



Ponca City Labor Basin Labor Availability Analysis – 2015

Prepared For

Ponca City Development Authority

By

The Docking Institute of Public Affairs

Gary D. Brinker, PhD
Director

Michael S. Walker, MS
Assistant Director

Jian Sun, PhD
Research Scientist

Bradley Pendergast
Survey Center Manager

Lynette Ottley
Administrative Associate

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To Facilitate Effective Public Policy Decision-Making.

The staff of the Docking Institute of Public Affairs and its University Center for Survey Research are dedicated to serving the people of Kansas and surrounding states.

Fort Hays State University
600 Park Street
Hays, Kansas 67601-4099

Telephone: (785) 628-4197
FAX: (785) 628-4188
www.fhsu.edu/docking

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Executive Summary

The Ponca City Labor Basin includes Cowley, Garfield, Grant, Kay, Noble, Osage, Pawnee, and Sumner counties in northern Oklahoma and southern Kansas. The purpose of this report is to assess the “Available Labor Pool” in this labor basin. The “Available Labor Pool” represents those who indicate that they are looking for employment or are interested in new jobs for the right employment opportunities.

The Docking Institute’s independent analysis of this labor basin shows that:

- The population of the Ponca City Labor Basin is 248,169. About 29% of the population (or 72,808 individuals) is considered the Available Labor Pool.
- Of the *non-working* members of the Available Labor Pool, an estimated 8,249 (11.3%) are currently looking for work and 14,042 (19.3%) are interested in working for the right opportunities. Of the *working* members of the Available Labor Pool, 11,093 (15.2%) are currently looking for work, while 39,424 (54.1%) are interested in a different job given the right opportunities.
- More than two-thirds (69.3%) of the Available Labor Pool has at least some college experience and about 97% has at least a high school diploma. The average age for members of the Pool is about 42 years old, and women make up half (50.7%) of the Pool.
- About 17% of the Available Labor Pool are currently employed as general laborers, while an additional 8.3% work in government services or technical/high skill blue-collar occupations. An estimated 34.1% members of the Pool work in service sector jobs, while 9.7% work in professional white-collar jobs. Less than a third (30.6%) are not currently working.
- More than 80% of the Available Labor Pool is “willing to work outside of their primary field of employment for a new or different employment opportunity.”
- More than one-third (37%) of the members of the Available Labor Pool will commute up to 45 minutes, one-way, for an employment opportunity, while 82% will commute up to 30 minutes for employment.
- The five most important desired benefits, in order, are good salary or hourly wage, good retirement benefits, on-the-job training (OJT) or paid training, good health benefits, and good vacation benefits.
- An estimated 12,121 members (17%) of the Available Labor Pool are interested in a new job at \$10 an hour, 31,716 (44%) are available at \$15 an hour, and 46,302 (64%) are available at \$20 an hour.
- Of the 50,517 members in the subset of *employed members* of the Available Labor Pool, 16,083 (32%) consider themselves underemployed.
- Of the 66,435 members in the subset of *non-business-owning members* of the Pool, 22,231 (33%) have considered starting their own businesses and are “potential entrepreneurs.”
- Most employers experience low turnover and find their workforces at least moderately productive, have at least good work attitudes, and have average or better entry level skills.

The Ponca City Labor Basin

The Ponca City Labor Basin includes eight counties in northern Oklahoma and southern Kansas (see Map 1 below). The criterion used to include a county in this labor basin is whether it contains communities from which, it can be reasonably assumed, individuals may commute to the center of the labor basin (Ponca City) for an employment opportunity. In the case of the Ponca City Labor Basin, it is reasonable that individuals may commute from (and within) one of the eight counties because these counties contain 1) communities with adequate transportation to the Ponca City area and 2) communities that are within a 45-minute commute to the center of the labor basin.

Map 1: Ponca City Labor Basin

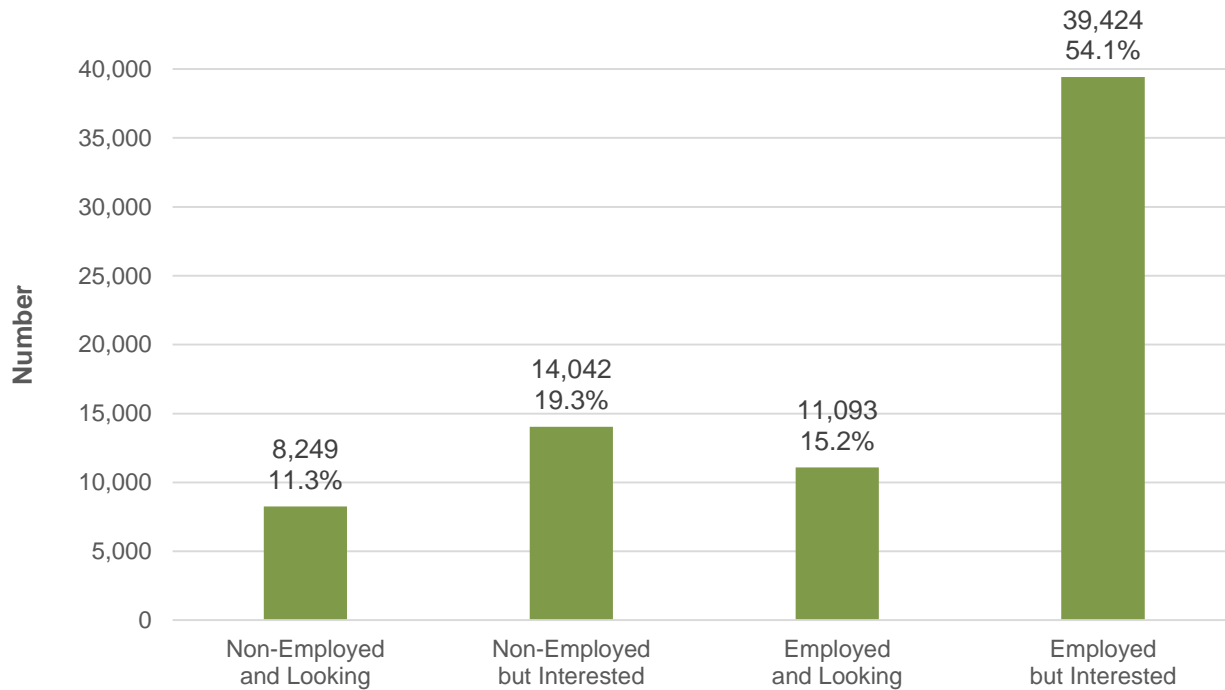


The Ponca City Labor Basin has a total population of approximately 248,169, and a Civilian Labor Force of 122,861. The total number of employed is 116,805 and the average unemployment rate was about 4.9% at the time of this study.

