

Where Are the Workers?

Insights from employers and working-age adults in *Greater Akron*
(Summit, Medina and Portage counties)

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Christine Marshall
Executive Director
Summit/Medina Workforce Area

Michelle Collins
Executive Director
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Introduction

About This Project

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Employer Perspective

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Employer Research Overview

Surveys and focus groups with employers helped us better understand:

- How the labor shortage was impacting them
- What they tried and what worked to combat shortage
- How well they understood what workers want and need in today's labor market

Survey	Responses
Greater Akron	254
<i>Medina</i>	33
<i>Portage</i>	99
<i>Summit</i>	122
Region	766

Focus Groups	Sessions	Registrations
Greater Akron	6	77
<i>Medina</i>	1	30
<i>Portage</i>	2	17
<i>Summit</i>	3	30
Region	22	463



The labor market feels tight
because it is tight!

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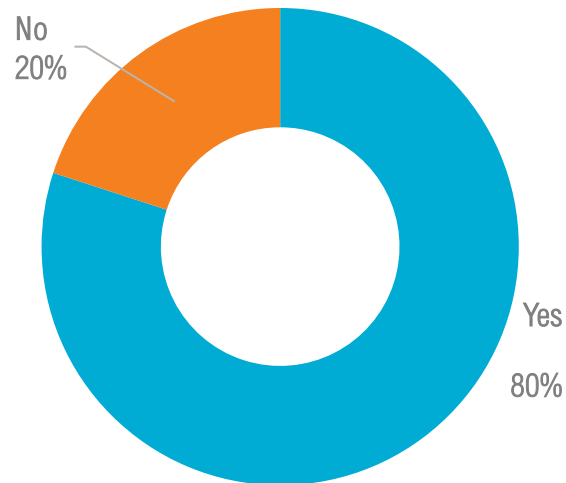
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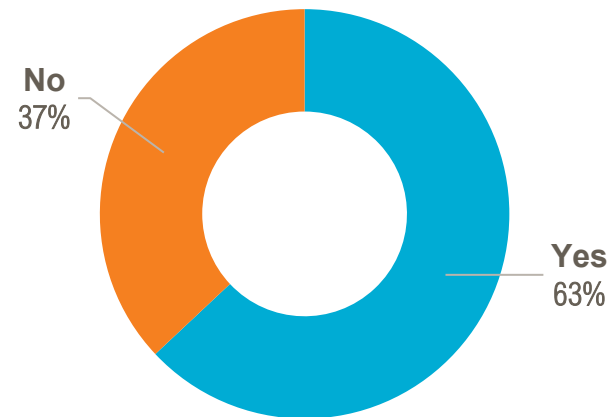
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Greater Akron employers were feeling it.

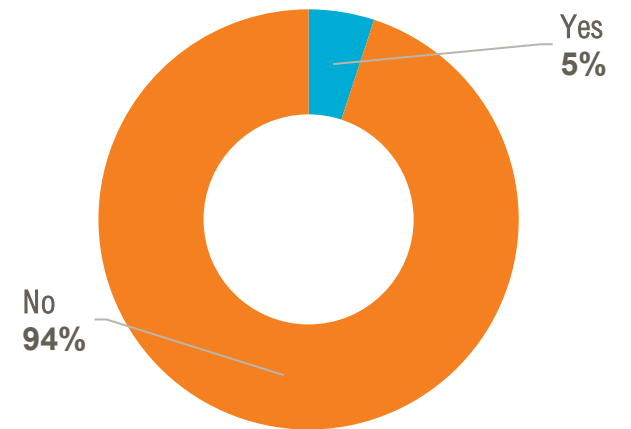
Talent Shortage?



High than Normal Turnover?



Sufficient pool of qualified applicants?



The most elusive workers...

18-30
year-olds

Hardest to recruit (47%)
Quitting the most (44%)



Employers were trying to address.

What is the biggest difference between today and pre-pandemic in your efforts to attract and hire talent?

1. Increasing benefits/salaries (including flexible work hours, hire-on bonuses)
2. Expanding job description to reach wider applicant pool/hiring less qualified candidates
3. Partnering with new organizations or training providers

What is the biggest difference between today and pre-pandemic in your efforts to retain your talent?

1. Offering bonuses/incentives
2. Promoting more from within the company
3. Supporting workforce to gain new skills (e.g. tuition reimbursement, in-house training)

Employers were saying...

- Raising wages wasn't enough
- They need to find new ways to be attractive to candidates
- Need to place greater emphasis on company culture and implement strategies to retain employees
- Need to have flexible policies, including a hybrid work environment

"Wages are table stakes, nothing more."

-Executive at employer roundtable

Working Age Adult Perspective

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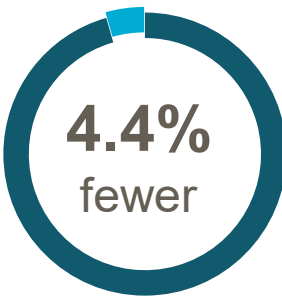
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What We Know about the Labor Shortage

How many people are working?



18,188 fewer people in jobs (4.4%) than in 2019 in Summit, Medina and Portage Counties

Started freelancing since the pandemic began:

- 12% of US workforce (Upwork)

Retired in the past 2 years:

- 3.2 million in 2020 (BLS)
- estimated the same in 2021 (BLS)

Deaths from COVID:

- 258,440 working ages 18-64 (CDC)

Stayed out to care for children:

- 5 million reported in 2022 (US Census)

Lost to Opiate crisis (out of workforce and deaths):

- 860,000 males ages 25 to 54 out of the workforce (NIH)
- 56,035 deaths for working age adults ages 25-64 and a 28% increase expected in 2021 estimated 71,732 (CDC)

Shrinking demographics:

- 3 million less employees (CBPP)

Key: US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS); Center On Budget & Policy Priority (CBPP); Center for Disease Control (CDC); & National Institute of Health (NIH)



Methodology and Survey Overview

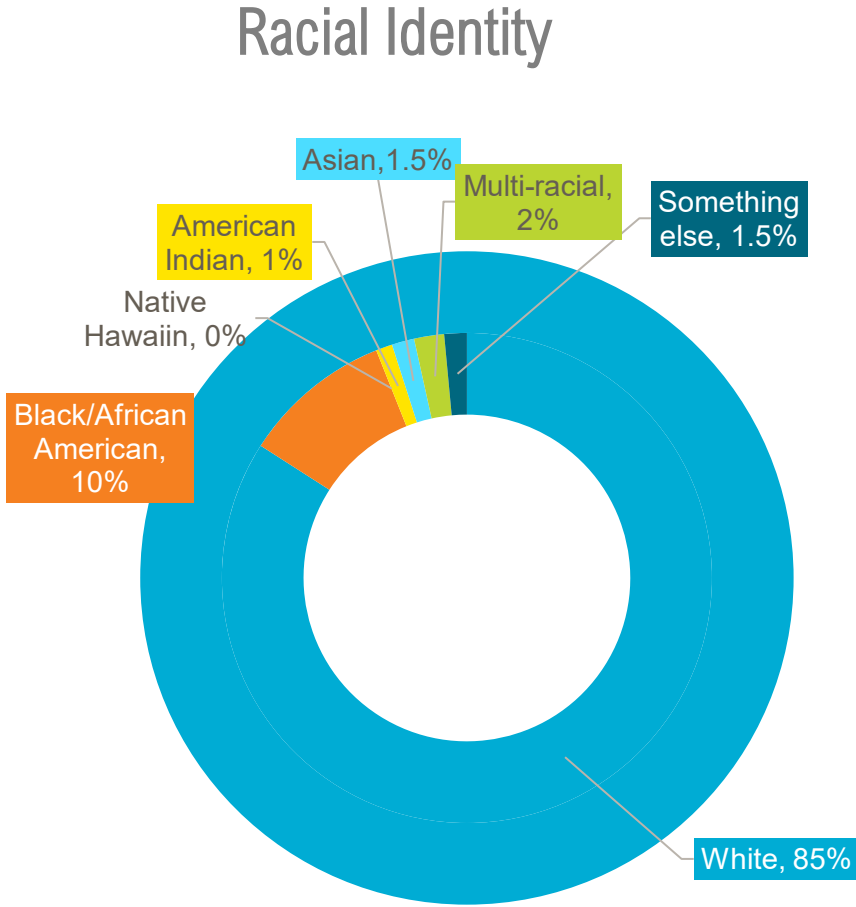
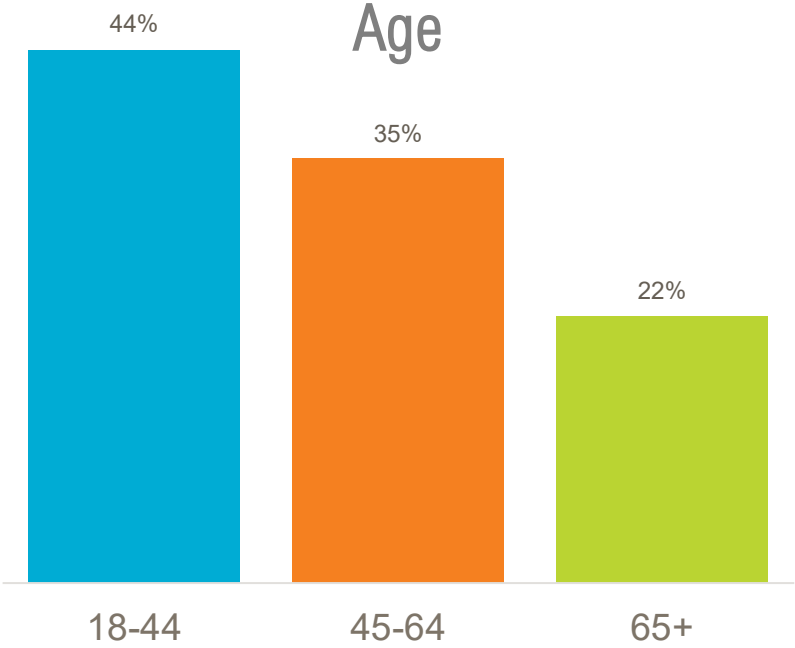
Mid-February 2022 to Mid-May 2022

