



**ALBERTA
PERSPECTIVES
SURVEY**

**HIRING
INTENTIONS/
SKILLS TRAINING**

JANUARY 2025

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INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

Hiring Intentions/ Skill Training

This is the eighth survey in the series focusing on hiring intentions.

This report continues research initiated in March 2020 dealing with labour market issues in Alberta. Many of the original questions have been repeated in subsequent surveys and others have been added.

The overall purpose of the research is to understand the experiences and expectations of Alberta businesses (private sector, public sectors and NGO's) regarding their hiring needs over the next year. To this end, questions probed current staffing needs, incidence of staff shortages and the impact of shortages, and challenges hiring.

In addition, respondents who agreed to answer further questions were asked about areas for improvement among current employees, willingness to hire people in various situations, and how accessible their workplace is to public transit and if this is a barrier to hiring.

Hiring Intentions/ Skill Training

Methodology

In all, 268 businesses completed the survey which was administered on the Alberta Perspectives platform by the Alberta Chambers of Commerce to members and other affiliated businesses.

In addition, 169 of the initial respondents answered a number of follow up questions appended to the end of the survey.

Fielding for the current survey was undertaken between January 14th and February 2, 2025.

Significant differences are reported between waves of research.

↑↓ Significantly higher/lower vs. previous wave

KEY FINDINGS

HIRING INTENTIONS

Expectations of employers regarding hiring intentions remain stable and well below the highs of 2021/22.

Only a third anticipate that their workforce would increase on the next six or twelve months. More continue to believe their needs will remain unchanged and with few (5% in the next six months) anticipating a declining need.

Although the threat of tariffs was not assessed in this survey, this threat, and the evolving impact on the economy, may well change these expectations, at least in the shorter and medium term.

Perceptions of Change in Size of Workforce
% Saying "Will Increase"



STAFFING SHORTAGES

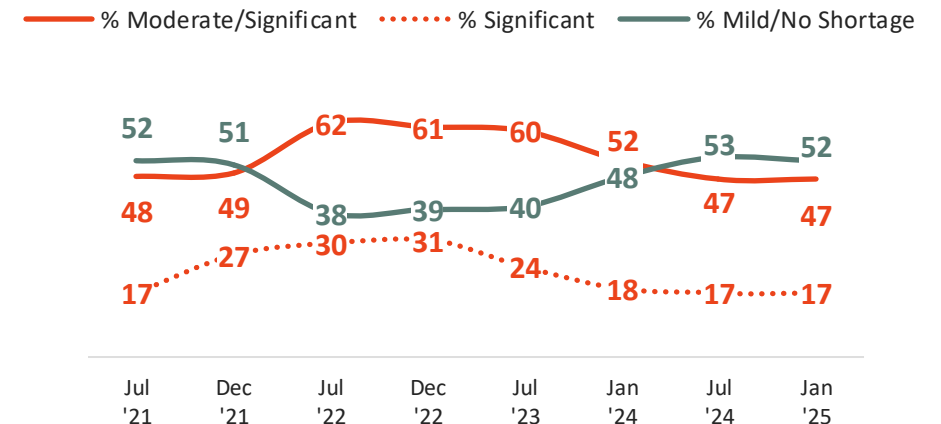
The extent of staffing shortages remains steady this wave after declines in 2024, but difficulty in hiring is up.

Despite limited expectations of a need to hire, just under half of employers continue to report they are experiencing a moderate (30%) or significant (17%) staffing shortage.

That said, four-in-ten (41%) of businesses report that hiring the skills their business needs is 'more difficult' compared to a year ago—a significantly higher proportion than in the spring of 2024 (28%).

Businesses currently experiencing a significant staff shortage report the most difficulty with almost three-quarters (73%) indicating that it is more difficult to hire the skills their business needs versus a year ago. This compares to 10% of businesses that are not dealing with a staffing shortage.

Extent of Business Experiencing Staffing Shortage



IMPACT ON BUSINESS

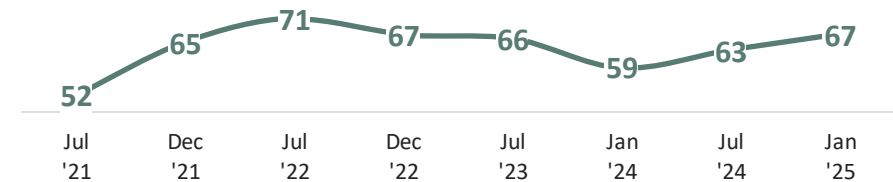
These continued staffing shortages are increasingly having a negative impact on businesses.

Among employers experiencing a staffing shortage, the impact this is having in terms of loss of production or sales opportunities has been trending up. Two-thirds (67%) now indicate it is having a 'moderate' or 'significant' impact - up from 59% a year ago. This suggests employers' ability to manage shortages is eroding as time goes on.

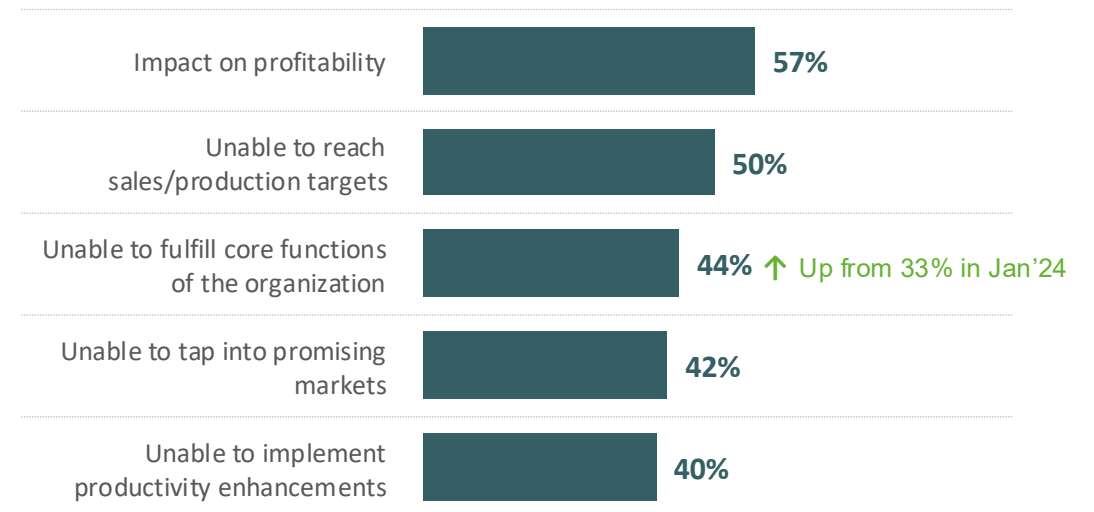
Along with the growing impact on production and sales opportunities, staff shortages also continue to have the biggest impact on profitability (57%) and the ability to reach sales/production targets (50%).

Importantly, four-in-ten (44%) report it impacts their ability to fulfill core functions of their organization – up from 33% a year ago. Again, suggesting the ability to manage labour shortages is eroding.

Impact of Staffing Shortage on Production and Sales Opportunities



Impact of Staff Shortages on Different Aspects of the Business



MOST DESIRED SKILLS FOR FUTURE HIRES

Businesses now indicate that finding staff with the people skills they need is the biggest challenge in hiring.

There has been a 10-point change compared to a year ago with employers now indicating that finding staff with the people skills they need (57%) is the biggest challenge in hiring while 43% saying it is finding people with the technical skills they need.

Problem solving and commitment to quality remain the most desired people skills and competencies for future hires, while Industry-specific technical skills and analytical thinking remain the most desired technical skills and competencies.

Notably, these are also the top skills employers previously reported were lacking in the people they hired.



