



Norfolk

HIRING AND TRAINING NEEDS REPORT

NEBRASKA

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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 Norfolk area labor issues and workforce needs. Responses received from employers in the Norfolk 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 (90.5%) reported that they hired or tried to hire at least one new worker in the past two years. Over 52% 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 3.8 positions available.

Employers indicated whether they anticipated labor availability being an issue if they were to expand. Over 90% 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 80% of Norfolk area businesses stated it was difficult to find workers, and the most common reasons businesses gave were not receiving enough applicants, applicants' lack of work experience, and lack of occupation-specific skills.

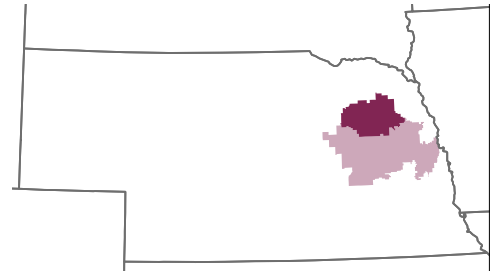
Over the course of the survey, employers were provided a list of skills and asked to rate the competency of their applicant pool (see "**Figure 15 Competency of Typical Applicant Pool**"). Employers also used the same list of skills to report whether there were deficiencies in their current workforce (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 47.3% of businesses did report that a majority of their current workforce was deficient in their leadership skills, only 37.2% 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 48% 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, the applicants lack required work experience, and applicants lack occupation specific skills. 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 Norfolk area. Further recommendations are provided in the Norfolk Skills Gap Report.

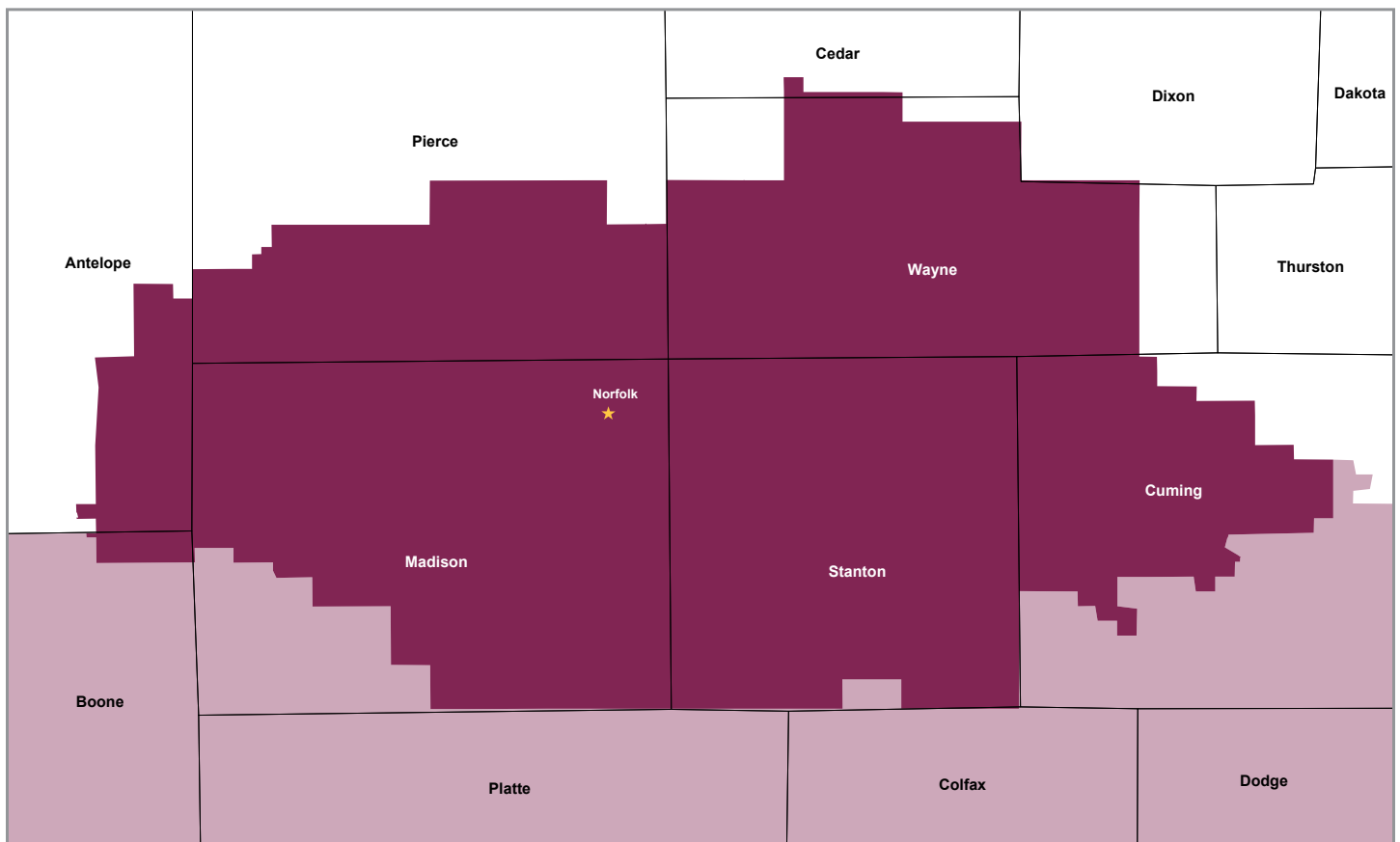
Introduction

This report discusses the results from a survey of employers in the Norfolk 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 Norfolk 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 Norfolk survey area included all or parts of six counties in the northeast region of Nebraska, including Madison County. The survey was mailed to all privately-owned businesses with 10 or more employees in the Norfolk 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 470 establishment locations throughout the six counties in the survey area.



Survey Area Map Northeast Nebraska



Introduction

Characteristics of Businesses

A total of 232 complete surveys were received as a result of the three mailings, for a 49.3% 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, 85% of respondents were businesses with fewer than 50 employees. These were designated as small businesses in the discussion of this survey. Another 8.3% of businesses had between 50 and 99 employees, and these were designated as mid-size businesses. The remaining 6.8% of respondents were large employers with 100 or more employees.

Goods-producing businesses accounted for 19.6% of Norfolk respondents. The goods-producing category primarily includes responses from businesses in the manufacturing industry (7.7% of Norfolk respondents). Service-producing businesses accounted for 80.4% of respondents. Service-producing is a broad category which includes responses from businesses in the retail trade industry (18.6% of Norfolk 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)	85.0%
Mid-size (50 - 99 employees)	8.3%
Large (100 or more employees)	6.8%
Industry	
Goods-Producing	19.6%
Manufacturing	7.7%
Construction	6.8%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	4.7%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	0.4%
Service-Producing	80.4%
Retail Trade	18.6%
Health Care and Social Assistance	14.9%
Accommodation and Food Services	12.6%
Finance and Insurance	6.8%
Wholesale Trade	6.6%
Transportation and Warehousing	5.1%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	3.6%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	3.0%
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	2.8%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	2.6%
Information	2.6%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	1.1%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	0.2%

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 84.4% of respondents had been in business for more than 10 years, while just 10.4% of respondents had been in business for six to 10 years and 5.2% had been in business for one to five years. No Norfolk area respondents had been in business for less than one year.

Table 2 Employment Characteristics of Responding Businesses

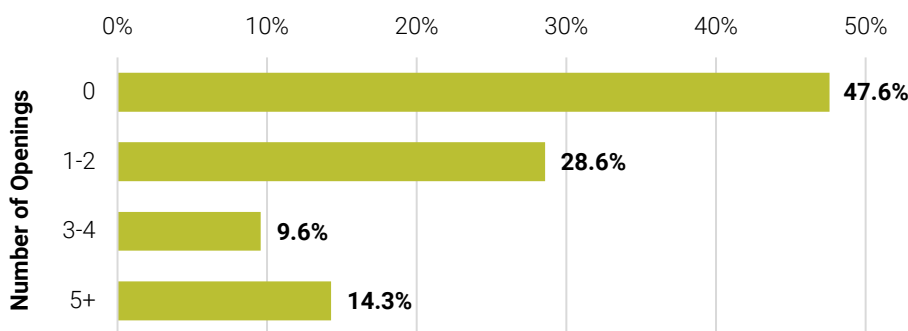
Measure	
Years in Operation	
<1 year	0.0%
1-5 years	5.2%
6-10 years	10.4%
>10 years	84.4%
Percentage of Employment	
Full-Time	70.0%
Part-Time	30.0%
Percentage of Workers by Type of Employment	
Permanent	93.7%
Temporary	3.9%
Seasonal	2.4%
Hiring	
At Least One Job Opening	52.4%
Average Current Job Openings	1.9
Hired or Tried to Hire Last Two Years	90.5%

Employers were asked to provide the number of full and part-time workers employed at their location. Exactly 70% of current employees' jobs were full-time positions compared to 30% part-time jobs. Employers also provided the number of permanent (93.7%), temporary (3.9%), and seasonal (2.4%) workers. Responding businesses also were very active in the labor market, with 90.5% of respondents reporting that their business hired or tried to hire employees during the last two years.

