






2024 EMPLOYER ONE



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HELPING TO BUILD A BETTER AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

An annual survey built to discover the needs of Hamilton's local employer landscape.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Workforce Planning Hamilton extends our gratitude to the City of Hamilton Economic Development division for their invaluable partnership and support throughout this project. Through this collaboration, we significantly expanded our survey outreach and collected essential feedback from our local economy. Additionally, we extend our appreciation to the Employer One 2024 Marketing Committee for their efforts in further amplifying our survey's reach and collecting valuable insights.



This project is funded by the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

WHAT IS THE EMPLOYER ONE?

The Employer One survey allows local employers to speak on barriers, challenges, and successes faced in their day-to-day business operations. The survey is administered by workforce development boards across Ontario. The survey is intended to identify and alleviate labour market shortages, support local access to training through employer needs and identify local sector-specific priorities and concerns.

JOB SEEKERS: use the Employer One survey results to help you understand Hamilton's job market through data-driven decision-making, and when looking for a job.

EMPLOYERS: use the Employer One survey results as a resource to better inform your business practices and hiring needs in 2024.

SURVEY RESPONSES

This year we were pleased to hear from 264 employers, garnering great insights into the business landscape. Due to an unprecedented cyber security incident which effected the City of Hamilton and subsequently the ability to send email blasts, newsletters, and other media updates, our response rate to the survey does not reflect our usual response rates previously. As such, this year our responses are not representative sample.

REFERENCE PERIOD

The 2024 Employer One Survey ran from February 14th, 2024 to March 21st, 2024.

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INTRODUCTION

EMPLOYER TRENDS IN 2024

Hamilton's Employer One survey has uncovered the needs of employers for 11 years and counting. In 2024, almost half of the employers we surveyed noted a good short-term business outlook, with increases in revenue. Overall, jobs in the City also grew by 10% within the past two years, with some industries experiencing higher growth. However, from our survey we also identified some key challenges to employers. In particular, employers' highlighted their difficulties in hiring new employees, with rising costs of business inputs weighing down on various sectors across the City. This report documents the insights from employers in 2024, with specific emphasis on Hamilton's major industries.

**HELPING LOCAL
EMPLOYERS FOR 11
YEARS AND COUNTING**



WHO DID WE SURVEY?

INDUSTRIES

This year, we had 264 employers respond to our survey from various industries and sectors. Below is a breakdown of our employers by 2-digit NAICS.

This year we had representation from all 19 of the North American industries.

Some highlights..

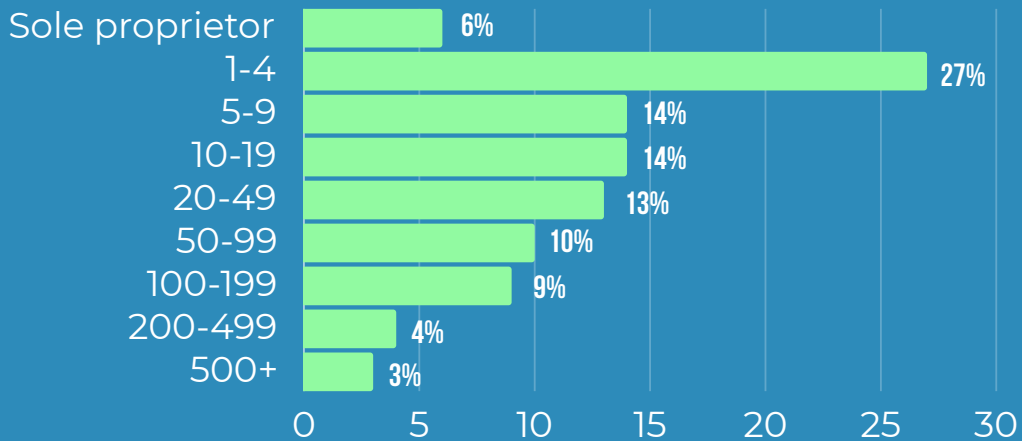
- We had the largest proportion of employers come from Accommodation and Food Services.
- Job growth increased by 10% compared to last year.
- The highest job growths were seen for Other Services (56%), Management (53%) and Arts and Rec (27%).
- 55% of employers surveyed were Living Wage employers, or those that paid \$20.80/hour for all positions.

INDUSTRY	%
ACCOMMODATION AND FOOD SERVICES	17%
CONSTRUCTION	13%
RETAIL TRADE	11%
OTHER SERVICES	11%
MANUFACTURING	10%
HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE	6%
ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT AND REC	6%
PROFESSIONAL, TECHNICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SERVICES	5%
TRANSPORTATION AND WAREHOUSING	4%
EDUCATIONAL SERVICES	3%
ALL OTHER INDUSTRIES	13%



WORKFORCE SIZE

75% of employers we surveyed were small to medium (SME) businesses, or those with less than 50 employees.