The Ponca City Labor Basin's Available Labor Pool

The Available Labor Pool is composed of workers categorized as either 1) currently not working *and* looking for full-time employment, 2) not working *but* interested in full-time employment, 3) currently working *and* looking for other employment, and 4) currently employed *but* interested in different employment for the right opportunities.

Figure 1: The Available Labor Pool for the Ponca City Labor Basin

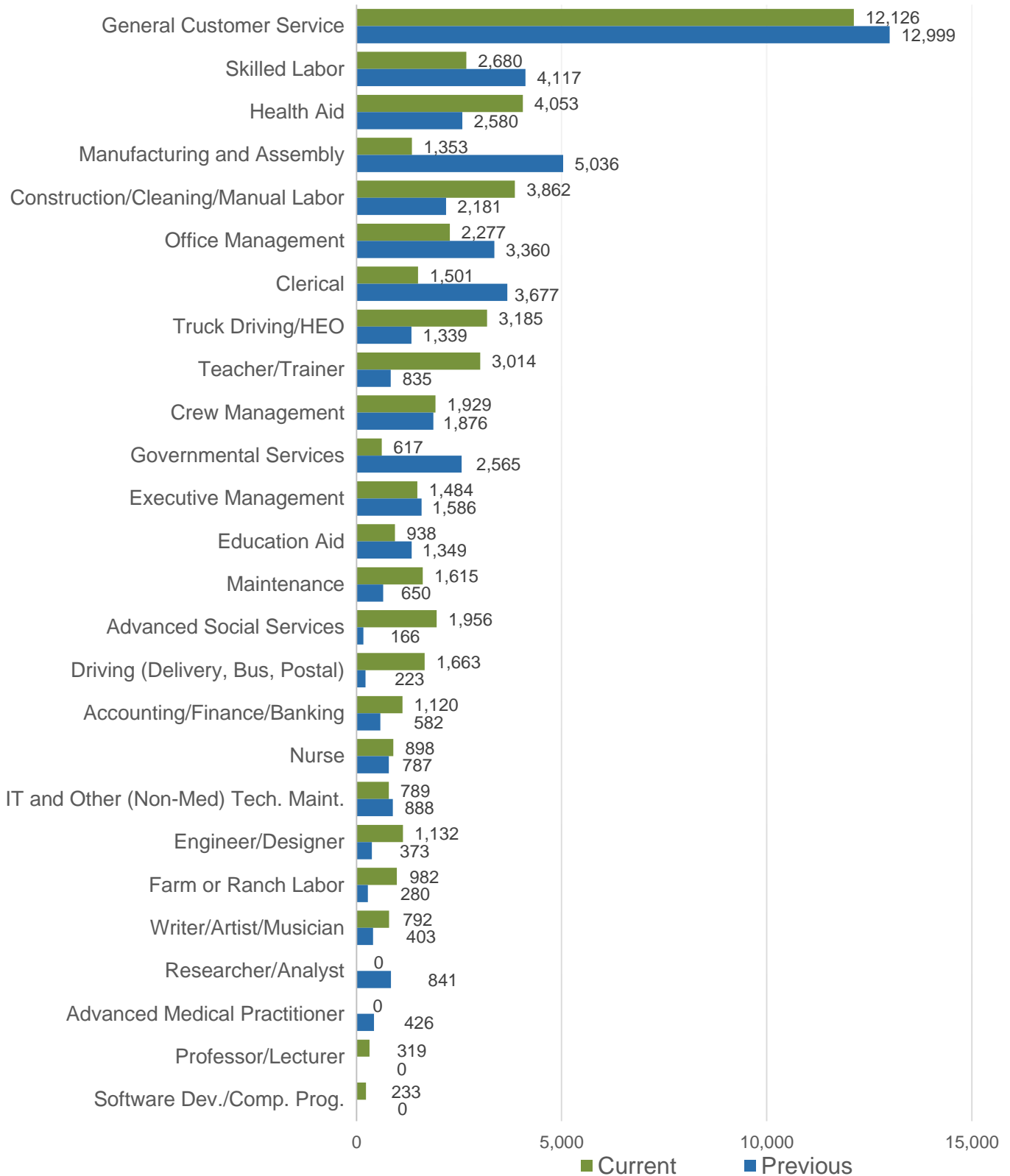


The Available Labor Pool is composed of workers categorized as either 1) currently not employed and looking for full-time employment, 2) currently not employed *but* interested in full-time employment, 3) currently employed *and* looking for full-time employment, 4) currently employed *but* interested in other full-time employment for the *right opportunity*.

Current Skills and Work Experiences

To gain perspective on the types of workers that are available for new and/or different employment in the Ponca City Labor Basin, survey respondents were asked questions assessing work skills and previous work experience.

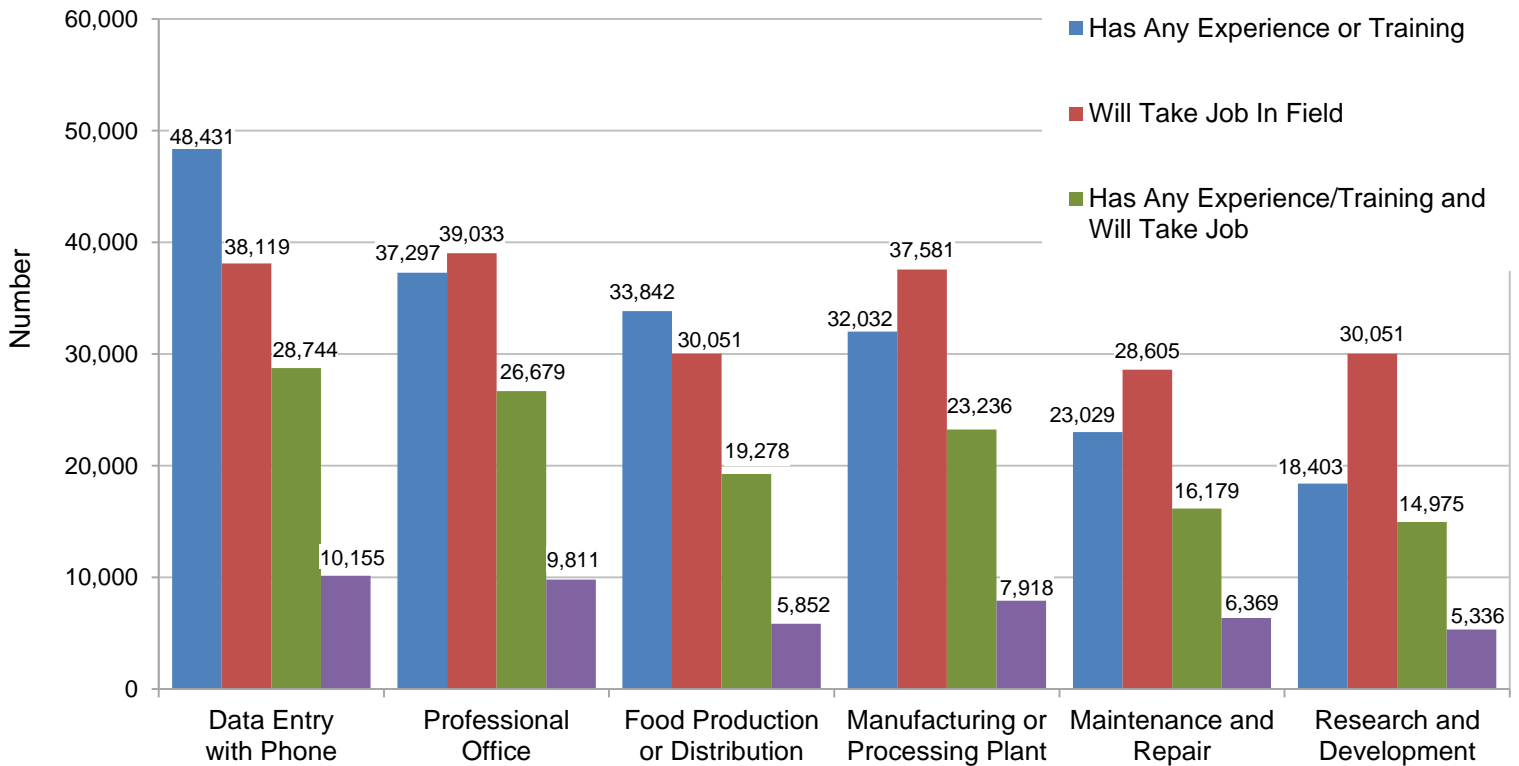
Figure 3: Current Work Experience plus Previous Work or Training Experience



