

# Addressing the Labour Market Gap

Insights Report | May 2023



Ministry of  
Social Development  
and Poverty Reduction

in partnership with the  
BC Chamber of Commerce



BCMindReader™ Platform  
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# Table of Contents

<b>Summary .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Background .....</b>	<b>4</b>
BC Labour Market Outlook .....	4
Addressing the Labour Market Gap .....	4
<b>Who We Heard From.....</b>	<b>5</b>
Interpreting Results.....	5
<b>What We Heard .....</b>	<b>6</b>
Overall Disconnect .....	6
Top Challenges for Employers and Job seekers.....	7
Recruitment .....	8
The Recruitment Process .....	8
Job Postings: What is Offered and What is Desired .....	12
Employment Services.....	13
Salaries .....	15
Retention.....	17
Diversity and Inclusion .....	19
Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion .....	19
Job Offers .....	20
Agism.....	21
Gender Discrimination .....	21
Racism.....	22
Accommodations for Disability or Medical Conditions.....	22
<b>Conclusion / Next Steps .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>24</b>
Appendix A: Job Posting Features .....	24
Appendix B: Detailed Description of Survey Participants .....	25
Regional Representation .....	25
Age Distribution .....	25
Gender Distribution .....	25
Household Income .....	26
Highest Level of Education .....	26
Industry .....	27

## Summary

British Columbia's acute labour shortage challenges both employers and job seekers. Employers struggling to find workers must adapt to the needs and expectations of job seekers to attract and retain talent. Job seekers, however, are struggling to secure employment despite the myriad opportunities available.

Building labour force capacity and resiliency is a top concern for BC Chamber of Commerce members across the province. The Addressing the Labour Market Gap survey collected the views of 812 employers and 1225 job seekers between February 7 and March 3, 2023.

**Both employers and job seekers are having a harder time finding each other in most areas of the province.** Over 60% of employers surveyed said it was harder to find qualified candidates now compared to prior to the pandemic while less than 40% of job seekers said it was harder to find jobs. Key disconnects between employers and job seekers in BC are outlined below.

- **Top Challenge** | Finding qualified candidates that matched the job description was identified as a top challenge by employers. For job seekers, the most common challenge was finding jobs that met their salary expectations.
- **Recruitment Process** | Employers are struggling to find the time to administer a recruitment process and to define a salary range. Job seekers are struggling to identify and negotiate compensation for the work they seek.
- **Job Postings** | Salary is the most important feature in a job posting for one in two job seekers but 60% of employers do not think salary needs to be posted.
- **Employment Services** | Half the job seekers surveyed reported difficulty identifying positions for which they are qualified and over a third found application requirements too complicated. Job seekers identified training as the most important service when seeking new career opportunities, followed closely by online services and job search/resume assistance.
- **Salaries** | Just over 50% of employers shared that it was challenging to find qualified applicants within the salary range they offered, while nearly 50% of job seekers found it challenging to find jobs that met their salary expectations.
- **Diversity and Inclusion** | Employers recognize the importance of fair, diverse and welcoming workplaces but lack policies in this area. Job seekers may not be looking for this during the recruitment process, but it is a significant factor in their retention in the workplace. Job seekers' experiences highlight gaps in hiring a diverse workforce.

In Addressing the Labour Market Gap Phase 2, we will continue to engage with the BC Chamber of Commerce network, industry and professional associations, as well as WorkBC and human resource organizations to explore potential solutions.

We thank the BC Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction for funding this initiative and all individuals who participated in this phase.

# Background

## BC Labour Market Outlook

British Columbia is in the throes of an acute skilled labour shortage. Except for the period from Feb 2020 to Feb 2022, BC's unemployment rate has remained around or below 5% for the past 10 years.

Borne out of an aging demographic and exacerbated by the pandemic, the shortage is likely to continue for several years. The 2022 BC Labour Market Outlook projects that 636,000 workers will leave the workforce over the coming decade, and only 474,000 young people will enter the workforce to replace them. Of the 1,017,000 job openings anticipated between 2022-2032, roughly two-thirds will replace retiring workers while the remaining will be new jobs created through economic growth.

## Addressing the Labour Market Gap

BC's acute labour shortage challenges both employers and job seekers. Employers struggling to find workers must adapt to the needs and expectations of job seekers to attract and retain talent. Job seekers are struggling to secure employment despite the myriad opportunities available.

Building labour force capacity and resiliency is a top concern for BC Chamber of Commerce members across the province.

This trailblazing project aims to understand and address the labour market gap between employers and job seekers. Through the BC Chamber of Commerce's own network of businesses and in partnership with Work BC centres, we asked complementary questions of both employers and job seekers. The Addressing the Labour Market Gap survey collected the views of employers and job seekers between February 7 and March 3, 2023.

This report illustrates some of the disconnect between employers and job seekers in BC. It also identifies opportunities for employers and the government to shift the landscape for job seekers and improve how job seekers become valued workers in BC businesses. The BC Chamber of Commerce will continue to engage with its network, industry and professional associations, as well as WorkBC and human resource organizations to explore potential solutions in the next phase of work.

## Who We Heard From

A total of 2037 people completed the survey. Of these, 812 were employers in BC while 1225 identified as job seekers.

The majority of job seekers who responded to the survey were not actively looking for work but would consider a new employment opportunity if it arose, while a third were actively looking for a job. Sixty-five percent of job seekers were currently employed full-time (41%) or part-time (24%). Job seekers also identified as being self-employed (13%), freelancer or contractor (11%), student (7%), stay-at-home parent or homemaker (6%) and retired (2%). Less than 2% of job seekers said they were not employed and not looking for work.

The majority of employer responses (62%) came from business owners themselves, while the remaining (38%) were from a staff person that handles employment matters at a business. Less than a quarter of all responses were from sole owner of a business.

Distribution of employers and job seekers by region, age, household income, level of education and industry is shown in the Appendix.

### Interpreting Results

Our sample of job seekers is robust enough to allow for an analysis across all regions of the province, as well as four key generational groupings: Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X and Baby Boomers.

Where differences are presented across genders, regions or age, the results are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level with a margin of error of +/- 3.0%.

The survey also asked respondents about other issues, including the “gig economy” and ghosting.

# What We Heard

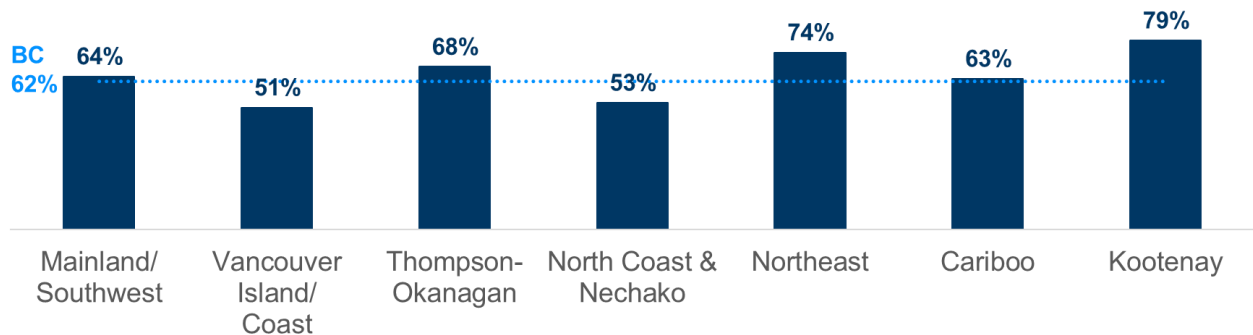
## Overall Disconnect

Both employers and job seekers are having a harder time finding each other in most of the province.

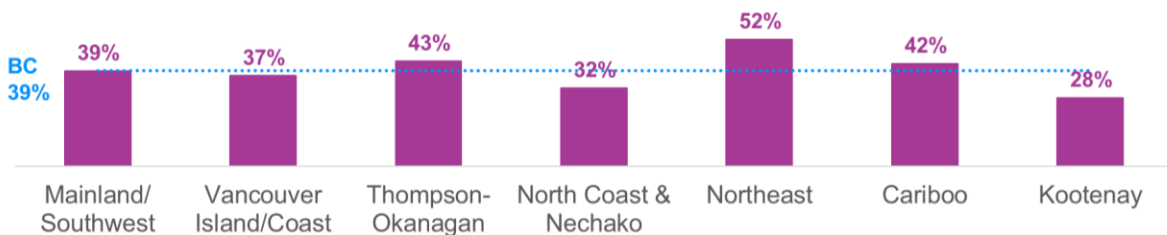
Over 60% of employers surveyed said it was harder to find qualified candidates now compared to prior to the pandemic while less than 40% of job seekers said it was harder to find jobs.

