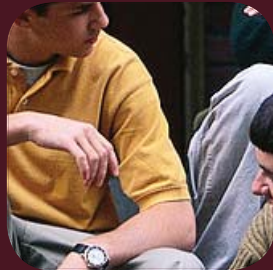


# The Imminent Workforce

A study of employment and our local youth.

June 2007



Prepared by



Funded in part by

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The transition from youth to adult, from school life to earning a living, is a decisive period in our lives. For many young people, this means a first entry into a competitive labour market with, relatively, fewer skills and less experience than adult workers, new to job search and unaware of the various job opportunities and paths open to them. For those who are prepared and able to make a successful transition – or series of transitions – it can mean a career and lifestyle involving personal fulfillment, one that also contributes to their families, their community and the economy. However, for youth who are not prepared with the right skills and education, the likelihood of experiencing periods of unemployment, job instability or unfulfilling employment are significant. For these youth, the experience of economic insecurity during their initial years in the workforce is common, sometimes leading to individual challenges and social consequences that may continue for much of their lives.

Since working generally means more than having a job – it involves being productive, contributing to society, making a living, ability to raise a family, personal fulfillment, paying taxes, enjoying social status – the importance of assisting the youngest members of our workforce takes on an elevated level of importance. Indeed, their future success will ultimately create the type of society we live in.

Youth, themselves, are not a single, homogenous group defined strictly by an age category. Within the common youth age grouping of 15-24 is found a mosaic of youth with as many differences as similarities. Youth in rural areas verses urban areas, teenagers in relation to young adults in their early twenties, university educated youth verses those who did not complete high school – all have unique characteristics in regards to their employment and career goals. They also have distinct needs at various times to support their entrance and advancement in the workforce.

Some youth may find themselves on the periphery of the labour market because they do not have the required skills or because the skills they do have are not in areas of high demand. Identifying skills shortages – both in the economy and at the individual level – can be a difficult and complex issue, dependant upon many factors involving the specific industry, range and type of occupations and local/regional economic situation. For example in the construction industry the demand for skilled

workers tend to be cyclical and seasonal in nature, since it is highly dependent on building starts, which relates to the state of the economy, making it difficult to predict definitive workforce needs over a period of time. When we add the complex components of an aging workforce and try to identify the future occupations which may be in demand but low in supply, the exercise of predicting today the type of skills that youth will need tomorrow, it becomes easier to understand why many youth do not have the information needed to determine the skills and training that will help lead them to better employment options in their future.

As a snapshot in time and place, we have attempted to capture some of the salient issues that impact the youth in our region who are attempting to become, and remain, active and successful members of the workforce. Many factors that impact the situation of youth in the workforce are systemic and societal in nature, both from a standpoint of the economic conditions of a particular region of study to the institutions, programs and legislation in place that is meant to prepare, support and steer young people into successful engagement. Isolating any one of the many factors in an attempt to find the 'silver bullet' that addresses youth unemployment is neither valid nor possible. Many interrelated, important and multi-level challenges exist, requiring a symmetrical and coordinated response from the many stakeholders who are tasked with trying to improve the lives and careers of young people, locally and across the nation.

Success in the workforce may be as much within the control of the individual as not, which should lead all stakeholders to ensure that areas which are not in youths control, but at the doorstep of society – services, training, education, legislation, programs – are functioning at the optimum level so as to minimize the barriers and challenges that young people face as they begin to blaze their own career trails.

Through this study – utilizing various research methodologies – a number of key issues came to the forefront as relates to youth employment/unemployment, preparation for, and engagement in, the workforce.

Upfront, we have attempted to capture and summarize the essence some of these key issues in the first section, Summary of Determinants, Factors & Indicators. Two sections that provide data and analysis on two important issues– Youth Migration

and Income & Dependency – are presented next. The results and analysis on specific issues that derived from the primary respondents to our research survey – youth, employers, and service providers – are then captured in the next sections of this report. The views and vantage points of our future workforce are captured and presented in a section that presents results of a survey conducted with local grade 12 students. We conclude with some recommendations and/or strategic directions that are meant to guide, or reinforce, areas that can assist in addressing key issues facing our local, and other, youth.

## ■ RESEARCH METHODS

To ensure broad involvement, input and responses to the research aspects of this project, a number of methodologies were used:

- Separate surveys were developed and targeted local employers, local youth and local youth agencies involved in training and employment.
- An online version of the youth survey was developed and available through the ECOTB website.
- A comprehensive literature review was conducted to capture and identify specific information and data relative to the subjects and concept of the study.
- Special, custom data purchases were made from Statistics Canada to support analysis of local conditions and indicators pertaining to youth migration, employment, income and government dependency.
- A separate, online survey for local grade 12 students was developed and made available through the ECOTB website.
- Numerous public events, information booths, marketing and survey packages were made available at various locations and dates throughout the region, including through our website.

Finally, as has been consistently noted by our organization, and others, one of the key challenges in conducting thorough research on various labour market, economic and employment topics is the limited availability and accessibility of adequate information. We have written various papers related to the various shortcomings, challenges and potential solutions for obtaining, collecting, purchasing and maintaining important local – and accessible provincial and national – labour market information of a variety of types. While too numerous and detailed to mention – and for which we invite you to contact us for further discussion or details – some of the key challenges that arise with research of the type conducted in this study are:

- Data that is out-dated, especially some key, local data that is only collected by government during Census period, which can leave a timeline gap of up to 7 years.
- High costs – leading to limitations to comprehensive research – to purchase special data sets and/or custom products from various government bodies, with Statistics Canada being the most prevalent ministry holding most LMI data.
- No local collection, reporting or data systems that provides data or analysis below an employment region level, that will allow for accuracy and any level of integrity, primarily with the serious limitations to the Labour Force Survey which is used for such items as employment and unemployment rates, youth unemployment, and labour force participation, to name some.
- Overall, a large void and lack of resources to support local labour market systems and data collection that could provide timely, current, affordable, accurate and local information for a variety of purposes including research.

If we are to better research, analyze and understand important and complex challenges facing our workforce and communities, and gain knowledge of solutions that are effective at addressing such challenges, we need to first support better, affordable, and consistent information through which solid research is possible.



### RURAL AND URBAN YOUTH

Though each rural area of Ontario has unique characteristics related to the makeup of its economy, workforce and youth population, a number of trends are more prevalent in rural areas which, for purposes of this study, have shown to have an impact on youth. Generally, rates of unemployment found in rural areas are higher than rates found in urban centres, both for youth and adults alike. Rural areas typically face economic and employment circumstances that present greater variables and volatility for engaged and potential workers. As a common thread for most rural areas, some of the consistent findings are:

- Youth unemployment rates are higher than the adult population in both rural and urban areas. Culminating from this, youth in rural areas – on the whole – have higher levels of unemployment and lower levels of workforce attachment than all other groups found in rural or urban centres.
- The duration of unemployment is longer in rural areas.
- At the same time, participation rates in the labour force are lower in rural areas.
- Rural residents are more likely to leave school early, with less of them obtaining a high school certificate than their urban counterparts.
- Those in rural areas are less likely to have a university degree versus urban populations.
- Rural areas are more limited in access to training, education and workforce development programs and institutions.

As highlighted in further sections, there are linkages and correlations across various issues that youth and adults face simply due to the nature of being in rural economies and communities. For instance, less employment options often translates into higher out-migration as youth leave to pursue options, usually found in urban centres. Or, given the fact of less post-secondary institutions being in rural settings, more youth leave for greener pastures to pursue education, while those who stay back – or cannot afford the growing costs of higher education – have less educational attainment opportunities. While many of the determinants of unemployment or underemployment are similar in both urban and rural areas, rural citizens face additional difficulties strictly due to geographic isolation, a narrower range of employment options, less industry and occupational

exposure, and limited training opportunities.

The simple fact of being 'rural', however, does not necessitate being faced with the disadvantages of each trend, or that it will affect all parts of a rural area to the same degree. For workforce and employment-related factors, however, the rural areas that have relied on high concentrations of primary industry for their economy (e.g. agriculture, manufacturing, forestry, mining) tend to experience more intense impact across many of the factors noted. For the region covered in this study, it would qualify as just such an economy which, to some extent, is and has been experiencing labour market adjustments and impacts due to economic conditions found in many of the primary industries. In numerous reports, we and others have documented the continual changes in the agriculture and forestry sectors that have seen significantly lower levels of employment and we are currently experiencing a downside shift in the local, manufacturing sector which will likely have a significant, ripple affect across the local economy in the same way it has on the provincial and national scene.

As greater numbers and percentages of the population continue to live and migrate to urban centres, the populations in rural areas simultaneously continue to represent less percentage of the overall population. We continue to see a general decline in the overall rural population which has carried with it a decline in the youth population – our critical current and future workforce.

Most studies also continue to show a shift in the type and location of employment opportunities, with as high as 75% of the job growth in the near future expected to occur in main urban centres and in occupations requiring a post secondary level of education.<sup>3</sup> These two important trends, should they prove true, may account for continual challenges for rural communities to maintain their youth who are seeking higher education and employment that may be prevalent in rural economies.

Statistics Canada data reveals a steady decline in youth populations in most rural communities and this trend is expected to continue.<sup>36</sup> A further outcome to this trend may result in limiting the supply of qualified workers for local businesses, exacerbating a challenge for the local economy and local businesses to maintain and build their operations. When combined with an ageing workforce, this decline of younger workers can interact with other factors to result in localized, industry-specific labour



shortages that can further compromise the local situation for both employers and youth.

It is important to note that this type of shortage situation is not due to the 'healthy' economic conditions resulting from high growth and industry demand, but rather is due to an 'unhealthy' condition of lower supply of workers being available in a dormant population base due to many working age residents – primarily youth – leaving the areas to pursue better employment opportunities.

Rural areas also need to recognize that this gap is often market driven, with shortages as equal or more the result of conditions of the industry or business (e.g. seasonal, part time, lower wages, contract employment) than it is the lack of qualified, available workers who are looking for adequate wages and greater full time employment opportunity.

### ■ EMPLOYMENT, UNEMPLOYMENT AND UNDEREMPLOYMENT

Generally, there is a negative correlation between age and unemployment, with younger Canadians finding themselves on the wrong side of the unemployment statistic. While higher youth unemployment rates are not a new concern, many studies indicate that there has been pronounced trend over the past decades: youth unemployment relative to that of adults has worsened since the recession of the early 1990's.<sup>38</sup> Though the unemployment rate for youth has cycled, and at times is actually less (in some provinces!) than during the noted recessionary years, the key is that progress on youth employment in relation to adult workers has not kept pace.

It is becoming clear that youth unemployment is not a single issue but a composite result of numerous factors and influences. The education levels of youth, the overall decline of youth available to meet the demand in the workforce, the level of economic activity in the country and a specific region, and the specific skills of workers all provide impacting factors on overall youth employment and unemployment.

While some of the determinants of low employment levels can be attributed to individual youth themselves (e.g. lack of skills, poor work ethic, lower education levels), most factors are beyond the demographic situation of simply being a youth and can be attributed to such socio-economic conditions as the overall economy, the local industry structure, cyclical employment trends, and even government policy and legislation.

Some of the consequences of high youth unemployment can be profound and far-reaching, such as:

- Reliance on government assistance in the form of social payments and services for short- and long-term in order to provide for their basic sustenance, with cyclical usage from generation to generation a potential outcome.
- Society loses its education / training investment in young people when their potential productivity is unused or underutilized.
- Unemployed - and underemployed - young people have less disposable income to spend on consumer goods and service, resulting in a negative impact on the overall economic situation.
- The individual's employability deteriorates since they are not building or improving their skills in the workplace.
- Personal savings may be reduced or eradicated, increasing the likelihood of the individual being financially dependent on their families or social programs.

Despite many programs and initiatives targeted directly at young workers, youth unemployment rates have not dropped significantly over the decades. The transition into the workforce poses some serious challenges for many youth, compounded by numerous factors such as economic conditions, state of the rural economies, and education levels to name a few.

All forecasts and research pertaining to the nature of impacts and factors that affect the overall economy and labour market point to a continuation of these structural realities. This, more than anything, means that attention by all stakeholders involved with youth – policy makers, service providers, educational providers, youth themselves – must work towards assisting those youth most susceptible to joblessness in face of the labour market realities by addressing circumstances that most affect their employment challenges.

The issue of employment options available to youth is another concern. The rate of youth of participation in the workforce began to decline in the 1990's, with a corresponding increase in non-standard work arrangements such as part time, contract and seasonal employment.<sup>22</sup> Globalization of the economy and advances in technology have also contributed to new work structures, skill sets and workforce demand, often resulting in a contraction of employment opportunities for many in the workforce, including a high percentage of youth looking at gaining entry for the first time.

The scarcity of 'good' secure and well paying

jobs has also required many youth to explore less traditional career paths and employment arrangements. Self employment is a viable employment option for many and, in some regions, may be a key direction for youth and others to obtaining employment and earning income. Local analysis from this study, however, along with previous study of trends in the region and some national research has indicated that, for many, self-employment in rural areas may pose high levels of challenge with low levels of success. While some youth have been very successful in self-employment, the overall economic feasibility is not encouraging as many are realizing income levels far below standard employment arrangements and, in fact, are often below or nearing levels associated with poverty-level income.

Other challenges identified that, even though youth who were involved in self-employment were seen to be committed, determined and willing to work long hours, they often endured a range of less positive experiences resulting from low earnings, lack of benefits (e.g. health, other medical) and access to other social benefits such as employment insurance coverage for such life events as maternity, parental leave and periods of unemployment for which their counterparts who are employed in conventional employment are usually eligible. Unfortunately, for many, self-employment is often a means of survival as opposed to a choice. The 'rewards' are not seen as compelling compensation for the additional 'risks' taken by those pursuing self-employment.

The structure of the job market in rural communities can create a situation that youth find discouraging for numerous reasons. Few rural communities benefit from the variety or size of employers found in urban centres. Industries and sectors in rural settings often do not offer the same diversity, choice and availability of job opportunities as their urban counterparts. While larger companies often provide many diverse positions, opportunities for advancement can be rare and often seniority plays a major role in the promotion of employees, relegating youth to entry level positions.

Local youth may have access to these jobs, but limited wages, shift work, and the inability for upward movement often deter them from seeking or staying in these positions. Although an entry level position does provide some amount of experience, youth may quickly feel they are ready for new challenges. The lack of opportunities for meaningful employment in rural communities not only promotes additional out-migration, and as noted in a recent local youth survey, although youth indicated a number of

contributing factors, the lack of positions which offered meaningful employment was the most compelling reason to leave the area.

The overall economic conditions found in a given rural area may present the most significant factor impacting unemployment and employment circumstances for youth. Lower job 'demand' in rural areas for workers due to a lower, or decreased, level of economic activity affects all job seekers, adult and youth alike. When demand is low, but the supply of workers is adequate or even high, adults are more likely to be hired due to their skills being more marketable and attractive to employers at a going wage rate, whatever that rate may be. Areas of high 'supply' of workers, in general, also tend to experience lower wage levels due to the availability and quantity of qualified workers. When there is a tight supply of workers, and higher demands, wages tend to increase.

Research indicates that youth tend to be the first laid off when there is an adjustment in the labour force, and are rehired last during times of economic turnaround in a labour market.<sup>38</sup> Higher levels of mobility and less attachment to the workforce amongst youth tends to reduce the overall size of the youth workforce and, by extension, can make adult workers more attractive to employers looking for a stable workforce with less turnover. Adults also tend to be the first hired in economic upturns as well, again due to their experience, productivity rates, and lower levels of mobility.

Longitudinal studies across many areas of the United States confirm that, even with government stimulus aimed at youth, there is a relatively small reduction in youth unemployment due to the general advantages and benefits employers tend to realize by hiring more experience adult workers over youth. In rural economies such as ours, where there are higher levels of unemployment and an available labour force of adults to draw from, many youth find themselves facing consistent competition with adults for available employment. Simply, regions experiencing lower economic activity across the diverse industries do not produce and maintain sufficient employment for the available workforce.

Also I regions such as ours, which experience higher levels of seasonal employment due to the nature of their economy and seasonal industries, there is usually a higher volume of employment during peak times of the year and a lower level of employment activity in non-peak months. Seasonal economies also experience higher levels of seasonal unemployment amongst youth. While numerous programs and incentives are often put in place by

government to stimulate employment for students – primarily during the summer months – this surplus of labour onto the market can often raise the youth unemployment levels as more people are available and seeking employment for a finite number of jobs. This is due to the fact that, while many youth may be returning to school after the summer, many are not and may experience prolonged unemployment as the availability of total jobs is lower, and competition higher, during this peak. Following such peak periods, there is often a drop-off in the overall job demand. Youth who reside in areas with significant seasonal employment also find themselves competing with adults after the peak season as it may be a core employment option for many adults.<sup>20</sup>

Underemployment is an often-used term that encompasses various components of assessment by researchers and individuals themselves. While there is no one widely accepted definition of underemployment – and it can be difficult to measure – it nonetheless is an important element in the overall makeup of the labour force. The following parameters are most commonly used to define and capture this term:

1. An inadequate number of hours worked, usually a person having less than full time hours per week but desiring more hours.
2. Mismatch of skills and education, where an individual's years of education are above the level needed for their current position, or they have significant skills or qualifications beyond those currently being used or required.
3. Low income -- individuals working full-time but at wages that have put them in the low-income category.<sup>28</sup>

While an analysis of underemployment in a labour market would require a separate study unto itself, this study did seek information and input from the main sources as to their assessment of their own, or the local youth, underemployment.

From youth themselves, there was clear indication that underemployment based on parameter<sup>1</sup> above was impacting them. First, the majority of youth (52%) were employed part time, but more than 74% of this group were seeking full time. A total of 47% of youth worked less than 24 hours per week, with 28% being less than 10 hours. More specific factors related to amount of work hours can be found later in the report.

Relative to parameter 3 above, we have provided a detailed section further on outlining income levels for local youth which, in summary, are well below the average worker in the region who, in turn, are often

well below the provincial average. Specific to the high out-migration of youth in the region, the main reasons given are to seek full time employment, higher earnings, and more career options.

In regards to parameter<sup>2</sup> above, when youth commented on their perspectives of a mismatch of skills, 53% said they were not working in their field of study. The majority (68%), however, felt there was some opportunity for career advancement in their place of work, though it may not always be their field of study.

Finally, agencies supporting youth were specifically asked to comment on the percentage of young people they support who they feel are underemployed – based on level of skill or education – once they have found employment. The majority of service providers (67%) felt that up to 25% of youth gaining employment were underemployed, while 22% of providers felt that up to 50% were underemployed. Again, though not a comprehensive analysis, from the standpoint of youth themselves and many of the service agencies that provide employment support, a significant level of underemployment exists in the region amongst youth who have already obtained employment.

There exists a perceived paradox in that youth continue to experience a higher unemployment and underemployment rate than average, while at the same time employers face current and forecast shortages of skilled workers. On one side, in a recent study by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business of small and medium sized businesses in the private sector, it was found that a high proportion of firms indicated that 'worker indifference and poor work attitudes' were partially responsible for firms having difficulty filling vacancies. Not finding enough, or enough of the properly qualified and motivated employees, continues to be a common theme from employers across most sectors and geographies. On the other side, many studies continue to show that certain working conditions such as seasonal employment, lower wages, part time employment and limited to no health benefits contributes to inability to find, and retain, employees. Further factors, such as certain stigmas attached to certain occupations, or lack of awareness by youth of the range of occupational opportunities, can also contribute to gaps, barriers and the overall 'mismatch' of jobs to qualified/ interested workers.

Ultimately, the issues facing rural youth are not the main problems, but rather represent symptom of other, external factors and determinants – it is a broad, community issue. Highest on the list are

the economic conditions in the rural area which can either provide significant and sustainable employment and income levels for youth or not. If not, the community will continue to be impacted by youth having to leave the region for greater employment and wages and jobs related to their education levels, or staying and being faced with less opportunities for higher earnings, less career advancement in their fields, and less disposable income by which to purchase homes, services and products in the local area.

## ■ EDUCATION, TRAINING & SKILLS

Students in rural areas of Canada may be falling behind their urban counterparts. Recent research has identified some of the key situation and trends experienced by rural youth as it relates to education, which include:

- High school drop-out rates are significantly higher in rural areas (16.4%) than in urban areas (9.2%).
- Rural students are achieving lower marks than urban students in the key subject areas of math, reading and science.
- The proportion of adult workers (25-44) who have some post-secondary education is slightly over 60% in urban areas, and slightly below 50% in rural areas.<sup>4</sup>

In fact, in a recent study of OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation Development) countries, Canada was found to be the worst with respect to the rural-urban gap of education levels in the workforce. As this and other studies have continued to note, lower educational levels can limit the range of employment options for youth (and all workers), and simultaneously reduce the availability of skilled workers in a local economy. What is clearly a consistent pattern is that those who have less education and training, and are less skilled, will be less attached to the workforce, have higher levels and longer durations of unemployment, and will usually make lower wages than their average counterparts in the workforce.<sup>33</sup>

It is clear that, in general, workers who possess higher levels of education and higher levels of skill fare better in the workforce. While much research has identified the higher, lifetime earnings – on average – that person A with a university degree will make over person B with only high school level education, the issue facing youth and all workers is much broader and deeper. Everyone can name the entrepreneur who did poorly in school but has

succeeded beyond most as measured by income, just as we know of those with Phd.'s who are in the lower levels of income. The right education and the right skills in the right place, and often at the right time, can be significant factors that contribute to success in the workforce beyond any recognized academic certification.

Despite higher levels of unemployment amongst youth, the unemployment rate among youth with university degrees has either remained the same or declined over the past decades. Those with only high school levels or less have seen increases in unemployment rates during the same period. Similar impacts on the two groups can be found in the wages and earnings, with university level youth seeing stability and favourable increases in real median full-time earnings over the recent years, while those without post-secondary have experienced a decline in the same earnings category.

The impact of education levels – which also translate to skill levels – cannot be overstated as one of the key factors affecting youth employment. Despite current trends that identify a declining youth population across Canada, the numbers of young people enrolling in post-secondary education has increased. While some of this trend can be attributed to poor labour market conditions in some areas, the positive sign is that many young people are recognizing the benefits and importance of higher levels of education and skills for succeeding in the workforce.

Current trends show a delay in students entering the workforce because of extended time pursuing post secondary education. For these youth, late entry into the labour market is not necessarily a negative as it is a result of staying in school longer. At the same time, there are considerable numbers of students leaving school before attaining their secondary school diploma, particularly in rural areas. Less educated workers and/or early school leavers account for 43% of the total number of unemployed youth with an unemployment rate of 22.7%, 1.5 times the annual unemployment average for all youth.<sup>4</sup>

Though data shows results and differences of some educational challenges faced by rural youth, the determinants and contributing reasons for such outcomes are less clear and often point to broader social, cultural and family factors. Why, for instance, are young males substantially more likely than females to drop out of school at nearly every age group? Some point to the tradition – or economic and family need – in many rural areas of males

taking over the family business, especially in such industries as agriculture. While this may limit the educational attainment of this group, the positive aspect is that they are employed at an early age, contributing to their own and their family's income, and are working in the adult workforce gaining important skills and experience.

Other factors contributing to less education attainment can be found in socio-economic conditions facing a greater number of rural families. Given the lower levels of family income that are found in rural areas, many families simply cannot afford the cost of post-secondary education. Aside from the familiar, high costs of college or university, rural youth who leave their community have added costs, such as accommodation, that many urban students don't face. The family home is often the residence used by urban students who are attending education as it is within a commuting distance, something not available to most rural students.

Personal and social adjustments by rural youth to the new, different and challenging environment often found in urban centres and large universities is also a significant factor affecting successful completion of post-secondary education. While many individuals thrive or adopt effectively, rural youth on the whole have more adjustments to be made in coping with such dramatic changes in their personal lives and, simultaneously, have less of a support network at hand from their family, friends and peers to assist with such adjustments.

Further, the existing situation found in rural communities and families may play a large part in affecting the goals and motivations for higher levels of education. Many adults in rural areas have, themselves, not attained a post-secondary level of education, which can impact their degree of support, value, recognition and modeling for such education attainment. As important, if the type and level of jobs found in rural areas requires lower levels of education and training, many youth do not see the advantages or need to pursue higher education.

