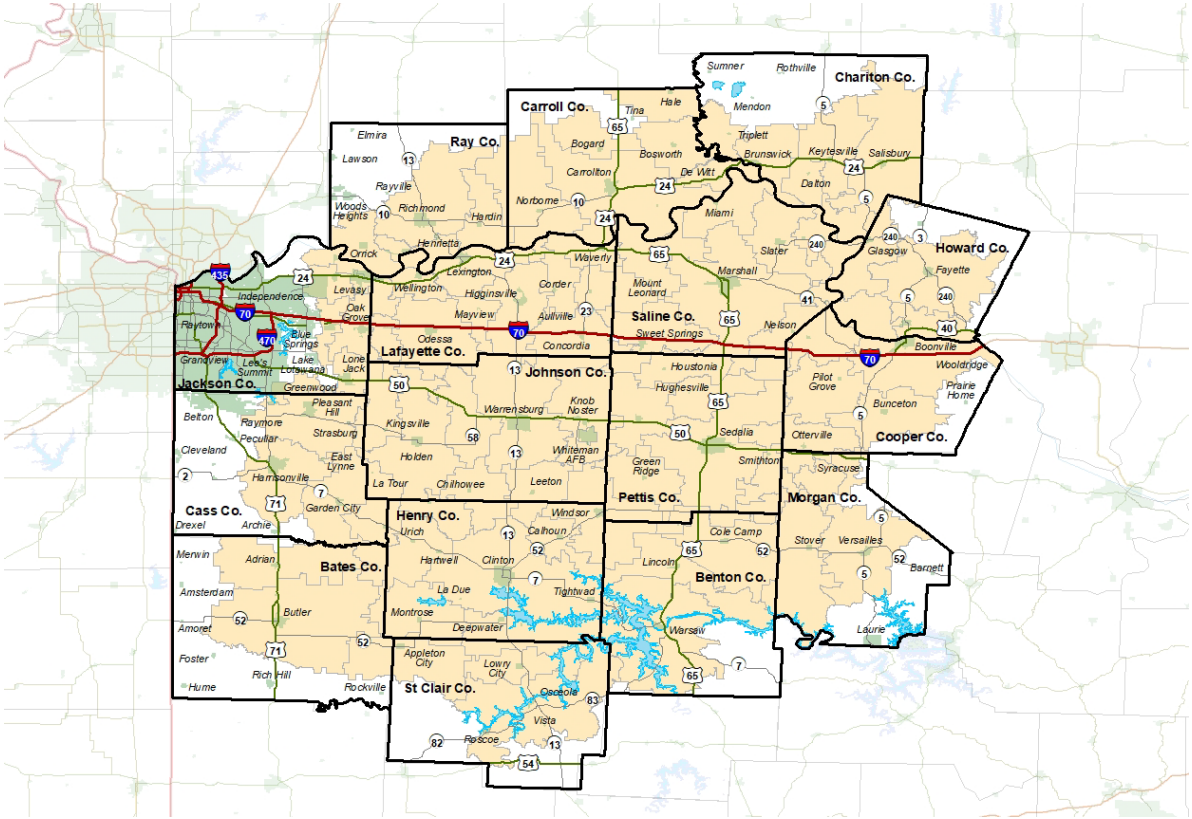
Central Missouri Regional Available Labor Analysis – 2025

Including key findings from available labor studies conducted in 2005, 2009, 2012, 2015, and 2018

Bates ● Benton ● Carroll ● Cass ● Chariton ● Cooper ● Henry ● Howard ● Jackson ● Johnson ● Lafayette ● Morgan ● Pettis ● Ray ● Saline ● St. Clair Counties



Prepared For

The Central Missouri Economic Development Alliance

in financial partnership with evergy

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Mission:

To facilitate effective public policy decision-making among governmental and nonprofit entities

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Represented by:

Henry County
Johnson County
Lafayette County
Pettis County
Saline County

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Central Missouri Regional Available Labor Analysis - 2025

Executive Summary

- The purpose of this report is to assess the "Available Labor Pool" (Pool) in the Central Missouri Labor Region. The Pool represents those who indicate that they are looking for employment or would consider taking a new or different job for the right employment opportunities.

- The labor region encompasses 114 ZIP Code areas across Bates, Benton, Carroll, Cass, Chariton, Cooper, Henry, Howard, Jackson, Johnson, Lafayette, Morgan, Pettis, Ray, Saline, and St. Clair Counties in Missouri. Each selected ZIP Code lies within a 30- to 35-minute one-way commute to one of the central hubs of five labor basins, located in Henry, Johnson, Lafayette, Pettis, and Saline Counties.

- The total number of people living in the applicable ZIP Code areas is approximately 359,083. The Civilian Labor Force is estimated to be 170,060, and 163,730 members of the population are employed. The Docking Institute's analysis estimates that the Available Labor Pool for the labor region is 113,016 individuals.

- It is estimated that 17,828 (15.8%) members of the Pool are non-employed and currently looking for employment, while 14,711 (13%) are non-employed *but* might be interested in a new job for the right opportunities. In addition, 14,028 (12.4%) members of the Pool are employed and currently looking for different jobs, while 66,449 (58.8%) are employed *but* might be interested in new employment for the right opportunities.

- The average age of the Pool is 46 years old, about half (52.1%) are men, and nearly all (97.4%) have at least high school diplomas. A large majority (80.1%) have at least some college-level educational experience, and close to half (47.2%) have at least a bachelor's degree. Regarding the military, 3.8% are active-duty, while 3.4% currently serve in the National Guard or Reserves.

- Semi-skilled labor occupations are held by 13.7% of the Pool, while 11% hold highly skilled labor jobs, 31.4% work traditional service-related occupations, 15.7% hold professional occupations, and 28.8% are non-employed.

- Semi-skilled laborers show the longest work tenure, with a mean average of 15 years and a median of 13 years. Service sector employees have the shortest tenure, averaging 9 years (mean) and 6 years (median).

- It is estimated that 7,511 members of the Pool are *currently employed* as general laborers, construction workers, cleaners, and similar positions.

- An estimated 86,345 members of the Pool have training and/or experience in working in a professional office environment, while 81,259 individuals would consider employment in that field.

- The Pool with distribution/warehousing experience (an estimated 54,474 individuals) moved materials or loaded trucks, 36% worked in inventory control or scheduling, and 23% held administrative or management positions.

- Similarly, of the Pool with manufacturing/processing experience (estimated to be 49,501 individuals), 52% worked in production, fabrication, or assembly; 36% held positions in administration, management, or sales; and 32% worked in maintenance, shipping, or receiving.

- Among the 80.1% of the Pool with at least some college experience, 23% studied social sciences, 21.3% studied business and economics, and 20.5% studied computer science or mathematics. Another 14.8% studied biological sciences and health, 9.8% studied physical sciences, 7.4% studied arts and humanities, and 3.3% studied education.

- Among the 37% who completed a technical certificate or credential, 21% earned a commercial driver's license (CDL) and 16.8% earned a certificate or credential as a certified nurse assistant (CNA), emergency medical technician (EMT), or in another healthcare-related field. Another 15.1% earned business-related certificates or credentials, and 11.8% studied HVAC, wiring, plumbing, welding, etc.

- A majority (78%) of working members of the Pool *at least agree* that they "enjoy the things they do at work" and 68% have "generally positive work environments." In addition, 62% have "reasonable workloads," 58% "receive fair pay," and 56% "have a fair chance at pay increases." Only 32% *at least agree* that they have a "fair chance at promotion" to another position.

- A third (34%) of the working Pool hold jobs which are only remote or have hybrid positions.

- Regarding military service, 3.8% of the Pool are active-duty and 3.4% serve in the National Guard or Reserves.

    - Of those who serve, the age is 41 years, most are male (70%), and about half (48%) have at least some college experience.
    - Of those with at least some college experience, 55% studied social sciences, 36% studied business and economics, and 8% studied computer science or math.
    - Half (50%) of military members of the Pool have earned a technical certificate or credential. Most (88.9%) have earned a commercial driver's license (CDL), about 6% have earned a certificate or credential as a certified nurse assistant (CNA), emergency medical technician (EMT), or in some other health care-related field. About 5% have a certificate or credential in security and safety.

- When asked when they plan to retire, most replied in “5 to 9 years.” About a quarter selected “15 to 20 years” and another quarter selected “more than 20 years.”
- When asked about their retirement plans, 45% said they intend to stay in the local area, 41% said they did not, and 14% were “unsure.”

- About 83% of the Pool are willing to accept positions outside of their primary fields of employment, while 45.8% will work weekends, 42.6% will work the 2nd shift, 35.1% will work rotating shifts, and 24.9% will work the night shift.

- Almost all (96%) of the Pool will commute up to 15 minutes, one-way, for a new or different job, while 82% will commute up to 30 minutes. About a quarter (26%) will commute up to 45 minutes and 12% are willing to commute up to 60 minutes.

- At least 80% consider good vacation benefits, sick leave, good salary or hourly pay, good health benefits, and good retirement benefits as “very important” considerations for taking a new or different job.

- It is estimated that 20% of the Pool is available for an hourly wage of $20, while 42% is available at $25 per hour, and 58% is available at $30 per hour.

- About 19% of semi-skilled laborers anticipate earning between $15 and $20 per hour at a new or different job, compared to just 2% of highly skilled laborers. In the service sector, 24.9% expect wages within that same range, while only 0.5% of professional workers expect the same.

- Of the 80,478 *employed members* of the Pool, 59% consider themselves to be “underemployed.”

    - The average age of an underemployed worker is 44 years old. More than half are female (52.3%) and hold at least bachelor’s degrees (53.1%).
    - Service sector workers make up the highest percentage of underemployed workers at 46%. Semi-skilled workers make up 23% of the underemployed, while highly skilled laborers make up 15%. Professionals make up 16%.
    - The highest percentage (20.4%) are employed in customer service roles, while 12.3% work in general labor and delivery. About 11% are engaged in clerical positions and another 10.6% are employed in manufacturing, maintenance, or trucking.
    - Of those with at least some college experience, 32% studied social sciences, 22% studied business and economics, 15% studied computer science and math, 14% studied biological sciences and health, 12% studied arts and humanities, 3% studied physical sciences, and 2% studied education.

- A third (33%) have earned a technical certificate or credential. Almost 20% have earned commercial driver's licenses (CDLs); while almost 15% have earned certificates or credentials as certified nurse assistants (CNAs), emergency medical technicians (EMTs), or in other healthcare related fields; and 11.5% earned certificates or credentials in manufacturing or mechanical skills.
- More than 80% of the underemployed workers feel that good vacation benefits, good salary or hourly pay, sick leave, and good health benefits are "very important" considerations for a new or different job.
- Almost 20% are available for wages ranging from $15 to $20 per hour, 44% are available for wages ranging from $20 to $25 per hour, and almost 60% are available for wages ranging from $25 to $30 per hour.
- More than half (58%) of the underemployed workers are seeking new employment to address their underemployment status.

- Almost 16% of the Pool are non-employed but looking for a new job.

  - The average age is about 50 years old, and a majority (56.3%) are male. Most (91.7%) have at least some college experience, while 25.6% hold at least a master's degree.
  - Nearly a quarter (23.6%) have experience in office or departmental management, while 16.3% previously worked in accounting or engineering. Another 12.2% held roles in customer service and 11.8% have nursing or other health-related skills.
  - Of those with at least some college experience, more than a third (38%) majored in biological sciences or a health field, 31% studied computer science or math, 15% took courses in the physical sciences, 8% studied business and economics, and 8% studied social sciences.
  - About one-quarter (24.4%) of non-employed but looking respondents have earned certificates or credentials in business-related skills. A similar proportion (24.2%) hold certifications in healthcare fields, including roles such as certified nurse assistants (CNAs) and emergency medical technicians (EMTs). An additional 23.3% report credentials in maintenance and repair, while 18% have earned certifications in cosmetology or other personal care occupations.
  - When asked which benefits would be "very important" when considering a new or different job, the most important benefits were those that traditionally come with jobs: good retirement benefits (90%), good vacation benefits (89%), sick leave (82%), and good health benefits (82%).
  - Regarding wage expectations among the non-employed and looking, 35% are available for wages ranging from $15 to $20 per hour, 39% are available for wages ranging from $20 to $25 per hour, and 76% are available for wages ranging from $25 to $30 per hour.

- Similar labor studies were conducted in the Central Missouri Labor Region in 2005, 2009, 2012, 2015, and 2018.

  - The 2025 study recorded the highest Available Labor Pool as a percentage of the regional population, while the lowest percentage was observed in 2009.

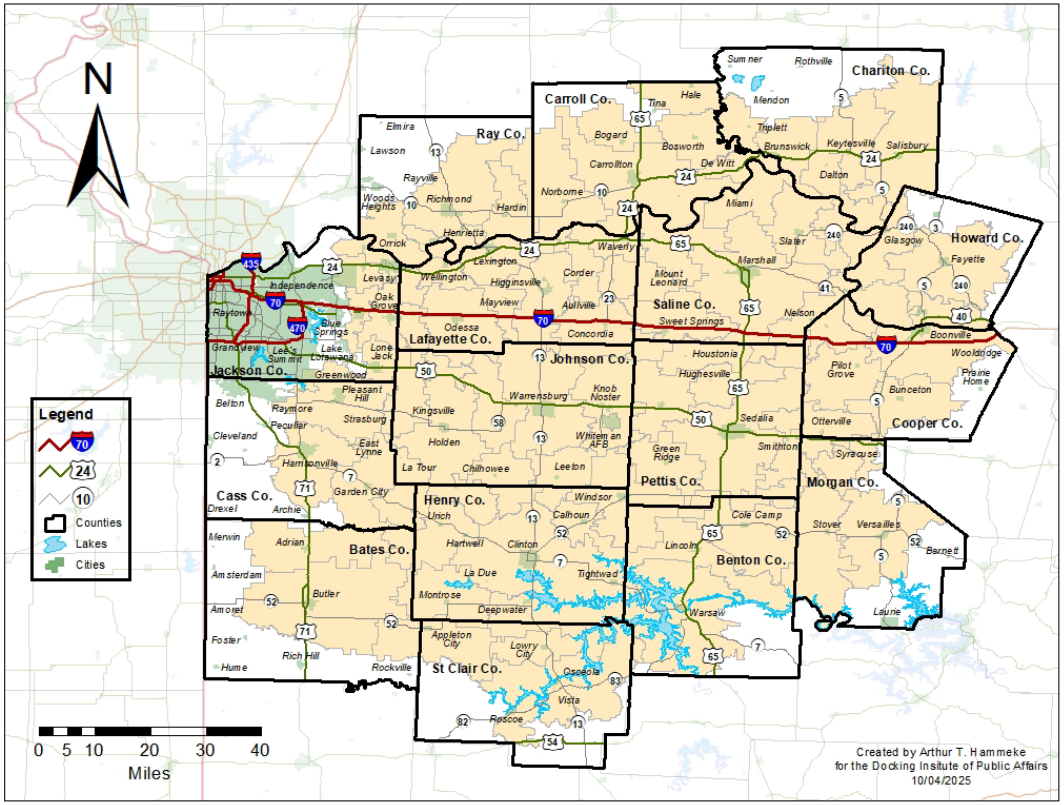
- The 2025 study also revealed a higher percentage of “non-employed and looking” than in previous years. The “employed but interested” category is also highest as a percentage in 2025. The 2012 study has the highest percentage of “non-employed but interested,” but the lowest “employed and looking.”
- The percentage of the Pool willing to take a job outside of their primary field varied from 79.7% (2015) to 87% (2005).
- The 2025 study shows that about half of the Pool will travel up to about 33 minutes, one way, for a new or different job. By comparison, half of the 2015 Pool was willing to commute for up to 46 minutes, one way, for a job opportunity.
- Regarding benefits, good salary/hourly pay was the most important benefit in all study periods except for 2005 and 2025. Good health benefits ranked highest in 2005 and good vacation benefits ranked highest in 2025.
- Regarding wages, 2025 shows consistently lower cumulative percentages of the Pool at each wage level shown.
- Regarding underemployed workers, the 2025 study shows the highest percentage of the Pool (58.6%), while 2018 shows the lowest (22.2%).
- The percentage of underemployed workers in semi-skilled labor occupations is highest in 2015 (30.5%) and 2018 (30.3%), and lowest in 2025 (22.9%). The service sector reached its highest share of workers in 2018 (53.6%), while the lowest was recorded in 2009 (45.2%); 2025 was nearly as low at 45.9%.
- The percentage of underemployed workers with advanced degrees is highest in 2025 (29.4%) and lowest in 2009 (8.2%).

The Central Missouri Labor Region

The Central Missouri Labor Region includes ZIP Code areas within 16 counties in central Missouri (see Map 1 below). The map includes 114 ZIP Code areas within a 30- to 35-minute commute (one-way) to the center of Lafayette, Johnson, Saline, Pettis, or Henry Counties.

The ZIP Code areas within the labor region have a total population of approximately 359,083, with 170,060 in the Civilian Labor Force, and 163,730 employed. The Docking Institute's analysis estimates that the Available Labor Pool for the labor region is 113,016 individuals.

Map 1: Central Missouri Labor Region



The Available Labor Pool is composed of working age area residents who are 1) currently not working and looking for a job, 2) not working *but* interested in a new or different job given the right opportunities, 3) currently working *and* looking for another job, or 4) currently employed *but* interested in a new or different job given the right opportunities. Please see the Methods Section for more information about the Institute's Available Labor Pool analysis methodology and the survey research methods used for this study.

Key Questions

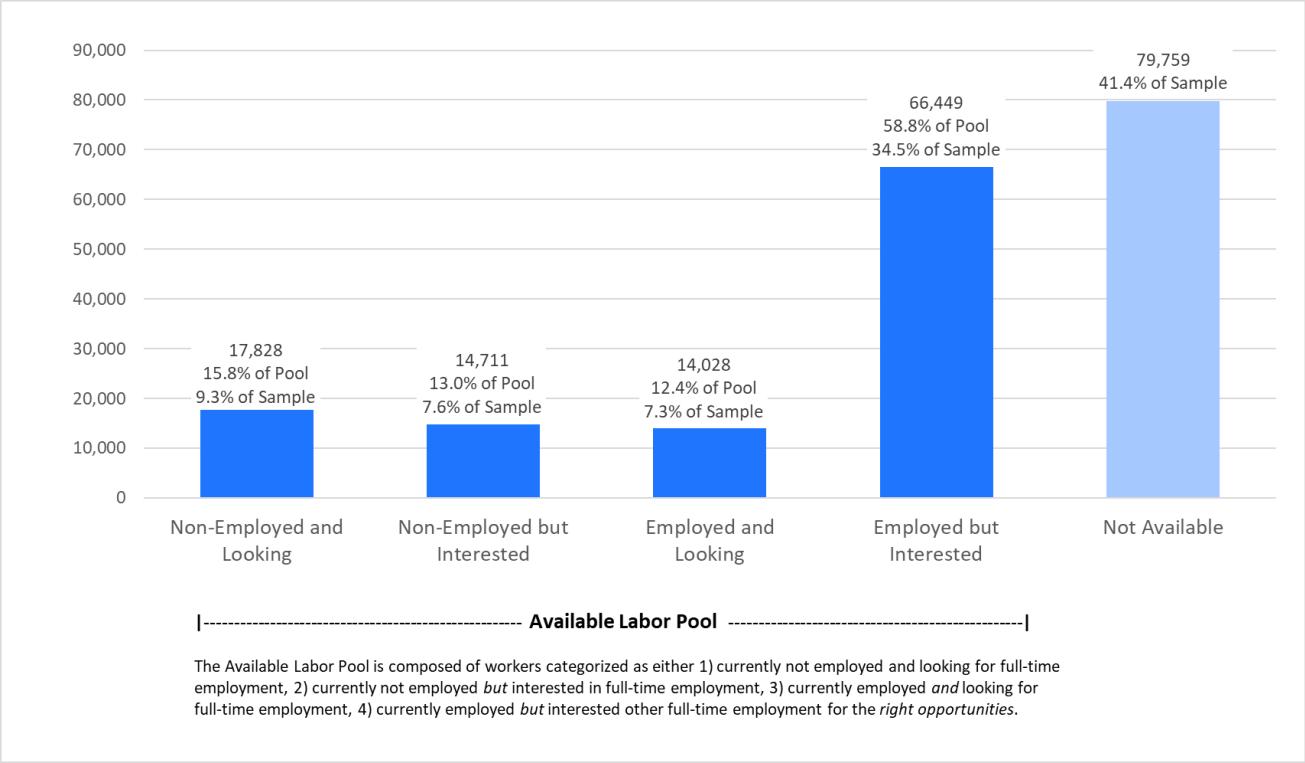
This report assesses the characteristics of the Available Labor Pool in the Central Missouri Labor Region by answering the following questions:

- What proportion of the labor force – employed, unemployed, homemaker, student, retired and disabled – are looking for or would consider a new employment opportunity?
- What skills and education levels do these workers and potential workers possess?
- How many years of experience do workers have in their current jobs?
- What types of jobs have they had in the past?
- What types of considerations (pay, benefits, commute time) shape their decision-making?
- How do expected pay and commute time interact?
- What percentage are serving in the active-duty military or National Guard and reserves?
- Do military personnel plan to stay in the area after retirement?
- What are some of the characteristics of semi-skilled laborers, highly skilled laborers, service sector workers, and professional employees?
- What percentage is willing to change fields of employment?
- What types of work shifts are they willing to work?
- What is their level of job satisfaction?
- What percentage consider themselves underemployed, and what are some of the characteristics of the underemployed?
- What percentage are non-employed but looking for work, and what are some of the characteristics of this subset of the Available Labor Pool?
- How do key indicators compare to previous Docking Institute labor studies in the region?