As seen in Table 2, 52.4% of responding businesses had at least one job opening at their location. The average number of current open positions at these locations was nearly two jobs, but when only considering businesses with at least one current job opening, the average increased to 3.8 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 Norfolk area.

Figure 1 Job Openings at Business Location



For all of the Labor Availability Study reports, visit:

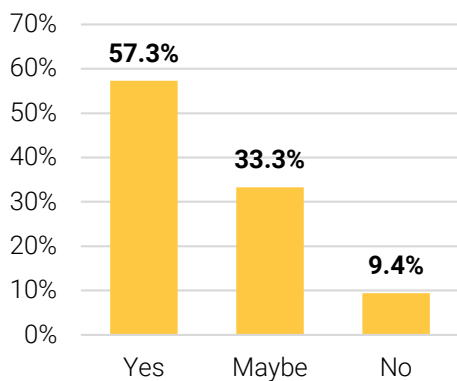
dol.nebraska.gov/las

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 (57.3%) reported that issues with labor availability would be present in the Norfolk area if they were asked to consider an expansion. More than 33% of businesses suggested that availability issues might be present, and 9.4% 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 Norfolk 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, 36.4% of businesses reported that they were not at all concerned, and 12.9% 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, 16.8% of respondents were not at all concerned and over 27.3% 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

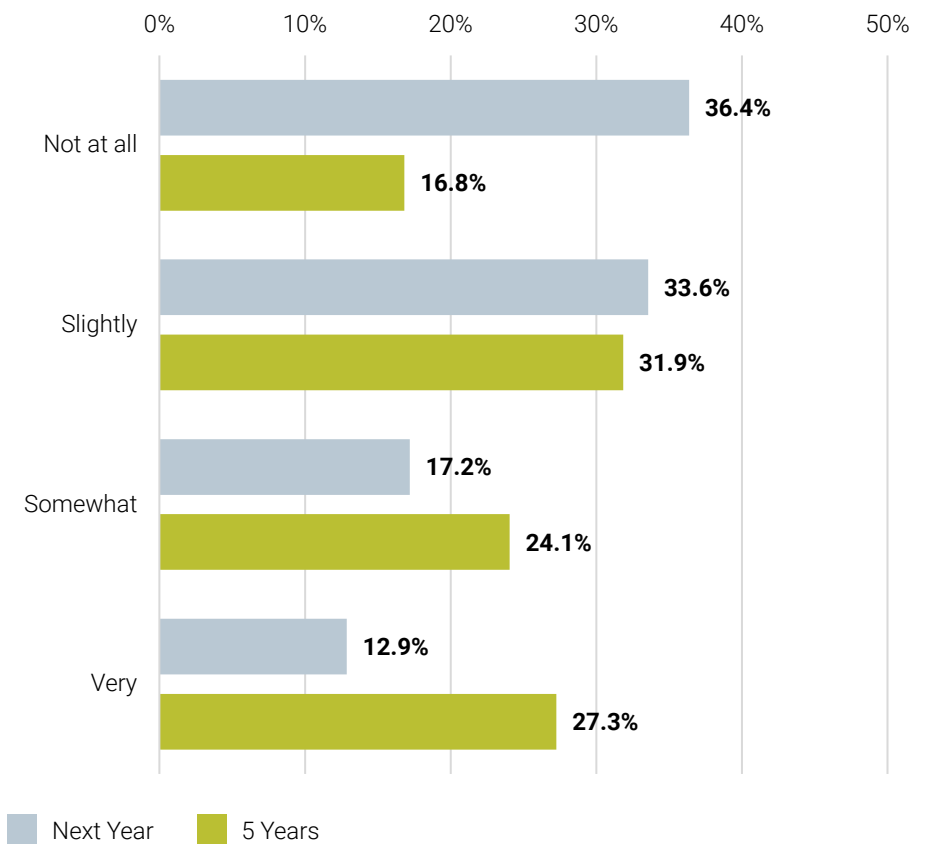


Figure 4 Have Taken Steps to Address Potential Skill Gaps

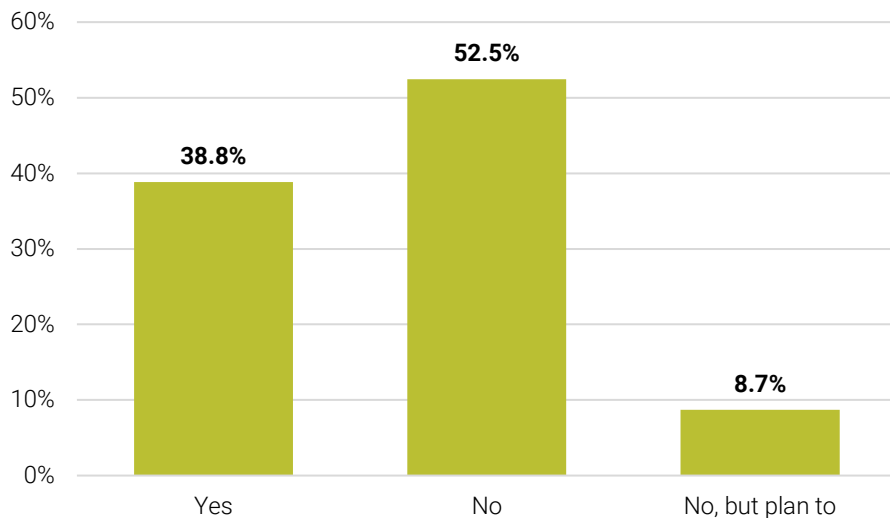
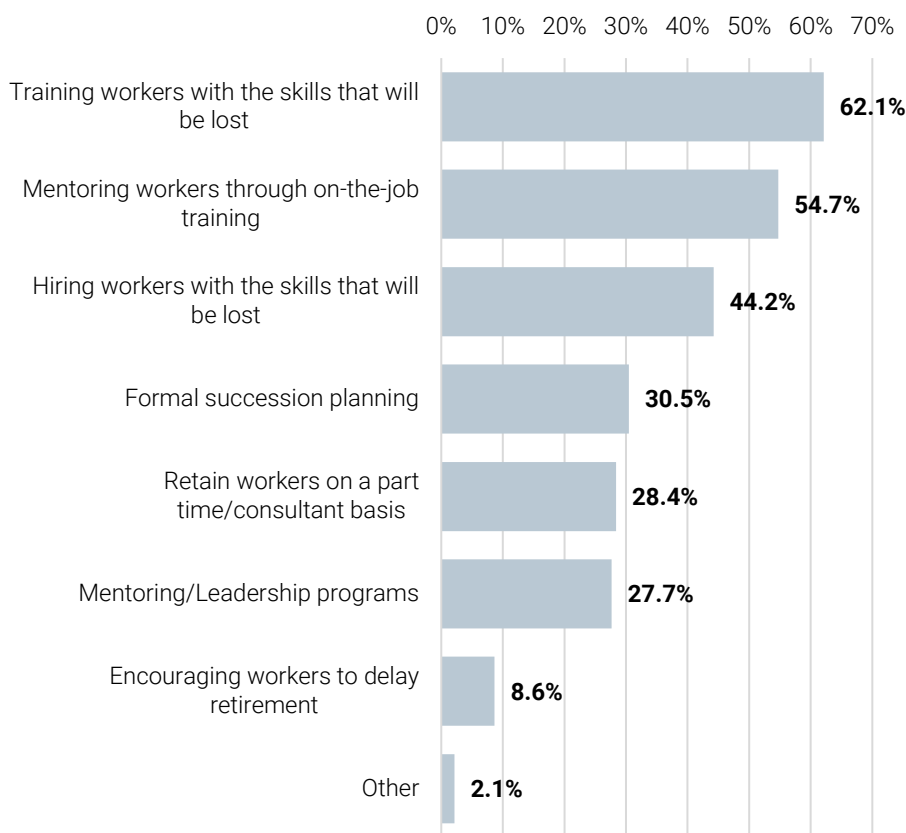


Figure 5 Methods of Addressing Potential Skill Gaps



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, nearly 39% of Norfolk area businesses answered that they had addressed the loss of skills due to retiring workers, and 8.7% 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 (62.1%) when other workers retire (See Figure 5). Mentoring workers through on-the-job training and hiring workers with the skills that will be lost were the next most common means of replacing skills lost resulting from retiring workers.