The employers who reported the most difficulty finding qualified candidates were highest in the Kootenay (79%), Thompson-Okanagan (78%) and Northeast (74%). The highest proportion of job seekers who reported it was harder to find jobs was in the Northeast (52%), Thompson-Okanagan (43%) and Cariboo (42%). Job seekers in the Kootenay region were least likely to report that it was harder to find a job than before the pandemic.

Employers who say it is harder to find qualified candidates than before the pandemic



Job seekers who say it is harder to find a job than before the pandemic



## Top Challenges for Employers and Job seekers

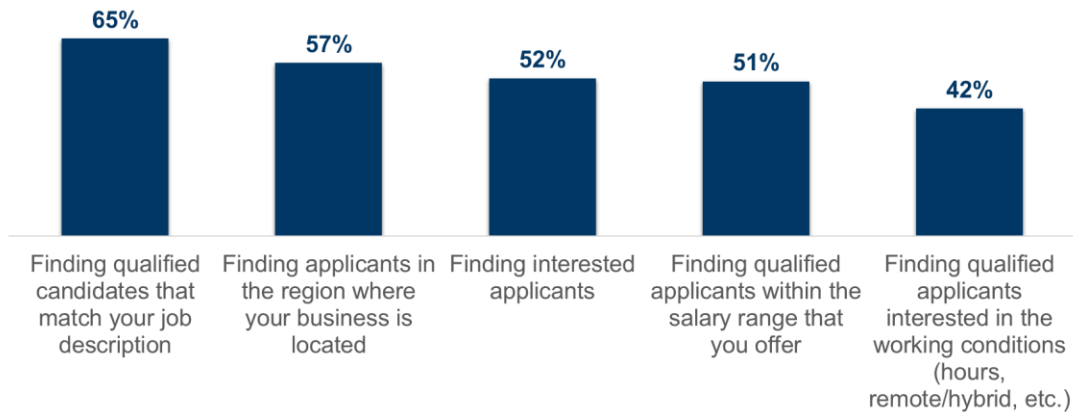
Finding qualified candidates that matched the job description was identified as a top challenge by employers, while finding jobs that fit their qualifications ranked as the third most common challenge for job seekers.

The second biggest challenge for employers was finding applicants in the region where their business was located. However, finding jobs in the region where they live was the fifth most common challenge for job seekers.

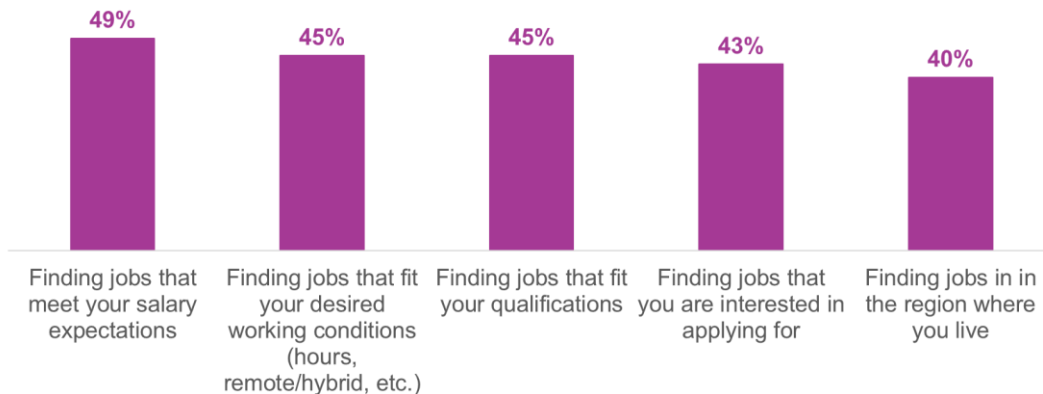
For job seekers, the most common challenge was finding jobs that met their salary expectations. Finding qualified candidates within the salary range offered was the fourth most common challenge for employers.

Finding jobs that fit their desired working conditions was the second biggest challenge for job seekers. However, finding qualified applicants interested in the working conditions ranked fifth in the list of challenges for employers.

### Top Challenges for Employers in BC



### Top Challenges for Job seekers in BC





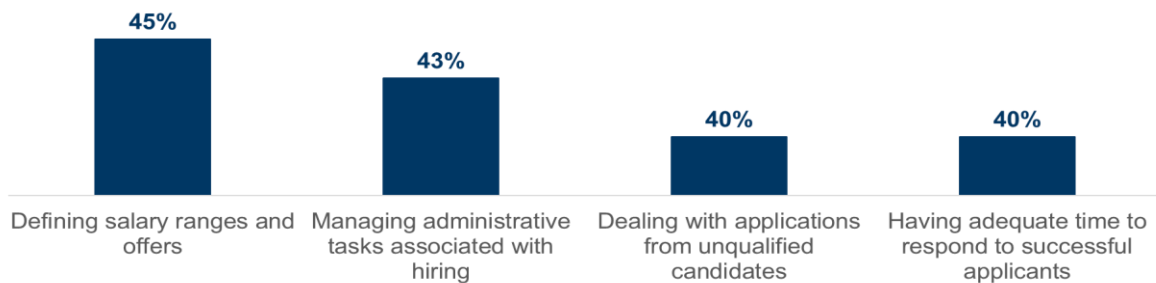
## Recruitment

Employers are struggling to find the time to administer a recruitment process that includes defining a salary range. Job seekers are struggling to identify and negotiate compensation for the work they seek.

### The Recruitment Process

The main hindrances for employers are related to the amount of time it takes to be ready for recruitment. At least two-in-five employers say that four specific tasks are “difficult”: defining salary ranges and offers; managing administrative tasks associated with hiring, such as correspondence and scheduling; dealing with resumes and/or cover letters from candidates who are not qualified for the position; and having adequate time to respond to successful applicants.

**Difficulties employers experienced in the recruitment process**



Some significant regional differences were observed in these challenging tasks. The proportion of employers who identified it challenging to define salary ranges and offers in the current environment was highest in Mainland/Southwest (50%), Northeast (49%) and Kootenay (46%). The highest proportion of employers struggling with administrative tasks associated with hiring was in Thompson-Okanagan (47%) and Northeast (also 47%). Cariboo (51%) and Thompson-Okanagan (49%) were the highest regions where employers struggled to deal with resumes and/or cover letters from candidates not qualified (40%) Northeast (46%) and Mainland/Southwest (45%) had the highest proportion of employers who found it difficult to respond to successful candidates.

*“Finding the time or having trained personnel available to handle the sheer number of applicants we receive for posted positions, not to mention finding time to interview.”*

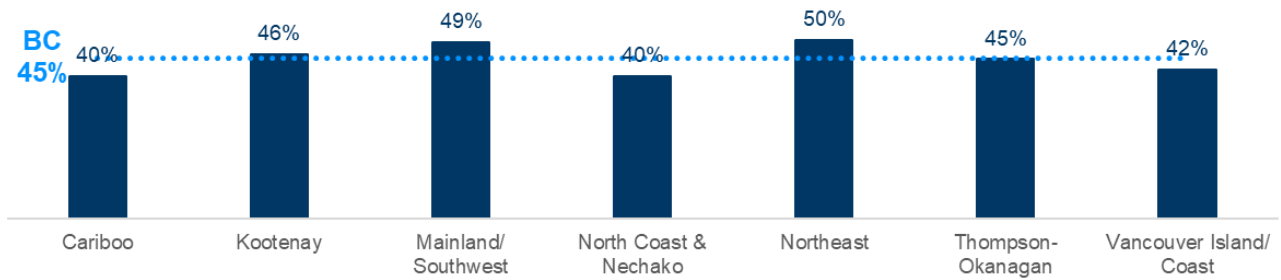
-- Employer

*“In the past year the volume of unqualified candidates for any posting has grown exponentially. It's a big timewaster.”*