There is one important caveat to add, however, relative to educational attainment in rural youth. While statistics and research show that those youth who live in rural areas, in general, have not attained the higher levels of education in the same amount as urban youth, the statistics do not capture the full circumstances. Rural youth who leave to urban centres, and achieve higher levels of education but do not return to rural areas, are not counted in rural statistics. Only those who left, and returned, would qualify in most of the data and research. Therefore, while it may imply that the proportion of rural youth

still existing in rural areas may have lower levels of post-secondary education, such statistics do not include the many rural youth who did achieve such levels but did not return to their hometown. A main message to reinforce here is that, while factors in rural areas contribute to the opportunities available to youth wishing to pursue post-secondary education, there are no factors limiting the capability and success of rural youth who do gain access to higher education.<sup>3</sup>

In rural communities that have experienced higher-than-average levels of enrolment and participation in post-secondary education by their youth, the overall structure of post secondary education programs and courses was an important element. For example, some provinces have implemented articulation agreements between colleges and universities, using various models but with the primary factor being that students can take courses at a college and transfer to a university in later years. Recent research has shown that, while this may have increased access and resulting attendance of rural youth in post-secondary studies, it doesn't always result in greater completion of a university degree. Those students, however, who were not part of an articulation agreement but negotiated transfers on an individual basis, were often more likely to complete the course of study that they had begun. The key message is that flexible options and opportunities to meet the unique needs of rural youth must be put in place to support improvements in post-secondary applications and completions.

While numerous benefits exist in many rural secondary educational setting and institutions – smaller class sizes, greater community involvement, civic involvement and connections by students – some barriers and challenges have been identified in rural areas regarding factors and determinants of educational attainment, such as:

- Recruiting and retaining qualified teachers in small, rural schools.
- Limitations in offering specialized courses with the correspondingly 'specialized' educators.
- Limitations to the availability, and application, of current information and communication technology, for reasons of overall cost effectiveness and lack of access to necessary levels of high speed connectivity in most rural schools.
- Limitations to certain types of courses and curriculum given the lower levels of student enrolment and/or availability in rural areas.
- A correlation to the local economic conditions



and perceived demand for higher-education positions in rural areas which can directly affect the interest and awareness of youth in identifying and pursuing various occupations.

- A profile and belief that those pursuing higher education and careers need to leave rural areas for urban centres.<sup>4</sup>

Such situations faced by rural schools at the secondary level are known to have impacts on rural youth but, importantly, relate more to the characteristics and conditions of the system as opposed to the students. Limitations to curriculum, resources or support services in rural schools is often a matter of lower economies of scales, thereby creating need for various types of amalgamation whose outcomes may result in the closings of smaller schools, creating larger geographic boundaries to be able to sustain certain programs and requiring longer bus rides for students to attend certain programs. As has occurred in the region – and will likely continue – the lower numbers of students in the region who are of elementary and secondary school age may result in further school closings and other types of amalgamations.

Exposure of students to a broad range of employment options, varying types of professions and career opportunities, and the general makeup of the workforce in the local economy also play a role in affecting the educational attainment, interests and pursuits of young people. If communities have limitations to a broad range and scope of professionals, businesses and business leaders who can offer insight and the opportunity to gain career awareness for young people, rural youth may be less inclined to pursue such employment avenues. One particularly creative approach to this challenge occurred in Iowa, where a banking institute actually opened a real, small branch in a rural, elementary school. Students were fully involved in learning a range of financial and business skills, which linked directly to the many math, literacy and computer literacy skills, and numerous 'soft' skills, required in business and customer service. This is a prime example of the exponential benefits that can be realized through business-education partnerships where all parties – especially students – can benefit.

Access to technology is another area of concern in many rural schools. Aside from the budgetary restrictions and/or economies of scale that may exist for rural schools to acquire the latest technology, the simple lack of some capacity and infrastructure in rural communities poses a significant challenge. While some see the range of technology jobs and a technological economy as being a potential way

for rural economies to minimize lost jobs and grow new companies, others are concerned that without strategic investment in such technologies in rural areas, further declines and employment shifts away from rural areas to urban centres will continue to occur.

In the information age, the role of technology and computer literacy continues to be paramount for people and communities. If distance education, for example, is even to be an option which can provide a way to 'level' the playing field between urban and rural educational access, the technology infrastructure needs to be in place to also support these newer methods for delivering education.

Further, the need for rural schools to provide access to, and education in, a range of technology and information technology areas will be critical if rural students are going to compete in the future in the various technology fields and jobs, no matter where these jobs exist. This will mean investments by communities, companies and schools alike if rural areas are to be able to respond and take advantage of the growing and changing technological economy through availability of adequate physical, and human, capital.

Research has shown that the overall level of education in a community is also a factor in the educational success of the area youth. The Canadian Council on Learning studied the difference in communities with varying education levels. In communities where the majority of employment required lower levels of education, the overall reading performance among 15 year olds was correspondingly lower. While recognizing compounding variables, such as economic status and family environment, they conclude that a 15 year old, given the same environmental situation to account for any other variables, will be a better reader in an urban centre. They attribute this to the influence of a more educated populace, particularly a higher percentage of those with university degrees. Some theorize that youth perform better when they perceive the promise of attainable and meaningful employment. Communities with a more highly educated population offer students both this positive perception towards future employability, as well as role models that can guide youth's interests and prospects.<sup>4</sup>

Another important 'gap' in educational opportunities in rural areas is the lack of post secondary institutions. It is rare, for instance, to find universities in rural settings. As a result, most interested and motivated youth are forced to move to urban centres to pursue a post-secondary education. This, we

know, is one of the key contributors to youth out-migration. What rural areas have continued to face, however, is an inability to attract youth back to their core areas, primarily due to the limitations that may exist in rural communities for jobs, especially full time, sufficient wage jobs.

The 2001 Census (again, the 2005 Census results were not released at time of report) revealed that locally, when youth between the ages of 20-29 were classified by education levels, 17% had not completed high school, while 21% had achieved a high school diploma. In total, 20% of the population had completed or achieved some level of a university degree, which compared unfavourably to 33% of the Ontario average. The one positive is that a higher percentage of the local population had achieved part of, or their entire, college diploma, resulting in 40% for the region against the Ontario average of 30%. All projections show that the overall educational requirements and the workforce demand for skilled workers in the national and global economy will create an even greater disparity between the educated and the less educated jobseekers.

It is extremely important, however, to emphasize that rural schools have many benefits unto themselves and, in many cases, may actually be more effective than urban schools. Some areas in which rural schools may perform better relate to the benefits of smaller classroom sizes, students having higher levels of participation in extracurricular activities, are more linked and supportive of their peers, are more linked and involved in community-related activities, and are within families who tend to have more contact and involvement in a particular school and with the education system. While much research tends to focus on the averages and general findings across populations, it must be remembered that many rural youth are at the highest levels of achievement in the education system and are equalling – and exceeding – students in many urban centres who, themselves face various challenges related to their socio-economic, environmental and local school conditions.<sup>36</sup>

The status of rural schools is closely linked to the economic viability of the local community. To the extent that these rural communities are able to improve the economic conditions they face – for all workers – the greater the chances of increasing the overall quality and sustainability of the schools. Given the direct linkage and significance of education to higher levels of success in the workforce, the need to ensure all youth have access to equitable education and training will be paramount

in beginning to make improvements to the employment/unemployment situation facing youth, especially rural youth who may face increased gaps in terms of accessing and pursuing higher levels of education.

It must be clearly understood, however, that there is “nothing intrinsic to rural setting that precludes successful education outcome”, as noted by the Canadian Council on Learning. Similarly, there is nothing intrinsic in rural youth that prevents equal levels of achievement in higher education. Better outcomes and higher educational attainment in rural areas is inherently achievable with proper supports and resources for the community, the youth and the various systems that support education and learning. In a true learning mode, urban schools can also learn from the valuable attributes, knowledge and innovative ways that rural areas support and achieve healthy and vibrant education and school systems for their youth.

## ■ MIGRATION

There are numerous reasons why youth migrate, both from rural to urban centres, from one province to another, and at times out of the country altogether. In Ontario, the majority of youth tend to migrate to large, urban centres from rural areas and smaller, urban centres. The lure of the big city is a definite factor and ultimate destination for many of Canada’s youth. Based on 2001 Census analysis conducted by Statistics Canada (note: 2006 statistics were not available at time of report), youth aged 15 to 29 were far more mobile than the rest of the population. Reasons cited were typical of such migration at this stage of life, namely for reasons of enrolling in post-secondary education, expanding their life experiences, leaving due to marriage, and the largest percentage to join – or attempt to join – the workforce.

Perhaps most extraordinary was the fact that, between 1996 and 2001, “one-half (50.2%) of the nation’s total population of young adults aged 15 to 29 moved.” Of this group, 5.2% of the people changed province or territory. For their destination, of all youth who did migrate, the three cities of Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver were the prime cities of choice, with more than 200,000 youth migrating to these urban centres. Along with their rural counterparts, smaller urban centres also saw young people leave their centres and migrate to one of these three cities. Of all migration, these cities acquired 1 in 3 young people who left their existing areas from all parts of the country, resulting in a net



gain of new youth for these cities of over 67,000 youth.<sup>28</sup>

Rural communities experience a higher rate of youth migration and much lower rates of return than do urban centres. While urban youth primarily migrate to other urban centres when they do leave, they rarely migrate to rural areas. It is estimated that less than 25% of the rural youth who leave their community will return to the same community within 10 years. According to Statistics Canada, for a five year period beginning in 1996, for instance, for youth strictly in the 15-19 age group, 30% left their rural communities compared to just 18% of their urban counterparts. Of the youth in this age group who left, it was estimated that just 56% returned to live in their original community 10 years later.<sup>36</sup>

Additionally, when youth do return to their home community, youth themselves have noted that it can carry a stigma of failure. Research shows youth often feel like they have failed, or are perceived by others as not having been able to 'make it' in the big city. Conversely, those that do not leave are sometimes viewed as being less motivated, less skilled or lacking higher training and education. While youth may recognise the benefits of their rural community for aspects related to raising a family, these benefits are not as much of a priority as with adults. Priorities for youth such as education, employment and social opportunities seem to be linked to youth's attraction to urban centres, with rural communities seeming less appealing from these standpoints.

Youth migration from rural communities is, and should be, of concern for rural communities. While the net loss of youth from an area is not strictly a negative for the youth or the remaining workforce (i.e. less competition for existing positions), this continuing trend in face of both existing shortages and an aging workforce poses challenges to the very economies and conditions found in many rural areas.

In this study area, the out-migration trend over the recent 5 year period has been a negative one, with many more youth leaving the area than remaining or returning. In every year encompassing 2000 to 2005, each of Hastings, Prince Edward and Lennox & Addington counties experienced a net-loss of their youth population in the critical age group of 18-24. (Full details on migration can be found in a later section of the report).

Of particular concern is the general loss of highly qualified youth who, often, tend to be those who leave to pursue higher education and often remain in urban areas or, in the case of those involved

in apprenticeship, leave to find more secure, year-round and higher paying jobs that are more abundant in urban centres. It is known that those with higher levels of education tend to be more mobile, and trends have shown that some rural communities have experienced positive migration of this higher-educated group who, also, are often found in the 25-44 age categories. While these educated demographic groups often bring with them considerable experience, skills, wealth and higher income levels, one of the main reasons they migrate to rural areas in the first place is the prevalence of positive, economic conditions for themselves and their families.

During the past decades, numerous rural areas have seen various turnarounds from net-loss to net-gain and back again to loss in regards to youth out-migration. Some rural areas with growing and stable economies have experienced positive trends in retaining their existing youth and attracting those from other areas, both urban and rural. This is an important factor for rural areas, as the ability to produce and provide sufficient employment, and the opportunity for secure and high paying jobs for some, is one of the main determinants for retaining youth and attracting others who are likely to have higher education, skills and capital.

For all youth, the decision to leave a rural area to pursue their goals in urban centres does not always come easily. Indeed, both those who 'stay' and 'leave' face similar challenges in making the decision, as most retain strong ties to their communities and often have strong community connections and family values. Faced with a potential of lower wages, lower lifetime earnings, less employment certainty, and other social conditions such as lower access or quality of health care, many youth opt to leave but do so begrudgingly. Others who perceive the urban tradeoff as also involving such things higher crime and rates of violence, differing cultures and values, housing affordability, and high rents found in urban centres, may make the decision to stay in rural areas and accept the known challenges and circumstances. The economic and educational opportunities, however, appear to be key determinants and factors in the decision-making of most rural youth, for which urban centres are often perceived as offering more of both.

We cannot, however, make blanket statements about the desire of rural youth to migrate away from their home communities and rural regions. As noted in our study, most youth desire the rural lifestyle and have close ties to their communities. Most youth surveyed are looking to find employment and settle

in the local area. Even students who themselves have ‘migrated’ to the area to attend one of our local colleges are interested in establishing themselves in the local workforce. Like numerous adults who have realized the various benefits and chosen to relocate to rural areas, or return during their later years, these same benefits are as enticing and positive for young people.

Perhaps as best captured by the OECD study, “socially and culturally, rural areas are perceived as offering their residents many special benefits including a more cohesive community life, less crime and congestion, and better access to natural recreation. Many rural areas host rich, sometimes ancient cultural and artisanal traditions that cannot be transferred or recreated elsewhere.” Most noteworthy, even though rural family incomes are less on average than urban families, “fewer rural than urban families fall below Statistics Canada low-income cutoff”.<sup>34</sup>

It may be that, if facts and perspectives such as this were more known and promoted, the advantages of rural life may be seen by youth in a different light, leading more to tip the scale towards staying than leaving, or returning if they do leave. However, while many youth have a strong, community attachment and most would like to stay in their home region, the realities of the need to gain sufficient and sustainable employment will usually tip the scale to the economic regions that can meet this need.

## ■ INCOME & WAGES

As a direct result of factors and conditions that exist in, and affect, rural areas – to a greater or lesser degree in a specific rural community – the income levels for rural adults and youth are less than those found in urban areas. For the most part, these lower income levels apply to all forms of employment, from conventional paid employment to self-employment, and for part time to full time to contract positions.

As we have noted in previous findings over the past 8 years, income levels for the local area have trailed the provincial average by varying amounts, some being quite significant. As a summary, the following comparisons of employment-related income apply to the most current data available from the 2004 tax year and include all age groups:

- Average annual employment income (all types of employment) for the region (\$29,609) was 74% of the Ontario average (\$38,266), with the northern part of the region trailing even more with only 62% (\$23,840) of the provincial average.

- Average annual wage and salary income (conventional paid employment) was 76% (\$29,339) of the provincial average (\$38,49), again with the northern region experiencing a lower level (\$25,739) which was 66% of the province.
- The average, self-employment income for the region was only \$11,809, representing 61% of the provincial average, with a corresponding lower level in the northern part of \$6,629, or only 34% of the province.

The correlation between lower youth income levels compared to the general workforce continues to be found in most rural areas, including this region and study area. The important linkage between the overall, economic conditions remains a critical determinant to the income levels – and overall employment levels – found in areas, both rural and urban. Most levels of income for youth continue to trail the general workforce levels for the same, defined geography being measured. (Greater details on income and wage levels can be found further in the report).

In summary, however, comparison of youth wages to the provincial averages – and indeed to the existing local workforce – produce the same outcome, namely that youth are trailing the rest of the local workforce. Given the lack of funds to acquire even greater detail of data for this report, we were not able to isolate youth in our region in comparison to youth in urban centres; however, given the local findings from our region that are consistent with research findings that have focused on rural-urban comparisons, youth in our region will likely – and significantly – trail in income levels to most urban areas.

While full details can be found in the Income and Dependency section, in summary are the following facts relative to local youth (18-24) income and dependency:

- Employment income is only 32% of the provincial average, and 43% of the local workforce average, and comes in at \$12,406.
- Social Assistance dependency rates for youth in the region are 110% higher than the region as a whole, and 351% higher than the provincial average.
- Employment Insurance dependency rates for youth are 53% higher than the regions average and 106% higher than the provincial average.
- Youth self-employed income (exclusively – no other source of employment income) was an



average of \$4,803. This amounts to only 41% of the regional self-employment average (\$11,809) and only 25% of the provincial average (\$19,324).

As has been noted, various conditions and factors found in rural areas that affect overall employment, out-migration, etc., also impact the important issue of incomes and wages. Some of the key determinants contributing to lower income levels, overall, include some of the following:

- Less total employment and job opportunities across the region relative to the working age population.
- More seasonal employment and more sectors requiring seasonal work.
- Less diversity and range of employment demand in occupations that tend to attract higher income levels, such as finance, business, and technology-based sectors.
- Less diversity and availability of some occupations within the various sectors that tend to attract higher wages, especially those positions requiring university level education.
- Decreasing levels of employment in some primary industries which often pay higher wages matched with decreasing levels of service industry employment, which historically offer lower wage levels.
- Lower levels of education attainment at most levels, from high school to university.

Of particular note, much research has found a correlation between levels of education and its relation to a number of factors pertaining to employment and the level of income and associated lifetime earnings. In regards to the final bullet point above, it is important to 'quantify' the meanings, and potential significance, of educational levels as they relate to this, and other, rural areas.

Cause and effect are important elements when linking the general education levels and income/employment situations in a given rural geography. First, we have noted some key factors, such as costs to attend post-secondary which pose barriers to many in rural areas, given the lower incomes and potential higher costs (accommodation). Another factor relates to the out-migration of youth to attend post-secondary education, taking them away from rural areas where they often remain as they seek, and find, employment that is related to their study and/or with better conditions than they can find in their home area (e.g. full time employment, higher wages).

Some of the findings that link education and income levels in a rural economy, however, focus on two other important factors. First, if the given economy does not have a high demand for workers who possess higher levels of education, many residents and young workers will make the decision not to pursue it as it may not be required to gain access to the labour market. Hence, the less demand for post-secondary, the less the supply of local workers who see the need – or any benefits – for pursuing it.

Second, if the rural economies are typically made up of sectors and occupations that do not have a prominent level of occupations that often produce higher salary levels (e.g. business and finance vs. service industry), than the general wages in an area may, by extension, be lower. As we have stressed, it is not simply the fact that people in rural areas do not have higher education and therefore lower wages, but the local situation is greatly influenced by the fact that the demand, and type, of employment conditions in the area do not require the same levels of higher education, so many citizens do not seek it as a means for gaining greater employment and wages.

According to Statistics Canada's monthly survey of labour markets, for February 2007 Ontario youth aged 15-24 had average hourly earnings of \$11.01. It was also noted that the highest proportion of surveyed youth were in the sales and service sector with an average wage of \$13.47 hourly. Those employed in occupations requiring post secondary education reported significantly higher wages. For example, workers in the health occupations averaged \$24.57 hourly, in natural and applied sciences averaged \$29.21 hourly, and in management occupations was \$33.62 hourly. This points, again, to the trend that higher education levels typically equates to greater earning potential.

When we delve into the survey responses of youth, there is consistency with findings across other research as it relates to factors affecting incomes and wages for rural youth. In general, the local youth responses identify that:

- The majority of respondents were only working part time (52%), with hours ranging from 10-24 hours per week.
- 74% of respondents who were working part time were looking for full time employment.
- Of all respondents, 52% were making \$15,000 or less annually.
- Of those working full time, 49% were earning \$30,000 or less annually.

- The majority (53%) were not working in their field of study.
- For those considering employment outside the region, 51% stated the reason was more job opportunities than locally, 30% to earn more money, and 22% due to not enough full time work in region.

Hourly wages and lifetime earning potential for youth have been also declining, which means that the average wages of youth can often approach, or be below, the poverty line or low-income cutoff level. As a result, consumer spending opportunities such as owning a home becomes an impossibility. Even renting becomes extremely difficult, if not unlikely. Many youth are often forced to stay, or return, to their parent's homes to live. In recent Statistics Canada report almost 57% of young adults lived with their parents. This is a significant increase from the 1991 census where 43% lived with their parents. In 2002 young people between the ages of 18 – 24 represented the largest low-income group in Canada at 22%.<sup>40</sup>

Youth aged 15 to 29 earn less than adults and these lower earnings and ineligibility for income support programs such as Employment Insurance and Social Assistance may put youth at higher risk of poverty. Increasing tuition fees are making it more difficult for youth, particularly low income, to access post-secondary education and training. Youth have a higher rate of part time work than the adult working population. Working part time can be a convenience for those who require flexibility for

school and other commitments. In other situations youth are employed as part time employees but working full time hours. In this situation youth are being deprived of advantages that come with full time status, including health benefits and company pension plans.

The minimum wage rate is particularly relevant to youth employment. Most wage legislation is provincially controlled. Minimum wage workers are often characterized as being unskilled, untrained and in many cases less attached to the labour force. As a result less experienced youth must compete with more experienced workers for employment. Some argue that where youth rates are similar to those of adults, employers will generally choose the older more experienced worker, even at minimum wage rates. This argument supports the use of a lower minimum wage for young workers to encourage their entry into the workforce. In response, some provinces have established 'sub-minimum' wage rates (minimum rates for certain categories of workers such as young workers). The intent of such rates is to reduce the level of competition youth face with adults. In some cases, however the rate applies only for employees under 17-18 years of age. Critics of this point to the fact that in many OECD countries the relative wage rates of young people fell during the 1990s while youth unemployment rates rose.<sup>33</sup> This would imply that reducing youth wages in order to cut youth unemployment may not be highly effective at addressing youth employment.

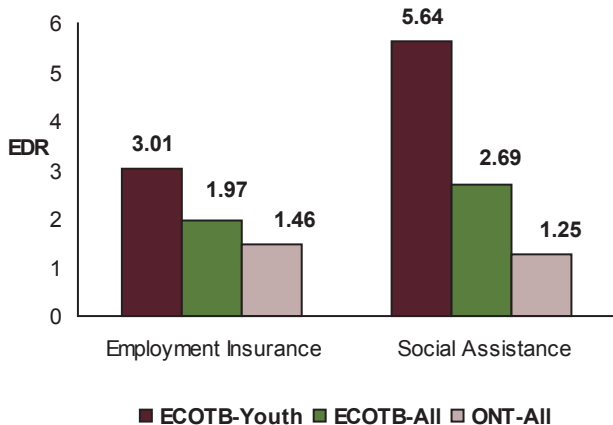
In order to get a broad and more detailed understanding of the status of youth in the local area, we track data that relates specifically to the income levels and type of income realized, as well as the level of dependency that youth have on government assistance programs. Both of these key elements are noted below. The data is custom purchased from Statistics Canada and relates to the 2004 taxfiler year, which is the only source of such data and is the most current period available at time of writing.

**ECONOMIC DEPENDENCY**

The Economic Dependency Ratio (EDR) reflects the amount of government assistance a region receives in the form of transfer payments, such as employment insurance and social assistance. Specifically, the EDR relates government dollar transfers into a region to the employment income earned in that region for any given period of time. For purposes of this study, we look at the key EDR which pertain to transfers that are linked primarily to employment/unemployment of youth, that being EI and Social Assistance. We do not look at other forms of government transfer or assistance such as CPP and Old Age Security as these primarily affect older or retired workers.

The importance of EDR in the general analysis of the economic conditions in a given area should be fully understood, closely monitored and targeted for solutions by local stakeholders and employers. It is known that areas with higher EDR are also found to have lagging economies, lower wage levels, greater levels of social unrest and challenges, and higher out-migration of workers in prime age groups of the workforce, namely 18-44.

**ECOTB Economic Dependency (2004)**

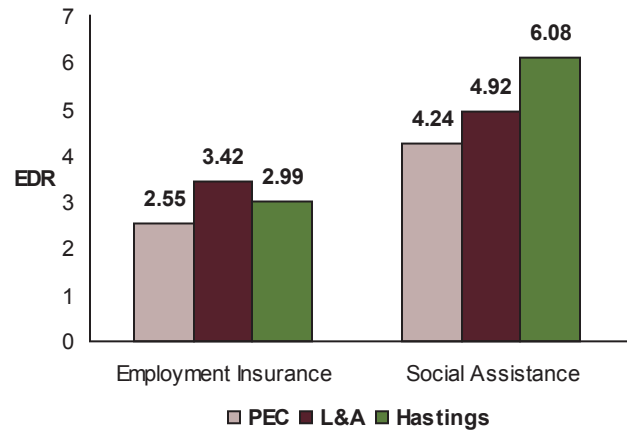


Looking directly at the Employment Insurance and Social Assistance dependency for youth in the region, we see significantly higher levels of dependency in both categories than for the full 18-64 year group in the local area. The 18-64 group represents the core working age population for the region.