The Central Missouri Labor Region's Available Labor Pool

An estimated 17,828 members of the Pool (15.8%) are non-employed[1] and are currently seeking employment, while 14,711 (13%) are non-employed *but* might be interested in a job for the right opportunities. Additionally, 14,028 members (12.4%) are employed and currently looking for different jobs, while 66,449 (58.8%) are employed but might be interested in new employment for the right opportunities.[2]

Figure 1: The Available Labor Pool for the Central Missouri Labor Region



[1] The term "non-employed" is used to distinguish it from "unemployed," which refers to an official government classification. "Non-working" is also avoided, as some individuals may be working at home without earning income. In this study, "non-employed" includes officially unemployed members of the Civilian Labor Force as well as full-time students, homemakers, retirees, and disabled individuals who indicate they are available for employment.

[2] Figure 1 shows the percentages of each group within the full sample of survey respondents. Overall, 41.4% of the sample is not seeking nor would consider a new job opportunity.

Map 2 illustrates how ZIP Code areas across the Central Missouri Labor Region compare in their share of the total available labor.

- ZIP Code areas in Jackson and Cass counties stand out, each contributing **5% or more** of the Pool (dark red).
- ZIP Code areas in nine counties account for **2% to 5%** (red).
- Many ZIP Code area contribute **1% to 2%** (orange).
- ZIP Code areas in all counties contribute **up to 1%** (light and dark yellow).

Map 2: Percent of Total Available Labor in Region by ZIP Code

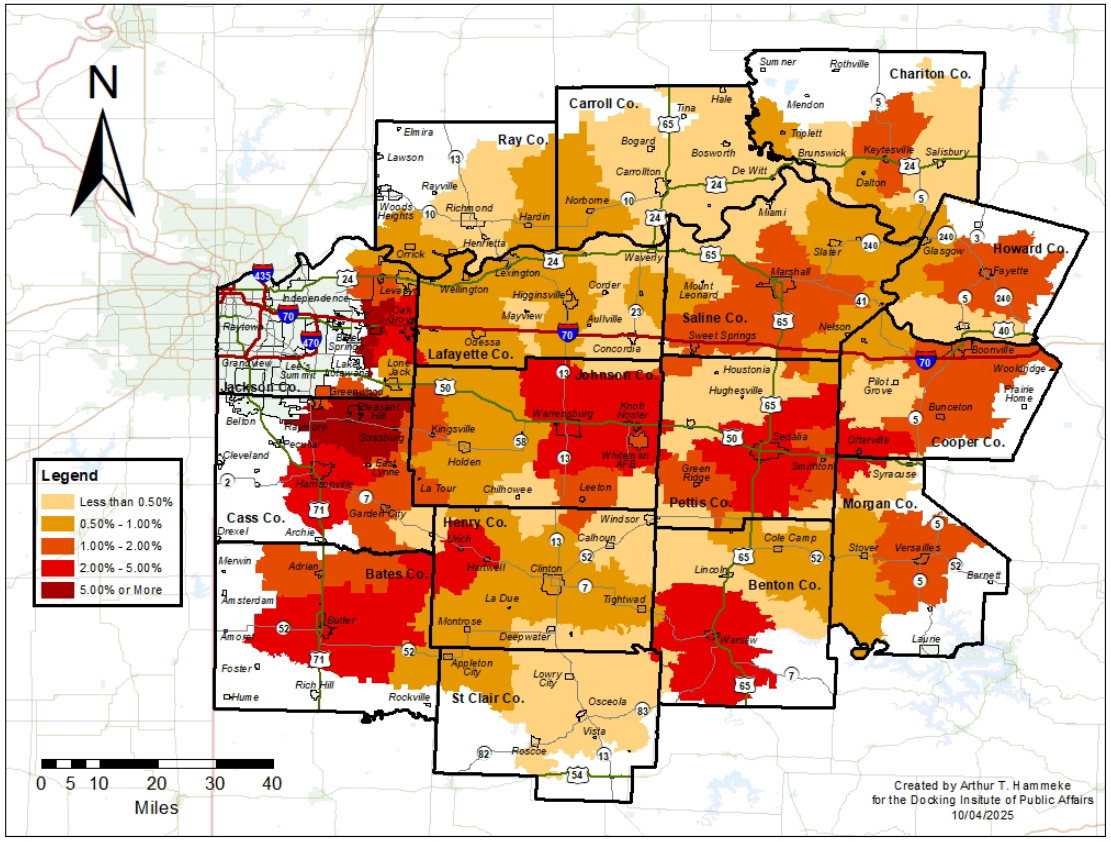


Table 1 shows the age, gender, and education levels of the 113,016-member Available Labor Pool. The average age of the Pool is 46 years old, about half (52.1%) of the Pool are men, and nearly all (97.4%) have at least high school diplomas. A large majority (80.1%) have at least some college-level educational experience, and close to half (47.2%) have at least a bachelor's degree. Regarding the military, 3.8% are active-duty and 3.4% currently serve in the National Guard or Reserves.

Table 1: Characteristics of the Available Labor Pool

Age Information	Age in 2025
Range	19 to 67
Mean Average	46
Median Average	46

Gender	Number	Percent
Male	58,856	52.1
Female	51,969	46.0
Prefer Not to Say	2,191	1.9
Total	113,016	100

Highest Level of Education	Number	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Doctoral Degree	4,640	4.1	4.1
Master's Degree	23,531	20.8	24.9
Bachelor's Degree	25,188	22.3	47.2
Associate's Degree	13,588	12.0	59.2
Some College	23,531	20.8	80.1
High School Diploma	19,554	17.3	97.4
Less HS Diploma	2,983	2.6	100
Total	113,016	100	

Military Service	Number	Percent
Active Duty	3,027	3.8
National Guard or Reserves	2,724	3.4
Other Employed	74,726	92.9
Total	80,478	100

Table 2 presents the occupational categories of the 113,016-member Available Labor Pool. Semi-skilled labor roles account for 13.7% of the Pool, while highly skilled labor occupations comprise 10.4%. Traditional service-related jobs represent 31.4%, and professional occupations make up 15.7%. Non-employed individuals constitute more than a quarter of the Pool, totaling 28.8%.

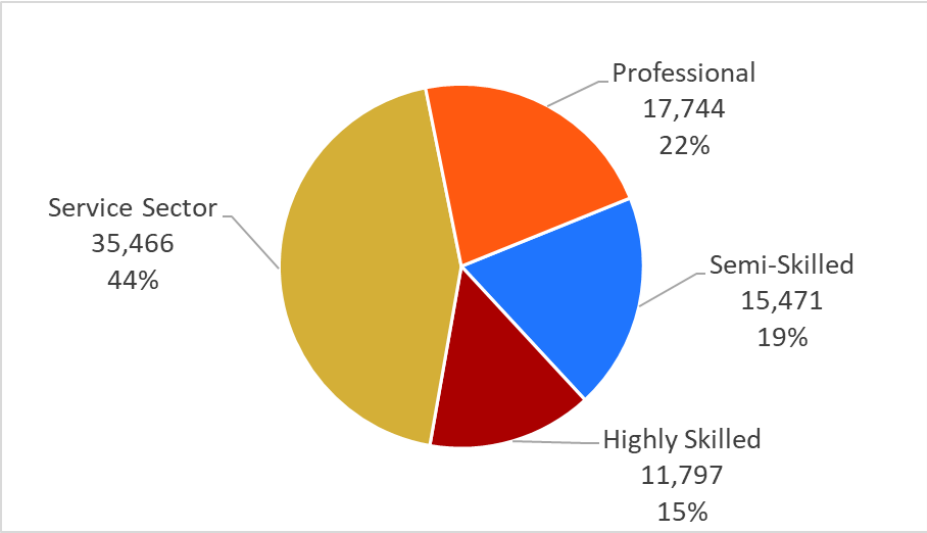
The table also presents the mean and median job tenure for each occupational category. Semi-skilled laborers report the longest tenure, with a mean of 15 years and a median of 13 years. In contrast, service sector employees show the shortest tenure, averaging 9 years (mean) and 6 years (median).

Table 2: Major Occupational Categories of Available Labor

			Years at Job	
Occupational Category	Number	Percent	Mean	Median
Construction/Cleaning/Labor/Delivery	7,511	6.6	17.4	10.9
Manufacturing/Maintenance/Trucking	7,960	7.0	12.6	15.1
Total Semi-Skilled Labor	*15,471*	*13.7*	*15.0*	*13.0*
Mechanic/Welder/Comp Tech	7,894	7.0	15.0	8.7
Crew Management/Protection Services	3,903	3.5	7.0	5.0
Total Highly Skilled Labor	*11,797*	*10.4*	*11.0*	*6.9*
Customer Service	11,360	10.1	10.6	9.8
Clerical	9,087	8.0	9.6	6.5
Office or Dept Manager	6,710	5.9	11.7	6.0
Health Aid/Nurse	5,619	5.0	8.1	4.8
Education Aid/Teacher	2,689	2.4	5.1	3.0
Total Service Sector	*35,466*	*31.4*	*9.0*	*6.0*
Exec Management	6,139	5.4	10.9	10.5
Accounting/Programming/Engineering/Research	5,794	5.1	12.7	8.0
Doctor/Professor/Attorney	5,505	4.9	11.5	8.0
Writer/Artist/Musician	306	0.3	4.5	4.9
Total Professional Sector	*17,744*	*15.7*	*9.9*	*8.0*
Homemaker/Students/Unemployed	13,441	11.9	n/a	n/a
Retirees/Disabled	19,098	16.9	n/a	n/a
Total Non-Employed	*32,539*	*28.8*		
Total	113,016	100		

Figure 2 displays the occupational sectors of employed members of the Available Labor Pool. The percentages differ from those in Table 2, which includes both employed and non-employed Pool members.

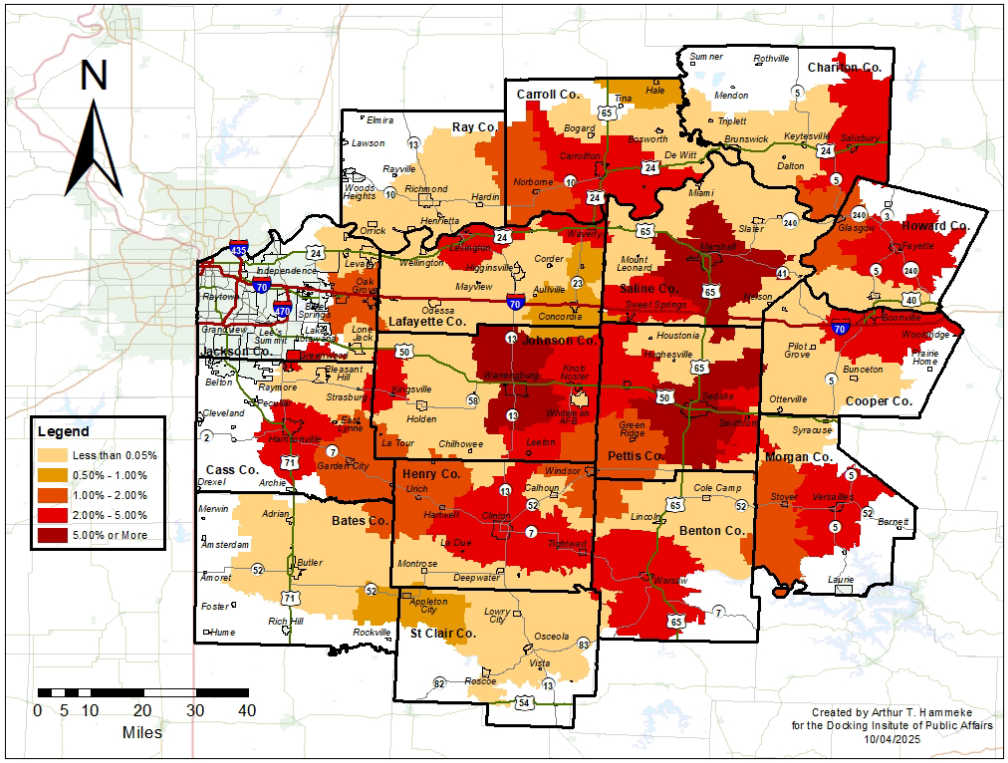
Figure 2: Occupational Sectors of Available Labor (Employed Only)



Map 3 illustrates how ZIP Code areas across the labor region compare in their share of employers hiring Pool members.

- ZIP Code areas in Johnson, Pettis, and Saline counties each account for **5% or more** of employers (dark red).
- ZIP Code areas in 13 counties contribute **2% to 5%** (red).
- ZIP Code areas in 11 counties represent **1% to 2%** (orange).
- ZIP Code areas in five counties (Bates, Carroll, Johnson, Lafayette, and St. Clair) account for **0.5% to 1%** (dark yellow).
- ZIP Code areas in all counties contribute **up to 0.5%** of employers.

Map 3: Percent of Employers of Available Labor Pool in Region by ZIP Code



Work Experiences and Current Skills

To better understand the types of workers available for new or different employment in the Central Missouri Labor Region, survey respondents were asked about their work skills and previous job experience.

Table 3 and Figure 3 present the current employment status and prior work or training experience of Pool members. Table 3 details the number of individuals currently employed in various job categories, along with the number of employed and non-employed individuals who report previous experience or training in those same fields. It also provides the combined total of Pool members currently working in a given category plus those with relevant prior experience.

For example, 3,320 Pool members are currently employed as general laborers, construction workers, cleaners, or similar roles. An additional 2,080 individuals (both employed and non-employed) report previous experience or training in those occupations, resulting in a total of 5,400 individuals with relevant backgrounds in that job category.

Table 3: Current Work Experience Plus Previous Work or Training Experience

	Current Employment* Number +	Previous Work/Training** Number =	Current plus Previous Work or Training Number
Working with Hands			
Construction, Cleaning, Manual Labor	3,320	2,080	5,400
Farm or Ranch Labor	2,160	562	2,722
Manufacturing and Assembly	1,751	5,131	6,882
Maintenance	2,713	3,234	5,946
Driving (Delivery, Bus, Postal)	2,031	1,626	3,656
Truck Driving/Heavy Equip. Operator	3,497	1,623	5,119
Skilled Labor	4,743	1,676	6,419
Crew Management	1,888	1,229	3,117
Working with People			
General Customer Service	11,360	8,440	19,800
Office Management	6,710	6,761	13,471
Governmental Services	2,015	4,594	6,609
Executive Management	6,139	4,540	10,679
Advanced Social Services	2,325	2,798	5,124
Working with Numbers			
Clerical	9,087	1,392	10,479
Accounting/Finance/Banking	1,144	6,139	7,283
Researcher/Analyst	1,261	1,045	2,306

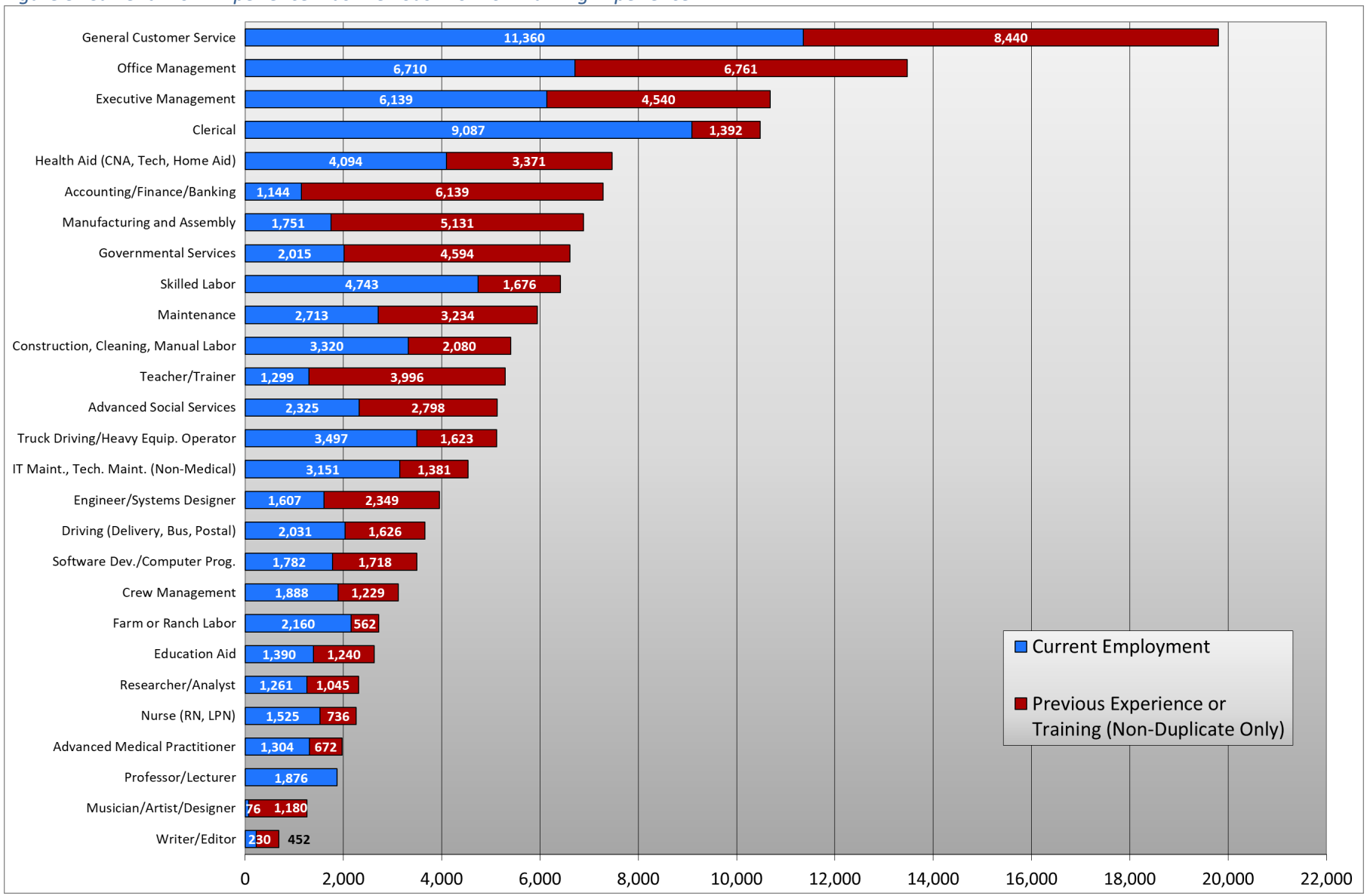
(Table continues to next page)

Table 3: Current Work Experience Plus Previous Work or Training Experience (Continued)

	Current Employment* Number +	Previous Work/Training** Number =	Current plus Previous Work or Training Number
Working with Technology			
IT Maint., Tech. Maint. (Non-Medical)	3,151	1,381	4,532
Software Dev./Computer Prog.	1,782	1,718	3,500
Engineer/Systems Designer	1,607	2,349	3,955
Providing Health Services			
Health Aid (CNA, Tech, Home Aid)	4,094	3,371	7,466
Nurse (RN, LPN)	1,525	736	2,262
Advanced Medical Practitioner	1,304	672	1,976
Providing Educational Services			
Education Aid	1,390	1,240	2,630
Teacher/Trainer	1,299	3,996	5,295
Professor/Lecturer	1,876	0	1,876
Creative Arts			
Musician/Artist/Designer	76	1,180	1,256
Writer/Editor	230	452	682
Total	80,478	69,964	

Figure 3 (next page) presents the same data shown in Table 3, but in graphic format. Of the job categories included, 18 show a greater number of currently employed individuals than those with prior work or training experience. Conversely, 10 categories reflect more individuals with previous experience than current employment. These include office management; accounting, finance, and banking; government services; manufacturing and assembly; maintenance; teaching and training; engineering and systems design; and artistic fields such as music, art, and design.

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

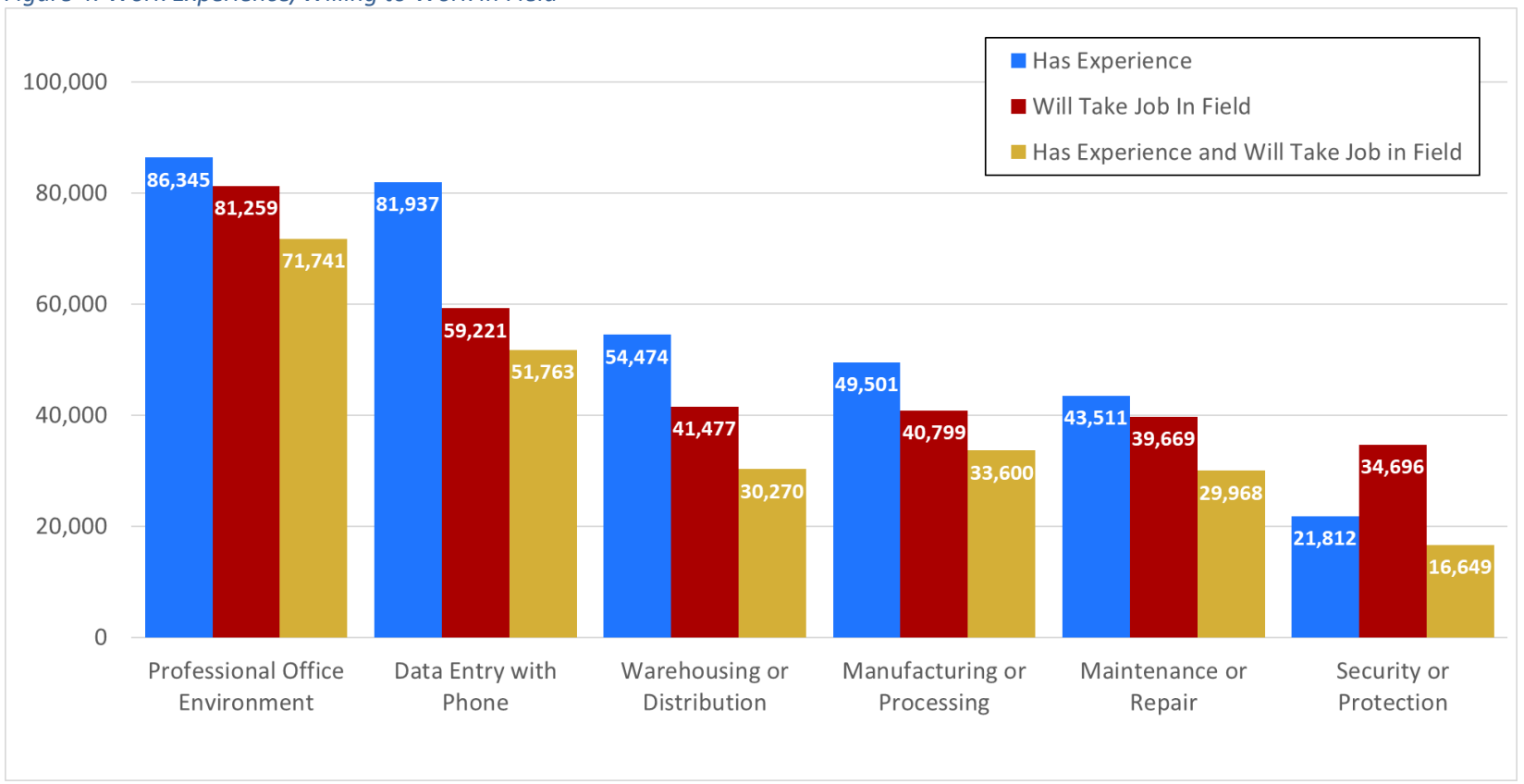


In addition to asking respondents to provide their current employment status and previous work/training experience (the results of which are shown in the previous table and figure), respondents were asked about the six specific employment fields listed in Figure 4.