MEDIUM TO LARGE BUSINESSES

Most medium to large (50+ employees) businesses we surveyed were in Manufacturing (20%) followed by Construction (16%) and Arts and Rec (10%).



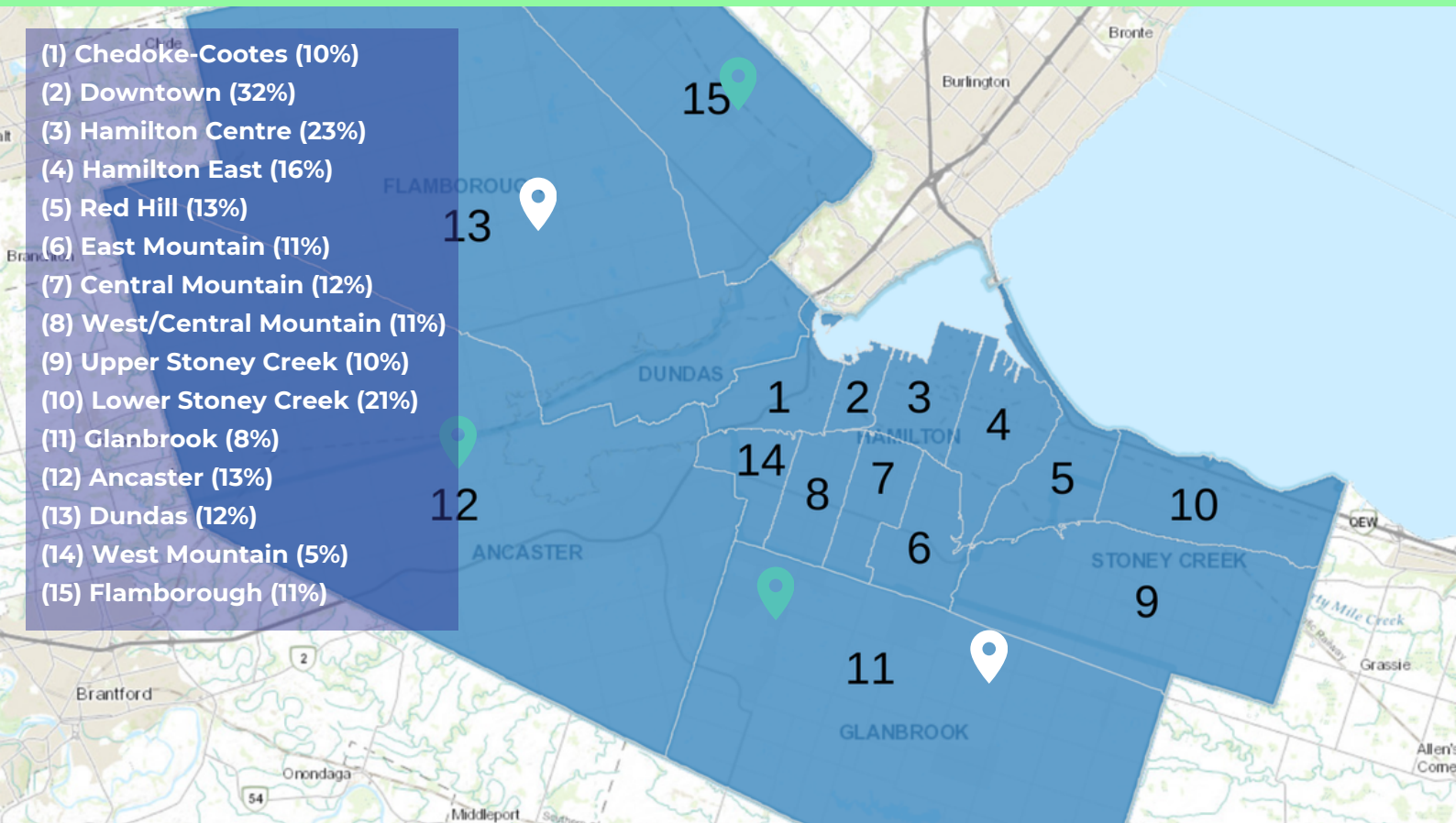


WARDS



EMPLOYERS BY LOCATION

Our survey collected data from employers in all 15 of Hamilton’s wards. We asked employers to identify the wards in which their business had a physical presence. Some employers noted that their business operated in multiple wards/locations.





BUSINESS OUTLOOK

How have employers' short-term business outlooks changed throughout the years? Below is a 3-year timeline that documents employers' business perspectives.

2022

RECOVERING FROM THE PANDEMIC

After a tumultuous year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Hamilton employers primarily noted a Good short-term business outlook (37%), followed by Fair (27%); Poor (17%); and Good (12%).

2023

HIGHER HOPES IN 2023

Following a post-pandemic economy, Hamilton employers were more optimistic when it came to their businesses. 46% of employers noted a Good business outlook, followed by Fair (23%); Very Good (13%); and Poor (10%).