For the Employment Insurance dependency, youth are 53% higher than the regions average. When compared to the Ontario average, local youth have 106% higher levels.

Focusing on the Social Assistance dependency rates for youth in the region, the findings highlight an even more worrisome situation. The youth EDR at 5.64 is 110% higher than the region as a whole, and 351% higher than the provincial average.

**EDR by County (18-24 age)**



When we delve into the regional level data to assess the dependency levels in each of the three counties, it shows that Hastings County has the highest rate of youth economic dependency among the three counties for Social Assistance dependency, while L&A has the highest dependency for youth relying on employment insurance.

Prince Edward has the lowest dependency ratio of the two categories examined.

For Social Assistance dependency, Hastings is 43% higher than PEC's. This relatively high level of Social Assistance dependency is an important contributing factor to the high level of overall economic dependency experienced by youth in the region.

In the employment insurance dependency, L&A at the highest is 34% higher than PEC. It is important to note that one of the main reasons for employment insurance dependency ratios being lower than social assistance is the fact that many youth do not qualify

for EI as they have not been in the workforce long enough to meet the requirement, in terms of hours and duration of employment.

In the two EDR categories analyzed, it is critical to note that the higher level of dependency on such government programs, the lower the levels of overall employment income that are being generated by the working age population, in this case youth from 18-24. As has been captured in numerous studies in regions with high levels of EDR, the economic conditions of a given area are critical to the employment income levels: the more employment and higher levels of employment income (e.g. full time, higher wages), the less reliant the population will be for government assistance. One of the reasons for excluding such assistance programs as Old Age Security and CPP are, for the most part, to isolate the assistance levels that pertain to those who are in the workforce and are not retired which, if left in, could skew the data for areas that had a high percentages of population of older age groups such as found in this study region.

### ■ INCOME CHARACTERISTICS

Boiled down, income levels are the most significant measures of the economic conditions found in a given area and, most would argue, are the most important aspect related to the fruits of their labour and success in their employment endeavours. Low income levels are not positive attributes for individuals, local economies or nations. While they reflect the conditions found in a specific area, the ripple affects of low income are many and mixed, from social consequences of varying degrees, to higher reliance on government assistance to lower levels of employment.

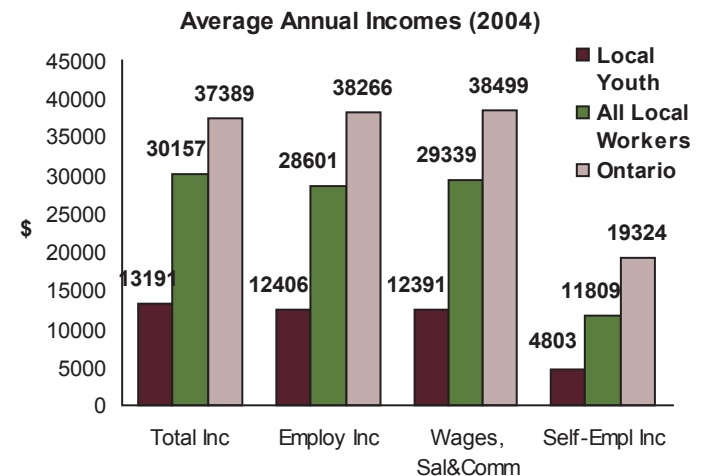
Most importantly, low incomes affect overall economic conditions in an area, impacting discretionary funds of consumers which translates to impacts on local businesses which, in turn, can limit the type, level and amount of business growth and job creation of any given company.

The income data paints a rather grim income picture of the local youths' earning power. Looking first at income categories in comparison to Ontario averages and the region's average, local youth incomes are substantially below all other groups in all income categories.

Total annual income of youth is less than half (44%) of that of all working age taxfilers in the region. This reflects the preponderance of part-time and entry level work in the local labour market experienced by those in the 18-24 age group. Additionally, a

portion of youth in this demographic may still be in school and work only part time by choice. While the data does not isolate hours of work, our survey responses indicate a clearer image of this situation. Though 52% of the survey respondents were, in fact, working part time, however; of this number there were 74% who were seeking full time employment. This provides good confirmation that, even though youth in this age group may be working part time by 'choice, most would be working full time if they had the chance and, hence, are seeking full time employment even if it takes them out of the region.

Overall, the total incomes for the region (\$30,157) trail the provincial average income (\$37,389) by nearly 24%, with youth levels being much lower at \$13,191. Isolating Employment Income (which is any source of income from employment) local youth lag far behind average incomes of the local workforce at only 43%, and fall behind the provincial average even further at only 32% of the province.

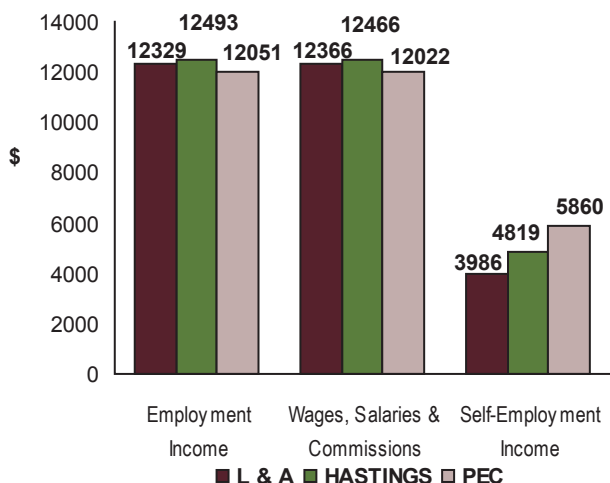


The next main income category, Wages, Salaries & Commissions, isolates conventional paid employment from other types, such as self-employment. As noted, the similar pattern for youth – and all workers in the region – holds true. Youth income levels (\$12,391) are 42% of the regions average (\$29,339), and 32% of provincial average (\$38,499).

Finally, self-employment income levels continue the trend, though at critically low levels. Youth who are self-employed (exclusively – no other source of employment income) made an average of \$4,803. This income amounts to only 41% of the regional self-employment average (\$11,809) and 25% of the provincial average (\$19,324). As we have highlighted in other reports on these same income levels for the working age population, the region is consistently below provincial averages, thereby putting comparisons of local, youth income levels in

context of significantly trailing an already lower level of average incomes.

**Youth Average Annual Incomes (2004)**



Finally, in comparing the youth income levels within the region, there exists a fairly even balance across the three counties. There is relatively little difference in regards to income between the residents of the individual counties. Hastings County with a proportionally higher population and more urban centres posted the highest income levels and Prince Edward County the lowest, with the exception of self employment income. For this category, L&A trails the others with an average income of \$3,986, followed by Hastings at \$4,819 and PEC at the highest level with \$5,860.

Self employment income for Prince Edward is 47% greater than that of Hastings County, though still at a low absolute level. This pattern of higher numbers of citizens involved in self-employment, sometimes with higher income levels but not always, often points to the fact that people have to choose self-employment due to a relative lack of conventional or paid employment income such as wages, salaries and commissions. With greater employment opportunities in the more urban centres of the region (e.g. Belleville, Trenton), youth and other workers tend to choose these more secure forms of employment.

Clearly, the overall economic well-being of youth in the region, as indicated in the high levels of economic dependency and low income levels across the board, is not healthy. Youth are experiencing

lower income levels in all categories, have significantly higher dependency on government assistance programs, notably the social assistance levels, and are not keeping in relative closeness to the region's average which are already below (in terms of income) or higher (in terms of dependency).

Unfortunately, these figures are not surprising, though highly troublesome. With high levels of out-migration by local youth, high levels of part time and seasonal employment, and less availability of full time, high wage employment to be found in the local economy, those who stay – including many adults – and enter the workforce are faced with significant challenges and tradeoffs in terms of employment. While choosing self-employment may be positive for some, data shows that the income levels on average are far below even the accepted poverty levels of income. It is true that many young people may not have the financial responsibilities for such things as accommodation, as they may still be living in a family home. Others may only be working part time as they continue their post-secondary education, though the representatives in our survey represent a full spectrum of youth who have worked and reported income.

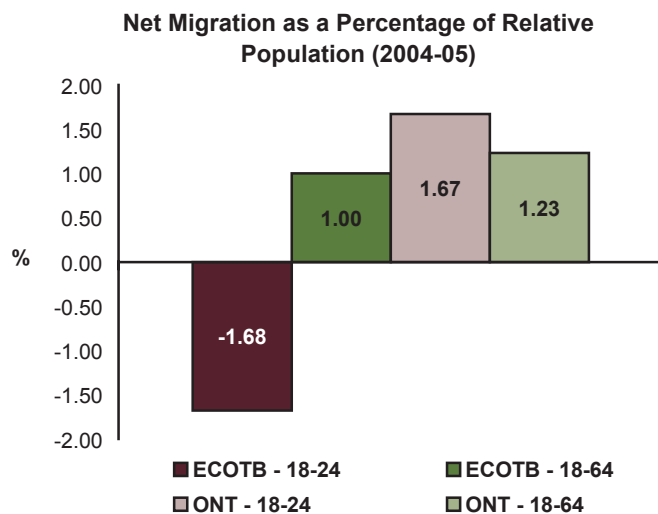
These important indicators of an economy that has not been producing sufficiently high levels of full time employment for many youth – and adults – are precipitators for many of the other determinants, such as youth leaving the area to pursue higher wages, full time jobs, or jobs in their field of study, which compounds the challenges in our local economy as it deals with aging workforce and a diminishing youth population.

We have stated that the chief, and perhaps only, solution to such employment challenges is job creation. Realizing it is easier to state than implement, job creation – and maintaining the jobs we have now, especially the full time ones – should be the number one task of all local stakeholders: government, business, municipalities, economic developers, educators, youth agencies, business groups and employers. It is not a simple task, but the alternative is to continue to lose local youth to others and deny those youth who do stay of a full, productive life that would contribute to, and reinforce, the growth of our local economy and communities.

## LOCAL YOUTH MIGRATION

The importance of out-migration of youth from rural areas, and this region in particular, is a critical issue that needs vigilance and ultimate improvement. Knowing some of the key reasons for youth leaving rural areas in favour of urban centres, the situation found in any given rural area may be different, with different determinants and ultimately different solutions.

How, then, are we doing in the study area? In summary, current data and recent trends continues to show consistently high levels of out-migration for youth in the 18-24 age group (the only age group data collected by Statistics Canada in non-Census years) and consistent trends of net losses of youth in every county for the latest 5 year period. The following information was compiled from 2004/2005 taxfiler profile data and provides a candid and sobering picture of the migration trends locally.

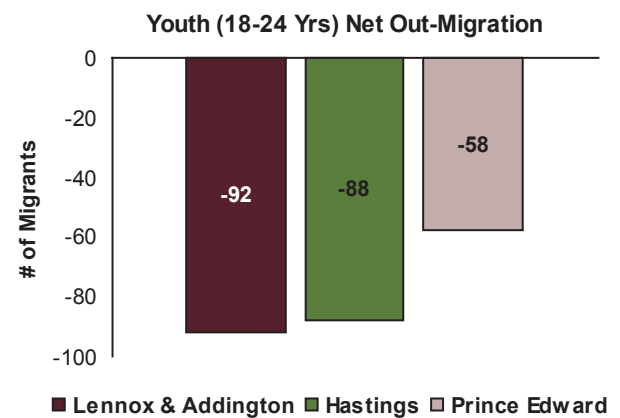


The local picture of youth out-migration is in keeping with the general trends of Ontario's rural communities which, on the whole, show a continual decline in rural youth populations.

First, from 2004-2005, the region's youth net-migration was negative (i.e. more youth in the 18-24 age group left the area than came into it). Specifically, the net out-migration of youth 18-24 years old was 1.68% of the region's 18-24 population. This negative net-migration is in direct contrast to the positive net-migration in the other categories. Ontario's 18-24 age group posted the greatest net in-migration at 1.67% of the province's 18-24 population. The local 18-64 age group (the main working age population), with net in-migration of 1% of the region's 18-64 population, trailed

the provincial value of 1.23% of Ontario's 18-64 population. As has been noted, most of the positive 'in-migration' figures have been concentrated in Toronto and other large, urban centres.

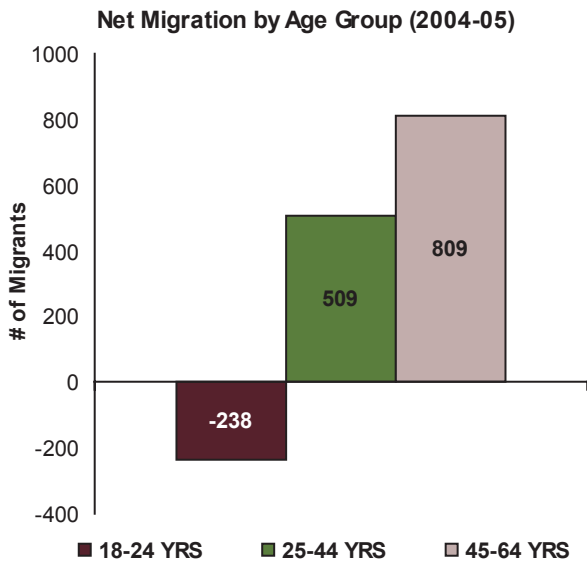
Net-migration represents the calculated difference between in-migration and out-migration. All three counties contributed to the region's overall negative youth net-migration in 2004-2005. As noted in the chart, all 3 counties experienced more out-migration than in-migration. While Hastings County enjoyed the greatest youth in-migration (1064), it also had the highest out-migration (1152), resulting in a negative figure of 88 youth leaving. Lennox & Addington had 355 in-migrants versus 447 out-migrants (-92 figure), while Prince Edward experienced the least activity with only 211 in-migrants versus 269 out-migrants (-58 figure), though it needs to be noted that this county also has the lowest population of the three.



The region's negative net-migration (-238) in 2004-05 represents the sum of the negative net-migration of all three of its component counties. Lennox and Addington had the greatest net out-migration at 39% of the total (92 net youth), followed by Hastings at 37% (88 net youth) and then Prince Edward 24% (58 net youth). It is noteworthy that all three counties posted negative values.

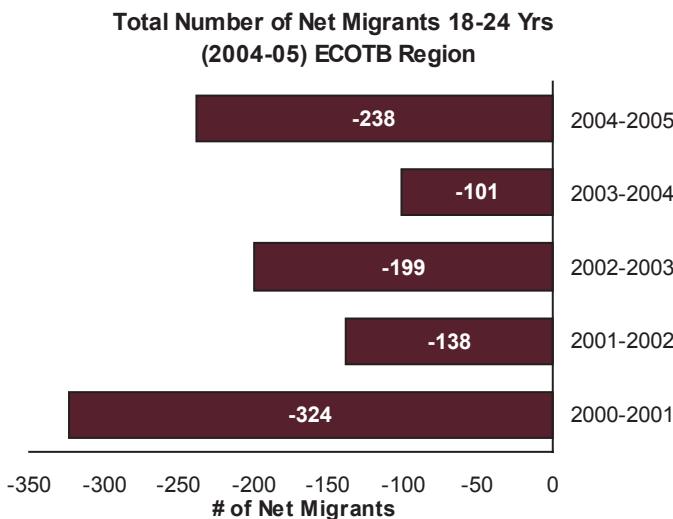
In relation to the reasons for such out-migration, the survey results in further sections identify some of the key impetus. Most youth respondents, though seeking employment in various areas (e.g. in region, outside region, other provinces), approximately 46% are either not/not sure if they plan to seek it in the region. Some of the core reasons given were limits to jobs in their field of study, more job opportunities in other areas, to earn more money, and the opportunity for more full time employment elsewhere. As identified, employment and its pursuit

is one of the leading factors that lead rural youth to consider migrating to other areas.



While the region as a whole experienced significant net in-migration in both the 25-44 and 45-64 age groups (509 and 809 net in-migrants, respectively), the 18-24 age group had significant net out-migration, with 238 net out-migrants in total for 2004-2005.

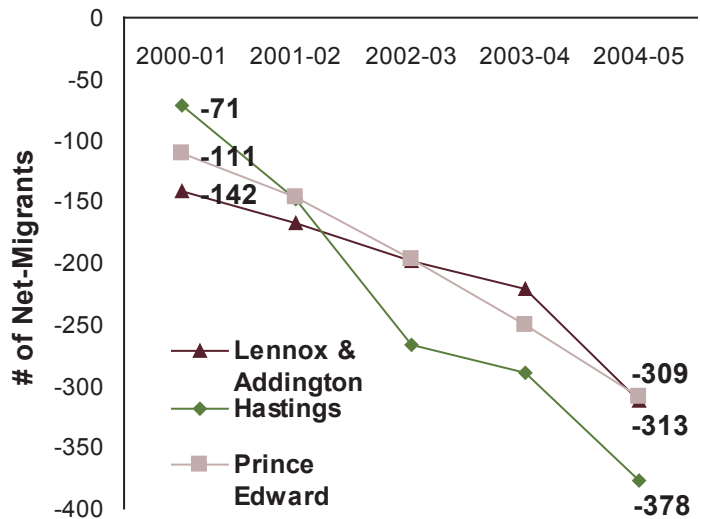
The region's popularity as a retirement and recreational destination drove the net in-migration in the 45-64 and, to a lesser extent, the 25-44 age groups. Knowing that the overall populations of most of the three counties is either declining or remaining the same, and the fact that the age demographics show increases in the percentage of population of 45+, the serious impact that net-migration of the youngest, working age population is having on the regions labour market, and overall economy, cannot be understated.



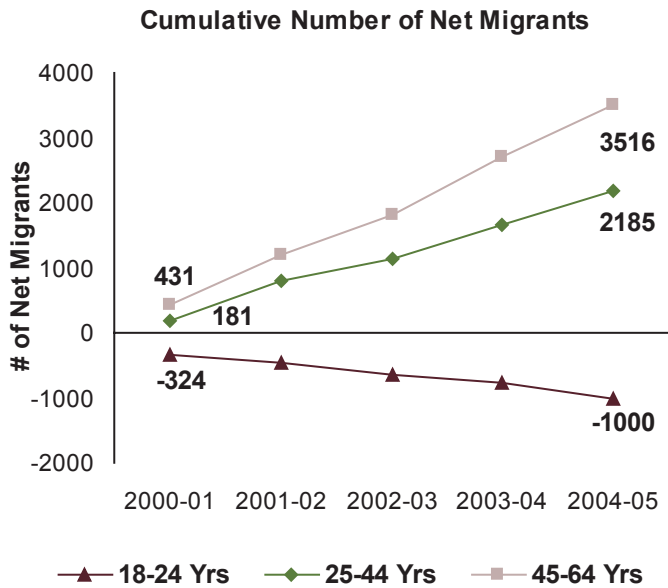
The need for trend data is always important in order to grasp the scope and breadth of any given issue over time, both as a way to identify norms, key facts, and any deviations and variations from normal, or acceptable, levels being analyzed. For youth migration, the trends point to a consistent, though troublesome, pattern – more youth leave every year which is resulting in a decline in the population of this age group.

The 18-24 age group experienced net out-migration in every county and in every year from 2000-2005. The relative magnitude of the out-migration varied among counties from year to year, but net out-migration was especially high in 2000-2001 in Lennox & Addington and Prince Edward Counties, and in Hastings County in 2002-2003.

### Cumulative Number of Net Migrants 18-24 Yrs by County (2000-2005)



Across all three counties over the noted time period, the cumulative affect is quite apparent. Each county in the region saw negative cumulative amounts across the 3 counties of -309, -313, and -378. Of particular note, though Prince Edward had a slightly lower total (-309) over the period, when compared to total population the figure is significantly higher as a percentage than the other counties.



Examining the net migration data by age group and also using a cumulative approach (i.e. adding each year's net migration to the previous year's total) produces a trend line for the five year period of 2000-2005.

During this period, the 45-64 age group exhibited the greatest net in-migration (3516 net in-migrants), driven primarily by the region's attraction as a retirement destination. The 25-44 age group also had significant in-migration (2185 net in-migrants), although not of the magnitude of the 45-64 group. These positive net in-migration trends are represented by the upward-sloping trend lines in the graph.

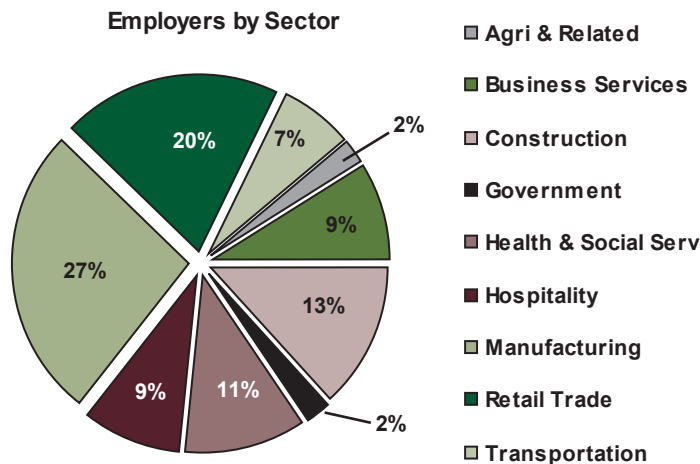
By contrast, the 18-24 age group exhibited significant net out-migration for the period amounting to a total, cumulative out-migration of 1000 youth, as represented by the downward trend line in the negative net-migration range.

We know that research has shown that only a percentage of youth who leave a rural area return. If this holds true for the region, we will continue to see an ongoing, negative net-figure of young people leaving the region (less youth coming than going!). While there is some positive to the migration data for the region in terms of the 25-44 age group, serious attention needs to be focused on key initiatives that impact the decision to leave, namely for employment, economic gain, and pursue of higher education.

## EMPLOYER RESPONSES

The target audience for this survey was local employers who were identified by various methods, in consultation with local partners, as having been involved in youth employment, training or education initiatives or had directly hired youth in recent years. Employers have an obvious and critical impact on the overall employment situation and workforce engagement of youth. From an economic interest standpoint, they require a highly trained and skilled workforce to increase their productivity, remain competitive and build their businesses, for which youth of today will form a core part of their future workforce.

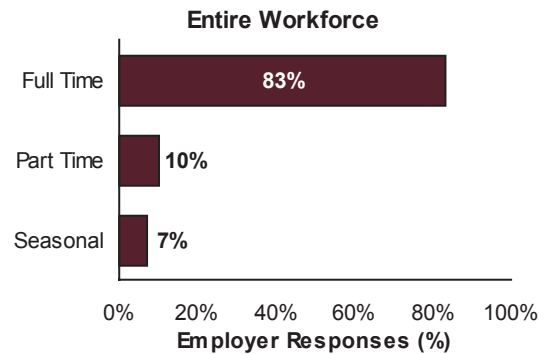
For statistical purposes, the Province of Ontario categorizes a business as 'small' if it is a goods-producing firm with fewer than 100 employees or a service firm with fewer than 50 employees. Companies with up to 500 employees are considered medium sized. These small and medium sized enterprises (SME) make up over 90% of Ontario's businesses and account for more than 50 percent of the province's jobs. The majority of survey respondents to this survey were small businesses with 76% employing a staff of 50 or less, while 38% had ten or fewer employees. These small businesses tend to provide the majority of hiring opportunities and their success relies on having an adequate supply of skilled workers.



The survey targeted local employers from various sectors represented in the local labour market, as well as garnering representation from various size companies and various parts of the three counties in the study area.