- Conducted 12-minute surveys with working age adults in Summit, Medina and Portage Counties via phone and web:
 - 2,400 interviews (800/county)
 - 18+
 - Representative of area population by county
 - Larger sample size allows for key groupings to be well represented

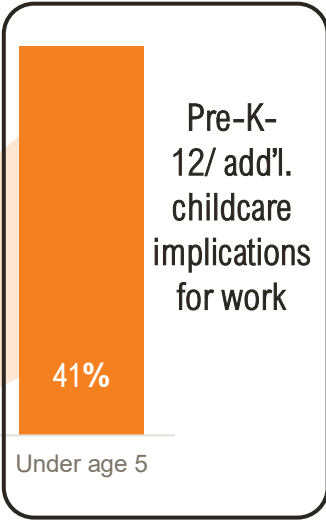
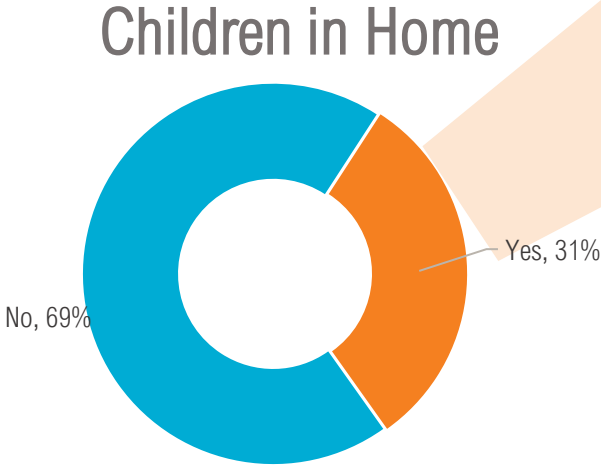
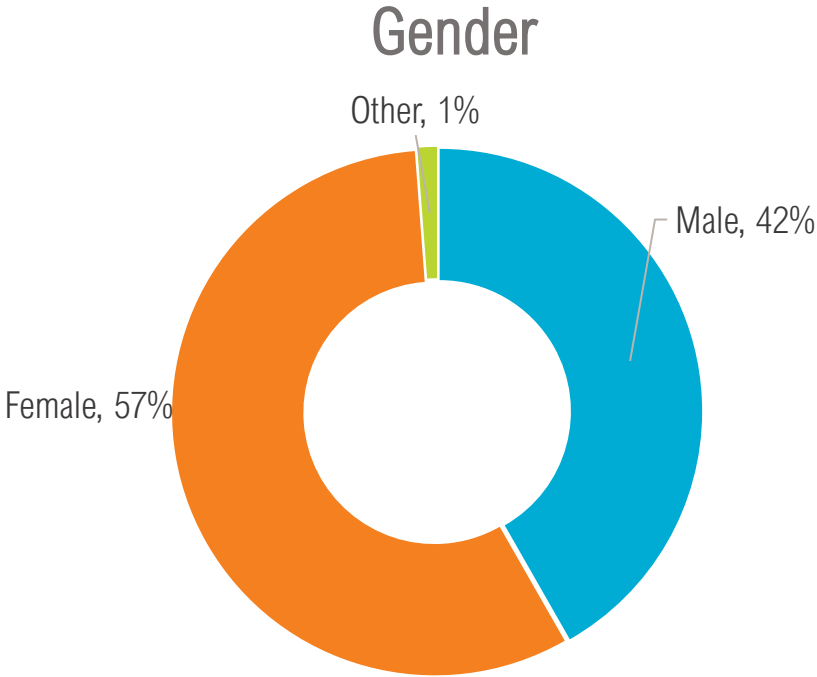
July 2022

- Conducted focus groups with individuals who completed a survey:
 - 5 focus groups with 6-10 participants

Who Responded?

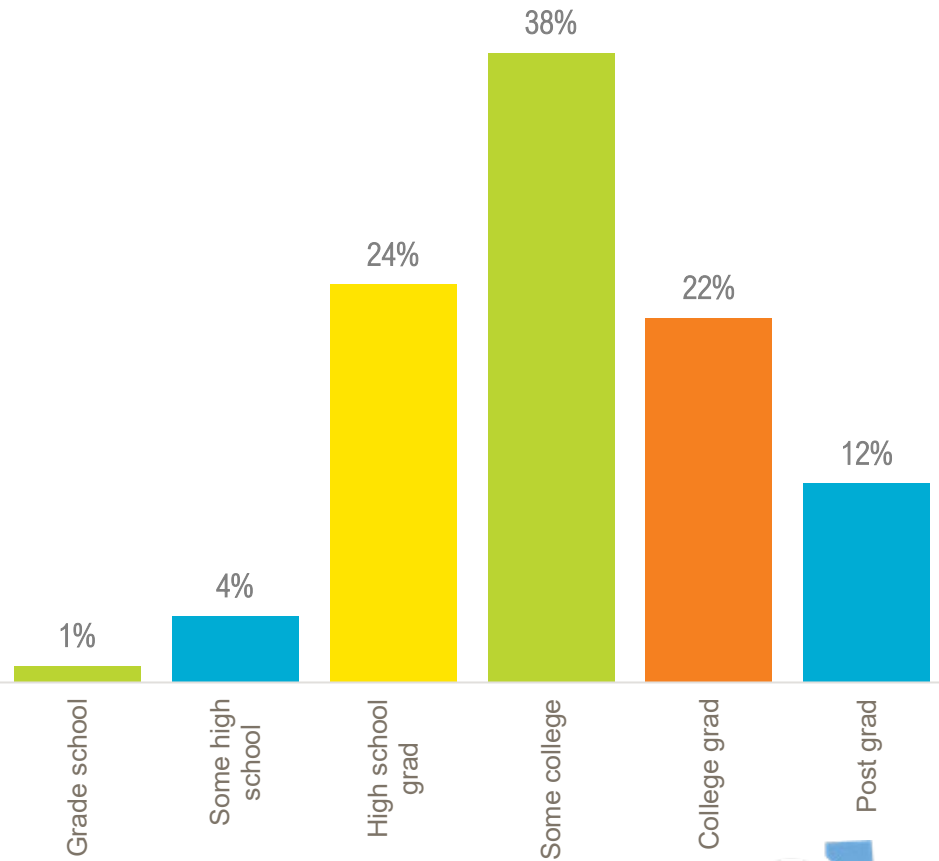


Who Responded?