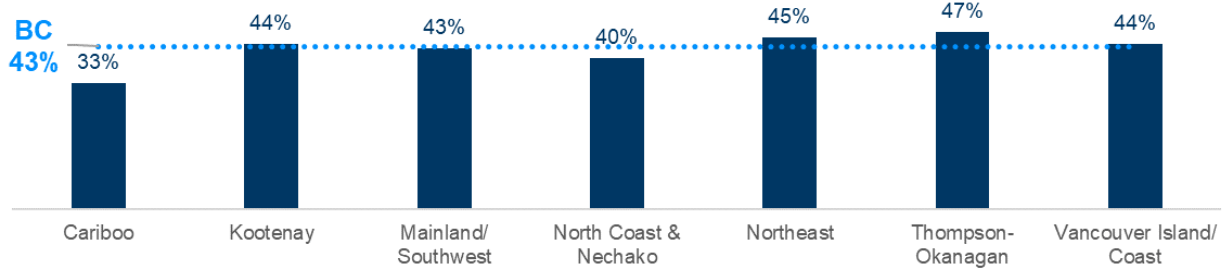
-- Employer



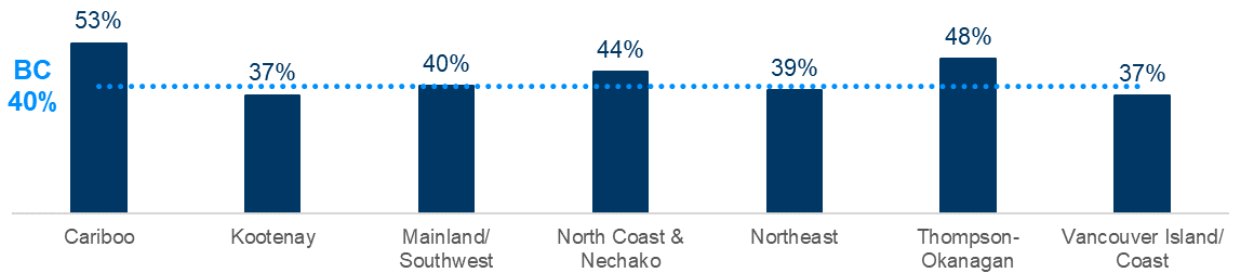
### Employers who found it difficult to negotiate salary ranges and offers



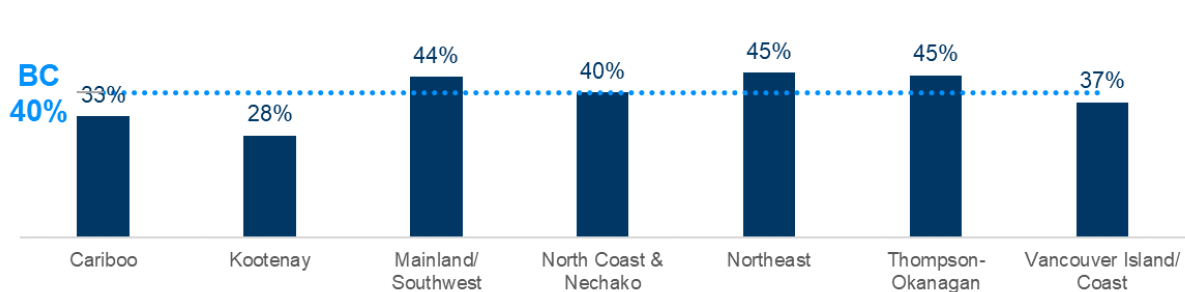
### Employers who found it difficult to manage administrative tasks associated with hiring



### Employers who found it difficult to dealing with applications from unqualified candidates

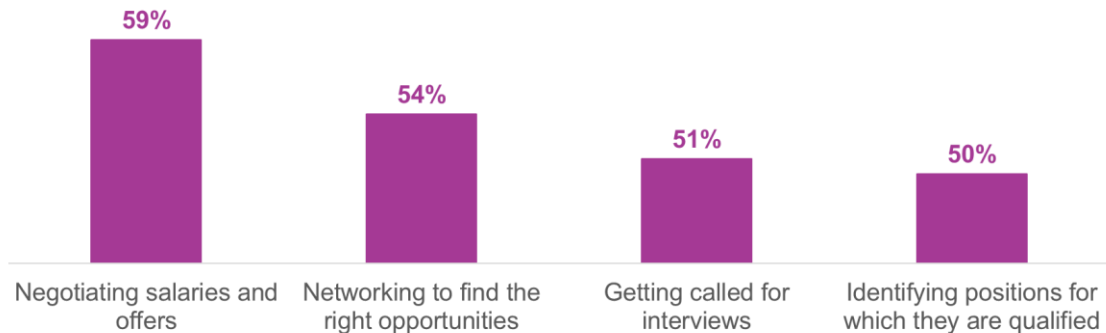


### Employers who had difficulty finding adequate time to respond to successful applicants



For job seekers, the key complications are getting noticed and keeping communications line open. More than half say it is difficult to network to find the right opportunities (54%), get called for interviews (51%) and identify positions for which they are qualified (50%). The majority also have problems negotiating salaries and offers (59%) and contacting a potential employer about the status of their application or candidacy (51%).

### Difficulties job seekers experienced in the recruitment process



Some significant regional differences were observed among job seekers.

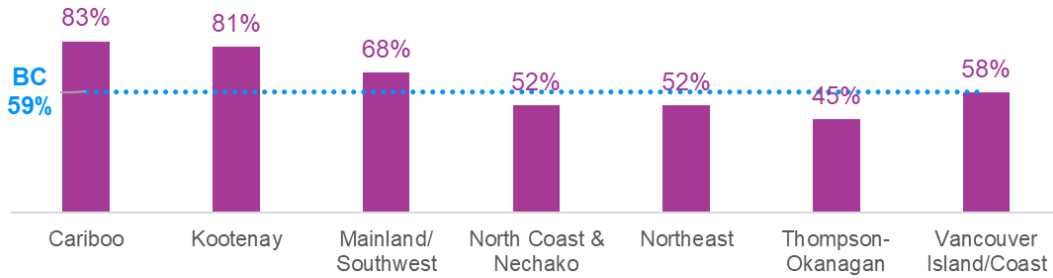
Cariboo (83%) and Kootenay (81%) were the highest regions where job seekers found it more difficult to negotiate salaries and offers with cost of inflation.

The regions with the highest proportion of job seekers who found it difficult to network for opportunities was Kootenay (77%) and Mainland/Southwest (68%).

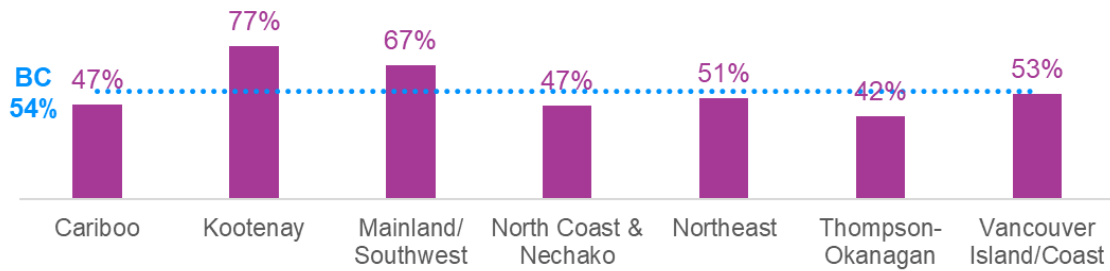
Kootenay (71%) and Mainland/Southwest were the highest regions where job seekers found it difficult to get called for interviews.

*"I have the experience for a lot of positions but find the education requirements are often barriers to qualify. Job descriptions are not properly aligned to what the role actually entails." – Job Seeker*

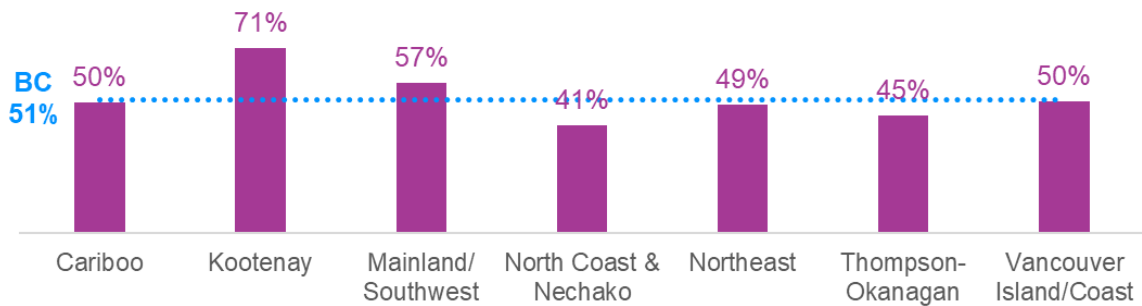
### Job seekers who found it difficult to negotiate salaries and offers