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 (63.1%), 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

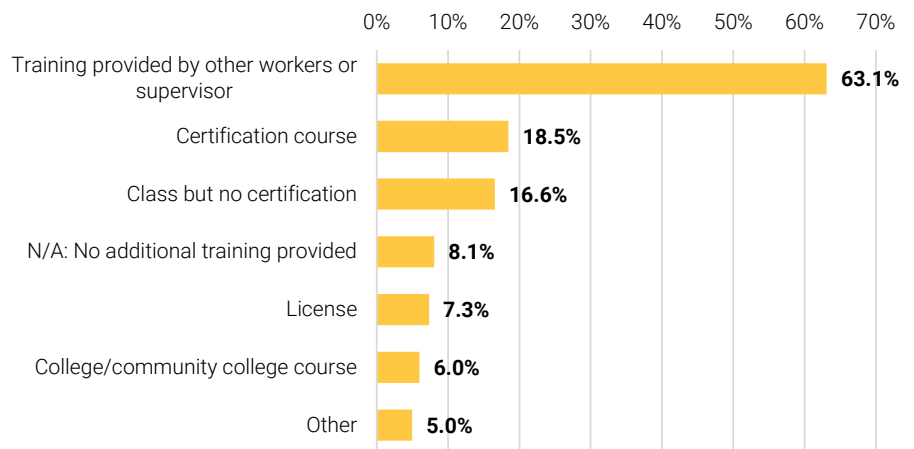


Table 3 Type of Training by Industry

Type of Training	Accommodation and Food Services	Finance and Insurance	Health Care and Social Assistance	Retail Trade	Wholesale Trade
Training provided by other workers or supervisor	63.6%	80.8%	58.2%	65.5%	68.0%
Certification course	12.1%	6.7%	36.3%	23.0%	18.0%
N/A: No additional training provided	9.1%	6.7%	4.0%	4.8%	12.0%
Class but no certification	7.7%	53.8%	18.7%	22.2%	18.0%
College/community college course	4.2%	0.0%	15.4%	5.1%	8.3%
License	0.0%	19.2%	9.9%	7.0%	18.0%
Other	0.0%	0.0%	10.6%	21.9%	16.7%

Table 4 Type of Training by Occupation

Type of Training	Construction and Extraction	Food Preparation and Serving Related	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	Office and Administrative Support	Sales and Related
Training provided by other workers or supervisor	56.8%	53.5%	69.6%	63.2%	79.4%
N/A: No additional training provided	17.1%	12.8%	8.8%	6.2%	5.2%
Certification course	11.5%	16.0%	26.0%	15.7%	29.5%
License	8.0%	0.0%	9.6%	10.9%	8.8%
Class but no certification	5.0%	7.3%	19.4%	21.6%	21.8%
College/community college course	5.0%	3.7%	27.2%	3.6%	0.0%
Other	14.9%	0.0%	31.3%	12.1%	21.3%

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 was provided, beyond basic orientation, by employers most often in the wholesale trade industry (12%) and for workers in construction and extraction occupations (17.1%). More than 36% of employers in the health care industry were provided a certification course and 18.7% were provided a class but no certification. In the finance industry, 53.8% 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. 88.2% of employers responded that they offered all or some of their full-time workers paid vacation, and 78.3% of respondents offered all or some of their full-time workers paid holidays. However, 86.7% of respondents offered telecommuting to none of their full-time workers. Furthermore, over 60% 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 23.7% of Norfolk area businesses reported offering paid vacation and 25.2% of employers offered paid holiday benefits to all or some of their part-time workers. Furthermore, 28.6% of firms offered retirement benefits to all or some of their part-time employees. However, over 63.7% of respondents offered all or some part-time workers a flexible work schedule.

Figure 7.1 Benefit Offerings for Full-Time Workers

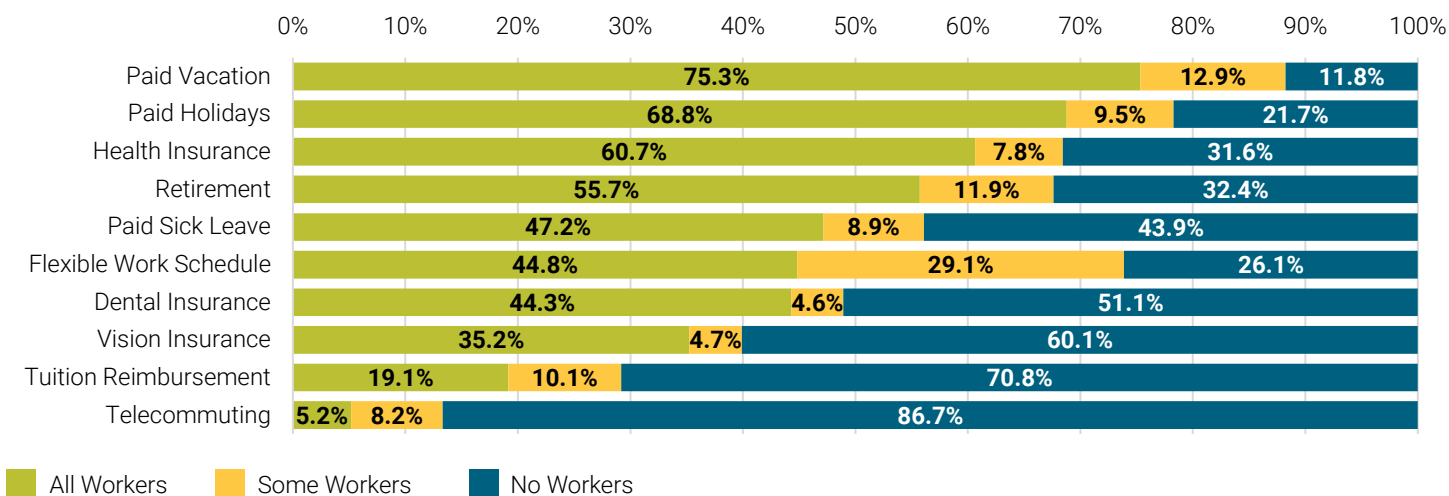
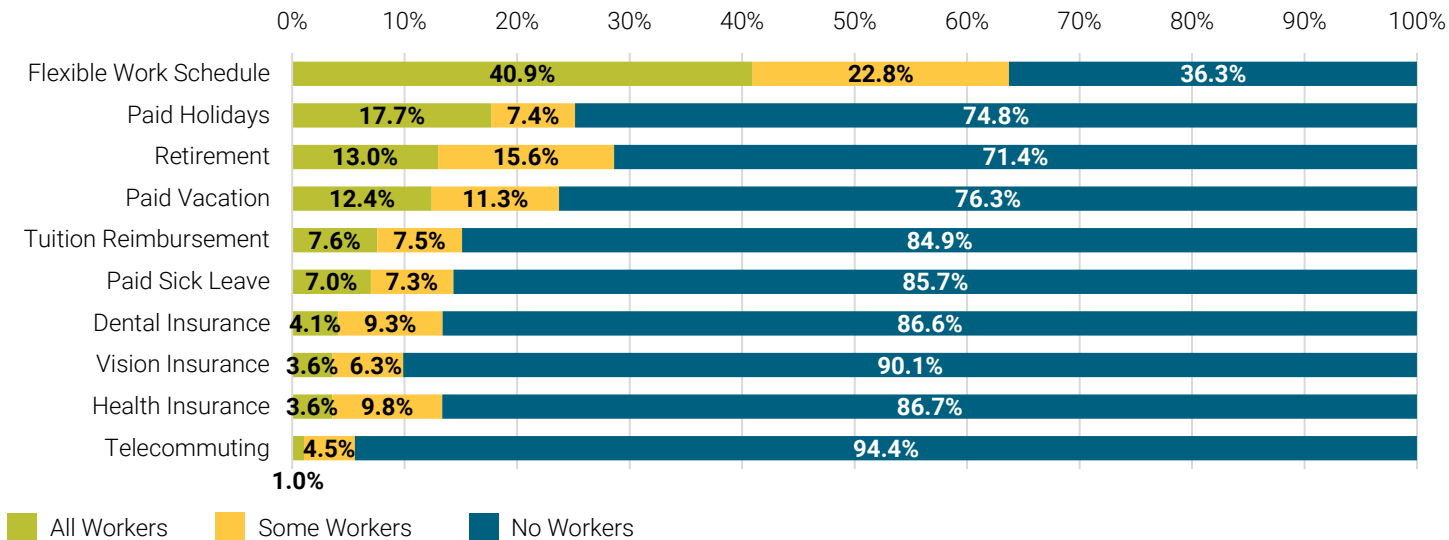


Figure 7.2 Benefit Offerings for Part-Time Workers



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 Norfolk area businesses (79.1%) 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 (54.9%). However, over 24% of employers do require up to a year of related work experience, and 20.8% of businesses require a year or more experience to qualify for the position.