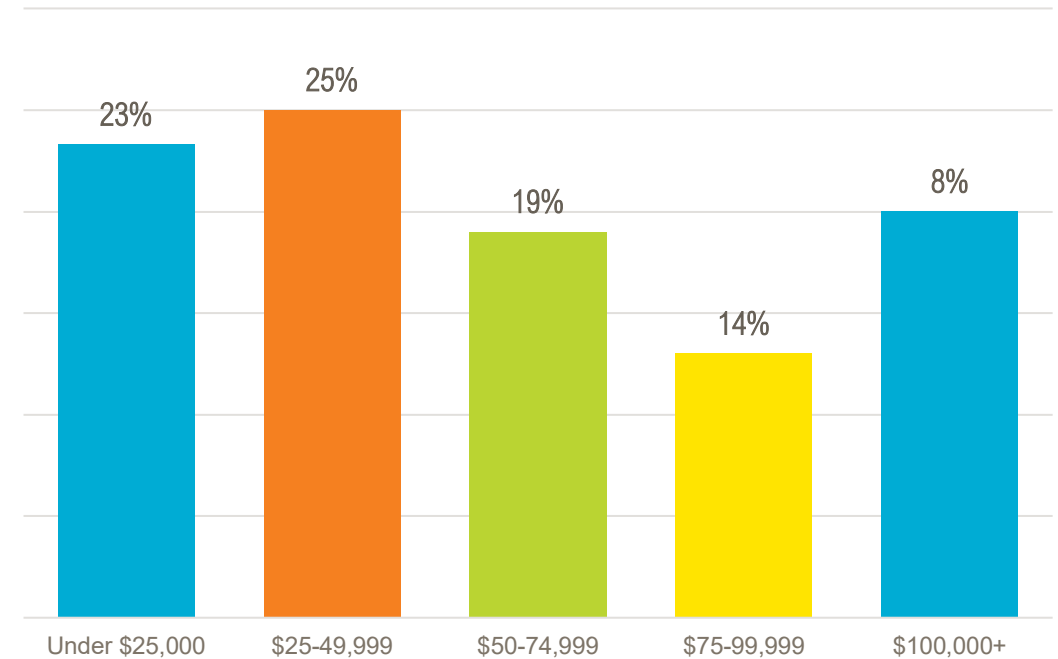


Who Responded?

Educational Attainment



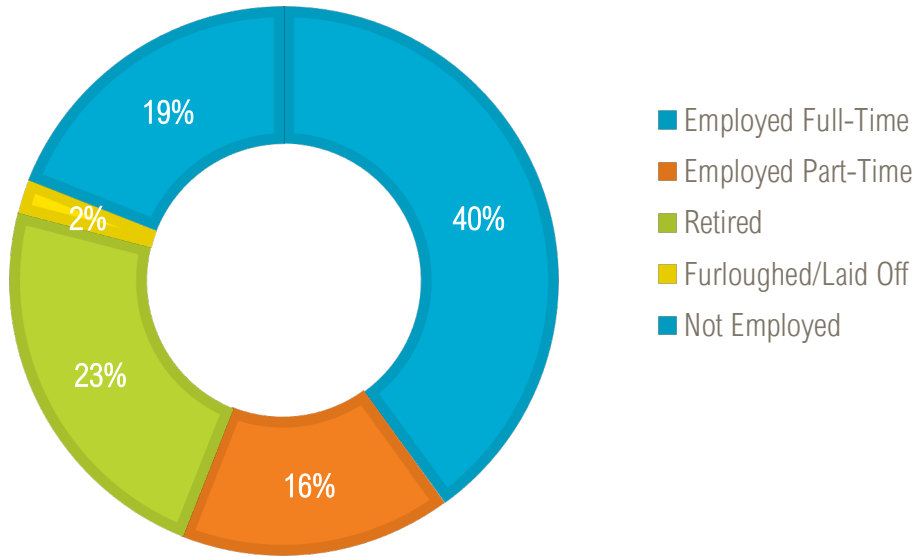
Family/Household Income



Who Responded?

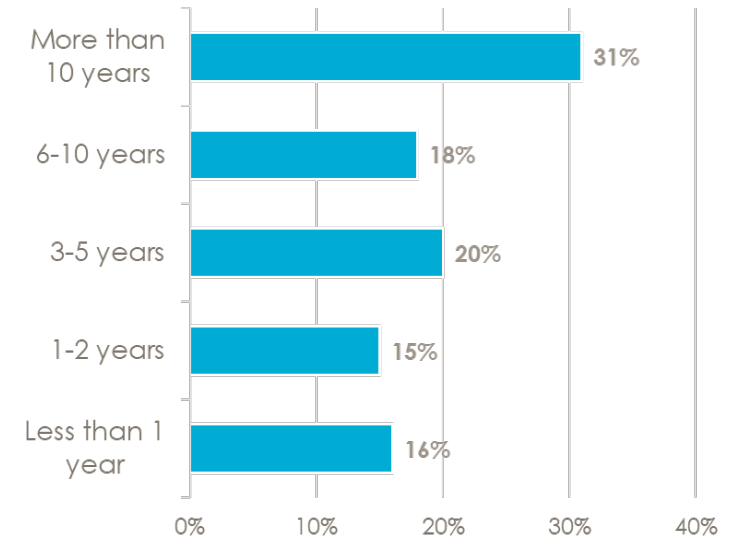


EMPLOYMENT STATUS



Of those employed, full time or part time,

LENGTH OF TIME AT JOB



What They Told Us

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Work was interrupted by the pandemic

1 in 5 had to stay home during the pandemic

1 in 3 of all workers were laid off

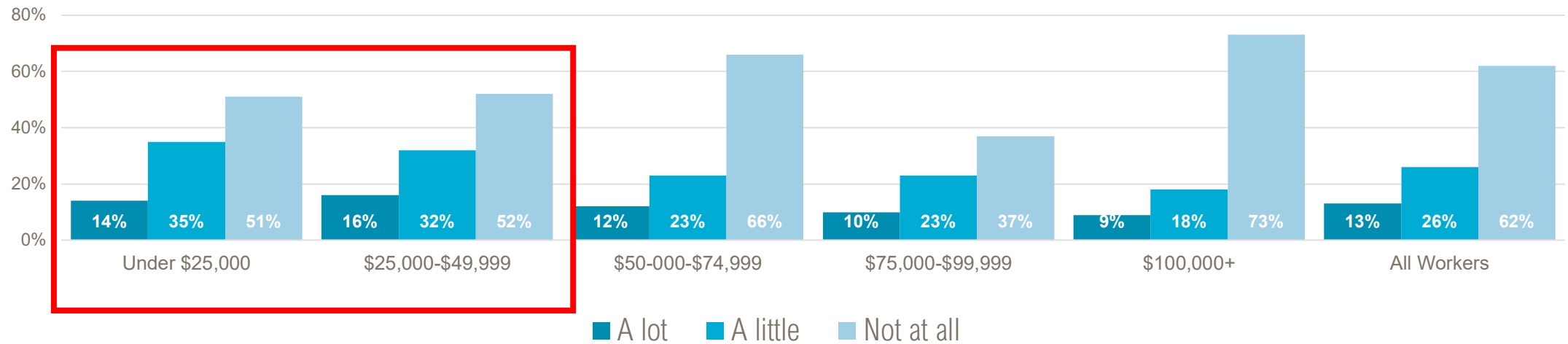
1 in 4 of workers had hours cut/took a pay cut

1 in 3 started a new job

1 in 3 stayed at home to care for a child and/or older relative

Work interrupted by the pandemic

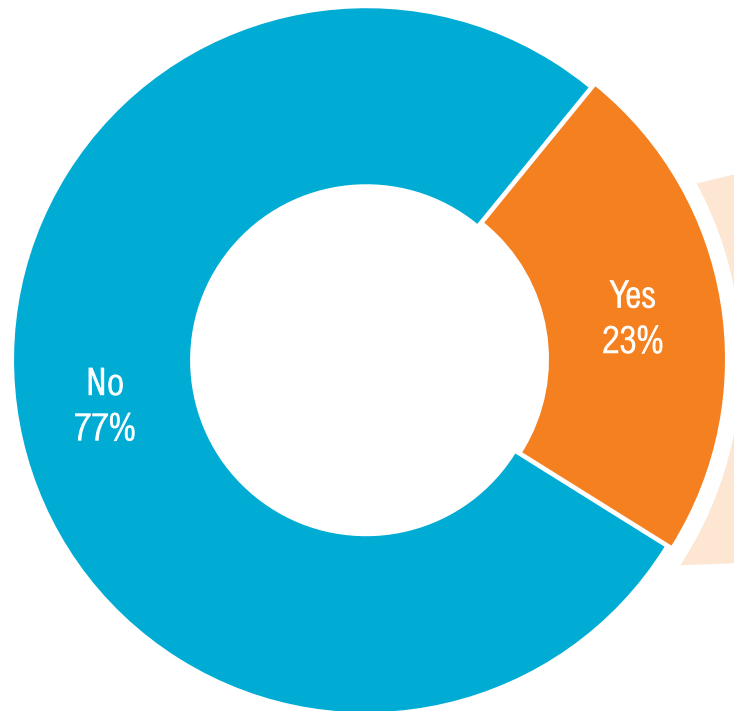
Did the extra unemployment benefits or other pandemic-related assistance allow you to stay out of the workplace longer or allow you to be more selective about your job when you returned to work?



