



Talent Development  
Task Force



# SKILLS, TRAINING, LABOUR MARKET POLICY

DECEMBER 2023

## ALBERTA PERSPECTIVES SURVEY



# Contents

3	Introduction and Methodology
6	Key Findings
11	Detailed Findings
26	Respondent Profile – Firmographics

# INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

# SKILLS, TRAINING, LABOUR MARKET POLICY



## This is the sixth survey in the Alberta Perspectives Series to focus on skills, training and labour market policy.

This report continues research initiated in March 2020 dealing with skills, training and labour market issues.

The overall purpose of the research is to understand the experiences of Alberta employers (private sector, public sector and not-for-profit organizations) regarding:

- Extent of labour market shortages;
- Identification of barriers to more skills training to deal with shortages;
- Source of new hires and, where a recent graduate, an evaluation of their technical and people skills;
- Extent lack of technical or people skills is biggest skills deficit;
- Awareness and use of an apprentice style training model for other skills; and
- Value and experience with Work Integrated Learning.



# SKILLS, TRAINING, LABOUR MARKET POLICY

## Methodology

In all, n=260 employers completed the primary survey which was administered on the Alberta Perspectives platform by the Alberta Chambers of Commerce to members and other affiliated organizations.

In addition, n=197 employers agreed to answer a secondary set of follow-up questions.

Surveying for the current survey was undertaken between October 31st to December 3rd, 2023.

Significant differences are reported between demographic segments.

↑↓ Significantly higher/lower vs. other segments

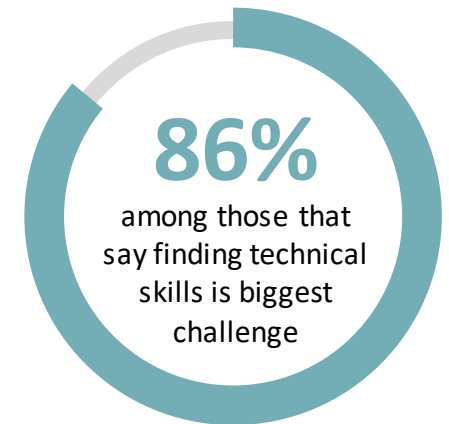
# KEY FINDINGS

## Skills Shortage

# A large proportion of Alberta organizations have experienced skills shortages.

Eight-in-ten organizations report they have experienced a skills shortage in the last year or two.

This increases to 86% among organizations that indicate that finding people with the technical skills they need is their biggest challenge when hiring.



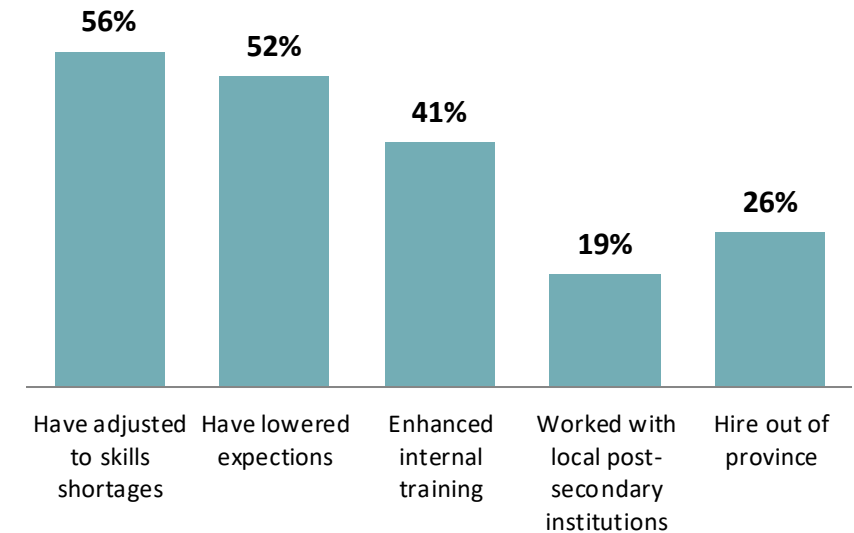
## Dealing with Skills Shortage

# Many organizations have adjusted and adapted to shortages.

About half report they have adjusted to being short of some skills or lowered their expectations of the level of skills they can hire.

Organizations have also enhanced their internal training or have worked with local post-secondary institutions.

However, one-quarter have had to hire out of province to find the skills they need, increasing to one-third whose biggest hiring challenge is technical skills.



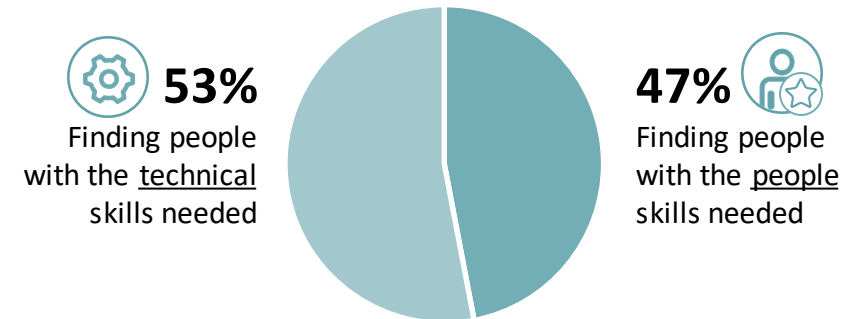


## Biggest Challenge in Hiring

# Employers are divided over whether finding people with the technical or people skills they need is their biggest challenge in hiring...

And, even when they do hire, there is a deficiency in the technical/people skills needed to be workforce ready. Organizations indicate that a large proportion of new staff hired direct from high school or post-secondary institutions do not presently have the technical or people skills required to be workforce ready.