RECENT GRADUATES AND WORKPLACE READINESS

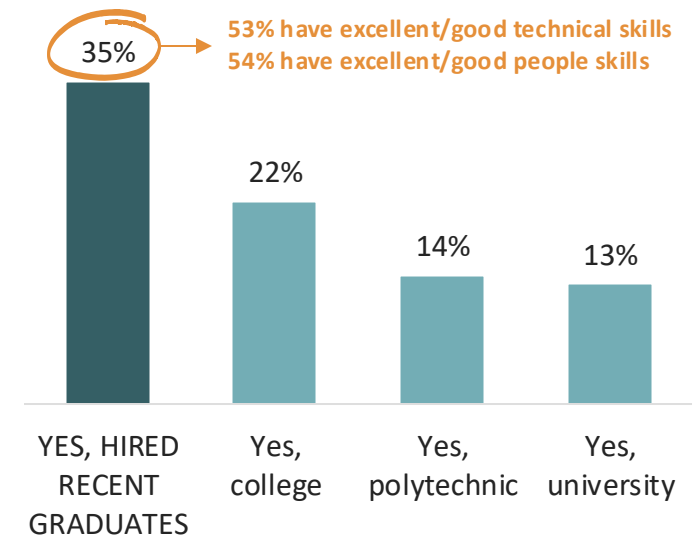
Only half of those hiring recent graduates from an Alberta post-secondary institution say they are workforce ready.

A third of employers report hiring a recent PSI graduate, and most were a graduate from an Alberta college (22%), followed by from a polytechnic (14%) or university (13%).

In terms of being workforce ready, just over half of new hires are considered to have 'excellent/good' technical (53%) or people (54%) skills. However, only one-in-ten are rated as 'excellent' (12% and 8%, respectively).

As may be expected with recent graduates of a post-secondary institution, limited work experience is the top cited reason these new hires are not workforce ready. This highlights the importance and need for work integrated learning programs.

Recent Hires from a Post-Secondary Institution



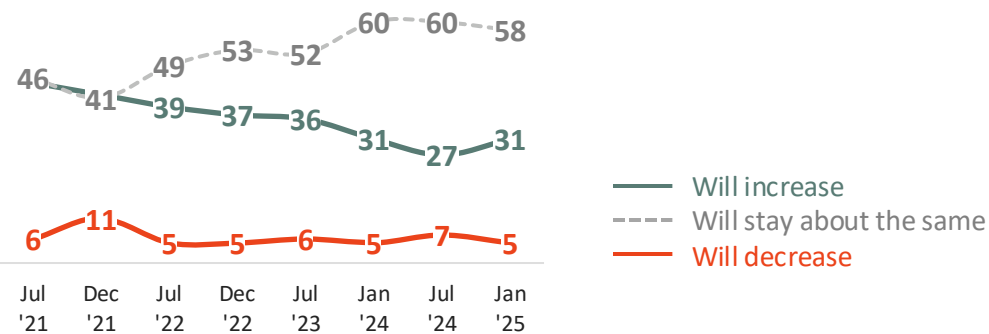
DETAILED FINDINGS

Similar to results in 2024, six-in-ten employers report they expect the size of their workforce to stay about the same in the next six months – although there was a slight uptick in those anticipating it will increase (31%).

- Considering the next year, the proportion that anticipate their workforce will stay about the same declined 4-points to 51% after two waves of increases. That said, results remain higher than measured prior to 2024.

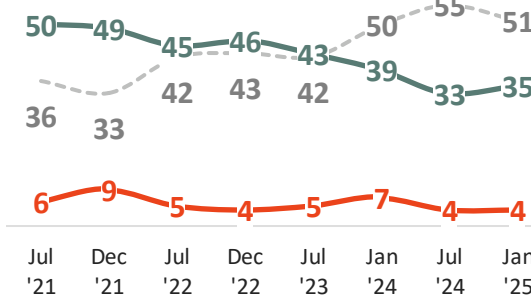
Perceptions of Change in Size of Workforce in Next 6 and 12 months

In the next 6 months ...



("Don't know" responses range from 3% to 7%)

In the next 12 months ...



("Don't know" responses range from 7% to 10%)

- By company size, employers with 20-49 staff are the most likely to anticipate the size of their workforce will increase in the next 6 months (45%) and the next 12 months (53%).
- Perceptions that their workforce will increase in the next six months continue to be significantly higher among organizations that are dealing with a 'significant' (56%) staffing shortage. This compares to 37% of employers with a 'moderate' staff shortage and 29% that characterize it as mild. This declines to 12% among those experiencing no staff shortages. This pattern is repeated for the next 12 months.

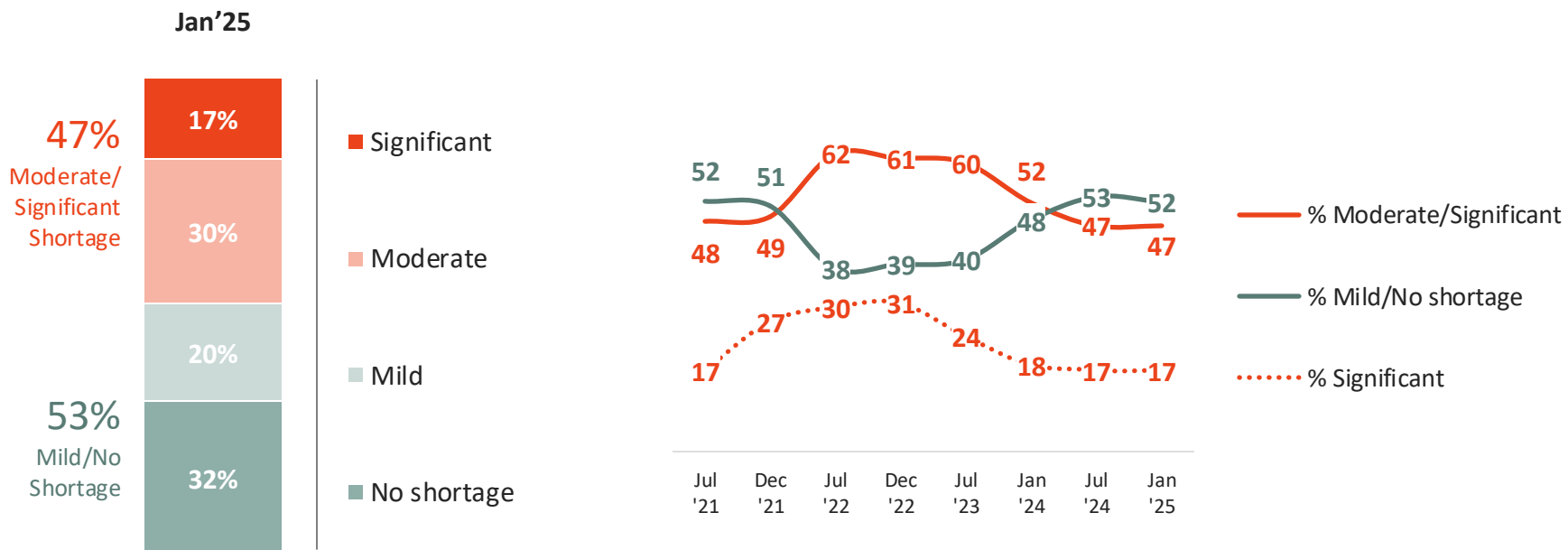
Q1. Aside from any seasonal fluctuations, do you anticipate any change in the size of your workforce relative to the following time periods [in the next 6 months] [in the next 12 months]

Base: Total sample Jul'21 n=487, Dec'21 n=410, Jul'22 n=560, Dec'22 n=535, Jul'23 n=321, Jan'24 n=322, Jul'24 n=255, Jan'25 n=250

The extent of staffing shortages remained steady after declines in both January and July of 2024. Just under half of employers continue to report they are experiencing a moderate (30%) or significant (17%) staffing shortage.

- While 47% of employers report they have a ‘significant’ or ‘moderate’ staffing shortage, results are down 15-points compared to a high of 62% in July’22 and have returned to 2021 levels when slightly more employers reported that shortages were mild or no shortage, compared with those reporting a moderate or significant shortage.
- That said, two-thirds (67%) of Alberta employers indicate they are experiencing some level of staffing shortage.