Figure 8 Education Requirements

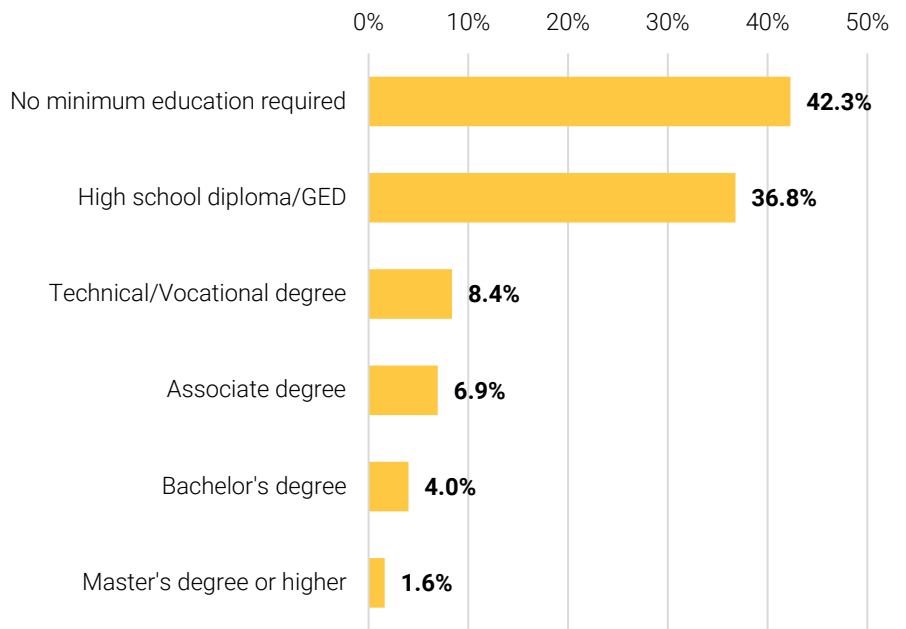


Figure 9 Work Experience Requirements

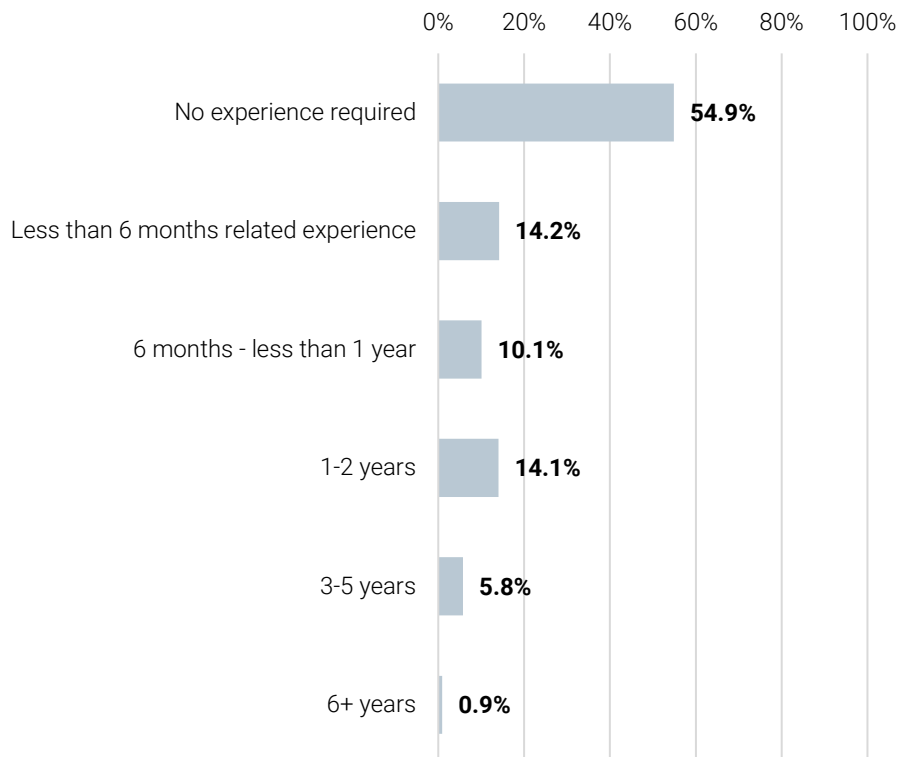
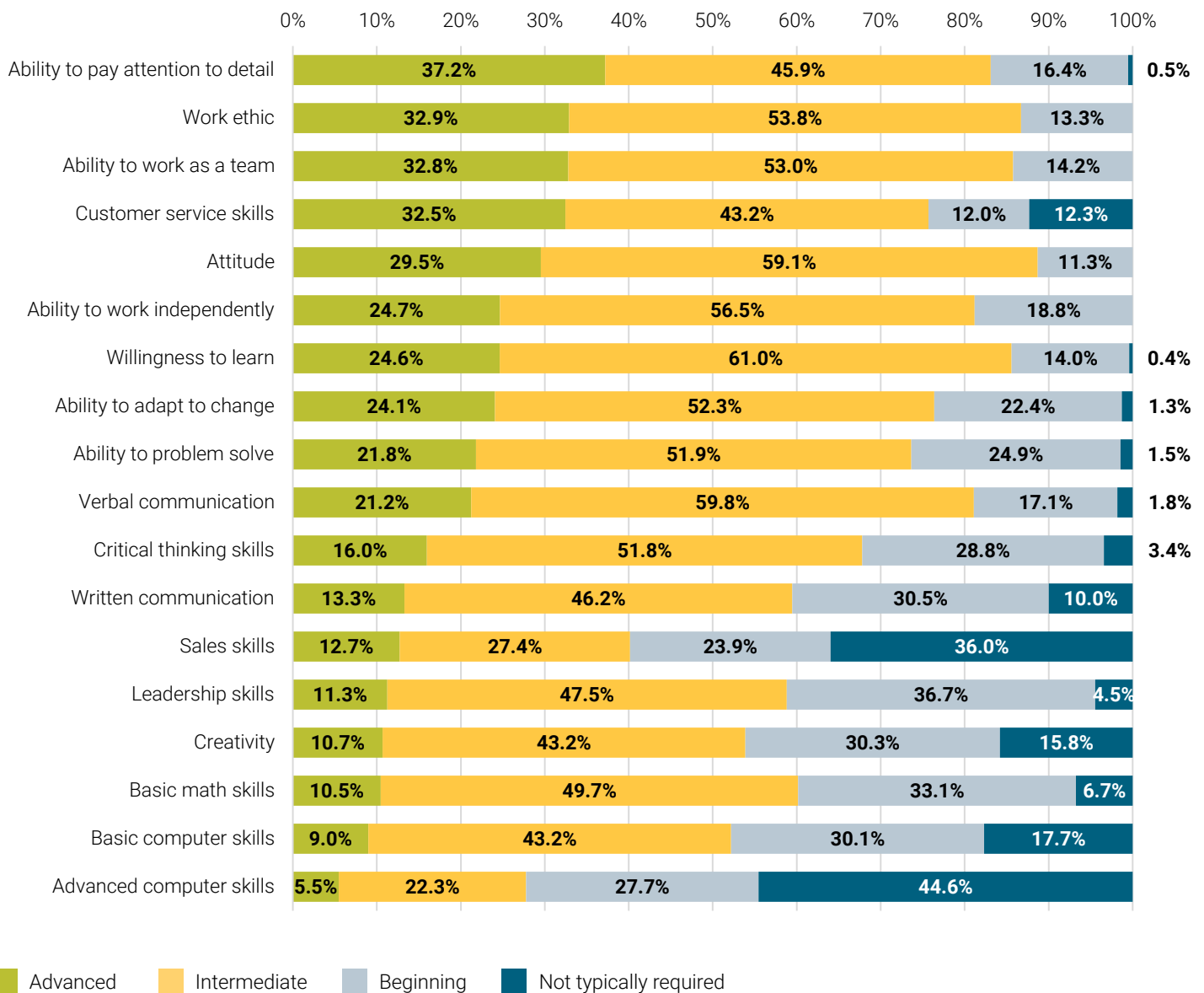


Figure 10 Skill Level Requirements



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 (44.6%), sales (36%), and basic computer skills (17.7%). A majority of businesses reported that for half 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 ability to pay attention to detail (37.2%) and work ethic (32.9%).

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, leadership (47.3%) 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 willingness to learn (23.4%), basic computer skills (24.6%), and basic math skills (25%).