In addition to collecting data regarding the current employment status and previous work or training experience through a series of “open-ended” survey questions, respondents were asked about the six specific employment areas listed in Figure 4. Respondents were first asked if they had any training or work experience in a specific field (blue column) and then if they would take a job in that field, regardless of their prior training or experience (red column).

The third column shows the estimated number that have any experience/training in a field **and** are willing to work in that field again (green column). The fourth column shows the estimated numbers that have any experience/training **and** are willing to take a job in that field **and** are within the **necessary commute time**¹ (purple column).

Figure 4: Work Experience / Willing to Work in Field



¹Necessary commute time is defined as: amount of time stated by the respondent that is equal to or greater than the commute time necessary for the respondent to travel from his or her Zip Code of residence to the Zip Code at the center of the labor basin. For example, a respondent that is willing to travel for 30 minutes, one-way, for a new or different job opportunity and that lives an estimated 15 minutes from the center of the labor basin is considered to be “willing to travel the necessary commute time” for a new job

Survey respondents with training or experience in food production/distribution or manufacturing/processing were asked additional questions to assess the type of work they performed at those jobs.

Figure 4a: Work Experience in Food Production or Distribution

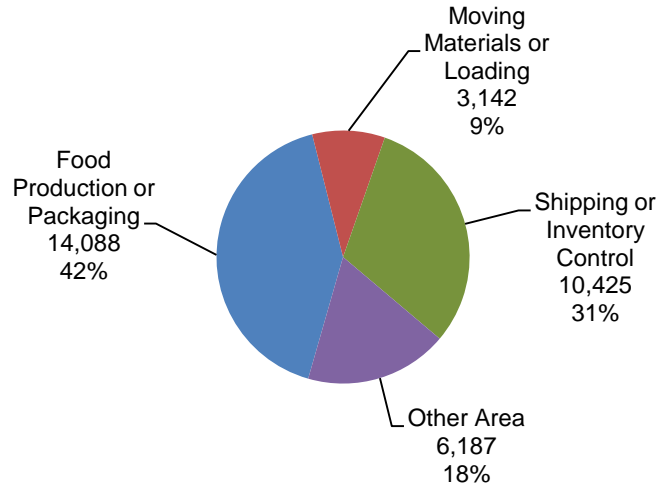
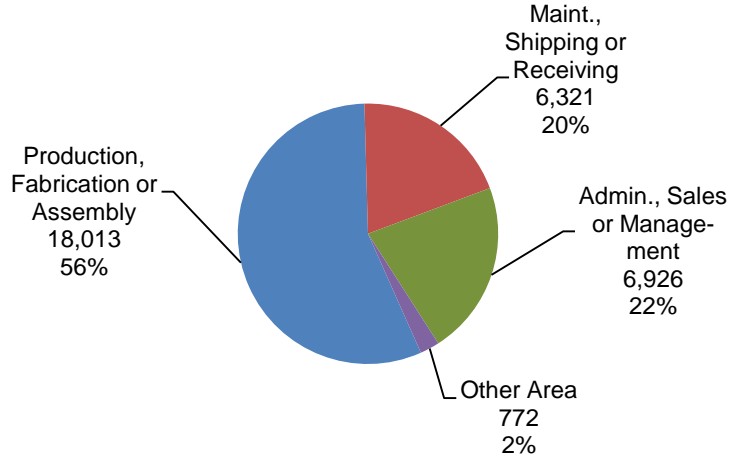


Figure 4b: Work Experience in Manufacturing or Processing Plant



Educational Experience and Job Satisfaction

Respondents that had completed at least some college or are currently enrolled in a community college, college, or university were asked to provide their major area of study. Answers were grouped into the following categories:

Social Sciences: Sociology, Psychology, Anthropology, Politics, and Social Work.

Biological Sciences and Health: Biology, Agriculture, Nursing, Pre-med, and Pre-vet.

Physical Sciences and Engineering: Physics, Geology, Chemistry, and Engineering.

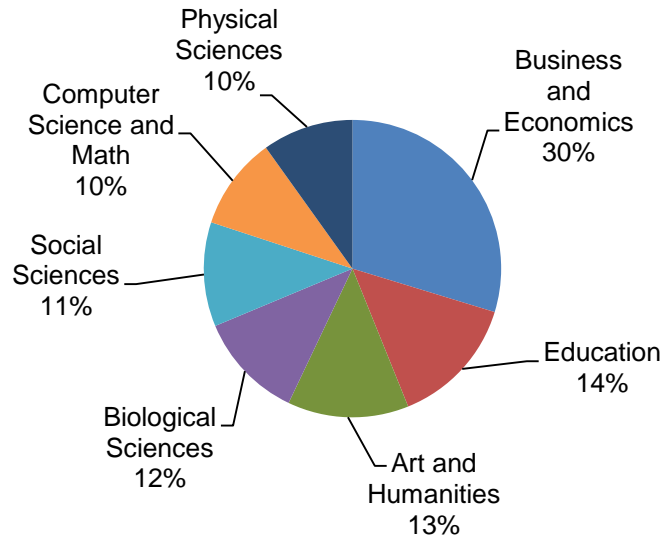
Business and Economics: Management, Accounting, Finance, Marketing, and Economics.