Extent of Business Experiencing Staffing Shortage

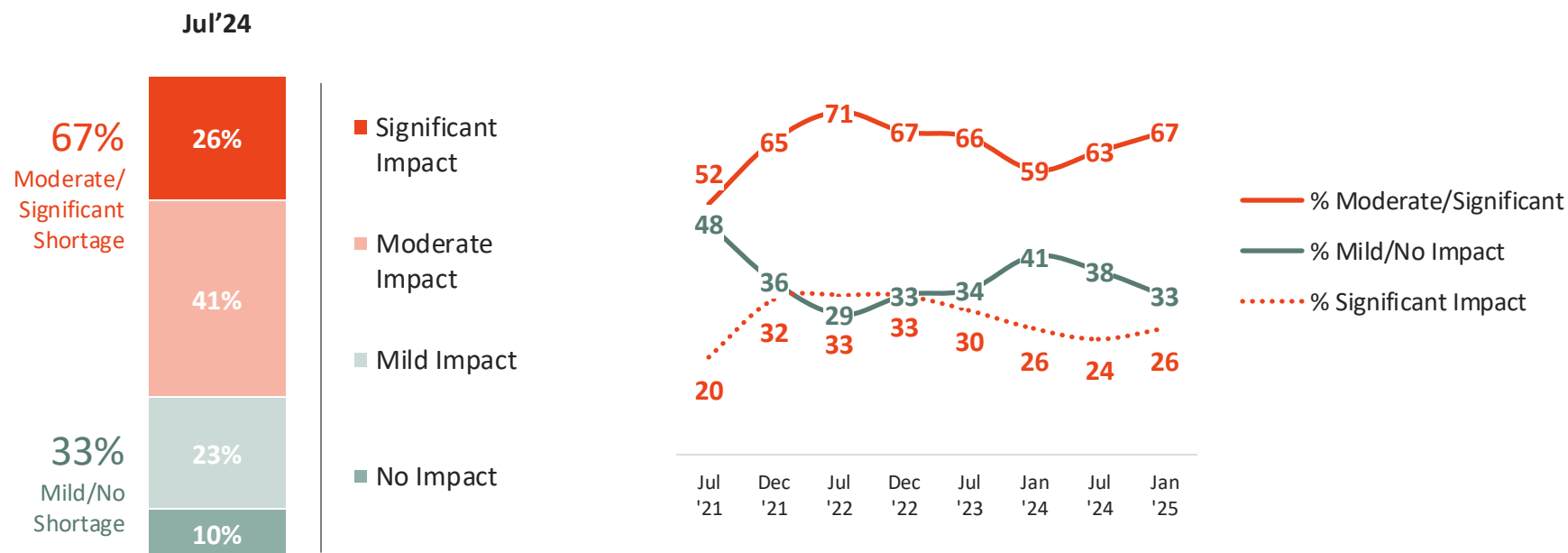


Q2. To what extent is your business currently experiencing a staffing shortage, that is you have insufficient qualified candidates to meet your business needs?
 Base: Total Sample Jul'21 n=487, Dec'21 n=410, Jul'22 n=525, Dec'22 n=520, Jul'23 n=297, Jan'24 n=292, Jul'24 n=230, Jan'25 n=254
 (From July'22 those saying a decline in staff at Q1 were not asked the staffing related questions)

Among employers experiencing a staffing shortage, the impact this is having in terms of loss of production or sales opportunities has been trending up. Two-thirds (67%) now indicate it is having a ‘moderate’ or ‘significant’ impact - up from 59% a year ago.

- Those reporting a ‘significant’ impact (26%) has remained steady and is on par with results measured in January 2024 and it those reporting a moderate impact that is trending up.

Impact of Staffing Shortage on Production and Sales Opportunities















Businesses currently experiencing a significant staff shortage continue to be the most likely to report they are dealing with the biggest impact on production/sales: three-quarters (75%) of this group continue to say the shortage is having a ‘significant’ impact. This compares to 13% when the shortage is considered moderate.

Q3. How much of an impact, if any, is your staffing shortage causing in loss of production or sales opportunities?
 Base: Currently experiencing a staffing shortage Jul'21 n=336, Dec'21 n=287, Jul'22 n=390, Dec'22 n=414, Jul'23 n=251, Jan'24 n=216, Jul'24 n=160, Jan'25 n=171
 (From July'22 those saying a decline in staff at Q1 were not asked the staffing related questions)

Along with the growing impact on production and sales opportunities, staff shortages also continue to have the biggest impact on profitability (57%) and the ability to reach sales/production targets (50%) – although results have been relatively stable.

- Four-in-ten (44%) employers report it impacts their ability to fulfill core functions of their organization – up from 33% a year ago.

Impact of Staff Shortages on Different Aspects of the Business

	Jan'25	<i>Trended:</i>			
		Jul'23	Jan'24	Jul'24	Jan'25
Impact on profitability	 57%	62%	57%	57%	57%
Unable to reach sales/production targets	 50%	41%	46%	47%	50%
Unable to fulfill core functions of the organization	 44%	45%	33%	35%	44%
Unable to tap into promising markets	 42%	38%	49%	40%	42%
Unable to implement productivity enhancements	 40%	37%	37%	38%	40%
Unable to undertake renovations or expansions	 26%	32%	25%	24%	26%
Impact on organizations viability	 23%	23%	17%	26%	23%
Reduced number of hours of operations	 22%	24%	19%	13%	22%↑
Unable to pursue strategic partnerships	 21%	28%	29%	25%	21%
Other	 6%	8%	6%	12%	6%
None of these	 5%	3%	2%	4%	5%
Don't know	 3%	1%	4%	1%	3%

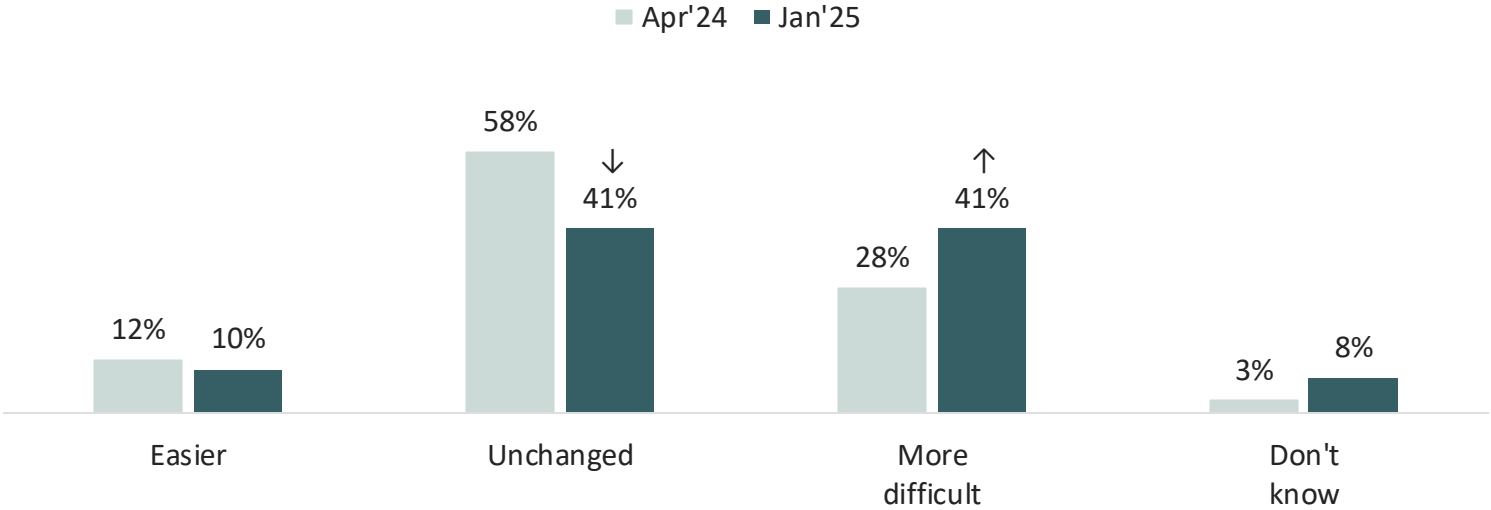
- Among businesses reporting a significant staffing shortage, seven-in-ten (70%) say they are unable to fulfill core functions of the organization (up from 59% the previous wave). This compares to 32% experiencing moderate staff shortages (also up from 29% the previous wave).
- Three-quarters (75%) in the tourism sector indicate staff shortages impact their profitability.
- Among small businesses of 1-4 employees, almost half (47%) report that these staff shortages impact their organizations viability.

Q4. You mentioned that staffing shortage are causing a loss of production or sales opportunities. In addition to any loss of sales or production are these shortages causing any of the following?