Biggest hiring challenge



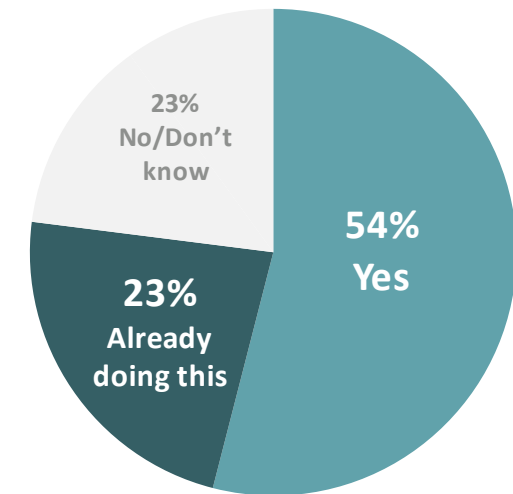
## Training Opportunities

# There are opportunities to increase on-the-job learning and WIL.

Half of organizations report there are non-trade skills and occupations used in their organization where on-the-job learning can replicate the apprenticeship type model to develop the talent they need (while 23% are already doing this).

In terms of Work Integrated Learning, 45% indicate they would consider providing WIL opportunities to post-secondary students as a strategy to recruit or acquire skilled workers (while 13% are currently doing this).

Can on-the-job learning replicate apprenticeship model to develop talent?



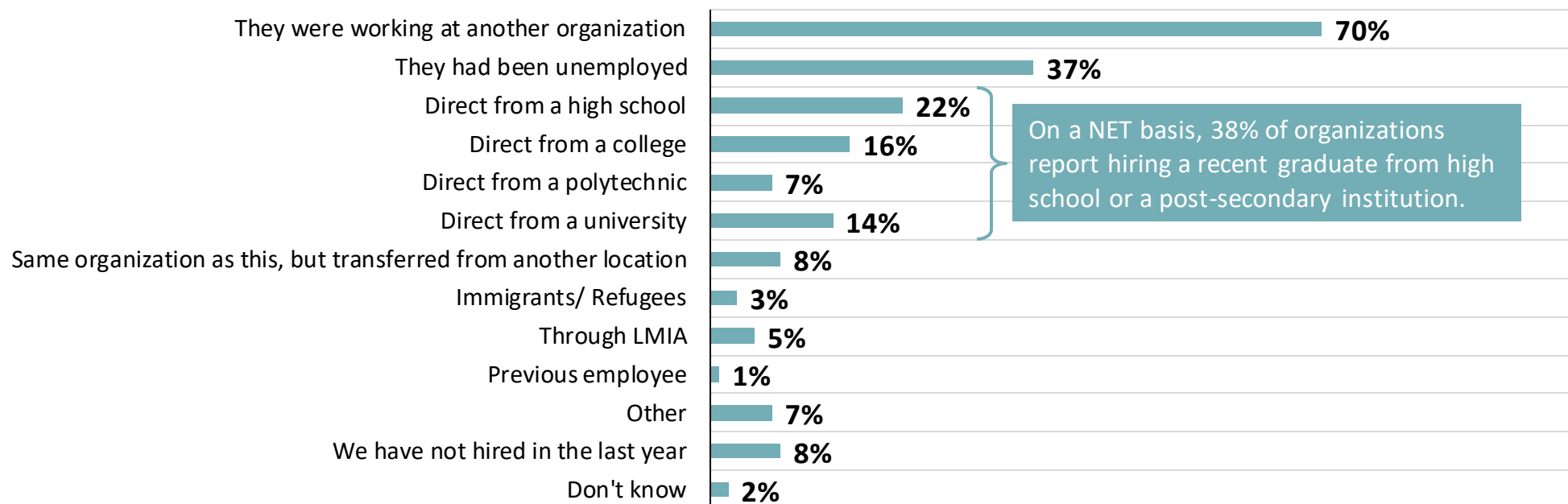
**98%**

Involved with a work integrated learning experience say it makes a difference to a student's work force readiness.

# DETAILED FINDINGS

**Most organizations report hiring staff in the last year. While many were people already employed, a significant number hired someone who had been unemployed (37%). Overall, 38% hired a recent graduate from high school or a post-secondary institution.**

### Source of New Hires



- Small organizations of 2-4 employees were the most likely to have not hired staff in the last year (34%↑).
- Regionally, organizations in Calgary (26%) are the most likely to have hired direct from a university.