Education: Elementary and Secondary Teaching.

Computer Science and Math: Programming or Technology, Networking, Web Design, and Math.

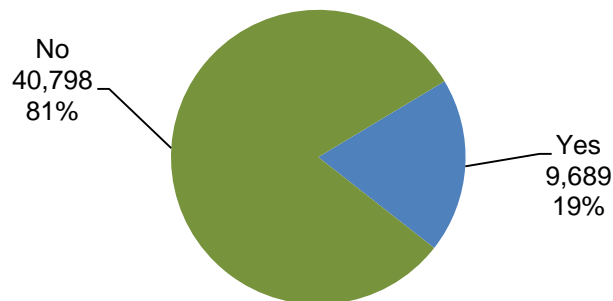
Arts and Humanities: Art, Music, History, Philosophy, and Languages.

Figure 5: Undergraduate College Major



All respondents that had completed “at least some college” were asked: “Are you attending technical school now or have you received a technical degree?”

Figure 6: Technical College Experience



Respondents answering “yes” to the above question were asked for their area of study. Answer options were grouped into one of the options shown in Figure 6a.

Figure 6a: Technical College Study Area

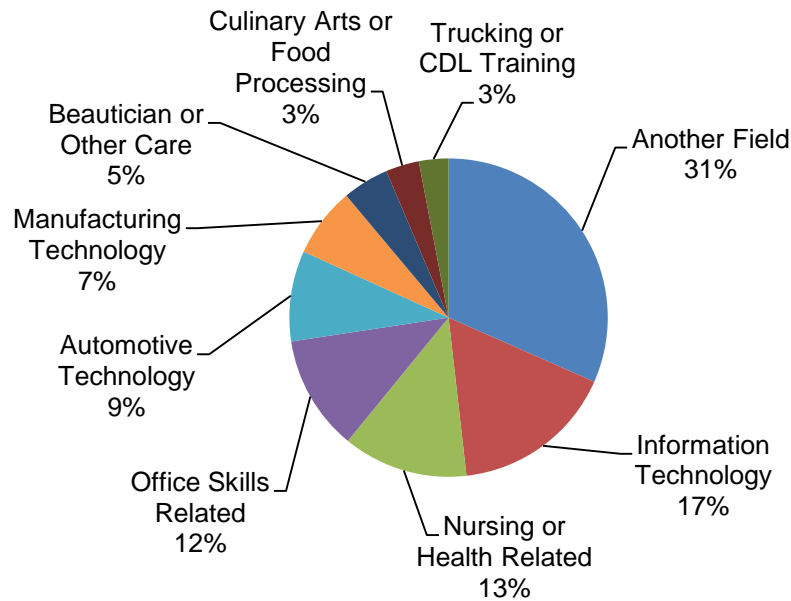
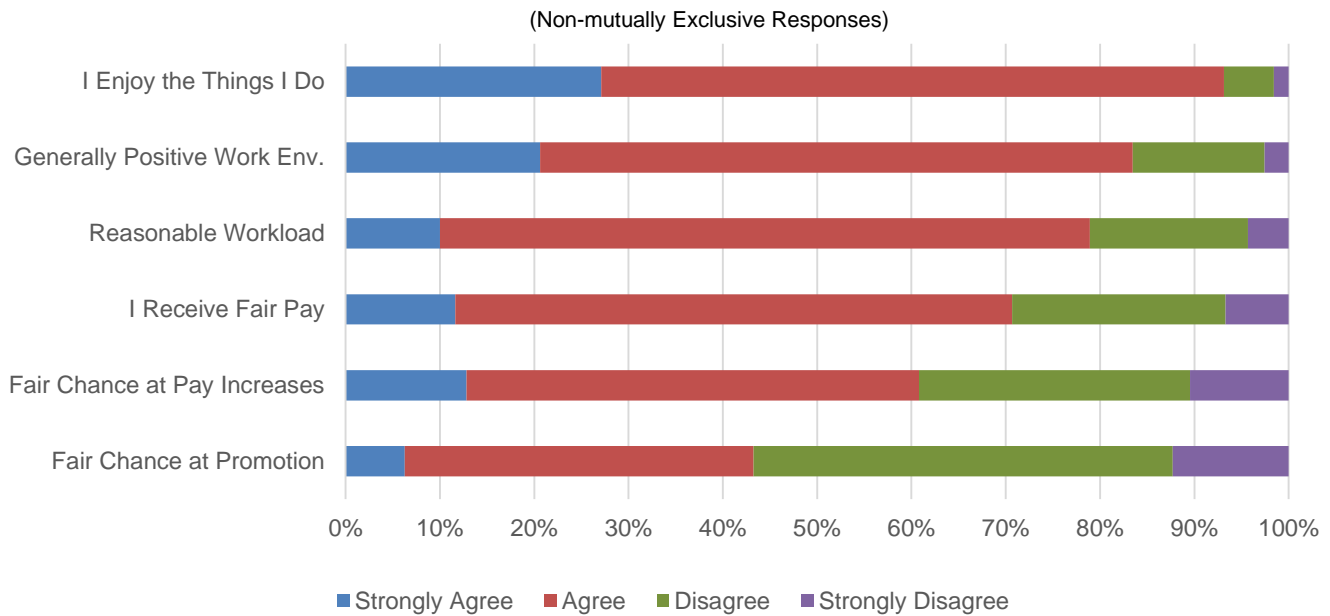


Figure 7 shows responses to questions regarding job satisfaction. The figure and table report responses from *working survey respondents* only.

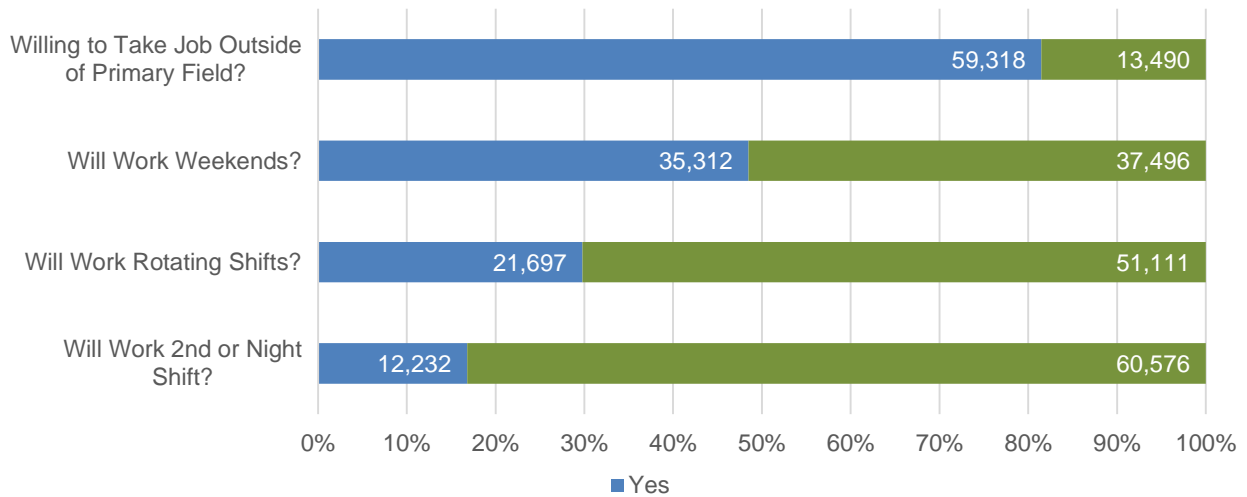
Figure 7: Job Satisfaction Among Available Labor Pool Workers



