

EMPLOYER *one* survey

2025 – 2026 RESULTS



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



Executive Summary

The EmployerOne Survey is conducted within the Sarnia Lambton community to collect information directly from local employers about 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 practices for future planning and career development.

The survey aims to explore key challenges such as recruitment, retention, and hard-to-fill positions. It also highlights the challenges faced by small, medium, and large businesses, including 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 301 local businesses spanning a wide range of economic sectors. Notably, response rates increased across most industries including Healthcare and Social Assistance, Education Services and Retail Trade demonstrating widespread employer involvement. This level of participation highlights the survey's continued significance and value to local businesses.

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

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Business Highlights

Of the 301 businesses that participated in the 13th annual EmployerOne Survey, 17% have been in operation for less than 5 years and 83% were established over 5 years ago.

Sole proprietorships accounted for 12% of the businesses surveyed, while 23% had 1-4 employees and 17% had 5-9 and 10-19 employees.

The physical landscape of the workforce varied, as 74% of businesses indicated that staff work on site, 5% relied solely on remote work and 20% used a hybrid approach. The remaining 1% indicated other locations for work, which included a mobile service to clients, a consultancy and multiple locations with members.

Figure 1: Location of Work

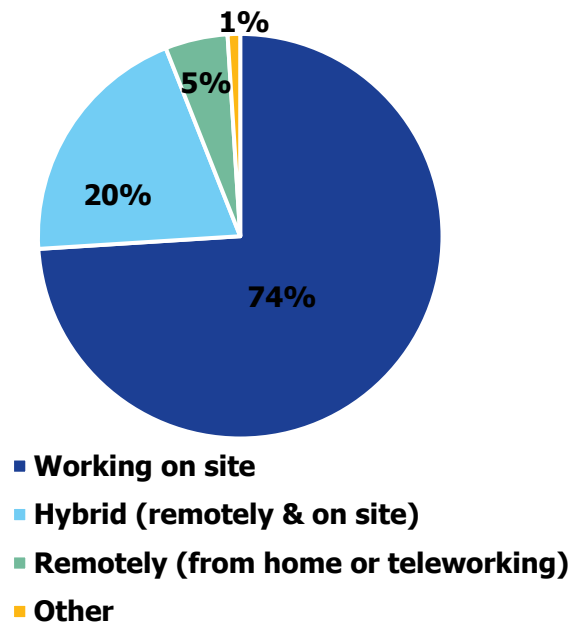
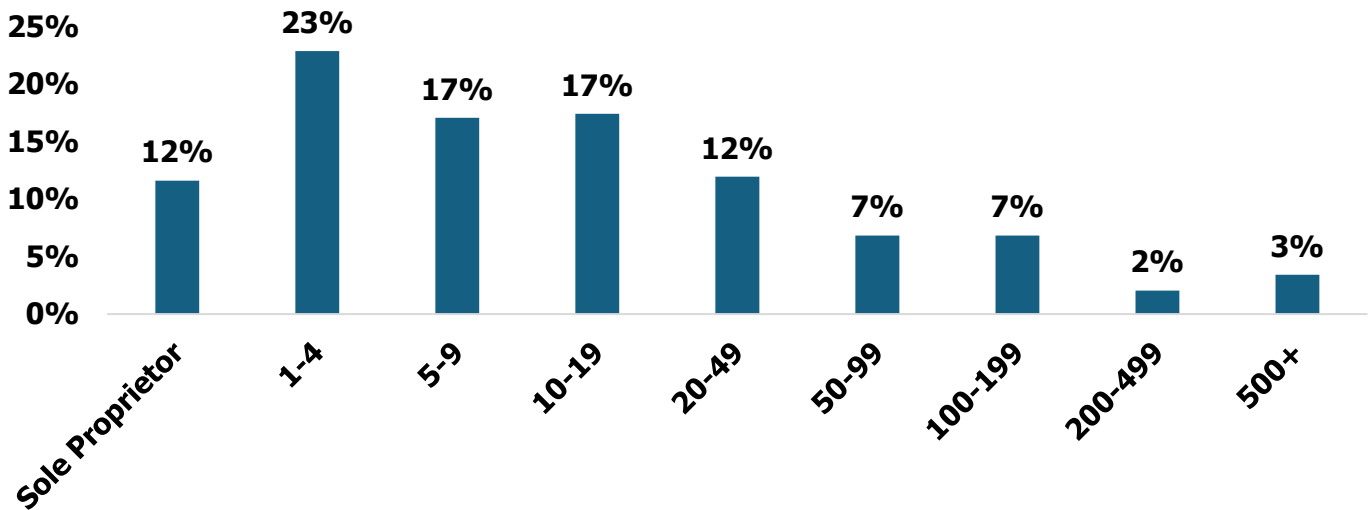


