EMPLOYER one survey

2025 Results

SLWDB

SARNIA LAMBTON WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The EmployerOne Survey is an annual survey conducted within the Sarnia Lambton community to gather information directly from local employers regarding their workforce needs and hiring trends. The report generated from this survey provides job seekers and employers with valuable insights into the local job market and recruitment methods for future and career planning.

The survey aims to address several challenges such as recruitment, retention, and hard-to-fill positions. It also focuses on the challenges faced by small businesses and sole proprietors. By collecting data from local employers, the survey helps to identify any gaps in the job market and provides an opportunity for stakeholders to work together to address them.

This year, the survey received responses from 323 local businesses representing various sectors of the economy. Notably, there was increased participation from industries such as Educational Services, Professional, scientific, and technical services, Retail, and Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, indicating a broad spectrum of employer engagement. This level of participation is a testament to the importance and relevance of the survey to local businesses.

The report is designed to be informative, comprehensive, and easily understandable. We welcome any feedback or questions, and you can reach us by contacting:

Dr. Mikelle Bryson-Campbell, PhD
Executive Director
Sarnia Lambton Workforce Development Board
St. Clair Corporate Centre
265 Front Street North, Suite 504
Sarnia, Ontario N7T 7X1
(519) 332-0000
Mikelle.Bryson.Campbell@slwdb.org

BUSINESS HIGHLIGHTS

Of the 323 businesses that took part in the 12th annual EmployerOne Survey, 23% were established within the past 5 years, while 77% were established more than 5 years ago. Businesses with local head offices accounted for 76% of respondents, while the remaining 24% of businesses were branches with head offices located outside of the region.

The physical landscape of the current workforce varied, as 76% of businesses indicated that staff were working on-site, 5% relied solely on remote work, and 19% utilized a hybrid approach with staff working both remotely and on-site. Sole proprietors primarily worked on-site (52%), while a smaller percentage worked hybrid (32%) and remotely (16%).

Figure 1: Physical landscape of current workforce.

Remote work 5%
Hybrid 19%
On site 76%
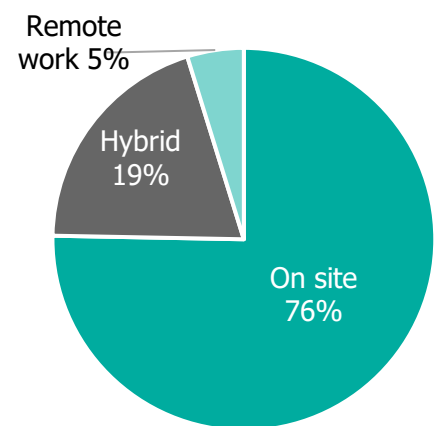
Figure 2: Business size categorization of survey respondents.

Sole Proprietor	1-4	5-9	10-19	20-49	50-99	100-199	200-499	500+
8%	26%	15%	19%	14%	7%	4%	2%	5%
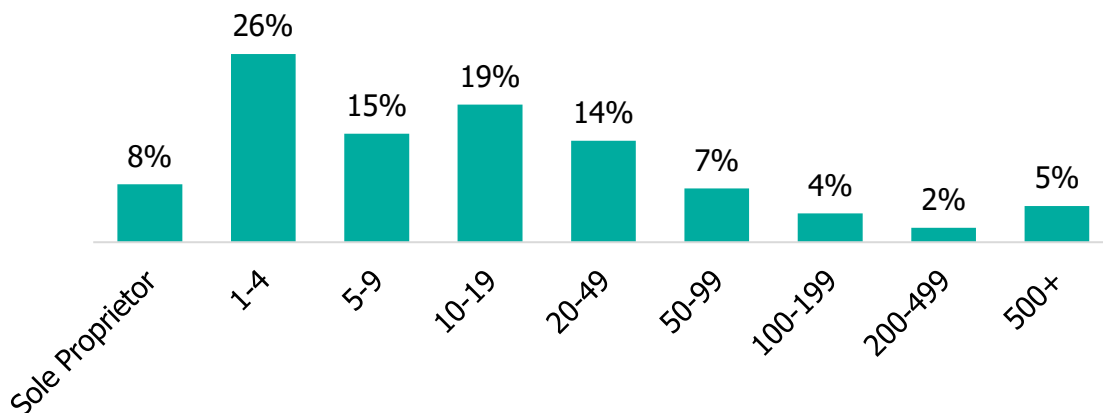
INDUSTRY HIGHLIGHTS