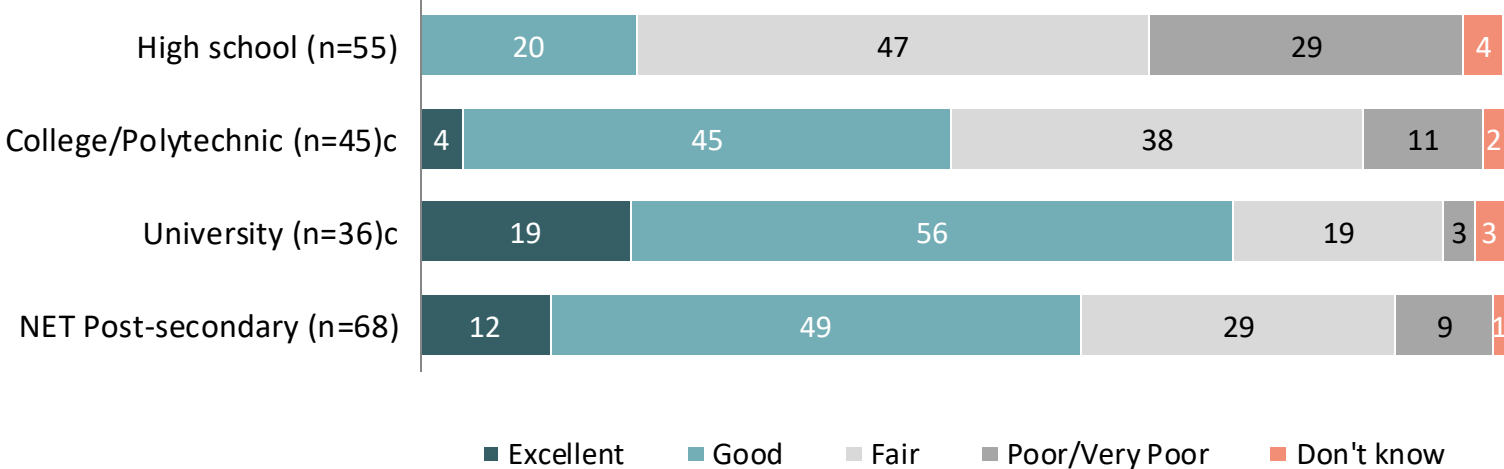
Q3. If your organization has hired staff in the last year, where did they come from?  
 Base: Total sample (Dec'23 n=260)

**New staff hired direct from university (75%) were considered the most likely to be workforce ready in terms of technical skills and competencies (with 19% rated as 'excellent'). This declines to 20% among new hires direct from high school.**

**Ratings of Technical Skills and Competencies**



**% Excellent/Good**



**20%**

**49%**

**75%**

**61%**

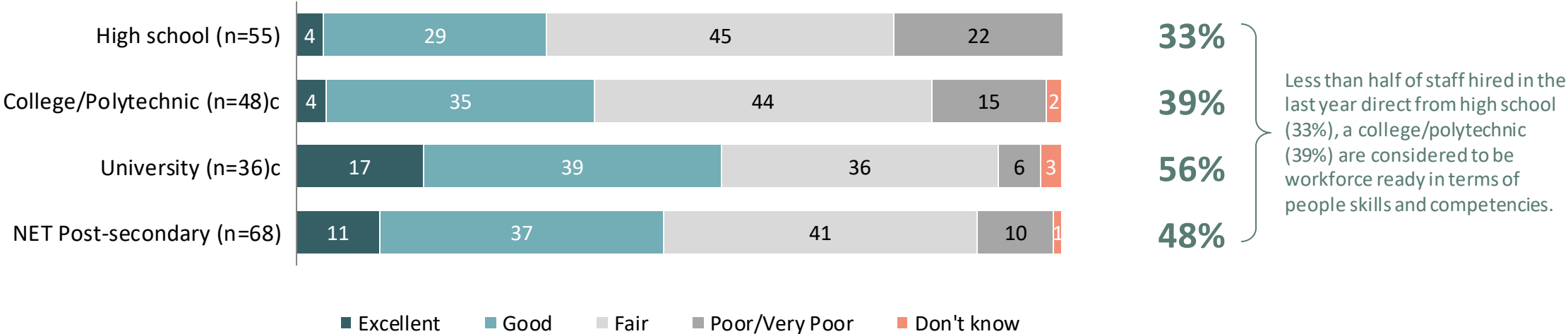
Less than half of organizations that have hired staff in the last year would rate the technical skills and competencies of those hired direct from college/polytechnic (49%) or high school (20%) as excellent/good.

Q4. From the perspective of being workforce ready how would you rate the technical skills and competencies of your new hires?  
 Base: Organizations that have hired staff in the last year (base sizes vary)  
 C: Caution, small base size

# From the perspective of the people skills and competencies of their new hires, ratings tend to be lower overall than for technical skills among those hired direct from a university or college/polytechnic.

## Ratings of People Skills and Competencies

% Excellent/Good



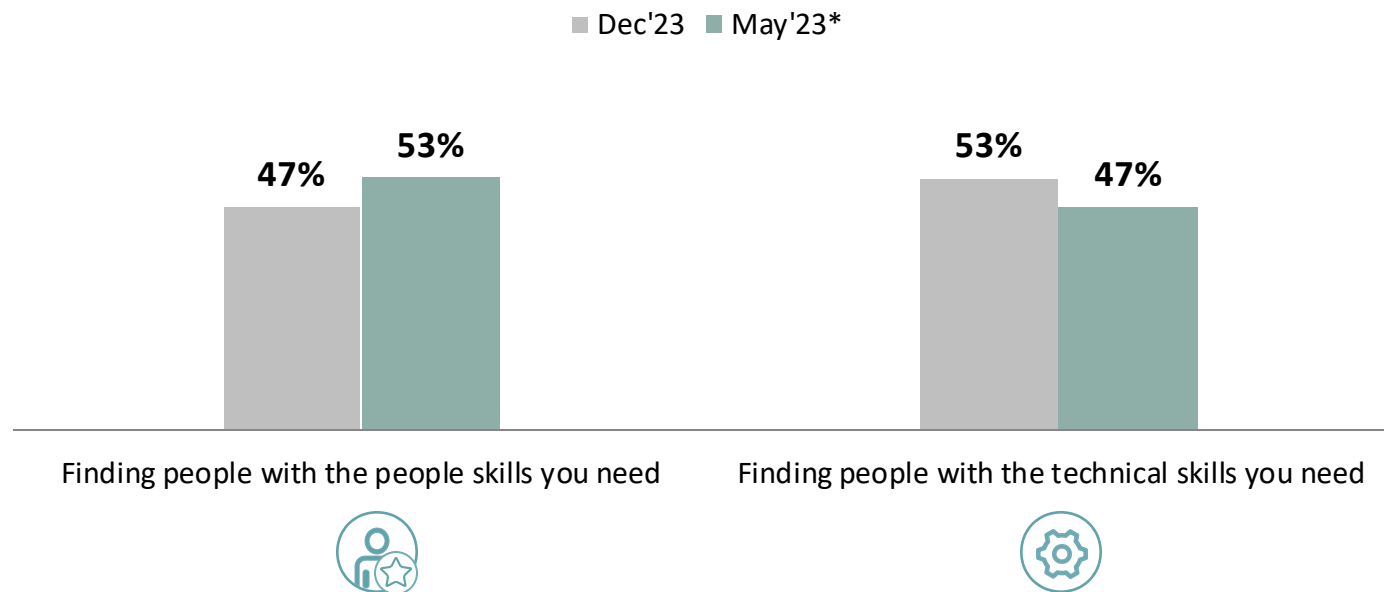
Q5. From the perspective of being workforce ready how would you rate the people skills and competencies of your new hires?

