

## Addressing the Labour Market Gap: Thompson/Okanagan Region

In recent years, employers have found themselves grappling with the pressing need to adapt to the needs and expectations of job seekers to attract and retain skilled staff. Meanwhile, job seekers face the daunting task of securing employment despite the myriad opportunities available. The *Addressing the Labour Market Gap Report* is the culmination of an extensive research effort, drawing upon the valuable input of 1,225 job seekers and 812 employers across the province.

Within the Thompson-Okanagan region, 249 job seekers and 132 employers participated in the provincial survey between February 7 and March 3, 2023.

The region had one of the lowest proportions of respondents who indicated that they are out of work and looking for employment (29%) compared to other regions surveyed. It also had one of the highest proportions of respondents who indicated that they are students (13%), compared to the provincial average (7%). Importantly, there were also more people participating in the gig economy compared to other regions in BC; 82% of respondents indicated that they have participated in the gig economy, compared to 64% provincially. Key highlights of the findings from the Thompson-Okanagan region are outlined below.

- **Top Challenge** | In line with findings from the rest of BC, finding qualified candidates that match the job description was a top challenge for employers in the Thompson-Okanagan region. For job seekers, finding jobs that are close to where they live and that meet their desired working conditions were tied as the most commonly cited challenges. This differs from the findings at the provincial level, where job seekers identified finding jobs that meet their salary expectations as the top challenge.
- **Recruitment Process** | At the provincial level, employers found it most difficult to define salary ranges and offers as part of the recruitment process. However, in the Thompson-Okanagan region, both employers and job seekers identified administrative and resources barriers as the most challenging part of the recruitment process. Employers most commonly identified the time required to review resumes and cover letters as the largest challenge in the recruitment process, while job seekers felt that getting called for interviews was the largest challenge. Job seekers also identified networking as a barrier to “breaking into” the job market in the Thompson-Okanagan region.
- **Job Postings** | Employers and job seekers had different ideas about what features are most important in job postings. Employers ranked work environment/office culture and comprehensive benefits as the most important. Work-life balance and salary were the top two most important features of any job posting according to job seekers. These findings from the Thompson-Okanagan region are reflective of findings at the provincial level.
- **Salaries** | Just under 50% of employers in BC described challenges finding qualified candidates within the salary range they offered while nearly 40% of job seekers in BC found it challenging to find jobs that met their salary expectations. Importantly, more employers in the Thompson-Okanagan region found it difficult to define salary ranges and offers compared to the provincial average. Conversely, the proportion of job seekers in the Thompson-Okanagan region that found it difficult to negotiate salary ranges (19%) was slightly *lower* than the provincial average (23%).



- **Diversity and Inclusion** | Both job seekers and employers identified “creating a workplace that is safe and fair for workers of different backgrounds to feel welcome” as one of the most important factors influencing worker retention. However, the *Report* illustrates gaps in policies to support this: while over 80% of employers reported having policies in place to support a diverse workforce, only 40% of job seekers reported experiencing such policies at their previous workplace. This gap between employer policies and jobseeker experience appears to be slightly wider in the Thompson-Okanagan region compared to the provincial average.

To access the full "Addressing the Labour Market Gap Insights Report," please visit <https://bcchamber.org/addressing-the-labour-market-gap/>