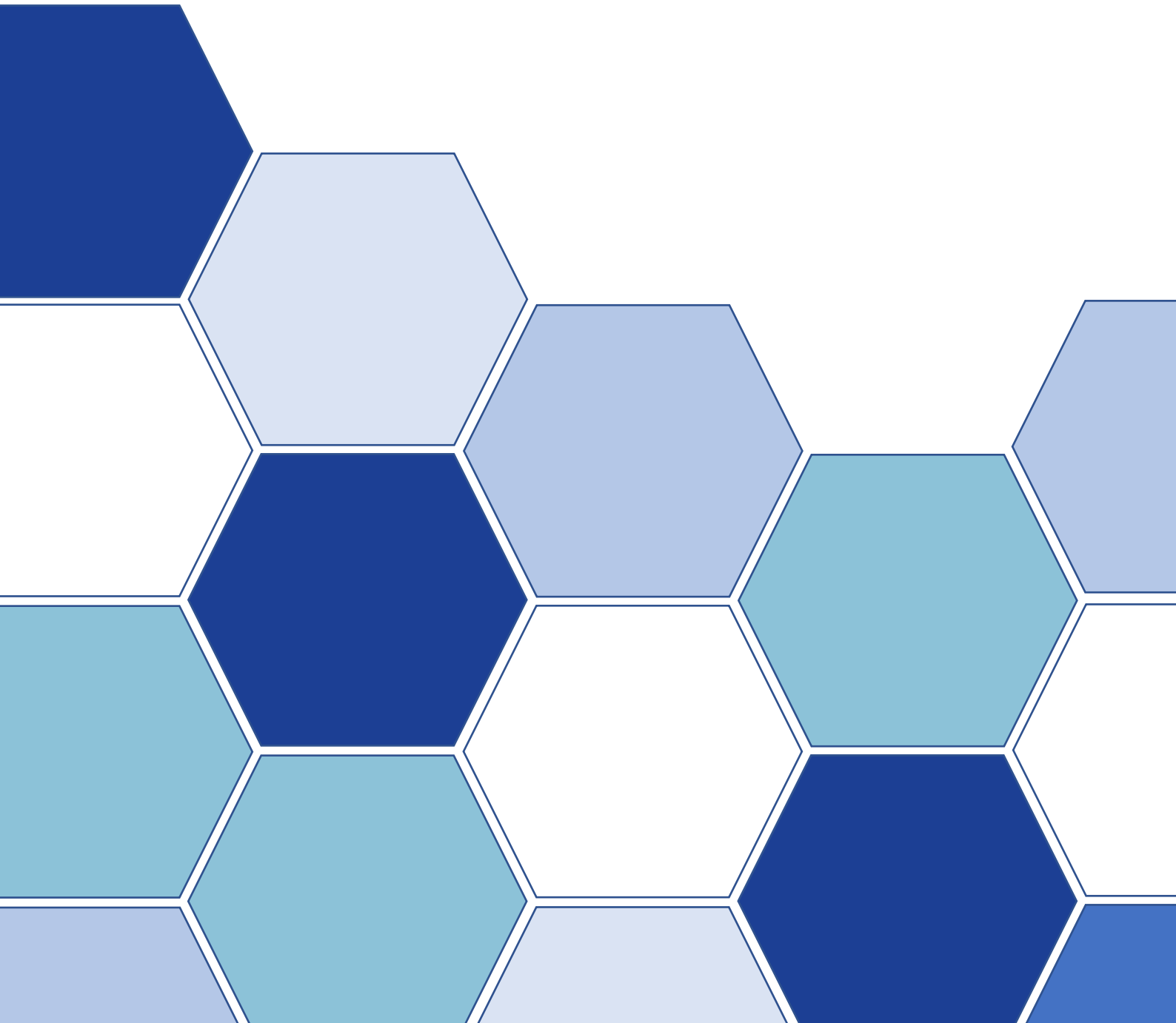




SARNIA LAMBTON WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Key Factors in Employee Retention: Results from SLWDB's 2022 Employee Retention Survey



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The views expressed in this publication are the views of the Sarnia Lambton Workforce Development Board and do not necessarily reflect those of the Province of Ontario. The Government of Ontario and its agencies are in no way bound by the recommendations contained in this document.

We invite your feedback on all publications produced by SLWDB. Additional information can be obtained by contacting:

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Foreword

This project was conceived in response to the Great Resignation, a labour force trend that has seen workers quitting their jobs at historic rates. According to Statistics Canada, job vacancies across all sectors reached an all-time high in the third quarter of 2021, up over 62% from a year earlier.¹

As a recent BDO Canada Report has made clear, “The ultimate result is a global war for talent that has empowered workers and given job seekers tremendous opportunities. Now, attracting and retaining talent requires employers to find ways to do things differently or risk losing workers and the ability to attract new ones.”²

SLWDB’s 2021 EmployerOne Survey results show that while layoffs were the primary type of separation experienced by businesses in the last year (64% of separations were due to layoffs, largely as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic), quits still represented 25% of separations. When asked what strategies they are using to encourage retention, employers identified regular increases in salary (19%), Recognition for service and/or outstanding work (19%), and job flexibility (16%).