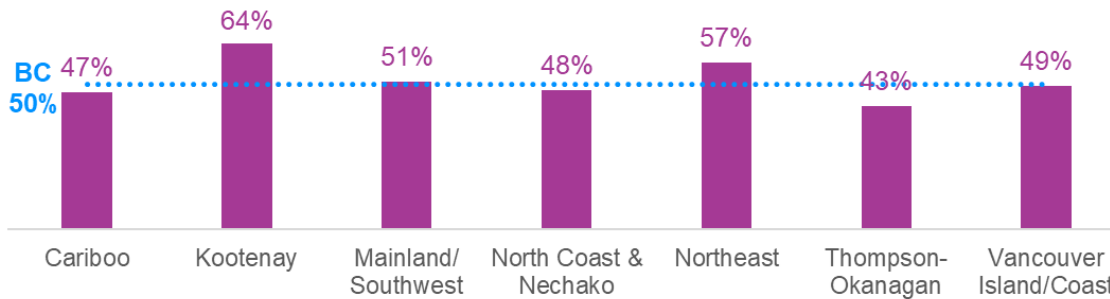
### Job seekers who found it difficult to network to find the right opportunities



### Job seekers who found it difficult to get called for interviews



### Job seekers who found it difficult to identify positions for which they are qualified



## Job Postings: What is Offered and What is Desired

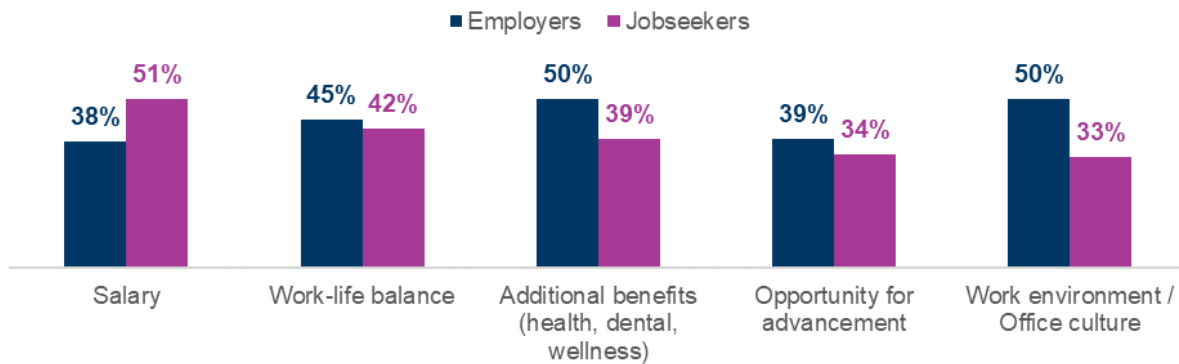
Salary is the most important feature in a job posting for one in two job seekers but 60% of employers do not think salary needs to be posted.

A comparison of the job posting features that job seekers consider important with what employers think job seekers consider important is telling of the disconnect.

Employers consider the following features the most important in job postings: work environment and office culture (50%), additional benefits (health, dental, wellness) (50%), work-life balance (45%), opportunity for advancement (39%) and salary (38%).

These are the same five features that job seekers look for in a posting, albeit with different levels of intensity: salary (51%), work-life balance (42%), additional benefits (health, dental, wellness) (39%), opportunity for advancement (34%) and work environment and office culture (33%).

**Job posting features considered most important.**



There were some notable generational differences among job seekers. Salary was ranked as highest importance among Baby Boomers (63%) while opportunity for advancement was highest among Gen Z. Both these reflect the career stage each generation is at in the workplace.

The desire for additional benefits (health, dental, wellness) was highest among women (46%). This may be due to their traditional social role in caregiving.

This disconnect is further pronounced by region. In several regions, work-life balance and salary are more important to the job seeker than employers realize. In Thompson Okanagan, a quick commute (under 30 minutes) is in the top 3 features for job seekers while in the Cariboo region, job seekers desire additional holidays; in both regions, these features are not considered as important by employers in that region.

A full list of all job posting features and the relative importance for job seekers and employers is presented in [Appendix A](#).

## Employment Services

Half the job seekers surveyed reported difficulty identifying positions for which they are qualified and over a third found application requirements too complicated. Job seekers identified training as the most important service when seeking new career opportunities, followed closely by online services and job search/resume assistance.

With regards to services that job seekers considered important when seeking new career opportunities, women (83%) were more likely to consider training important compared to the average (76%). The highest proportion of job seekers to deem training important was in the Kootenay region (91%) while the lowest was in Thompson Cariboo (68%) and North Coast and Nechako (68%).

Online services were deemed important by 68% of job seekers while in-person services were deemed important by 64%. Regional preferences varied. Thompson Okanagan (60%) was the lowest region where job seekers considered online services important, while the highest regions were Cariboo (72%), Kootenay (71%), Vancouver Island/Coast (71%) and Mainland/Southwest (70%). North Coast and Nechako (59%) was the lowest region with job seekers who considered in-person services important while Cariboo (69%) was the highest.

Two-thirds of job seekers (67%) considered job search/resume assistance an important service. North Coast and Nechako was the lowest region that considered this important at 59%, while Cariboo (81%) and Northeast (75%) were the highest.

Over two-thirds of job seekers also considered access to technology and using assistance using technology an important service. This was lowest in the North Coast and Nechako region (59%) and highest in the Northeast (70%). Recruitment services were also deemed important by two-thirds of job seekers.



Participant responses illustrate a few areas where job seekers may benefit from support and direction. Supports that boost job seekers' self-esteem, confidence and/or positive mental health would be beneficial. Mental health counselling was most important for Millennials (69%) and least important for Baby Boomers (41%). North Coast and Nechako (54%) was the lowest region where job seekers considered mental health counselling an important service when seeking employment.

Additionally, career counselling for people who are employed but looking for a change and direction towards resources where job seekers can discover sector- and role- specific salary ranges may be helpful.

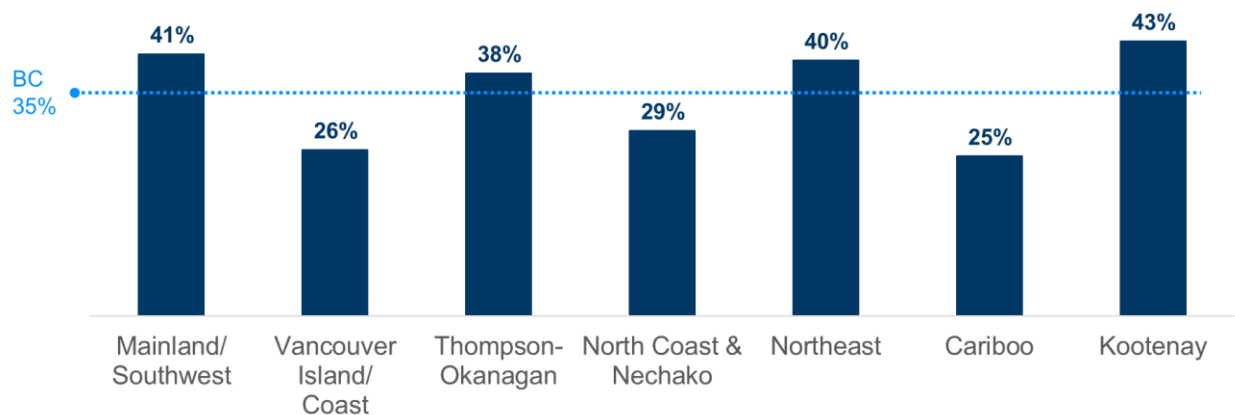


## Salaries

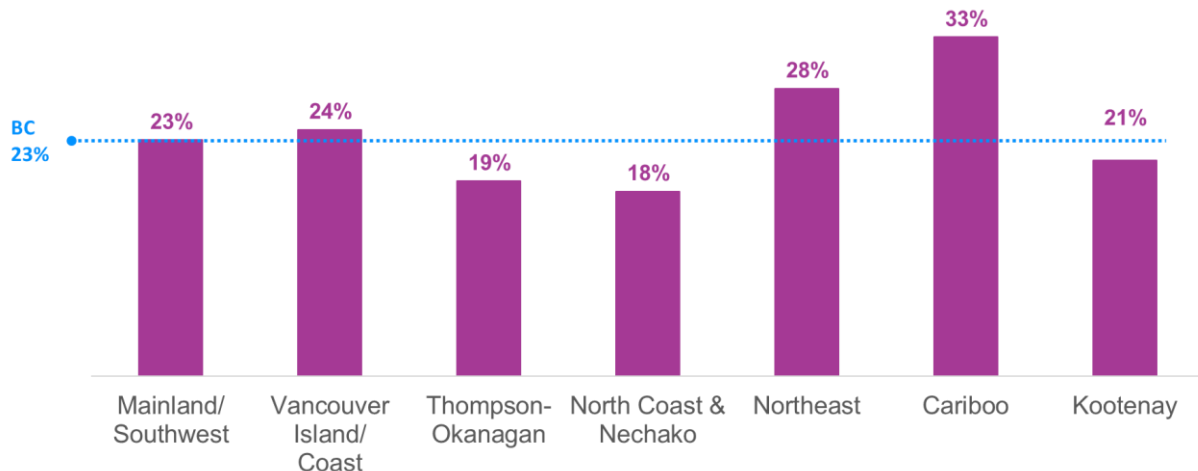
Just over 50% of employers shared that it was challenging to find qualified applicants within the salary range they offered, while nearly 50% of job seekers found it challenging to find jobs that met their salary expectations.