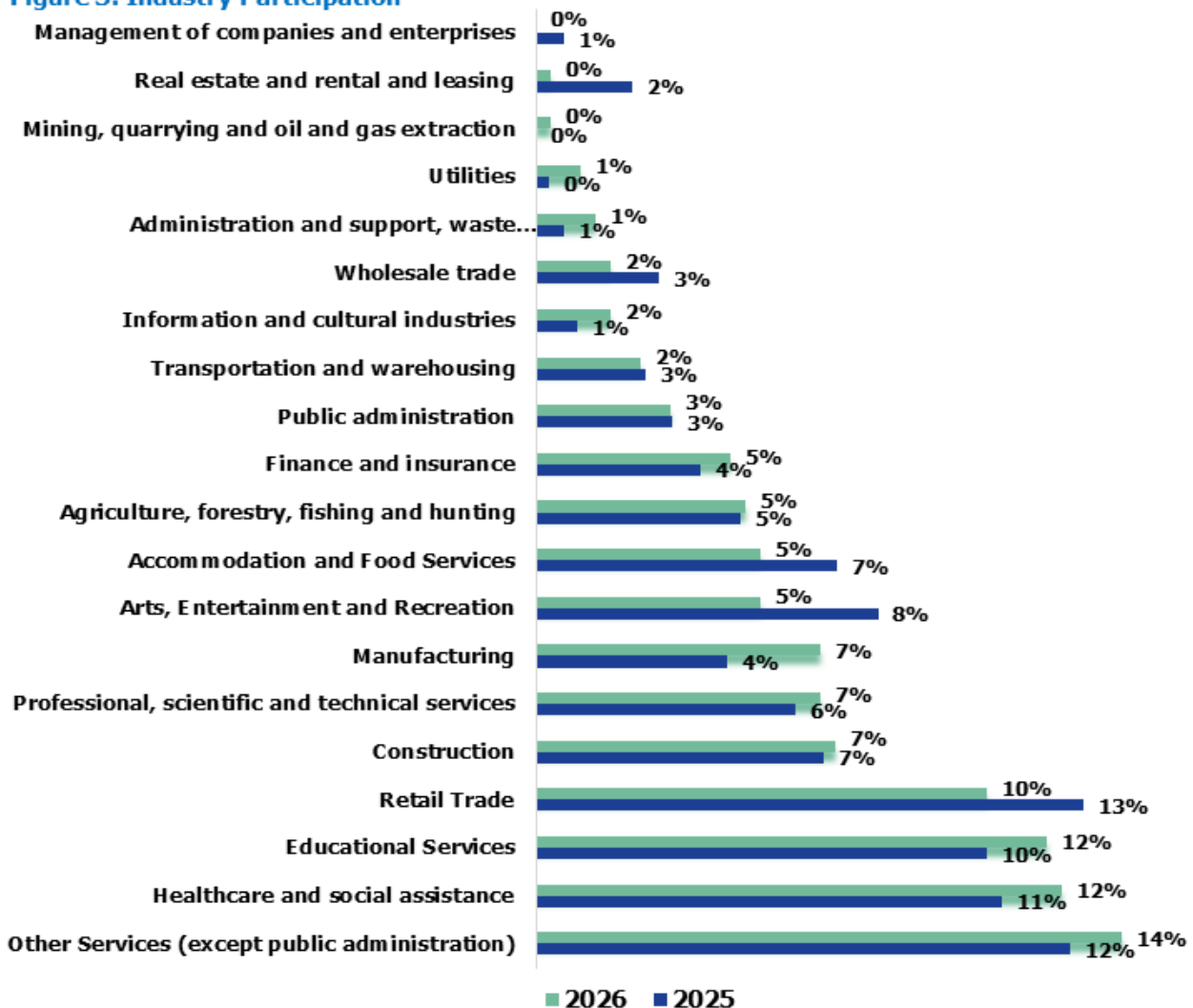
Figure 2: Business Size



Industry Highlights

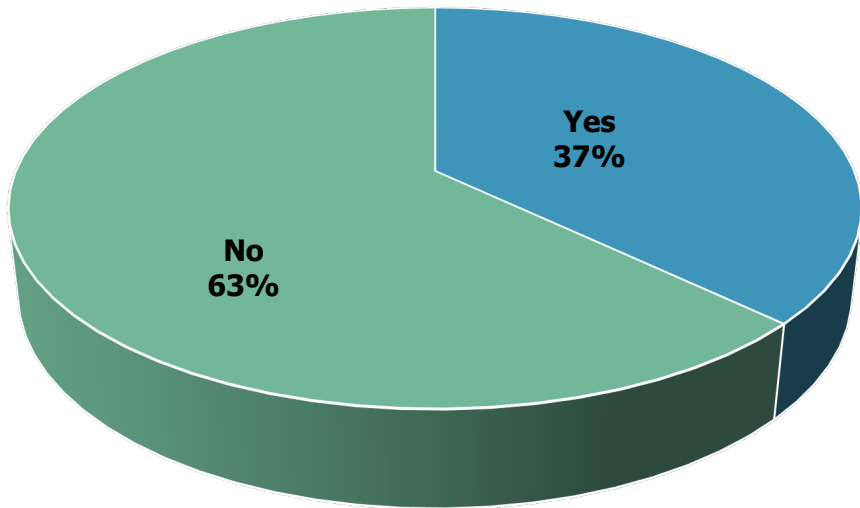
Similar to the 2024-2025 EmployerOne survey, businesses that participated in the survey were primarily from Other Services (except Public Administration) (14%), Healthcare and Social Assistance (12%), Education Services (12%) and Retail Trade (10%). There was an increase ranging from one to two percent in participation from businesses in most sectors. However, there was a decrease in participation of about 3% in Retail Trade as well as Arts Entertainment and Recreation.

Figure 3: Industry Participation



When asked about the impact of tariffs on businesses, 37% of respondents reported that they were affected by tariffs imposed by the United States