Base: Organizations that have hired staff in the last year (base sizes vary)

C: Caution, small base size

While just over half (53%) indicate that finding people with the technical skills they need is their biggest challenge in hiring, this is closely followed by finding employees with the people skills they need (47%).

### Identification of Which is the Biggest Challenge in Hiring



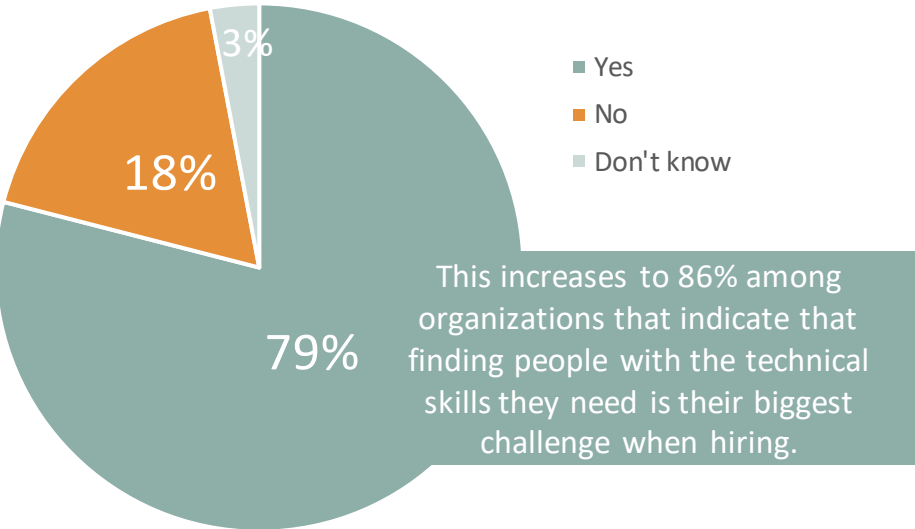
- Regionally, organizations in the Northeast (71%↑) and Northwest (69%↑) are the most likely to report finding people with needed technical skills is their biggest challenge.
- The not-for-profit sector (64%↑) is more likely to identify challenges with finding people with the people skills they need than are organizations in the public (45%) or private (43%) sectors.

\* In May'23, asked of organizations that reported they had hired staff in the last few years.

Q7. Overall, which is the biggest challenge in hiring?  
 Base: Total sample (Dec'23 n=260); May'23\* n=438)

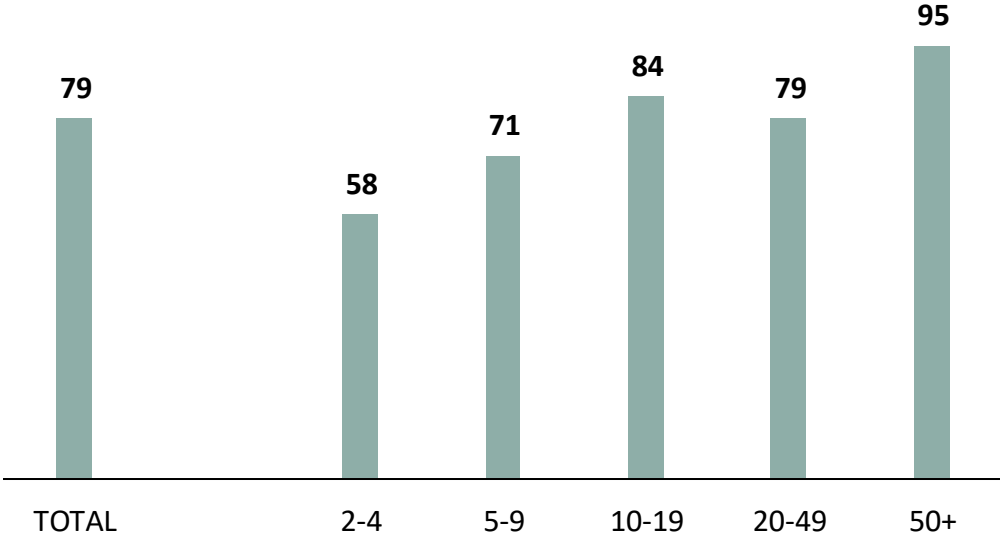
**Significantly, eight-in-ten (79%) organizations report they have experienced a skills shortage in the last year or two. Almost all companies with 50+ employees say they have been impacted by a skills shortage.**

**Experienced a skills shortage in last year or two?**



- YES:**
- By sector: Public 90%↑; Private 80%; Not-for Profit 68%
  - By industry: Primary 75%; Secondary 91%↑; Service 77%