Overall, employers across BC found it difficult to define salaries (45%) and job seekers across BC found it difficult to negotiate salaries (59%). The cost of living plays a role in the complexities of defining salary ranges and offers. Employers in the Mainland and Southwest (50%) and the Northeast (49%) are more likely to struggle with this component than their counterparts in other regions. Job seekers in Cariboo (73%) and Kootenay (71%) were more likely to struggle with negotiating salaries and offers than elsewhere in the province (59%).

**Employers who find it difficult to define salary range and offers**



**Job seekers who find it difficult to negotiate define salary range and offers**





Salaries were also the top feature that job seekers in BC looked for in a job posting but the fourth most important feature employers consider featuring in a job posting. There are two regions where compensation is particularly noteworthy. In the Mainland and Southwest 46% of employers and 64% of job seekers view salary as an important feature. In the Kootenays, 42% of employers and 68% of job seekers say salary is a key feature with job postings.

BC’s new pay transparency legislation will require all employers to include wage or salary ranges on all publicly advertised jobs as of November 1, 2023. The government of BC anticipates that this will reduce the gender pay gap. Our data suggests that employers may need support identifying salary ranges that meet both industry standards and their regional cost of living.



## Retention

Over 60% of employers reported having policies for on-the-job training, role expectations, conflict resolution, flexibility during personal crises, advancement and compensation increases, and accommodations for employees who need them. However, over a third of job seekers said they didn't experience this in their last workplace.

Increasing staff retention and reducing turnover are becoming increasingly important in a labour market where there are more jobs than job seekers. When asked about the workplace elements that job seekers felt were most important, there were disconnects between what employers thought and what job seekers said.

**Promoting a safe, healthy and supportive work environment** was the most important feature of any workplace from both the employer and job seeker's perspective. While 85% of employers said they have policies to create a safe and supportive work environment, 38% of job seekers said their last employer did not provide this. There were no major differences across regions.

**Providing clarity on role expectations and evaluation** ranked as the second most important element of a workplace according to job seekers. Although 80% of employers said they had policies about this, nearly half the job seekers felt their last employer did not have policies in this area. The highest proportion of employers who said they had policies in this area were in the Northeast (74%) while the lowest were in the North Coast and Nechako (51%).

**On-the-job training** was the third most important feature that job seekers looked at in the workplace. While 83% of employers said they have a policy regarding on-the-job training, only 64% of job seekers said their previous employer provided such training. The proportion of employers offering on-the-job training was highest in Kootenay (78%), Mainland (70%) and Northeast (70%) and lowest in North Coast and Nechako (53%)

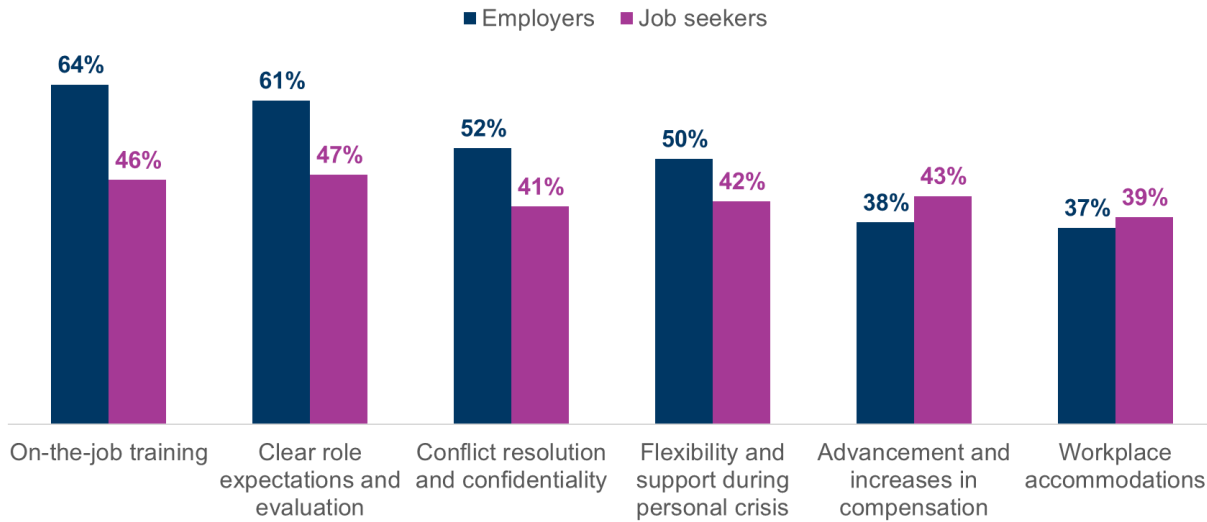
**Providing flexibility and support to employees who experience personal challenges or crises** was somewhat less important but represented difference by both gender and region. A higher proportion of women (54%) felt this was "very important" compared to men (36%). While 76% of employers said they offered flexibility and support, 40% of job seekers felt their past employer did not provide this. The proportion of employers offering flexibility and support was lowest in North Coast and Nechako (36%) and Cariboo (38%) and highest in Northeast (63%) and Kootenay (62%). This element was higher for women (90%) compared to men.

**Processes for resolving conflict and sharing concerns confidentially** was another element of the workplace where regional differences were visible. Employers were more likely to see this as "very important" (52%) than job seekers (41%). Over a quarter of employers (77%) identified having conflict resolution policies while 46% of job seekers said their last employer did not have such a policy. The proportion of employers with conflict resolution processes was highest in Northeast (84%), Kootenays (82%) and Mainland/Southwest (81%) lowest in North Coast and Nechako (58%).

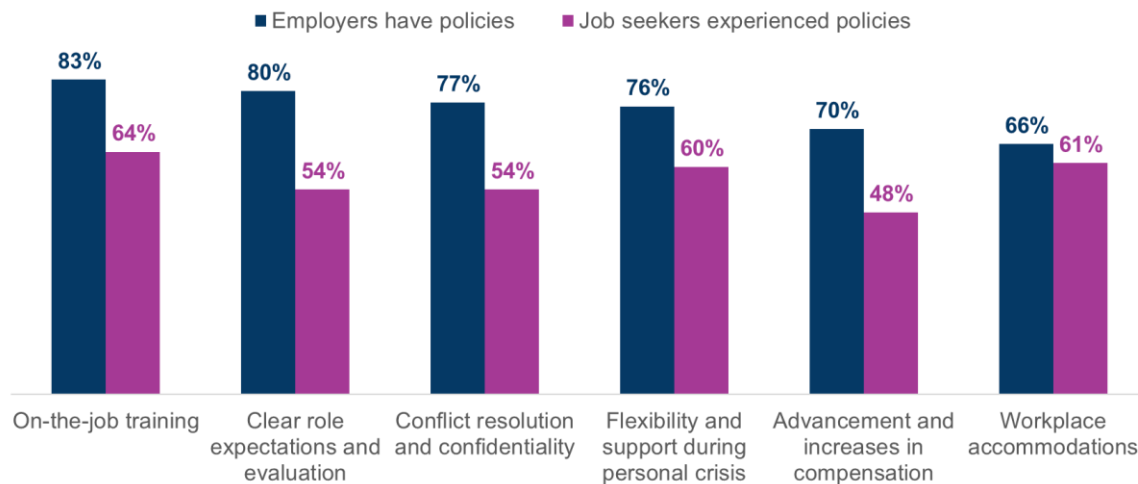
**Understanding how to advance and increase compensation** was not considered as important by job seekers despite the importance of salaries and the impacts of recent increases to cost of living, However, there was a visible disconnect here. While 70% of employers said they had policies for advancement and

increasing compensation, over half the job seekers said their last employer did not have policies in this area.

### Relative importance of various elements of a workplace



### Employers in British Columbia who have policies and job seekers who have experienced them in previous workplaces



## Diversity and Inclusion

Employers recognize the importance of fair, diverse and welcoming workplaces but lack policies in this area. Job seekers may not be looking for this during the recruitment process, but it is a significant factor in their retention in the workplace. Job seekers' experiences highlight gaps in hiring a diverse workforce.