The majority of the respondents (27%) were from

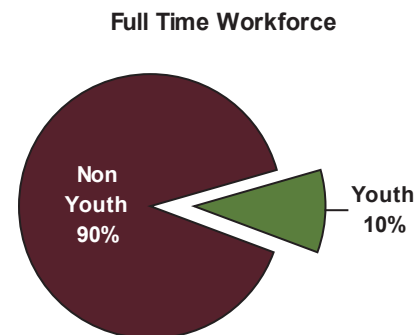
the Manufacturing Sector, followed closely by Retail Trade (20%), the Construction Sector (13%), Health & Social Services (11%), with two at 9%, Business and Hospitality companies.



The respondents were asked to provide various data related to the makeup of their workforce and the sub-group of youth in the company. This data allows us to gain greater detail on the type of employment within the various companies and to see how youth fare in these firms.

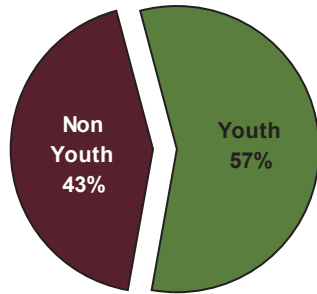
Looking first at the entire workforce of the respondents, the employment status breakdown for is 83% full time, 10% part time, and 7% seasonal. This represents a fairly consistent average found across most geographic areas containing diverse sectors, each having varying levels of each type.

To identify and capture the status of youth employment within these companies, we have dissected each of the employment categories (full/part/seasonal) separately in order to calculate percentages of youth.



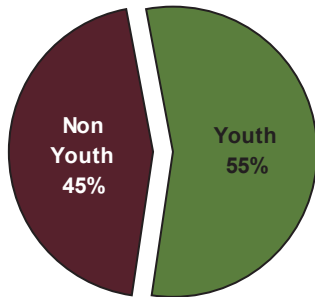
Within the full time workforce, youth (aged 15-29) are found to make only 10% of the overall workforce, with non-youth (over 29 age group) making up the corresponding 90%. Clearly, this is a very low engagement in full time work by young workers.

### Part Time Workforce



Looking at part time employment with the same perspective, we see that youth are now in the majority of workers at 57% of the overall workforce. Focusing further on seasonal employment, there is a comparable finding with youth accounting for 55% of the total seasonal workforce.

### Seasonal Workforce



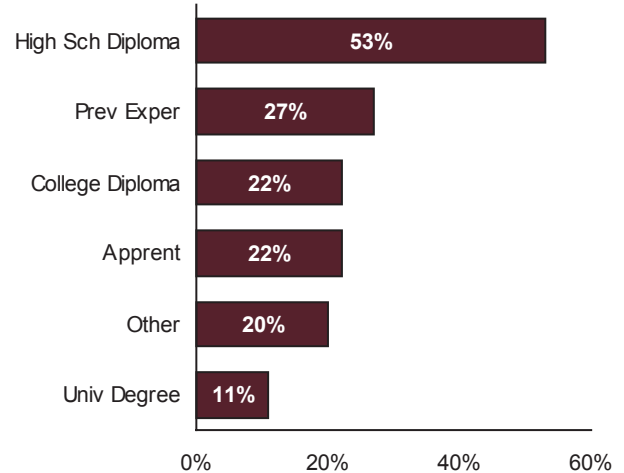
Both of the latter employment categories illustrate the preponderance of youth in the part time and seasonal workforces where they comprise over 50% in these workforce segments.

Such findings underscores both the reliance by employers on youth as a source of workers for part time and seasonal positions and, conversely, identifies some of the challenges for youth as they attempt to enter the workforce and endeavor to progress toward full time employment. The nature of many businesses and the type of job availability results in a consistent, and consistently high, need for part time and seasonal employees.

Simultaneously, some youth in the study group were only available and interested in part time and seasonal employment as they were pursuing other avenues, primarily their post secondary education. However, when looking at the low level of youth involved in full time employment through the businesses surveyed, we see levels that are far below what are normal, per capita averages when considering the overall workforce population in this age group. While this supports consistent findings for the region as to the high levels of part

time/seasonal employment, and lower levels of full time jobs, it also reinforces the need to build the local economy with greater levels of decent wage, full time jobs. Employers, however, will need to put higher emphasis and priority on engaging more young workers into their workplace in full time employment, both as a means to their own future business goals and as a way to assist youth to gain sufficient employment to retain them in the community.

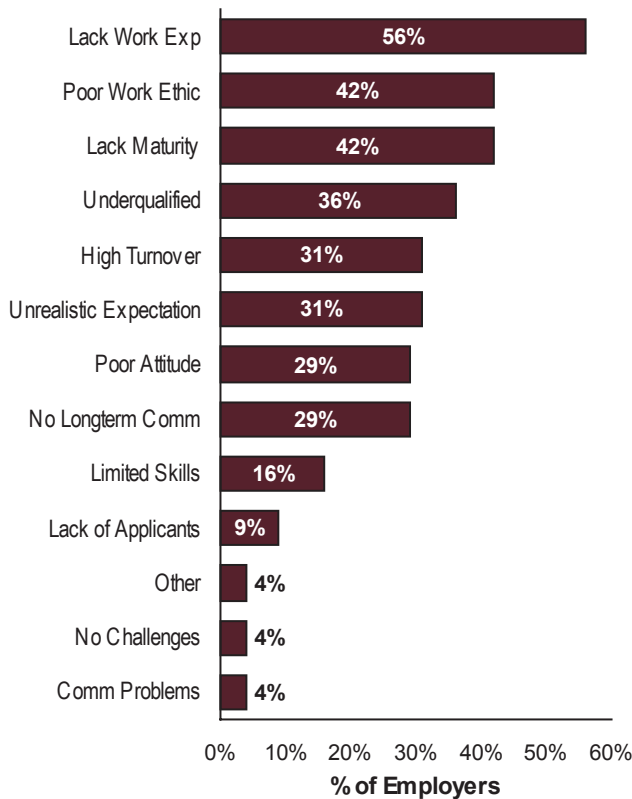
### Education Levels Required by Employers



Research consistently shows that education levels have been positively correlated with levels of employment, as well as indicators of job satisfaction and wage levels. When asked about their hiring requirements, employers responded that a High School Diploma was essential (53%), followed by Previous Experience (27%) and 'Other' (20%) which primarily included certain technical certifications or training needed in a specific occupations.

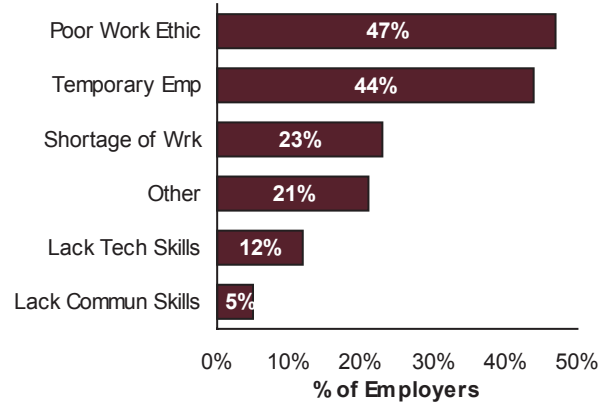
A University Degree was a requirement for only 11% of respondents, while 22% stated that a College Diploma was necessary. Although this makes the job market more available to youth who completed high school, it also indicates that the types, and subsequent volume, of jobs available to not require post-secondary education. It is reasonable to deduce that the majority of the positions with survey respondents would be entry level ones, associated with lower wage levels, less job security and of a part time nature.

### Employer Challenges in Hiring Youth



Employers were also asked to identify the particular challenges they faced when hiring, or attempting to hire, youth. Lack of Work Experience was their main concern, followed by Lack of Maturity, Poor Work Ethic and Underqualified candidates. Of the top eight rated challenges identified, only Underqualified and Lack of Experience relate to the individual candidates actual skill or training level, whereas the others relate to a perceived – or actual – concern with the ‘soft’ skills and personal attributes and attitudes presented by youth they have hired. Issues such as high turnover, for example, can often be considered from both sides as being a causal factor, with youth often leaving at higher rates as they pursue more permanent jobs or higher wages, both related to working conditions.

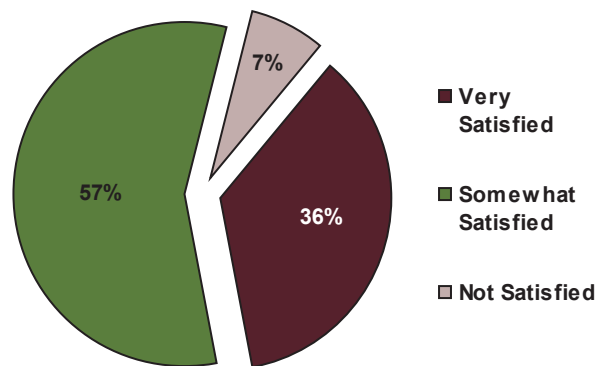
### Reasons for Youth Leaving Job



Asked to provide an overview of the reasons why the youth that they hired were either terminated or left their job, employers noted a number of reasons. Poor Work Ethic was the most prominent reason cited by 47% of respondents. A general lack of a work ethic in some youth was a very consistent comment heard from employers. Other significant reasons cited were that the employment was only temporary employment (44%) and no longer available. A Shortage of Work was identified by 23%, some of which was reflective of local labour market conditions or a down turn in the local economy, as with the manufacturing sector.

This ‘shortage of work’ issue is not related to how the labour force is trained or deployed, but rather to the decreased demand for labour in general during a downturn in economic activity, and can result in adult workers and youth alike being laid off. However, as a group, young people are more susceptible than older workers to negative economic and employment conditions, with a result being that there is usually a decline in the amount of new hires, a key issue for youth. In turn, since adult workers tend to be more marketable and appealing to employers, they usually will be the first to be rehired when the economy begins an upturn, often as a result of overall seniority and sometimes due to higher skill levels and experience. Generally, youth employment levels in a given economic area will only improve when there is an overall increase in the full workforce employment levels. Again, the general economic and employment conditions in a local labour market can have a profound and lasting effect on young people trying to enter or re-enter the workforce.

### Satisfaction with Young Employees



Despite employers' experiences with youth leaving their employ due to poor work ethic, the majority indicated that, overall, they were Somewhat Satisfied (57%) or Very Satisfied (36%) with their experiences in hiring youth. One of the key indicators of whether a business will hire youth is their direct experiences: those who have had good experiences employing youth are more likely to continue to hire youth.

The 7% who reported dissatisfaction may be less likely to hire youth in the future. Most of the employers who reported being dissatisfied explained their negative experience pertained, primarily, to the poor work ethic or a disinterest in long-term employment (not to be confused with full time employment) by the youth.

Employers were then asked an open ended question to identify one specific Knowledge, Skill and Attitude that they felt a youth must possess to help their employment with their firm.

To better present their responses, we grouped the answers under the main headings noted, and then further created sub-groups to highlight the particular examples given. Additionally, we provide a percentage figure that relates to the percent of employers who identified each particular category and particular response.

As shown, for the Knowledge traits, employers responded that Specific Experience (48%) is a key element when considering hiring. Next many considered theoretical Knowledge as essential (5%), but many noted technical knowledge as important, for which math was a prominent answer. A number of respondents (14%) indicated that a certain amount of General education was considered important.

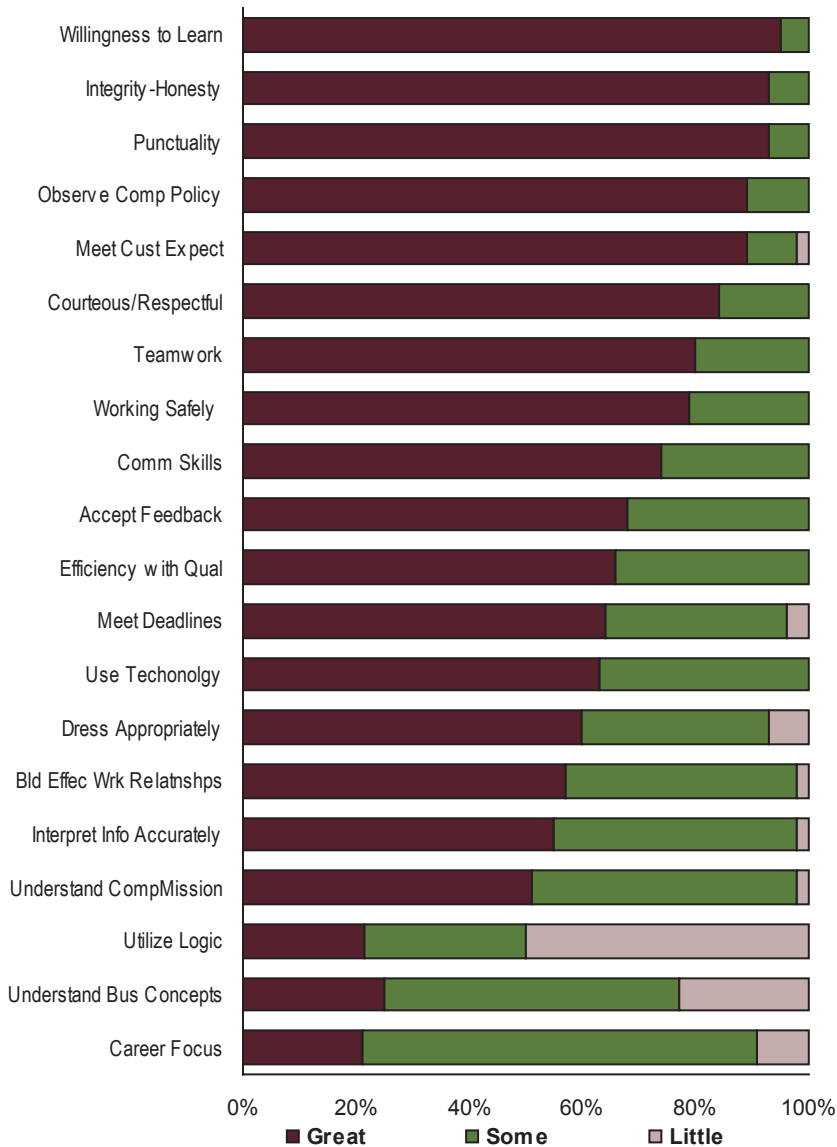
For the Skills traits, most respondents noted the need for specific skills related to their work requirements, such as computer literacy. Most highly noted by 41%, however, was the need for soft skills, including communication, problem-solving and multi-tasking, to name a few.

In the area of Attitude traits, a positive attitude was the highest response level at 43%, with work ethic following at 27% - for all intents and purposes,

these two items fall in the same, unique area. Personality traits (e.g. courteous, mature) were lower but noted, as was certain competencies associated with a positive attitude (work independently, follow instructions).

Skills		
Category	%	Particular
Specific skills	37	Computer, particular literacy requirements
Certifications	11	Drivers license, Early Childhood Education
Soft skills	41	Communications, problems solving, multi-tasking
Physical skills	11	Hand/eye coordination
Attitudes		
Category	%	Particular
Work ethic	27	Hardworking, honest, reliable, team player
Personality	17	Courteous, mature, personable
Positive Attitude	43	Motivated, dedicated, enthusiastic
Competencies	13	Common sense, follow instructions, work independently
Knowledge		
Category	%	Particular
Specific Experience	48	Emergency procedures
General	14	Business practices
Technical	33	Math
Theory	5	Electrical

### Important Skills & Attitudes

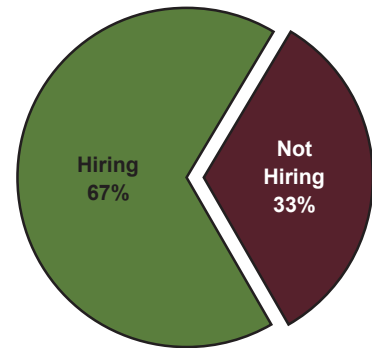


Employers were also asked to rate a specific list of Skills, Knowledge and Attitudes that they deemed as priorities for youth they do, or would, employ.

Attributes which affect their bottom line are obviously important to Employers so it is not surprising the respondents ranked Meet Customers Expectations as most important. The ranking of specific skills and attitudes was consistent with the Employers' open-ended responses. A revealing issue is that employers continue to stress many 'soft skills' as being the most important attributes of employees (e.g. willingness to learn, punctuality, teamwork, communication skills). In fact, these 'soft' or 'employability' skills are at the top of the priority list as having 'great' and 'some' impact by nearly

all employers. This reinforces what consistent research and significant qualitative feedback by employers has highlighted, that being that employers often hire for 'attitude/personality' and train for 'skills'. While many occupations require specific, technical skills and qualifications, these alone are often not the deciding factors, but often weigh equally – and sometimes lower – than the employee's general attitudes and personal attributes.

### Hiring Youth in Next 12 Months

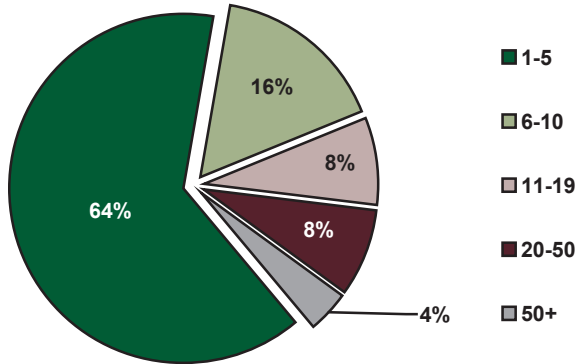


The inclusion of Youth in the local labour force is important, both for the local economy and the individual. Employers were asked to identify whether they had any plans to hire youth in the next 12 months. The majority of respondents (67%) answered very positively that they did intend to hire youth. Most of the employers who responded that they were not intending to hire clarified that it was due to the fact they were a small business whose hiring is

dependent on the availability of work. However, with additional work or incentives, they noted that they would be willing to hire youth in the future.

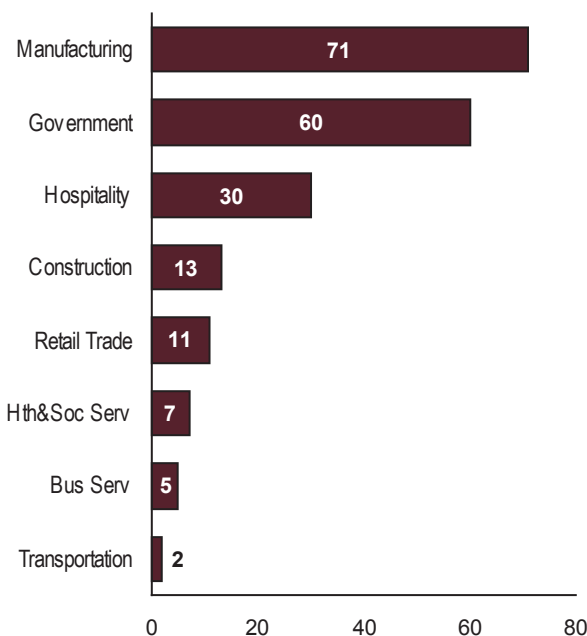
When we sought responses to a shorter timeframe for hiring, most respondents (60%) indicated that they intend to hire additional staff in the next 6 months. When asked how many total employees they plan to hire, most employers (64%) are looking to expand their staff by up to 1-5 people.

**Number of Employees to be Hired in Next 6 Months**



The next highest was 16% of employers stating they would likely hire 6-10 workers in the next half year. A few larger employers (4%) are expecting to hire 50 or more people. The majority of local Employers are small businesses, which have proven to be the major job creators in our economy. Their hiring relationship with youth is closely linked to the age of the business and their previous experiences. Newer firms are likely to have twice the proportion of young employees compared to older business, implying that a focus on new venture startup and a strong, business development environment could generate additional employment opportunities for youth. This finding is also consistent with comprehensive surveying done by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) of its members and in relation to younger workers.

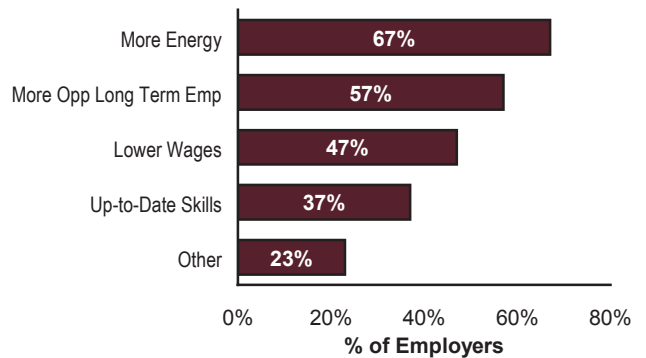
**New Hires by Sector**



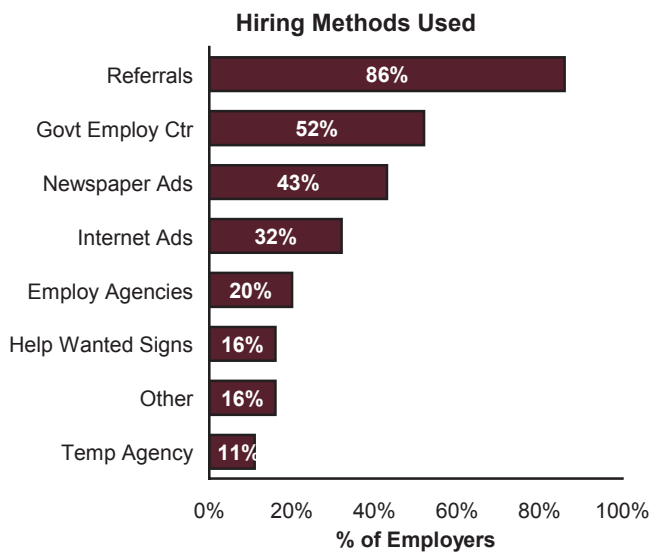
Delving into the specific sectors representing potential hiring's in the next 6-12 months, the respondents from the manufacturing sector indicate the highest number, which comes as some surprise, though it also reflects the large number of jobs in the sector. Next highest was government positions, identifying up to 60 public sector hiring opportunities. Not surprising, the Retail and Hospitality/Tourism sectors indicate job opportunities in the upcoming, seasonal months. Unfortunately these positions may not be full time or year round.

Some sectors clarified that, while they intended to hire youth, they are unable to due to poor candidate selection. Employers indicated that often they do not receive sufficient applicants with adequate skills, education or presentation and are therefore unable to fill the positions with young workers. How much of the 'gap' is skill and education based versus presentation was not noted, though it would be important knowledge to have as it could assist in identify specific training and skill development programs needed to support youth employment.

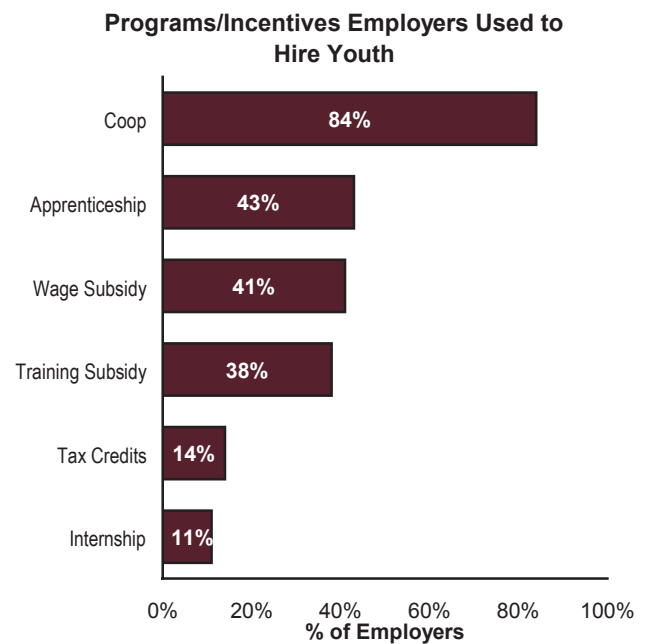
**Business Advantage of Hiring Youth**



Employers were then asked to indicate what advantages, if any, they felt they gained by hiring youth. Most (67%) indicated that they appreciated the energy that youth bring to their company. More than half (57%) also indicated that young workers provide an Opportunity for Long Term Employment, meaning they see the hiring as an investment and longer-term strategy that can offset any initial training costs. A further 47% indicated that being able to pay lower wages was an advantage. This is not surprising since most were small businesses and salaries would constitute a sizeable portion of their operating budget, thought the response would certainly not be seen as an advantage from the youth perspective. The up-to-date knowledge that youth bring in areas such as technology and computer literacy was considered significant by 37% of the respondents.