Base: Staffing shortage has a Significant, Moderate or Mild impact Jul'23 n=229, Jan'24 n=200, Jul'24 n=144, Jan'25 n=149

Compared to a year ago, four-in-ten (41%) businesses report it is ‘more difficult’ to hire the skills their business needs, a significantly higher proportion than in the spring of 2024 (28%). One-in-ten continue to report it is ‘easier’.

Ease/Difficulty vs. a year ago...

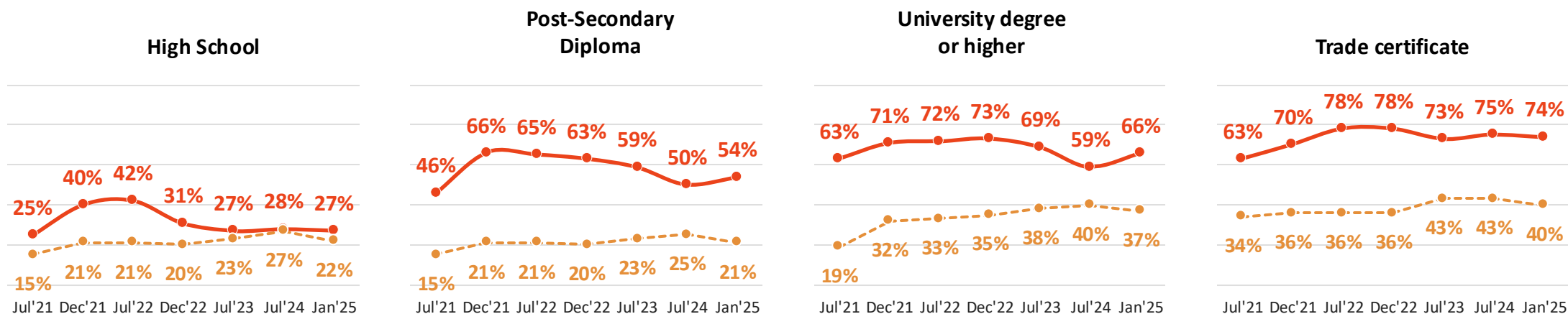


- Of note, almost three-quarters (73%) of businesses currently experiencing a significant staff shortage report that it is more difficult to hire the skills their business needs versus a year ago. This compares to 10% that are not experiencing a staffing shortage.
- Almost double those in the tourism industry (61%) indicate it is more difficult compared to in other industries (33%).
- Regionally, results for ‘more difficult’ are highest in Edmonton (54%).

Q5. Is it more difficult or easier to hire the skills your business needs than a year ago?
 Base: Organization employs more than one (Apr'24 n=217, Jan'25 n=247)

Among those reporting staffing shortages, a majority continue to say it is ‘very’ or ‘somewhat’ difficult to hire all but the high school educated. Notably, after a dip in 2024, the difficulty hiring those with a university degree increased this wave.

- Difficulty hiring people with a trade certificate remains the highest, with results remaining relatively unchanged.
- While there is the most difficulty of hiring people with a university degree or higher (66%) or a trade certificate (74%), they are the education levels that businesses continue to say are most likely to say they have not needed to recently hire (37% and 40%, respectively).

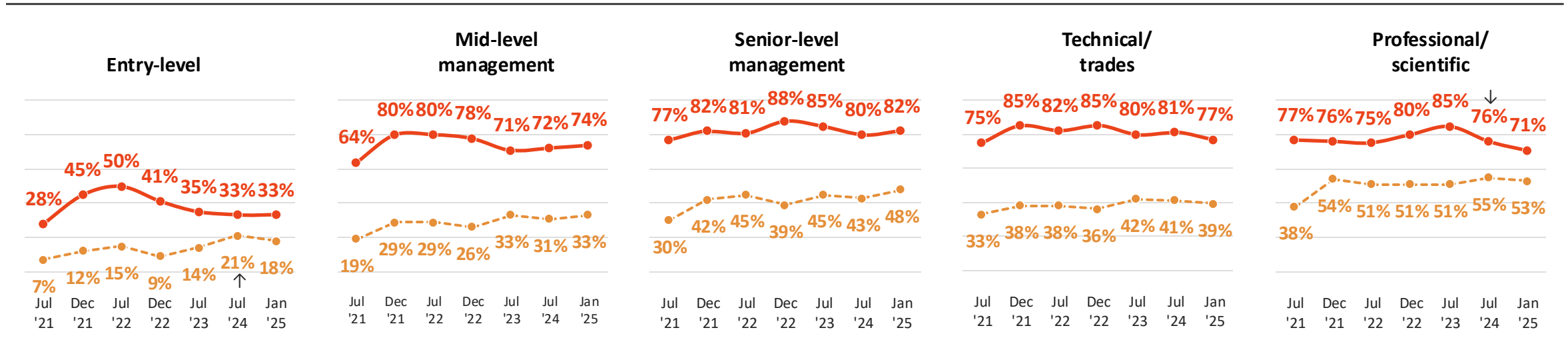


—●— % saying "Very/Somewhat Difficult to hire" (re-proportioned to exclude "Have not needed to hire recently" responses)
 ---●--- % saying "Have not needed to hire recently"

Q6. How easy or difficult is it to hire people with the following education levels to manage your business?
 Base: Currently experiencing a staffing shortage Jul'21 n=336, Dec'21 n=287, Jul'22 n=389, Dec'22 n=414, Jul'23 n=297, Jul'24 n=207 (Excludes those reporting No shortage), Jan'25 n=202
 (From July'22 those saying a decline in staff at Q1 were not asked the staffing related questions)

It remains the most difficult to hire staff for senior-level (82%) or mid-level (74%) management or with technical skills/trades (77%). While 71% report difficulty hiring people with professional or scientific skills, results have been trending down.

- Entry level positions continue to be the least difficult to fill (33%).
- While senior-level management is the most difficult to hire, there has been an uptick to 48% of business reporting they have not needed to hire this skill set recently.



—●— % saying "Very/Somewhat Difficult to hire" (re-proportioned to exclude "Have not needed to hire recently" responses)
 ---●--- % saying "Have not needed to hire recently"

Q7. How easy or difficult is it to hire people with the following skills to manage your business?

Base: Currently experiencing a staffing shortage Jul'21 n=336, Dec'21 n=287, Jul'22 n=389, Dec'22 n=414, Jul'23 n=297, Jul'24 n=207 (Excludes those reporting No shortage), Jan'25 n=202 (From July'22 those saying a decline in staff at Q1 were not asked the staffing related questions)

Problem solving and commitment to quality remain the most desired people skills and competencies for future hires. Notably, these are also the top two skills employers reported were lacking in the people they hired when asked in April 2023.

- Service orientation, interpersonal skills and adaptability are in the next tier of desired skills.

Most Desired People Skills and Competencies in Future Hires

Note the different question wording and focus which raises caution in making comparisons. After April 2023, the question focuses on ‘skills most look for’ while in 2023 the focus was on skills lacking in hires.



Q8. Of the following, which are the top 5 people skills and competencies you anticipate you will most look for in future hires? Apr'23 wording: Of the following, which are the top 5 people skills and competencies lacking in the people you hire?