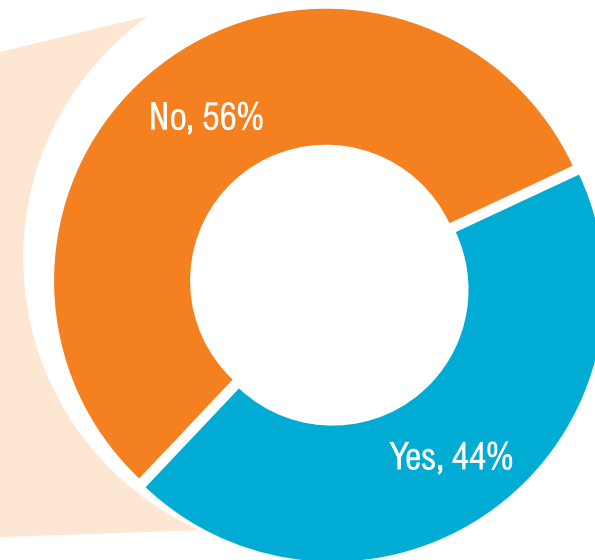
People were quitting without jobs lined up.



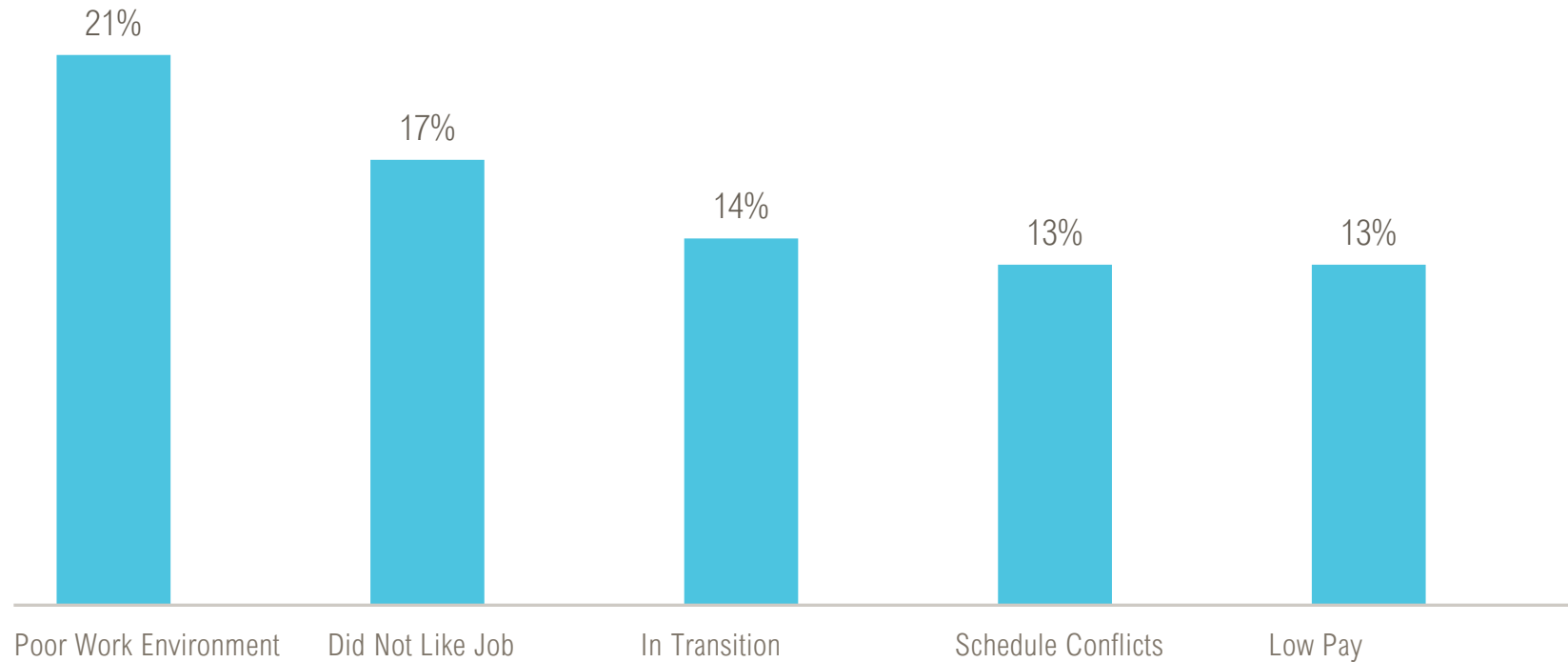
In the past 12 months, have you quit or left your job?



Did you have another job lined up before you quit?



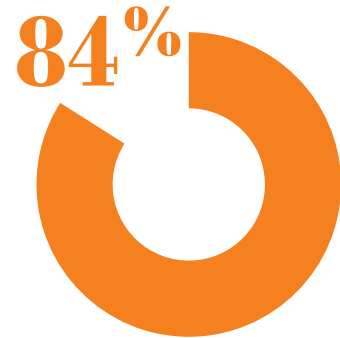
They left for a few key reasons.



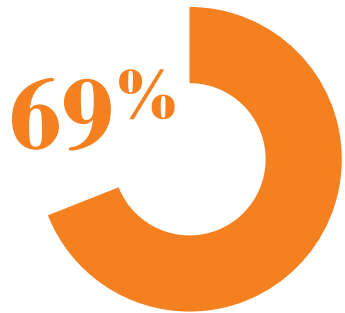
Gig work expanded options for workers in a time of uncertainty.



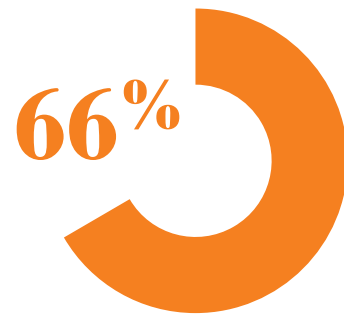
See it as their
MAIN JOB



ENJOY this type of
work



Started within the past
TWO YEARS



are CURRENTLY doing
this type of work

21%

Have done freelance or contract work in the past year (Uber, DoorDash, babysitting, yardwork, etc.) to earn extra money?

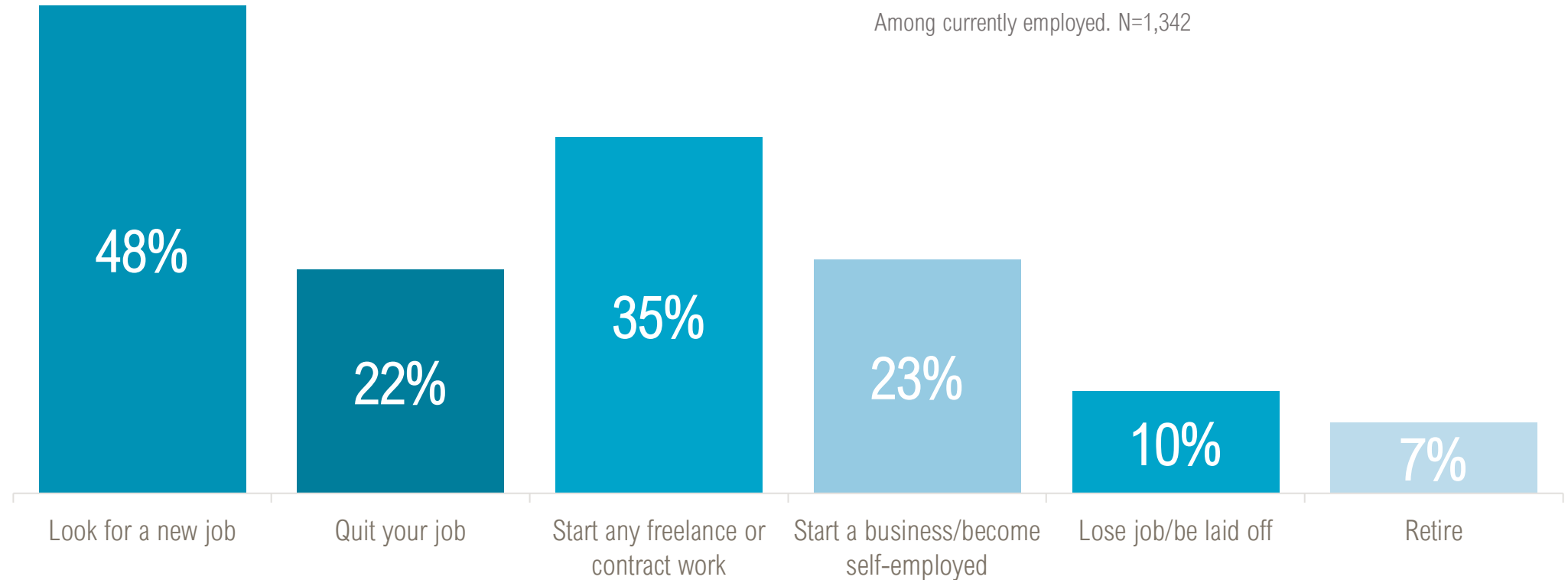
Employees feel overworked.