in the last 12 months. The effects experienced were mainly an increase in the cost of supplies, a change in customers' spending habits and being in a state of uncertainty, leading to an inability to plan and having funding paused.

Figure 4: Businesses Affected by Tariffs



Hiring Trends

Most businesses, 71%, hired an employee within the last 12 months, accounting for a total of 3,051 new hires by 198 businesses. This reflects a decrease from 3,753 new hires by 235 organizations in the previous year.

Employment types over the last year varied, as 42% were permanent full-time, 26% were permanent part-time and 32% were contract/seasonal/gig worker positions.

Figure 5: Type of New Hires

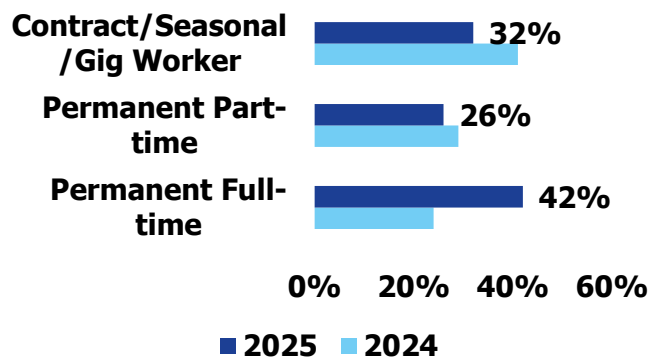
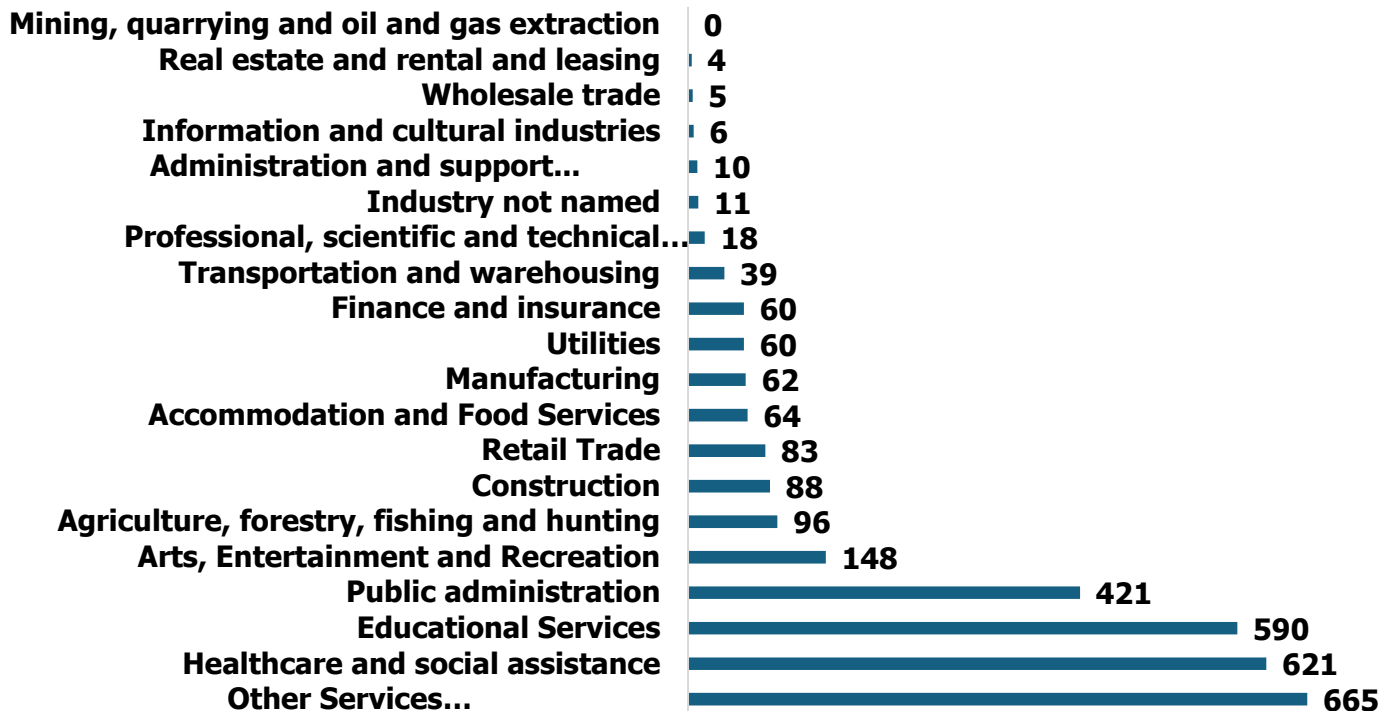