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

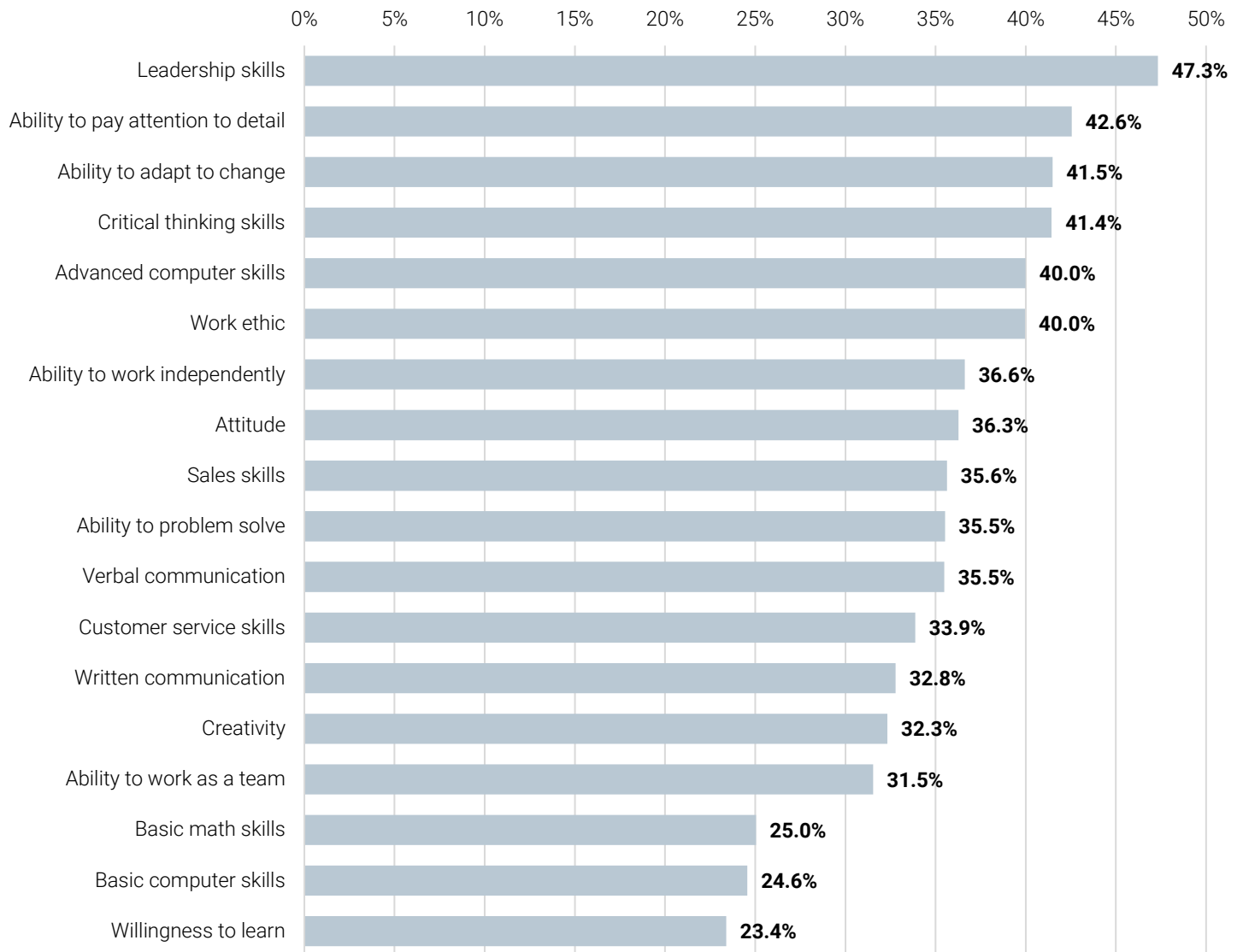


Figure 12 Applicants' Current Employment Situation

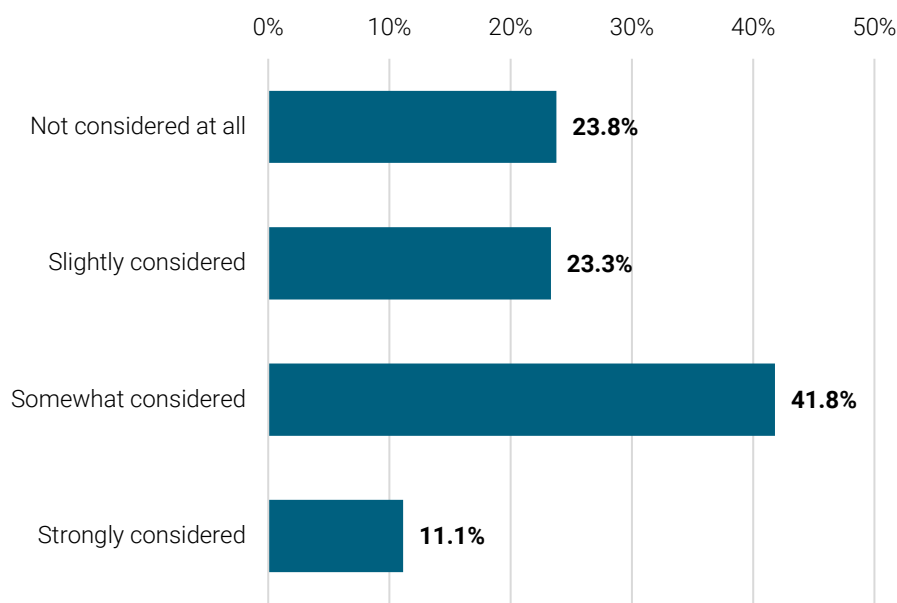
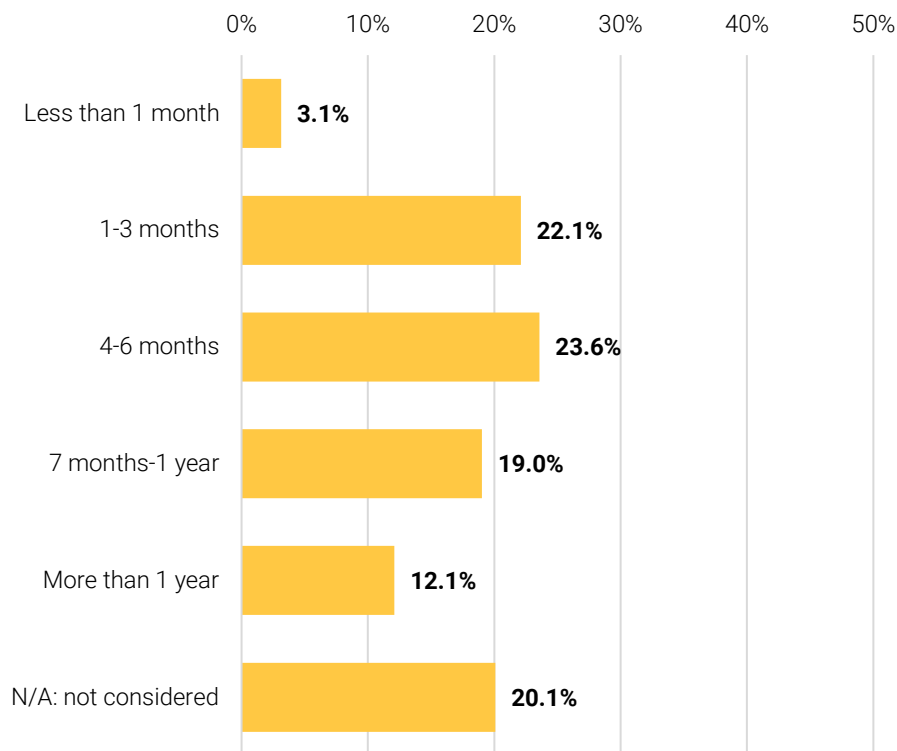


Figure 13 Hesitation Regarding Unemployed Applicant by Time Spent Not Employed



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 47% of Norfolk area businesses responded that an applicant’s current employment status is either slightly considered or not considered at all. On the other hand, 11.1% 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 Norfolk area, the greatest percentage of employers responded that a four to six month length of an applicants’ time not employed would cause hesitation (23.6%).