They expressed they would keep leaving.

In the next 12 months, how likely will you... (very or somewhat likely)

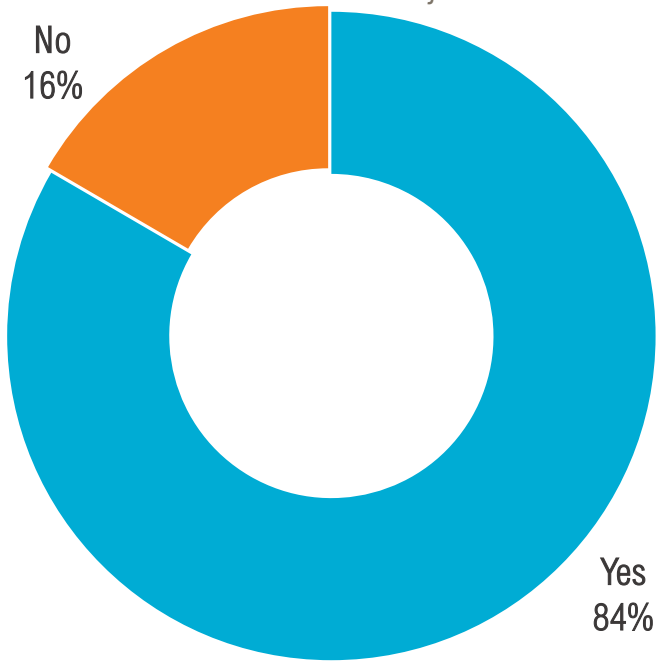
Among currently employed. N=1,342



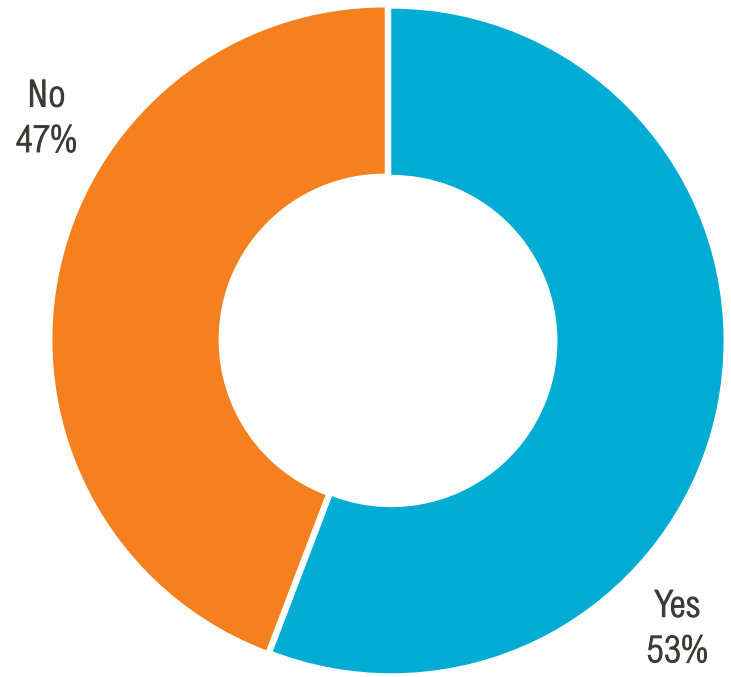


Most planning to quit anticipated looking for another job. A smaller majority **could be convinced to stay** in their role for the right incentives.

Of those planning to quit, do you plan to look for another job?

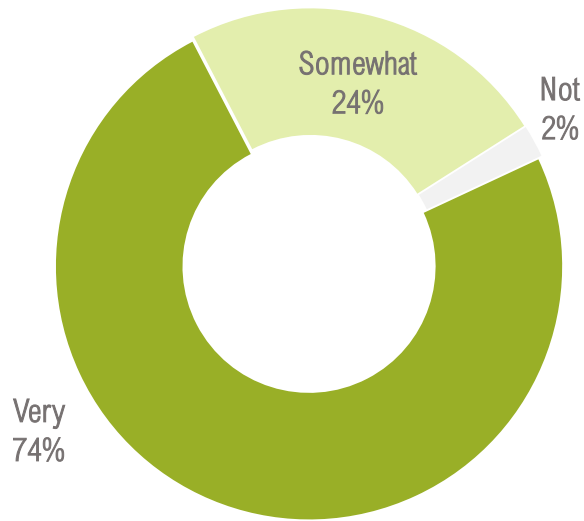


Is there anything your employer could do to encourage you to stay?



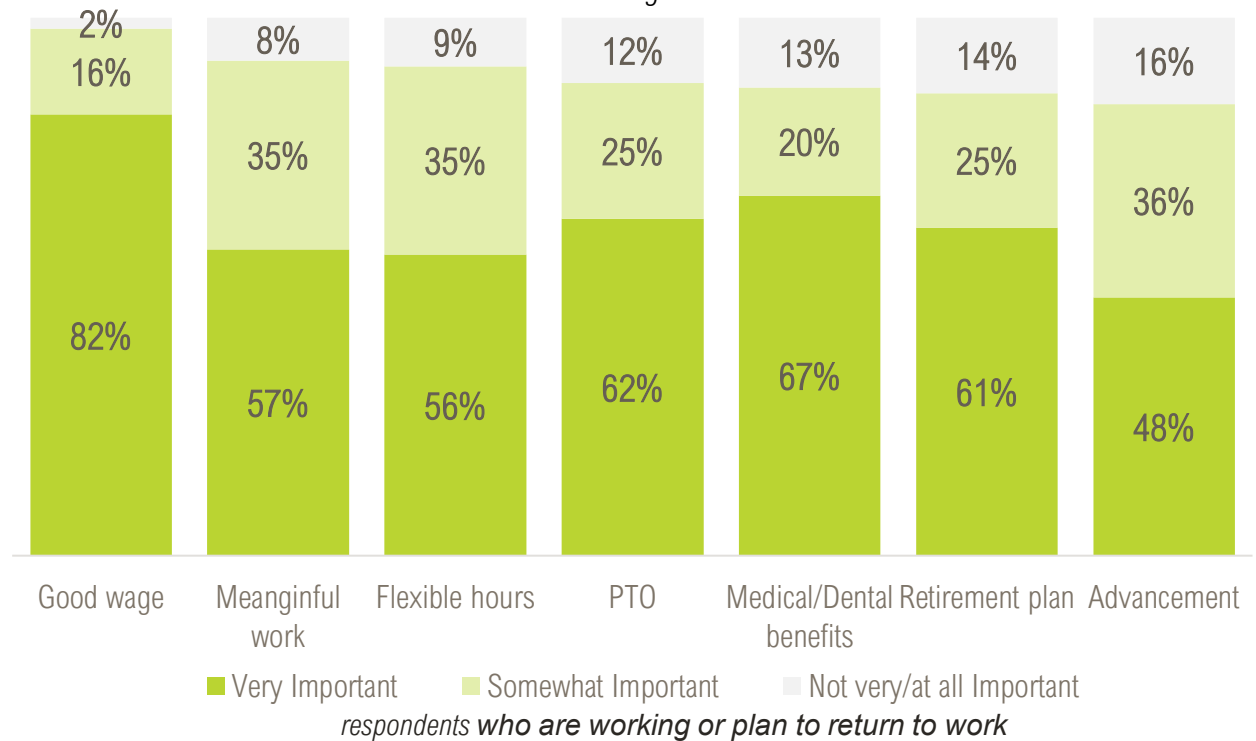
Money talks. But it's not everything.