Figure 6: Number of New Hires



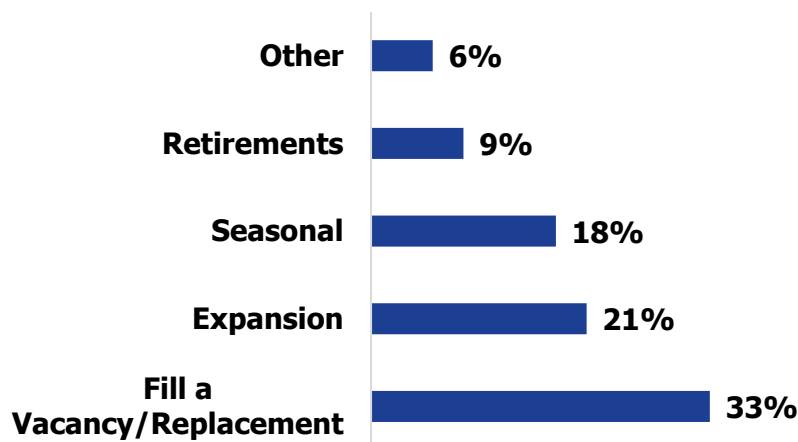
Future Hires

As they plan for the future, respondents indicated that they expect to hire 1,139 employees in the coming year, a reduction from last year's figure of 2,062 planned hires. Thirty-three percent of planned hires will fill a vacancy, while 21% will be due to expected expansion. Industries that anticipate hiring the largest number of new hires for 2026 include Public Administration (315), Healthcare and Social Assistance (175) and Arts, Entertainment and Recreation (147).

Recruitment in Healthcare and Social Assistance will primarily be due to retirements (35%), expansion (21%) and to fill a vacancy/replacement (19%) while recruitment in Educational Services will arise for other reasons (25%), fill a vacancy/replacement (18%) and expansion (13%).

The primary reason for recruitment in Arts, Entertainment and Recreation is seasonal jobs (21%) and for Public Administration, retirements will drive 15% of recruitments.

Figure 7: Expected Reasons for Hiring in 2026



Top Occupations expected to be recruited in 2026

Public Administration

- Bridge Attendant
- Custodian
- Library Technician
- Branch Assistant
- Office Workers

Healthcare and Social Assistance

- Registered Nurse
- Registered Practical Nurse
- Registered Social Worker
- Dietary Aide
- Developmental Services Worker
- Personal Support Worker
- Case Worker