**Incidence of skills shortage by company size**

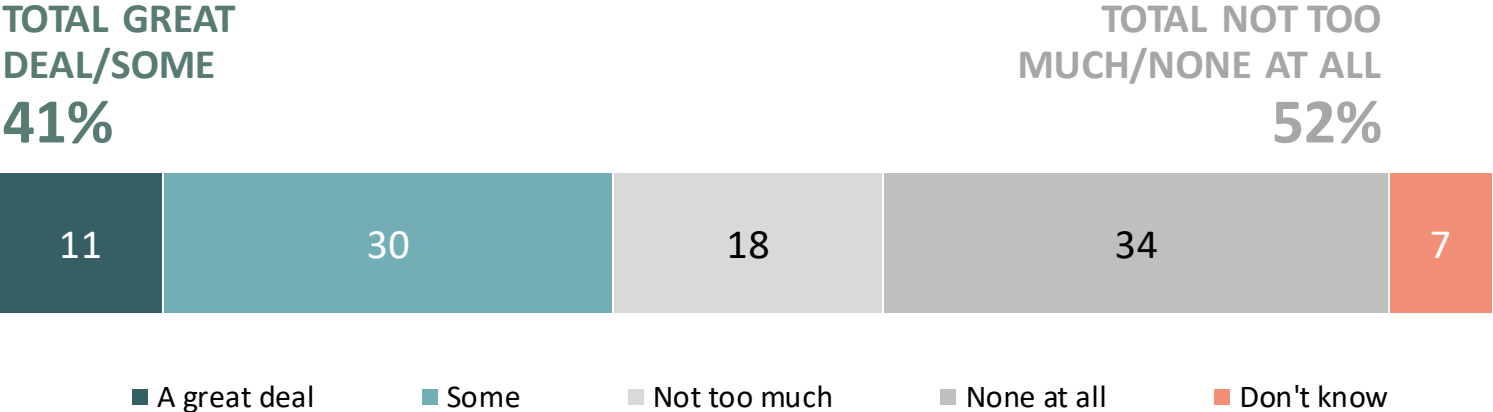


Q8. Has your organization experienced a skills shortage in the last year or two?  
 Base: Total sample (Dec'23 n=260)



# Four-in-ten organizations indicate they have either ‘a great deal’ (11%) or ‘some’ (30%) experience with non-apprenticeship skills training using a formal mentoring program.

## Experience with non-apprenticeship skills training



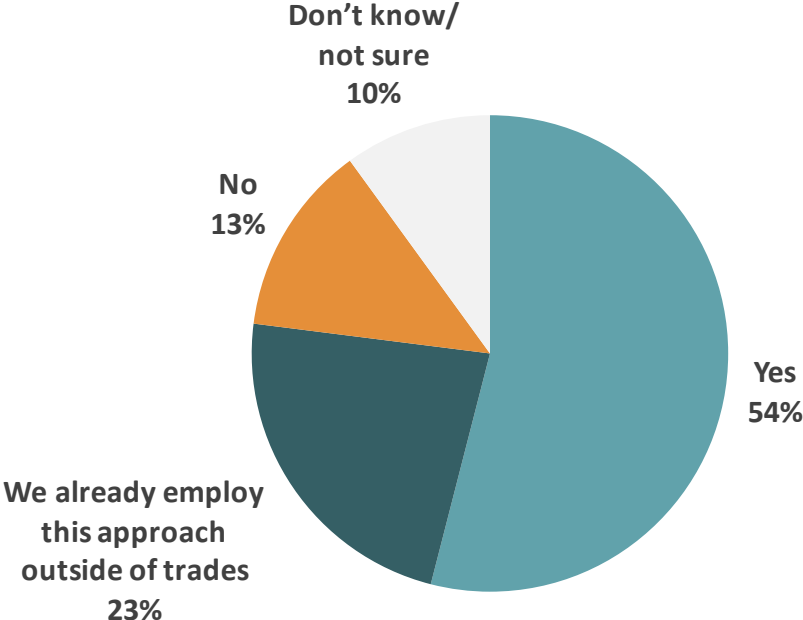
- While 43% of organizations that have been impacted by a skills shortage in the last year or two have ‘a great deal/some’ experience with non-apprenticeship skills training, about one-third (35%) of those that did not experience a skills shortage also have experience with this type of training.
- There is a 10-point difference between organizations that report technical skills are their biggest hiring challenge (46%) versus people skills (36%) in terms of experience with non-apprenticeship skills training.

Q9. As you may know, trade apprenticeships develop skills by combining post-secondary theoretical experience with on-the-job learning supported by the mentorship of an already skilled tradesperson – this approach has proven successful at developing skills businesses need. What kind of experience, if any, has your organization had with non- apprenticeship skills training using a formal mentoring program structured such that both mentor and mentee have specific goals and targets that match the organization's goals and culture?

Base: Total sample (Dec’23 n=260)

Three-quarters of organizations report that either there are non-trade skills and occupations used in their organization where on-the-job learning can replicate the apprenticeship type model to develop the talent they need (54%) or that they already employ this approach (23%).

Can on-the-job learning replicate apprenticeship model to develop talent?



Q10. Are there non-trade skills and occupations used in your organization where on-the-job learning supported by an experienced mentor on your staff could replicate the apprenticeship type model to develop the talent your organization needs?

Base: Total sample (Dec'23 n=260)

# Among organizations that already use on-the-job training to replicate the apprentice model to develop talent, it tends to be for a wide range of skills/occupations including customer service/people skills, business development/operations and equipment operation.