Compared to the previous year's data, there were shifts in business participation across various sectors. Particularly noteworthy were the increases in responses from businesses in Healthcare and social assistance (+5%), Educational Services (+3%), and Arts, entertainment, and recreation (+3%). Conversely, there were decreases in responses from sectors such as Professional, scientific, and technical services (-6%), and Other Services (except public administration) (-3%).

Figure 3: Industry categorization of survey respondents.

	2024	2023
Accommodation and Food Services	7%	8%
Administration and support, waste management...	1%	1%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	5%	4%
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	8%	5%
Construction	7%	9%
Educational Services	10%	7%
Finance and insurance	4%	4%
Healthcare and social assistance	11%	6%
Information and cultural industries	1%	1%
Management of companies and enterprises	1%	0%
Manufacturing	4%	5%
Mining, quarrying and oil and gas extraction	0%	0%
Other Services (except public administration)	12%	15%
Professional, scientific and technical services	6%	12%
Public administration	3%	3%
Real estate and rental and leasing	2%	2%
Retail Trade	13%	11%
Transportation and warehousing	3%	2%
Utilities	0%	1%
Wholesale trade	3%	2%

2024 HIRING TRENDS

Most of the businesses with employees (73%) indicated they had hired an employee within the last 12 months, with an estimated total of 3,753 new hires by 235 organizations. In contrast, there were 3,663 new hires by 228 organizations in the previous year. Employment types varied, as 24% were permanent full-time, 29% were permanent part-time, and 41% were contract/seasonal positions.

Figure 4: Total number of hires by industry categorization.

Industry	Hires
Educational Services	756
Healthcare and social assistance	697
Retail Trade	455
Public administration	387
Other Services (except public administration)	341
Manufacturing	189
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	169
Accommodation and Food Services	168
Finance and insurance	156
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	138
Construction	100
Transportation and warehousing	61
Professional, scientific and technical services	36

Overall, 53% of all respondents reported having hard-to-fill positions. This was echoed in 35% of small businesses (1-99 employees), 65% of medium businesses (100-499 employees) and 41% of large businesses (500+ employees). The primary reasons that positions were hard to fill were a lack of applicants (18%), a lack of qualifications (17%), and a lack of work experience (16%). Other reasons suggested by employers included challenges offering more competitive salaries, hours of work and geographical location.

Industries facing the greatest challenge due to a lack of applicants include Public administration (44%), Educational services (30%), Construction (24%), and Healthcare and social assistance (32%). On the other hand, sectors encountering difficulty due to insufficient qualifications comprise Educational Services (45%), Public administration (33%), Manufacturing (29%), and Other services (except public administration) (63%).

Reasons why the positions were hard to fill:

- Not enough applicants (18%)
- Lack of qualifications (17%)
- Lack of work experience (16%)
- Lack of motivation, attitude, or interpersonal abilities (10%)
- Lack of technical skills (12%)
- No applicants at all (5%)
- Other (1%)
- Inability to compete with other employers (4%)
- Lack of language skills (7%)
- Company is not accessible by public transit (2%)
- Inability to assess a foreign educational qualification or credential (1%)
- Lack of childcare available (1%)
- Lack of transportation (4%)
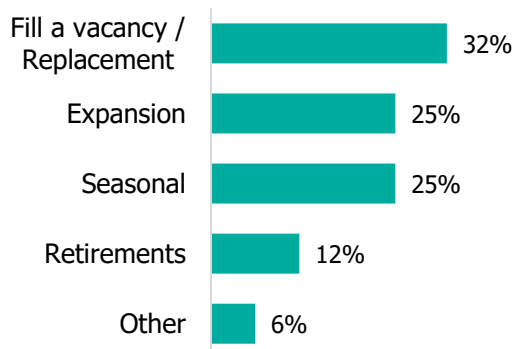- Lack of housing (2%)

FUTURE HIRES

Looking to the future, 63% of respondents indicated that they expect to hire an estimated 2,062 employees in the coming year. Many of the planned hires will fill a current or expected vacancy or the result from anticipated business expansion. Industries that anticipate recruiting the largest number of new hires in 2025 include Healthcare and social assistance (738), Public administration (334), Other services (except public administration) (236), and Educational Services (208).