Importance of salary information inclusion in job listing (all respondents)

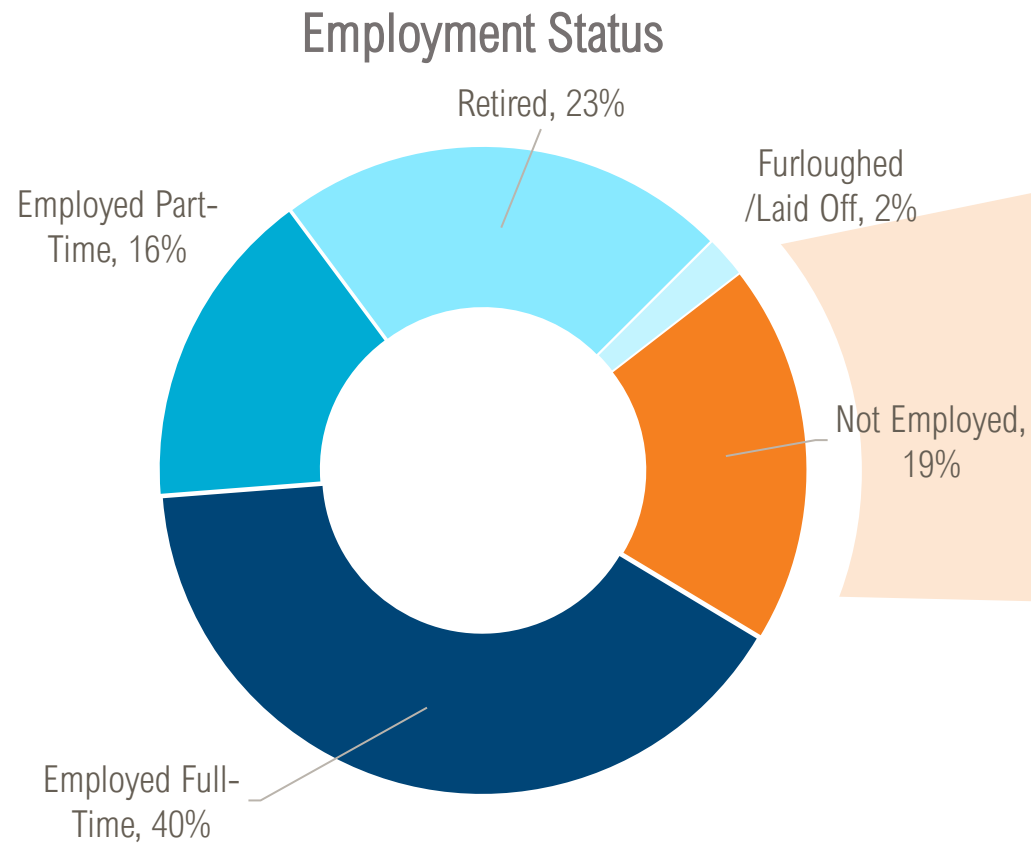


Other top factors

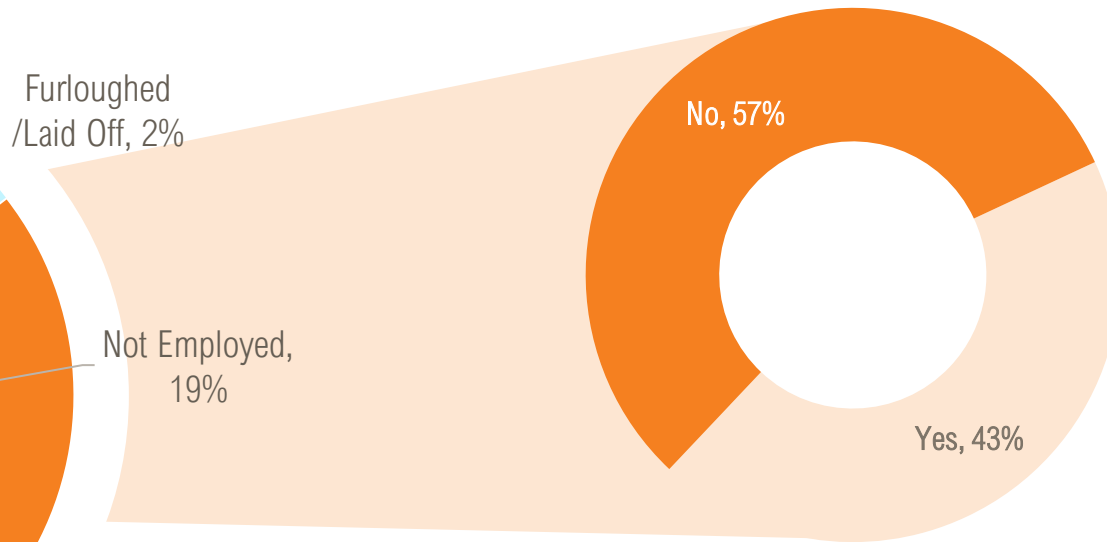
In thinking about the ways you earn money both now and in the future, how important are each of the following. . .



People not looking for work had good reasons.



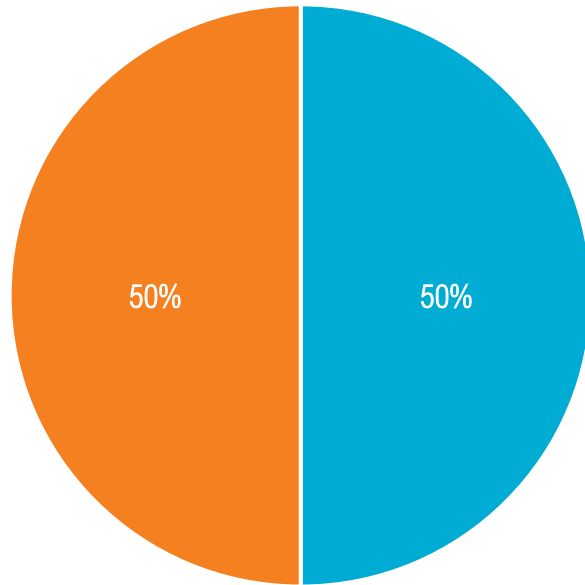
Are you currently looking for work?



- #### Top 3 Reasons Not Looking for Work
- Disability
 - Stay at home parent
 - Medical/health issue

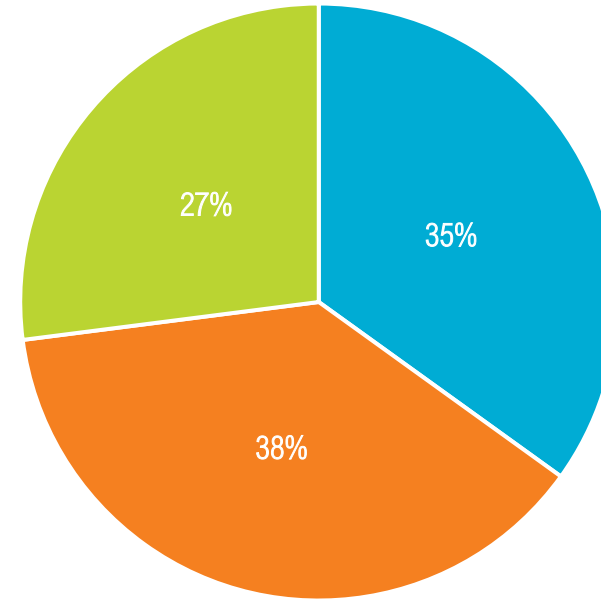
Those looking for jobs...

Looking for FT or PT
(of those looking)