Hiring practices were also requested, and the majority of employers surveyed indicated that most (86%) rely on referrals, followed by services and programs from government or employment centres at 52%. This would indicate that many local firms take a more informal, low cost and ad hoc approach to recruitment. Newspaper ads were next at 43%, while internet ads were used by 32%. As internet is a popular and growing trend for job search by many youth, employers would be wise to continue to increase this method when they may be targeting youth. Given the prominence of 'referrals' used by employers, young jobseekers must be aware of the value of networking and word of mouth as an effective means of gaining access to unadvertised positions. While some sectors, such as manufacturing, use temporary agencies to a higher degree, it was the least used method across all sectors.

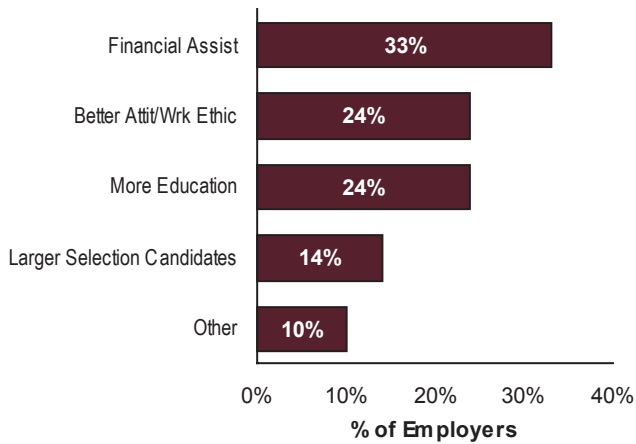


Employers were asked to identify any Incentives or Programs they had used when hiring youth.

The involvement in a cooperative education program was used by a surprisingly large number of respondents at 84%. Participation in apprenticeship, both as a training and employment program was used by 43%. Previously, employers indicated that lower wages was a definite hiring incentive, hence the fact that 41% cited wage subsidy as one of the programs used. Training subsidies were used by 38%, while tax credits were used by 14%, likely for apprenticeship positions in qualifying occupations.

Many of these programs provide an opportunity for youth to gain some on-the-job skills and experience while offering the employer a direct, low risk benefit and potential cost savings, or the chance to pre-screen youth through certain programs before making a full investment. Hiring new employees is an expensive and risky undertaking, with no guarantee the employee will remain with the company long enough for the employer to see a return on their training investment. Initiatives that can offer the youth to gain greater skills and experience, while affording the company with time and incentive needed to take on a younger worker who may not always be as qualified, provide a win-win opportunity for all involved.

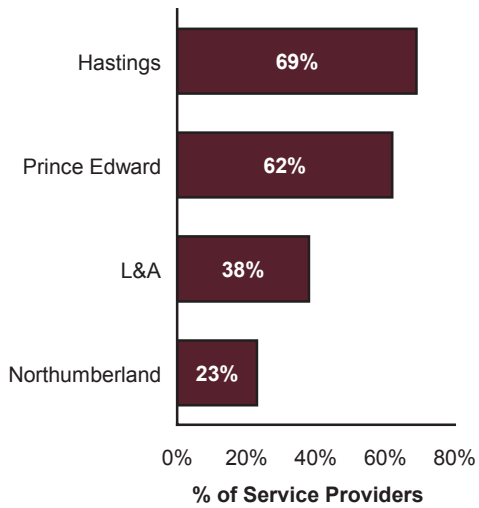
### Incentives That Would Encourage Employers to Hire More Youth



Employers were then asked an open ended question to identify the most beneficial incentives that could be put in place to encourage hiring youth. Most of the respondents, 33%, stated that Financial Assistance would provide the greatest incentive to hire more young workers. This is not surprising given that most are small businesses and staff salaries constitute a major portion of their operating budget. Incentives and subsidies would also help to offset some training costs and loss of productivity while new employees are learning work skills. A significant number indicated that the current selection of applicants would benefit from an improved Work Ethic (24%) and Better Education (24%). The 'attitude and work ethic' issue is a pervasive theme throughout the employers' comments, as stated previously these skills are not easily taught in a classroom setting, but are often learned on the job from co-workers and mentors, or at home from family and relatives.

## YOUTH SERVICE AGENCY RESPONSES

Service Area by County



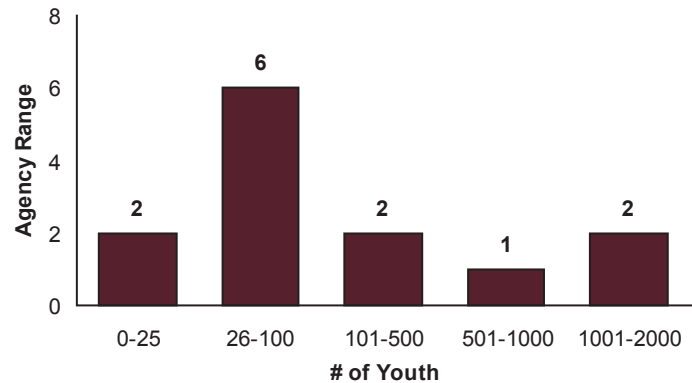
The target audience for this survey was local service providers who deliver programs or services to youth that were, in some capacity, relative to employment, career development and preparation, training or education. In total, 13 youth service providers in the local area responded to the survey. Given the study area encompassing services to youth in Hastings, Lennox/Addington and Prince Edward counties, agencies in this geography qualified.

A fairly equitable distribution of service areas across the main counties was captured in the survey, with the county of Northumberland being smaller due to the fact that it was outside of the study area in terms of which agencies were surveyed. However, due to their mandate or service contracts, some agencies from Hastings also provide service coverage to youth in Northumberland.

The agencies targeted deliver a variety of labour market programs aimed at supporting and stimulating employment and employability for youth. Among some of the programs and services offered are training incentives and wage subsidy initiatives, job search assistance, skill development, social services, literacy and basic skills, education, skill development and training. The service agencies that deliver these programs – funded primarily through various government levels and ministries – are on the front lines of the local labour market and workforce development and often provide a critical link between employers and young jobseekers.

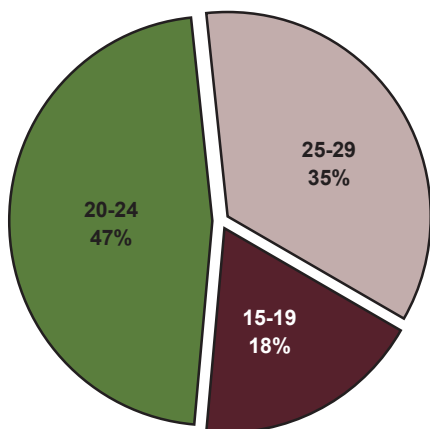
In order to identify the scope of services offered to youth by local agencies, service providers provided details on the numbers of youth served by their agency on an annual basis, noted in the attached chart. It is important to note that this focus was strictly to ascertain volume of youth served on an annual basis and does not reflect the range or depth of services that may be offered. A number of the service providers offer very specific programming that may limit their overall numbers or, conversely, only receive certain levels of funding to be able to offer services. Additionally, many agencies provide different services to youth outside of employment-related areas, and also provide services to different target populations beyond youth.

Youth Served Annually by Agency



In total, across the 13 agencies responding, a total of 4,849 youth received services throughout the region. The majority (6) served between 26-100 youth annually. Given the inability to collect specific individual youth information, it would be fair to say that a percentage of youth receive services from more than one of the providers who responded, thereby creating the potential situation of a double-count. However, the goal of the survey was to look at volume and type of service by agency and across total region, and it is equally important to count the number of youth that each agency is actually supporting.

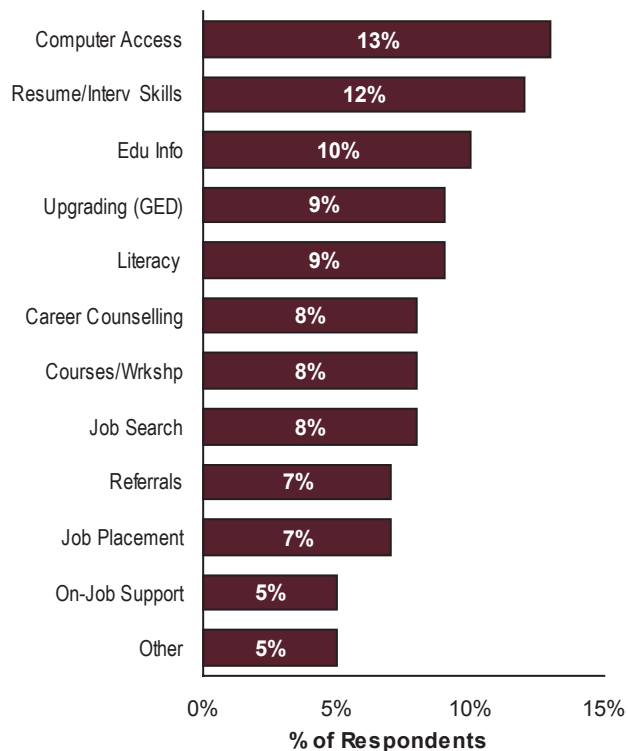
**Age Groups Served**



While there are no firm definitions as to the age category of people who qualify as ‘youth’ (e.g. Statistics Canada uses different youth age groupings in Census data compared to taxfiler data), for purposes of the study the core age of interest was local individuals who were between the ages of 15-29. Numerous service agreements and government data sources also focus on subgroups of those considered in the youth categories, those being the three age groups noted in the attached chart.

For the study, providers were asked to identify the numbers of clients in specific age categories. Not surprisingly, the middle range, those aged 20-24 years, comprised 47% of their clientele. Youth in this age range tend to have left high school – with or without a diploma – and/or may have also completed most of their post secondary education. As a result this is often the age when youth are entering the workforce for the first time and are engaged in services that may assist them in this venture. Not far behind, however, are youth in the 25-29 age group who made up 35% of the population served by local providers. Typically, this age group has completed post-secondary if they attended, and/or have been partly or fully involved in the workforce for varying length of time.

**Services Provided**



The agencies offered a wide cross section of services to young job seekers. Overall, the range of services was fairly evenly represented by each agency. Many providers focus on specific types of services, primarily as a result of their core mandate and the funding received to provide them.

The majority, 13%, provide Computer Access. The access to computers and the internet is a particularly important to those youth, who otherwise may not have use of a computer to prepare resumes and to conduct their job search. Assistance with Resume Writing and Interview Skills (12%) was the next most common service provided. These are critical skills necessary for job seekers to first gain an interview and then land a job. Educational Information (10%) was the next most often provided service, followed by Upgrading (GED) and Literacy (9%). Career Counseling (8%) and specific Course/Workshops (8%) as well a Job Search (8%) support were frequent services provided. These programs can help prepare youth to be much more employable since, most of the surveyed Employers indicated that Grade 12 was their basic hiring requirement and that communication skills both written and oral were considered essential in their employees. The ‘Other’ category referred to very specific programs such as the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP), pre-college preparation programs and specific types of skill training.

Many providers focus on specific types of services, primarily as a result of their core mandate and the funding received to provide them. Services such as literacy, upgrading, job search and career counseling were some of the key services offered. Those agencies who were surveyed were ones who provided various services that support the employment goals of individuals they serve. We did not target specific training programs or educators in this grouping as they focus on other types of services (e.g. technical training, diplomas, certifications, general education) that, while obviously linked to employment, are not funded to serve youth exclusively or to provide employment-related supports and programs.

identified by 85% of respondents. Following closely was level of education of youth, noted by 84% of respondents in the 'great' impact category.

Other key factors noted as having great impact were Work Ethic and Interpersonal Skills which, in conjunction with other similar factors, are more closely attributable to the individual versus the employer or overall labour market. These qualities are commonly referred to as 'soft skills' and are not as easily taught in a classroom setting, but more often learned on the job.

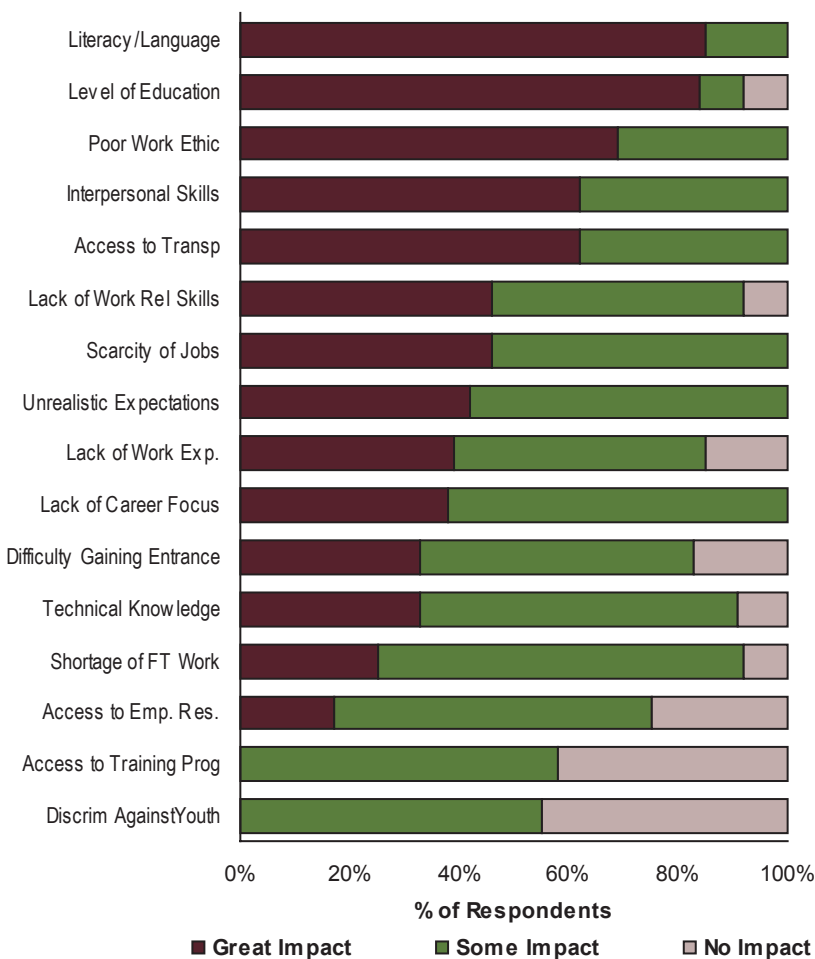
Transportation and Scarcity of Jobs – more related to the community or local economy – also scored high as impact factors, each being seen to some degree as posing either great or some impact. Nearly two thirds of all respondents rated access to transportation as having a great impact on youth's ability to participate in the workforce. Transportation issues are more acutely felt in rural communities where there is often little or no access to public transportation. This is further compounded by the need to secure some type of transportation to allow employment, the lengthy commuting distances to areas with higher job opportunities, and the need, often, to move from more rural towns to areas where transportation and job opportunities are more prevalent.

Other key factors point, again, to challenges for individuals, were impacts such as Lack of Career Focus, Unrealistic Expectations, and Lack of Work Experience. While the first two may be helped by realistic information, counseling or personal development, the last factor is one that could be seen as equally the responsibility of individuals and local employers. Providing work experiences through a variety of mechanisms and in a number of settings is a critical way for employers to contribute to both their own workforce and the future workforce of the local area, from which they will they rely on for securing qualified employees. The axiom of 'no experience, no work, etc.,'

can only be tackled when employers invest in youth by providing opportunities, and young people invest in themselves and participate in work experiences even when it may not be their ultimate, occupational goal.

Other recurring themes emerged through the survey responses. Some issues reflect local economic

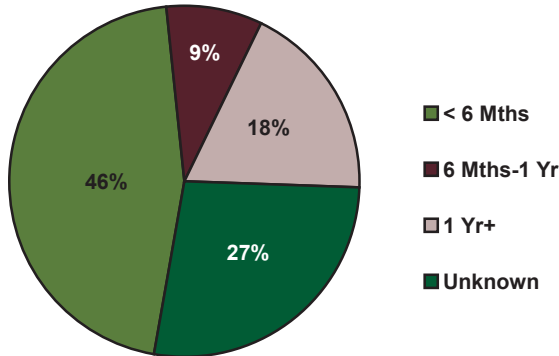
**Impact on Client's Ability of Find Work**



Service providers were then asked to identify the impact of a number of various factors related to their youth client's ability to find and secure employment. Literacy/Language Skills were considered to have the most profound impact, with this factor being

conditions, such as the perceived shortage of jobs, particularly full time, permanent positions. Though not rated in the 'great impact' category, discrimination against youth and access to training had high ratings in the 'some impact' category with nearly 60% of agencies citing these factors.

**Average Client Job Search Interval**

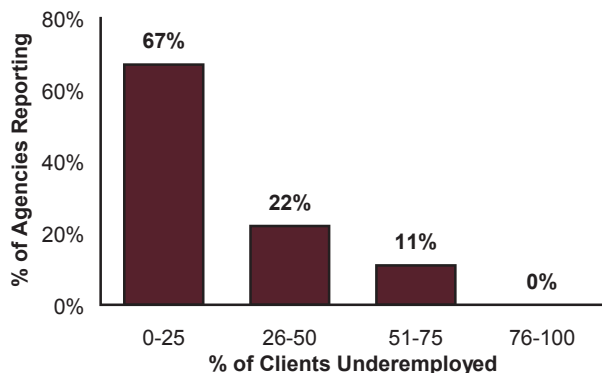


When we were asked how long their clients search for employment, the majority (46%) indicated the job search lasted 6 months or less, with a further 18% taking more than a year. This affirms the responses from the employed youth, who provide the same range for their job search interval.

While this is somewhat encouraging, responses from youth themselves indicate that many of them accept lesser employment than they desire for financial reasons, out of fear of remaining unemployed, from frustration with their job search, to gain some work experience and get a 'foot in the door', and because they could not always find a position they felt was appropriate or suitable for their field of study.

As we noted in the opening section, underemployment is an important element of a workforce that can identify specific challenges that may be faced by workers and which are not captured in higher analysis of looking at unemployment or employment statistics alone.

**Rate of Underemployment (%)**

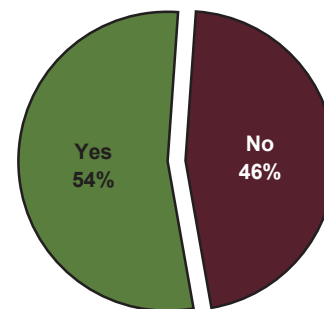


Service providers were asked to rate the underemployment assessment of youth who they served and who obtained some form of employment. While some subjectivity exists, and the lack of research resources to focus strictly on this issue, there was high indication that many of the youth they serve would be classified as underemployed. This was in relation to the youth level of education as one element, and the level of wages as another.

As captured in the chart, 67% of providers feel that up to 25% of their clients who had gained employment are underemployed, while up to 22% of providers feel that 26-50% of their clients are underemployed. When we look at income levels and type of employment in further sections, it is clear that there is a significant level of underemployment amongst youth in the region which relates, overall, to the economic conditions found across the labour market in terms of lower income levels, some limitations on full time, higher wage employment, and limits to job availability in certain occupations in the region.

For businesses, underemployment can have significant impacts on the workplace situation, leading to poor productivity and diminished output, potentially affecting customer satisfaction and creating a domino effect in areas of retention and recruitment. Similarly, workers who are underemployed can often feel frustrated, underappreciated, devalued and considering alternative employment should it materialize. Service agencies often provide various incentives to employers to take youth, and others, into their businesses for purposes of employment, experience and trial employment (e.g. temporary placement).

**Agencies Offering Employers Incentives to Hire Youth**



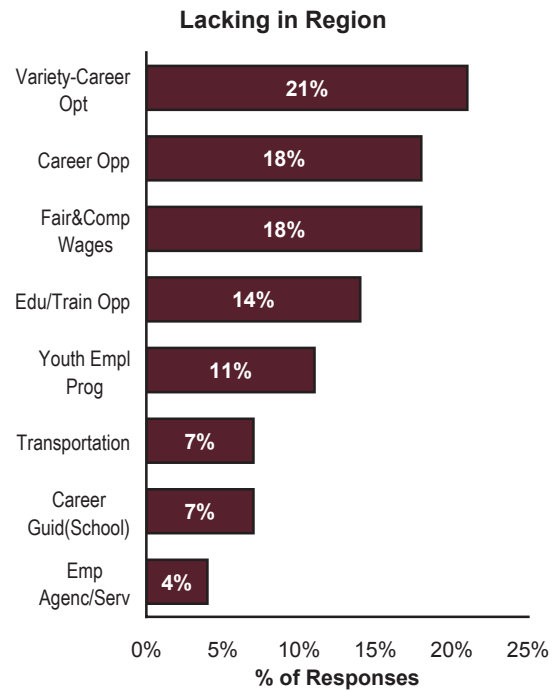
Youth are often a targeted group for such incentive programs. Many Government initiatives, such as the student summer programs, offer incentives ranging from wage subsidies to contract positions. Of the service agencies surveyed, 54% offer certain types of incentives to employers to aid in the hiring and training of young workers.

Within the various types of incentives offered, the most common were wage subsidies offered by 75% of agencies and work placements, which were provided by 57%.



The minimum wage rate has been rising consistently, most recently to \$8/hr. on February 1, 2007, with the objective of \$10.00/hr. (approximately) in the next 3 years. Wage subsidies, which can be partial, equal or greater than the minimum wage levels but often with a total payment cap, are seen as making young employees more attractive and affordable to employers. Small business, which make up the bulk of hiring in our region, often see wage subsidies as a way to make it possible for them to consider expand their workforce and hiring additional workers.

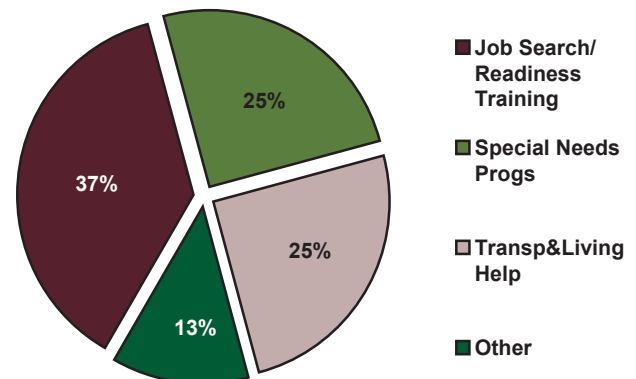
Service providers were asked a number of open-ended question concerning issues and services they feel could assist youth.



The first question asked them to identify what was lacking in the region concerning youth employment. Overall the Service Agencies indicated the Variety of Career Options, Career Opportunities, and Fair & Competitive Wages to be most lacking in the area. These responses are reflective of youth responses and help to define some of the current labour market issues. Other supported categories included Education and Training Opportunities and Youth Employment Programs. Transportation and the career guidance they received in school were also noted as lacking.

Next, providers were asked to identify the services they felt they would offer youth if the funding and/or resources were made available.

**Other Services Offered If Available Funding**



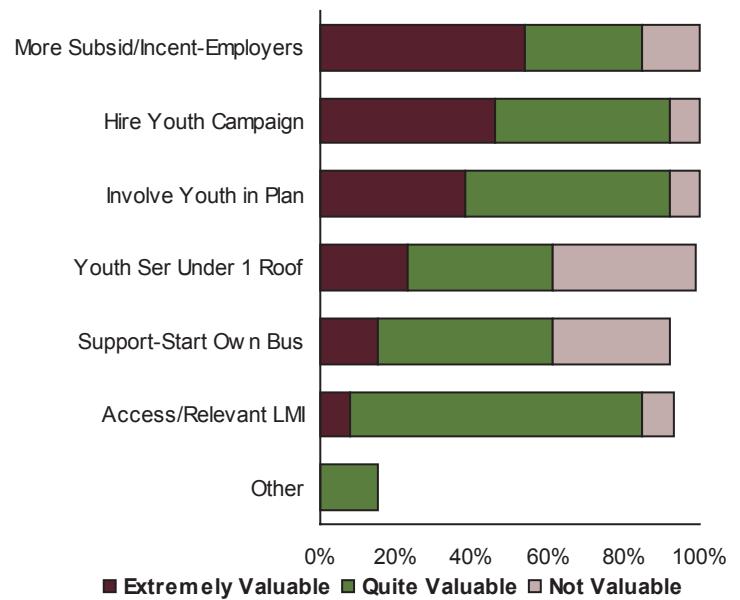
Their responses were placed into four categories:

- Job Search/Readiness – including workshops on topics from job search skills to personal hygiene
- Special Needs Programs – targeting disadvantaged youth in their job search and life skills
- Transportation and living help – this included help organizing living arrangements and transportation for work
- Other – this included very specialized services not related to employment

Over one third of the Service Agencies (37%) indicated more programming or resources dedicated to Youth Job Search and Readiness Training would be beneficial. Many key indicators throughout the survey suggest that Youth are not equipped to perform a proper job search, which is corroborated by the service provider responses. Additional areas of concern, also matching the Youth responses to their challenges or barriers, are Special Needs Programs (25%) and Transportation and Living Assistance (25%).