Industries that are expected to hire because of expansion include real estate and rental and leasing (43%), manufacturing (43%), and educational services (39%). In contrast, industries that expect to see the most retirements include Management of companies and enterprises (50%), Transportation and warehousing (38%), and Public administration (22%).

Figure 5: Expected reasons for hiring in 2025.

Reason	Percentage
Fill a vacancy / Replacement	32%
Expansion	25%
Seasonal	25%
Retirements	12%
Other	6%

Occupations expected to be recruited for in 2025:

Educational Services

- Teachers
- Educational Assistants
- Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECE)
- Childcare Assistants
- Custodians
- French Teachers
- Tutors

Other Services (Except Public Administration)

- Lawn Care Workers
- Graphic Designers
- Job Developers
- Business Development Officers
- Website Developers
- Summer Students
- Project Manager

Healthcare and Social Assistance

- Personal Support Workers (PSW)
- Registered Practical Nurses (RPN)
- Registered Nurses (RN)
- Physicians
- Occupational Therapists
- French speaking Social Workers
- Speech-Language Pathologists

RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

Recruitment trends show that online job boards were the most used hiring method, making up 43% of responses. Word of mouth, including personal contacts and informal networks, remained significant at 27%, despite the growing preference for digital platforms. Social media continued to expand its influence, representing 11% of responses. Non-government or community employment service centres or websites accounted for 6%, while government employment centres or websites made up 5%.

On-site job signs or posters were used less frequently at 3%, and other methods accounted for 4%. This trend highlights the shift toward digital hiring methods, stressing the need for employers to adjust their strategies to remain competitive in attracting talent.

Employers in the Sarnia Lambton area reported a slight improvement in the availability of qualified workers compared to previous years. While 49% of employers rated the availability as excellent or good last year, this figure has risen to 52% this year, reflecting a positive trend in the local labour market.

Top competencies employers look for when recruiting:

Work ethic 13%

Professionalism 7%

Self-motivated/ability to work with little or no supervision 12%

Problem solving, reasoning 5%

Dependiability 11%

Fits with company/mission 5%

Teamwork/interpersonal 10%

Time management/organizational 4%

Willingness to learn 10%

Computer/ digital literacy 2%

Communication (both oral and written) 9%

Creativity 2%

Customer service 8%

Analytical/ research 1%

Retention remains a concern for half of employers. 50% of employers express concern about retaining staff. Additionally, 49% of respondents reported having succession plans to manage anticipated growth and impending retirements over the next 3 to 5 years. Among the industries expressing heightened retention concerns are Public Administration (56%), Healthcare and social assistance (47%), Educational Services (42%), and Construction (38).

Strategies used by local employers to encourage retention:

- Regular increase in salary (21%)
- Recognition for service and/or outstanding work (18%)
- Training opportunities (17%)
- Employee "perks" (i.e., discounts on merchandise, company-branded clothing, staff celebrations, etc.) (15%)
- Job flexibility (i.e., work-from-home arrangements, flex time, job sharing) (9%)
- Clear promotional paths or advancement opportunities (7%)
- Regular increases in benefits (5%)
- Job rotation opportunities (4%)
- Other (2%)

## Figure 6: Retention a concern.

50% 50%

■ Yes ■ No
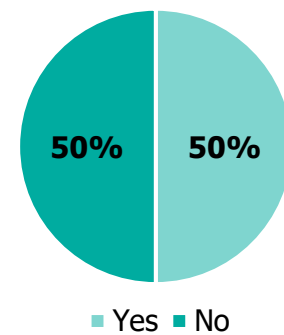
2024 SEPARATIONS

This year, respondents reported a total of 2,526 job separations, an increase from last year's 1,928 (n=304 responses). The industries with the highest number of separations were Educational Services (24%), Healthcare and Social Assistance (17%), and Retail Trade (12%).