Arts, Entertainment and Recreation

- Cook
- Server
- Golf Operations Staff
- Camp Counsellor

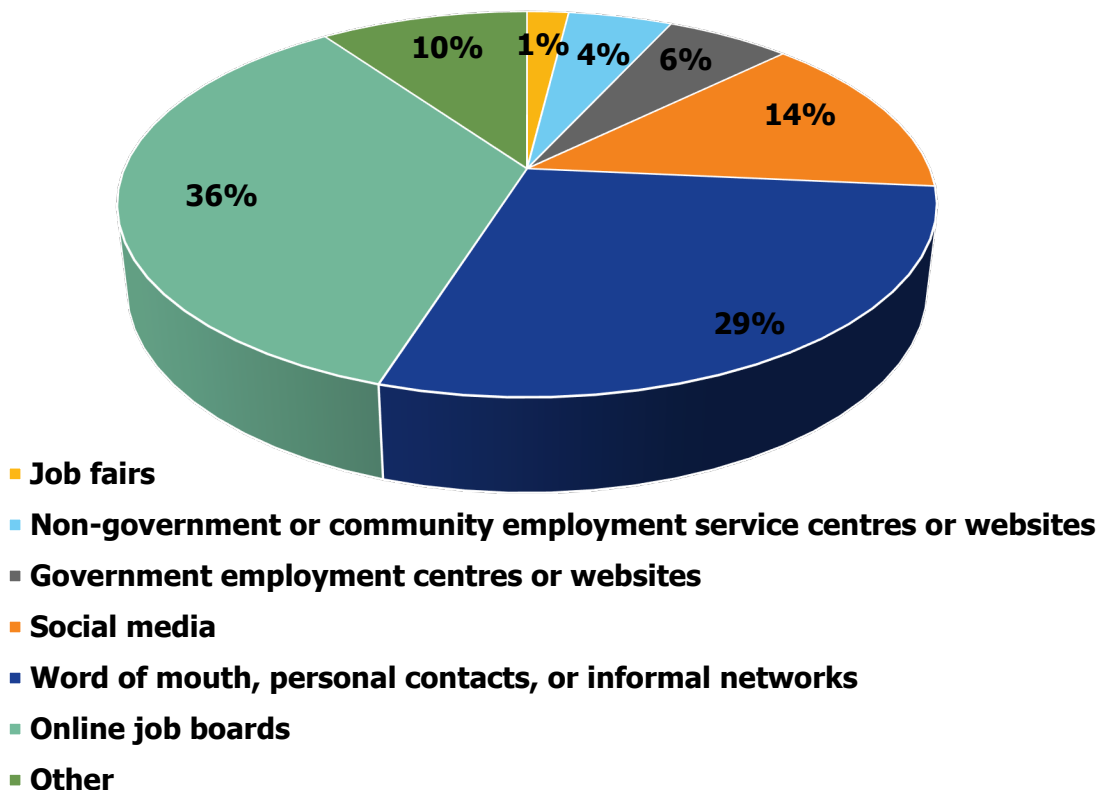
Recruitment

Recruitment trends show that online job boards were the most used hiring method with 36% of organizations using this method. Word of mouth, personal contacts, or informal networks followed with 29% of organizations using this method to recruit, while social media was the third most used at 14%.

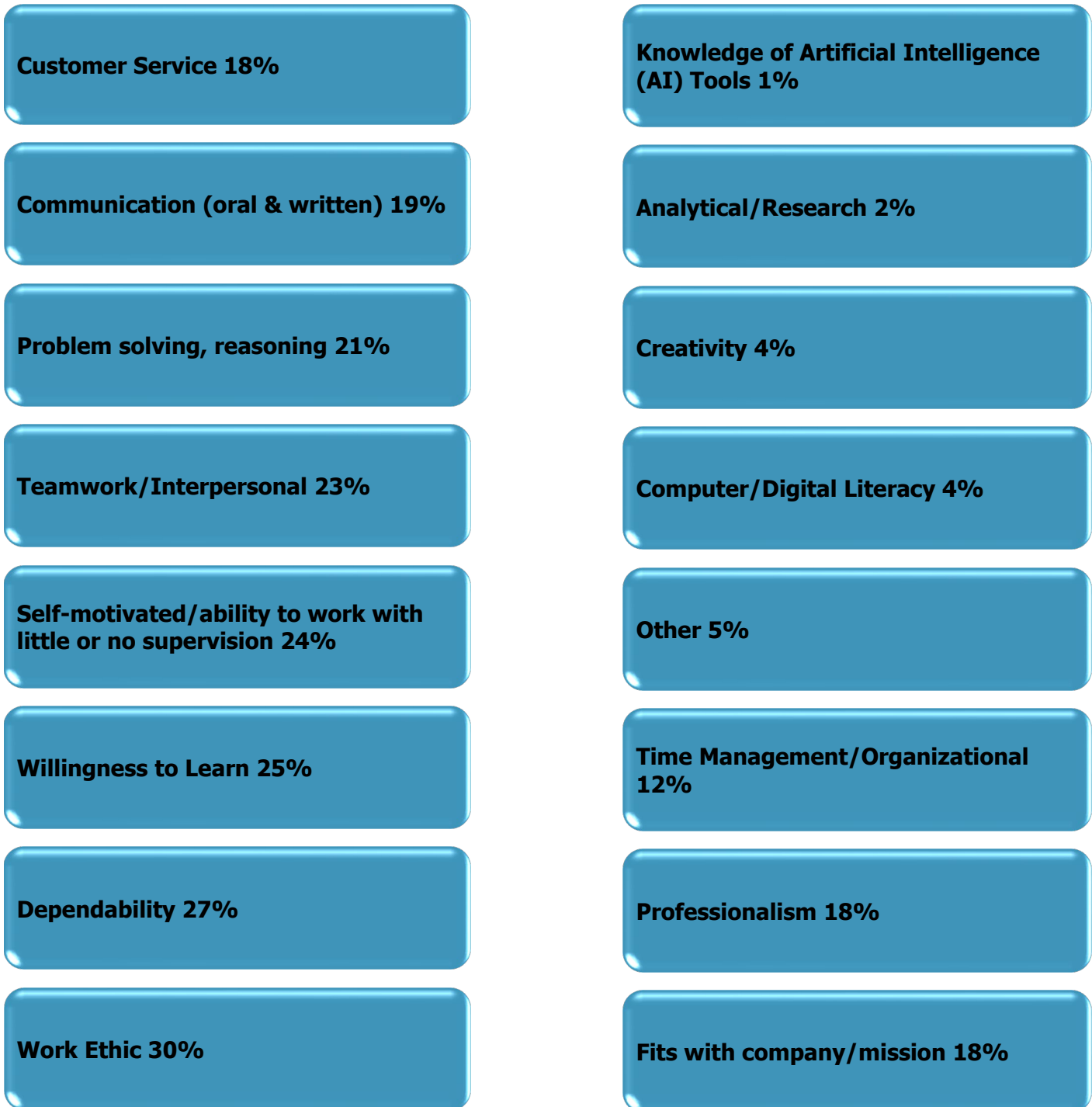
Methods that were used less frequently included government employment centres or websites by 6% of organizations and non-government or community employment service centres or websites were used by 5% of organizations and 2% used job fairs. Ten percent of organizations used other methods, including union halls, VidCruiter, Lambton College and their company websites. This trend toward digital hiring methods point to a shift local organizations are making to compete for available talent.