2024

STRONGER AND MORE RESILIENT

In 2024, 48% of the employers we surveyed identified a Good business outlook. Compared to previous years, employers this year were more resilient. 23% noted a Fair outlook; 13% Very Good; 10% Poor; and 6% Excellent.

"Seasonal business. We operate April to October."

-Employer

"Growing too fast our workforce can't keep up."

-Employer



“Consumer shopping is way down for whatever reason, so as a sole proprietor I can't justify paying employees to work daily and lose revenue.”

- Employer

DIFFICULTIES

RISING FINANCIAL STRAINS AND HIRING FRUSTRATIONS

Despite a more optimistic short-term outlook by employers, difficulties still persist when it comes to finances and hiring. From our survey, we identified key pain-points for employers.

FINANCIAL CONCERNS

Financial stability was still a major concern for employers. With rising interest rates, some businesses were finding it harder to finance their business and stay on top of expenses.

RISING INFLATION

Hamilton experienced record-high inflation last year and accordingly, employers felt the pressure mount as their operating costs increased.

HIRING DIFFICULTIES

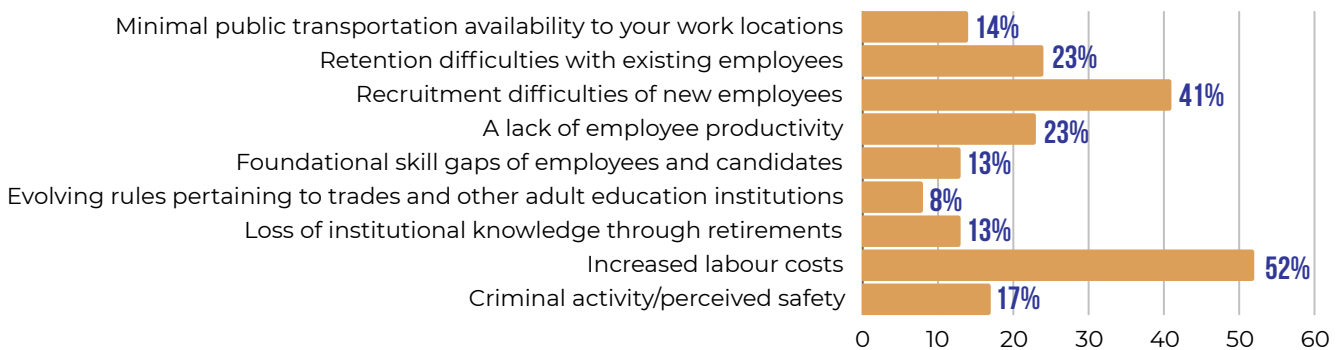
Despite a higher unemployment rate in 2024 than in 2023, the pipeline to the employer and job seeker market was disconnected. More employers were looking to hire for tradespersons and Skilled Trades but could not find the right, qualified candidates.

NEWCOMER TALENT

In tandem with the labour shortages in the current market, employers were dissatisfied with the current Newcomer labour pool, citing lesser qualified candidates.

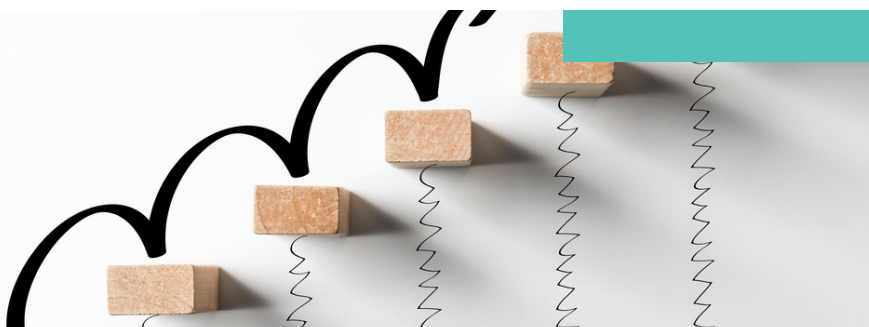
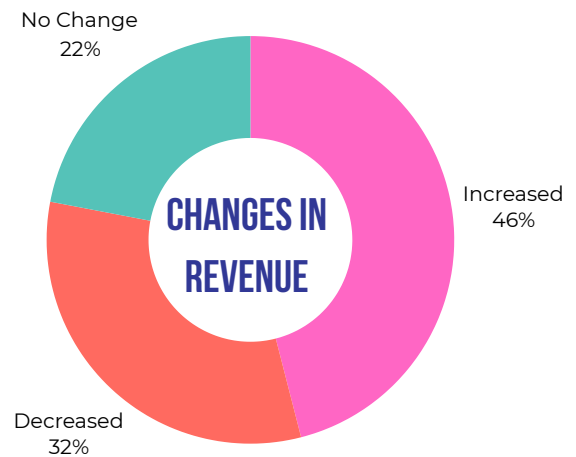
WORKFORCE IMPACTS

We asked several questions about the hiring landscape, availability of qualified workers and overall business growth for employers. From this, the top three negative workforce impacts to persist among Hamilton employers were increased labour costs, recruitment of new employees; and retention of existing employees.