Results

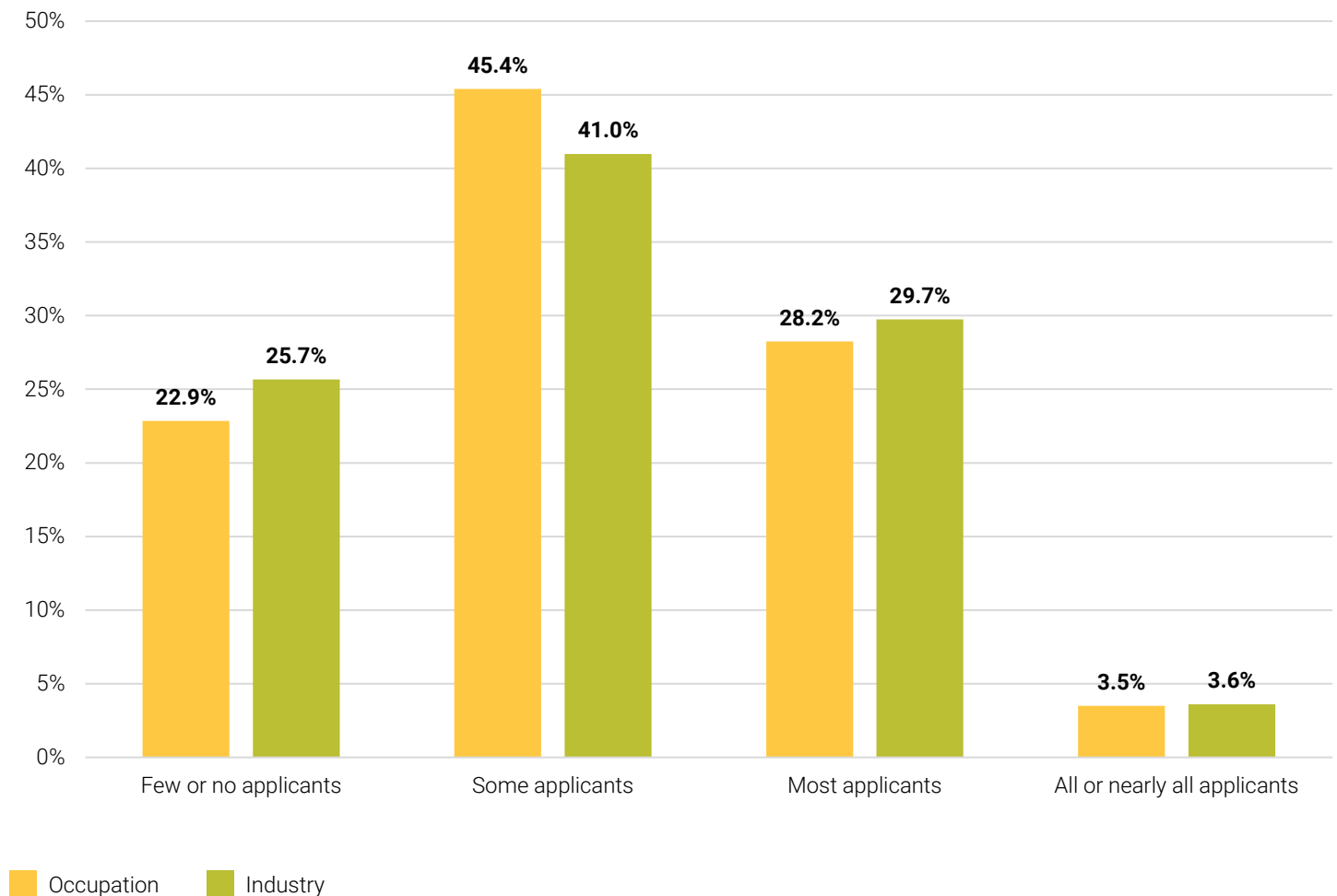
Respondents were asked the question, “Generally speaking, when hiring, how many applicants have experience in the same industry or a closely-related industry?” Respondents were also asked the same question about applicants’ experience in the same occupation or a closely-related occupation (see Figure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

Respondents were given four options to describe applicants, and 66.7% of Norfolk area businesses indicated that some or a few to no applicants had experience in the same industry or a closely-related industry. Only 3% of respondents indicated that nearly all or all applicants had experience in a similar industry.

Considering occupational experience, over 68% of employers responded that some, a few, or no applicants had experience in a similar occupation. Conversely, 3.5% 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 some applicants had occupational experience (45.4%) compared to industry experience (41%), and fewer respondents said few or no applicants had occupational experience (22.9%) compared to some industry experience (25.7%).

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



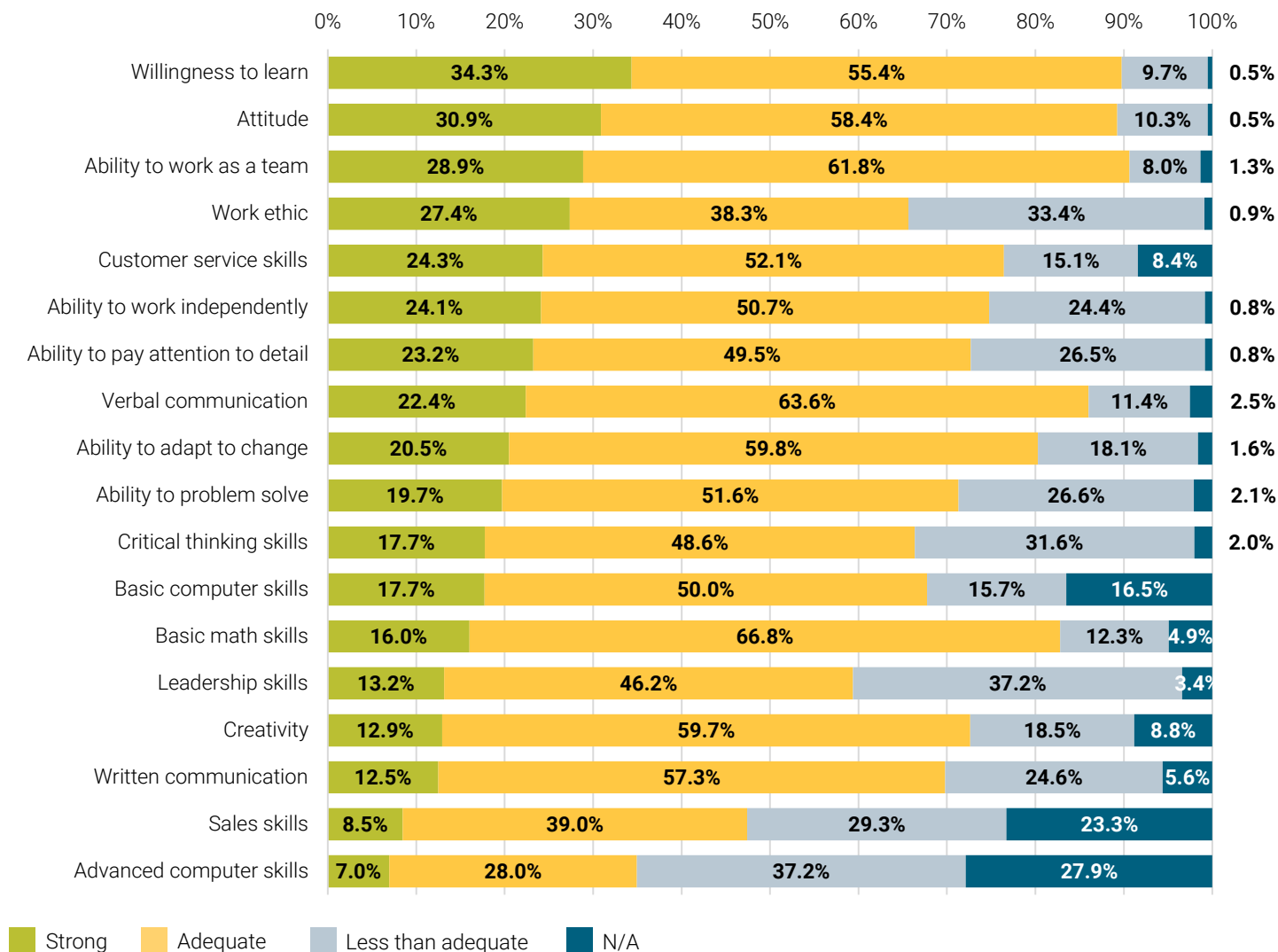
Competency

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 more often than they reported that advanced computer skills were not applicable (27.9%). Over 37% of employers rated their applicant pool as less than adequate in leadership, but 89.7% rated willingness to learn as strong or adequate.

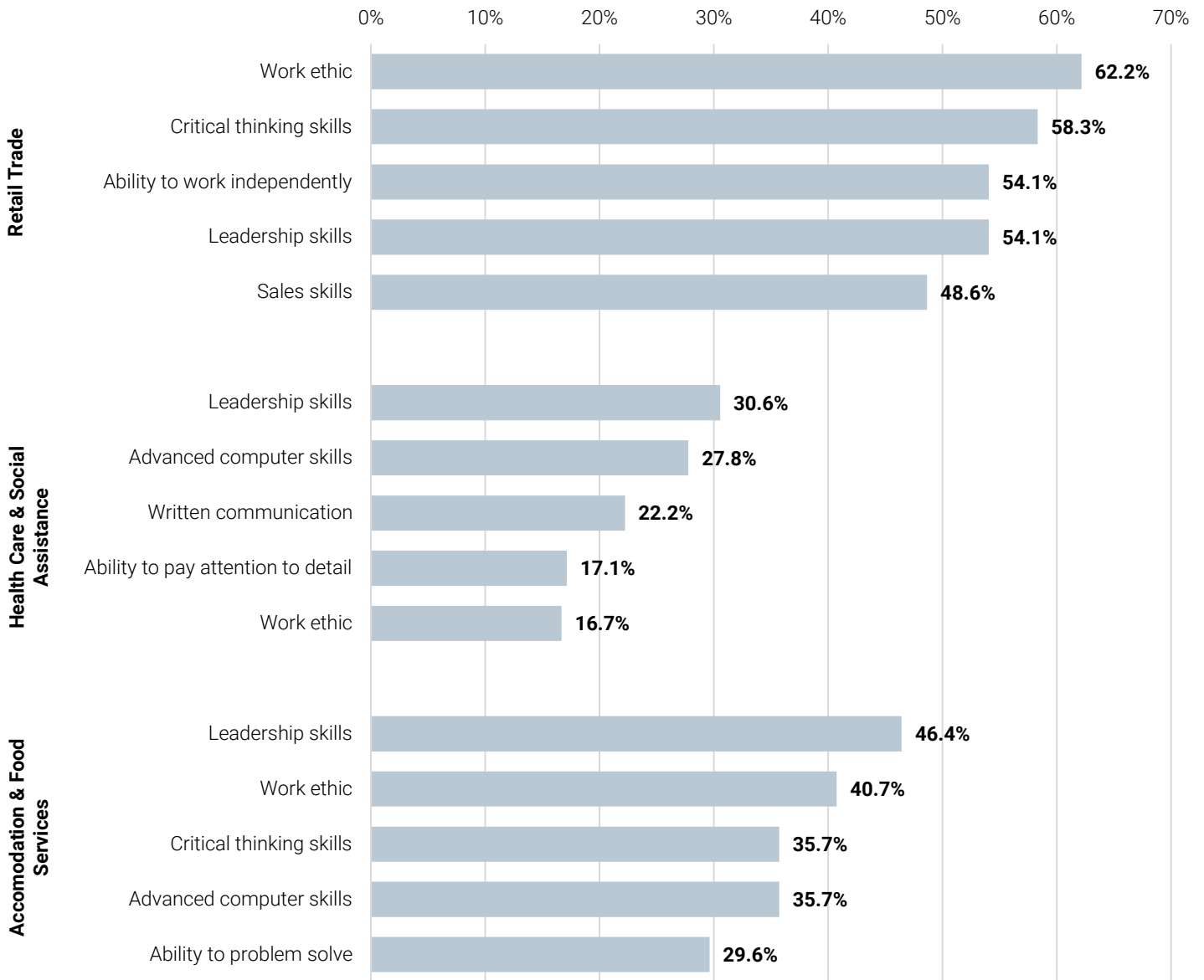
Almost 91% rated ability to work as a team as strong or adequate, and 30.9% of respondents rated applicants' attitude as "strong." Furthermore, most employers reported that applicants' verbal communication (86%) and basic math skills (82.8%) were "adequate" or "strong."