EmployerOne Survey data also shows that 40% of organizations indicated a concern for retention. In consultations, employers have indicated that they are struggling to understand which retention strategies will work for the employees.³

While organizations such as SLWDB collect data annually from employers, there is very limited data collected from the local workforce on retention. This project sought to address this gap and capture the insights of our local workforce.

One of the notable results of the survey is that only 37% of the respondents are currently looking for a new job opportunity. These results challenge the concern of local employers that all employees are actively seeking new opportunities.

The Retention Checklist at the end of this report synthesizes the survey results into a framework for employers to apply in their own workplaces. We hope that this tool will support them as they reconsider their current offerings and look to make change.

Sincerely,



Laura Greaves, Executive Director
Sarnia Lambton Workforce Development Board

¹ Statistics Canada, “Job vacancies, third quarter 2021,” <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/211220/dq211220a-eng.htm>

² BDO, “The Great Resignation: How labour shortages are increasing business risk,” <https://www.bdo.ca/en-ca/insights/advisory/forensic-and-investigative-services/great-resignation-business-risk/>

³ SLWDB, 2022 EmployerOne Report, <https://www.slwdb.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/2022-EmployerOne-Report.pdf>

Demographics of Survey Respondents

The SLWDB Retention Survey was live from May 20th, 2022, to September 14th, 2022. and collected a total of 261 survey responses.

The survey completion rate was 81% and the average time to take the survey was 5 minutes.

Of the 261 responses, 95% of the respondents are currently employed whereas 5% are unemployed. In terms of their identified gender, survey respondents identified as 71% female, 28% male, and 1% other.

Figure 1: Currently Employed

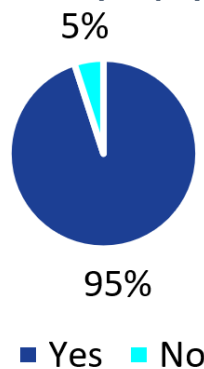
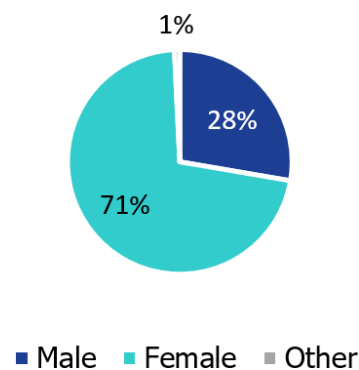
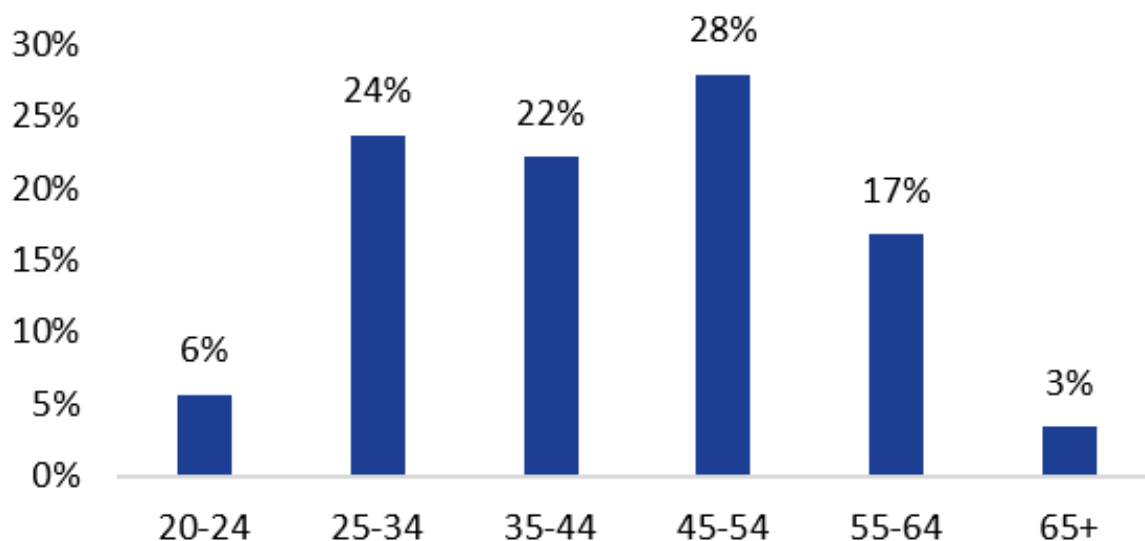


Figure 2: Gender Identification



The largest representation of respondents, 74%, were in the core working-age category (aged 25-54), followed by those aged 55 to 65 years old (20%), the under 25 (6%), and those over 65 years of age (3%).