INCREASED LABOUR COSTS

Employers in 2024 were experiencing financial difficulties. While many noted the increase in labour costs, others saw their business revenue decrease from last year. In particular, we asked employers how their business revenue changed in 2023 compared to 2022. While 46% of employers noted an increase in revenue, 32% noted a decrease. Compared to our last EmployerOne, more employers voiced a decline in revenue.



“The most significant negative impact our business is experiencing is coming from economic headwinds. Business activity has dropped off dramatically.”
- Employer

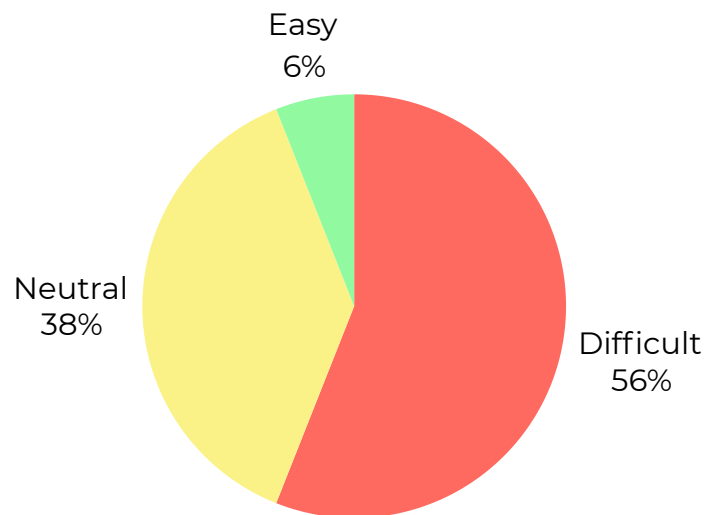


RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

In 2024, recruitment and retention concerns plagued Hamilton employers. We asked employers how they found the availability of qualified workers in the City; the results were jarring. Only 37% of employers noted a good labour pool, while 63% noted a poor labour pool. Coupled with an unqualified labour pool, 56% of employers noted a difficult hiring environment for their organization/business.

With this said, this sentiment has also been felt beyond Hamilton, shortages in the Skilled Trades, the Early Learning sector and Sales have put a big strain on Ontario’s economy, and subsequently the employers.

Hiring Difficulty	% of Hamilton Employers
Very difficult	19%
Difficult	37%
Neither easy nor difficult	38%
Easy	4%
Very easy	2%