Respondents were first asked if they had training or work experience in a specific field and then if they would take a job in that field regardless of their prior training or experience. For example, the figure shows that an estimated 86,345 Pool members report having training and/or experience in working in a professional office environment (blue column), although fewer (81,259 individuals) would consider employment in that field (red column).

The third column (gold) shows the number who have experience/training in a field ***and*** are willing to work in that field again.

Figure 4: Work Experience/Willing to Work in Field



Survey respondents indicating that they had training or experience in distribution/warehousing or manufacturing/processing were asked additional questions to assess the type of work they performed at those jobs. Figures 5 and 6 show the responses to those questions. Survey respondents could select more than one answer option.

Figure 5 shows that, of those with distribution/warehousing experience, 51% moved materials or loaded trucks, 36% worked in inventory control or scheduling, and 23% held administration or management positions.

Figure 6 shows that, of those with manufacturing/processing experience, 52% worked in production, fabrication, or assembly. Another 36% held positions in administration, management, or sales; and 32% worked in maintenance, shipping, or receiving.

Figure 5: Experience/Training in Distribution Center or Warehouse

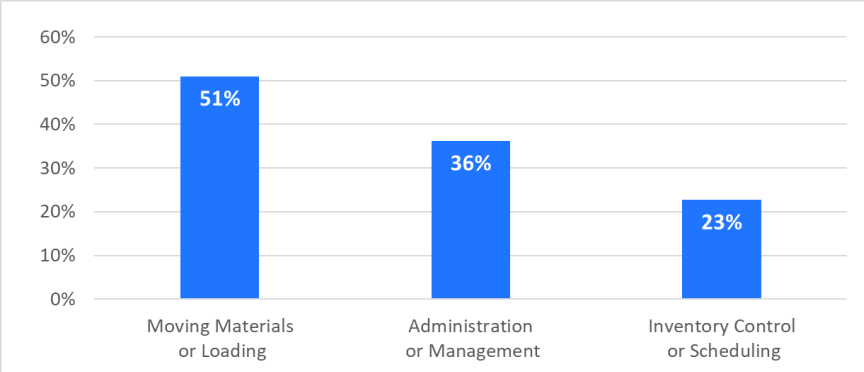
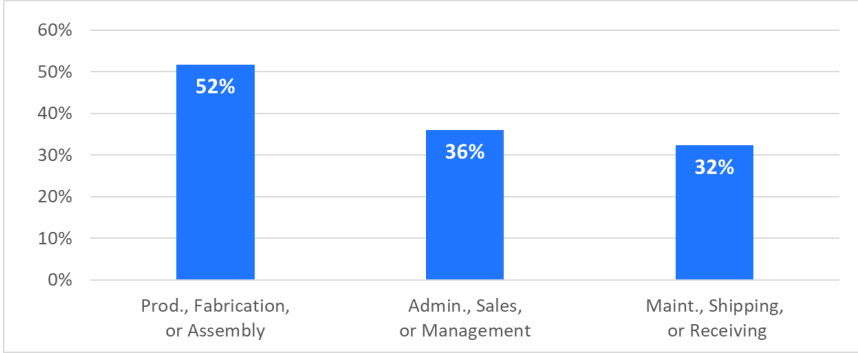


Figure 6: Experience/Training in Manufacturing or Processing



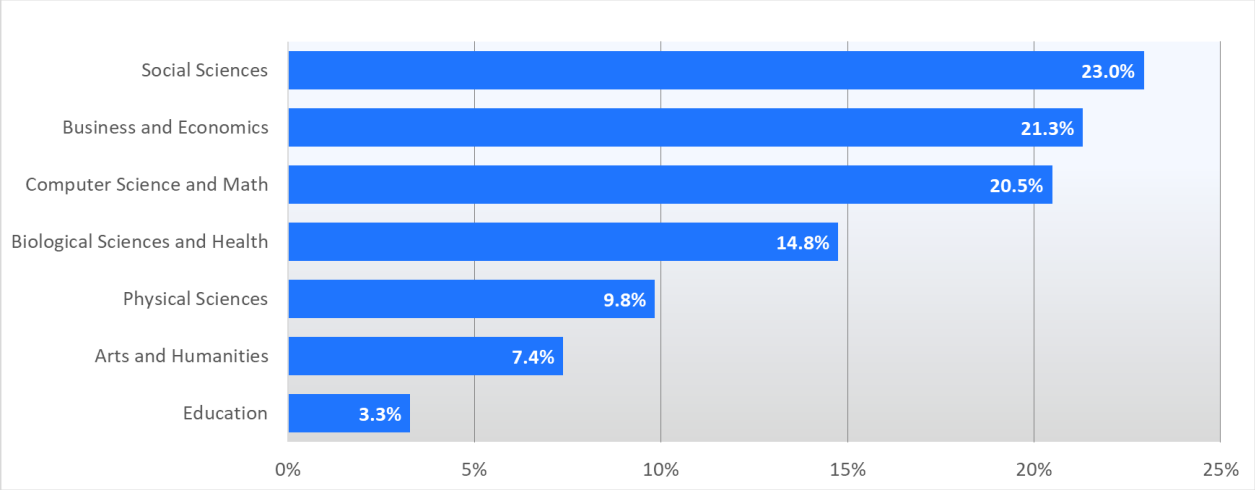
Educational Experiences and Job Satisfaction

Table 1 showed that 80.1% of the Pool has at least some college experience, while 59.2% hold at least associate's degrees, 47.2% hold at least bachelor's degrees, and 24.9% hold at least master's degree. Respondents who had completed at least some college were asked to provide their major area of study. Answers were grouped into seven categories:

Social Sciences: Sociology, Psychology, Anthropology, Politics and Social Work.
Biological Sciences and Health: Biology, Agriculture, Nursing, Pre-med, Pre-vet and Human Performance.
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: Computer Programming or Technology, Networking, Web Design and Math.
Arts and Humanities: Art, Music, History, Philosophy and Languages.

Figure 7 displays the distribution of academic fields studied by members of the Available Labor Pool. The highest percentages studied social sciences (23%), business and economics (21.3%), and computer science or math (20.5%). Additional areas of study include biological sciences and health (14.8%), physical sciences (9.8%), arts and humanities (7.4%), and education (3.3%).

Figure 7: College Major



Survey respondents were also asked if they have certificates or credentials in a technical field. Those answering "Yes," were asked to provide the field of their technical certificate or credential. Figures 8 and 9 show responses to the two questions. Figure 8 shows that 37% of the Pool completed a technical certificate or credential. Figure 9 shows that, of those individuals, 21% earned their commercial driver's license (CDL), and 16.8% earned a certificate or credential as a certified nurse assistant (CNA), emergency medical technician (EMT), or in other healthcare related fields. Another 15.1% earned business-related certificates or credentials, and 11.8% studied HVAC, wiring, plumbing, welding, etc.

Figure 8: Technical Certificate or Credential

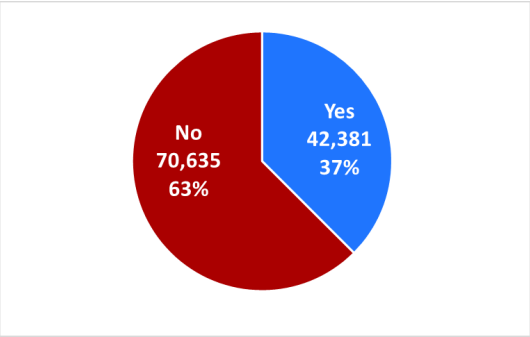


Figure 9: Field of Study

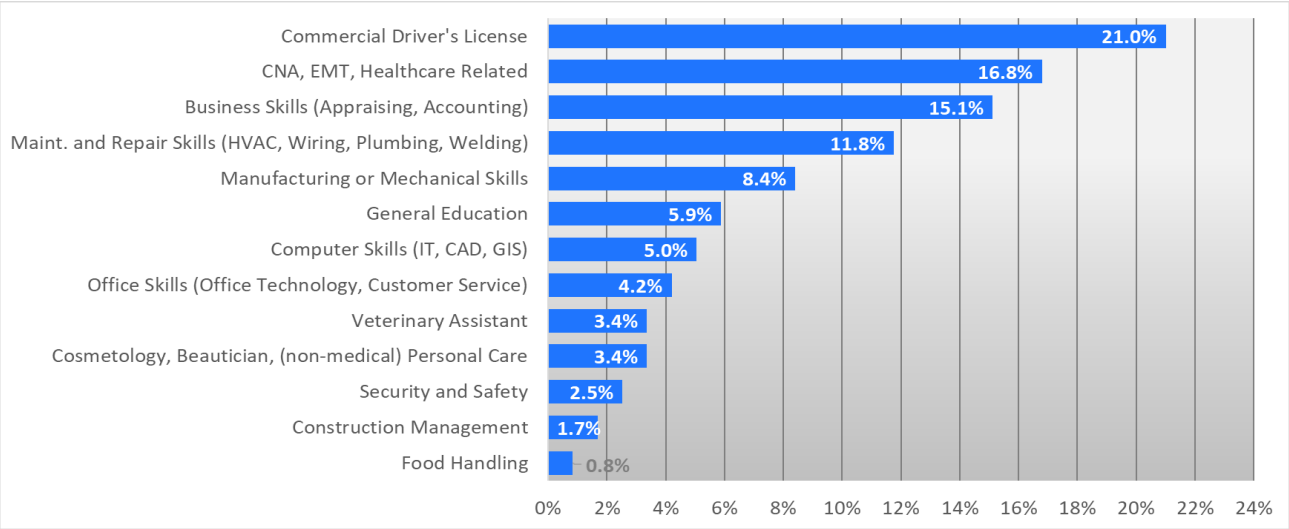


Figure 10 addresses job satisfaction among working members of the Available Labor Pool. Items are ordered by the combined percentages of "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" responses. The combined responses are referred to as "*at least agree*."

The figure shows that 78% *at least agree* that they "enjoy the things they do at work," 68% have "generally positive work environments", 62% have a "reasonable workload," 58% "receive fair pay," and 56% "have a fair chance at pay increases." Only 32% *at least agree* that they have a "fair chance at promotion" to another position.

Figure 10: Job Satisfaction

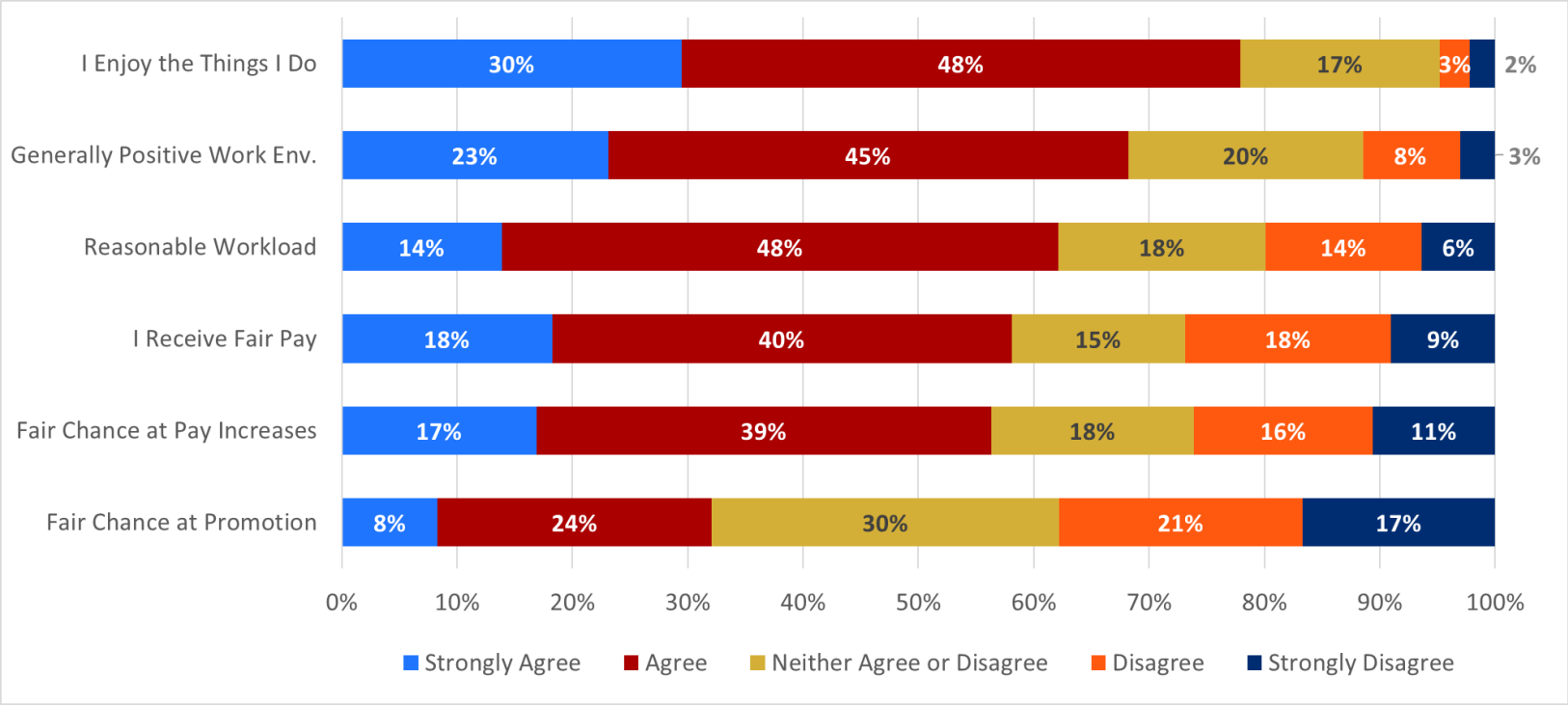


Table 4 compares the job satisfaction responses from working Pool members with employed survey respondents who are not available for a new job (the working Non-Pool). The table provides combined percentages of "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" responses for each item. Combined responses are referred to as "*at least agree*" responses.

The table shows that across all six statements, working Non-Pool respondents reported higher levels of agreement than working Pool members. For example, 77.9% of Pool workers *at least agree* that they enjoy the things they do at work, compared to 90% of the Non-Pool workers.

The largest gap between the Pool and the Non-Pool is regarding fair pay, with 58.2% of the working Pool saying that they *at least agree* that they "receive fair pay" and 78.4% of the working Non-Pool suggesting the same.

Table 4: Job Satisfaction Among Working Pool and Non-Pool

	At Least Agree		
	Working Pool	Working Non-Pool	Difference
	Percent	Percent	*(Pool - Non-Pool)*
I Enjoy the Things I Do	77.9	90.0	-12.1
Generally Positive Work Env.	68.2	85.2	-17.0
Reasonable Workload	62.2	79.2	-17.0
I Receive Fair Pay	58.2	78.4	-20.2
Fair Chance at Pay Increases	56.3	68.1	-11.8
Fair Chance at Promotion	32.1	38.3	-6.2

Remote Work and Military Service

Working survey respondents were asked if they work remotely. Answer options included “Yes – I have a job that is only Remote,” “Yes – I have a hybrid or blended position, working some of the time on-site and part of the time at home or off-site,” and “No, I work onsite only.”

Figures 11 and 12 show responses from working Pool members and working Non-Pool survey respondents. A third (34%) of the working Pool hold jobs which are only remote or have hybrid positions. Of the working Non-Pool, 16% hold jobs which are remote or hybrid.

Figure 11: Working Pool and Remote Work

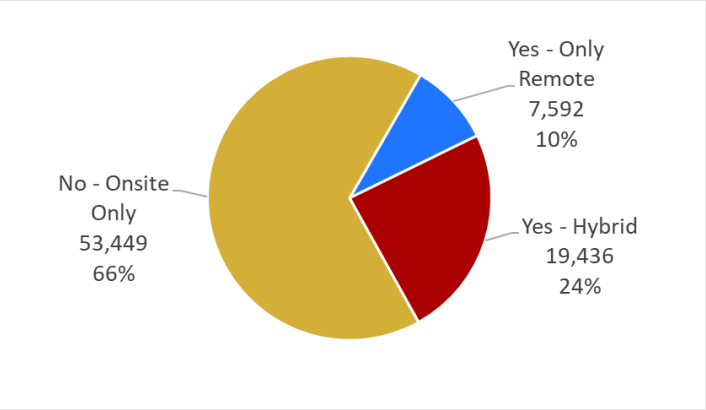
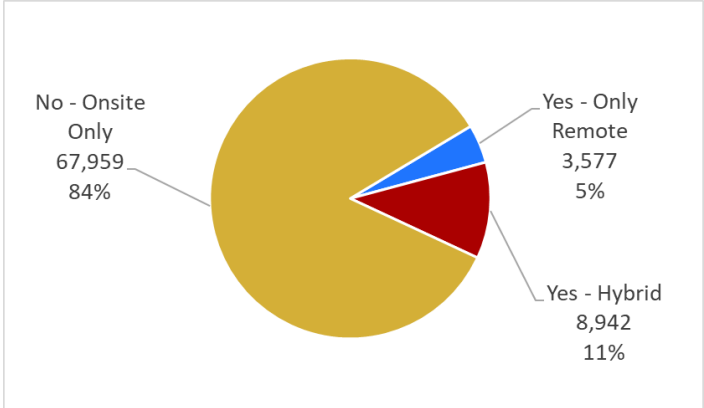


Figure 12: Working Non-Pool and Remote Work



Working survey respondents were also asked if they were currently serving in the military. The figure below shows that 3.8% of the Pool are active-duty, while 3.4% serve in the National Guard or Reserves. Most Pool members (92.9%) do not currently serve in the military.

Figure 13: Current Military Service

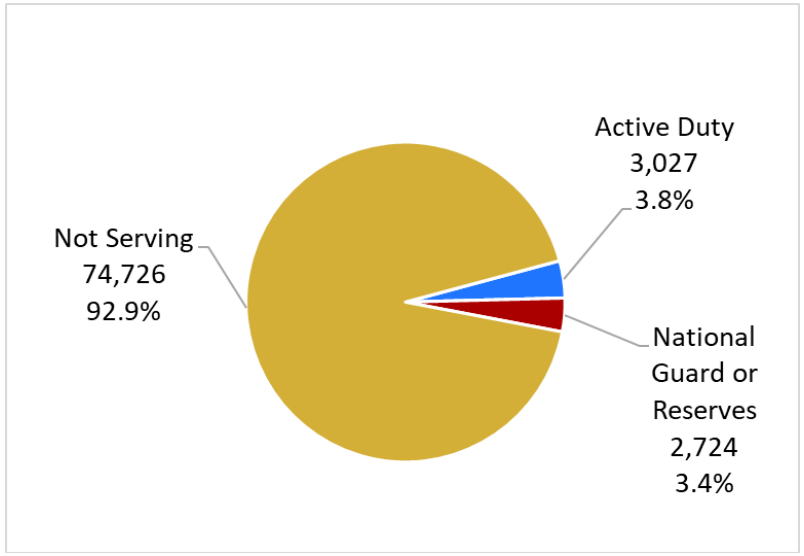


Table 5 shows demographic information for those Pool members serving in the military. Their mean age is 41 years, most are male (70%), and about half (48%) have at least some college experience.