Base: Apr'23 n=445, Apr'24 n=212, Jan'25 n=230

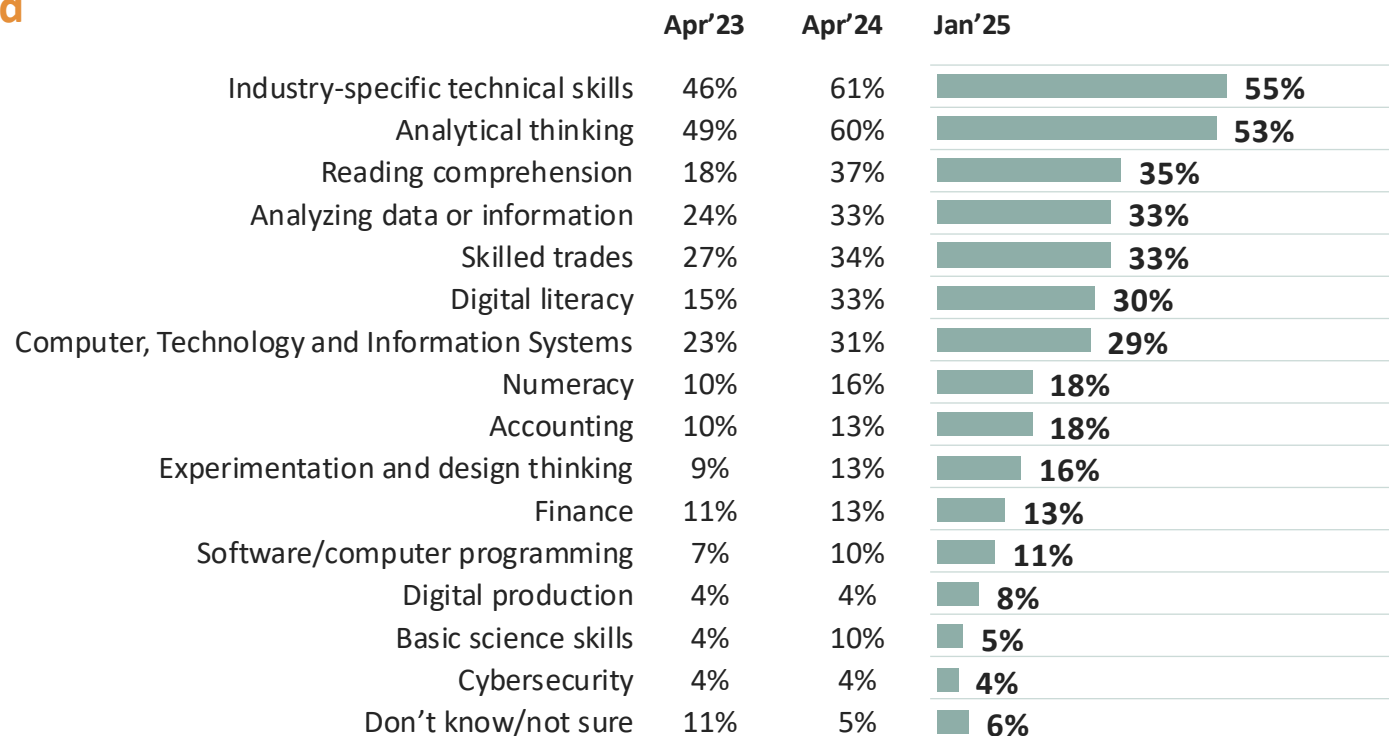
Industry-specific technical skills and analytical thinking also remain the most desired technical skills and competencies for future hires.

- Again, these technical skills employers most want in future hires are the top skills that were lacking in the people that were hired (2023 question focus).

Most Desired Technical Skills and Competencies in Future Hires

Note the different question wording and focus which raises caution in making comparisons. After April 2023, the question focuses on ‘skills most look for’ while in 2023 the focus was on skills lacking in hires.

- By company size, larger businesses with 200+ employees are more likely to want industry-specific technical skills (76%) in future hires.
- Employers experiencing a significant staff shortage are also more likely to want industry-specific technical skills (63%).
- Among those in knowledge-based industries, 73% cite analytical thinking.

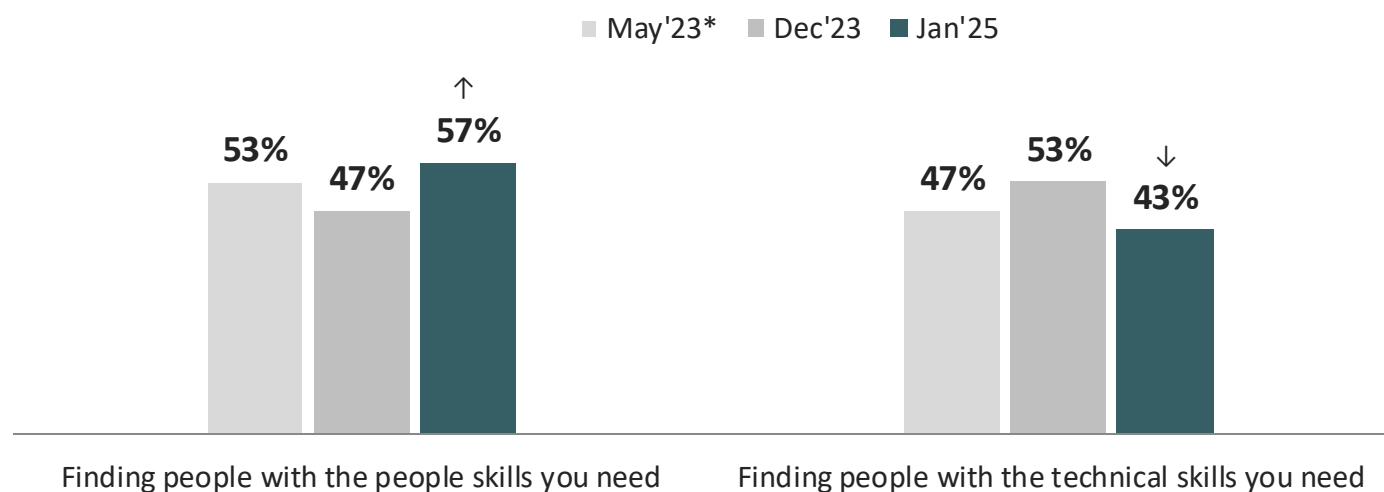


Q9. Of the following, which are the top 5 technical skills and competencies you anticipate you will most look for in future hires? Apr'23 wording: Of the following, which are the top 5 technical skills and competencies lacking in the people you hire?

Base: Apr'23 n=445, Apr'24 n=212, Jan'25 n=217

There has been a 10-point change compared to a year ago, with employers now indicating that finding candidates with people skills (57%) is the biggest hiring challenge, while 43% say the greatest difficulty is finding candidates with the necessary technical skills.

Identification of Which is the Biggest Challenge in Hiring



- Among businesses experiencing significant staff shortages, results are closer to par with 48% citing people skills and 52% technical skills – unchanged compared to a year ago.
- The difference is more pronounced among larger businesses with those having 200+ employees with 76% reporting it is a bigger challenge finding people with the people skills they need – again unchanged compared to a year ago.

Q10. Overall, which is the biggest challenge in hiring?

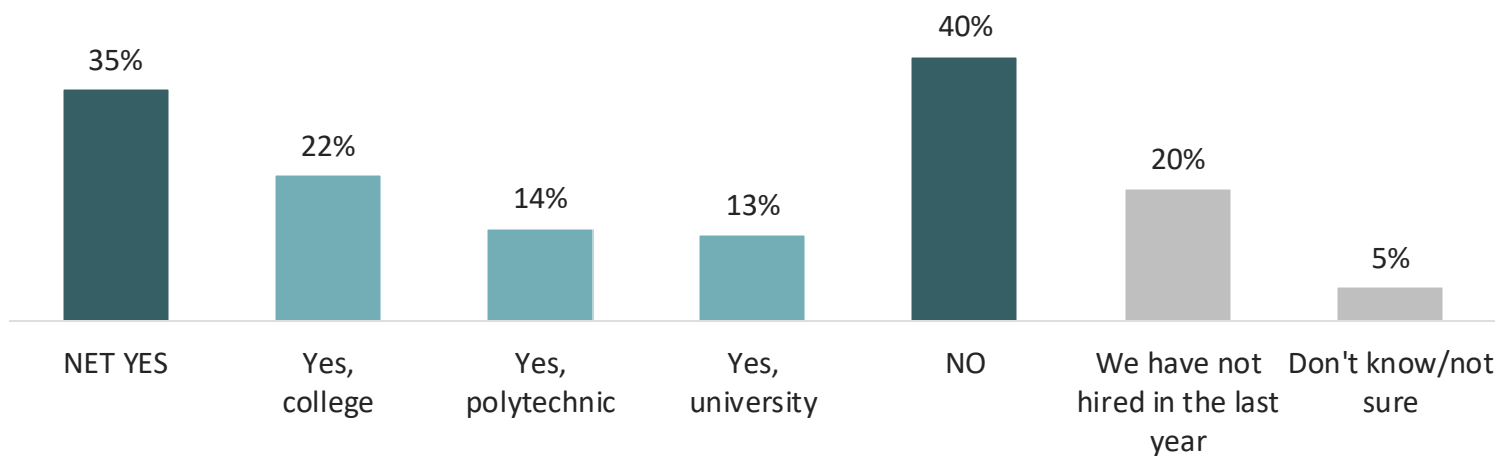
Base: May'23* n=438, Dec'23 n=260, Jan'25 n=224

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

Just over one-third (35%) of organizations report that staff hired in the last year included recent graduates of an Alberta community college, polytechnic or university.