■ Part-time ■ Full-time

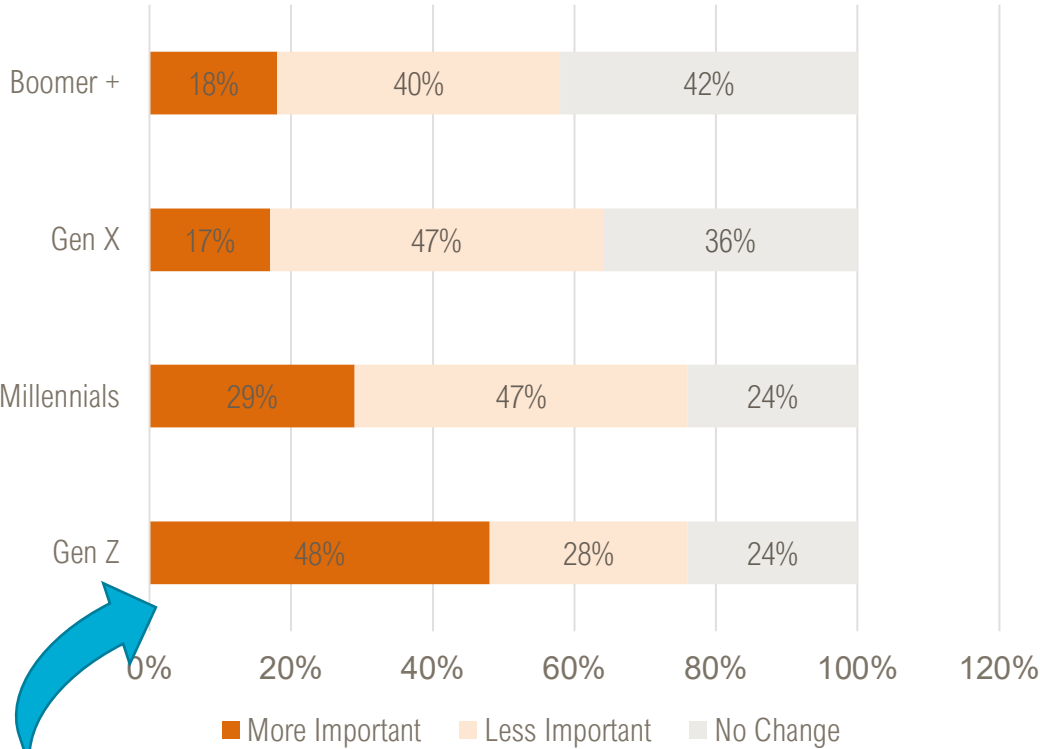
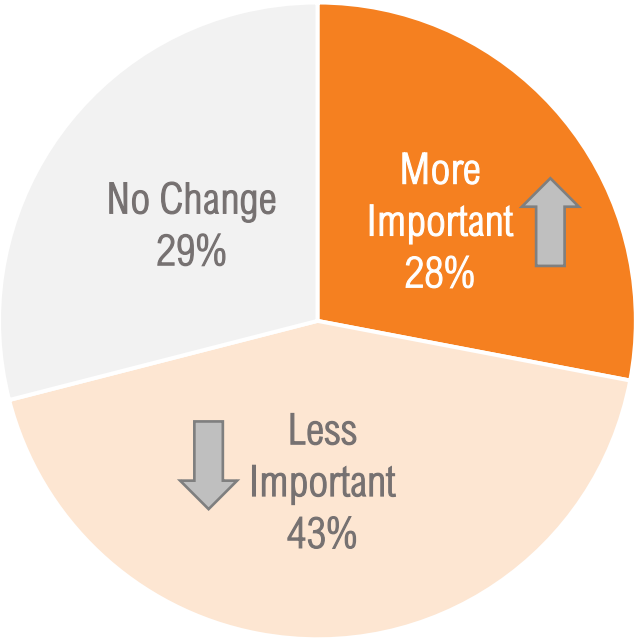
Current Outlook of Finding Job
(of those looking)



■ Very optimistic ■ Somewhat optimistic ■ Pessimistic

Attitudes about work have changed.

Since the pandemic, has work become more or less important to you?

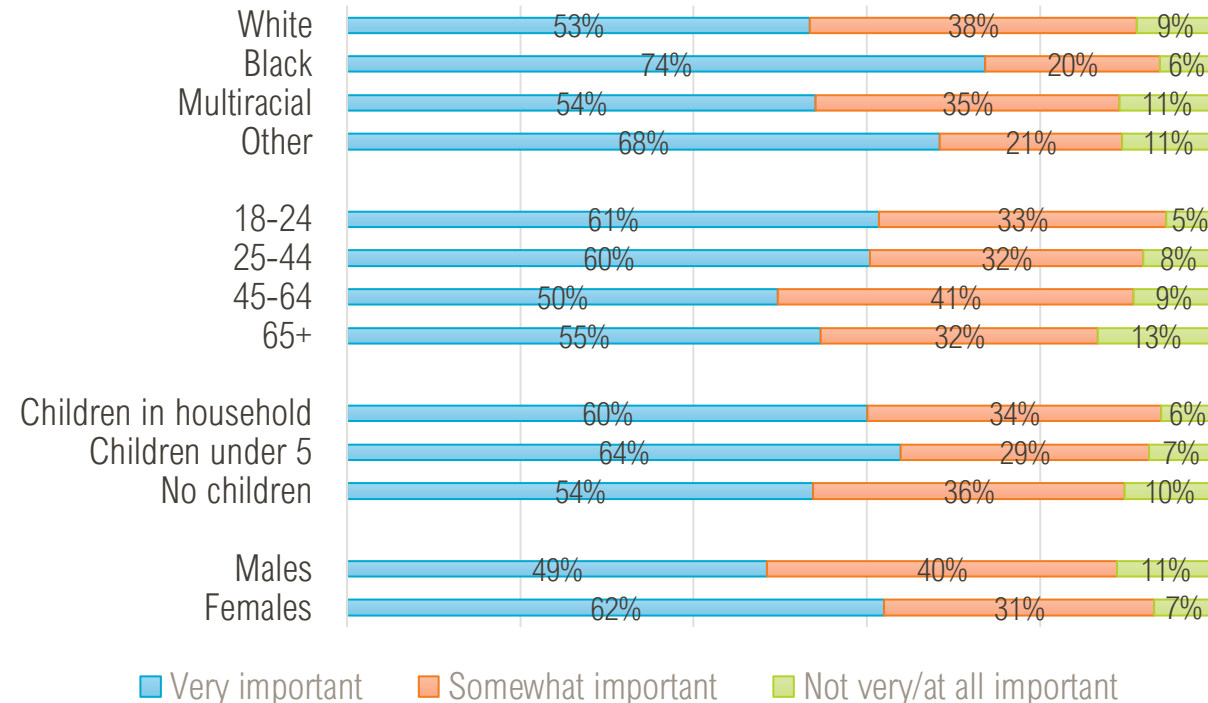


Almost half of younger workers say work is more important now than it was pre-pandemic.

Flexible hours are important to many workers.



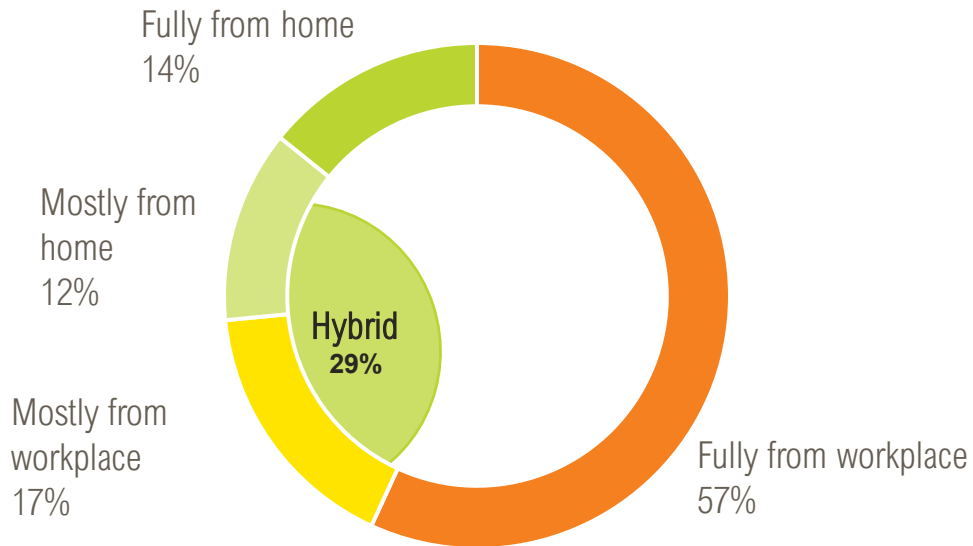
Importance of Flexible Hours



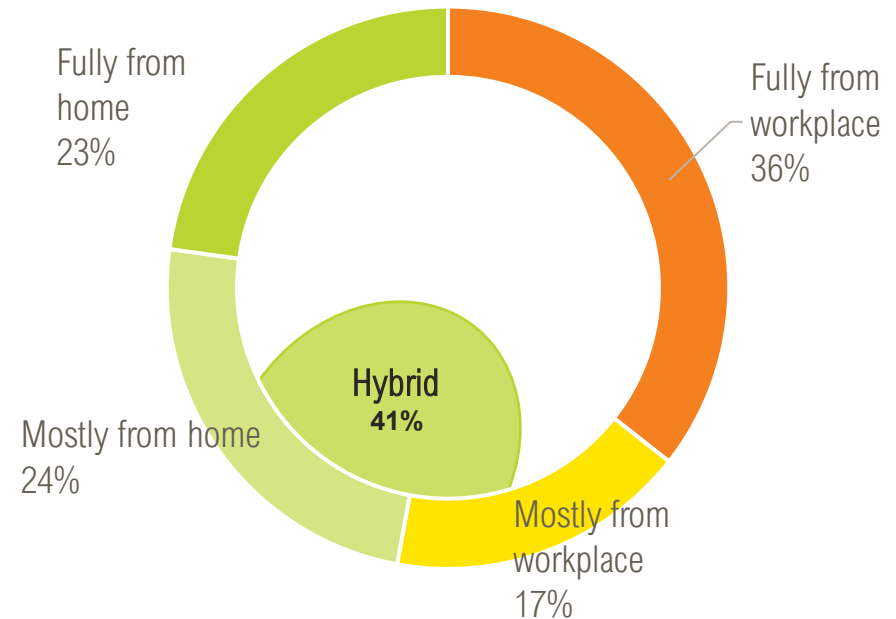
Work environment flexibility is important to many workers.