Table 5: Characteristics of Military Members of the Available Labor Pool

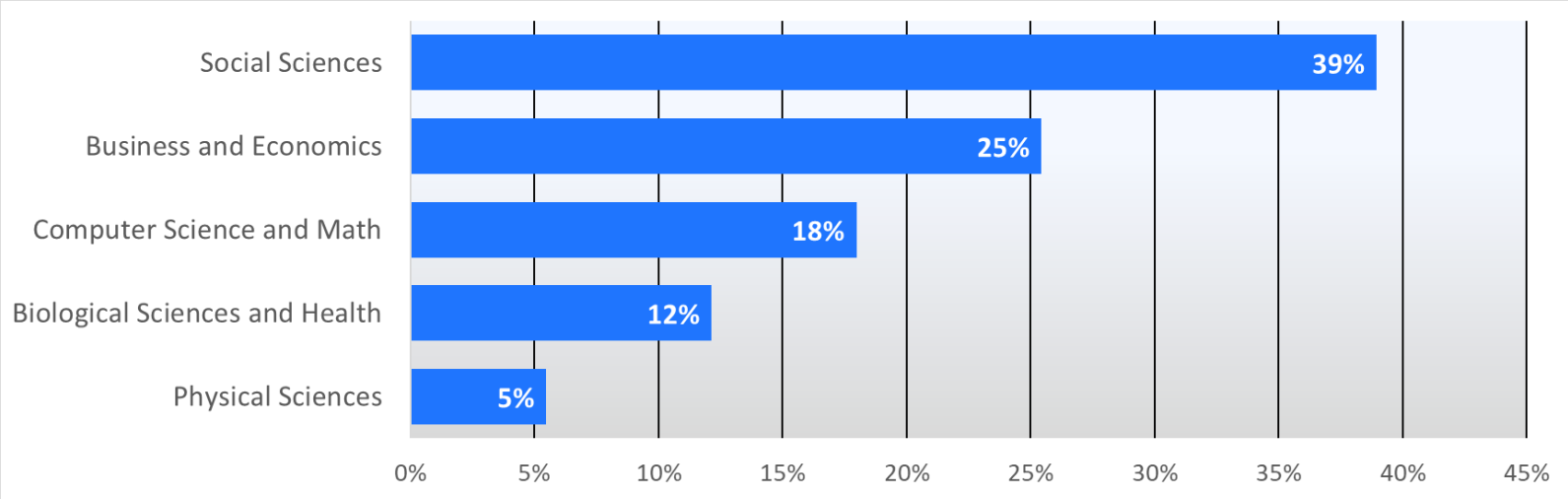
Age Information	Age in 2025
Range	23 to 59
Mean Average	41
Median Average	44

Gender	Number	Percent
Male	4,026	70.0
Female	1,725	30.0
Total	5,751	100

Highest Level of Education	Number	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Doctoral Degree	72	1.3	1.3
Master's Degree	137	2.4	3.6
Bachelor's Degree	684	11.9	15.5
Associate's Degree	125	2.2	17.7
Some College	1,781	31.0	48.7
High School Diploma	2,952	51.3	100.0
Total	5,751	100	

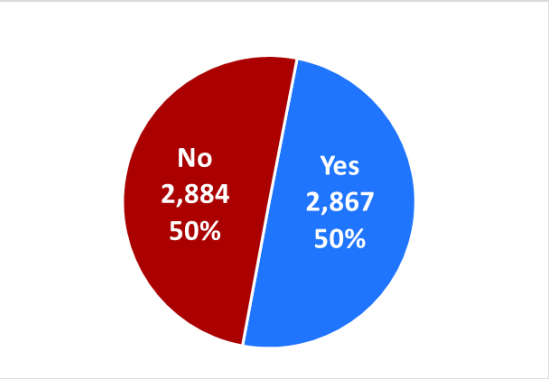
When asked, most Pool members serving in the military with at least some college experience said that they studied social sciences (55%). Other fields mentioned included business and economics (36%) and computer science and math (8%).

Figure 14: College Major (Military)



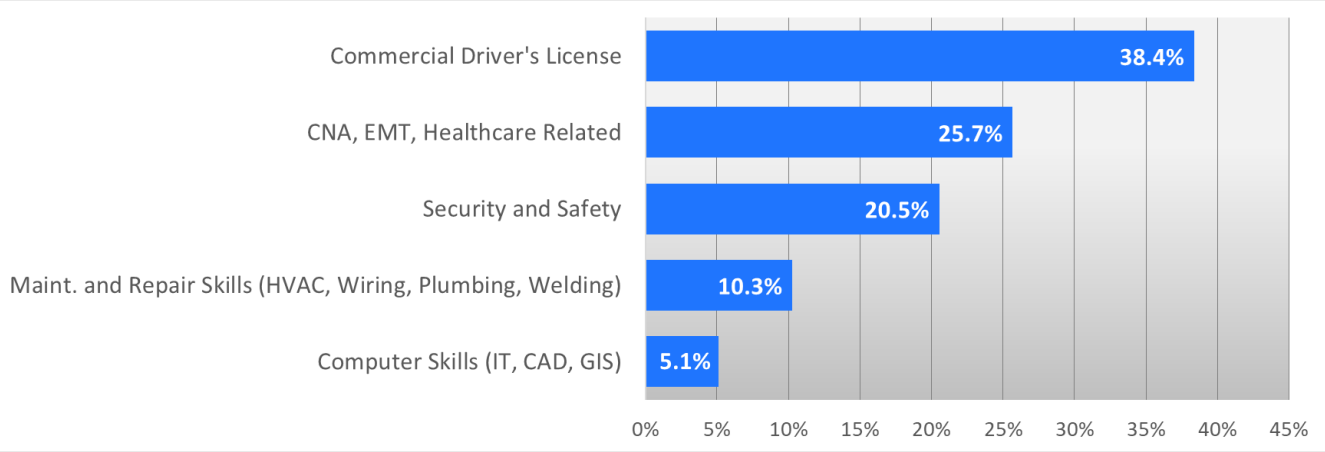
Half of the Pool currently serving in the military have received a technical certificate or credential, as shown in Figure 15.

Figure 15: Technical Certificate or Credential (Military)



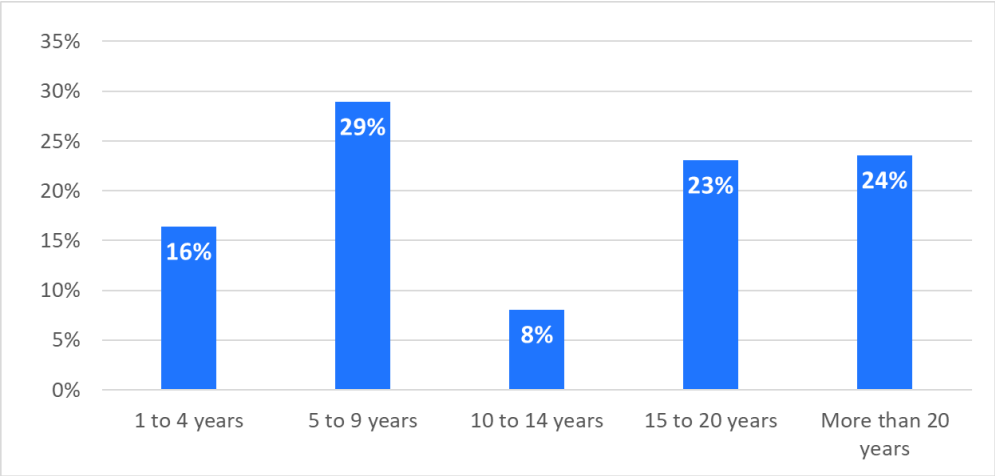
When asked for their field of study, over a third (38.4%) have earned a commercial driver's license (CDL), about one-fourth (25.7%) have earned a certificate or credential as a certified nurse assistant (CNA), emergency medical technician (EMT), or in some other healthcare related field. About a fifth (20.5%) have a certificate or credential in security and safety.

Figure 16: Field of Study (Military)



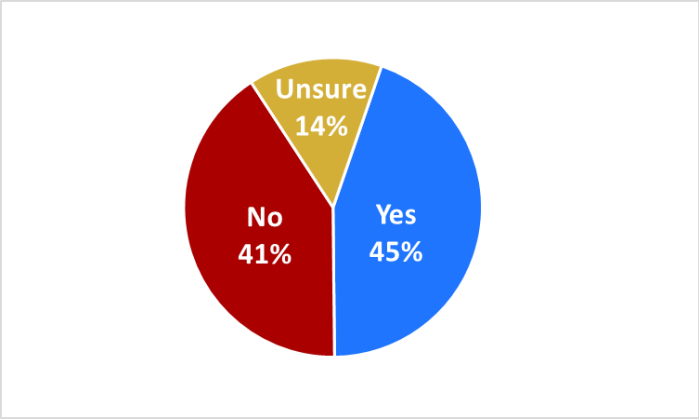
When asked when they plan to retire, the single highest percentage (29%) selected “5 to 9 years.” About a quarter each (23% and 24%, respectively) reported that they would retire in “15 to 20 years” and in “more than 20 years.”

Figure 17: Years to Retirement



When asked about their retirement plans, 45% said they intend to stay in the local area, 41% said they did not, and 14% were “unsure.”

Figure 18: Intent to Stay in Local Area After Retirement



When asked for their post-retirement plans, answers included animal services/rescue, business owner, entertainment, farming, fishing, furniture refinishing, volunteering, and owning a welding business.

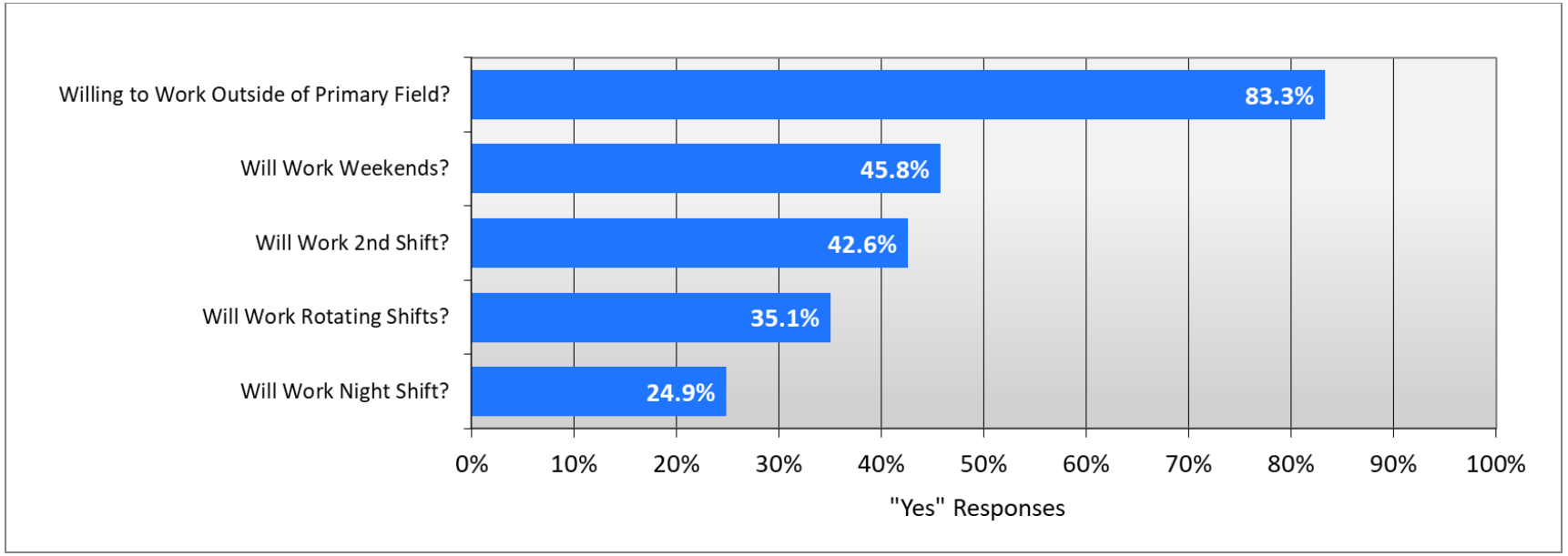
Considerations for Employment

An important consideration for many employers looking to locate or expand operations is whether workers are willing to pursue new employment opportunities outside of their primary fields. 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 Central Missouri Labor Region. Figure 19 shows that 83.3% of the Pool are willing to accept positions outside of their primary field of employment. The figure also shows responses to four questions regarding work shifts. Respondents were asked if they would be willing to work weekends, the 2nd shift, rotating shifts, and the night shift.

The figure shows that 45.8% of the Pool will work weekends, 42.6% will work the 2nd shift, 35.1% will work rotating shifts, and 24.9% will work the night shift for a new or different job opportunity given the right opportunities.

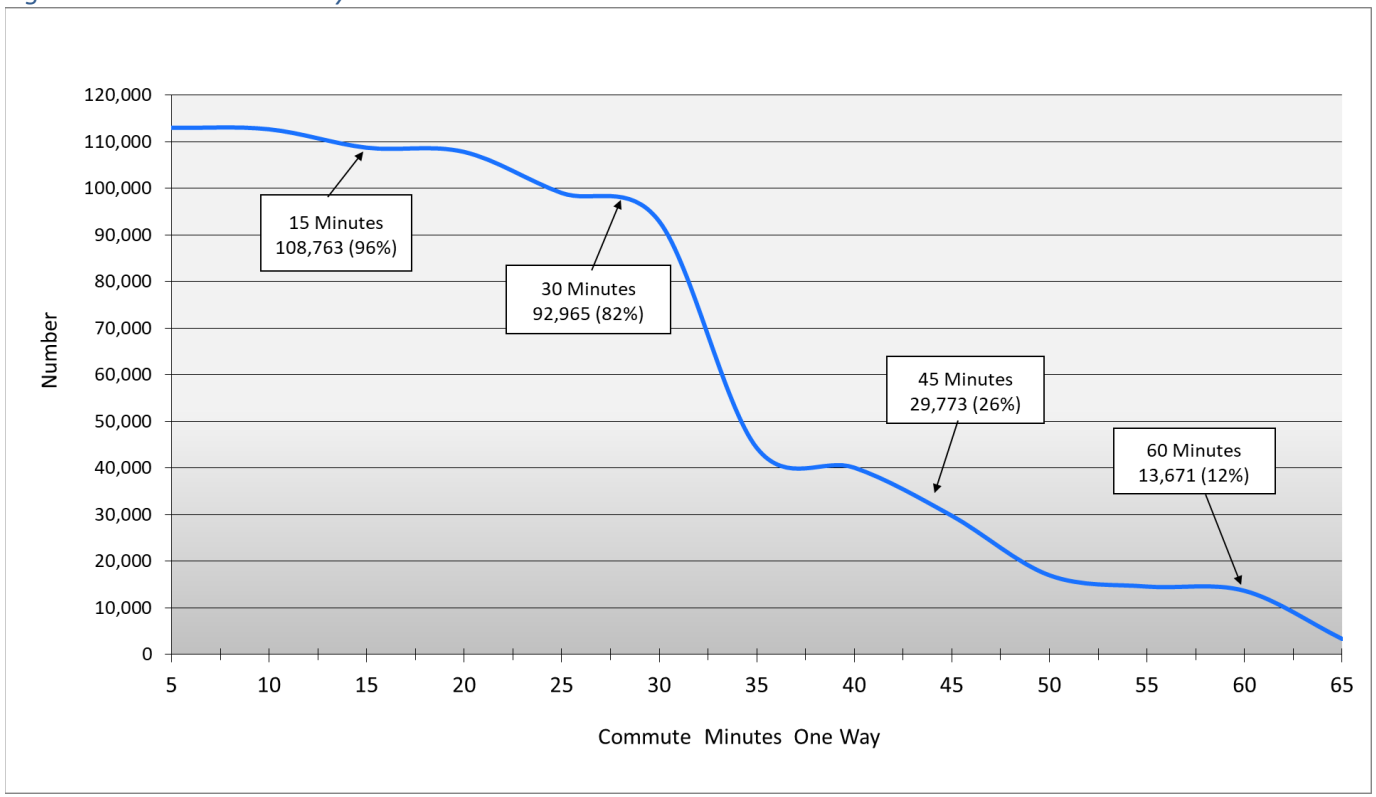
Figure 19: Considerations for Employment



Another important consideration for many employers is whether workers are willing to commute for a new or different employment opportunity. Figure 20 shows that 96% of the Pool will commute up to 15 minutes and 82% will commute up to 30 minutes, one way, for a new or different job for the right opportunities.

After 30 minutes, the percentages of workers decline, as 26% are willing to commute up to 45 minutes and 12% are willing to commute up to 60 minutes, one way, for a new or different job for the right opportunities**.**

Figure 20: Available Labor by Commute Minutes



Pool members were presented with various benefits and opportunities and were asked if each would be a “very important” consideration for taking a new job. Answer options included “yes” and “no.”

Figure 21 shows that the five most important benefits/opportunities are, in order, good vacation benefits, sick leave, good salary or hourly pay, good health benefits, and good retirement benefits. Each of these benefits were considered “very important” by at least 80% of the Pool.

Flextime/flexible hours, on-the-job training (OJT), and remote work were considered “very important” by 75% of the Pool.

Transportation assistance, education assistance, elder care assistance, and child care assistance were considered “very important” to less than 40% of the Pool each.

Figure 21: Benefits/Opportunities Very Important to Change Jobs

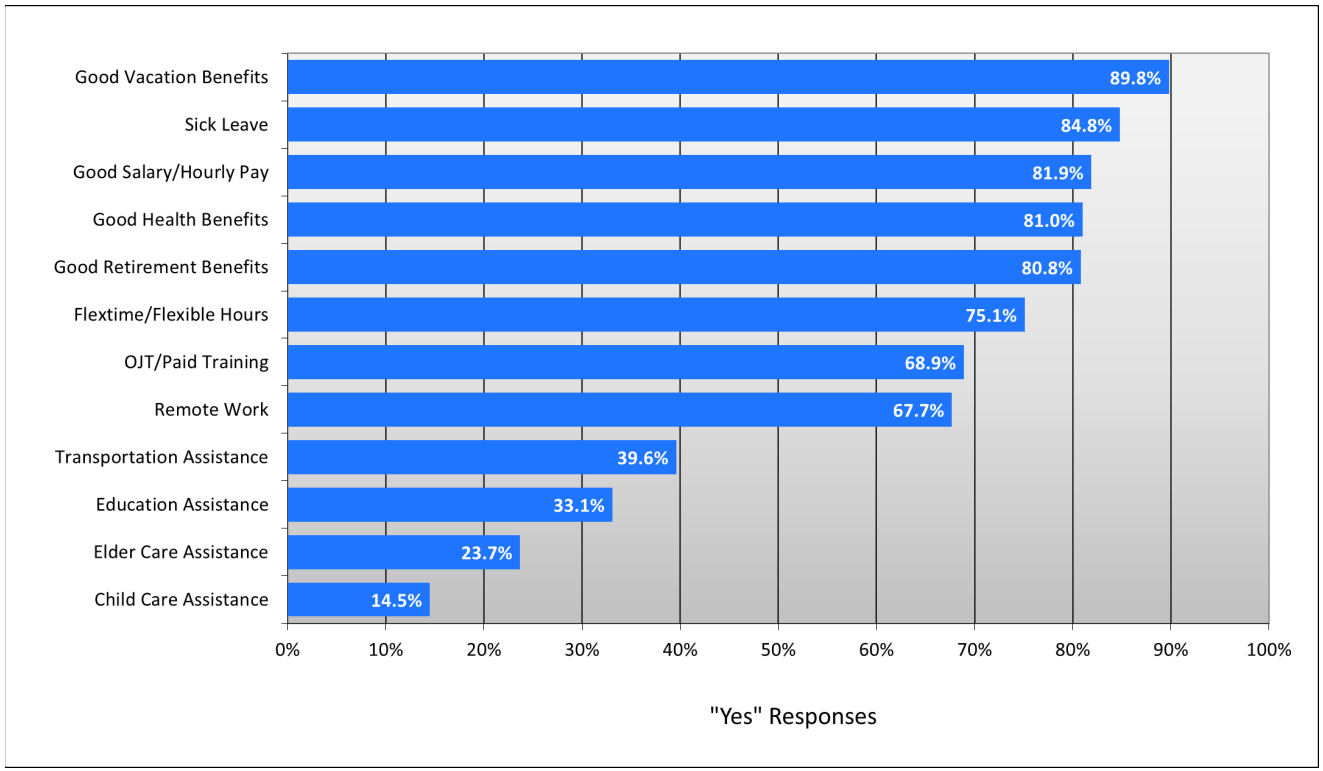


Table 6 shows information from the previous figure (left percent column) along with the percentages of working members of the Pool *who currently receive* the same benefits/opportunities (right percent column). The third column shows the difference between the two.

As noted, 89.8% of entire Pool consider good vacation benefits to be “very important” for a new or different job. Of working Pool members, 75.9% currently receive or earn vacation benefits. Similarly, 84.8% of the entire Pool consider sick leave to be “very important” for new or different job, while 66.8% of the working Pool receive sick leave benefits.

Flextime or flexible hours show the largest disparity between perceived importance (75.1%) and actual workplace availability (44.7%), a difference of 30.4 percentage points.