Considerations for Employment

An important consideration for many employers looking to locate or expand operations is whether workers are willing to pursue new employment opportunities. Some workers may be available for new employment but are unwilling to switch from their current job to a different type of position. A large percentage of those unwilling to change their jobs might limit the types of employers that can enter the labor basin. This does not seem to be the case for the Ponca City Labor Basin. Figure 8 shows that 59,318 (81.5%) members of the Available Labor Pool are willing to accept positions outside of their primary fields of employment.

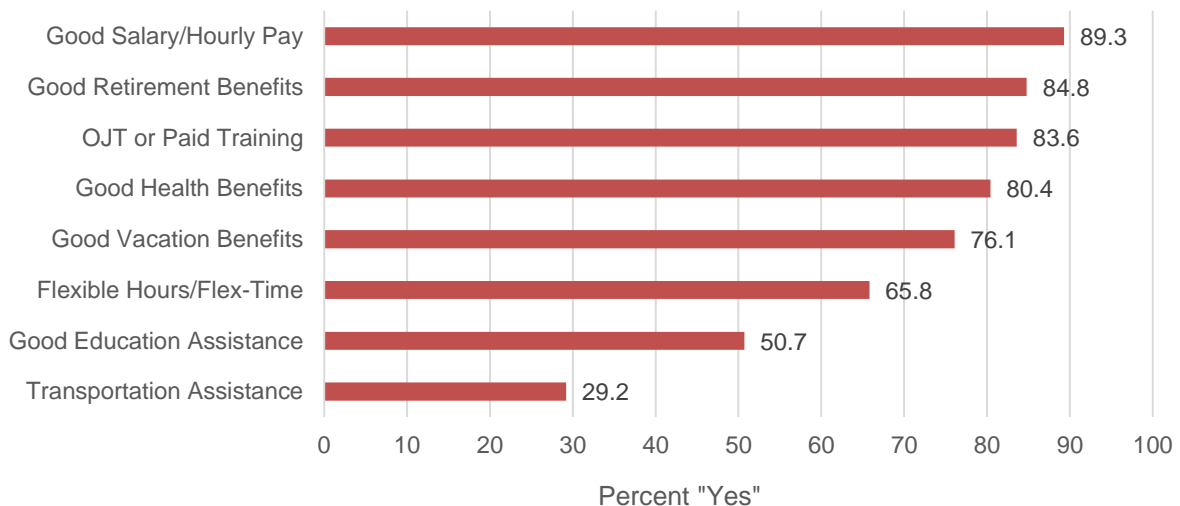
Figure 8: Considerations for Employment



Available Labor Pool members were asked about various benefits that might be important when considering whether to take a new or different job. Respondents were asked if each benefit would be a “very important” consideration for taking a new job, with answer options included “yes” and “no.”

Figure 10: Benefits Very Important to Change Employment

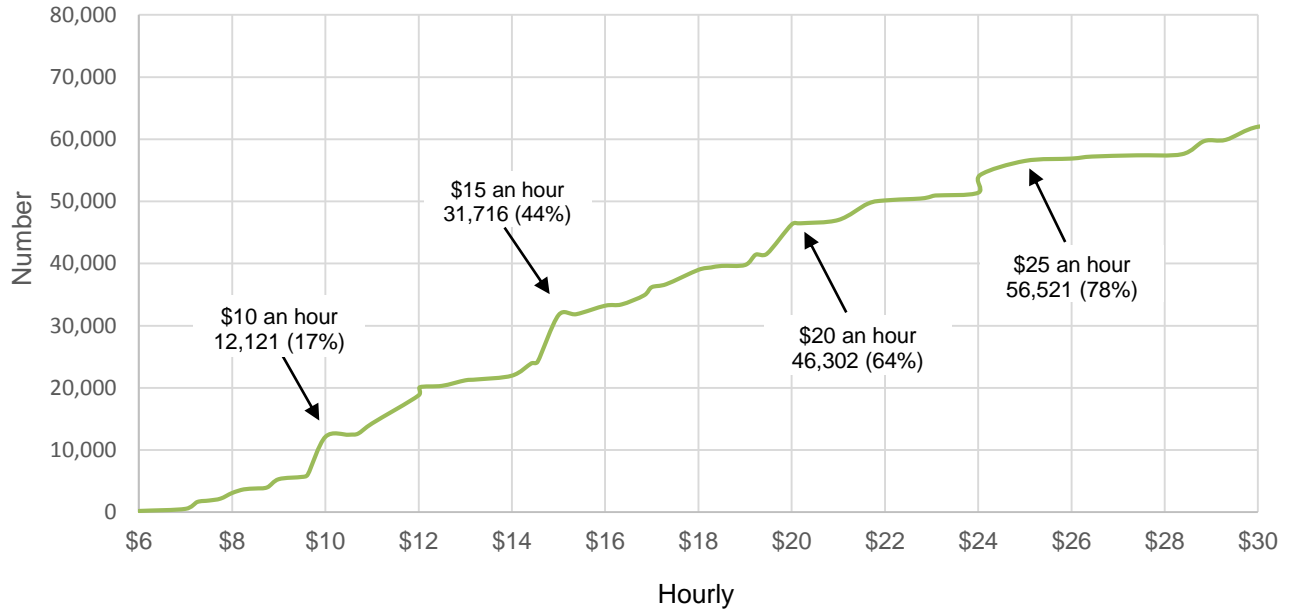
(Non-mutually Exclusive Responses)



Desired Wages of Available Labor Pool

Desired wages are another important consideration for employers and economic developers. Figure 10 shows desired wages for members of the Available Labor Pool.