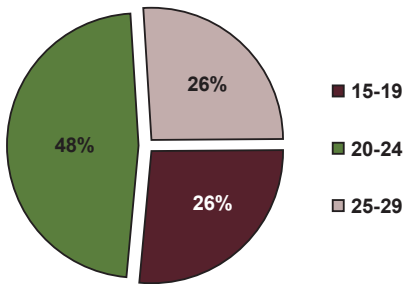
Service providers were then asked to rate the effectiveness (from extremely valuable to not valuable) for each possible solution to Youth unemployment issues. More than half (54%) of the Service Agencies felt that offering greater subsidies and incentives to employers for hiring youth would be the most beneficial.

**Agencies' Ratings of Possible Solutions to Youth Employment Challenges**



Overall most felt marketing campaigns such as 'Hire Youth' would be effective in attracting more employers to consider hiring more youth. Many providers (38%) supported the inclusion of youth in planning processes, a method receiving considerable success in some communities. Recent studies and youth forums have shown that rural youth consistently report feeling disconnected from their communities. These youth express the view that their opinions are not being respected or even heard. They have noted that they have little or no means of participation in the very services meant to support them, and they feel that there is some bias against youth in the community, giving them the impression of being unwanted and not valued.

**Respondents by Age**

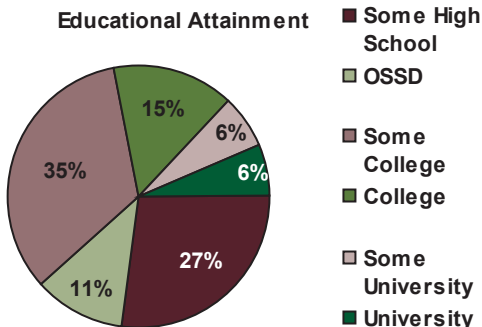


The target audience for this survey was youth aged 15-29 who were no longer in high school and lived in the three counties of the study area. In total, 189 local youth responded to the survey. Further, in order to improve our understanding of the specific situations of local youth – who are at various stages and involvement in their pursue of employment – youth provided a range of information on their current status, from attending school, working part or full time, or unemployed. Survey questions specific to each of these classification were asked. Some individuals may have bridged more than one category, for example in the case of a part time student also working part or full time. Respondents were asked to respond to questions from all specific classification in which they fell.

The study also targeted grade 12 students in the local area with a separate survey. Results from this group, a total of 533 students, are found in a later section exclusively identifying their responses.

Of the respondents 48% were in the 20-24 age range, while the 15-19 and 25-29 age groups had equal participation of 26% respectively. The average age of the respondents was 22 years. More females responded to the survey than males, with females accounting for nearly two thirds (63%) of the respondents, while males accounted for 37%.

**Educational Attainment**

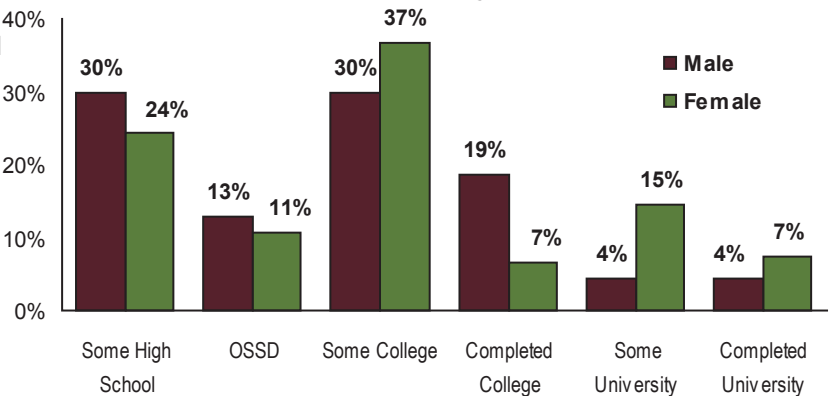


The majority of the respondents were local residents (80%), meaning this was considered their current, permanent address. Non-resident respondents were represented by students who had relocated to the area to further their education or training.

Given the age range of the respondents, it is concerning that over a quarter of respondents (27%) had not attained their high school diploma. This, combined with those who had completed high school, amounted to 38% of youth respondents who had attained high school level or less.

As the study secured responses from youth who were still attending college or university, the results for these two levels are in line with normal levels

**Levels of Education by Gender**

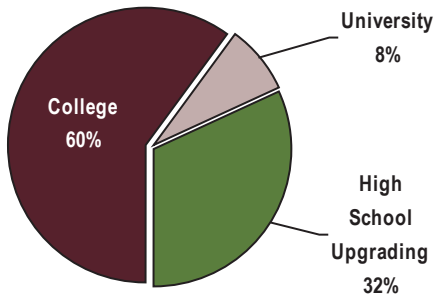


of post-secondary education for the region. As respondents were asked to identify only their highest level of completion, it is promising that a total of 62% of respondents had either completed, or were in process of completing, post-secondary education.

Looking at the male/female breakdown of educational attainment, the survey responses show that higher levels of female respondents were pursuing further education than their male counterparts. In all areas of post secondary completion or currently attending, except for completion of college females were more represented and involved in these pursuits. Female respondents, however, were less likely to have completed all, or some of the high school credits required for their OSSD.

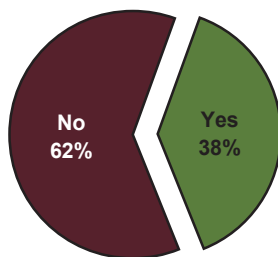
For those youth who were pursuing further education, 92% were involved full time. This includes individuals who were involved in education programs ranging from upgrading programs (such pursuing their OSSD) to those attending college or university programs. Only 8% were completing their studies on a part time basis.

### Student Enrollment



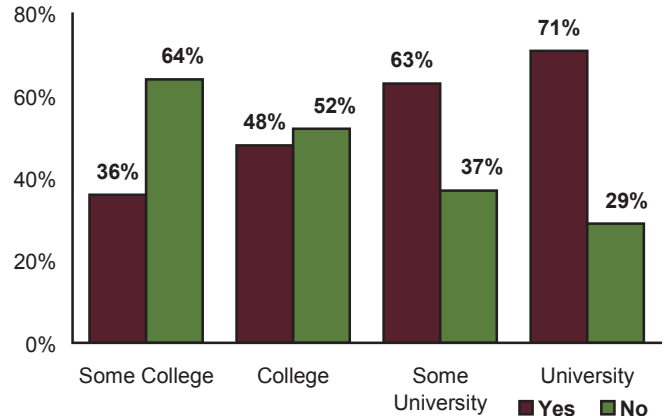
Further, the level of enrolment of respondents pursuing education identified that 60% were attending college, 32% were enrolled in high school upgrading, and 8% were attending university. One reason for the lower level of university enrolled students is due to the fact that there is not a university located within the study area, correlating to less young people living in the region who are attending university. It is not a reflection, necessarily, of the number of local youth who may have achieved a university degree and live in the region. As it was a requirement that respondents needed to live within the three county jurisdiction, those attending university captured those who were living here but commuting to one of the universities close to the region, but did not capture local youth who had moved outside the region in order to attend post-secondary courses.

### Enrolled in Literacy/Continuing Education Program



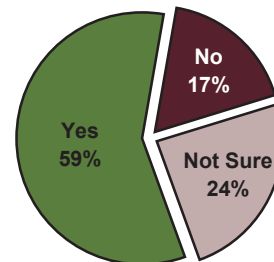
As a sub-group of the 62% attending continuing education, almost two thirds of the respondents who indicated that they are completing their GED (General Equivalency Diploma). Employers stress that a high school diploma is the base level of education expected of their employees, and is often a strict requirement for attaining certain types employment. Youth going back to school to earn their GED will certainly be considered more employable than those without their OSSD or equivalency.

### Working in Field of Study by Educational Attainment



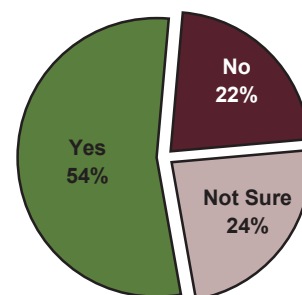
When these results were broken down by level of education attained, those who had some university (63%), or had completed university (71%) were more likely to be working in their field than those who had some college (36%) or had even completed college (48%). It is a clear indicator that as the education levels of the respondents rose, so too did the numbers of those working in their field of study.

### Employment Opportunities in Field of Study in Region



For those enrolled in any type of education, respondents were asked if they felt there were employment opportunities in the region in their field of study. There was a fairly balanced response, with 59% indicating they felt there was employment for and 41% noted that there were no opportunities or they were unsure at this point.

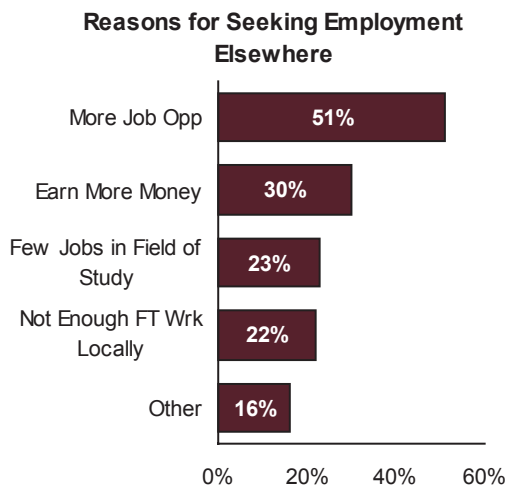
### Plan to Seek Employment in Region



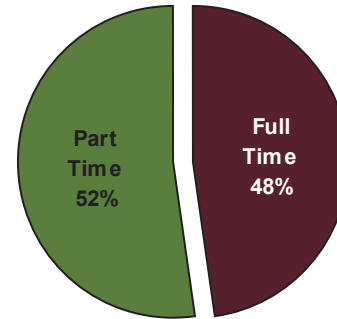
Retention of youth in rural areas has been noted as a high priority and important strategy for building and maintaining an adequate labour market supply. Research has found that the majority of rural youth who leave typically do not return to their home community.

This desire to remain in the community is mirrored by the responses of 54% who plan to seek employment in the near future. However it should be noted that this could reflect optimism on their part since they have just started their job search. A significant number of respondents (22%) indicated that they were not going to seek employment in the region and 24% were uncertain of their job search area. This implies that close to one half may consider seeking employment elsewhere and settling in another area. It is critical for rural communities to understand and deploy strategies that assist youth to find adequate employment and retain young workers in the local, labour force.

When students were asked why they are seeking employment outside the region, the majority of 51% of respondents stated the reason as being more opportunities elsewhere. Given the determinants of out-migration youth have already noted, this is not surprising. Many Youth feel the area lacks employment opportunities. Nearly one third (30%), of the respondents felt that the salary ranges would be higher elsewhere and as a result they could earn more money if they relocated. At nearly one-quarter for each response, youth stated that there were few jobs in their field of study (23%) and not enough full time work in the local area (22%). This underlines the challenges of retaining young workers for rural areas in which the economic conditions do not support a high level of full time, higher paying, and adequate job opportunities.



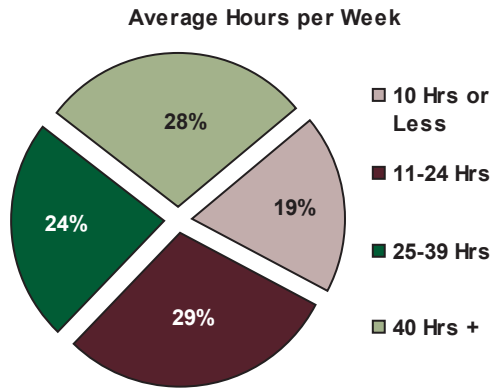
**Employment Status**



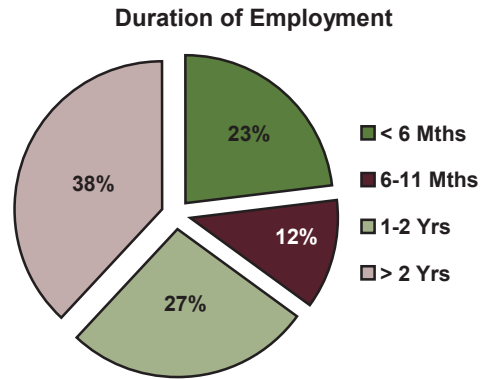
Of the youth respondents who were employed, 48% were working full time, (defined as 25 hours a week or more), while 52% were working part time (defined as less than 25 hours per week).

From the complement of youth who were employed, 14% indicated that they worked at more than one job. Most indicated they were employed in a part time position in their field of study, and worked at a second position to supplement their income. Those in this situation also noted that they would prefer full time hours, both for security and monetary benefits, but most importantly so that they could be working full time in their field of study.

On a positive note, most of those working two positions (83%) indicated that they felt that there was some opportunity for advancement in their current situation. Although these youth may be sacrificing the stability and benefits of one full time position, they felt being employed would help them gain valuable experience as they work towards the eventual goal of a full time position in their field. As is the situation being faced by many adult workers, alternate methods of hiring and employing workers – contract positions, part time, temporary – has become a growing part of the labour force in place of historical, full time employment. This means that many workers may be faced with less job security, less benefits, lower income and overall earnings, and higher risks of not being fully engaged in the workforce.

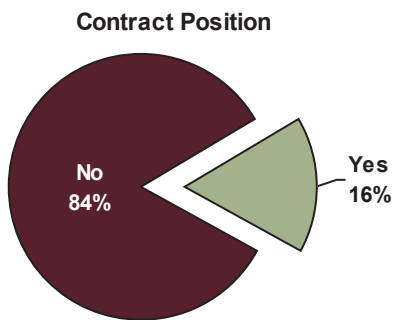


Respondents were then asked to identify the average number of hours they worked per week. Of those working full time hours, 28% worked 40 or more hours per week, with some youth reporting up to 70 hours per week, primarily due to the fact that they were employed at more than one job. A total of 48% (29% + 19%) were working less than 24 hours (for some this may be due to attending school), while a further 24% averaged 25-39 hours per week.



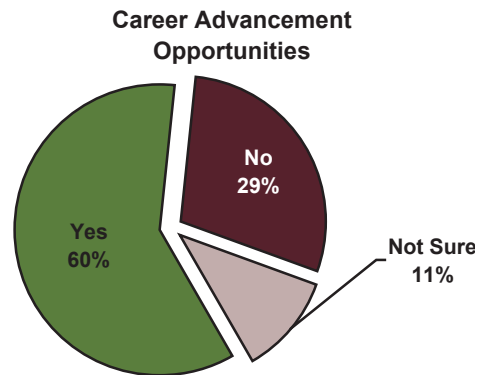
Employed youth were then asked to identify the length of time they have been employed at their current job. Youth who had been in their current employment more than 2 years was the highest response at 38%, while those who were employed between 1 and 2 years totaled 27%. A further 23% had been in their position for less than 6 months.

Given that the majority of youth surveyed were in the 20-24 age range – with the average age of all respondents being 22 – it is not unusual that the majority have been in the workforce for short periods of time.



Only 16% of respondents indicated that they were employed in a contract position; ‘contract’ meaning there was a defined start and end to their employment. Many of the contract positions were a result of specialized programs that target youth during the summer months. These programs often have very specific criteria that may limit their application to the broader youth population, such as targeting youth who are unemployed as opposed to any youth.

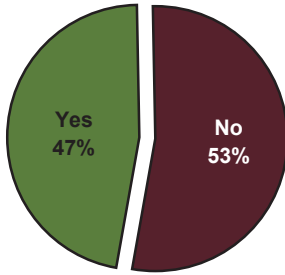
Only 13% of the youth were currently in seasonal positions. This lower-than-anticipated number was likely due to the timing of the survey, which was outside the highest period of seasonal employment of June to September. In the local area, sectors such as agriculture, retail and tourism tend to have much higher levels of seasonal employment than the survey results would indicate. As noted in the employer responses, the youth they employ in seasonal jobs is fairly significant at approximately 22% of their youth workforce.



A positive response came from 60% of the employed youth who felt that there was some opportunity for advancement in their current job situation. As a comparison, 29% felt that there was no career advancement and a further 11% were not sure of any advancement opportunities.

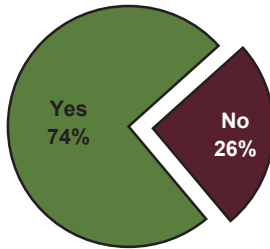
A concern for youth is not only that they get a job, but that they find meaningful employment. Research shows that such adequate employment contains such factors such as the ability to earn acceptable wages, a level of responsibility and importance, and the opportunity for career or job advancement.

### Working in Field of Study



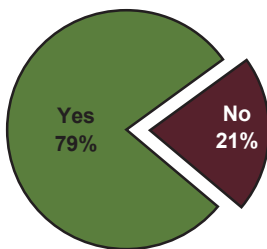
Employed youth who had completed some level of post secondary education were asked whether they were employed in their field of study. A total of 53% of respondents indicated that they are not working in their field of study, with 47% stating they are. This category also provides a general indication of 'underemployment', as noted in an earlier section.

### Part Time Employees Seeking Full Time Employment



In order to delve further into the type and satisfaction of their employment, youth were asked to clarify whether they were content with their current situation. First, part time workers were asked if they were currently seeking full time employment, for which the answer was affirmative in nearly three quarters of the respondents (74%). The remaining 26% of responses indicate that part time employment suited their current situation. For the majority who stated they are seeking full time employment, the reasons cited were job security and the desire to earn hire wages.

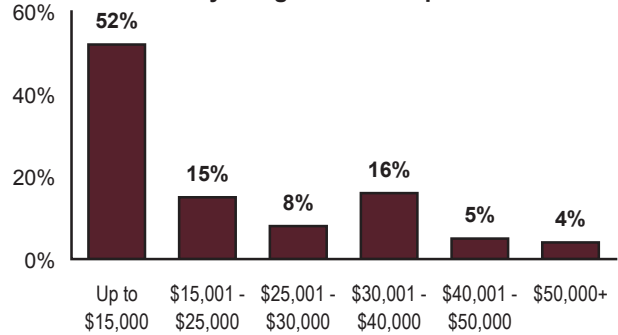
### Full Time Employees Seeking Alternate Full Time Employment



When similarly queried, youth who are employed full time confirmed that the majority (79%) appeared satisfied with their current situation. Only 21%

indicated they were seeking alternative, full time employment. The main reasons given for seeking alternate employment were: the desire to make higher wages, attain greater job security, gain a position in their field of study, and finding a position with greater career advancement potential.

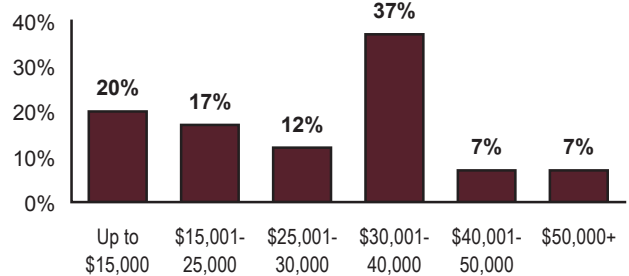
### Salary Range for all Respondents



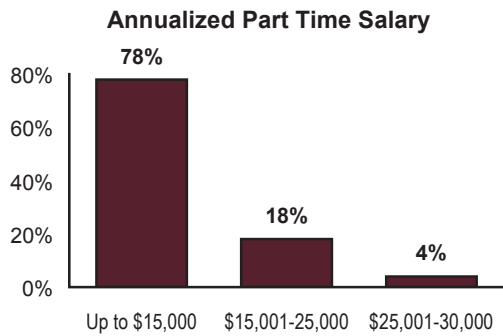
In the category of income levels, this survey showed results in correlation to the detailed, comprehensive taxfiler data used in the earlier section. For clarification, taxfiler data is 100% sample size of all individuals who report any source of income, whereas this survey offers a representative sample of respondents.

When all respondents (part time and full time workers) were asked their wages – either on an annual amount or hourly wage – results show that the majority of youth (52%) earn under \$15,000 a year, with the vast majority of 75% earning no more than \$30,000/year.

### Wage Range for Full Time Workers

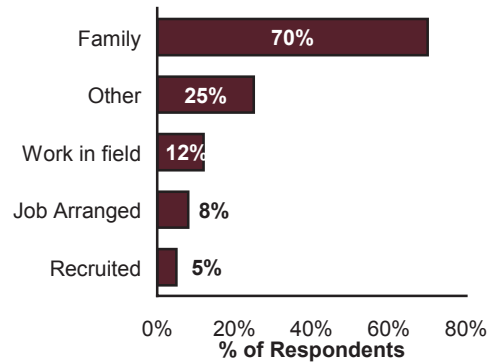


When full time responses were separated out, we find that the largest number of youth, 37% earned between \$30,001 and \$40,000 annually, a more promising wage level for a greater amount of young people. On the opposite side, a net total of 49% of youth made less than \$30,000 annually, with 20% noting that they earn \$15,000 or less annually for full time work.



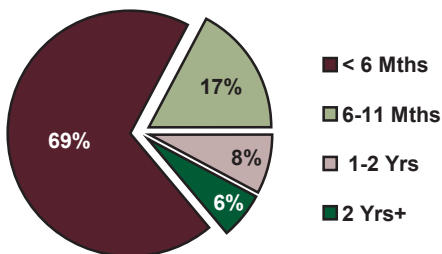
According to the Canadian Council on Social Development, in their report based on Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut-Offs (LICOs), the poverty line for a community the size of Belleville (population under 50,000) is \$17,784. More rural areas in the region have poverty a poverty line closer to \$16,273. The remote rural poverty line sits at \$14,303. When the salaries of the respondents who were working part time were annualized, it identifies that the majority (78%) were earning less than \$15,000 a year, many of whom are not working in this type of employment by choice and are attempting to find full time work. Further, when looking at those youth who are working full time, 20% of them are making \$15,000 or less per year.

### Reasons for Search/Accepting Work in Region



Employed youth were then asked to identify the reasons they chose to look, or stay, in the region for employment. The overwhelming answer from respondents (70%) was having family in the area. This indicates that many youth have strong ties to the community and, if possible, will stay in the region for employment. It could provide an important factor for employers when considering effective recruitment and retention strategies. Likely, if youth were more able to meet other economic factors in their employment (e.g. decent wages, full time work), the percentage of those migrating to other areas might be somewhat curbed.

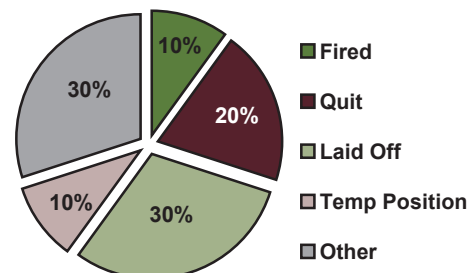
### Longest Period of Unemployment



When respondents were asked to identify the longest period of unemployment they had experienced since finishing school, the majority of respondents (69%) answered they had found employment within 6 months, with 14% total noting 1-2 years or longer.