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 Norfolk area. The top five skills most often reported as less than adequate for each industry are displayed. In the retail trade industry, work ethic was most often reported as "less than adequate" (62.2%), followed by critical thinking skills (58.3%) and ability to work independently (54.1%).

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 (25%) and accommodation and food services (35.7%) industries.

Figure 17.1 Difficulty Finding Workers by Industry

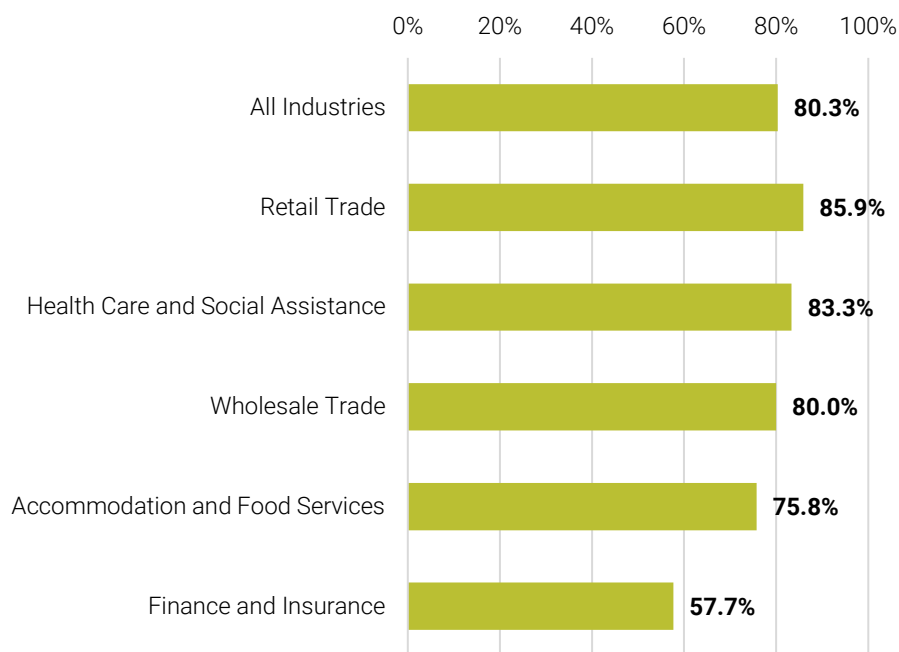
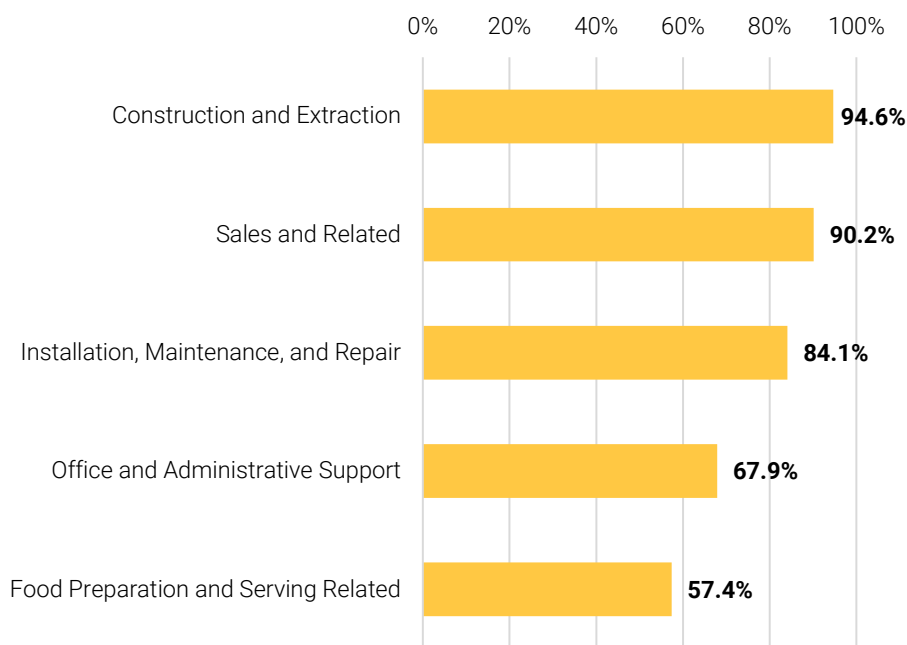


Figure 17.2 Difficulty Finding Workers by Occupation



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 80% of Norfolk 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 retail trade industry most often had difficulty finding workers (85.9%). The accommodation and food services (75.8%) and finance and insurance (57.7%) industries less often reported difficulty finding workers than Norfolk businesses overall (80.3%).

Norfolk area businesses most often reported recently hiring or trying to hire for these occupation groups: construction and extraction, sales and related, installation, maintenance and repair, office and administrative support, 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 construction and extraction, sales and related, and installation, maintenance, and repair occupations more often reported having difficulty finding workers (94.6%, 90.2%, and 84.1%, respectively) than Norfolk area businesses overall (80.3%).

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.

Nearly 72% of Norfolk businesses that reported having difficulty finding workers for a specific job said that not receiving enough applicants was a reason why the search was challenging. Over 45% of businesses said workers' lack of work experience was a reason that they had difficulty hiring for that occupation, followed by a lack of occupation specific skills (39.1%). On the other hand, very few businesses reported that the difficulty in finding workers was due to them being overqualified (5%) or a citizenship or work authorization issue (4.6%), and only 4.2% of businesses reported language barrier as being a challenge.

Respondents were given the opportunity to specify other reasons for hiring difficulties not listed. In the Norfolk area, other reasons included issues with workers' desire to relocate and attendance. Additional reasons for hiring difficulty included issues that were not related to problems with applicants, such as non-competition agreements, location of office, and required travel.