Table 6: Desired Benefits/Opportunities and Currently Offered Benefits/Opportunities

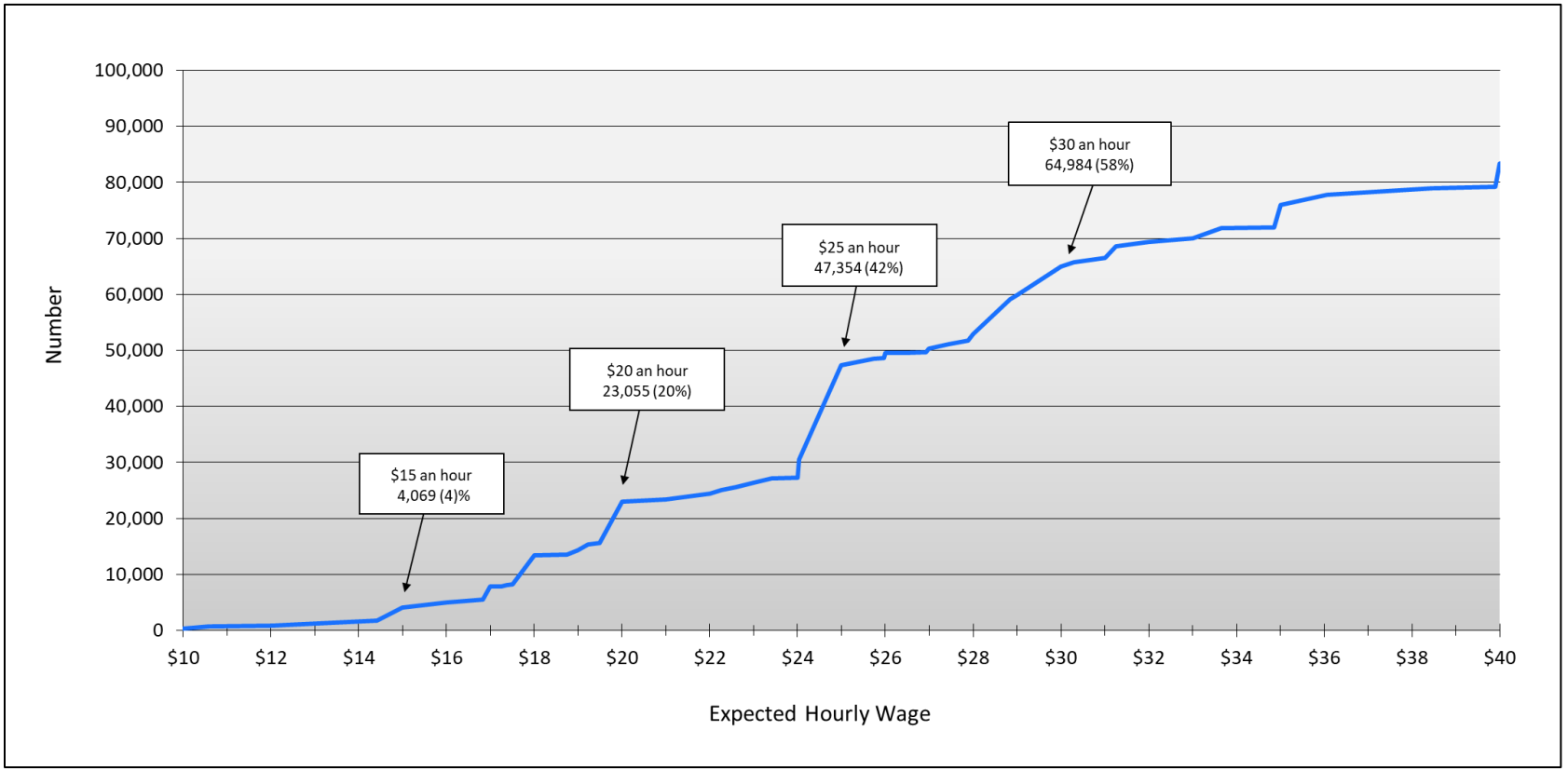
	Very Important to Change Jobs Percent	Currently Received by Working ALP Members* Percent	Difference *(Important - Received)*
Good Vacation Benefits	89.8	75.9	13.9
Sick Leave	84.8	66.8	18.0
Good Salary/Hourly Pay	81.9	58.2	23.7
Good Health Benefits	81.0	75.0	6.0
Good Retirement Benefits	80.8	71.3	9.5
Flextime/Flexible Hours	75.1	44.7	30.4
OJT/Paid Training	68.9	54.4	14.5
Remote Work	67.7	33.3	34.4
Transportation Assistance	39.6	15.3	24.3
Education Assistance	33.1	27.9	5.2
Elder Care Assistance	23.7	0.7	23.0
Child Care Assistance	14.5	4.2	10.3

*Combined percentages of "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" responses from the statement "I receive fair pay for the work I do" in the Job Satisfacton section are shown for current Good Salary/Hourly Pay.

Wage Expectations

The expected wage for a new or different job is another important consideration for employers and economic developers. Figure 22 shows expected wages for members of the Pool. It is estimated that 20% of the Pool is available for an hourly wage of $20. Additionally, 42% are available at $25 per hour and 58% are available at $30 per hour.[3]

Figure 22: Available Labor by Expected Hourly Wage



[3] See the Appendix for an hourly wage/annual salary conversion chart.

Table 7 shows expected wage categories the four main occupational sectors (employed Available Labor Pool only). The table shows that 19.2% of semi-skilled laborers anticipate earning between $15 and $20 per hour at a new or different job, compared to just 2% of highly skilled laborers. In the service sector, 24.9% expect wages within that same range, while only 0.5% of professional workers expect the same.[4]

Table 7: Expected Wage Categories by Occupational Sector

	Semi-Skilled		Highly Skilled		Service Sector		Professional	
	(N = 51) (+/- 13.7% MoE)		(N = 39) (+/- 15.7% MoE)		(N = 117) (+/- 9.1% MoE)		(N = 59) (+/- 12.8% MoE)	
	Number	*Cumulative %*	*Number*	*Cumulative %*	*Number*	*Cumulative %*	*Number*	*Cumulative %*
$50 or More	15,471	100	11,797	100	35,466	100	17,744	100
$45 to $50	15,347	99.2	8,529	72.3	33,976	95.8	9,546	53.8
$40 to $45	14,775	95.5	7,586	64.3	33,125	93.4	4,294	24.2
$35 to $40	13,490	87.2	6,217	52.7	32,416	91.4	4,152	23.4
$30 to $35	13,367	86.4	4,518	38.3	28,444	80.2	3,602	20.3
$25 to $30	11,897	76.9	2,560	21.7	23,798	67.1	2,342	13.2
$20 to $25	8,370	54.1	1,286	10.9	15,995	45.1	532	3.0
$15 to $20	2,970	19.2	236	2.0	8,831	24.9	89	0.5
$10 to $15	464	3.0	0	0	1,383	3.9	0	0
Up to $10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

[4] It is assumed that a job seeker would, if offered, take a higher hourly wage than expected. As such, cummulative percentages are provided.

Table 8 shows the expected wage categories for semi-skilled labors and service sector workers who are willing to change fields of employment (see Figure 19) and are thus presumably potential workers for either of these two sectors.[5] These workers are considered "transferable workers." Table 7 (previous page) shows data representing each occupational sector independently and does not include non-employed Pool members. Table 8, on the other hand, allows semi-skilled laborers, service sector workers, and non-employed Pool members to be classified as a transferable worker.[6]

Table 8: Expected Wage Categories of Transferable Workers

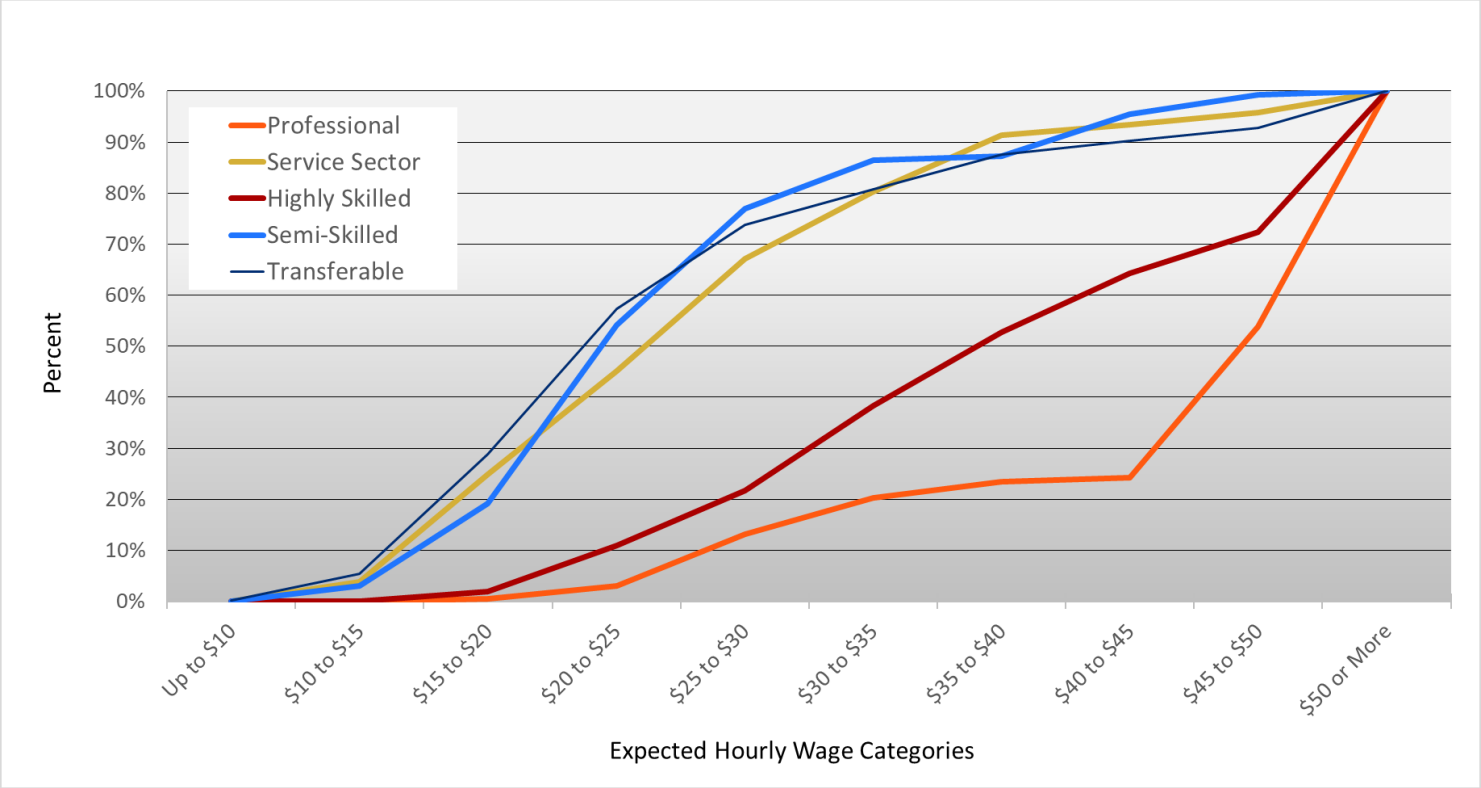
	Transferable Workers Will Change Fields & Semi-Skilled + Service Sector + Non-Employed (N = 207) (+/- 6.8% MoE)	
	Number	*Cumulative %*
$50 or More	62,660	100
$45 to $50	58,163	92.8
$40 to $45	56,583	90.3
$35 to $40	54,858	87.5
$30 to $35	50,594	80.7
$25 to $30	46,270	73.8
$20 to $25	35,966	57.4
$15 to $20	18,100	28.9
$10 to $15	3,424	5.5
Up to $10	141	0.2

[5] Highly skilled and professional workers are excluded from Table 8 because it is presumed that, generally, people in occupations such as machinist, electricians, medical doctors, lawyers, engineers, professors, etc. are unlikely to transfer into lower skill semi-skilled and service sector occupations. It is also presumed that, because professional and highly skilled occupations require extensive education and/or training, semi-skilled laborers and service sector workers are unable to transfer to highly skilled labor or professional positions - at least in the near term.

[6] It is assumed that non-employed Pool members will take jobs (all things being equal) in field in either the semi-skilled or service sector areas.

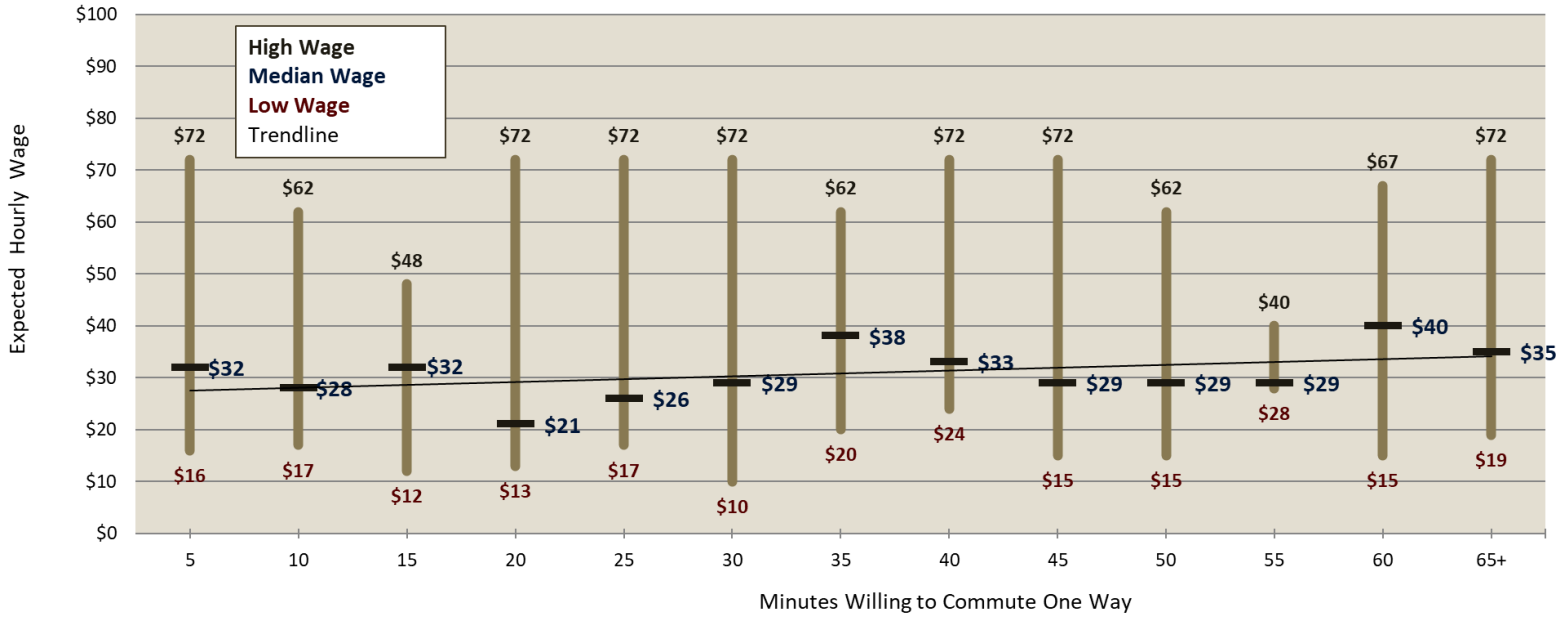
Figure 23 integrates information from Tables 7 and 8 to show wage expectations by category for each occupational sector and transferable workers. The figure shows that about half of the semi-skilled laborers expect to earn a wage ranging from $20 to $25 per hour, while about half of the highly skilled laborers expect a wage ranging from $35 to $40 per hour. Regarding service sector workers, about half expect a wage ranging from about $20 to $25 or $25 to $30, while professional employees expect a wage ranging from $45 to $50 per hour. About half of the transferable workers expect a wage ranging from about $15 to $20 or $20 to $25 per hour.

Figure 23: Wage Expectations by Occupational Sector Including Transferable Workers



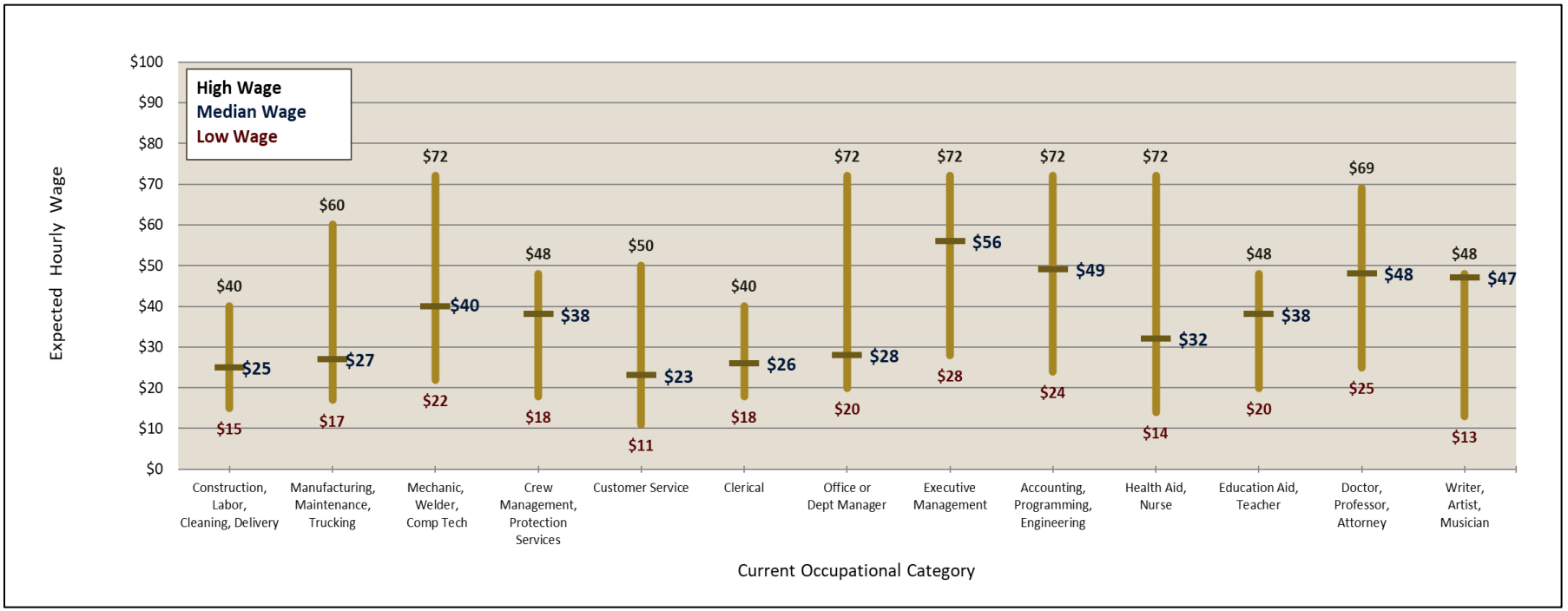
The figure below displays expected hourly wages alongside the number of minutes Pool members are willing to commute one way for a new job. Wage ranges (high, low, and median) are shown in five-minute increments. To reduce the influence of extreme outliers, the highest expected hourly wage was capped at $72 (equivalent to $149,760 annually), although a small number of responses exceeded this threshold. To a limited extent, respondents expecting higher wages tend to be willing to commute slightly longer distances than those expecting lower wages.

Figure 24: Expected Hourly Wage by Minutes Willing to Commute One Way



The figure below shows the median and range of expected hourly wages by occupational category. The lowest low expected wages tend to be associated with categories that might be considered entry-level by some people. The largest low wage points to be associated with jobs that generally require extensive education and training. To reduce the influence of extreme outliers, the highest expected hourly wage was capped at $72 (equivalent to $149,760 annually), although a small number of responses exceeded this threshold.

Figure 25: Expected Hourly Wage by Current Occupational Category



Underemployment

Underemployment is a significant issue in many communities. To assess underemployment in the Central Missouri Labor Region, *employed members of the Pool* were presented with a scenario describing underemployment.[7] 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 unable to work as many hours as they would like at their job.

Of the 80,478 *employed members* of the Pool (shown in Figure 26), 59% answered "yes" to one or more of the questions presented above (shown in Figure 27). These Pool members are considered "underemployed."

Figure 26: Employed and Unemployed Members of the Available Labor Pool

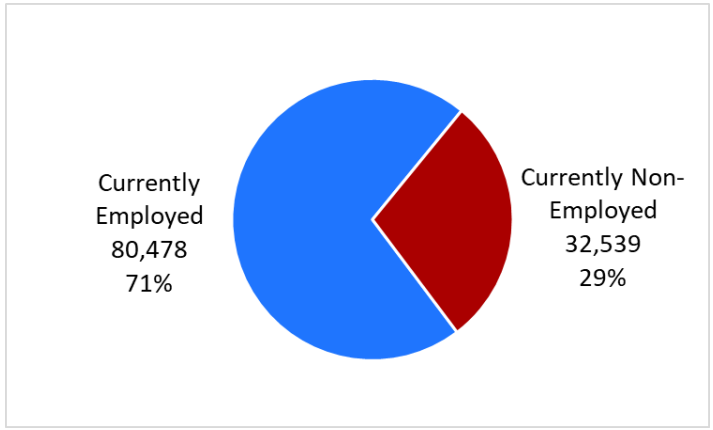
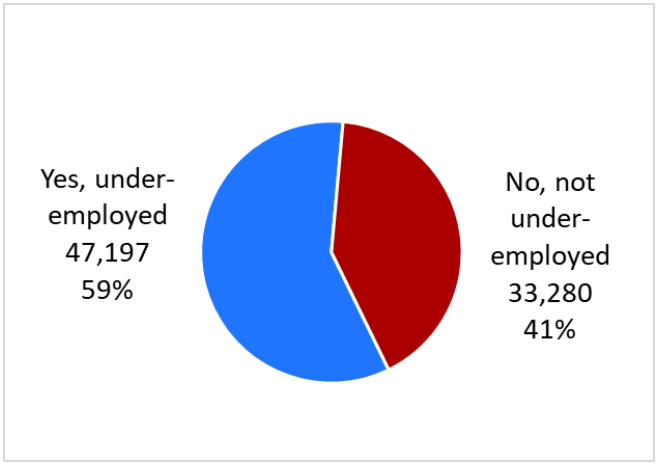


Figure 27: Underemployed Workers



[7] "Because of circumstances, some workers have jobs that do not fully match their skills, education, or experiences. For example, a master plumber taking tickets at a movie theater would be a mismatch between skill level and job requirements. Do you consider yourself an underemployed worker because...?"

Figure 28 shows the percentages of the positive responses (i.e., “yes” answers) to the various measures of underemployment. Two-thirds (67%) of working Pool members consider themselves underemployed because they possess education levels exceeding those needed for their current jobs, while 54% consider themselves underemployed because they possess skills that are not being used currently on the job. When asked if they are underemployed because they earned more money at a past but similar job, 44% responded “yes,” while 25% feel they cannot work as many hours as they would like at their job.