Figure 3: Respondent Age Cohorts



When asked about their primary group identity the majority of survey respondents selected the "none of the above" category (63%). As noted in Figure 4, there was a minority

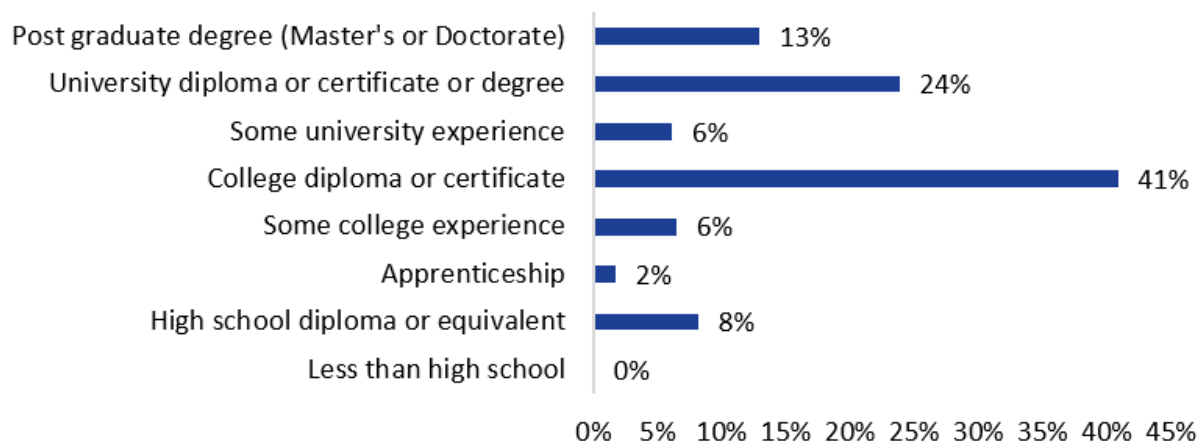
representation from a wide range of groups. Respondents were given the option of identifying multiple affiliations.

Figure 4: Respondent Group Identity Representation



Respondents were asked to identify their highest level of education. Education levels amongst survey respondents varied, with none of the respondents holding less than a high school diploma, 8% holding a high school diploma or equivalent, and 92% having some form of post-secondary experience, including a diploma or degree.

Figure 5: Respondent Highest Level of Education Attainment



The survey results show that 37% of the respondents are currently looking for a job opportunity while 63% are not.

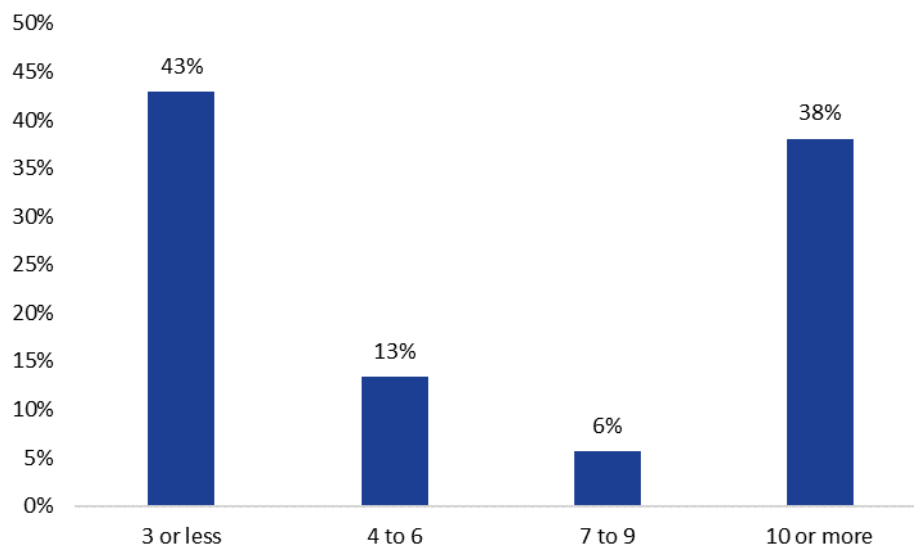
Figure 6: Respondents Looking for Job Opportunities



With regard to work experience, there were roughly equal responses from those who were beginning their careers (less than 4 years of work experience, 43%), and those with well-

established careers (more than 9 years of work experience, 38%). There were fewer responses from those with 4 to 9 years of experience (19%).