- These new employees were more likely to be a graduate from an Alberta college (22%), with similar proportions from a polytechnic (14%) or university (13%).
- Of interest, most (75%) employers report hiring, but the fact that only 35% hired recent graduates indicates that 40% of employers hired either direct from high school or those working elsewhere.

Recent Hires from a Post-Secondary Institution



- By company size, larger businesses are significantly more likely to have hired staff in the last year from an Alberta post-secondary institution: 50-199 employees (58%); 200+ employees (65%). Hires were more likely to be from a college or polytechnic than a university.
- In knowledge-based industries, 31% of their new hires were from an Alberta university. This compares to 8% in the service industry.

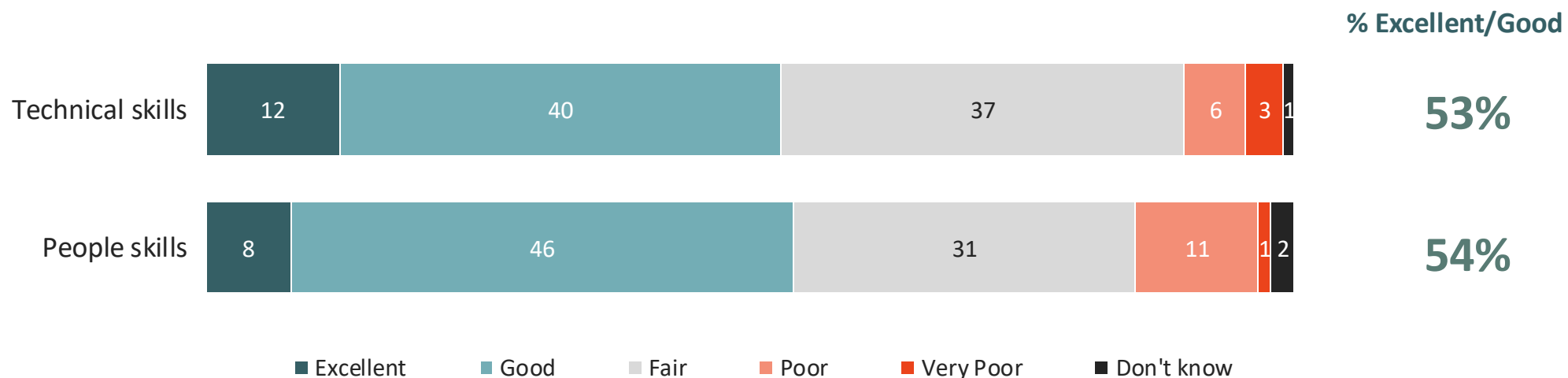
Q11. If your organization has hired staff in the last year, were any recent graduates of an Alberta community college, polytechnic or university?

Base: Jan'25 n=223

In terms of being workforce ready, only just over half of new hires from a post-secondary institution are considered to have ‘excellent/good’ technical (53%) or people (54%) skills. Only one in ten are rated as ‘excellent’ (12% for technical skills and 8% for people skills).

- There is also some evidence (see data below) that staff shortages are forcing employers to take less than suitable staff.

Rating of Skills of Recent Hires



- It appears that employers with a staff shortage have had to hire people that did not match their requirements for technical skills as only 38% provide an ‘excellent/good’ rating. Ratings increase with a decrease in the degree of a shortage: moderate (44%), mild (56%), no shortage (72%).
- There is the same pattern for people skills being rated as ‘excellent/good’: significant staff shortage (38%), moderate (47%), mild (50%), no shortage (76%).

Q12. From the perspective of being workforce ready, how would you rate the following skills of your new hires?

Base: Have hired graduates from post-secondary institutions in past year Jan’25 n=89

As may be expected with recent graduates of a post-secondary institution, limited work experience is the top cited reason these new hires are not workforce ready, which highlights the importance of work integrated learning experiences.

- However, skills training/education is not to industry standard closely follows. Lacking in motivation and a poor work ethic are also top cited reasons.

Reasons New Hires are Not Workforce Ready



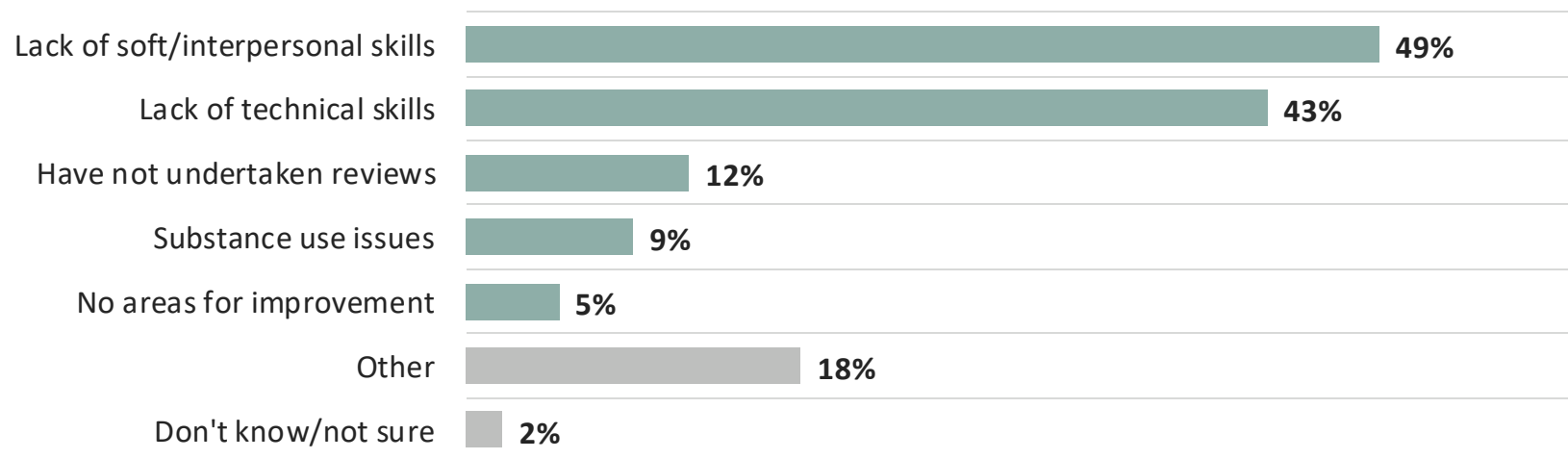
Q13. If new hires are not workforce ready, which of the following comes closest to your reason for believing this?

Base: Fair/Poor/Very poor rating of either technical or people skills Jan'25 n=51

INSIGHT COMMUNITY

Among those that conducted reviews of staff in the last year, a lack of soft/interpersonal skills was the most common area for improvement (49%) followed by a lack of technical skills (43%).

Areas for Improvement among Staff



- Employers with a staff shortage are significantly more likely to cite a lack of soft/interpersonal skills than those not experiencing a shortage: significant (48%) moderate (65%), mild (56%), no shortage (23%).
- A lack of technical skills is significantly more likely to be an area for improvement where there is a significant (64%) or moderate (58%) shortage compared to a mild (28%) or no shortage (16%).

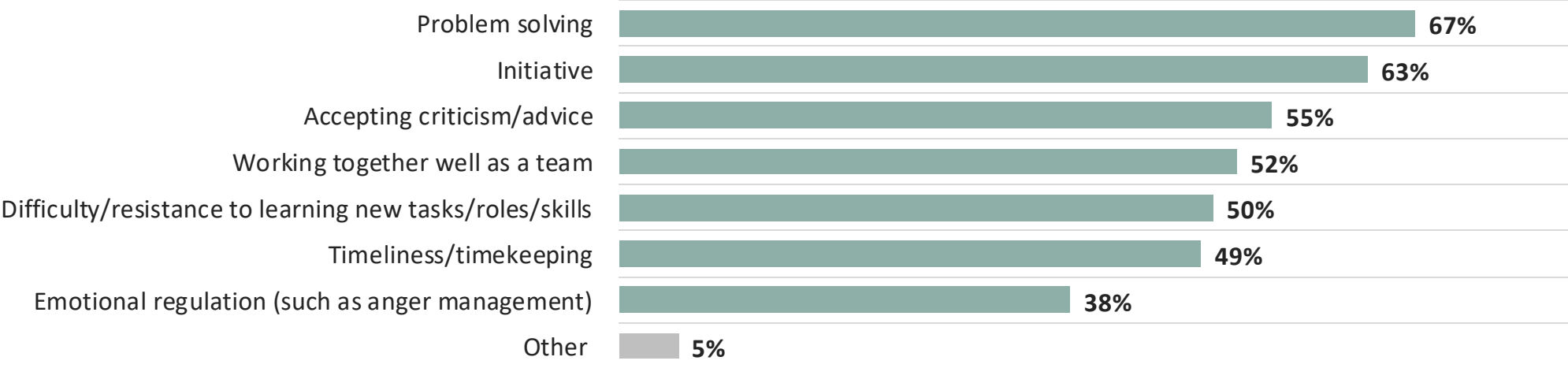
Q14. In undertaking reviews of staff in the last year, which of the following are the most common areas for improvement?