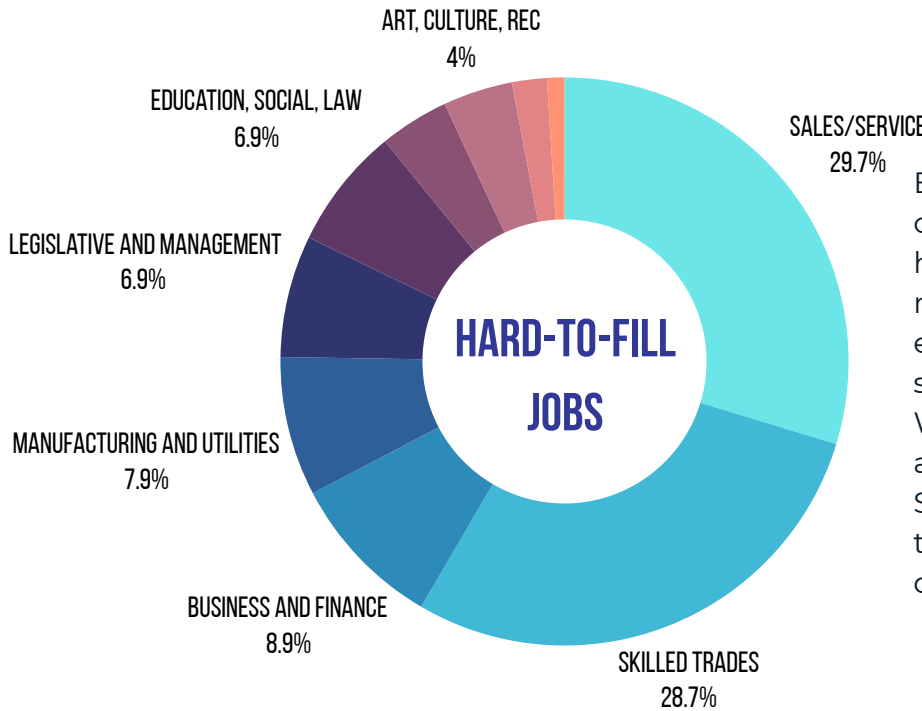


“Shortage of skilled trades, particularly carpenters.”
- Employer



HIRING IN HAMILTON

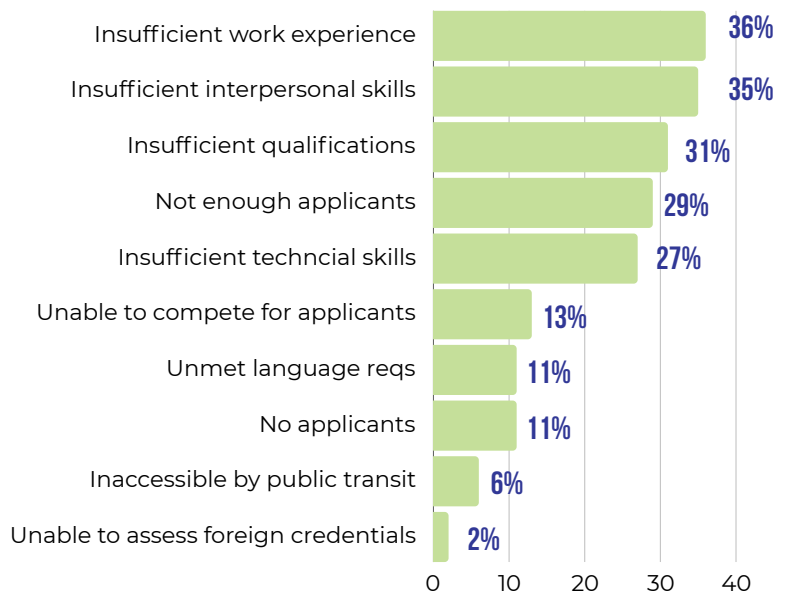
57% of employers said they were hiring in 2024. From this, we identified the hard-to-fill positions.



By large, Sales and Service occupations were the most hard-to-fill occupation reported by Hamilton employers. This follows a similar trend seen on WPH’s job board aggregator, where Retail Salespersons have been in the top five most in-demand job for over a year.

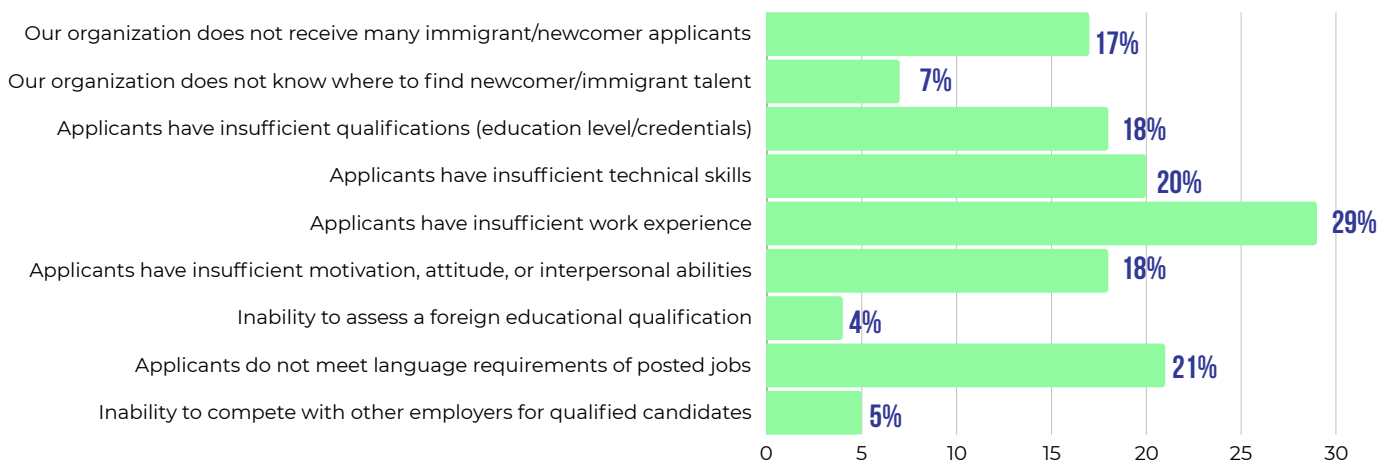
REASONS FOR HARD-TO-FILL

We asked employers what their reasons for hard-to-fill positions were. Employers could select up to three reasons. We found that 36% of employers found that applicants had insufficient work experience for the job listed; followed by insufficient interpersonal skills (35%), insufficient qualifications (31%); not enough applicants applying (29%); and insufficient technical skills (27%).