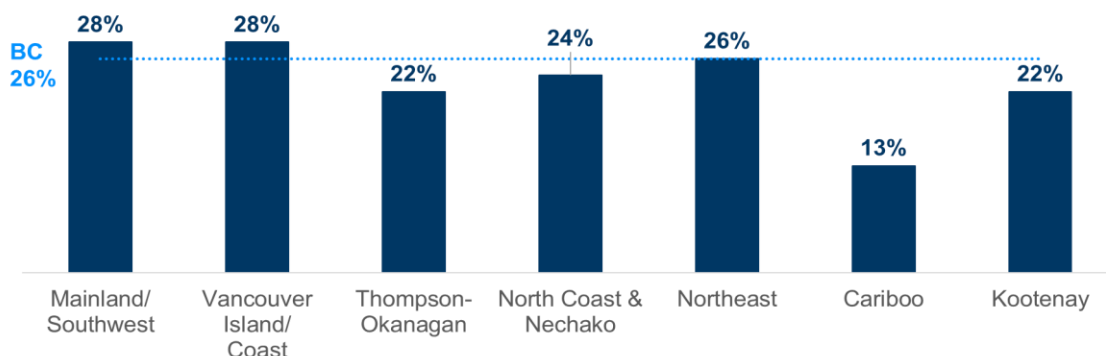
### Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion

Most employers recognized the importance of a strong commitment to diversity and inclusion in their businesses, but fewer had policies in this area. Even fewer thought it was important to highlight this value in their job postings. Nine out of ten employers shared that it was important to create a workplace that is fair and safe for workers of different backgrounds to feel welcome; however, 79% had workplace policies in this area. Similarly, 77% of employers said they make efforts to hire a diverse workforce but only 62% had policies on this.

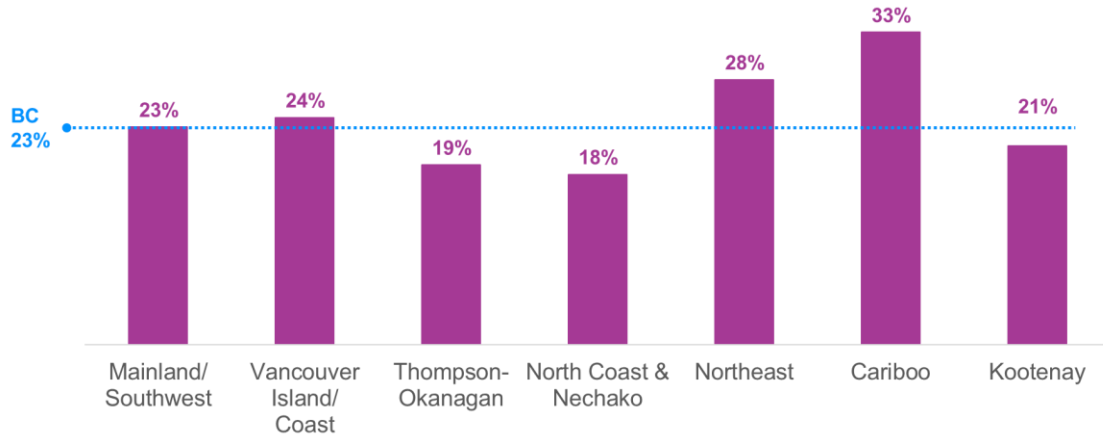
Interestingly, employers did not think it was important to highlight this commitment in job postings. In no region of the province do we see at least three-in-ten employers say that a commitment to diversity and inclusion is an important feature of job postings. The proportion is highest in the Mainland/Southwest (28%) and Vancouver Island / Coast (28%) and lowest in Cariboo (13%). Relatively more employers (35%) felt it was important to state that they had a diverse and fair workplace; this was highest in Kootenay (43%) and Mainland (41%) and lowest in Cariboo (25%) and Vancouver Island /Coast (26%).

Although less than a quarter of job seekers thought having a diverse and fair workplace was an important feature of job postings, 81% of job seekers felt it was important to create a workplace that is fair and safe for workers of different backgrounds to feel welcome, and 76% felt it was important to hire a diverse workforce. Creating a workplace that is fair and safe for all to feel welcome was highest in Kootenay (96%) and Cariboo (92%) and lowest in North Coast and Nechako (68%) and Thompson Okanagan (72%). Hiring a diverse workforce was highest in Cariboo (83%) and Mainland/Southwest (83%) and lowest in North Coast and Nechako (62%) and Thompson Cariboo (68%). More women (85%) felt it was important to hire a diverse workforce. In conclusion, diversity and inclusion is less important for job seekers while looking for employment but much more important once they are in the workplace.

**Employers who identified a commitment to diversity and inclusion as an important feature of job postings**

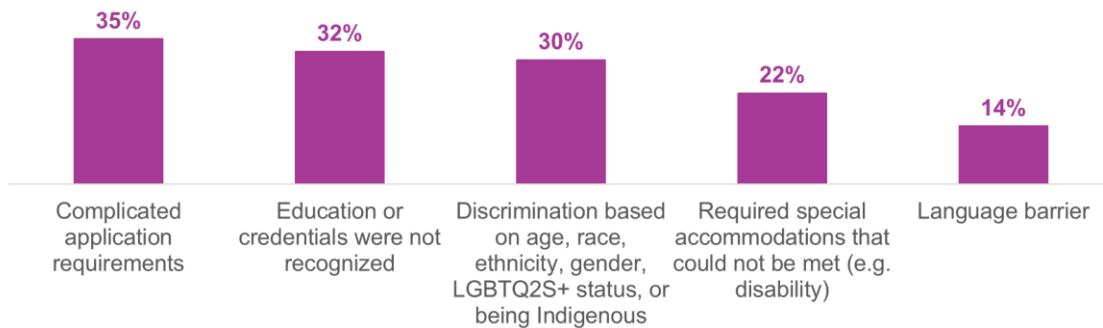


### Job seekers who identified a commitment to diversity and inclusion as an important feature of job postings



### Job Offers

Many job seekers felt that they may not have been offered a job due to their identity or circumstances as shown below.



Three in ten job seekers reported that they felt were not offered a position due to discrimination based on age, race, ethnicity, gender, LGBTQ2S+ or being Indigenous. Two key industry areas were discernable: Construction (46%) and Manufacturing (34%).

Further analysis showed no statistically significant difference across gender (Women 31%, Male 29%, Other 30%) or language (English 30%, Other 29%). The proportion of Baby Boomers who felt discriminated against (53%) was much higher than the three younger generations (Gen Z at 28%, Millennials at 26%, and Gen X at 30%). An analysis of qualitative responses showed age to be the primary concern for experiencing discrimination, followed by Gender (18%) and race (10%).

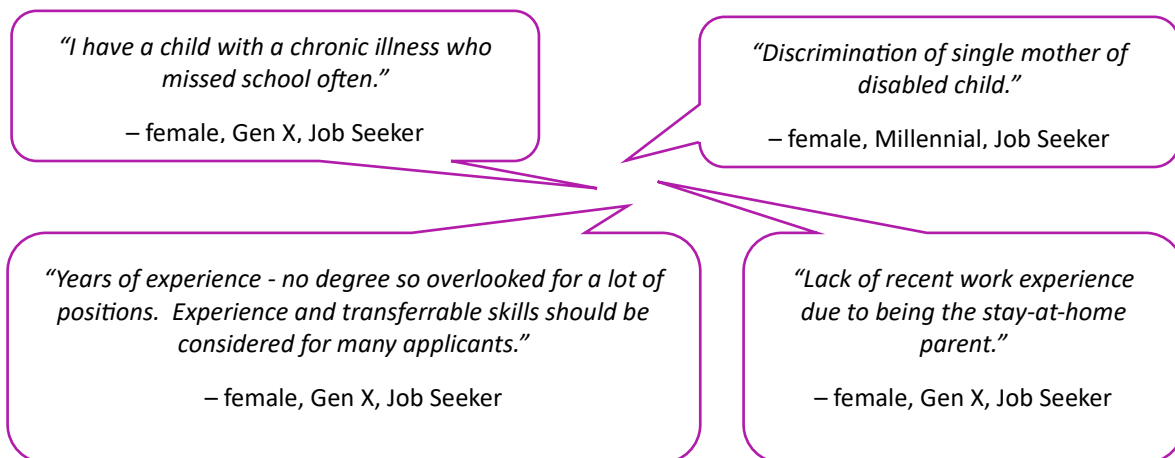
## Agism

While some job seekers felt that employers dismissed them due to age even when they had the right qualifications, other job seekers felt they lacked the skills or training to enter the workforce after some time away.



## Gender Discrimination

Female job seekers identified that they struggled to find employment due to parenting responsibilities. This idea was most expressed by job seekers who identified as Millennials or Gen X. Several female baby boomers commented on being overlooked for positions despite having years of experience and transferrable skills from being self-employed or from volunteering activities as a parent.