Employers in Sarnia Lambton rated the availability of qualified talent as excellent or good (56%). This represents an increase over the last two years where this figure was 52% in 2025 and 49% in 2024.

Figure 8: Methods Used for Recruitment



Businesses were asked to share the top three competencies they look for when recruiting employees. Thirty percent of employers value work ethic in employees and 25% look for dependability. Following closely in importance are willingness to learn and self-motivated/ability to work with little or no supervision at 25% and 24%, respectively. Interestingly, computer/digital literacy and knowledge of artificial intelligence (AI) were not among the top priority competencies identified, with only 4% and 1% of employers seeking these competencies.





Retention is a concern for 43% of businesses. This is a reduction from the previous year when retention concern was at 50%. Among the businesses concerned about retention, 21% were from the Healthcare and Social Assistance industry and 15% each from Education Services and Other Services (except public administration) industries.

When asked to share up to three strategies used to encourage recruitment, 31% of businesses have implemented regular increases in salary, 26% offer training opportunities and 23% recognize service and/or outstanding work.

Figure 9: Concerned about Retention

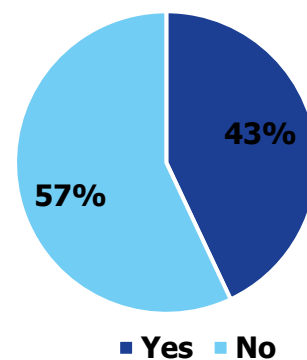
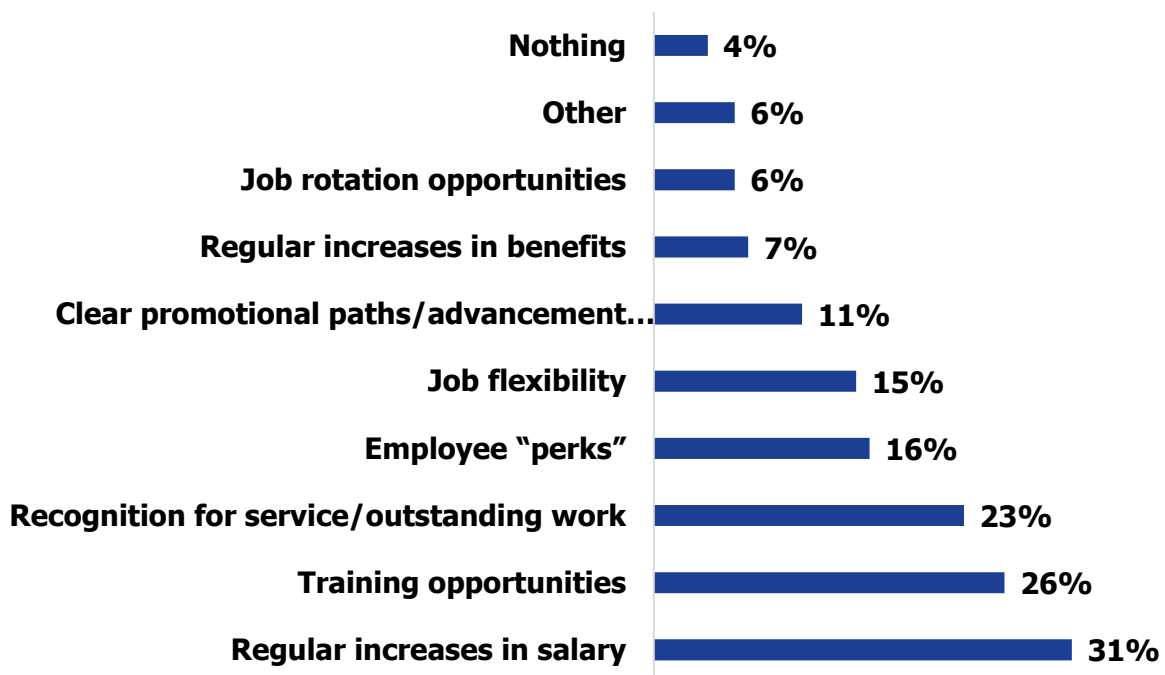