Figure 28: Reasons for Underemployment

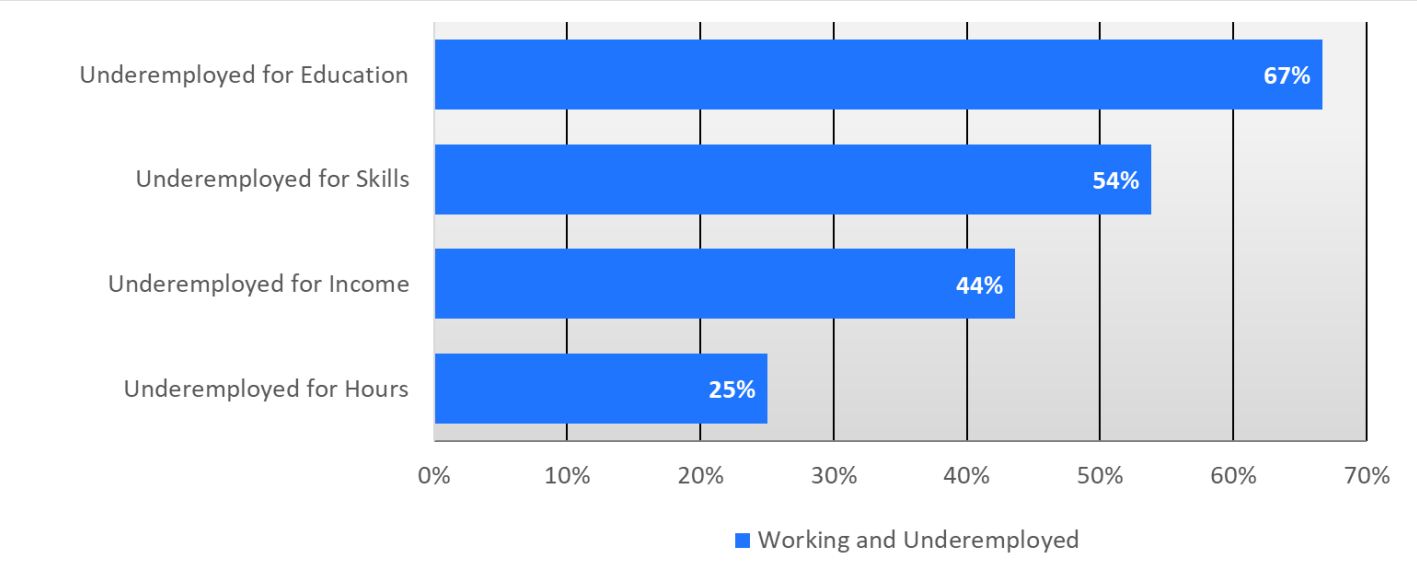


Table 9 and Figure 29 (next page) show some characteristics of the underemployed members of the Pool. The table shows the average age is 44 years old, and about half are female (52.3%) and hold at least bachelor’s degrees (53.1%). Almost all (97.9%) have at least high school diplomas.

The figure shows that semi-skilled workers make up 23% of the underemployed workers, while highly skilled laborers make up 15%. Service sector workers make up the highest percentage of underemployed workers at 46%, and professionals make up 16%.

Table 9: Characteristics of Underemployed Workers

Age Information	Age in 2025
Range	19 to 67
Mean Average	44
Median Average	44

Gender	Number	Percent
Male	22,415	47.5
Female	24,664	52.3
Prefer Not to Say	119	0.3
Total	47,197	100

Highest Level of Education	Number	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Doctoral Degree	1,320	2.8	2.8
Master's Degree	12,542	26.6	29.4
Bachelor's Degree	11,222	23.8	53.1
Associate's Degree	5,281	11.2	64.3
Some College	6,271	13.3	77.6
High School Diploma	9,571	20.3	97.9
Less HS Diploma	990	2.1	100
Total	47,197	100	

Figure 29. Occupational Sectors of Underemployed Workers

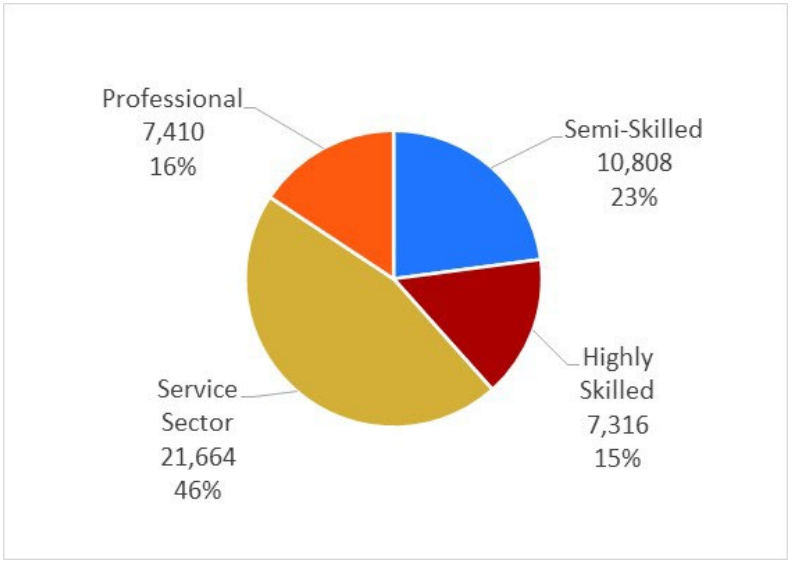


Table 10 shows the occupational categories of underemployed workers within the Pool. The highest percentage (20.4%) are employed in customer service roles, while 12.3% work in general labor and delivery. About 11% are engaged in clerical positions and another 10.6% are employed in manufacturing, maintenance, or trucking.

Table 10: Occupational Categories of Underemployed Workers

	Number	Percent
Customer Service	9,646	20.4
General Labor/Delivery	5,811	12.3
Clerical	5,260	11.1
Manufacturing/Maintenance/Trucking	5,007	10.6
Mechanic/Welder/Comp Tech	4,637	9.8
Doctor/Professor/Attorney	2,777	5.9
Crew Management/Protection Services	2,691	5.7
Office or Dept Manager	2,619	5.5
Education Aid/Teacher	2,608	5.5
Exec Management	2,548	5.4
Accounting/Engineering	2,016	4.3
Health Aid/Nurse	1,503	3.2
Writer/Artist/Musician	75	0.2
Total	47,197	100

Figure 30 (next page) shows the college majors for underemployed workers with at least some college experience. About a third (32%) of the underemployed workers studied social sciences, while 22% studied business and economics. Computer science and math was the college major for 15% of the underemployed workers. Almost the same percentage (14%) studied biological sciences and health and 12% studied arts and humanities. Physical sciences and education follow with 3% and 2%, respectively.

Figure 30: College Major (Underemployed Workers)

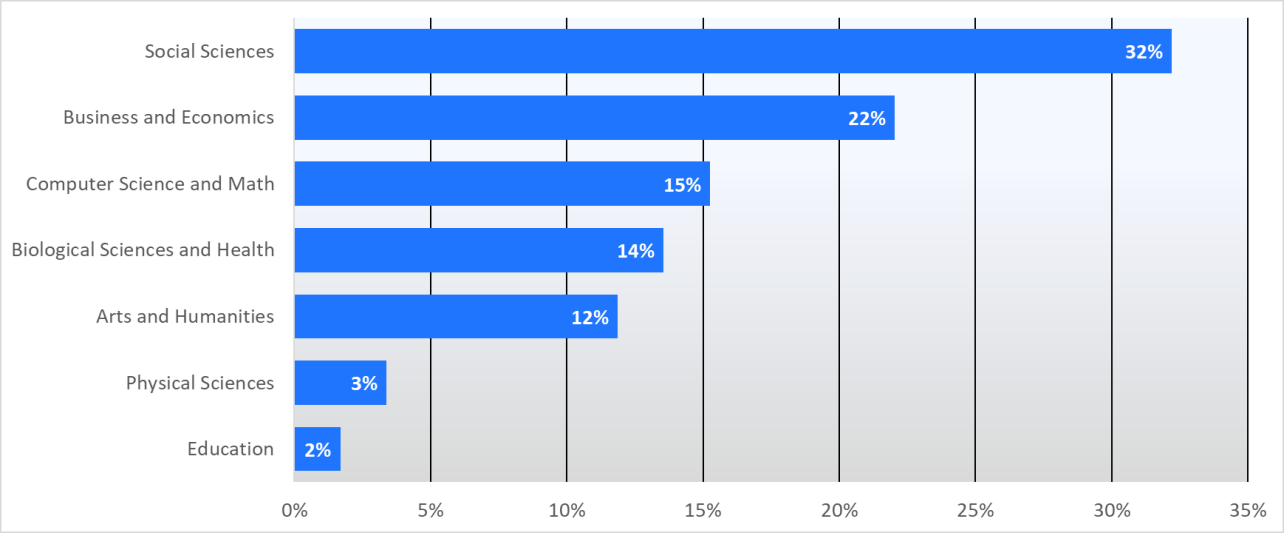


Figure 31 shows that a third (33%) of the underemployed workers have earned a technical certificate or credential.

Figure 31: Technical Certificate or Credential (Underemployed Workers)

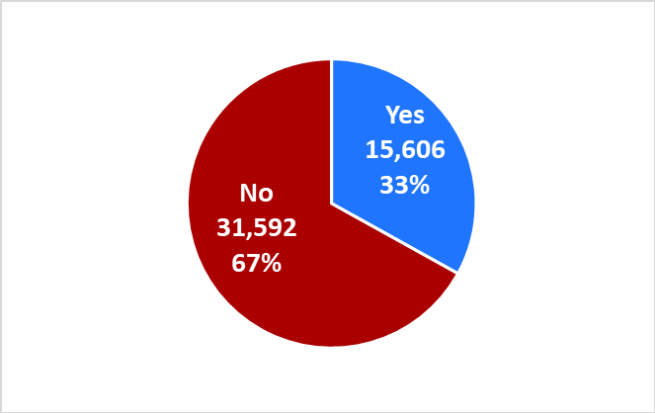


Figure 32 shows that 19.9% of respondents have earned a commercial driver's license (CDL). An additional 14.8% hold certificates or credentials in healthcare-related fields, including certified nurse assistants (CNAs) and emergency medical technicians (EMTs). Another 11.5% have obtained certifications in manufacturing or mechanical skills.

Figure 32: Field of Study (Underemployed Workers)

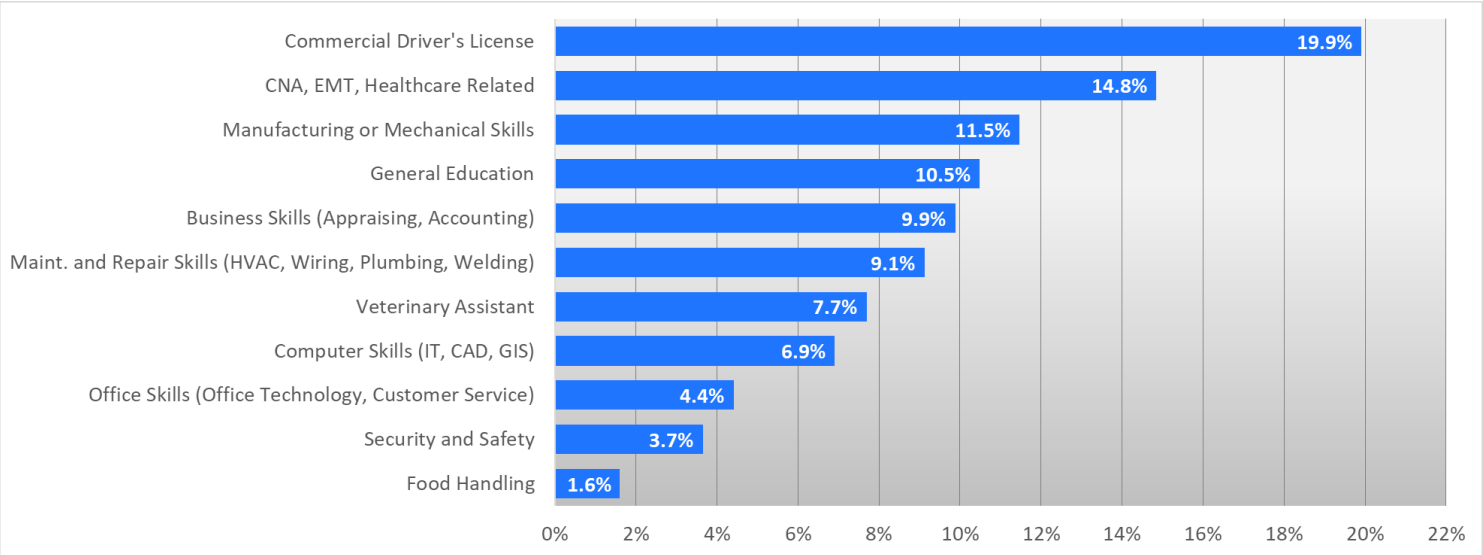


Figure 33 shows that the four most important benefits/opportunities are, in order, good vacation benefits, good salary or hourly pay, sick leave, and good health benefits. Each of these benefits were considered “very important” by at least 80% of the underemployed workers.

Good retirement benefits and flextime/flexible hours were considered “very important” by 78% each.

On-the-job training (OJT) and remote work were considered “very important” by 68% and 67%, respectively.

Transportation assistance, education assistance, elder care assistance, and child care assistance round out the bottom four at 44%, 36%, 33%, and 18%, respectively.

Figure 33: Benefits/Opportunities Very Important to Change Jobs (Underemployed Workers)

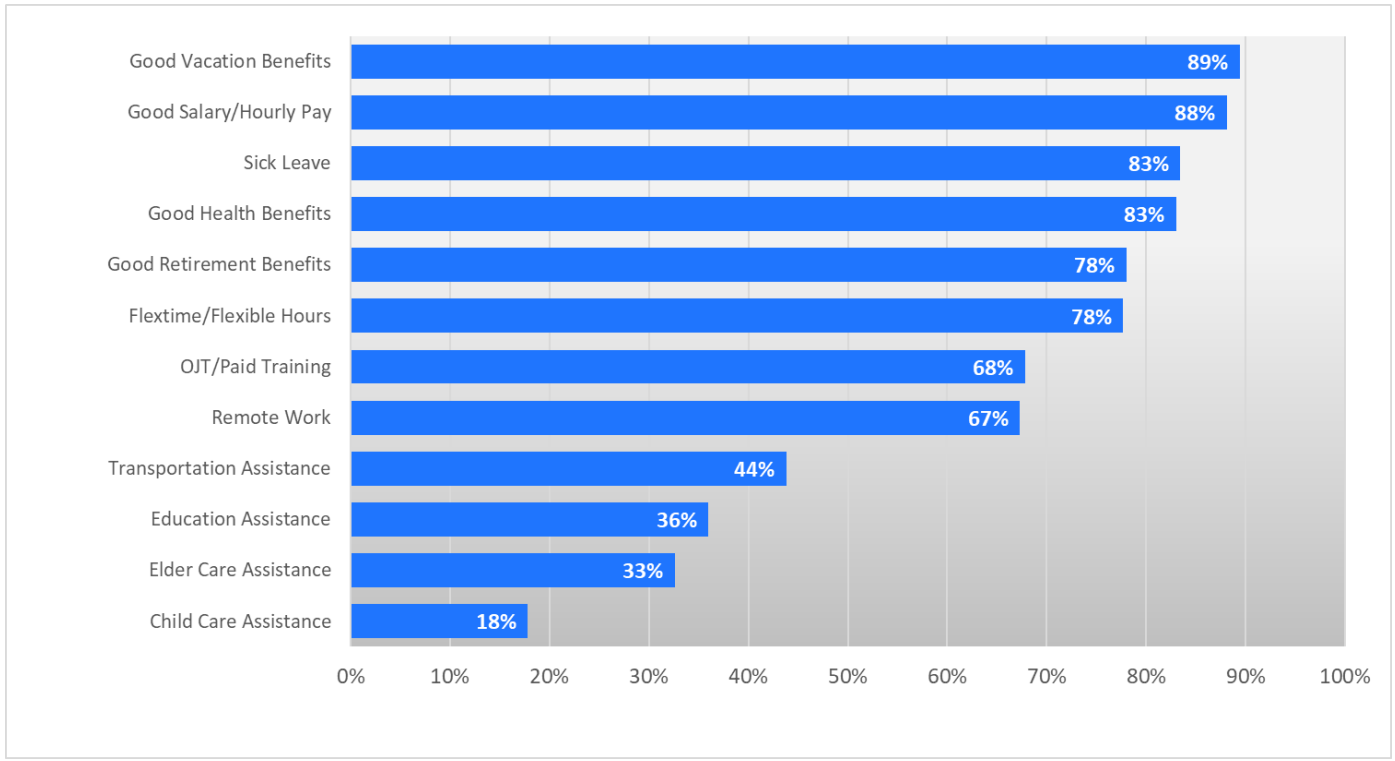


Figure 34 shows wage expectations by category for underemployed workers. The figure shows that 19% are available for wages ranging from $15 to $20 per hour, 44% are available for wages ranging from $20 to $25 per hour, and almost 60% are available for wages ranging from $25 to $30 per hour.

Figure 34: Wage Expectations (Underemployed Workers)

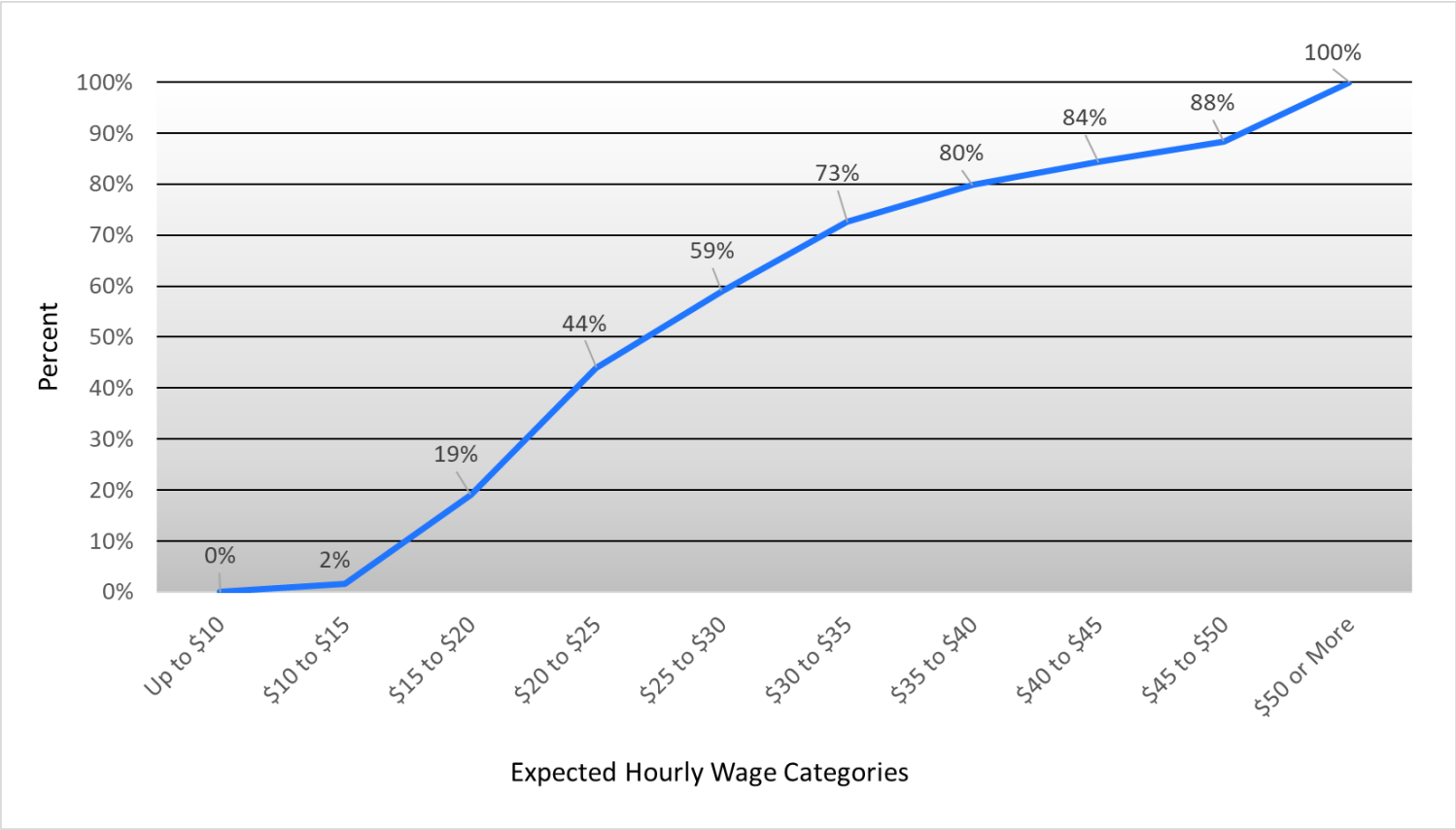
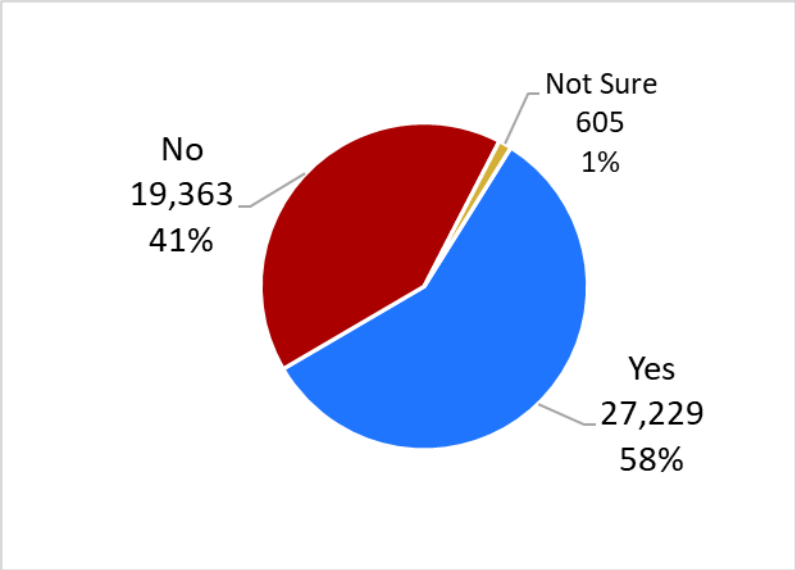


Figure 35 shows that of underemployed Pool members, 58% are pursuing new job opportunities to address their current underemployment status.

Figure 35: Seeking New Employment to Address Underemployment



Non-Employed and Looking for Employment

Another group of the Pool that might be of interest to employers are those who are non-employed at the present time but looking for employment. Figure 36 shows that this subset is 15.8% of the Pool.