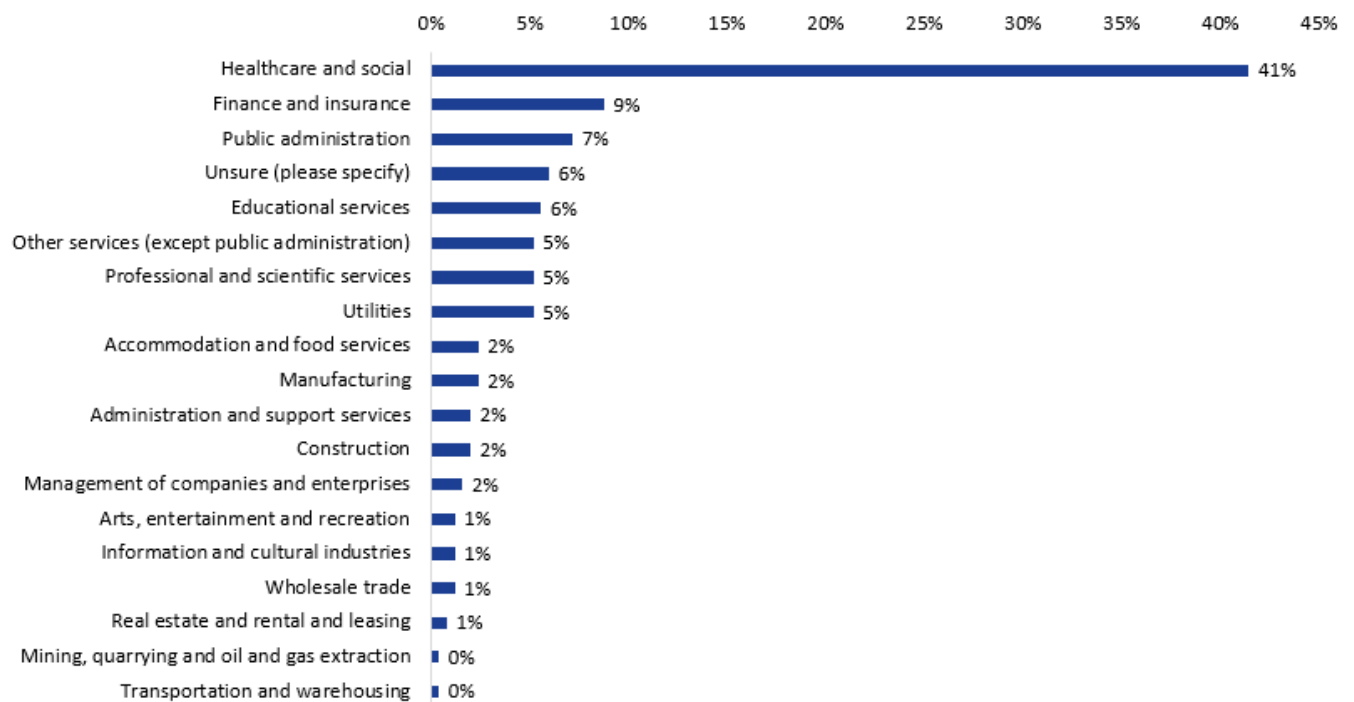
Figure 7: Years of Experience



Breakdown of Respondents by Industry

The greatest number of responses came from people currently working in Healthcare and social assistance (41%), followed by Finance and insurance (9%) and Public Administration (7%).

Figure 8: Industry Breakdown



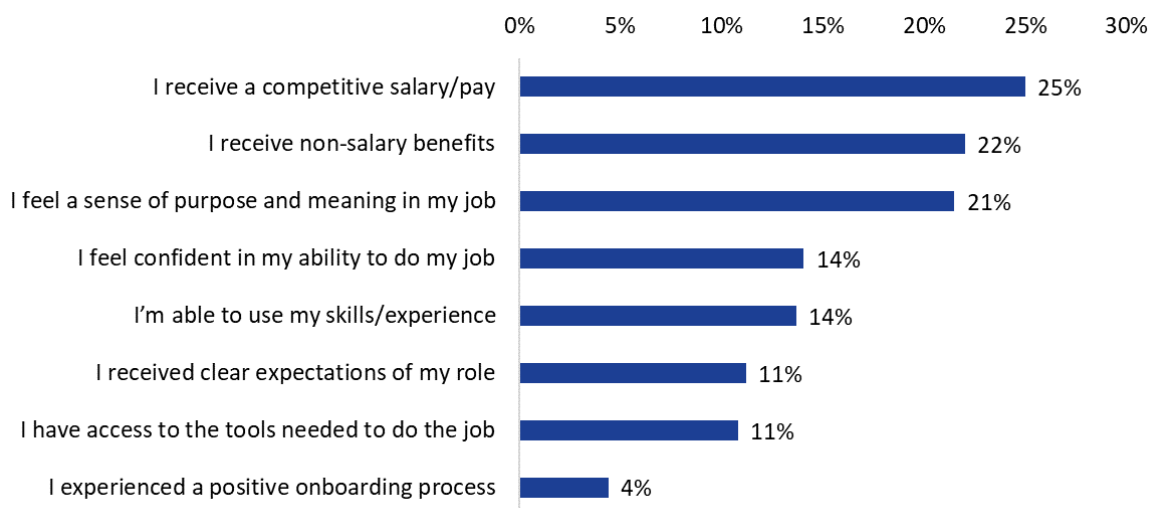
Overall Results of the Survey

In the survey, retention strategies were divided into four broad categories, grouping together strategies with similar attributes:



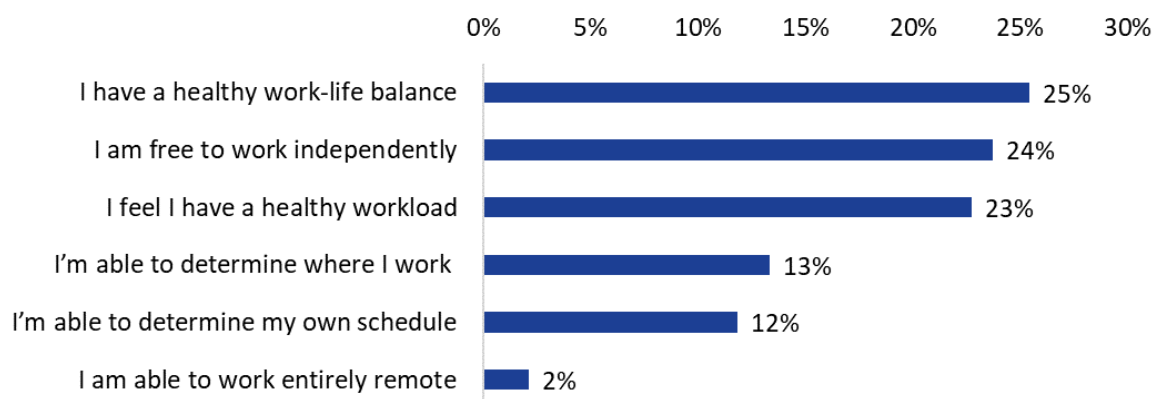
When respondents were asked what aspects of the job itself would keep them at their ideal job, the top choice was receiving a competitive salary (25%), followed by non-salary benefits (22%), and feeling a sense of purpose and meaning in their job (21%).