When comparing this year's job separations to last year's, some notable trends emerge. The percentage of employees who quit their jobs rose slightly to 50%, up from 48% last year, while retirements also saw a modest increase (13% vs. 12%). In contrast, layoffs declined from 17% to 13%, and dismissals dropped from 16% to 13%. Additionally, the proportion of employees on protected leaves whether paid or unpaid rose to 10%, up from 6% last year.

Figure 7: Industry categorization of separation types.

Legend: ■ Quits ■ Retirements ■ Layoffs ■ Dismissals ■ Other (paid/unpaid protected leaves)
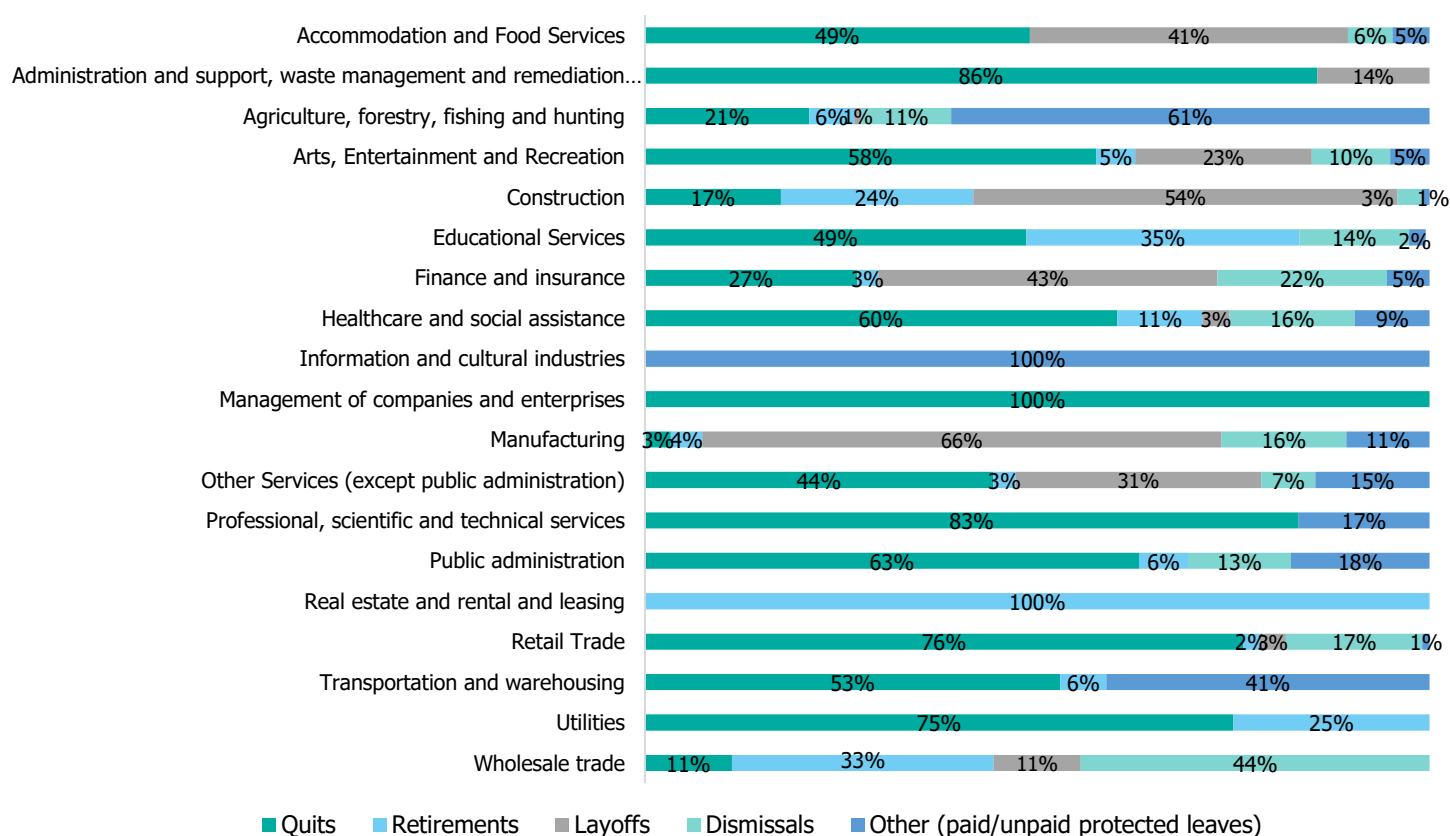
INTERNATIONAL TALENT