Figure 36: Non-Employed and Looking for Employment

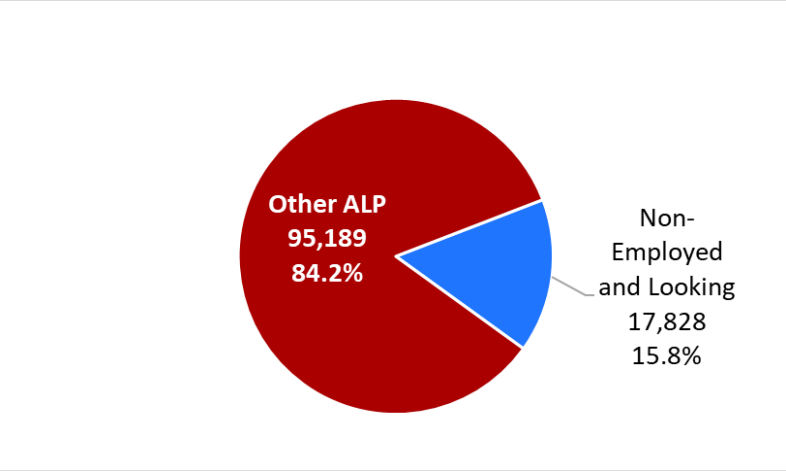


Table 11 shows some characteristics of this subset of the Pool. The mean age is 49 years old, and most (56.3%) are male. Nearly all (99.3%) hold at least high school diplomas and 91.7% have at least some college experience. A quarter (25.6%) hold at least a master's degree.

Table 11: Characteristics of the Non-Employed and Looking

Age Information	Age in 2025
Range	20 to 67
Mean Average	49
Median Average	54

Gender	Number	Percent
Male	10,037	56.3
Female	6,810	38.2
Prefer Not to Say	981	5.5
Total	17,828	100

Highest Level of Education	Number	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Doctoral Degree	981	5.5	5.5
Master's Degree	3,583	20.1	25.6
Bachelor's Degree	3,512	19.7	45.3
Associate's Degree	1,622	9.1	54.4
Some College	6,650	37.3	91.7
High School Diploma	1,355	7.6	99.3
Less HS Diploma	125	0.7	100
TOTAL	17,828	100	

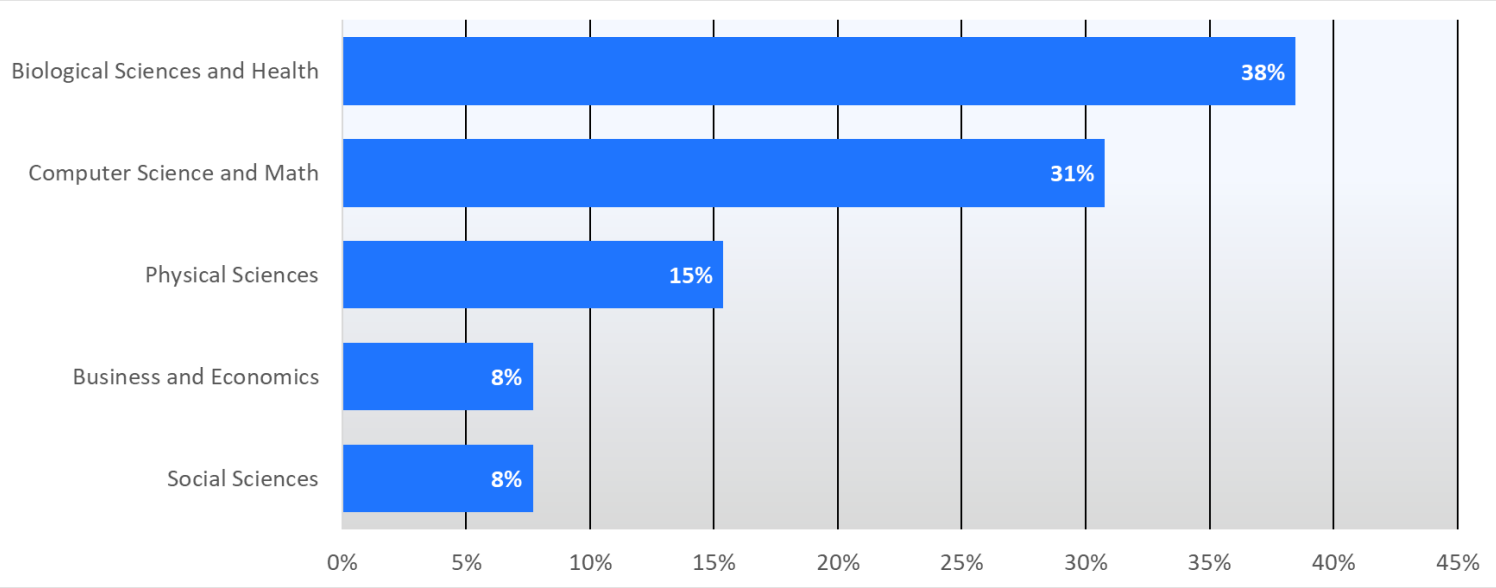
Table 12 summarizes the prior occupational backgrounds of the non-employed and looking subset of the Available Labor Pool. Nearly one-quarter (23.6%) have experience in office or departmental management, while 16.3% previously worked in accounting or engineering roles. An additional 12.2% held positions in customer service, and 11.8% report backgrounds in nursing or other health-related fields.

Table 12: Occupational Categories of the Non-Employed and Looking

	Number	Percent
Office or Dept Manager	4,202	23.6
Accounting/Engineering	2,909	16.3
Customer Service	2,183	12.2
Health Aid/Nurse	2,096	11.8
Doctor/Professor/Attorney	1,493	8.4
Writer/Artist/Musician	1,464	8.2
Exec Management	1,100	6.2
Manufacturing/Maintenance/Trucking	1,069	6.0
Mechanic/Welder/Comp Tech	768	4.3
Education Aid/Teacher	385	2.2
Labor/Delivery	158	0.9
TOTAL	17,828	100

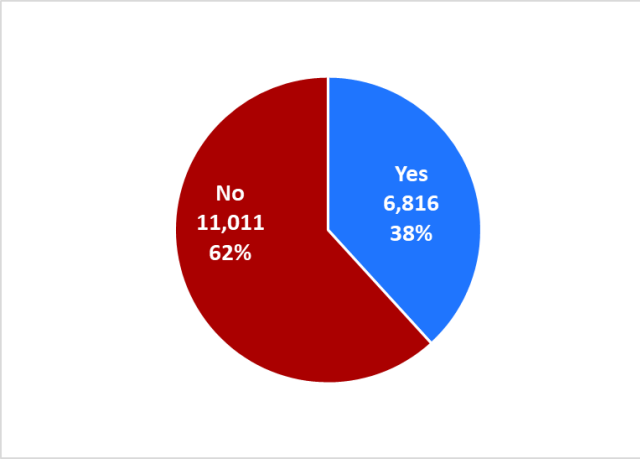
Among individuals with at least some college experience, 38% majored in biological sciences or health-related fields, followed by 31% in computer science or mathematics. An additional 15% studied physical sciences, while 8% pursued majors in business and economics, and another 8% in social sciences.

Figure 37: College Major (Non-Employed and Looking)



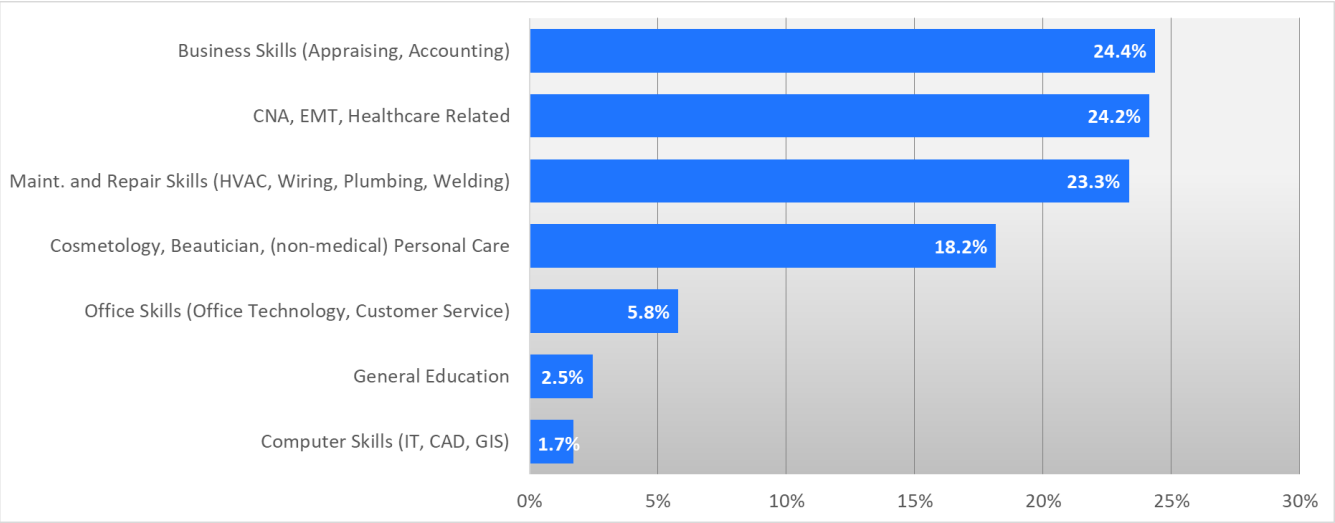
More than a third (38%) of the non-employed and looking subset of the Pool have completed a technical certificate or credential.

Figure 38: Technical Certificate or Credential (Non-Employed and Looking)



About one-quarter (24.4%) of non-employed and looking respondents have earned certificates or credentials in business-related skills. A similar proportion (24.2%) hold certifications in healthcare fields, including roles such as certified nurse assistants (CNAs) and emergency medical technicians (EMTs). An additional 23.3% report credentials in maintenance and repair, while 18% have earned certifications in cosmetology or other personal care occupations.

Figure 39: Field of Study (Non-Employed and Looking)



When asked which benefits would be “very important” when considering employment, the most important benefits among these respondents were those that traditionally come with jobs: good retirement benefits (90%), good vacation benefits (89%), sick leave (82%), and good health benefits (82%).

Remote work was “very important” for 79% of the non-employed and looking and a good salary/hourly pay was “very important” for 74% of this subset of the Pool.

On-the-job training (OJT) or paid training was “very important” for 65% and flextime or flexible hours was “very important” for 62%.

Rounding out the bottom four were transportation assistance, education assistance, elder care assistance, and child care assistance.

Figure 40: Benefits/Opportunities Very Important to Change Jobs (Non-Employed and Looking)

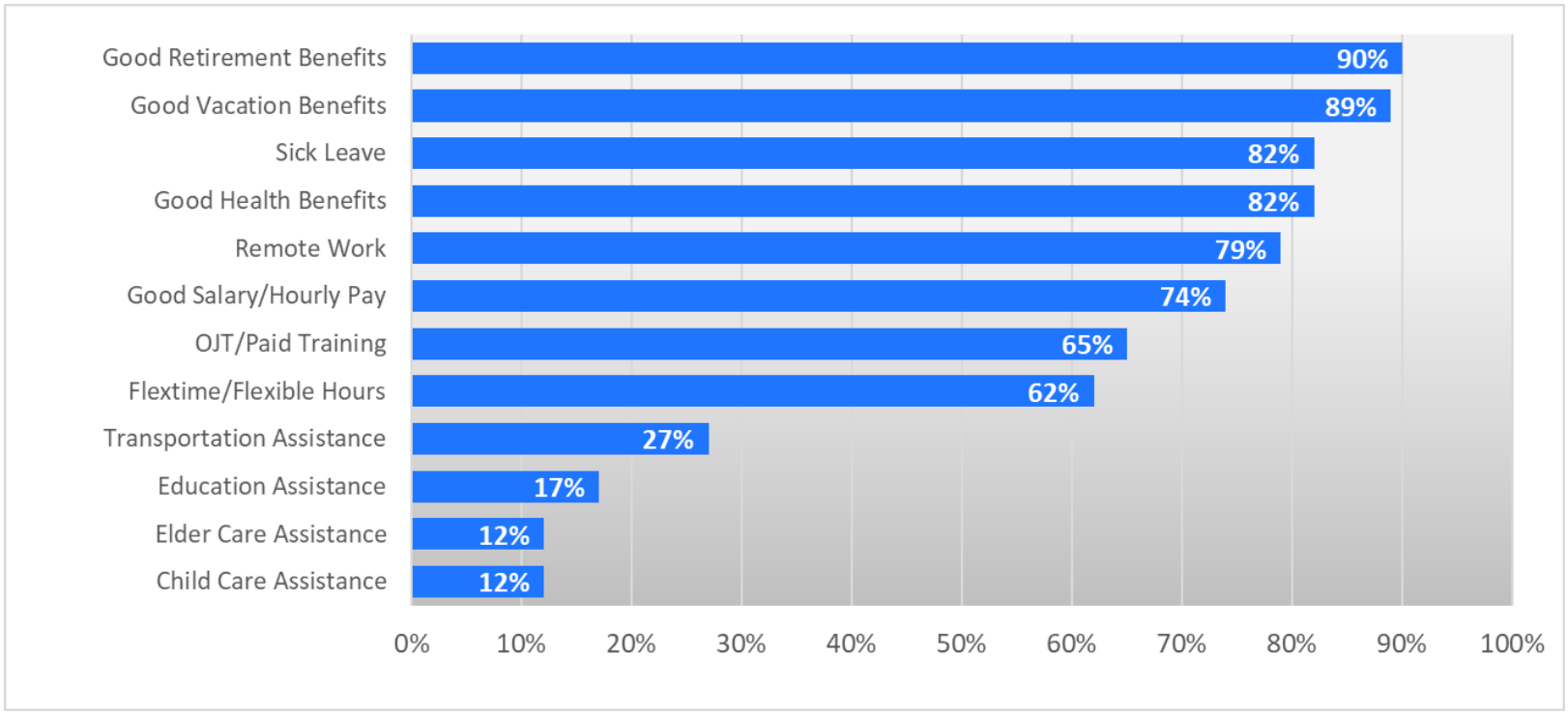
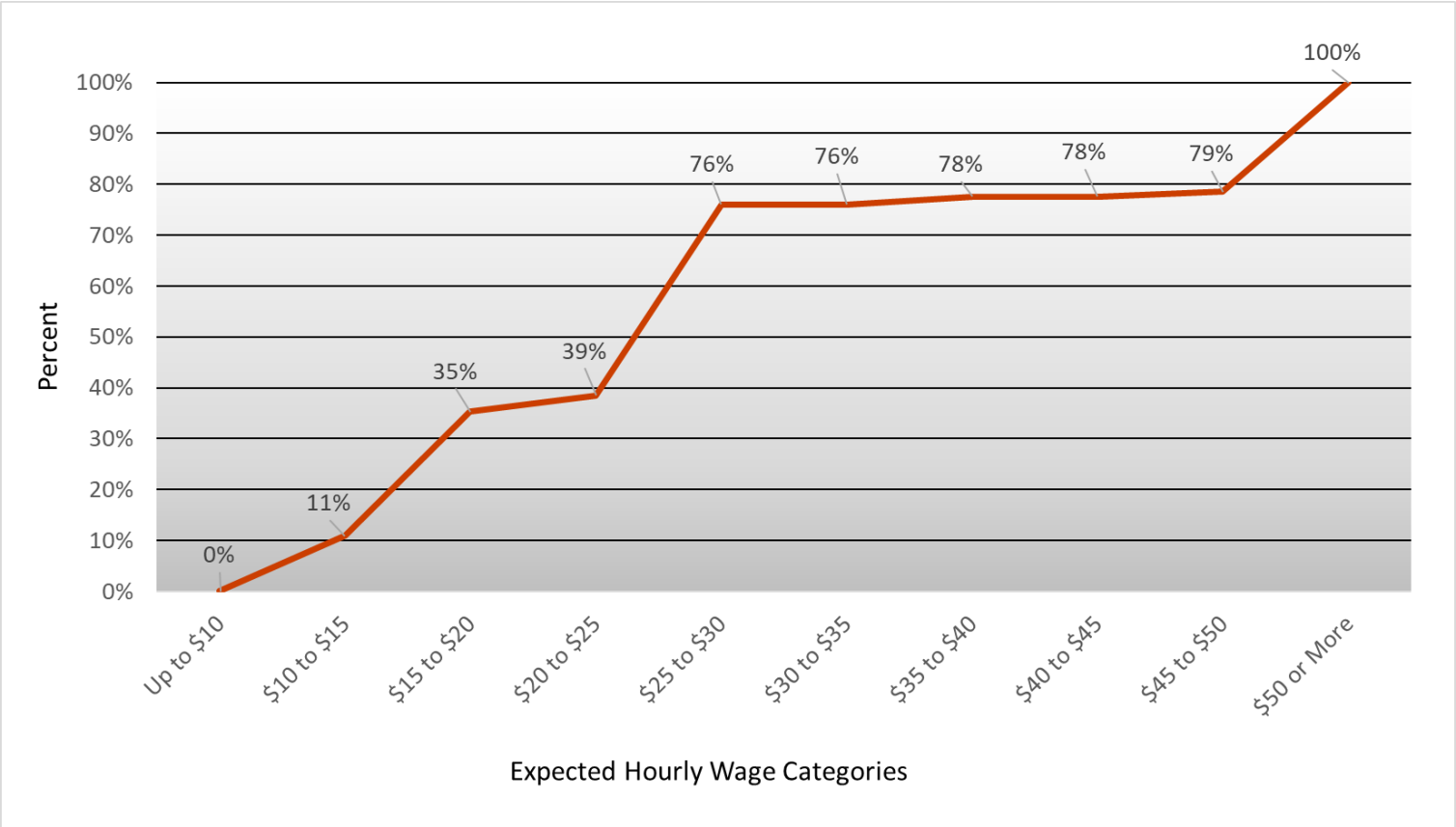


Figure 41 shows wage expectations by category for non-employed and looking members of the Pool. The figure shows that 35% are available for wages ranging from $15 to $20 per hour, 39% are available for wages ranging from $20 to $25 per hour, and 76% are available for wages ranging from $25 to $30 per hour.

Figure 41: Wage Expectations (Non-Employed and Looking)



Comparative Analysis: 2005, 2009, 2012, 2015, 2018, and 2025

The Docking Institute of Public Affairs conducted similar labor studies in the Central Missouri Labor Region and provided reports in 2005, 2009, 2012, 2015, and 2018. This section of the report compares some of the data collected from all six studies.

Table 13 presents regional data drawn from the six reports, including total population, Civilian Labor Force (CLF), number of employed individuals, average unemployment rate, and the size of the Available Labor Pool.

The 2025 study differs from previous methodologies by analyzing ZIP Code populations within a 30-minute commute radius of one of the central points of five labor basins, centered on Henry, Johnson, Lafayette, Pettis, and Saline Counties. As a result, the figures for population, CLF, employment, and available labor are smaller in absolute terms compared to earlier studies.

The table also shows, however, that 2025 recorded the highest Available Labor Pool as a percentage of the regional population, while the lowest percentage was observed in 2009.

Table 13: Key Population and Employment Indicators Through Time

	2005*	2009	2012	2015	2018	2025**
Region Population	444,308	491,086	511,627	528,679	531,838	359,083
Civilian Labor Force	227,279	245,925	246,603	256,020	264,431	170,060
Employed	214,532	230,619	222,708	239,273	252,084	163,730
Unemployment Rate	5.8%	6.5%	9.7%	6.5%	4.7%	3.7%
Available Labor Pool (Pool)	126,278	129,694	149,840	163,525	155,009	113,016
Pool Percent of Population	28.4%	26.4%	29.3%	30.9%	29.1%	31.5%

* The Henry County Labor Basin was not included in the 2005 and 2009 studies.

** The 2025 labor region was truncated to ZIP Code areas within a 30- to 35-minute commute time from the center of one of the five labor basins.

Figure 42 shows that there is a higher percentage of “non-employed and looking” members of the Pool in 2025 than in previous years. The “employed but interested” category is also highest as a percentage in 2025. The 2012 study has the highest percentage of “non-employed but interested,” but the lowest “employed and looking.”