Figure 18 Reasons for Difficulty Finding Workers

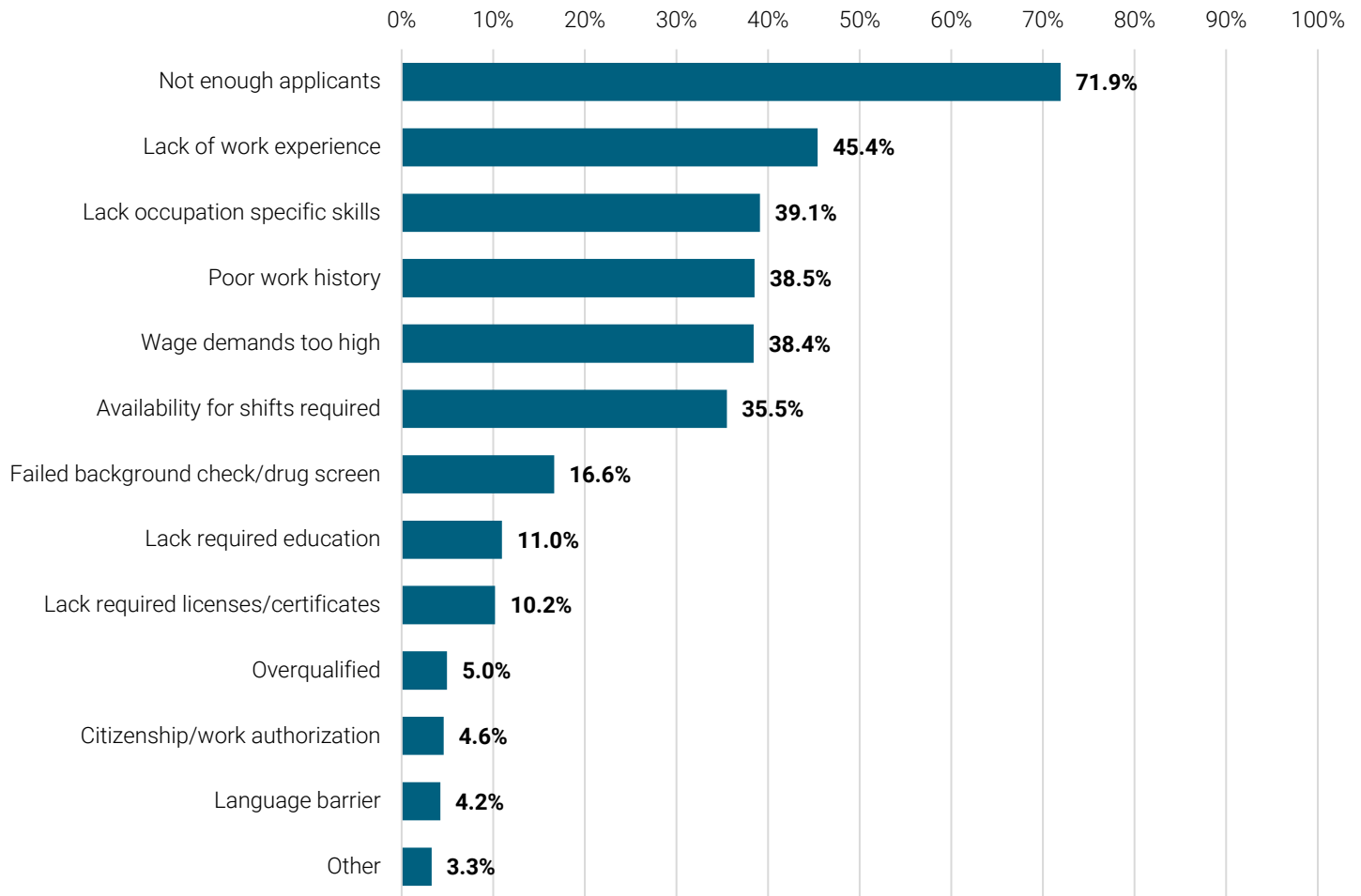


Table 5 Reasons for Difficulty Finding Workers - Top Responding Industries

Reason for Difficulty	Accommodation and Food Services	Finance and Insurance	Health Care and Social Assistance	Retail Trade	Wholesale Trade
Availability for shifts required	62.0%	0.0%	50.7%	41.1%	30.0%
Citizenship/work authorization	8.0%	0.0%	2.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Failed background check/drug screen	10.0%	0.0%	18.7%	16.4%	5.0%
Lack occupation specific skills	32.0%	66.7%	24.0%	41.7%	50.0%
Lack of work experience	30.0%	66.7%	42.7%	39.7%	70.0%
Lack required education	0.0%	6.7%	16.0%	9.6%	15.0%
Lack required licenses/certificates	2.0%	6.7%	12.0%	11.0%	5.0%
Language barrier	2.0%	0.0%	1.3%	2.7%	2.5%
Not enough applicants	68.0%	53.3%	69.3%	86.3%	70.0%
Overqualified	0.0%	6.7%	2.7%	8.2%	2.5%
Poor work history	48.0%	0.0%	28.0%	53.4%	40.0%
Wage demands too high	12.0%	20.0%	49.3%	46.6%	42.5%
Other	4.0%	0.0%	4.0%	1.4%	7.5%

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, finance and insurance, 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, except finance and insurance, 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 (62%) than in the health care and social assistance (50.7%) and retail trade industries (41.1%).

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 wholesale trade industry indicated issues with non-compete agreements 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	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	Office and Administrative Support	Sales and Related
Availability for shifts required	2.8%	58.4%	15.6%	25.5%	45.5%
Citizenship/work authorization	11.4%	3.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Failed background check/drug screen	22.7%	12.5%	25.3%	9.5%	15.3%
Lack occupation specific skills	49.0%	28.0%	65.5%	57.3%	37.2%
Lack of work experience	54.6%	27.7%	54.5%	53.3%	58.4%
Lack required education	2.8%	2.1%	23.9%	2.0%	13.8%
Lack required licenses/certificates	14.9%	2.2%	23.4%	2.0%	6.4%
Language barrier	8.6%	2.2%	3.6%	5.9%	1.4%
Not enough applicants	68.1%	72.1%	60.5%	72.5%	85.8%
Overqualified	5.7%	0.0%	14.0%	19.0%	0.0%
Poor work history	46.1%	47.9%	42.1%	44.9%	44.6%
Wage demands too high	31.3%	15.1%	27.0%	52.1%	39.3%
Other	8.5%	2.2%	2.4%	0.0%	6.6%

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, installation, maintenance and repair, office and administrative support, and sales and related. These occupation groups encompass many specific occupations, which can be viewed at onetonline.org.

Businesses that hire the top five occupation groups, other than installation, maintenance and repair occupations, 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 sales and related (58.4%), construction and extraction (54.6%), installation, maintenance and repair (54.5%) and office and administrative support (53.3%) occupation groups reported that having a lack of work experience was why it was difficult to find workers.

A lack of occupation specific skills was cited as being a hiring challenge more frequently for installation, maintenance and repair (65.5%) occupations and office and administrative support occupations (57.3%) compared to the sales and related (37.2%) occupation group.

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 construction and extraction occupations indicated issues with age and required travel, while businesses hiring for sales and related occupations identified a non-compete agreements and location.

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 Norfolk) 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 (80.3%). The most common reason businesses gave for difficulty hiring was not having enough applicants (71.9%).

Table 8.1 Key Results - Business Characteristics

Business Characteristics	Percent
Openings	
Hired or Tried to Hire Last Two Years	90.5%
At Least 1 Job Opening	52.4%
Average Current Job Openings	1.9
If Asked to Consider Expansion	
Labor Availability Issues Either Would Be or Might Be Present	90.6%
Percent of Businesses that have Difficulty Finding Workers for the Occupations they Hire	80.3%

The vast majority of businesses that responded to the survey (90.5%) indicated they hired or tried to hire at least one worker in the last two years. Over 52% of responding businesses had at least one current job opening at their location. The average current job openings for all responding businesses was 1.9, but when excluding businesses that had no current openings the average rose to 3.7 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, 90.6% 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 80% of all responding Columbus area businesses reported it was difficult to find workers and 85.9% of employers in the retail trade industry reported difficulty. As seen in "Figure 17.2 Difficulty Finding Workers by Occupation," 94.6% of employers who were hiring for construction and extraction 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 (71.9%), applicants' lack of work experience (45.4%), and applicants' lack of occupation-specific skills (39.1%). 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 Norfolk area businesses reported that either they have no minimum education requirement for applicants or they require a high school diploma or equivalent (79.1%). Some responding employers indicated they do require a technical or vocational degree (8.4%), or an associate (6.6%) or bachelor's degree (4%), but few businesses said they require an applicant to hold a master's degree or higher (1.6%).

Table 8.2 Key Results - Applicant Characteristics

Applicant Experience	Percent
Some to No Applicants with Experience in Similar Industry	66.7%
Some to No Applicants with Experience in Similar Occupation	68.2%
Businesses that Require No Prior Work Experience	54.9%

Similarly, a majority of businesses responding to the survey had no prior work experience requirement (54.9%). However, over 24% of employers did require no more than a year of related work experience, and 20.8% 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 (66.7%) or occupation (68.2%).

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 (44.6%), sales (36%), and basic computer skills (17.7%). A majority of businesses reported that for nine 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 ability to pay attention to detail (37.2%), work ethic (32.9%), and ability to work as a team (32.8%).

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 skill as less than adequate. Furthermore, advanced computer skills was a skill most often reported as less than adequate (37.2%), but was also the skill most often reported as not applicable (27.9%) (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	
Leadership	47.3%
Ability to pay attention to detail	42.6%
Ability to adapt to change	41.5%

Regarding perceptions of the current workforce, no more than 48% 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) 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 Norfolk 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 Norfolk Hiring and Training Needs Report, a report based on data received from individuals in northeast Nebraska is also available. The Norfolk Labor Availability Report details information about local potential job seekers and active job seekers. The Norfolk 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
68701 (Norfolk)	154
68715	<6
68716	8
68740	<6
68748	9
68767	<6
68768	<6
68779	<6
68781	<6
68787	37
68790	<6
68791	<6
Grand Total	232

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 Norfolk 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). More than 200 businesses were included in the Norfolk 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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