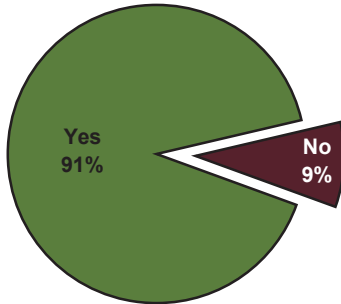
Given that 6 months is fairly reasonable, we also know that a large number of youth are accepting employment for many reasons including financial, work experience and to gain entrance to the workforce. Those who were currently unemployed have noted lengthier periods of job search than those who are employed, and much longer periods than those reported by service agencies.

### Reasons for Leaving Job



Focusing on those who had been employed at some time but had left their job, we asked respondents to identify reasons why they had left. The majority of youth responded they had experienced Lay Offs (30%), or had 'Other' reasons ranging from medical and contract issues to the employment being seasonal in nature. Some Youth indicated they had Quit (20%) or been Fired (10%). This could reflect, partially, a poor work attitude that many employers expressed concerns about, or possibly these youth did not find employment in an area in which they have interests or skills. A final 10% noted that their position was temporary in nature and that it had ended.

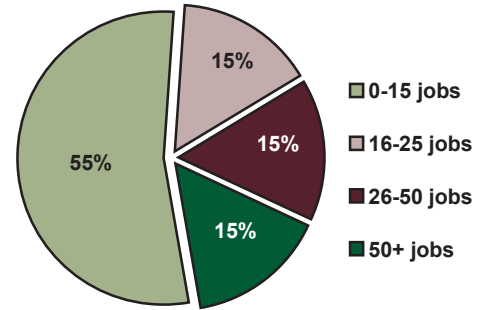
### Actively Looking for Work



Youth who were not employed and not in school were asked numerous questions about their situation. Of respondents, it was encouraging that 91% indicated they were currently seeking employment, while 9% were not looking at present. The majority of job seekers had applied up to 15 jobs, while a small amount had applied for greater levels of jobs, some being as high as 70 different applications. Some youth who were unemployed for more than a year had applied for very few positions, while some, unemployed for short periods, had applied to an excessive number of jobs.

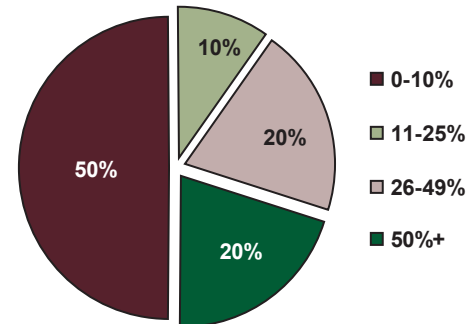
Various reasons for this disparity were noted, some reflecting limited awareness of job search strategies, some who were 'blanketing' the market with their resumes, and others who limited their search by only applying to specific jobs. While there are no concrete links between quantity and quality of job search levels and strategies, there were strong indications that youth will require more effective strategies, guidance and support to assist and expand their job search, especially in the local area where the number of jobs and recruiting methods can be different than conventional techniques used by employers in more urban centres. Research has shown that youth experiencing long periods of unemployment, or short-term, unsuccessful stints of working, are at a high risk of withdrawing from the labour market entirely. Youth having withdrawn from the labour market express frustration with their previous experiences, and hopelessness toward future prospects.

### Number of Jobs Applied For



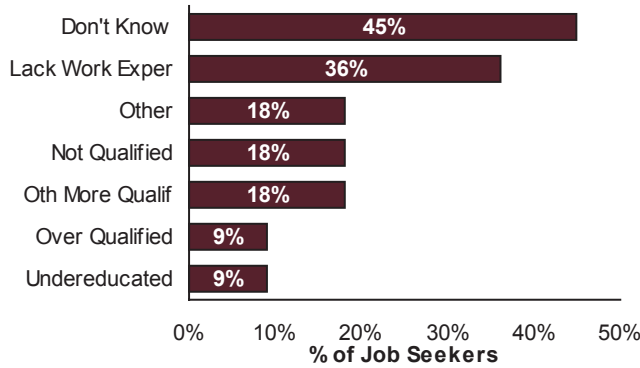
The average length of time job seekers spent seeking employment was 9.6 months. The majority of respondents (55%) had applied from 0-15 positions since their job search began. Across all other categories, 15% of youth had applied for the number of jobs noted (16-25; 26-50; 50+). While there is no magic number of applications by any individual or for any type of industry or occupation, it may be a strategy for youth to consider of applying for more jobs whenever possible to increase the chances of gaining an interview.

### Percentage of Interviews Resulting from Applications



Most noteworthy is the success rate for interviews resulting from job applications by all youth. For all respondents, 50% reported that they were getting very few interviews resulting from their application (between 0-10% interviews). This could be indicative of poor job search strategies, poor resume writing skills, lack of experience or qualifications, and/or unrealistic expectations. A further 20% indicated that they were successful in gaining an interview in 26%-49% of the time. An additional 20% indicated that interviews resulted with 50% of their applications.

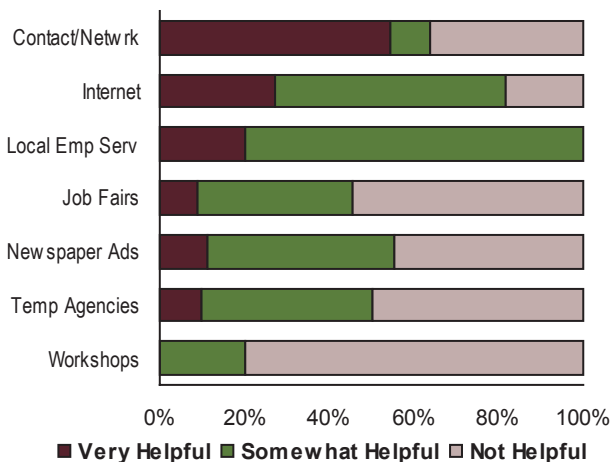
### Reasons for Not Being Offered the Job



In correlation to the employer and provider input, respondents were asked to provide their input on reasons why they felt – or had been told – that had not been offered a job for which they had interviewed. Their responses indicated that Lack of Work Experience (36%) was often cited, this was followed by Not Qualified (18%), and Others were More Qualified (18%). Only 9% were considered Over Qualified and conversely 9% were considered Undereducated.

However, the majority (45%) of respondents answered that they Don't Know the reasons they had been unsuccessful. This could mean that the interviewer was not forthright in offering an explanation or that these youth are not routinely following up with employers, an important element in any job search strategy.

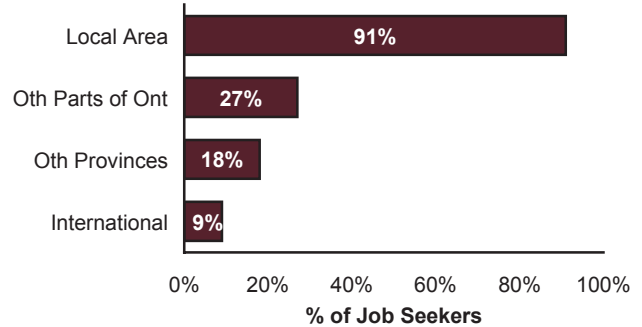
### Usefulness of Resources/Services in Job Search



Respondents were also asked to rate the usefulness and effectiveness of local programs and services that they had used in their job search. The results indicate that Youth find Contacts and Networking, at over 60% total, to be a very or somewhat helpful as part of a job search, while workshops were

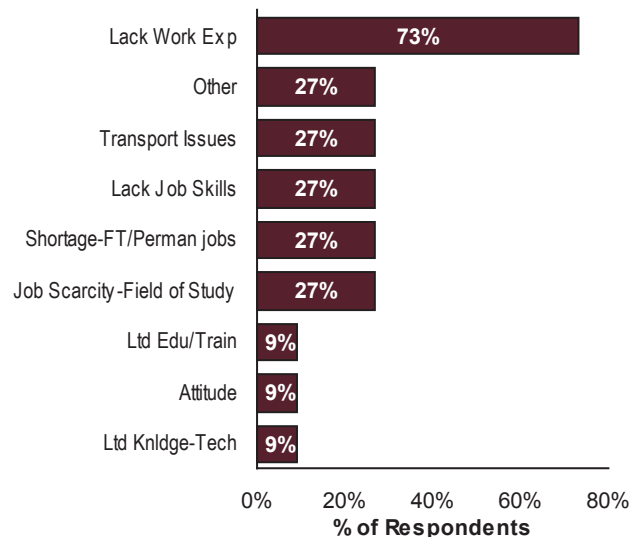
generally viewed as not helpful. This is supported by the employer responses to a similar question, since 86% indicated referrals as their primary source for hiring new employees. It is not surprising that many young people utilize the internet in their job search; however employers have not embraced this method to the same degree in their recruitment strategies. Local Service Agencies were viewed as a resource that Youth generally agreed upon as being helpful.

### Job Search Area



When asked to identify the geographic area where they are currently looking for work, the majority (91%) responded that their job search was within the local area. A total of 27% of respondents indicated that they were broadening their search to include 'Other Parts of Ontario', while 18% were considering employment opportunities in other provinces. Finally 9% were considering foreign job opportunities. Considering the trends of rural youth out-migration, this could be seen as a positive local situation in terms of their job 'search', though we know that higher numbers of youth will leave the area should they not be able to find adequate employment in the local labour market.

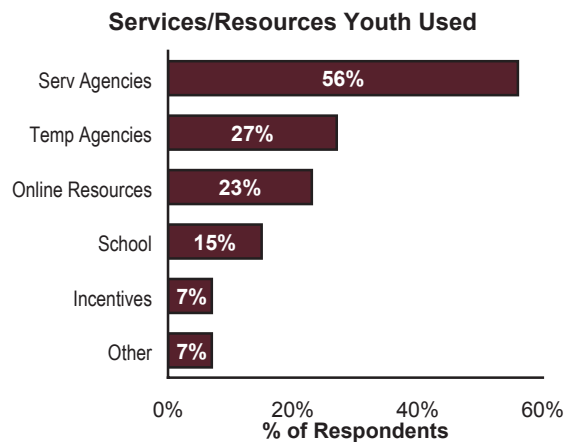
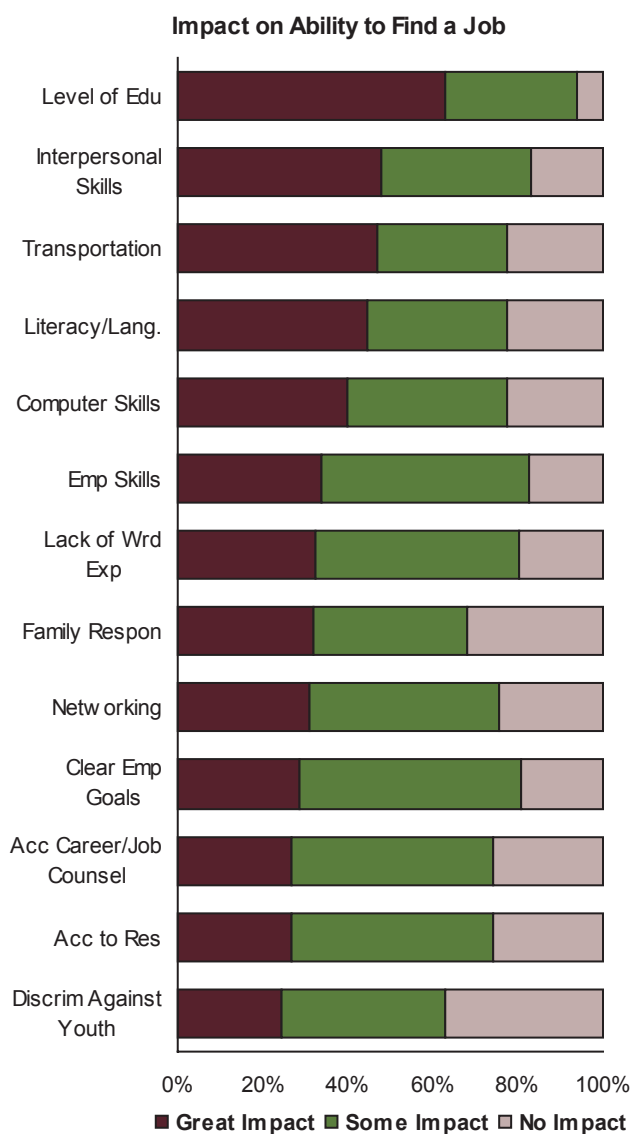
### Challenges to Job Search



When they were asked to identify the challenges or barriers, if any, that were affecting their job search, respondents indicated that Lack of Work Experience had the greatest impact (73%). This was followed by an equal response rate for Transportation, Lack of Job Skills, Shortages of Full Time Jobs, Scarcity of Jobs in Their Field and Limited Education/Training at 27% for each. As mentioned previously, the lack of or limited access to transportation poses serious challenge to rural youth and populations in general. The Lack of Job Skills and Limited Education may be resolved with further education and training, but this is not without costs and can add financial burden to individuals and families. Finally, the shortage of full time/permanent jobs and scarcity of jobs in their field of study reflects local labour market and specific economic conditions to a great extent.

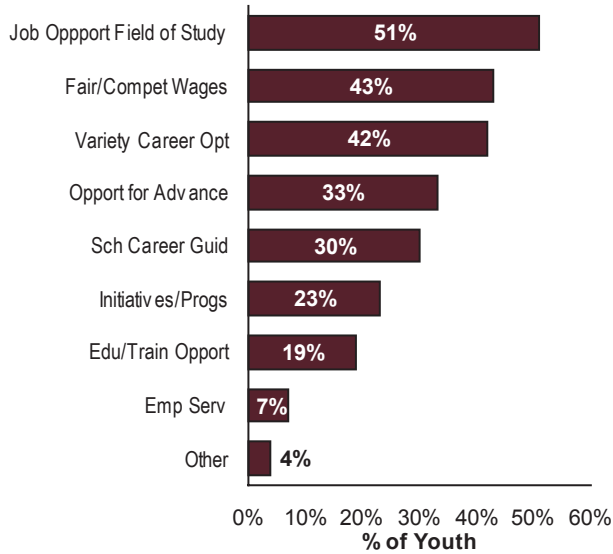
Finally, youth were surveyed on identical issues as employers and service providers as they related to ratings of certain factors which have an impact on their ability to find a job.

In their responses, the majority indicated that 'Level of Education' was the most significant factor, followed closely by 'Interpersonal Skills'. Certainly, the first can be remedied with further schooling and specific training; however, the latter is generally accepted as a skill that is best learned on the job. Transportation or the lack of it is a reoccurring theme, given that outside of the Belleville area there are no public transportation systems and the commuting times throughout the region can be lengthy. Computer Skills and general Employability Skills were seen as important factors, with Clear Employment Goals and Access to Resources – primarily computer and information – were to other factors that had high totals of 'great' and 'some' impact.



All youth were asked an open ended question – 'what employment services or resources have been of assistance to you?' The responses were organized into the categories shown in the accompanying chart. Over half of the respondents (56%) indicated that they had used the services of 'Youth Service Agencies' as their most useful resource. A significant number (27%) had worked through a Temporary Personnel Agency, while 23% found online resources to be useful.

### Lacking in Region for Youth



When youth were asked what they felt was 'lacking in the region to assist overall youth employment, the majority (51%) of respondents indicated Job Opportunities in their Field of Study, followed by the Lack of Fair and Competitive Wages (43%), a lack of Variety of Career Options (42%) and Opportunities for Advancement (33%). These responses reflect a pessimistic outlook by local youth of their employment opportunities within the region. This perception could prompt many of these youth to migrate from the region.

A significant number (30%) indicated that 'Career Guidance within the school system is lacking. In a number of, national surveys, youth echoed this sentiment, noting that they felt ill prepared to make career and educational decisions based on the guidance and career services available to them within the school system.

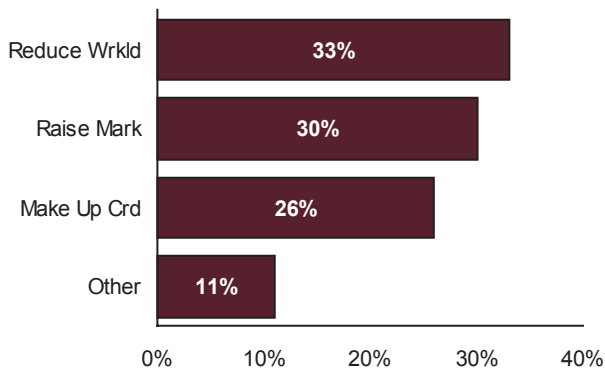
Young people are making the transition from school to the world of work through a variety of pathways, whether they choose to enter into post secondary education, through an apprenticeship or proceed directly into the work force. It is important to gain some insight into the influences and motivations that shape their intentions – and routes – into the world of work.

To capture the perspectives of local students as they prepare to leave high school en route to future employment, we implemented a survey to which 533 local Grade 12 students provided responses. The following provides details on these students' immediate plans, their perceptions of the local job market and their general employment preparedness.

Male and female students were fairly evenly represented, with only slightly more (58%) females compared to (48%) males. For this group, a series of questions were posed to determine if the students were able to access all the programs, credit courses and career exploration opportunities they wanted within the school system.

First, they were asked if they had taken summer school courses this past summer to supplement their education. Most (95%) responded that they had not.

**Reason For Taking Summer School**

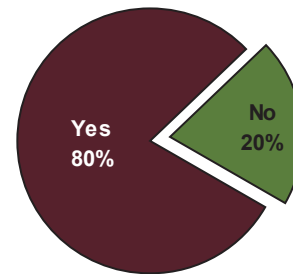


Students who had attended summer school were asked the reasons for choosing this avenue. The most common response (33%) was to Reduce their Workload. Given the recent changes to the school system, students are completing their high school education in four, instead of five years. Additionally, those headed for post secondary education are required to take certain courses, and indicate the lack of electives. Summer school is often a method for students to alleviate the intensity of their school years.

For 30% of the respondents, it provided an

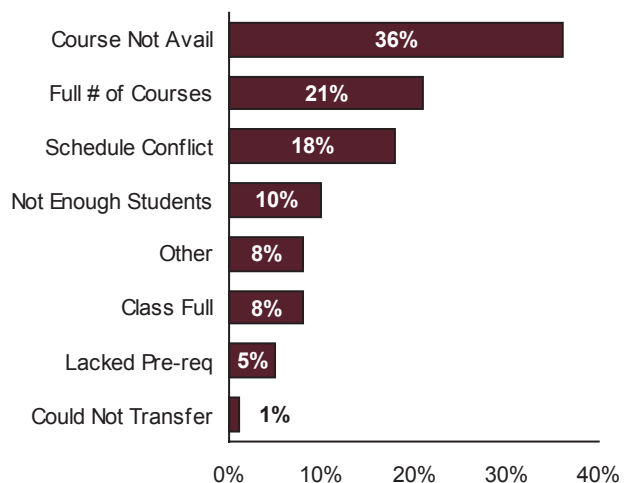
opportunity to Raise their Marks, while 26% noted that they took it to Make up Credits (26%). Those who indicated Other reasons, most often identified the summer program as an opportunity to take specific courses or programs that they did not take during the regular school year.

**Course Access in School Year**



Access to high-level and broad learning opportunities are noted as central goals of our education system. This access to programs and specialized courses is an important component in the students' preparation for further education and the workforce. To determine the availability of programs in their interest areas, students were asked if they were able to take all the courses they had wanted to. Most (80%) indicated that they were able to take the courses they had selected. The remaining 20% who answered they weren't able to access some courses were asked to identify the reasons why they could not.

**Reasons for Not Taking Courses**

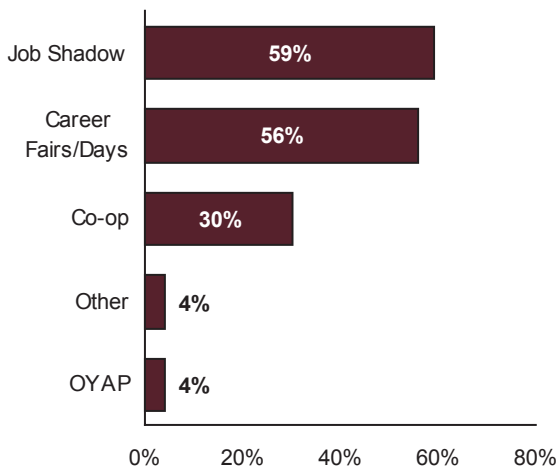


For those who did not access the courses desired, most students (36%) indicated the Courses were Not Available to them; this should raise some caution flags regarding the availability of the certain courses

and the potential impact on the students' ability to prepare for post secondary education or workforce destinations. Many students (21%) indicated that they already had their full complement of eight credits and a significant number (18%) indicated that there were Scheduling conflicts that limited their selection. Teachers and students alike note that it is very difficult for students to incorporate various electives, special interest programs or co-op education into already tight timetables during the 4-year period.

Another issue noted was the lack of students to offer a particular course. This issue is of broad concern for rural schools that have lower student populations and may not be able to implement certain courses. Some of these courses, however, are prerequisites for post-secondary acceptance, leaving youth to identify other ways of accessing a course such as by correspondence or electronic learning.

#### Participate-Career Related School Progs



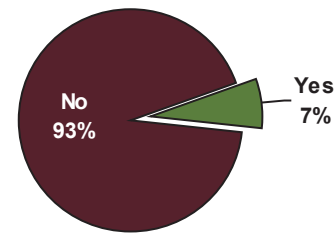
Students were then asked if they had participated in any Career Related school programs. Most students responded that they had taken part in Job Shadowing (59%) and Career Fairs (56%). These activities provide students with opportunities to explore a variety of career options and there is relative ease of access to these programs since they are often part of the curriculum for Grades 9 and 10 students.

Fewer students (30%) had participated in the Co-op Program, a lower percentage than might take it if they had more time available. This program targets Grades 11 and 12 students and this is where many are having difficulty fitting their courses into the tighter timetable. As well, coop education traditionally is promoted to students who are workplace bound. University bound students are usually counselled to pursue the various academic programs and prerequisite credits rather than

participate in work placement through this program. However, this program has been identified by many, local employers across a number of sectors as a key method of recruitment.

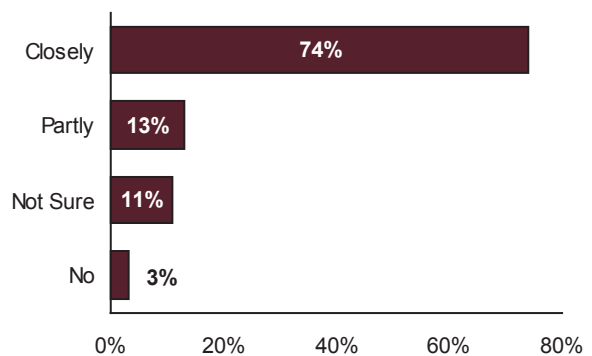
Some respondents indicated in the 'Other' category that they plan to take Co-op in their 5th year, meaning they are staying an extra year beyond the 4-year requirement. The new, four year curriculum has made it increasingly difficult for students to participate in the Co-op program without taking an additional year and still garner all their needed OSSD credits.

#### Participating in Co-op



When the Students were asked if they are currently participating in Co-op, only 7% indicated they were. While this does not seem to be a popularly attended program, many responses from other questions indicate that some students have already taken Co-op, or intend to complete Co-op in a fifth year. However many indicated that they were unable to fit a Co-op Placement into their schedule and graduate in four years.

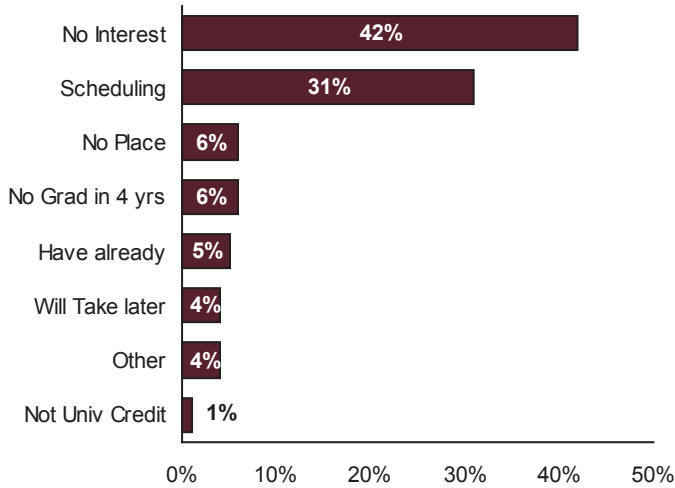
#### Co-op Related to Career Plans



Of the Grade 12 students that were taking Co-op, most (74%) indicated that their placements were Closely Related to their career plans. This is very positive and indicates that the program is successful in its goal to properly match students with a work experience that is in their interest area as well as connecting the student to a local employer.