## Types of skills/occupations where approach could be used (Among organizations that say 'yes' to on-the-job training model)

12%	Equipment operator
10%	Accounting/bookkeeping/accounting technician/tax preparation
10%	Business/business development/operations/administration
9%	Culinary skills/cooking/baking/chef
9%	Customer service/people skills/soft skills
9%	Management/supervisory skills/managers and supervisors
7%	Social services occupations/dealing with vulnerable/high risk populations
6%	IT/computer skills
6%	Communications
5%	Sales/retail
5%	Engineering
3%	Marketing
3%	General labour
3%	Construction
3%	Technical skills
3%	Landscaping/outdoor maintenance
2%	Housekeeping skills
31%	Other

## Skills/occupations using this apprenticeship-style approach (Among organizations that already use this approach)

17%	Customer service/people skills/soft skills
14%	Business/business development/operations/administration
14%	Equipment operator
11%	Marketing
8%	Culinary skills/cooking/baking/chef
8%	General labour
6%	IT/computer skills
6%	Management/supervisory skills/managers and supervisors
6%	Engineering
3%	Accounting/bookkeeping/accounting technician/tax preparation
3%	Communications
3%	Construction
53%	Other

Q11. For what kinds of skills and occupations might this apprenticeship-style approach work?

Base: Those answering 'yes' at Q10 - optional (n=86)

Q12. For what kinds of skills and occupations in your organization do you use this apprenticeship-style approach?

Base: Those answering 'we already use this approach' – optional (n=36)c

C: Caution, small base size

**Among the one-quarter of organizations that indicate either ‘no’ or ‘don’t know’ for using on-the-job mentoring for non-trade occupations and skills, the top cited barriers are that there are few people available to mentor or that it is too time consuming.**

### Barriers to using apprenticeship-style approach

41%	Few people available to mentor
39%	Too time consuming
24%	Non-trades occupations rely mostly on people skills which are difficult to mentor
19%	It doesn't fit with the business models of organizations that don't use trade occupations and skills
19%	Trades apprenticeships use a structured process well understood by industry
15%	Non-trade professionals aren't familiar with mentoring the way trades professionals are
10%	Trades occupations rely mostly on technical skills which are easy to mentor
10%	Post-secondaries don't prepare non-trade students for structured mentorship
8%	Compensation in the trades directly relates to certifications apprentices receive through mentored on-the-job training
8%	The trade apprenticeship model can cause bottlenecks in the supply of skilled workers
5%	Lack of people available to work/can't find people for jobs
5%	No financial incentives
2%	Other
25%	Don't know/not sure

Q13. What do you see as the barriers to apply the apprenticeship model of on-the-job mentoring for non-trade occupations and skills?

Base: No or don't know response at Q10 (n=59)

The organizations that have experienced skills shortages in the last year have searched for staff by posting the job extensively (61%) or using a professional recruiting firm (25%). However, about half report they have adjusted to being short of some skills (56%) or lowered their expectations of the level of skills they can hire (52%).

### How dealing with skills shortage

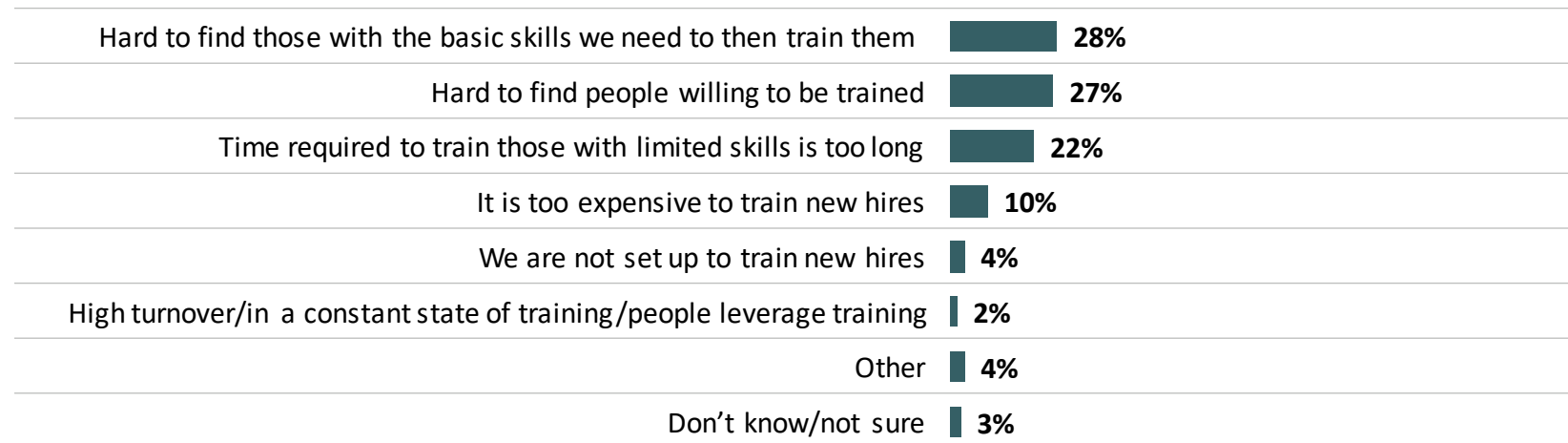
61%	Posted the job extensively
56%	We adjusted to being short of some skills
52%	Lowered our expectation of the level of skills we could hire
49%	Increased the salary/benefits for the job
41%	Enhanced our internal training —> <b>To meet their skills shortage, four-in-ten (41%) organizations have enhanced their internal training.</b>
26%	Hired out of province —> <b>One-quarter (26%) had to hire out of province to find the skills they needed. Biggest hiring challenge: technical skills (32%↑); people skills (18%).</b>
25%	Used a professional recruiting firm —> <b>Biggest hiring challenge: technical skills (31%↑); people skills (16%).</b>
19%	Worked with local post-secondary institutions —> <b>One-in-five (19%) report they have worked with local post-secondary institutions.</b>
2%	Hired out of country/applied for LMIA candidates/temporary foreign workers
2%	I do more of the work myself/went short staffed/working without
1%	Taken on less work/cut some services/scaled down
5%	Other

Q14. How, if at all, did you or are you meeting this skills shortage?