Current work environment for employed workers



Workers' desired environment

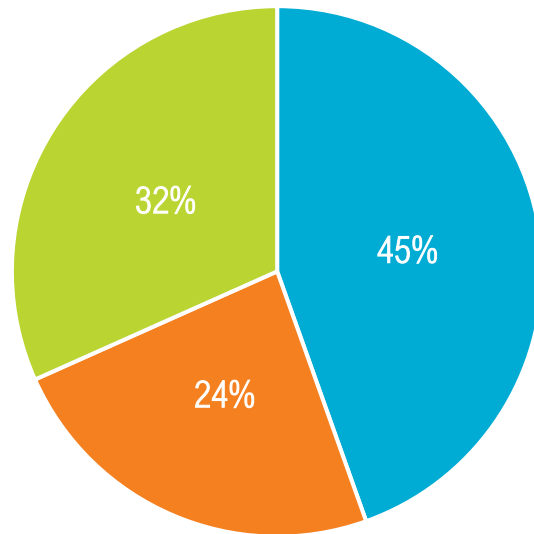


Top Barriers to Employment

All Responses	Black	Female	Under \$25,000	Gen Z	Not Employed
Pay Too Low	Pay Too Low	Pay Too Low	Pay Too Low	Pay Too Low	Pay Too Low
Health Issues	Discrimination - race	Health Issues	Health Issues	Health Issues	Health Issues
Childcare Issues	Health Issues	Concerns for Health of Self/Family	Disabilities	Lack of Work Experience	Disabilities
Disabilities	Concerns for Health of Self/Family	Disabilities	Concerns for Health of Self/Family	Lack of Training	Transportation Issues
Concerns for Health of Self/Family	Transportation Issues	Childcare Issues	Transportation Issues	Concerns for Health of Self/Family	Concerns for Health of Self/Family
Lack of Training	Discrimination – gender	Lack of Training	Lack of Training	Transportation Issues	Gaps in Employment
Criminal Record	Disabilities	Vaccine Mandates	Criminal Record	Disabilities	Lack of Experience

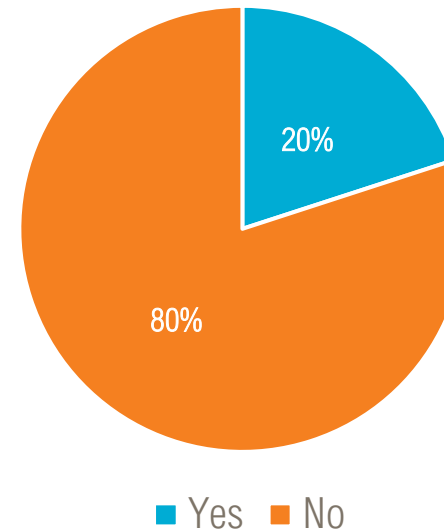
Training and Education Needs

Have Training and Education needed to get ahead in job?



■ Have what need ■ Need more ■ Happy with where am

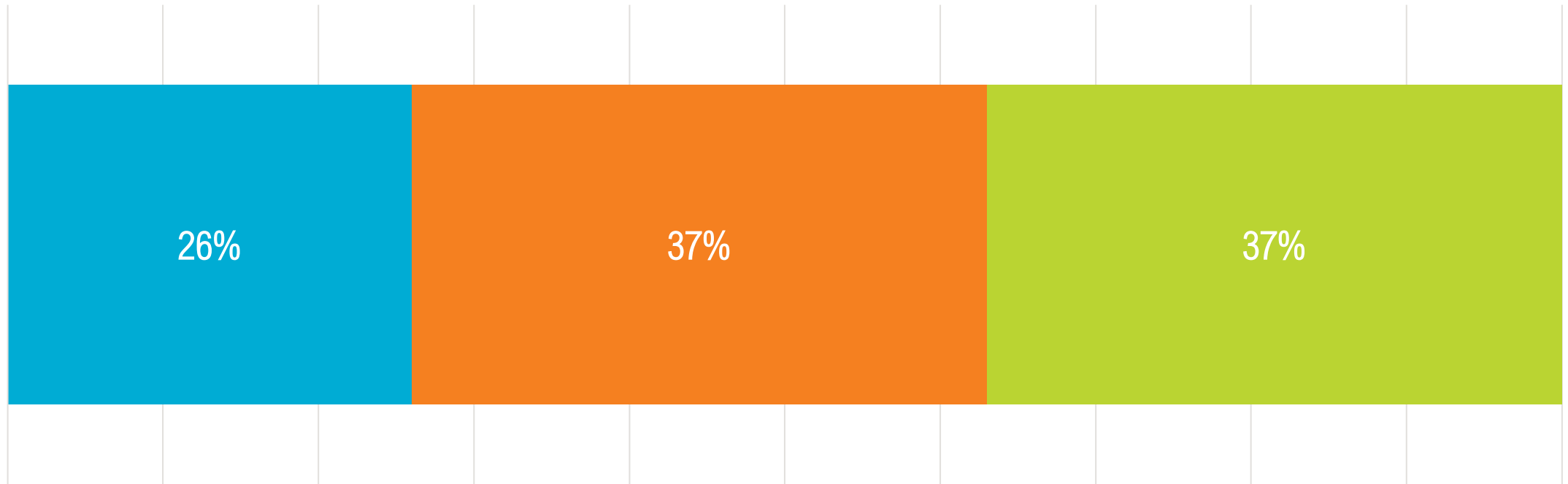
Had difficulty pursuing training



The top 3 reasons for what made getting training difficult:

1. Time
2. Money
3. Impact of COVID

Likelihood of seeking additional education or training in next 3 years



■ Very Likely ■ Somewhat Likely ■ Not at all Likely

Emerging Themes

Respondents frequently cited:

- Wage matters
- "Flexibility" is desired
- Want "meaningful work" - feel a part of something/contributing
- Gig work is a large part of the current employment landscape
- Access to mental health services
- Half job seekers looking for Part-Time work
- High interest in job related training and education
- COVID had a significant impact on defining what work is

Promising Strategies for Employers

For Employers and Workforce Practitioners

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Grow the Workforce...

Attract Talent

Pull in from
sidelines

Attract workers
from other
jobs

Attract workers
to region

Develop & Retain Talent

Train into new
careers

Advance
current
employees

Strategies to Attract and Retain Talent

Adopt flexible, creative work arrangements.

- **Flexibility** in setting work schedules (i.e., floating start times, shift swapping, or compressed work weeks) can offset some of the day-to-day family care, transportation, or other challenges of a regular 9-to-5 job.
- Provide flexibility (and pay) to attend training during regular working hours.

Strategies to Attract and Retain Talent

Make the recruitment process simpler and more inclusive.

- Implement employee referral programs
- Intensify social media efforts
- Shorten the recruitment, hiring, training processes
- Implement “easy apply” mobile options
- Reprogram application tracking systems to accept (vs.screen out) resumes with employment gaps and alternative credentials
- Implement accessible virtual interviewing
- Start employee as soon as possible to avoid taking another job

Strategies to Attract and Retain Talent

Split jobs into tasks

Match open positions by breaking jobs into tasks & matching those tasks to candidates' "three S's":

Skill level – Rewrite job descriptions to focus on core competencies and “must-have” skills, or lowering degree and experience requirements and annually review pay rates (ONET);

Schedule - Create [job sharing](#) or project-based roles that can be filled by workers on a part-time or alternative schedule; and

Stress level – Offer roles with lower physical demands and stressors to accommodate personal circumstances

Strategies to Attract and Retain Talent

Let workers grow into their jobs through targeted training

- Make it clear in job postings that applicants can grow into roles through:
 - Employer-provided training, internships, apprenticeships, or other work-based learning opportunities.
- Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) & On-the-Job Training (OJT)
- Youth Engagement
 - Recruit in High Schools, Career Plans for High School Students, Pre-Apprenticeships, Internships, Learn to Earn

Strategies to Attract and Retain Talent

Work to retain employees

- Maintain tailored training and support programs, including supervisor training
- Improve reward and recognition programs
- Formalize career pathways
- Implement a [Workplace Mentoring/Job Coach](#) program
- Offer health & well-being programs that target specific employee needs
- Conduct 30-, 60-, and 90-day “[stay interviews](#)” to identify what is and is not working for new employees



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Christine Marshall
Executive Director,
Summit/Medina Workforce Area

christine.marshall@workforcearea2.org

Michelle Collins
Executive Director,
ConxusNEO

mcollins@conxusneo.jobs

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