HIRING NEWCOMERS

With the increase in retirements across different industries and sectors, Newcomers and Immigrants will play an important role in revitalizing Hamilton's ageing workforce. It is expected by this year, Canada will welcome almost half a million Newcomers. We asked employers their perceptions of the current Immigrant and Newcomer labour pool. 31% of employers noted a good Newcomer labour pool, 41% rated the labour pool as poor/insufficient and 28% were unsure. We then asked the specific challenges employers had in regards to hiring Newcomers. Employers could choose up to 3 responses; the largest share said that applicants had insufficient work experience related to their job post. Below is the breakdown of responses.



HEALTH CARE INDUSTRY

1/3

of Health Care employers said that Newcomer and Immigrant applicants were good when it came to the current labour pool.



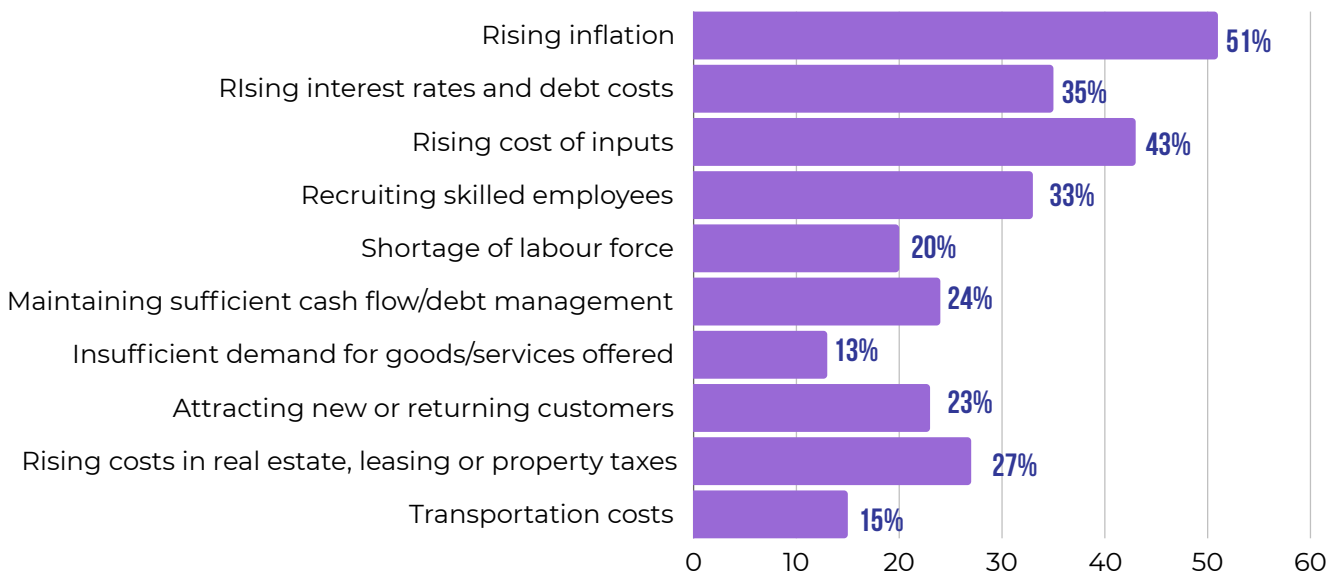
"Applicants are not flexible to available job opportunities and very difficult to retain."

- Employer



CHALLENGES

We asked employers what their top 3 challenges to their businesses or organizations were. Rising inflation was the top concern (51%), followed by rising costs of inputs (43%) and rising interest rate debts (35%). In trend, the top 3 concerns echoed the financial struggles Hamilton employers have been facing in 2024.



SMALL-TO-MEDIUM BUSINESSES

55% said rising inflation was their biggest challenge.

LARGE BUSINESSES

45% said rising costs of inputs (raw materials, labour) were their biggest challenge.



“Increased costs above have a negative impact on overall operating results of the entire business.”
- Employer



THIS PAGE SHOWCASES SOME INSIGHTS SHARED BY EMPLOYERS THIS YEAR IN OUR SURVEY.



EMPLOYER INSIGHTS

“WE HAVE HIRED SEVERAL YOUNG EMPLOYEES AND TRAINED THEM. THEY HAVE REMAINED WITH OUR WORKFORCE AND CONTINUE TO INCREASE THEIR KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL.”

-Employer

“MORE GRANTS AND TAX BREAKS FOR DEVELOPING BUSINESSES.”

-Employer

“HELP SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS THAT FALL UNDER X-ANNUAL INCOME WITH SUBSIDIZED MARKETING OR PROPERTY SHARE OR SUPPORT. BECAUSE I CANNOT SECURE A CONFERENCE ROOM RENTAL WITHOUT ABSORBING INSANE FEES MY BUSINESS MUST SEEK OUT OUR CUSTOMER TO HOUSE OUR TRAINING. WE NEED MORE INFRASTRUCTURE TO ENSURE OUR SUCCESS.”

-Employer

“PREVIOUS TO MY MOVE, MY EMPLOYEES FOUND THE COST OF PARKING DOWNTOWN PROHIBITIVE, OFTEN RESULTING IN PEOPLE QUITTING, OR REFUSING EMPLOYMENT.”