Business participants were surveyed regarding their inclination toward hiring candidates from international backgrounds. The findings indicated that industries most inclined to hire international talent include Accommodation and Food Services (50%), Educational Services (39%), Healthcare and social assistance (29%), and Other Services (excluding public administration) (26%). The industries that are least likely to hire international talent are Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting (47%), Manufacturing (29%), and Construction (24%).

Figure 8: Likeliness of local employers hiring international talent in 2024.
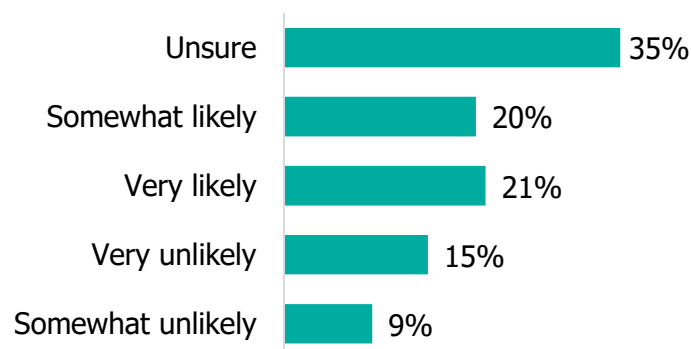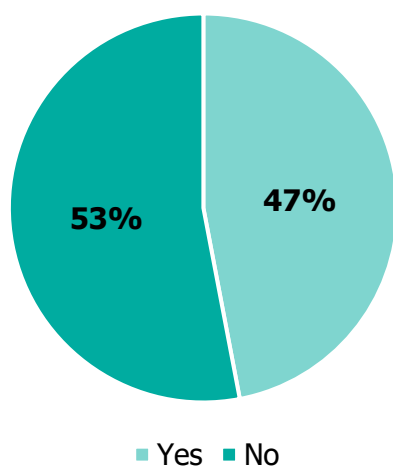

Figure 9: Percentage of Companies that Hired International Talent in 2024.

Respondents were asked regarding the hiring of international talent. Specifically, whether the companies had filled any positions with international talent. In total, 47% responded yes, while 53% responded no. The top industries that reported hiring international talent were Accommodation and Food Services (68%), Finance and insurance (58%), Educational Services (48%), Healthcare and social assistance (38%), Other Services (except public administration) (33%), and Retail Trade (33%).

ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK

At the end of the survey, participants were invited to share any additional insights into the current and future trends in their industry.

Economic and Policy-Related Challenges

- The uncertainty of tariffs, particularly in manufacturing and the electrical industry.
- Inflation and increasing operational costs.

Labour Shortages and Skill Gaps

- Employers struggle to find qualified professionals, particularly in skilled trades, healthcare, and childcare.
- Several employers expressed concerns about graduates lacking the necessary skills, a form of mismatch between education workforce needs.
- Employers in industries requiring hands-on work, such as construction and hairstyling, noted a lack of interest among younger generations.

Workforce Retention and Compensation Issues

- Smaller municipalities and sectors like community support struggle to compete with higher salaries in hospitals and large organizations.
- Many respondents indicated that younger workers have different work expectations.
- Several employers reported difficulty finding qualified leadership candidates at the director's level.

Childcare and Workforce Flexibility

- Lack/Loss of Childcare is reported as a significant barrier to growing business and employment.
- The childcare sector requires flexible workforce models to accommodate varying work schedules.

Technology and Innovation Challenges

- Employers anticipate both positive and negative effects from Artificial Intelligence.
- Some employers suggested the need for improved apprenticeship programs and specialized training to keep pace with technological advancements.

@slwdb

@slwdb_org

@Sarnia Lambton Workforce Development Board SLWDB

@SarniaLambtonWorkforceDevelopmentBoard

SLWDB

SARNIA LAMBTON WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

We invite community feedback on all SLWDB publications:
Provide feedback on the 2025 EmployerOne Survey Results