## Racism

Lastly, job seekers whose primary language was not English expressed challenges finding employment because their credentials or experiences were not recognized, because they lacked a local professional network or lacked local experience. In particular, job seekers mentioned the lack of local experience but also expressed frustration that without someone willing to give them a job they would never get the much-coveted Canadian experience.

*“Government jobs are too complicated to apply for. Despite having 15 years of Canadian social service experience, I am required to have my credentials attested while I don't have access to any of them due to my past life conditions of being a refugee for years and years.”*

-- Male, Gen X, Mainland/Southwest, Farsi speaking, Job Seeker

*“Absence of special conditions for equalization of education. There are no conditions for a university-educated refugee who cannot match her qualifications with the country of origin and must work as an uneducated worker.”*

-- Female GenX, Vancouver Island, Farsi Speaking

*“I consider changing career, but after receiving a local education in the new domain, I still experience rejection as entry level positions with no prior experience are hardly accessible.”*

- Female, Millennial, Mainland/Southwest, undisclosed primary language

*“Lack of local experience”*

- Male, Millennial, Mainland/SouthWest, Russian speaking, job seeker

## Accommodations for Disability or Medical Conditions

One fifth of all job seekers (22%) felt they were not offered a position because an employer was not able to accommodate their disability or medical condition. This was highest in Thompson Cariboo (31%) and lowest in Kootenay (14%) and Mainland/Southwest (16%). Conversely, around 12% of employers admitted to not making an offer to a qualified candidate because they could not provide a special accommodation. This was lowest in Kootenays (1%) and highest in North Coast and Nechako (20%) and Vancouver Island (19%).

*“Discrimination against me for mental health issues from past traumas.”*

-- Job Seeker on why he thought he wasn't offered a job

*“Special accommodation for availability, scheduling or wage expectations.”*

- Employer on why they didn't make an offer to a qualified candidate



## Conclusion / Next Steps

This survey points out several areas where there is a disconnect between the efforts and expectations of employers and job seekers. Both employers and job seekers are having a harder time finding each other post-pandemic. Finding qualified candidates that matched the job description was identified as a top challenge by employers, while the most common challenge for job seekers was finding jobs that met their salary expectations. During the recruitment process, employers struggle to find the time to administer a recruitment process and to define a salary range while job seekers struggle to identify and negotiate compensation for the work they seek. Salary is the most important feature in a job posting for one in two job seekers but 60% of employers do not think salary needs to be posted. Just over 50% of employers shared that it was challenging to find qualified applicants within the salary range they offered, while nearly 50% of job seekers found it challenging to find jobs that met their salary expectations. The next phase of Addressing the Labour Market Gap initiative will explore potential solutions to bridge these gaps.

On the employer side, tools that streamline and reduce the administrative burden of the recruitment process may be helpful for employers who are small and medium sized businesses. Additionally, access to standard HR policy templates and change management best practices may be helpful to improve workplace conditions that reduce staff turnover and encourage retention. These actions ultimately also create more positive conditions for job seekers and workers.

On the job seekers side, solutions that support job seekers to better navigate application processes, understand their worth in the labour market, and equip them with the tools to articulate their skills and advocate for their needs with potential employers will reduce the disconnect.

The BC Chamber of Commerce will continue to engage with its network, industry and professional associations, as well as WorkBC and human resource organizations to explore potential solutions in the next phase of work.

## Acknowledgements

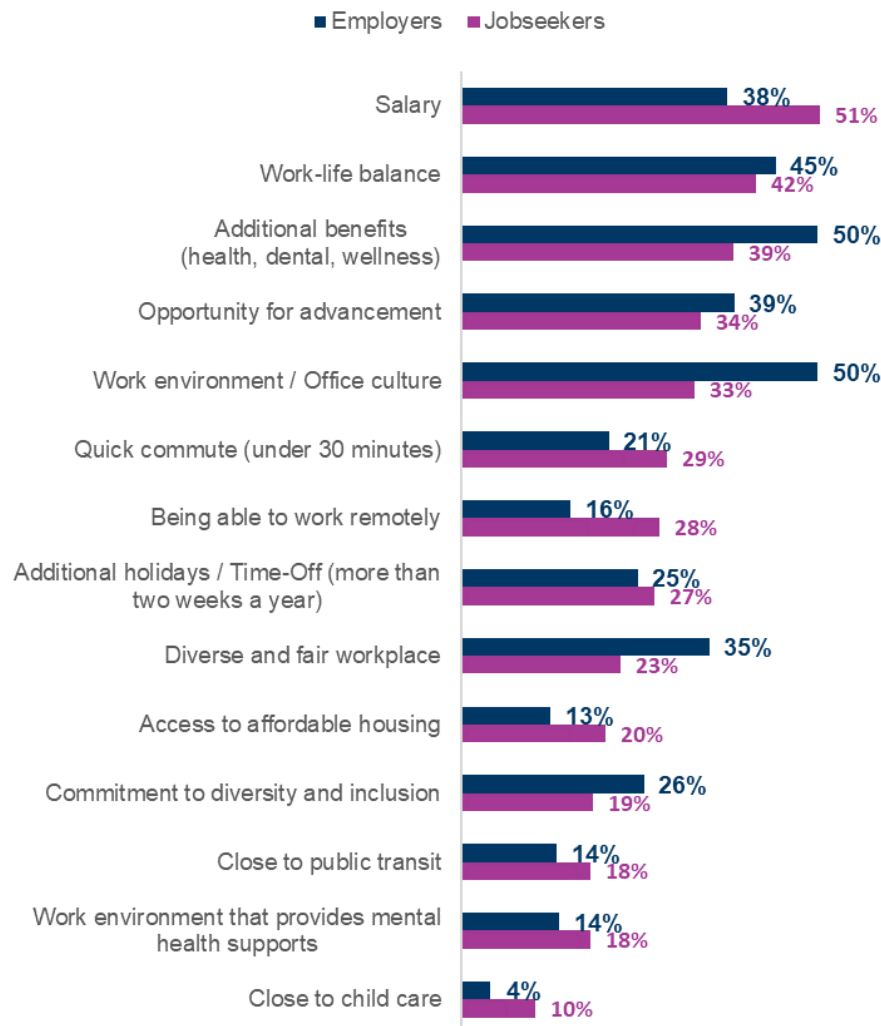
The BC Chamber of Commerce is grateful to all the individuals who participated in this initiative, as well as all the organizations that amplified this survey.

We thank the BC Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction for funding this initiative.

# Appendices

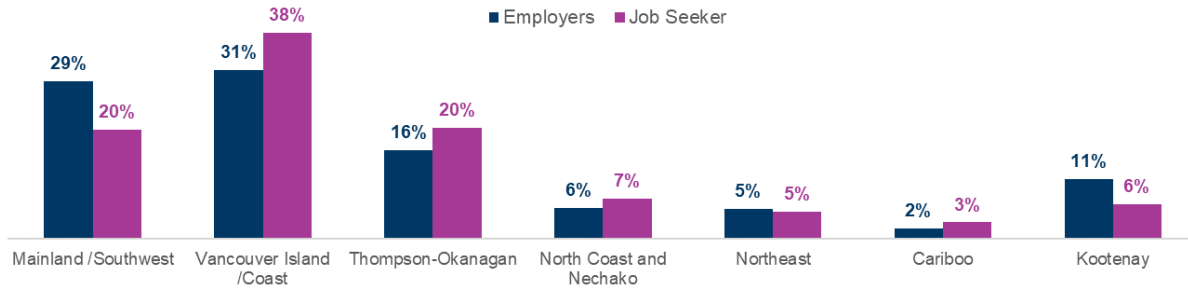
## Appendix A: Job Posting Features

Full list of all job posting features and the relative importance for job seekers and employers.