Base: Jan'25 n=169

Employers report that problem solving and initiative are the soft skills most in need of improvement among staff.

- The next tier of soft skills that need improvement include accepting criticism/advice, working together well as a team, difficulty/resistance in learning new tasks/roles/skills, and timeliness.

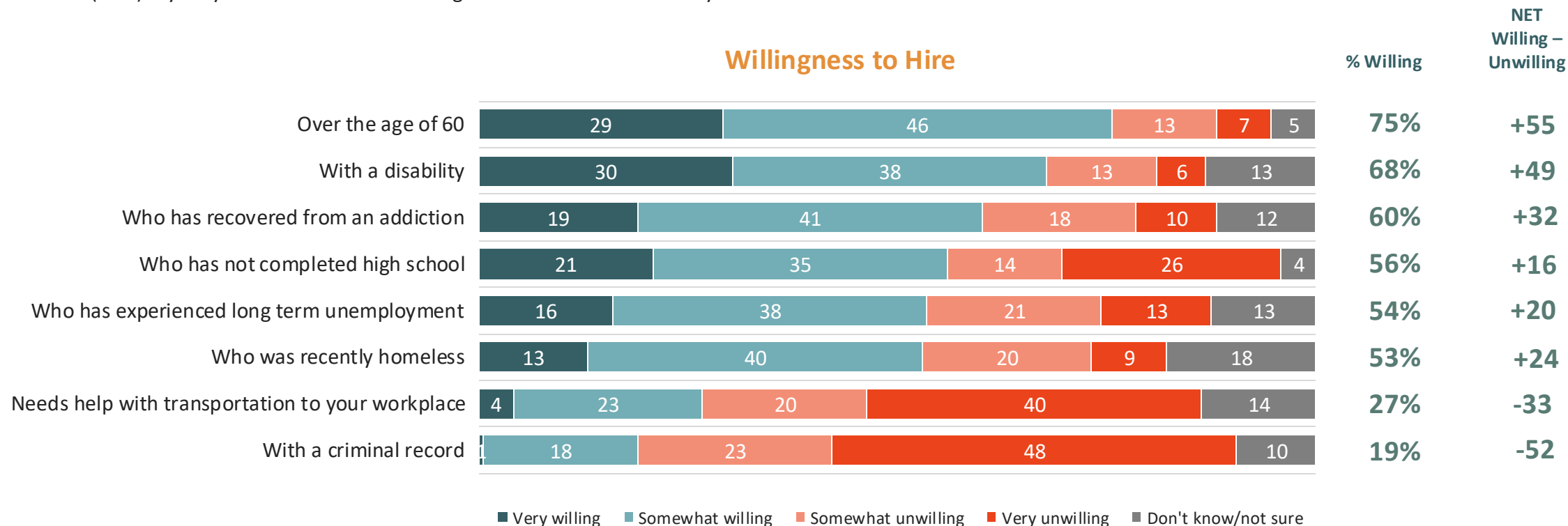
Soft Skills Most in Need of Improvement



Q15. What are the soft skills most in need of improvement? (Please check all that apply)
Base: Jan'25 n=82

Employers were asked their willingness to hire those in specific situations and indicate they are most willing to hire someone over the age of 60 or with a disability. They are least willing to hire someone who needs help with transportation to their workplace or with a criminal record.

- This is followed by someone who has not completed high school, with 26% reporting they are 'very' unwilling.
- One-in-five (18%) say they are 'not sure' about hiring someone who was recently homeless.



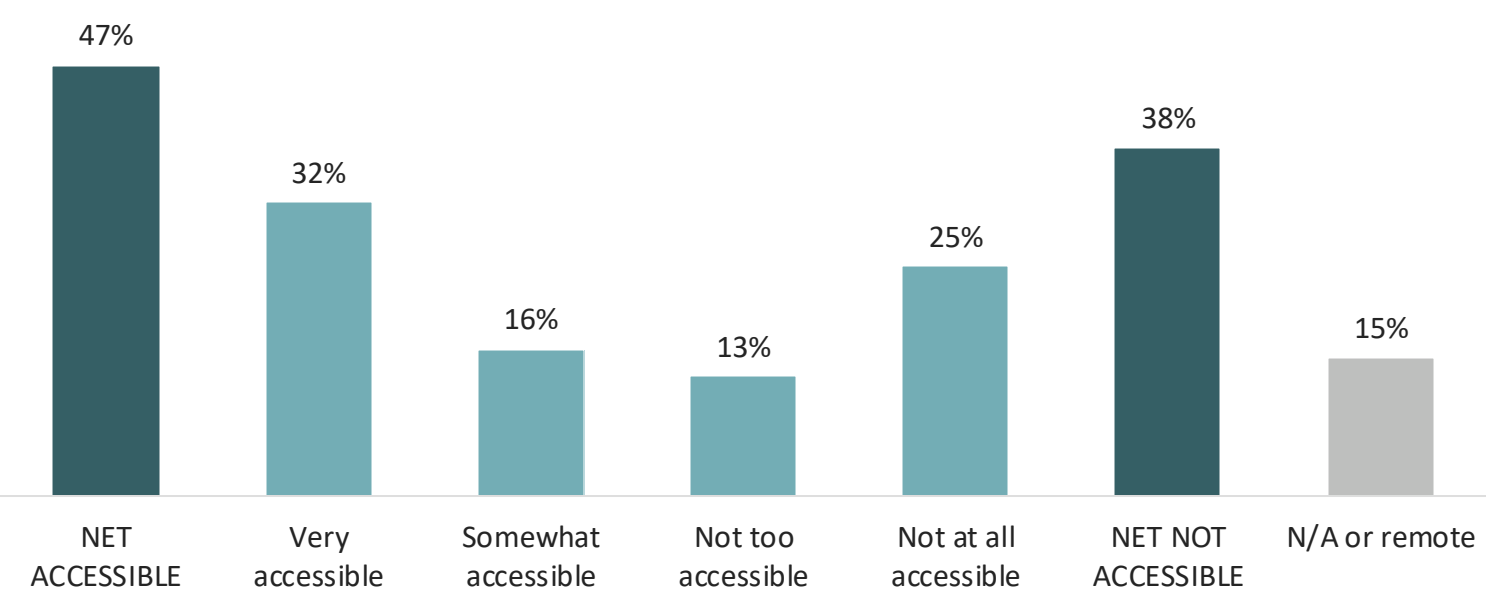
- Employers in the tourism industry (75%) indicate more willingness to hire someone who has not completed high school than those in other industries (54%).
- Needing help with transportation is an issue even among employers with a significant staff shortage with seven-in-ten (69%) indicating being unwilling to hire someone in this situation.

Q16. How willing or not are you to hire someone in the following situations?
 Base: Jan'25 n=168

Only half (47%) of businesses report that their workplace is accessible for employees that need to take public transit.

- Further, one-quarter (25%) say their workplace is 'not at all' accessible while a further 15% characterize their location as remote.