-Employer

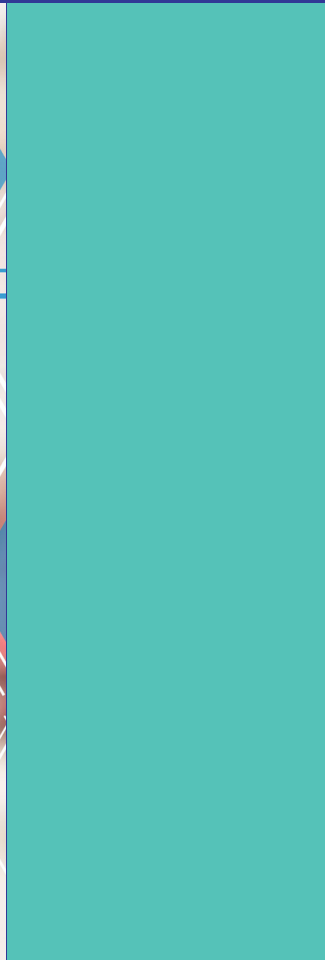
“AMAZING SESSIONS FOR BLACK ARTIST TO SHOWCASE THEIR WORK IN THE HAMILTON REGION. CREATING A MELANIN NIGHT MARKET FOR BIPOC SMALL BUSINESS.”

-Employer

Working together to create a sustainable and thriving Hamilton community with numerous opportunities for growth and success.



INDUSTRY ANALYSIS



Successes, challenges, and takeaways from some of Hamilton's major industries.



ACCOMMODATION AND FOOD SERVICES



"Focus on local small businesses."

-Employer

"Inflated cost of materials."

-Employer



26% 2-YR JOB GROWTH

GROWTH AND REVENUE

- Majority (63%) had a positive business outlook compared to a negative outlook (38%).
- 40% noted a business revenue increase, 29% had no impact and 31% saw a revenue decrease.
- Only 16% were Living Wage employers.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

- 10% of employers noted an excellent labour pool, 33% good; 29% fair; and 29% poor.
- 55% noted a difficult hiring climate, 33% rated it as neutral and 12% as easy.

HIRING

- 55% expected to hire in the first half of 2024; 21% said they were not hiring and 24% were uncertain.
- Among those hiring, 78% found Sales and Service occupations hard-to-fill.
- 22% noted applicants to their job posts had insufficient work experience, followed by lack of interpersonal skills (21%) and lack of applicants (14%).

CHALLENGES

- The main negative workforce impacts were the increased labour costs (34%) and recruitment and retention of new and existing employees (24%).
- The main challenges experienced by employers were the impact of rising inflation on their business (20%) coupled with rising cost of inputs (19%).

CONSTRUCTION

8% 2-YR JOB GROWTH



"Landscape Construction isn't a necessity and in this current fiscal environment only a select few individuals can afford to hire a company like mine."

-Employer

"Promote trades in the schools."

-Employer



GROWTH AND REVENUE

- Majority of employers (67%) had a positive business growth outlook whereas 33% had a negative outlook.
- 55% of employers saw their business revenue increase from last year, while 45% saw it decline.
- Among Construction employers, 74% were Living Wage employers.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

- 3% of employers noted an excellent labour pool, 14% good; 34% fair; and 48% poor.
- When asked about the current hiring climate, 31% rated it very difficult, 45% difficult, 21% as neutral and only 3% as very easy. At the aggregate, an overwhelming 76% noted hiring as difficult for their business.

HIRING

- With the shortage of skilled trades workers, 68% of employers were looking to hire in the first half of 2024.
- 74% of employers found tradespersons hard-to-fill jobs at their businesses.
- One fourth of employers noted applicants to job posts had insufficient technical skills, followed by insufficient qualifications and experience (17%).

CHALLENGES

- 30% of employers noted difficulties in recruiting new employees, an additional 18% struggled with increased labour costs.
- Construction employers found the main challenge to be recruiting skilled employees (17%).

RETAIL TRADE

17% 2-YR JOB GROWTH



“Safety and security in the downtown is a priority. Our downtown store manages many external factors that impact it's productivity and resources compared to our stores outside of the downtown.”

-Employer



GROWTH AND REVENUE

- 53% of employers had a negative growth outlook and 47% of employers had a positive growth outlook.
- 44% of employers saw their business revenue decrease from last year, 33% said it increased and 22% saw no change.
- Only 28% of employers identified as Living Wage employers.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

- Noting the current labour pool, 7% of employers said it was excellent, 25% said it was good; 36% fair; and 32% poor.
- 57% of employers in Retail Trade found hiring to be difficult, 36% were neutral and only 7% found it easy. In line with in-demand jobs, retail salespersons openings continue to persist in Hamilton.