Figure 10: Strategies for Retention



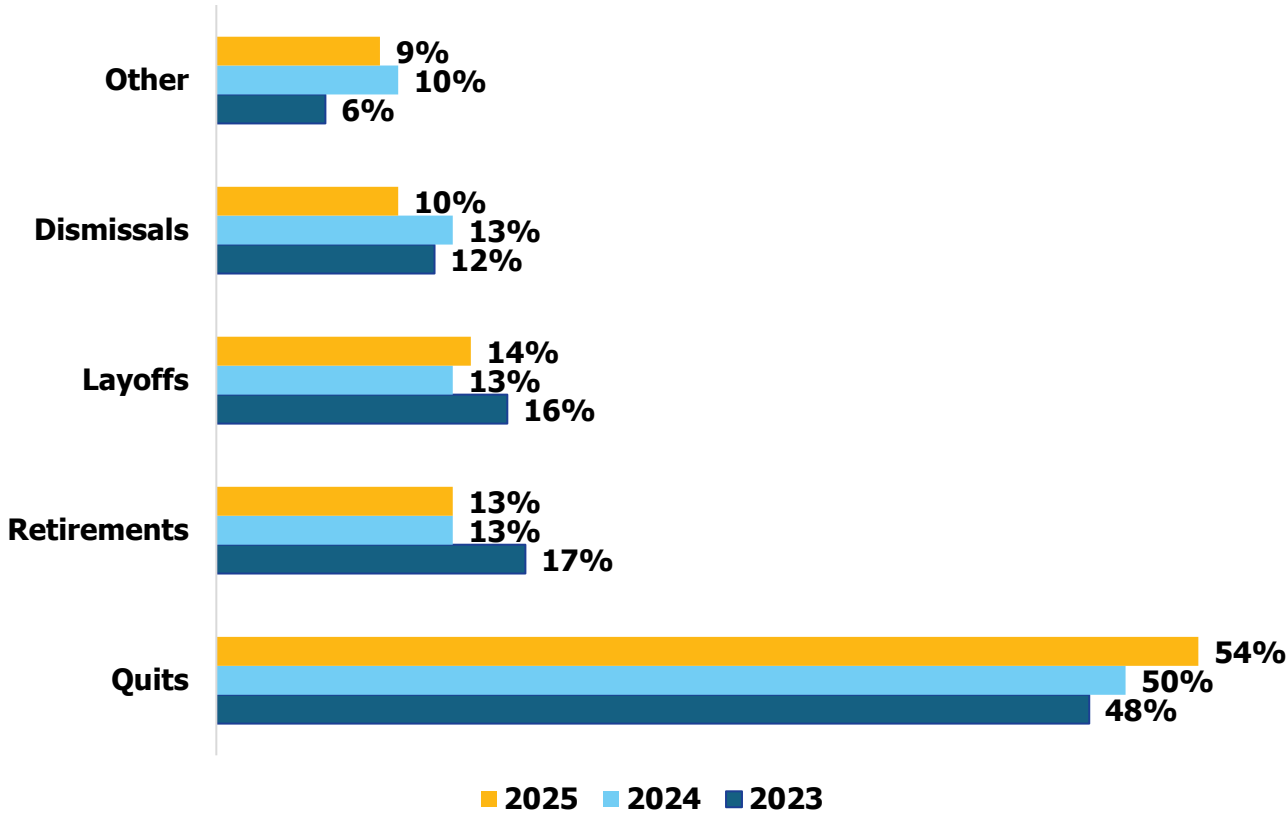
Separations



This year 301 respondents reported a total of 1,775 job separations, a decrease from last years 2,526 (n=323 responses). The industries with the highest number of separations include Healthcare and Social Assistance (31%), Other Services (except public administration) (26%) and Public Administration (15%).