Figure 9: Aspects of the Job Itself



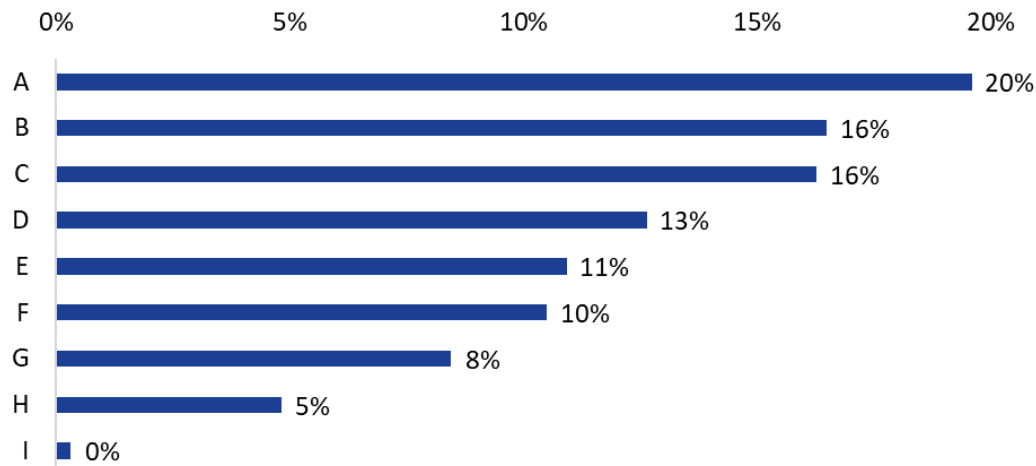
When respondents were asked what aspects of job flexibility would keep them at their ideal job, the top choice was having a healthy work-life balance (25%), followed by the freedom to work independently and being able to make their own decisions (24%), and having a healthy workload (23%).

Figure 10: Job Flexibility



When respondents were asked what opportunities for growth and development would keep them at their ideal job, the top choice was having a positive relationship with management and colleagues (20%), followed by feeling their thoughts, opinions and feedback are valued (16%), and feeling supported, respected, and safe in the workplace (16%).

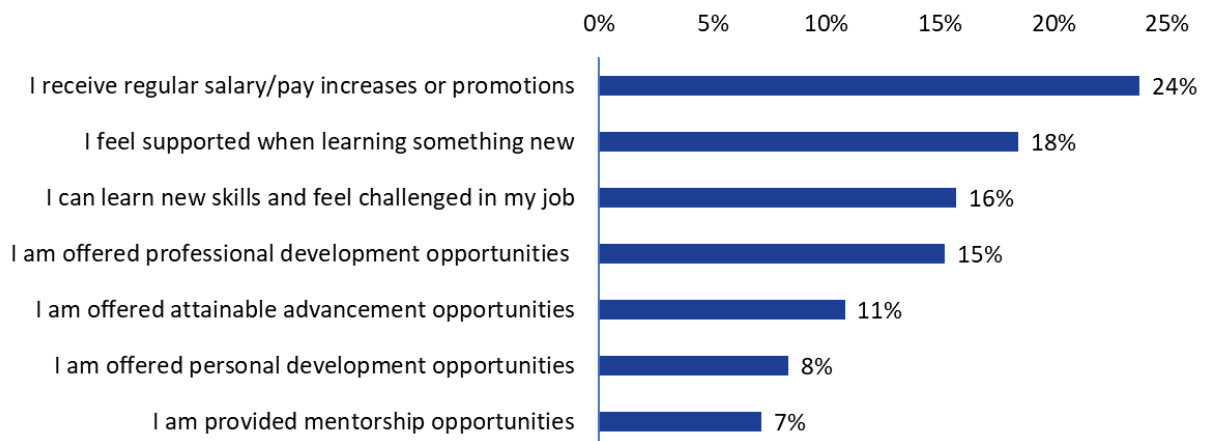
Figure 11: Workplace Culture



- A – I have a positive relationship with management and colleagues
- B – My thoughts, opinions and feedback are valued
- C – I feel supported, respected, and safe in the workplace
- D – The organization offers open and transparent communication
- E – My values align with the company's values
- F – I receive recognition for the work I do
- G – I feel my mental health is taken seriously
- H – I have access to personalized employee supports (i.e., Employee assistance programs)
- I – Other

When respondents were asked what factors related to workplace culture would keep you at your ideal job, the top choice was to receive regular salary/pay increases or promotions (24%), followed by to feel supported by both the management and colleagues when learning something new (18%) and to learn new skills and feel challenged in my job (16%)

Figure 12: Opportunities for Growth and Development



Ranking of the four categories

When asked to rank the four retention strategy categories overall, respondents ranked them in this way:

1. Aspects of the job itself
2. Job flexibility
3. Workplace culture
4. Opportunities for growth and development

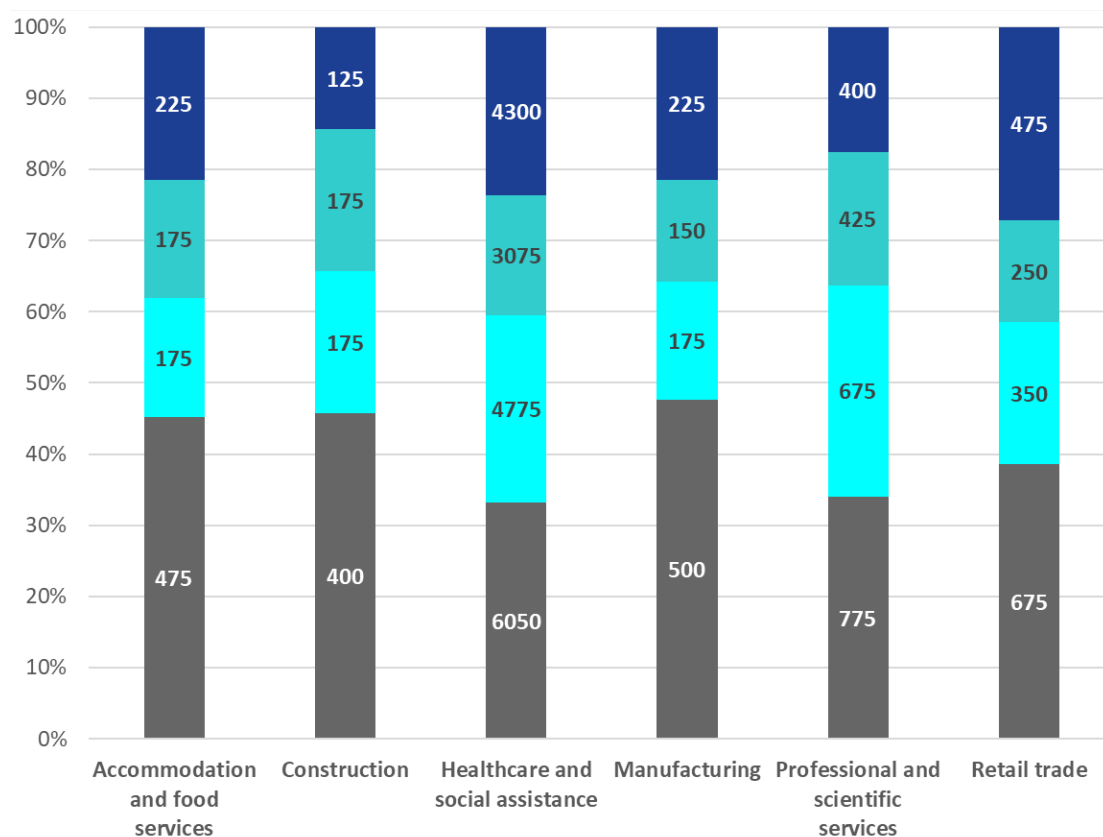
Survey Results broken down by Industry, Age and Gender

Comparing overall categories by industry

In the survey, respondents were asked to identify their industry. The industries included here represent the top five industries according to workforce size in Sarnia-Lambton.

In all five industries, the top choice was aspects of the job itself.

Figure 13: Ranking categories by industry



The second choice for those working in Professional and scientific services, and Healthcare and social assistance was job flexibility.

The second choice for those working on Retail trade, Manufacturing and Accommodation and food services was workplace culture.

The second choice for those working in Construction was a tie between job flexibility and opportunities for growth and development.

For workers in all industries except Construction, opportunities for growth and development was the last choice.

Industry Breakdown

The following data has been presented in a heatmap. In the charts below, the darker shade of green represents the highest number of responses, and the darker the shade of red represents the lowest number of or no responses.

For aspects of the job itself, the first choice for workers in Healthcare and social assistance, Manufacturing, Construction, and Professional and Scientific Services was receiving a competitive salary. The first choice for workers in Accommodation and food services was receiving non-salary benefits (healthcare plan, vacation time, flexibility, and pension) and feeling a sense of purpose and meaning in their jobs.

The first choice for workers in Retail trade was feeling confident in their ability to do the job and feeling a sense of purpose at their job.

Figure 14: Aspects of the job itself by industry

	I receive a competitive salary/pay	I experienced a positive onboarding process	I receive non-salary benefits	I received clear expectations of my role	I have access to the tools and resources needed to do the job	I'm able to use my skills/ experience/ training/ education	I feel a sense of purpose and meaning in my job	I feel confident in my ability to do my job
Accommodation and Food services	0	2	3	2	0	0	3	2
Healthcare and Social assistance	77	16	66	33	34	48	70	44
Manufacturing	6	0	5	3	4	2	4	3
Construction	5	0	1	2	1	4	3	3
Professional and scientific services	11	1	10	3	2	2	6	3
Retail trade	5	1	5	3	0	2	6	6

For job flexibility, the first choice for workers in almost all industries was having a healthy work-life balance.

For workers in Retail trade, the first choice was being able to work independently and make their own decisions.