Base: Those answering 'Yes experienced a skills shortage in the last year or two' at Q8 (Dec'23 n=206)

The biggest barriers to doing more training of hires in areas where there are skills shortages are that it is hard to find people willing to be trained (27%) and that it is hard to find those with the basic skills needed to then train them (28%), as well as the time required to train those with limited skills is too long (22%).

### Biggest Barrier to More Skills Training of Hires in Areas of Shortage

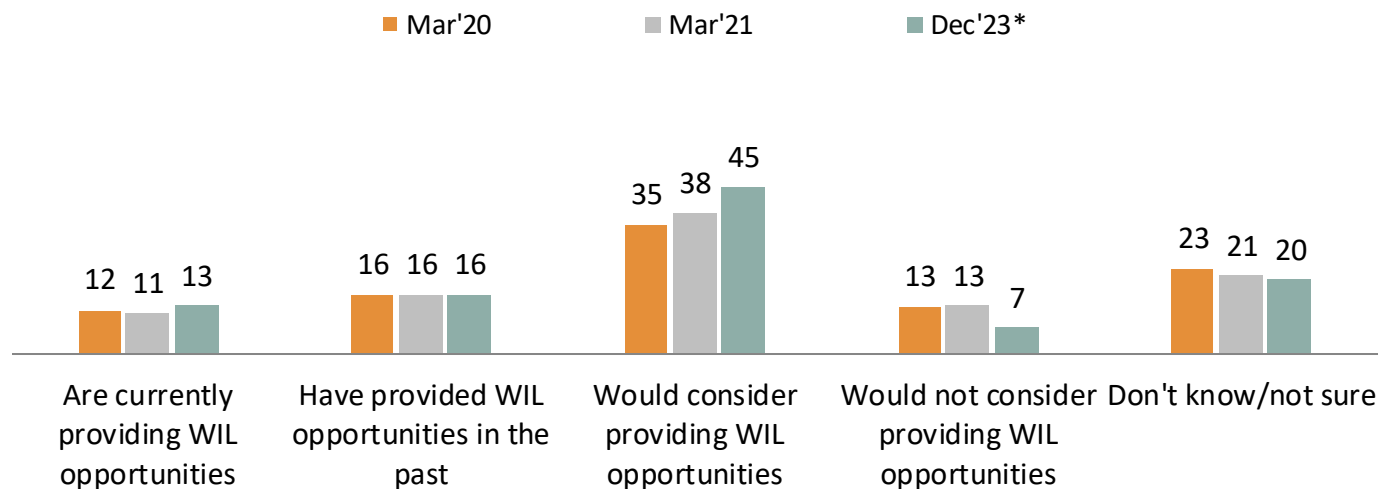


Q15. What is the biggest barrier to your organization doing more training of hires in the areas where you have skills shortages?

Base: Those answering 'Yes experienced a skills shortage in the last year or two' at Q8 (Oct'23 n=206)

**Three-in-ten organizations are either currently providing WIL opportunities (13%) or have provided them in the past (16%), while 45% indicate they would consider providing WIL opportunities to post-secondary students as a strategy to recruit or acquire skilled workers.**

### Willingness to consider Work Integrated Learning (WIL)



Q16. Would your business be willing to consider providing work integrated learning (WIL) opportunities (co-operative education placements, internships, applied research projects, etc.) to post-secondary students as a strategy to recruit and/or acquire skilled workers?

Base: Responses from Community Insight members\* (Dec'23 n=197); Hire staff (Mar'21 n=505; Mar'20 n=317)

Almost all (98%) organizations that currently provide WIL, or have in the past, believe that a work integrated learning experience makes a difference to a student's work force readiness. And, intensity is high with 71% reporting it makes a 'great deal' of difference.

**98%**  
believe a work integrated learning experience makes a difference to a student's work force readiness

**71% say 'a great deal' of difference**  
**27% say 'some' difference**

### Benefits of providing WIL opportunities

80%	Get to see if they will be a good fit
79%	It prepares students for the workforce
70%	It's a way of supporting students
66%	It's a way to try out potential employees
54%	They can bring new idea and approaches
39%	It provides a source of low-cost labour
36%	It reduces the time to onboard new employees
5%	Other
2%	Don't know/not sure

Q17. In general, how much of a difference, if any, do you believe a work integrated learning experience makes to a student's work force readiness?