Fifty-four percent of separations were due to employees quitting. This is an increase over the 2024 and 2023 figures of 50% and 48% respectively. The percentage of retirements have decreased from 13% to 10%, while the percentage of layoffs have remained stable at 13%. There was a slight increase in dismissals from 13% to 14% and a slight decrease of other separations (paid/unpaid protected leaves) from 10% to 9%.

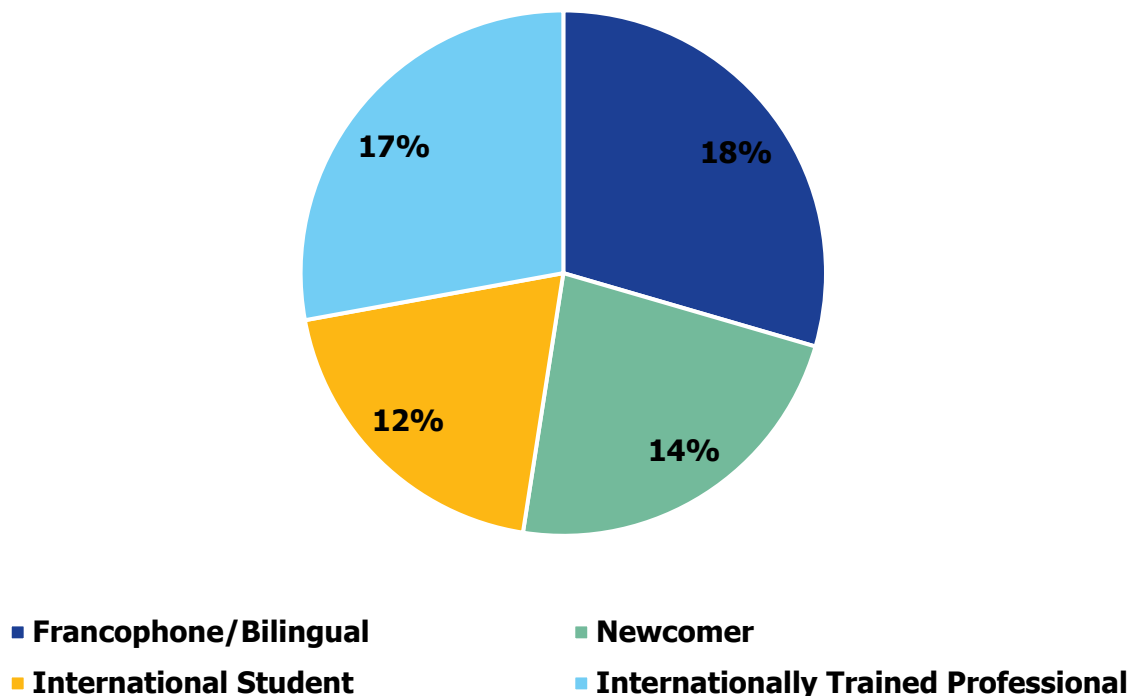
Figure 11: Separation Type by Year



International & Francophone Talent

Businesses were surveyed regarding the likelihood of hiring candidates who were francophone/bilingual, newcomers, international students or internationally trained professionals to meet their labour needs. Eighteen percent of businesses indicated that they are likely to hire francophone/bilingual workers, 17% are likely to hire internationally trained professionals, 14% are likely to hire newcomers and 12% international students. Thirty-nine percent of businesses did not think they would be likely to hire from any of the mentioned categories.

Figure 12 Intention to Hire Special Talent



Additional Feedback

Below are some of the additional comments or concerns respondents shared regarding the future of their business or industry.

Labour Shortages & Skills Gaps

- Concerns about retention, including employees leaving for opportunities that lead to permanent residency.
- A lack of skilled labour in the skilled trades, healthcare, construction, childcare and agriculture.
- Youth being discouraged from the trades or having unrealistic salary expectations without gaining skills or experience.
- Workers lacking basic skills such as writing, counting and communication.

Economic Uncertainty & Funding Concerns

- Concerns about US tariffs.
- Not sure of potential government cuts with looming elections.
- Changing business model/downsizing because of decreased demand and consumer confidence.
- Funding paused due to economic uncertainty.
- Ministry funding is being outpaced by inflation.

Other

- Industry specific concerns such as slow market adoption of a promising product.
- Non-profits' inability to offer competitive wages like larger businesses.
- Increased competition in the industry as more people try to supplement their income.
- Intention to sell or close their businesses.
- Investing in AI software to decrease future demand for administrative staff.



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[Provide feedback on the 2025-2026 EmployerOne survey Results](#)