Figure 15: Job flexibility by industry

	I feel I have a healthy workload (not too much and not too little)	I have a healthy work-life balance	I am free to work independently and make my own decisions in my role	I'm able to determine my own schedule	I'm able to determine where I work (both in-person or remote)	I am able to work entirely remote
Accommodation and Food services	3	4	3	2	0	0
Healthcare and Social assistance	66	69	67	40	37	3
Manufacturing	5	5	4	2	2	0
Construction	5	5	5	1	0	0
Professional and scientific services	8	10	9	4	4	2
Retail trade	7	7	8	3	2	1

For opportunities for growth and development, the first choice across all industries was receiving regular increases in salary or promotions. For workers in Healthcare and social assistance, the second choice was feeling supported by management and colleagues. For workers in Retail trade, the second choice was being offered professional development opportunities.

Figure 16: Opportunities for growth and development by industry

	I receive regular salary/pay increases or promotions	I am provided mentorship opportunities	I feel supported by both management and colleagues when learning something new	I am offered clear and attainable advancement opportunities	I can learn new skills and feel challenged in my job	I am offered professional development opportunities (job specific skills)	I am offered personal development opportunities (general skills)
Accommodation and Food services	5	0	2	2	3	0	0
Healthcare and Social assistance	77	21	74	30	48	57	32
Manufacturing	5	1	4	4	3	2	0
Construction	5	1	3	3	4	2	1
Professional and scientific services	13	4	6	5	2	6	4
Retail trade	8	2	5	3	5	6	2

For workplace culture, the first choice across all industries was having a positive relationship with management and colleagues.

For workers in Accommodation and food services, the first choice was a tie that also included feeling supported, respected and safe in the workplace.

For workers in Professional and scientific services, the first choice was a three-way tie that also included feeling their thoughts, opinion and feedback were valued, and feeling supported, respected and safe in the workplace.

Figure 17: Workplace culture by industry

	The organization offers open and transparent communication	I have a positive relationship with management and colleagues	My values align with the company's values	My thoughts, opinions and feedback are valued	I feel supported, respected, and safe in the workplace	I receive recognition for the work I do	I feel my mental health is taken seriously	I have access to personalized employee supports
Accommodation and Food services	1	4	2	2	4	1	0	0
Healthcare and Social assistance	54	74	44	62	58	39	34	22
Manufacturing	4	5	1	4	4	5	3	2
Construction	4	4	2	3	3	2	0	1
Professional and scientific services	3	9	4	9	9	5	5	2
Retail trade	3	9	3	6	5	5	1	0

Age Breakdown

In the survey, respondents were asked to identify their age.

For the aspects of the job itself, the first choice for workers aged 25 to 64 was receiving a competitive salary. In comparison, for workers aged 20 to 24 years old, feeling a sense of purpose is ranked higher than receiving a competitive salary. In fact, salary is ranked fourth for this age group.

For workers aged 65 years old and above, feeling a sense of purpose is equally as important as a competitive salary.

Figure 18: Aspects of the job itself by age

	Receiving competitive salary/pay	Positive onboarding process	Receiving non-salary benefits	Clear expectations of role and responsibilities	Access to the tools and resources needed	Ability to use skills/ experience/ training/ education	Feel a sense of purpose and meaning	Feel confident to do job
20-24	6	3	8	7	5	3	9	5
25-34	50	12	38	23	23	28	34	24
35-44	42	6	40	20	19	25	44	27
45-54	52	6	50	20	24	26	46	27
55-64	36	5	31	14	11	19	26	23
65+	6	2	2	2	4	4	6	2

For job flexibility, the first choice for workers aged 20 to 54 was having a healthy work-life balance. For workers aged 55 to 64, the first choice was having a healthy workload.

For workers aged 65 and older, the first choice was being free to make their own decisions.

Figure 19: Job flexibility by age

	I have a healthy workload	I have a healthy work-life balance	I am free to make my own decisions	I'm able to determine my own schedule	I'm able to determine where I work	I am able to work entirely remotely
20-24	9	12	8	5	4	1
25-34	37	49	44	21	30	5
35-44	39	43	39	24	20	5
45-54	47	51	52	24	30	2
55-64	31	28	26	13	14	3
65+	6	6	7	1	1	0

For opportunities for growth and development, the first choice for all age groups was receiving regular salary/pay increases or promotions. For workers aged 20 to 24 years old and workers aged 65 and older, feeling supported by management and colleagues and feeling challenged in their job were also highly ranked.

Figure 20: Opportunities for growth and development by age

	I receive regular salary/pay increases or promotions	I am provided mentorship opportunities	I feel supported when learning something new	I am offered clear and attainable advancement opportunities	I can learn new skills and feel challenged in my job	I am offered professional development opportunities	I am offered personal development opportunities
20-24	11	2	10	5	8	4	3
25-34	50	24	33	33	29	31	21
35-44	48	11	36	23	30	33	16
45-54	53	19	44	21	42	37	19
55-64	33	4	27	8	18	20	9
65+	5	0	5	1	5	3	2

For workplace culture, the first choice for most age groups was having a positive relationship with management.

For workers aged 55 to 64, the first choice was having their thoughts, opinions and feedback valued.

For workers aged 65 and over, their first choice was having open and transparent communication.