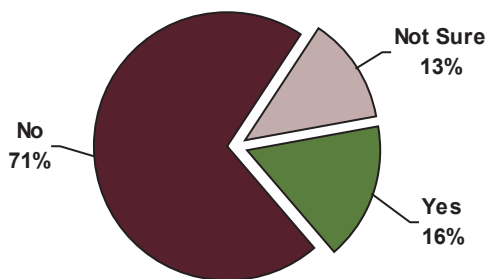
### Reason for Not Taking Co-op



Students who were not taking part in the Co-op program were asked why they had chosen not to participate. Many responded that they had No Interest (42%), however a significant number (31%) indicated that it was a Scheduling issue. This was reinforced by responses that indicated taking Co-op would prevent them from Graduating in Four Years, and that the program would not be included in the credits considered for university or college. Some students also indicated that they had already taken, or plan to take, Co-op in the future.

Only 1% of the students surveyed were participating in the OYAP program. This is in keeping with the overall responses, indicating that the majority of the survey group are planning on attending university after high school.

### Plan to Take 2nd YR for Grade 12

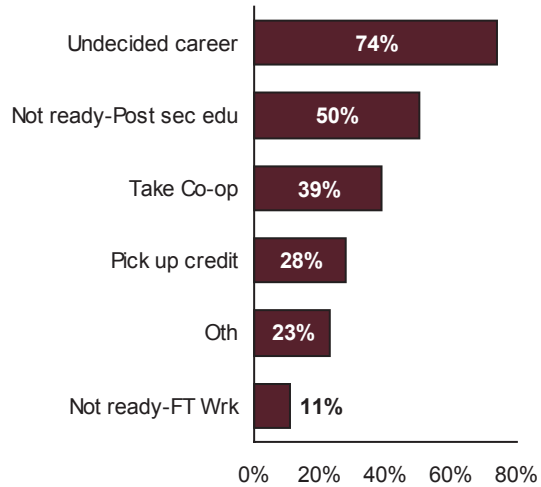


Since the introduction of the new curriculum and the four year program, many students have opted to take an additional semester, or full year, to complete their secondary school studies. The students were asked what year they were in, for which 89% were in their first year of Grade 12 and 11% were in their second year.

Of the students who are still in their first year of Grade 12, 16% indicated that they plan to take an

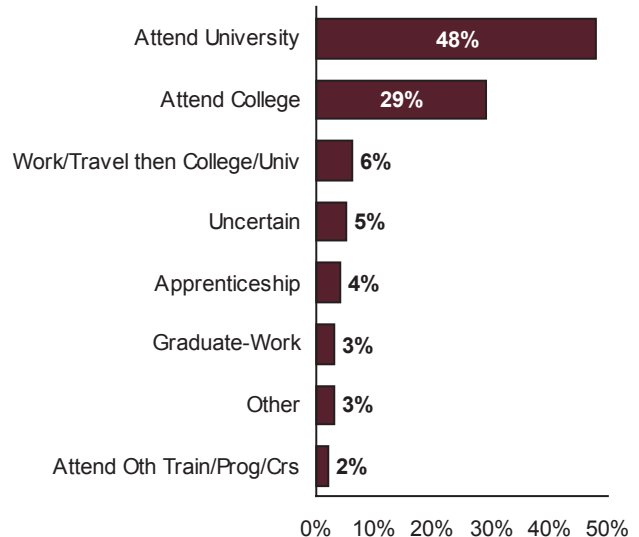
additional year of high school. Some students (13%) were not sure at present, while the majority (71%) plan to complete their high school as a four year program.

### Reasons for Taking 2nd Year



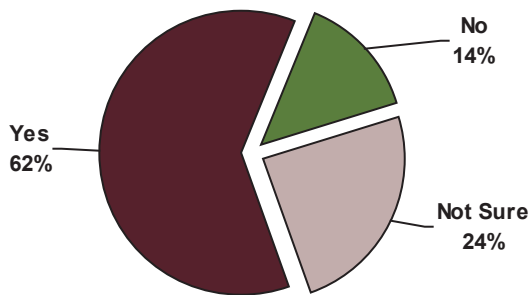
The Grade 12 students who indicated they would take an additional year to complete their Grade 12 were asked their reasons. Their responses indicate that most students (74%) are Undecided about a career choice they want to pursue and are using the additional year to consider their options. Similarly, the second most indicated reason (50%) noted was they were not ready to pursue post secondary education. A significant number (39%) indicated that they intend to use their second year to Take Co-op or to Pick Up a Credit. Those respondents who indicated 'Other Reasons' specified that they were either too young (many were 17), that they wanted to play on a sports team, or that they wanted to take other electives.

### Future Plans



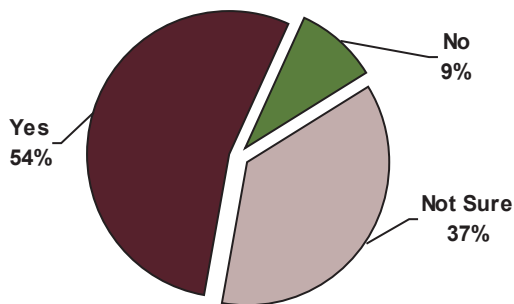
The push for higher education has been a theme throughout the surveyed groups. With the potential benefits for those who obtain education in addition to high school, it is encouraging that the majority of Grade 12 students (77%) surveyed noted their future plans include going to University or College. A further 6% want to work or travel first, and 4% are planning on pursuing an apprenticeship. Given the large number of the students who indicate their intent to go to University, it means most will need to travel outside the region to pursue such education, adding to the trend of out-migration with local youth.

**Employment Opportunities in Region in Career/Field**



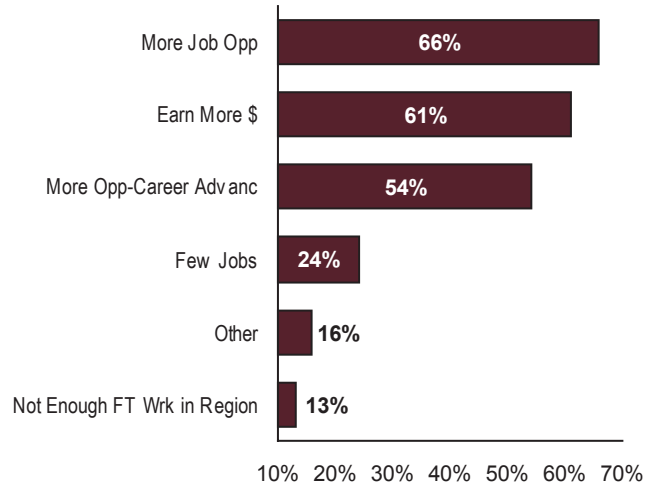
Students were then asked if they thought there were job opportunities in the area related to their potential career or field of interest. Much like the responses from the Youth survey, the majority (62%) indicated they felt there were career opportunities in the area.

**Seek Employment Outside Region**



However when the Students were asked if they intend to seek employment outside the region, more than half (54%) indicated they would be looking elsewhere to pursue their careers, and only 9% said they would not. This could reflect the reality that many youth leave for a variety of economic and non-economic reasons such as a desire to expand their life experiences.

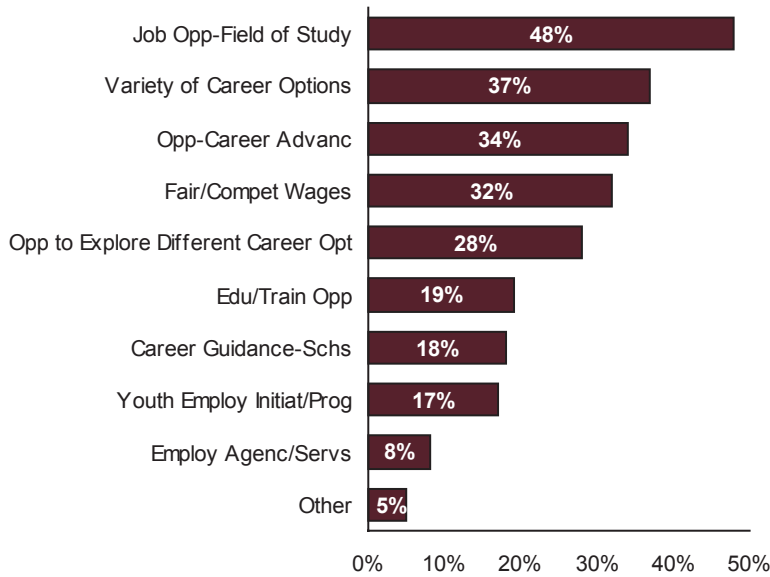
**Reasons for Seeking Emp Outside Region**



When students were asked to identify why they would be seeking employment elsewhere the majority (66%) indicated they felt there were More Job Opportunities elsewhere. Many (61%) felt that they would Earn More Money in other communities. A further 54% indicated they felt there were More Opportunities for Career Advancement outside the region, while 24% felt there were few jobs in the region.

When Students were asked to identify what was lacking in the region in regard to youth employment, most (48%) felt the region Lacked Job Opportunities in Their Field of Study. This would appear to be in stark contrast to the responses to Question 10 (Do you feel that there are employment opportunities in this region in your chosen career/field?) where the majority 62% answered there were indeed opportunities available for them. [From a research explanation, a main reason for this contrast could be that more students who felt there 'were not' job opportunities completed this write-in question (an open-ended, voluntary question) thereby increasing their weighted representation of responses].

### Lacking in Region Re: Youth Employment



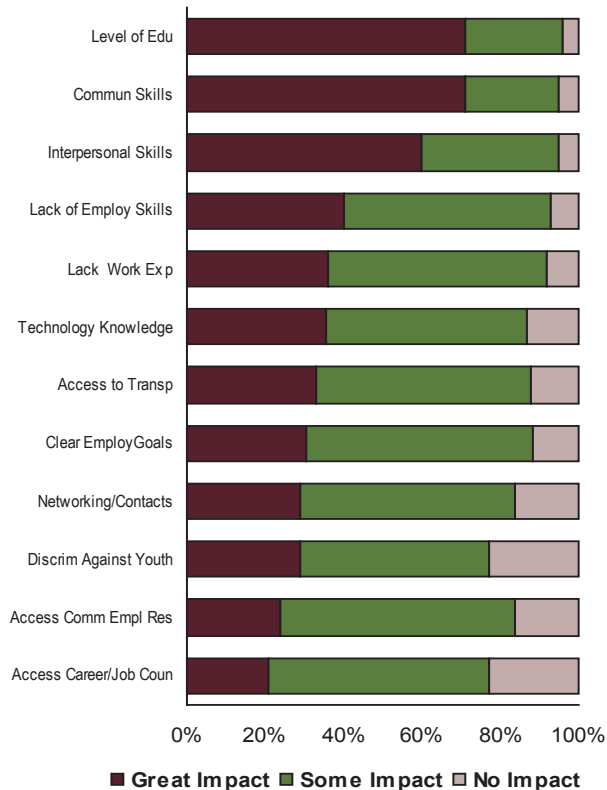
This response could reflect optimism on the part of the individual respondent as far as their own, personal career/employment prospects and a general pessimism on the outlook for youth employment in general. Other noted areas that were deemed as missing in the region were Career Options (37%), Fair or Competitive Wages (32%), Education and Training opportunities (19%) and Career Guidance in the high school (18%).

Finally, students were asked to rate a variety of factors that they feel impact their ability to find a job. The majority (71%) rated both Level of Education and Communication Skills as the most significant. As noted, most research indicates a positive impact of education attainment on employment opportunities and income levels than work experience. The students ranked Communication Skills and then Interpersonal Skills (60%) as having great impact on their ability to find employment. It is encouraging that they recognize the value of these 'softer' skills in their job search, since the findings from both the Employers and Service Agencies' surveys indicate that most employers value these skills.

More than one-third (36%) of the students recognized the significance of actual Work Experience on their ability to find employment, however for many it is difficult to gain direct experience and break the 'no experience, no job' cycle. The demands of their course load and limited access to the Co-op program (without taking a second year) means that less students will gain this coveted work experience unless they stay back an additional year.

Students also recognized the importance of 'Access to Transportation' as a factor affecting their employability. The lack of transportation in the region is a major issue cited by all participants in this study. Although the majority of the Grade 12 student respondents have not formally entered the job market, their overall perceptions of the impact of various factors was comparatively insightful and often reflected the importance of many issues cited by local employers.

### Barrier to Employment





The human and economic costs of unemployment, underemployment and a lower-skilled, less educated society are profound and well recognized. Unemployment early in a person's work life, when they are eager to begin work and enter a new phase of adult life, may permanently impair the person's

*“Those societies that perform best in integrating young people into the workforce appear to gain a genuine advantage for the future. But if the jobless tally among youth fails to budge or, even worse, begins to climb, then the consequences will be serious for everyone – individuals, their families, governments and employers”*

*Why Youth Employment is Good for Business, International Labour Office.*

future employability and career success. In addition to the negative effect it can have on an individual's income, there are many other personal and societal downsides. The compounding, personal issues and effects can range from higher reliance on government subsidies such as EI and Social Assistance, limitations in pursuing and affording societal goals such as housing, personal and family stresses brought on by financial challenges and limitations, or low attachment to the workforce and community as they migrate to other jobs and communities in pursuit of employment. The effects on communities and society in general are also well documented, from lower economic impact and purchasing power of individuals and families to higher levels of crime and drug abuse in communities with high levels of youth unemployment.

As the overall employment situation facing youth in a given area is directly linked to the situation faced by adults who live and work in the same area and, ultimately, their future, it is vital to put into place solid policies, services, economic development, training and education, and job creation programs and initiatives that improve the employment opportunities for youth, primarily as a means by which to start addressing and curbing the longer-term risks

associated with unemployment and lower standards of living.

Many stakeholders have a role, and often a responsibility, to help youth through the transition into paid employment, including youth themselves, parents, educators, business people, community agencies and governments. Solutions to youth unemployment must involve a range of activities and commitments of these stakeholders, some of which we have noted below, but which do not represent the many and varied solutions that do, or could, work for the local area. It will take a community effort to help our young people stay and grow into healthy, contributing and productive participants in the economic and social vitality of our region.

### ■ EDUCATION AND TRAINING

1. Integrate more workplace-based skill development and career awareness into existing curriculum and build on various initiatives that link and involve employers with students for exposure, awareness and training (e.g. career events, industry tours, cooperative education, apprenticeship).
2. Enhance options and opportunities for youth to increase skills and exposures in essential skill areas, with emphasis on reading, writing, math, computer literacy and other technology-based skill sets.
3. Increase exposure of educators and guidance counsellors to the range, variety and requirements of local sectors and associated occupations and professions.
4. Explore and pursue greater, web-based applications for distance learning that can be used in high schools where courses may not be available or have high enrolment, with particular focus on sciences, maths, business and technologies. Funding and support from government and other key stakeholders in business and economic development needs to be available.
5. Pursue new option for establishing business and work-related experiences within the school setting, bringing business leaders into the setting to provide expertise, support, mentoring and career guidance.
6. Involve local employers, industry rep's and



business leaders in development of new work experience and skill development programs for students at risk of not completing their high school or pursuing post-secondary education.

7. Provide enhanced exposure, linkage and training to high school students in obtaining and using labour market information to support their decision-making in terms of career development, post-secondary education, or employment pursuits.
8. Improve and broaden the exposure, education and options for high school students and youth in areas of business, self-employment and entrepreneurship.
9. Reduce barriers for post-secondary students switching institutions, and improve recognition of their credits when they enter or re-enter college and university level courses.
10. For post-secondary institutes, there is a growing need and opportunity to expand access to higher education curriculum and certifications through joint ventures with other degree/diploma granting programs that could be partially or fully available through local facilities.
11. Rural education systems need to focus on improved strategies for recruiting educators who can teach specialized courses and, where necessary, provide support and services that help them and their families adjust to rural conditions should they not be from a rural background. Special focus should be on educators with sciences, maths, business and technology-based credentials.
12. Develop and pilot initiatives that provide direct exposure, orientation, linkages, information sessions and social interactions between youth and high school students and various post-secondary institutions and students. High attention should be given to those who may not consider higher education for various reasons, including financial restraints and family support.

### ■ RURAL RESEARCH

1. Research and analysis is needed to document employment outcomes for youth who have been supported by local agencies offering employment-related services and programs.
2. Analysis of impact and outcome of government policies, programs and legislation targeting youth employment, such as wage subsidies, training subsidies, tax credits, self-employment benefits, and job creation.

3. Research to identify best practices and higher success rates that assist youth in accessing and retaining employment in the local labour market.
4. Identify post-secondary courses and programs that local youth are pursuing outside of the region in order to determine potential options for providing or securing such courses – full or partial – through local and nearby institutions.
5. Funding for longitudinal research to track and identify short-term and long-term barriers, challenges and outcomes faced by youth who have left the education system and have lower levels of participation and engagement in the workforce, and who have required use of government assistance programs.

### ■ EMPLOYER INVOLVEMENT

1. Identify and enhance options for integrating post-secondary students from outside the region in workplace activities such as placements, internships, cooperative education.
2. Establish recruiting and employment practices and initiatives that target post-secondary graduates from the region to return to the area.
3. Improve the level and scope of involvement in local initiatives that focus on integrating students and youth with employers for purposes of skill development, work experience, volunteerism, career awareness and cooperative education.
4. Increase linkages, services and program initiatives for youth with local sectors and employers where gaps or high demand for various occupations are known to exist.
5. Businesses and business leaders need to see, and act on, the range of opportunities to be engaged within school systems and training institutes to volunteer their knowledge, business acumen, mentoring and modeling and provide hands-on learning opportunities for young people, as with the Iowa banking concept.

### ■ DATA AND INFORMATION

1. Funding and collaboration at local/regional level amongst all youth agencies and pertinent bodies to centralize key data and information related to youth for purposes of research and analysis.
2. Collaboration and shared agreements amongst local areas on data purchases and accessibility, both to avoid duplication, have greater economies of scale, and reduced costs for any individual agency.

3. More public, cost-free, or low-cost information provided by Statistics Canada and other government ministries to support rural research related to factors, determinants and indicators of youth employment and related subject matter.

### ■ INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT

1. Greater access, availability and support for rural transportation through investments, subsidies and cost coverage needs to be put in place to support youth – and adult workers – who are involved in training, education, employment services and work-related activities.
2. Improve and increase the technological infrastructure for education facilities and communities to enable/improve access to training and education opportunities, as well as supporting recruitment and development of technology-based companies.
3. More focus by economic development bodies geared to supporting job creation, business development and career opportunities that involve youth and integrate them with local business leaders.
4. More focus in rural economic development on the range of leading and evolving industry changes and the associated needs of these industries (e.g. technological, access to research/education facilities) that could attract businesses and business people to the region, with a goal of job creation in higher quality, full time and advancing sectors. This will require consistent and high level knowledge, commitment and investment into infrastructure and services that will be required for such companies to consider establishing or relocating to the region.

### ■ PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

1. Enhanced services and programs that support youth who may wish to pursue self-employment as their initial, main, or augmented source of employment and career.
2. Identify skill gaps, training and education needs of youth on EI and Social Assistance as means for providing pertinent training and skill development linked to local labour market needs.
3. In addition to increasing funds for summer employment in rural areas so that students can gain skills and awareness of employment

opportunities, funding needs to be enhanced to support the varying issues in rural areas such as transportation.

4. Youth from low-income families need to receive enhanced support and services that assist them to gain skills, awareness and interest in pursuing higher education when they are at the high school level. Mentoring opportunities with business people and professionals provides great benefits to all youth who do not get exposure to certain occupations and job opportunities requiring higher education.

### ■ YOUTH

1. Utilize the volunteer hour requirements in high school, and volunteering in general, to explore and learn about various career options, professions, business skills, as a way to identify areas of interest, learn skills and network with adults who may provide assistance for future job and training support.
2. Acquire and maintain academic and skills in the key essential skill areas such as maths, sciences, writing, communication, computer literacy, for which access to such learning is often available in many settings from schools to libraries to service agencies.
3. Improve skills and networking in resume writing, interviewing, selling, and effective job search to improve chances of gaining part time and full time work, especially given the fact that most jobs are not posted at all or in traditional methods.
4. Consider cooperative education opportunities that can provide direct learning and skill development in occupations and jobs that are of potential interest for careers and as a way to gain a range of new skills and knowledge for future benefit.
5. Consider the many and varied occupations that fall under the apprenticeship system as viable, available and achievable careers that offer great opportunity for local employment, job security, good wages and transferability to other provinces and countries.
6. Gain awareness and understanding of local labour market conditions and seek out information and support to identify the various job and career opportunities and the associated educational requirements.



## ■ GOVERNMENT AND FUNDERS

1. Flexible and targeted funding to support private/public training bodies to offer courses and programs where rural workforce needs are clearly identified and employer involvement is confirmed.
2. Consider overall family income with a goal to enhancing grants and funds available to youth from these families who are pursuing post-secondary education and may incur greater expenses, such as transportation and accommodation.
3. Increase and expand funding for youth interning and career development programs for post-secondary students and graduates that allow local businesses to take on more young people in key positions, with a goal to helping them secure full time employment in the region where possible.
4. Support greater public access, lower cost and availability of data, labour market information and research support for rural areas and research organizations involved in studying youth and rural employment issues, with a focus on longer-term, longitudinal research that can build on knowledge and key analysis in order to propose effective solutions.
5. Review and reassess various policies and legislation that can act as a deterrent to businesses for job creation, especially smaller firms, with a key focus on business and payroll taxes, levels of legislative and regulatory compliance across many areas. As a corollary, enhance and build on effective initiatives that support job creation, such as tax credits for hiring various occupations, training subsidy, wage subsidy, transportation subsidy.
6. Funding and support to rural areas, with a focus on all education facilities, to support capital improvements in specific areas such as web-based technology for distance education, equipment to support apprenticeship training in rural schools, technology-based equipment and specialist instructors in leading-edge industry developments.
7. Increase funding and grant opportunities to rural students pursuing post-secondary education, especially those who must leave the region to attend specific courses and inherit higher costs for such things as transportation and accommodation.
8. Expand remedial programs for youth with low and poor essential skills (e.g. math, reading, writing, computer literacy) to improve their skills and employability.
9. Support and increase post-secondary courses that are made available in rural areas, through a combination of offering partial study within an existing institution or advancing web-based learning opportunities that effectively link rural students to universities and other facilities outside the region.
10. Review and alter policies that can exclude, or penalize, workers who do not qualify for certain assistance (e.g. employment insurance) due to the existing nature of employment such as contract work, part time and seasonal employment.
11. Increase the funds and accessibility to longer-term training that young people from low-income families or who are on government assistance, to increase the opportunities for future employment linked to jobs in the local area.
12. Increase access to funds for rural communities and rural bodies who are working towards infrastructure development that will have direct linkages to leading-edge sectors that can offer quality, full time employment in rural areas.
13. Maintain or lower tuition fees and overall costs to attend post-secondary education, and develop new solutions and funding arrangements that recognize additional needs of rural students and families with lower incomes, especially those who do not qualify for OSAP.
14. Provide matching funds and incentives to rural communities, education facilities and employers for programs that directly offer industry training and certification that is linked to real demand in the region and for which there is commitment and involvement by companies to employ youth.
15. Provide tax incentives, credits or other financial benefits to rural employers who recruit and hire youth who have graduated from an external post-secondary institute and return, or relocate, to a rural area, and for which a similar program does not exist in the local area.
16. Adopt similar strategies as tuition coverage/ subsidy for other, high demand local professions requiring university education, whereby youth who agree to relocate and move to rural area for a period of time can receive reimbursement for some or all of their tuition fees.



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