Base: Those currently providing or have provided WIL at Q16 (n=56)

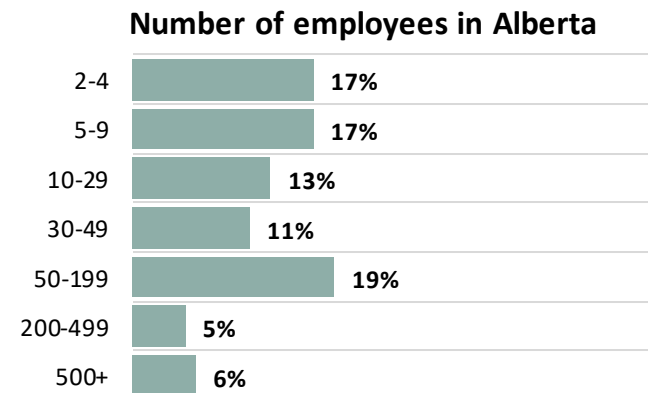
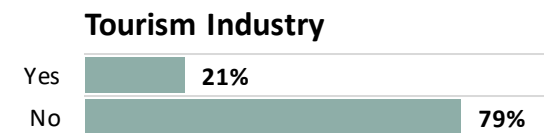
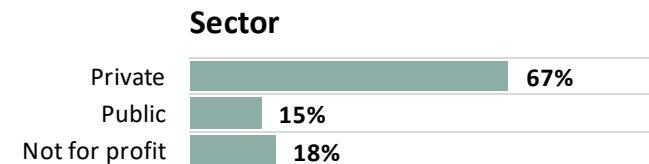
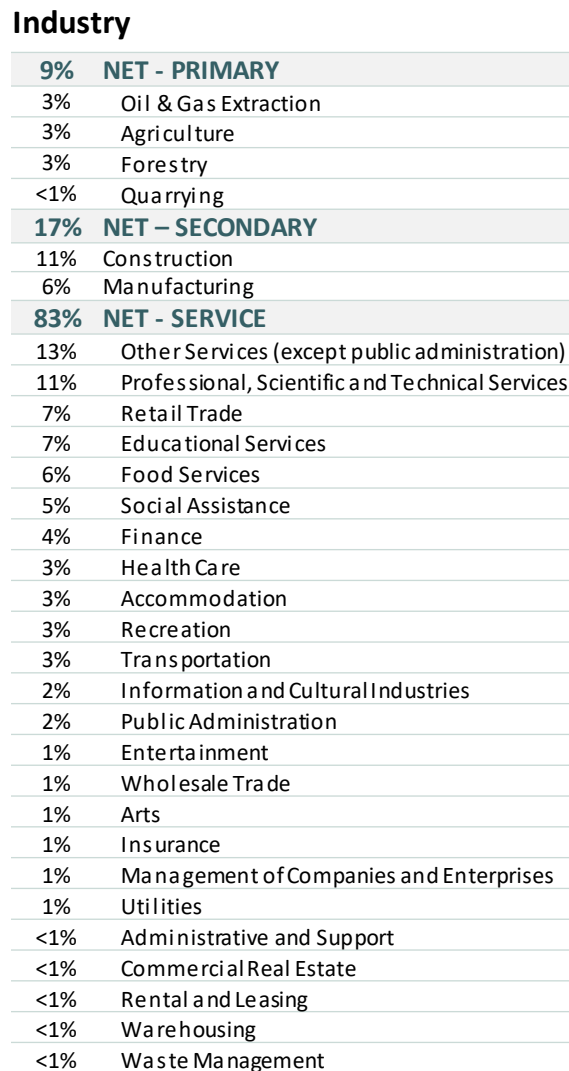
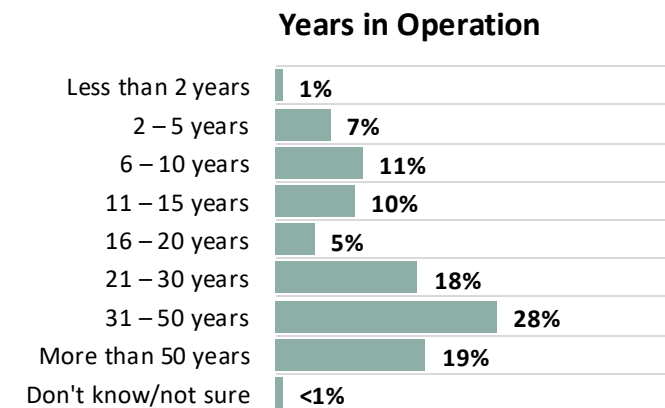
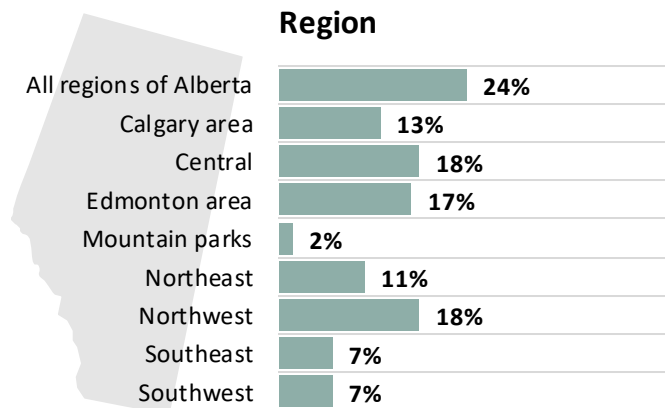
Q18. What are the benefits of providing work integrated learning opportunities as a strategy to recruit and/or acquire skilled workers?

Base: Those currently providing or have provided WIL at Q16 (n=56)



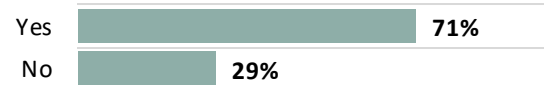
# RESPONDENT PROFILE - FIRMOGRAPHICS

# Respondent Profile – Firmographics



# Respondent Profile – Firmographics

## Owner/Partner



## Job Title

60%	President, CEO, Owner or Executive Director
4%	Vice president or equivalent
3%	C-Suite executive (CFO, CMO, CTO, CXO)
4%	Partner, advisor or associate
15%	Other senior manager
3%	Contractor or self-employed
10%	Assistant, coordinator or manager (or equivalent)
1%	Other

## Gender

49%	Female
44%	Male
<1%	Other
6%	Prefer not to answer