Figure 11: Available Labor by Hourly Wage



Underemployed Available Labor Pool Workers

Subset 2 of the study addressed the underemployed population in the Ponca City labor basin. Underemployment is defined as individuals possessing skills and/or training levels that exceed the responsibilities of their current job — is a significant issue in many communities. To assess underemployment in the Ponca City Labor Basin, *employed members of the Available Labor Pool* were presented with a scenario describing underemployment.¹ They were then asked a series of questions assessing if they perceive themselves as underemployed because 1) their skill level is greater than their current job requires, 2) they possess higher levels of education than is required on the job, 3) they earned a higher income at a similar job previously, or 4) they are limited in the number of hours that they can work.

Of the 50,517 *employed members* of the Available Labor Pool, almost a third answered “yes” to one or more of the questions presented above (see Figure 14). These Pool members are considered “underemployed.”

Figure 14 shows that the underemployed workers represent 32% (or 16,083 individuals) of the employed members of the Pool.

Figure 14: Underemployed Workers

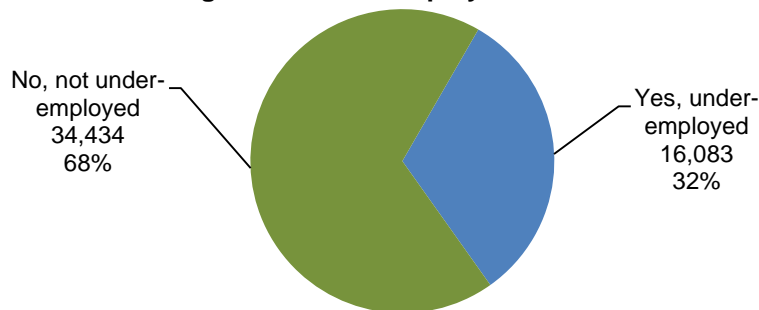
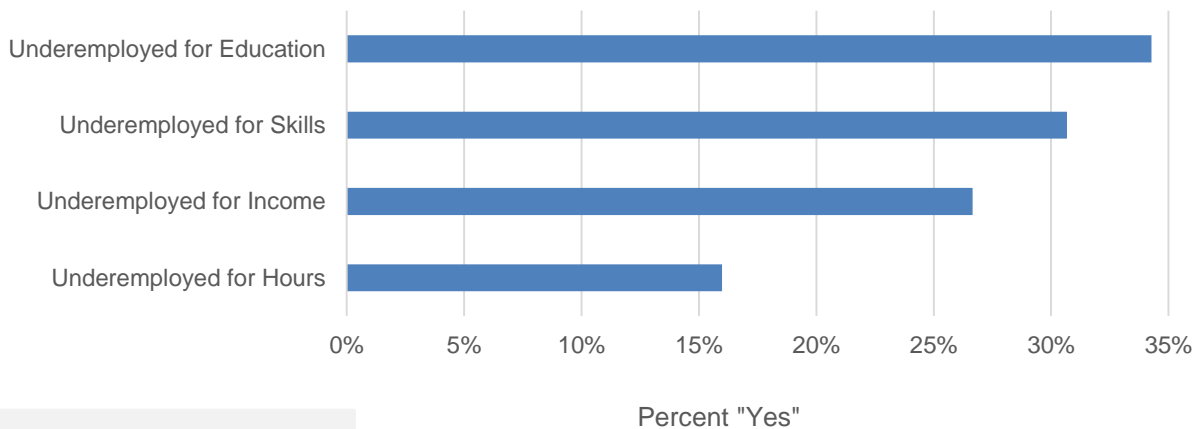


Figure 15 shows the percentages of the positive responses (i.e., “yes” answers) to the various measures of underemployment.

Figure 15: Reasons for Underemployment

(Non-mutually Exclusive Responses)



Occupational Sectors and Job Experience (of Underemployed Workers)

Figure 16: Occupational Sectors of Underemployed Workers

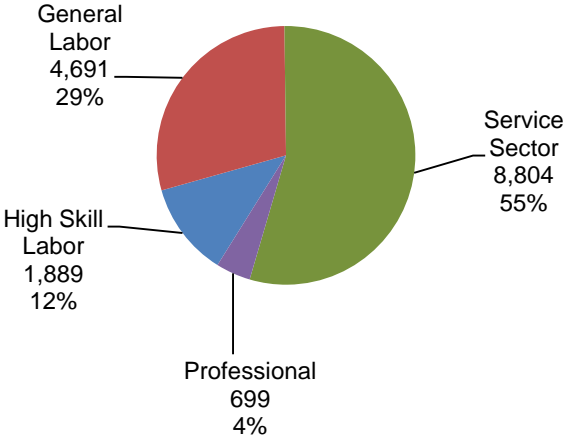


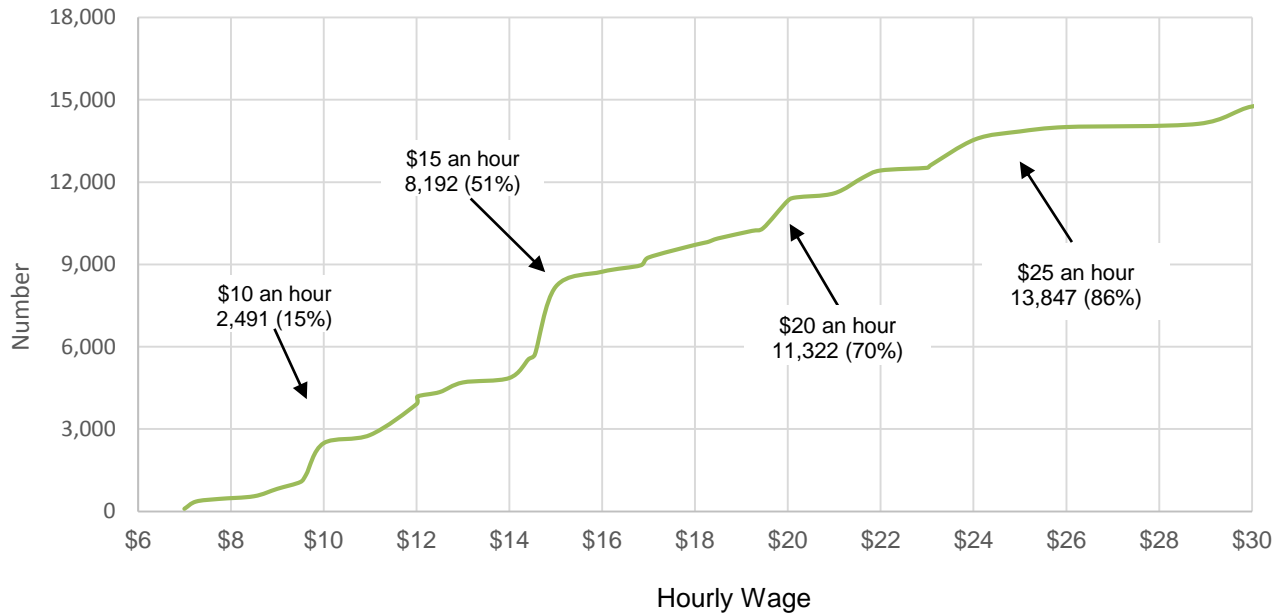
Table 11 shows the current work experience of underemployed workers by type of job. The information below shows the numbers of underemployed workers that ‘work with their hands’, ‘work with people’, work with numbers’, etc.