HIRING

- 41% of employers were planning to hire while another 41% did not anticipate hiring.
- 59% of employers found Sales and Service occupations hard-to-fill, followed by tradespersons (22%).
- Employers found applicants to have insufficient interpersonal skills (27%), insufficient qualifications (18%) and work experience (14%).

CHALLENGES

- Almost one third of employers noted increased labour costs as a main barrier to their business, followed by the lack of employee productivity (17%).
- The main challenges were rising inflation (18%), rising interest rates (16%), and rising property costs (13%).

OTHER SERVICES

56% 2-YR JOB GROWTH



“Currently a suite renter with a very small salon. Pre-pandemic I had multiple chairs and almost 1000sqft, but during the pandemic, the government destroyed our sector.”

-Employer



GROWTH AND REVENUE

- 70% of employers noted a positive business growth outlook.
- 43% saw their business revenue increase from last year, 23% saw no change and 33% saw it decline.
- 70% of employers were Living Wage employers.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

- Half of the employers noted a fair labour pool, 23% noted it as good, 20% as poor and only 7% as excellent.
- 60% of employers found the hiring climate to be difficult, while 37% were neutral and 3% found it easy.

HIRING

- 43% of employers were looking to hire in the first half of 2024.
- 29% of employers found Sales and Service occupations hard-to-fill, followed by tradespersons (23%) and Education/Social occupations (17%).
- The top recruitment challenges were the insufficient work experience of candidates (20%), followed by lack of applicants (18%), and poor applicant interpersonal skills (16%).

CHALLENGES

- Main barriers for employers in Other Services were the increased labour costs (28%), recruitment of new employees (25%) and the retention of existing employees (19%).
- The top challenge for employers were maintaining sufficient cash flow/debt management or applying to funding (16%).



MANUFACTURING

2% 2-YR JOB GROWTH



"Skilled trades and technical hiring challenges prevail."

-Employer



GROWTH AND REVENUE

- 68% of employers had a positive business growth outlook, with 32% having a negative outlook.
- 36% of employers saw their revenue increase, 32% had no change and an additional 32% saw it decline.
- 76% of employers were Living Wage employers.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

- In regards to the labour pool, 24% of Manufacturing employers found it to be good, 40% to be fair, and 36% to be poor.
- 52% of employers found hiring to be difficult, 44% were neutral and only 4% found it easy.

HIRING

- 68% of Manufacturing employers were looking to hire in the first half of 2024.
- Among hard-to-fill occupations, 41% of employers were looking to hire tradespersons, 38% hiring for Manufacturing/Utilities related occupations and 14% in Sales and Service.
- 19% found applicants to have insufficient work experience, followed by lack of technical skills/qualifications (17%).

CHALLENGES

- One fourth of Manufacturing employers noted increased labour costs as one of their main barriers, followed by recruitment difficulties (19%).
- With the largest share, employers found the rising cost of inputs (raw materials, labour costs, etc.) to be the main challenge at 25%.

TAKEAWAYS

WHAT'S NEXT?

This year, our Employer One survey revealed the current gaps and shortfalls of our local labour market. Below, we have identified some key areas for improvement so that we can foster a thriving and inclusive Hamilton community.

- **FINANCIAL SUPPORTS FOR SMALL BUSINESSES**

The biggest challenges faced by our employers this year were financial. From rising inflation to inflated cost of business inputs, and labour costs; employers - especially SMEs - need support in financing their business to stay afloat. Special emphasis should be placed on SMEs and sole proprietors which have faced heightened struggles and less financial support/infrastructure.

- **FOSTERING A QUALIFIED WORKFORCE**

Overall, employers experienced a difficult hiring climate this year. Some employers noted the need for better honed interpersonal skills (literacy, communication). Others noted the general lack of workers weighing down their sectors. There is room for training programs and employee supports to help build these foundational skills and include more programs to bridge the gap between hiring employers and jobseekers.

- **ADDRESSING INDUSTRY GAPS**

Employers faced industry-specific challenges, as documented in this year's survey. Shortages in tradespersons, ECEs, and other Skilled Trades have made hiring difficult for many employers. A lack of qualifications and skills in our current labour pool has also put significant strain on our labour market. With rising inflation and less consumer spending, industries in client-facing industries have also been hit with the economic headwinds that follow. WPH will continue to analyze industry trends to identify gaps and improvements.



ABOUT US



LEADERS IN LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION

Workforce Planning Hamilton (WPH) is a local community planning non-profit organization funded by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. We build solutions to labour market issues by engaging stakeholders and working with the local community.

For over 25 years we have been the leaders in Local Labour Market information and data dissemination in the Hamilton region. We are a part of a larger collective - known as Workforce Planning Ontario - which includes 25 local boards across the province.



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BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN THE
LABOUR MARKET AND EMPLOYERS
THROUGH OUR EMPLOYER ONE SURVEY.