Accessibility of Workplace by Public Transit

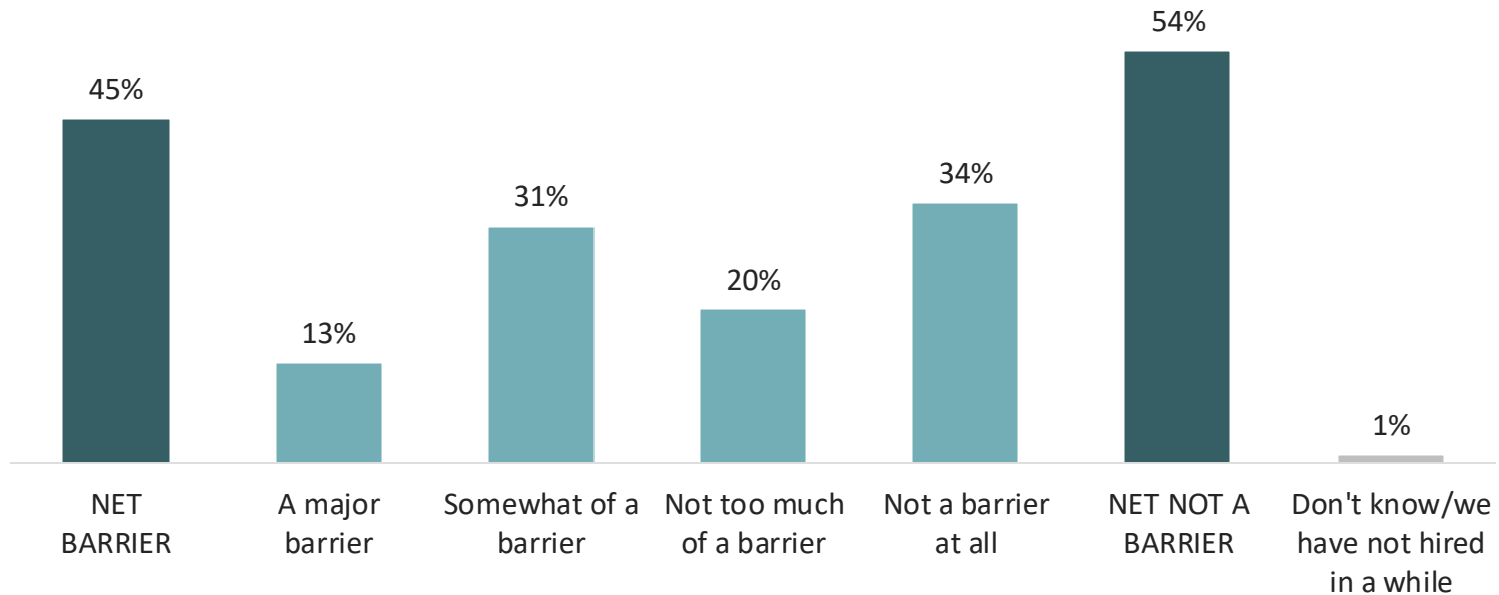


- Employers that are experiencing a staff shortage are more likely to say their workplace is not accessible by public transit: significant (48%), moderate (44%), mild (44%), no shortage (16%).
- By company size, those with 200+ employees are significantly less likely to say their workplace is 'very' accessible (7%).

Q17. How accessible is your workplace for any employee who has to come by public transit?
Base: Jan'25 n=167

Almost half (45%) of employers in a location that is not 'very' accessible by public transit indicate this is a barrier to hiring.

Location is a Barrier to Hiring



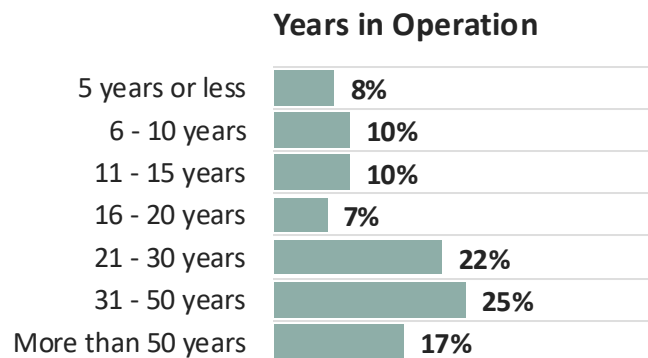
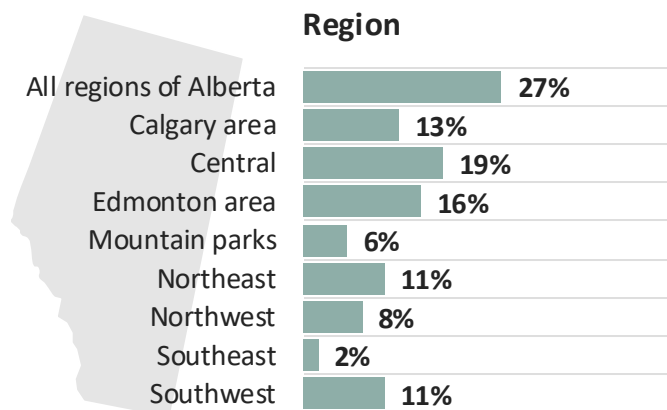
- Employers that are experiencing a staff shortage are more likely to say this is a barrier: significant (51%), moderate (52%), mild (46%), no shortage (25%).
- Employers in the tourism industry (69%) are more likely to indicate this is a barrier compared to those in other industries (40%).
- By company size, those with 200+ employees are significantly more likely to say this is a barrier (71%).

Q18. How much of a barrier to hiring is your location?

Base: Workplace is somewhat, not too or not at all accessible by public transit Jan'25 n=143

RESPONDENT PROFILE - FIRMOGRAPHICS

Respondent Profile – Firmographics



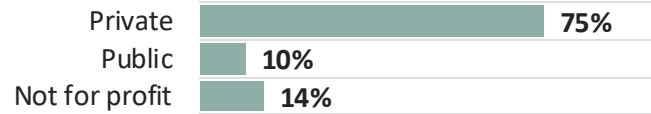
Industry

6%	NET - PRIMARY
4%	Oil and gas
2%	Agriculture
17%	NET – MANUFACTURING
9%	Construction
5%	Manufacturing
4%	Transportation
43%	NET - SERVICE
9%	Retail trade
6%	Recreation
4%	Accommodation
3%	Administrative and support
1%	Commercial real estate
1%	Food services
1%	Private real estate
1%	Waste management
1%	Wholesale trade
17%	Other services (except public administration)

34%	NET - KNOWLEDGE
12%	Professional, scientific, and technical services
5%	Educational services
4%	Finance
4%	Health care
3%	Entertainment
2%	Information and cultural industries
2%	Management of companies and enterprises
1%	Arts
1%	Public administration
1%	Social assistance

Respondent Profile – Firmographics

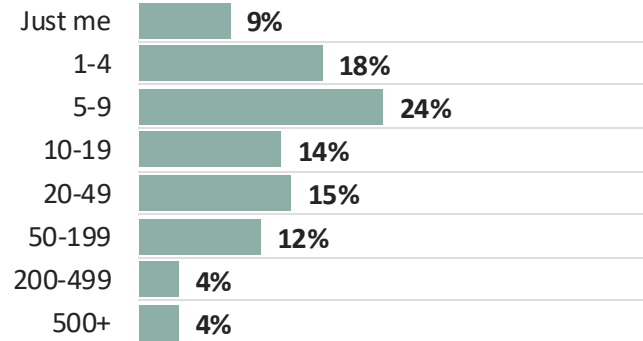
Sector



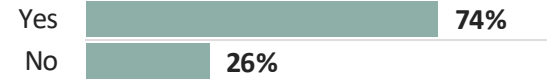
Tourism Industry



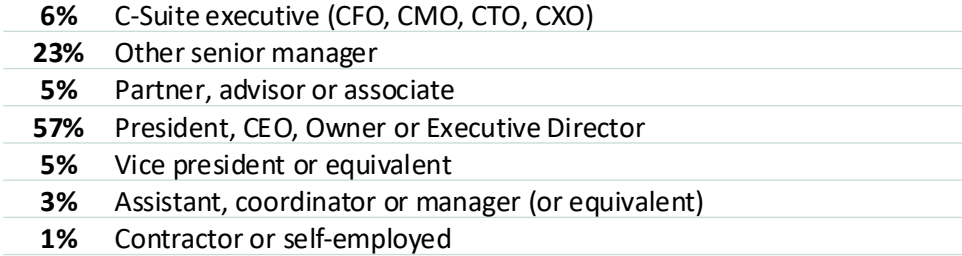
Number of employees in Alberta



Owner/Partner



Job Title



Gender