Table 11: Current Work Experience of Underemployed Workers

	Number	Percent
Working with Hands		
Construction/Cleaning/Manual Labor	1,227	7.6
Farm or Ranch Labor	161	1.0
Manufacturing and Assembly	480	3.0
Maintenance	751	4.7
Driving (Delivery, Bus, Postal)	1,154	7.2
Truck Driving/HEO	918	5.7
Skilled Labor	802	5.0
Crew Management	346	2.1
Working with People		
General Customer Service	4,936	30.7
Office Management	356	2.2
Governmental Services	194	1.2
Executive Management	0	0.0
Advanced Social Services	420	2.6
Working with Numbers		
Clerical	631	3.9
Accounting/Finance/Banking	161	1.0
Researcher/Analyst	0	0.0
Working with Technology		
IT and Other (Non-Med) Tech. Maint.	547	3.4
Software Dev./Comp. Prog.	0	0.0
Engineer/Designer	0	0.0
Providing Health Services		
Health Aid	1,873	11.6
Nurse	0	0.0
Advanced Medical Practitioner	0	0.0
Providing Educational Services		
Education Aid	554	3.4
Teacher/Trainer	455	2.8
Professor/Lecturer	0	0.0
Creative Arts		
Writer/Artist/Musician	118	0.7
Total	16,083	100

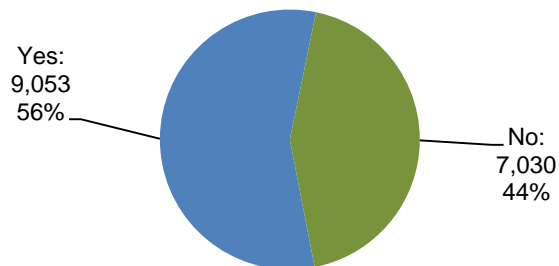
Figure 18 shows the estimated number underemployed workers by desired wage. Figure 18 shows that 74% of the underemployed workers are interested in a new job at \$25 an hour. Slightly more than three-fifths (61%) is interested in a new job \$20 an hour, while 48% is interested at \$15 an hour. Finally, a fifth (20%) is interested in a new job at \$10 an hour.

Figure 18: Underemployed Workers by Hourly Wage



Last, underemployed workers were asked if they “are available for a new or different job because they are underemployed?” Figure 20 shows that more than half (56% or 9,053 individuals) are seeking new employment to address underemployment.

Figure 20: Seeking New Employment to Address Underemployment



Survey of Area Employers

Ponca City Development Authority provided the Docking Institute with a list of 51 employers located in the Ponca City area. The Institute attempted to complete interviews with all 51 employers using a combination of telephone and web-based surveying methods. Thirty employers agreed to be interviewed, providing a response rate of 58.8%.

The survey included questions assessing workforce productivity, attitude, turnover, entry level skills, labor supply, and educational preparation. The survey also addressed recruitment practices and satisfaction with local workforce development and the area business climate.²

The following charts show the responses from the 30 employers. Unlike the previous sections in this report, the numbers provided here are not extrapolated to the larger population.

Workforce Productivity, Attitude, Turnover, and Entry Level Skills

The first part of the survey asked about the productivity, overall attitude, and turnover of each employers' own workforce, as well as a rating of the entry level skills of the area's workforce as a whole.

Figure 25 shows responses to a question asking each employer to assess the "productivity" of his or her own workforce.

Figure 25: Workforce Productivity

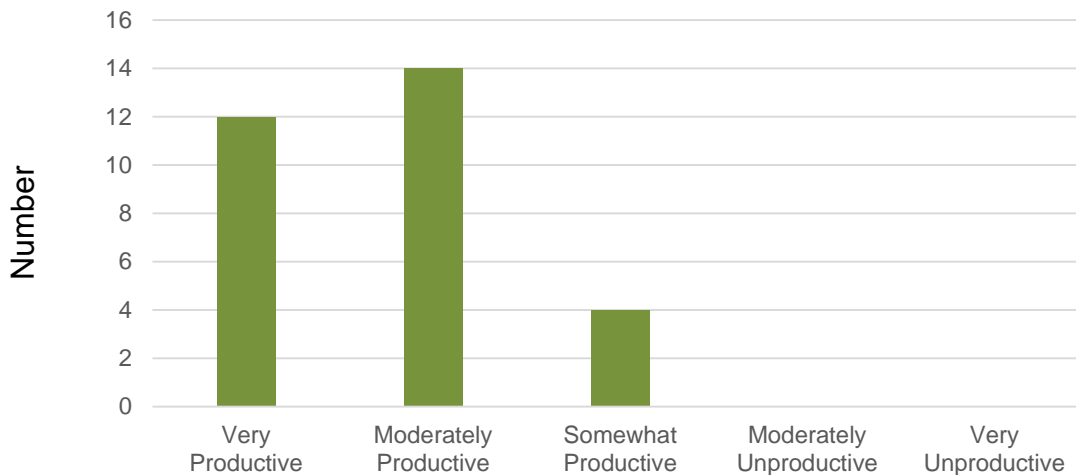
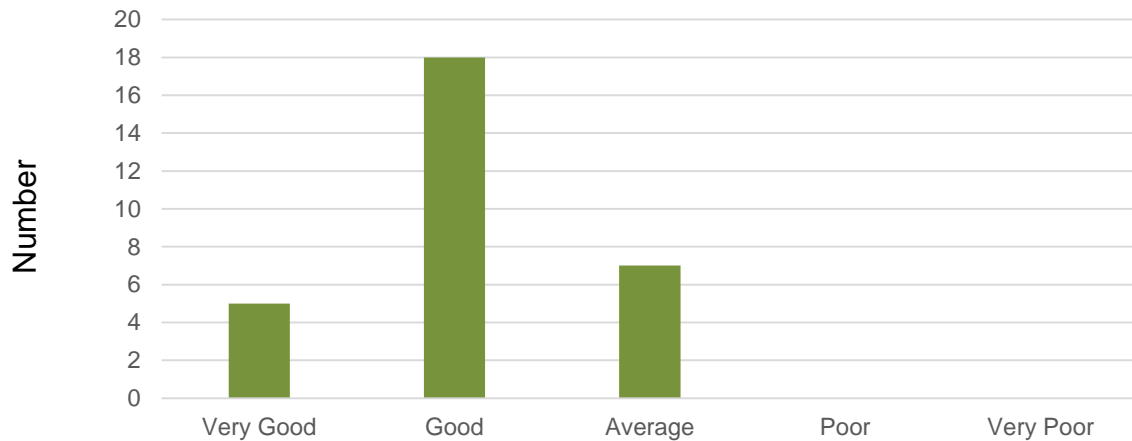