Figure 21: Workplace culture by age

	The organization offers open and transparent communication	I have a positive relationship with management and colleagues	My values align with the company's values	My thoughts, opinions and feedback are valued	I feel supported, respected, and safe in the workplace	I receive recognition for the work I do	I feel my mental health is taken seriously	I have access to personalized employee supports
20-24	6	9	3	5	9	2	4	2
25-34	30	45	22	34	33	26	26	8
35-44	28	41	25	39	37	22	24	14
45-54	31	55	35	42	43	26	17	14
55-64	17	27	13	30	27	20	7	6
65+	6	6	4	4	3	2	1	1

Gender Breakdown

For aspects of the job itself, the first choice for both genders was receiving a competitive salary.

For female respondents, this was followed closely by receiving non-salary benefits and feeling a sense of purpose in their job.

Figure 22: Aspect of the job itself by gender

	I receive a competitive salary/pay	I experienced a positive onboarding process	I receive non-salary benefits	I received clear expectations of my role and responsibilities	I have access to the tools and resources needed to do the job	I'm able to use my skills/ experience/ training/ education	I feel a sense of purpose and meaning in my job	I feel confident in my ability to do my job
Male	62	5	41	21	22	29	37	24
Female	129	28	126	64	61	76	126	84

For job flexibility, the first choice for both genders was having a healthy work-life balance.

For male respondents, the second choice was being able to work independently.

For female respondents, the second choice was having a healthy workload.

Figure 23: Job flexibility by gender

	I feel I have a healthy workload	I have a healthy work-life balance	I am free to make my own decisions in my role	I'm able to determine my own schedule	I'm able to determine where I work	I am able to work entirely remote
Male	40	57	54	21	19	7
Female	127	130	120	67	79	9

For opportunities for growth and development, the first choice for both genders was receiving regular salary increases or promotions.

For female respondents, this was followed closely by feeling supported by both management and colleagues.

For male respondents, the second choice was learning new skills and feeling challenged in their job.

Figure 24: Opportunities for growth and development by gender

	I receive regular salary/pay increases or promotions	I am provided mentorship opportunities	I feel supported when learning something new	I am offered clear and attainable advancement opportunities	I can learn new skills and feel challenged in my job	I am offered professional development opportunities	I am offered personal development opportunities
Male	57	22	29	31	35	31	21
Female	141	38	125	60	95	96	48

For workplace culture, the first choice for both genders was having a positive relationship with management and colleagues.

For male respondents, the second choice was having their thoughts, opinions and feedback valued.

For female respondents, the second choice was feeling supported, respected and safe in the workplace.

Figure 25: Workplace culture by gender

	The organization offers open and transparent communication	I have a positive relationship with management and colleagues	My values align with the company's values	My thoughts, opinions and feedback are valued	I feel supported, respected, and safe in the workplace	I receive recognition for the work I do	I feel my mental health is taken seriously	I have access to personalized employee supports
Male	34	48	25	41	34	25	15	7
Female	83	133	76	111	117	71	64	38

Conclusion

As we reflect on the data, two key highlights stand out.

- Aspects of the job itself and having a competitive salary are most important to the local workforce
- Most employees across all industries, ages and genders want a competitive salary, a healthy work-life balance and a good relationship with management and colleagues.

Employers are encouraged to review the Retention Checklist for Employers in Appendix A.

It is also important to keep in mind that employees have an important role to play in retention.

Recommendations for Employees:

- Understand the roles and responsibilities that you taking on before joining an organization
- Set clear expectations and communicate clearly with your employer
- Be open to changes and new processes

Appendix A: Retention Checklist for Employers

- ☐ Review the results of the SLWDB Retention Report, keeping in mind your industry and the demographic composition of your workforce.
- ☐ Gather feedback directly from your employees. This can be done in many different ways, depending on the size and location of your workforce. Some examples include:
 - a. Run a survey across your organization, asking your employees what factors are most important to them - If you do not have the capacity to create and distribute this survey yourself, there are local human resource professionals who can assist with this.
 - b. Hold consultation sessions with your employees - Incorporate a discussion into a regularly-scheduled meeting or plan a get together specific to this topic.
 - c. Incorporate this question into annual/quarterly performance reviews.
 - d. Talk to employees one-on-one.
- ☐ Examine job flexibility aspects in your organization and implement the practical solutions
 - a. Job flexibility ranked second in the overall categories. While not in the top three responses, the ability to determine where an employee works and their schedule were both important factors to many respondents.
- ☐ Set clear expectations around responsibilities and ensure effective and continuous communication
 - a. Work-life balance and having a healthy workload were identified by workers across all industries, age groups and genders as important to them. Setting clear expectations will help employees determine what responsibilities are most important and help them to prioritize their work.
 - b. Open and transparent communication was specifically identified by workers in construction and workers aged 65 and over, but was important to workers across all industries, age groups and genders.
- ☐ When providing training for skills development and growth, explain how it is connected to the individual's career growth
 - a. While opportunities for growth and development ranked lower than the other three overall categories, workers ranked regular salary increases and promotions as the first choice within this category. Work with employees to explain how training opportunities can help them to advance in their career.
- ☐ Take a tailored approach, depending on your industry and your company's needs
 - a. Each industry and company will have unique constraints; not all options will be available to all organizations. Take time to review the results of the feedback you receive from your employees and implement the ones that make sense for your workplace.



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