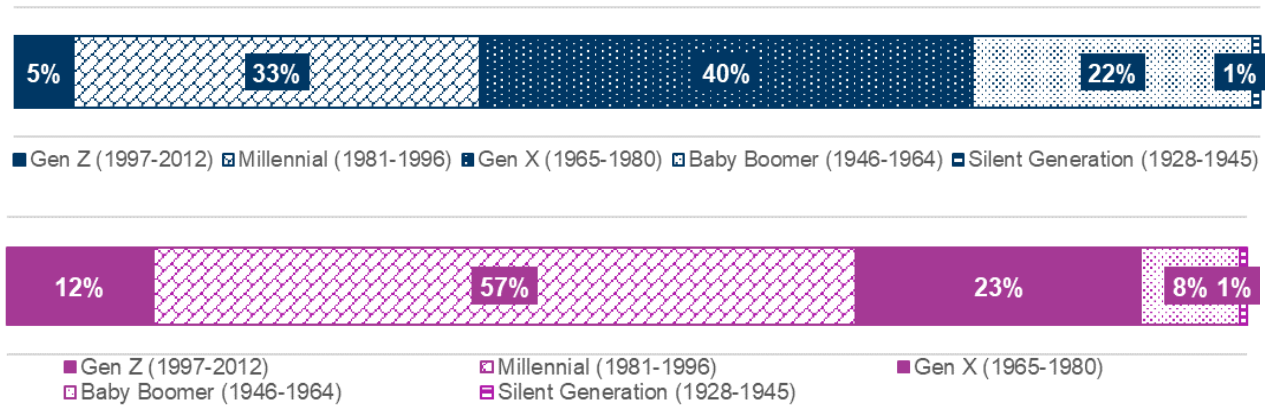


## Appendix B: Detailed Description of Survey Participants

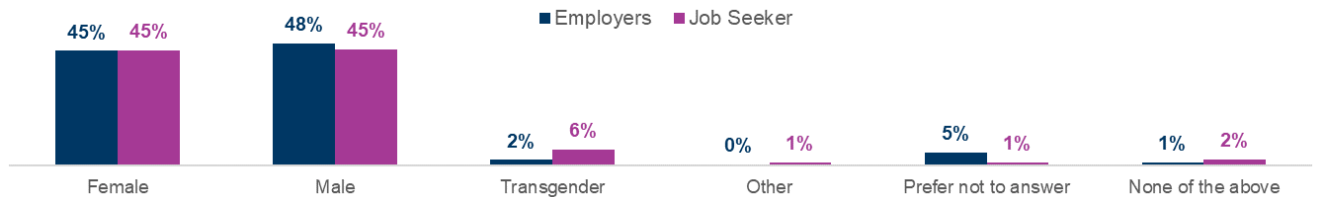
### Regional Representation



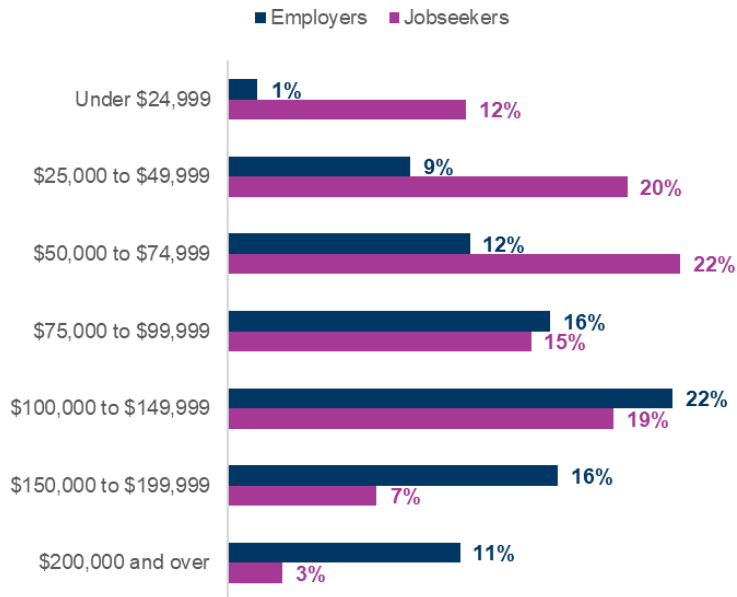
### Age Distribution



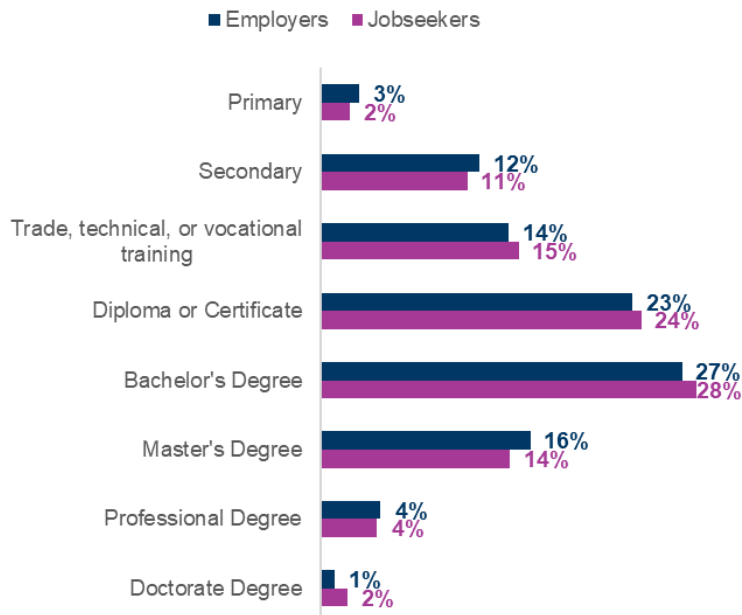
### Gender Distribution



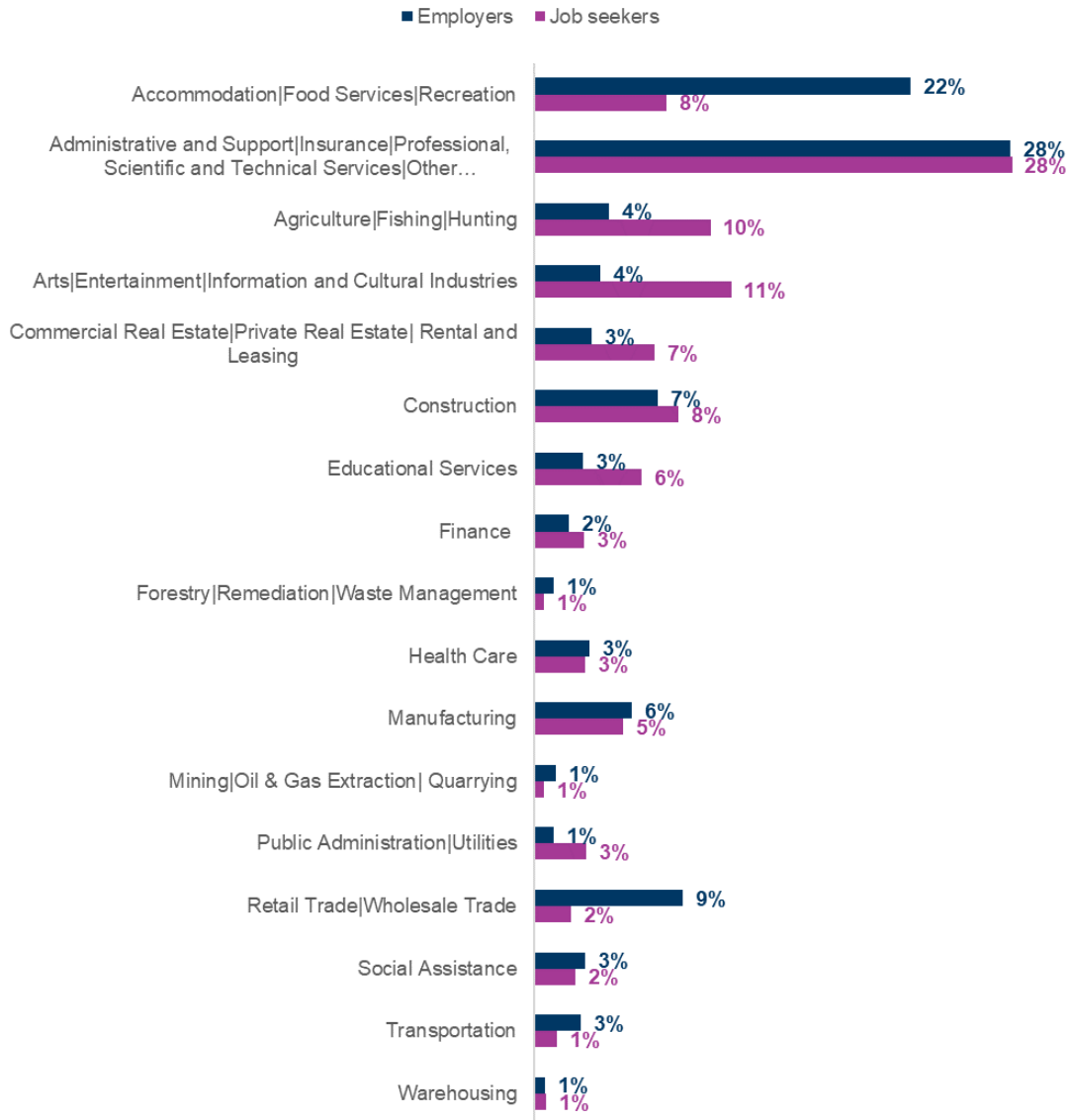
## Household Income



## Highest Level of Education



## Industry





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