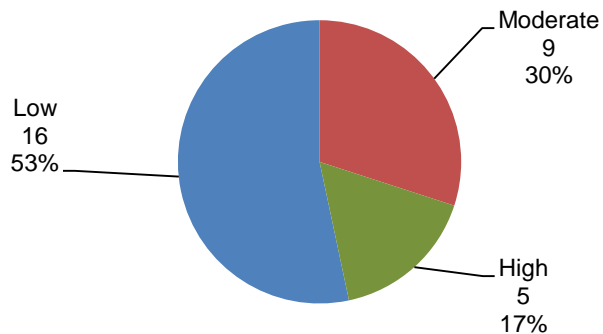
Figure 26 shows responses to a question asking each employer to assess the “overall attitude” of his or her own workforce. As with productivity, no employers rated their own workforce negatively with regard to attitude. More than half (18 out of 30) rate their employees as having “good” attitudes, while about a sixth (5 out of 30) rate the workforce attitude as “very good.”

Figure 26: Workforce Attitude



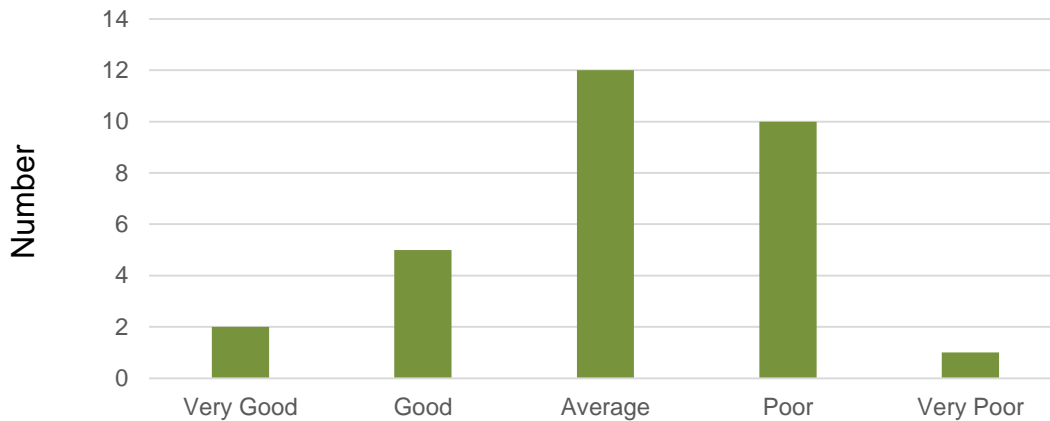
Employers were asked to rate the turnover rate of their workforce. Answer options included “high,” “moderate,” and “low.” Figure 27 shows that more than half (53%) report that their turnover rate is “low,” while about 30% report the rate as “moderate.”

Figure 27: Workforce Turnover



Employers were also asked to rate the “entry level skills” of the entire area workforce. Figure 28 shows that most employers rated the entry level skills as at least “average;” with two rating skills as “very good” and five rating the skills as “good.” Ten employers rated the entry level skills as “poor,” and one rated the skills as “very poor.”

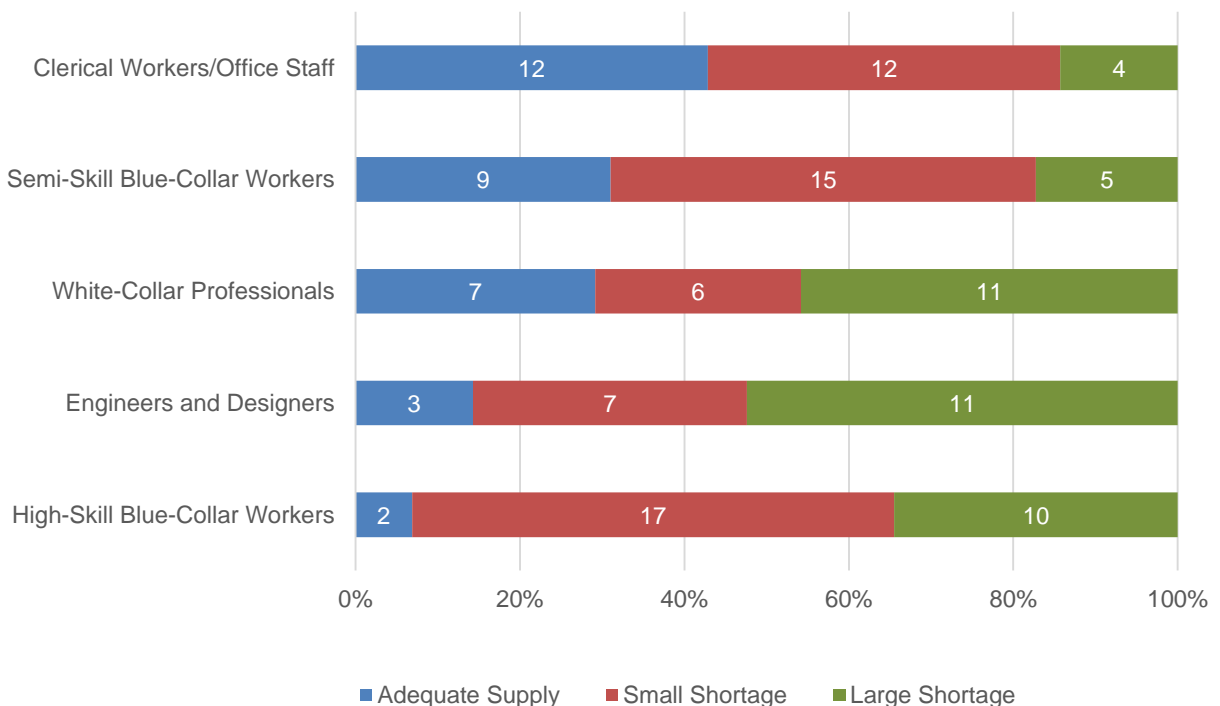
Figure 28: Entry Level Skill of Entire Area Workforce



Workforce Supply

The next section of the survey asked employers about the supply of various types of workers for hire. Specifically, employers were asked if they find an “adequate supply,” “small shortage,” or a “large shortage” of five types of workers.

Figure 29: Supply of Workers for Hire



Workforce Development, Economic Development, and Business Climate

Employers were asked if they were “satisfied,” “neither satisfied nor unsatisfied,” or “unsatisfied” with local workforce development programs, the local economic development organization, and the area business climate.

A vast majority of employers (almost 80%) are either satisfied or neutral with regard to the local area business climate.

Figure 33: Satisfaction with Local Entities/Business Climate