Figure 42: Available Labor Pool Comparison Through Time

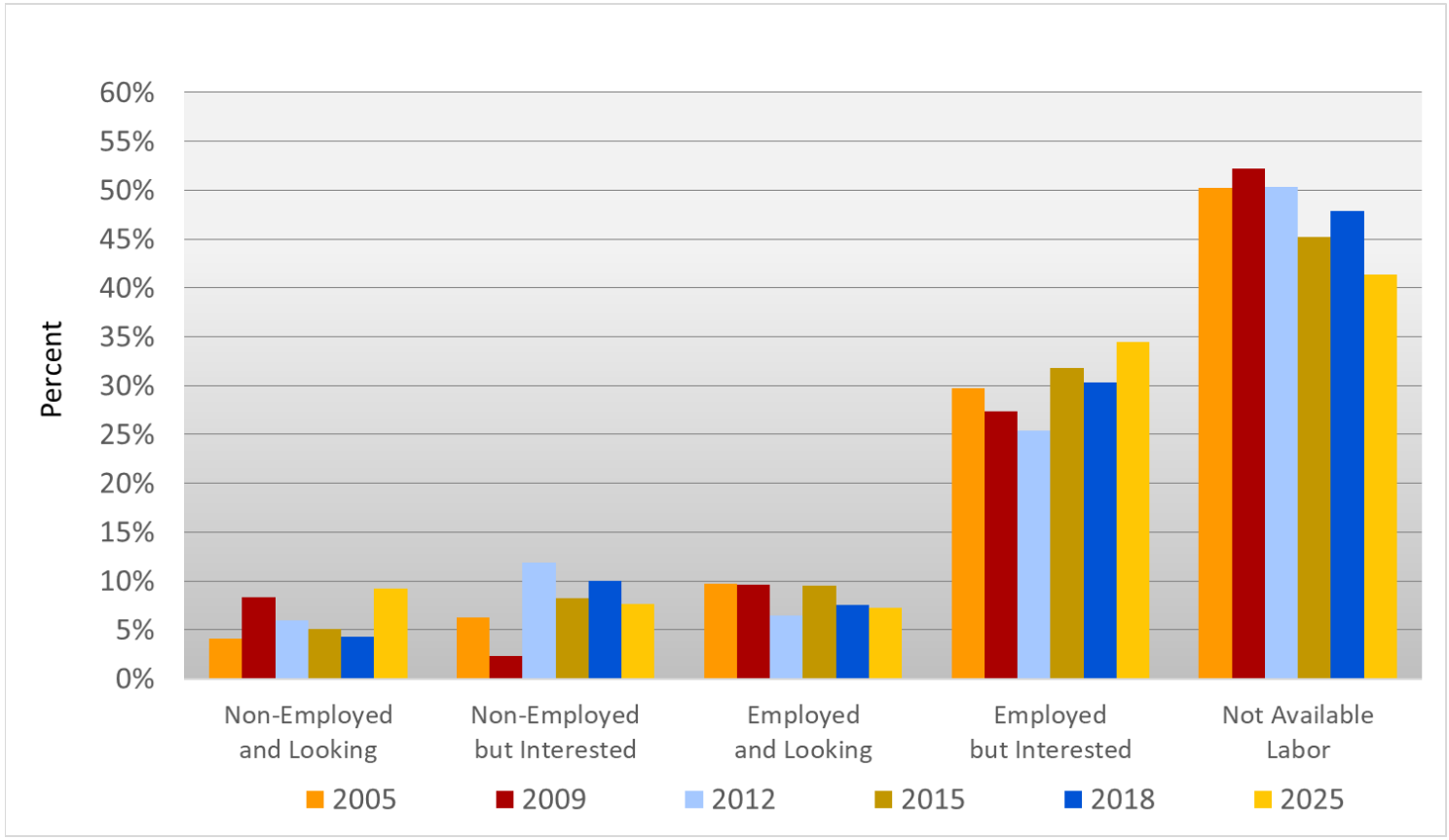


Table 14 compares occupational sectors and education levels from the six study years. The 2005 and 2009 studies stand out with the lowest percentages of non-employed pool members. The highest percentage of non-employed pool members occurred in 2012.

The table also shows the education levels of the six years. The 2025 Pool has a notably larger percentage of members with master's degrees (20.8%) compared to percentages in 2005 (9%) and 2018 (15.2%).

Table 14: Available Labor Pool Occupational Sectors and Education Levels Comparison Through Time

	2005*			2009			2012			2015			2018			2025**		
Labor Sector	Number	Percent		Number	Percent		Number	Percent		Number	Percent		Number	Percent		Number	Percent	
Semi-Skilled	27,758	22.0		26,214	20.2		21,744	14.5		28,042	17.1		28,456	18.4		15,471	13.7	
Highly Skilled Labor	8,899	7.0		11,355	8.8		11,253	7.5		16,525	10.1		12,353	8.0		11,797	10.4	
Service Sector	34,666	27.5		43,157	33.3		42,351	28.3		56,284	34.4		54,608	35.2		35,466	31.4	
Professional	28,980	22.9		21,445	16.5		21,288	14.2		22,501	13.8		16,796	10.8		17,744	15.7	
Non-Employed	25,975	20.6		27,523	21.2		53,203	35.5		40,173	24.6		42,796	27.6		32,539	28.8	
Total	**126,278**	**100**		**129,694**	**100**		**149,839**	**100**		**163,525**	**100**		**155,009**	**100**		**113,016**	**100**	
			Cumulative			Cumulative			Cumulative			Cumulative			Cumulative			Cumulative
Highest Education	Number	Percent	Percent	Number	Percent	Percent	Number	Percent	Percent	Number	Percent	Percent	Number	Percent	Percent	Number	Percent	Percent
Doctoral Degree	809	0.6	0.6	2,558	2.0	2.0	2,680	1.8	1.8	2,376	1.5	1.5	3,371	2.2	2.2	4,640	4.1	4.1
Master's Degree	11,368	9.0	9.6	12,286	9.5	11.4	15,998	10.7	12.5	18,156	11.1	12.6	20,257	13.1	15.2	23,531	20.8	24.9
Bachelor's Degree	19,537	15.5	25.1	22,372	17.2	28.7	23,048	15.4	27.8	33,392	20.4	33.0	44,375	28.6	43.9	25,188	22.3	47.2
Associate's Degree	11,464	9.1	34.2	11,999	9.3	37.9	21,075	14.1	41.9	21,044	12.9	45.8	22,294	14.4	58.3	13,588	12.0	59.2
Some College	36,634	29.0	63.2	39,793	30.7	68.6	31,944	21.3	63.2	37,315	22.8	68.7	30,157	19.5	77.7	23,531	20.8	80.1
High School Diploma	39,687	31.4	94.6	34,645	26.7	95.3	46,159	30.8	94.0	44,281	27.1	95.7	30,435	19.6	97.3	19,554	17.3	97.4
Less HS Diploma	6,779	5.4	***100***	6,040	4.7	***100***	8,936	6.0	***100***	6,961	4.3	***100***	4,120	2.7	***100***	2,983	2.6	**100**
Total	**126,278**	**100**		**129,693**	**100**		**149,840**	**100**		**163,525**	**100**		**155,009**	**100**		**113,016**	**100**	

* Henry County was not included in the 2005 study

** The 2025 labor basin was truncated to ZIP Code areas within a 30- to 35-minute commute from center of one of the labor basins.

Table 15 presents responses to the question, “Are you willing to take a job outside of your primary field of employment or experience?” It also includes data on willingness to work various shifts. Three shift-related questions (weekends, second/night shift, and rotating shifts) were introduced in 2009. In the 2025 survey, the second/night shift item was split into two distinct questions: one addressing second shift and the other night shift.

The percentage of Pool members willing to work outside their primary field ranged from 87% in 2005 to 79.7% in 2015.

Compared to earlier survey years, the 2025 Pool showed lower “yes” response rates across all shift-related questions (except for the night shift, which was added in 2025).

Table 15: Willing to Work Outside of Field and Work Shift Comparison Through Time

	2005*		2009		2012		2015		2018		2025**	
Ordered by 2025	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Willing to Work Outside of Primary Field?	109,862	87.0	108,035	83.3	126,611	84.5	130,394	79.7	125,531	81.0	94,141	83.3
Will Work 2nd Shift?***	n/a	n/a	72,110	55.6	85,409	57.0	89,285	54.6	88,406	57.0	51,763	45.8
Will Work Weekends?	n/a	n/a	70,813	54.6	84,360	56.3	88,794	54.3	86,554	55.8	48,130	42.6
Will Work Rotating Shifts?	n/a	n/a	53,693	41.4	70,425	47.0	70,152	42.9	62,968	40.6	39,654	35.1
Will Work Night Shift?	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	28,152	24.9

* Henry County was not included in the 2005 study

** The 2025 labor basin was truncated to ZIP Code areas within a 30- to 35-minute commute from center of one of the labor basins.

*** Until 2025, 2nd Shift and Night Shift were combined. Both shifts are shown in "2nd shift" for 2009, 2012, 2015, and 2018.

Figure 43 compares “minutes willing to commute” across six study years. Sharp declines in the Pool are evident between 30–35 minutes and again between 45–50 minutes. The steepest drop between 30 and 35 minutes occurs in 2025, while 2009 and 2015 show the most modest declines in that interval.

In the current study (2025), approximately half of the Available Labor Pool is willing to commute up to 33 minutes one-way for a new or different job. By contrast, in 2015, half of the Pool was willing to travel up to 46 minutes for a job opportunity.

Figure 43: Available Labor Pool by Commute Minutes Comparison Through Time

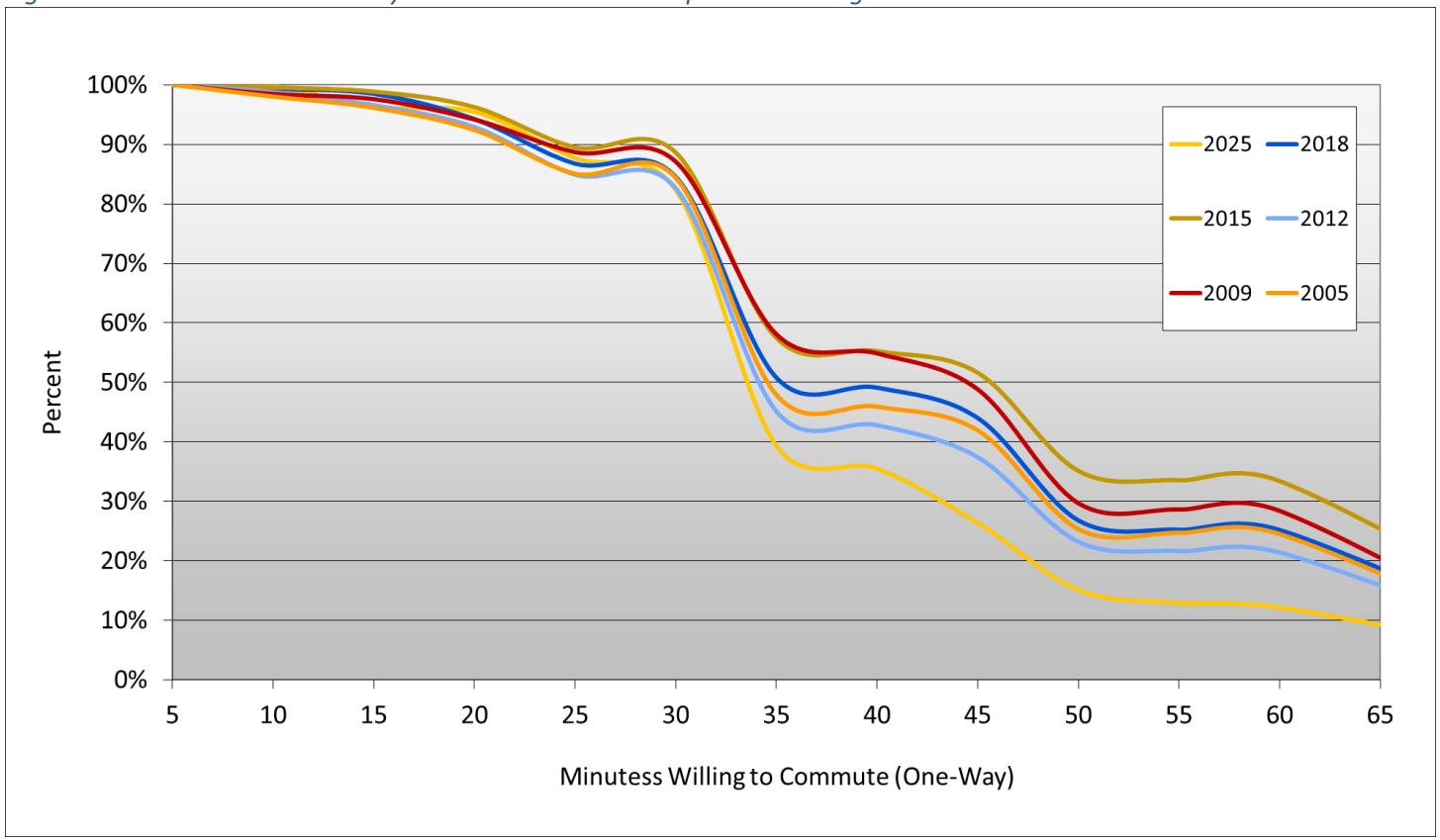


Table 16 shows the relative importance of various benefits or opportunities, ranked in order of 2025 responses. Good salary or hourly pay was the most important benefit/opportunity each year except in 2005 and 2025. On-the-job (OJT) or paid training was the most important benefit in 2005 and good vacation benefits were the most important in 2025.

Table 16: Very Important Benefits/Opportunities for a New Job Through Time

	2005*	2009	2012	2015	2018	2025**
Ranked by 2025 Report			*Percent Responding "Yes"*			
Good Vacation Benefits	78.9	79.3	74.0	83.2	79.0	89.8
Sick Leave	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	84.8
Good Salary or Hourly Pay	81.9	88.8	83.1	88.0	88.4	81.9
Good Health Benefits	87.3	87.3	82.3	83.4	79.7	81.0
Good Retirement Benefits	86.7	84.7	81.8	84.5	76.5	80.8
Flextime or Flexible Hours	69.7	70.6	66.3	73.7	73.1	75.1
OJT or Paid Training	88.0	86.7	81.0	82.4	82.4	68.9
Remote Work	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	67.7
Transportation Assistance to Work	n/a	33	33.2	26.8	22	39.6
Good Educational Assistance	64.8	52.2	50.2	51.9	35.7	33.1
Elder Care Assistance	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	23.7
Child Care Assistance	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	13.2	14.5

* The Henry County Labor Basin was not included in the 2005 and 2009 studies.

** The 2025 labor region was truncated to ZIP Code areas within a 30- to 35-minute commute time from the center of one of the labor basins.

Note: Transportation Assistance was added in 2009 and Child Care Assistance was added in 2018. Remote Work, Sick Leave, and Elder Care were added in 2025.

Figure 44 shows a comparison of expected hourly wages over time across six study groups. The 2025 data stand out, with consistently lower cumulative percentages of the Pool at each wage level up to $50 per hour.

Figure 44: Available Labor Pool by Hourly Wage Comparison Through Time

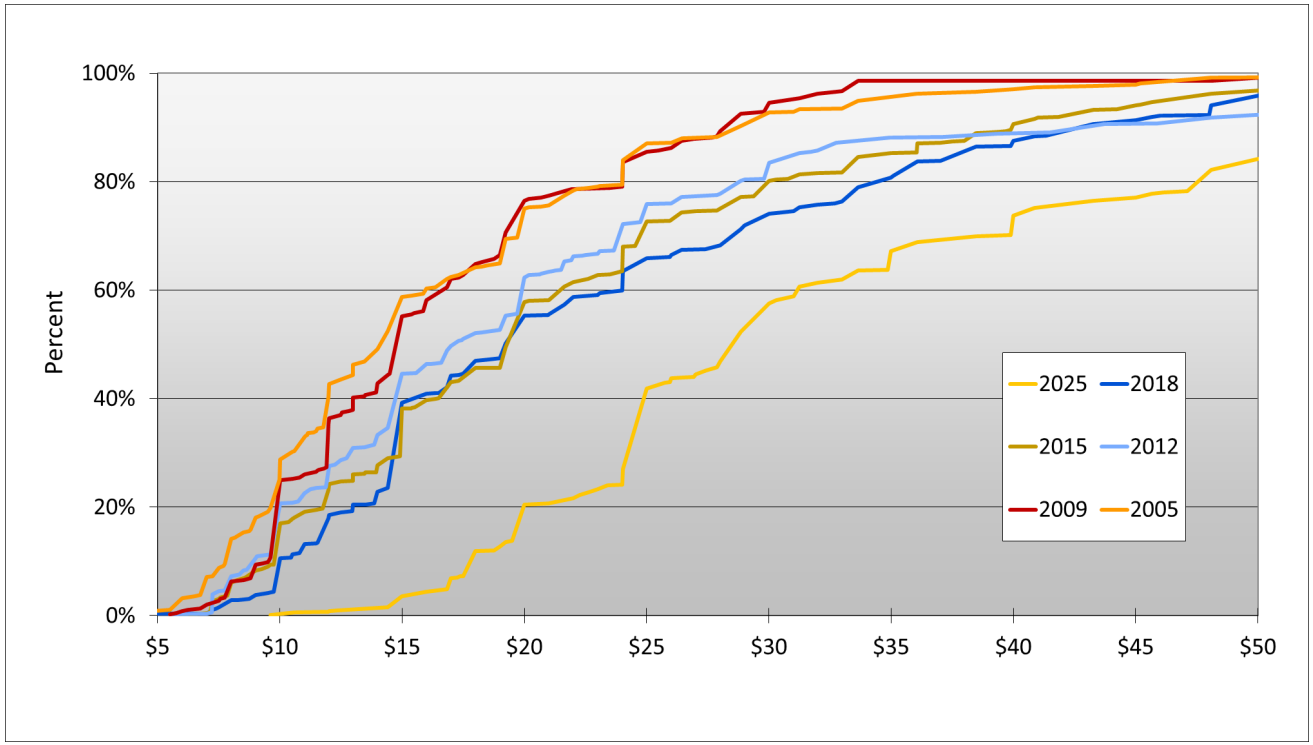


Table 17 compares underemployed members of the Available Labor Pools across six study years. The highest percentage of underemployed workers was observed in 2025 (58.6%), while the lowest was in 2018 (22.2%).

Underemployment in semi-skilled labor occupations peaked in 2015 (30.5%) and 2018 (30.3%) and was lowest in 2025 (22.9%). In contrast, the share of underemployed workers in highly skilled positions was highest in 2025 (15.5%) and lowest in 2018 (5.2%).

The service sector reached its highest share of workers in 2018 (53.6%), while the lowest was recorded in 2009 (45.2%); 2025 was nearly as low at 45.9%. Underemployed professional workers peaked in 2025 (15.7%), with 2005 showing a nearly identical level (15.6%). The lowest incidence of underemployment occurred in 2015 (10.7%), closely followed by 2018 (10.9%).

The proportion of underemployed individuals holding advanced degrees (master's or doctorate) reached its highest level in 2025 (29.4%) and its lowest in 2009 (8.2%).

Table 17: Underemployed Workers Occupational Sectors and Education Levels Comparison Through Time

	2005*			2009			2012			2015			2018			2025**		
	Number	Percent		Number	Percent		Number	Percent		Number	Percent		Number	Percent		Number	Percent	
Employed of ALP	100,303	79.4		91,189	77.6		96,637	64.5		123,352	75.4		112,213	72.4		80,478	71.2	
Underemployed Workers	***47,822***	***47.6***		***29,183***	***32.0***		***30,924***	***32.0***		***39,733***	***32.2***		***24,862***	***22.2***		***47,197***	***58.6***	
Willing to Change Job to	41,755	87.3		24,602	84.3		25,760	83.3		20,335	51.2		12,441	50.0		27,229	57.7	
Address Employment Status																		
Labor Sector	Number	Percent		Number	Percent		Number	Percent		Number	Percent		Number	Percent		Number	Percent	
Semi-Skilled	12,260	25.6		7,938	27.2		7,236	23.4		12,107	30.5		7,528	30.3		10,808	22.9	
Highly Skilled Labor	5,965	12.5		3,794	13.0		3,185	10.3		4,889	12.3		1,297	5.2		7,316	15.5	
Service Sector	22,118	46.3		13,191	45.2		16,328	52.8		18,494	46.5		13,323	53.6		21,664	45.9	
Professional	7,479	15.6		4,261	14.6		4,175	13.5		4,243	10.7		2,714	10.9		7,410	15.7	
Total	**47,822**	**100**		**29,184**	**100**		**30,924**	**100**		**39,733**	**100**		**24,862**	**100**		**47,197**	**100**	
			Cumulative			Cumulative			Cumulative			Cumulative			Cumulative			Cumulative
Highest Education	Number	Percent	Percent	Number	Percent	Percent	Number	Percent	Percent	Number	Percent	Percent	Number	Percent	Percent	Number	Percent	Percent
Doctoral Degree	452	0.9	0.9	603	2.1	2.1	557	1.8	1.8	436	1.1	1.1	366	1.5	1.5	1,320	2.8	2.8
Master's Degree	3,853	8.1	9.0	1,776	6.1	8.2	2,474	8.0	9.8	4,494	11.3	12.4	2,458	9.9	11.4	12,542	26.6	29.4
Bachelor's Degree	8,990	18.8	27.8	4,514	15.5	23.6	6,247	20.2	30.0	6,920	17.4	29.8	7,700	31.0	42.3	11,222	23.8	53.1
Associate's Degree	4,654	9.7	37.5	3,683	12.6	36.2	4,886	15.8	45.8	5,962	15.0	44.8	4,185	16.8	59.2	5,281	11.2	64.3
Some College	14,625	30.6	68.1	9,054	31.0	67.3	7,669	24.8	70.6	9,510	23.9	68.8	5,040	20.3	79.4	6,271	13.3	77.6
High School Diploma	13,379	28.0	96.1	8,483	29.1	96.3	7,607	24.6	95.2	10,897	27.4	96.2	4,333	17.4	96.9	9,571	20.3	97.9
Less HS Diploma	1,869	3.9	***100***	1,069	3.7	***100***	1,484	4.8	***100***	1,514	3.8	***100***	780	3.1	***100***	990	2.1	**100**
Total	**47,822**	**100**		**29,182**	**100**		**30,924**	**100**		**39,733**	**100**		**24,862**	**100**		**47,197**	**100**	

* Henry County was not included in the 2005 study

** The 2025 labor basin was truncated to ZIP Code areas within a 30- to 35-minute commute from center of one of the labor basins.

Methods

The Central Missouri Labor Region includes 114 ZIP Code areas across 16 counties, each located within a 30- to 35-minute commute of one of five labor basins centered in Henry, Johnson, Lafayette, Pettis, and Saline Counties. The region has a population of 359,083 and a Civilian Labor Force of 170,060. The number of employed residents is 163,730. The Docking Institute's analysis suggests that the region contains an Available Labor Pool of 113,016 individuals.

Explaining the Civilian Labor Force

Traditional methods of assessing the dynamics of the labor force have concentrated on what the Bureau of Labor Statistics calls the Civilian Labor Force. The Civilian Labor Force represents "the civilian non-institutional population, 16 years of age and over classified as employed or unemployed." The BLS defines "non-institutional civilians" as those individuals who are not inmates in institutions and who are not on active duty in the Armed Forces; and "unemployed civilians" as civilians available for work and who had "made specific efforts to find employment" in the previous four weeks.

While a review of Civilian Labor Force statistics represents the starting point for understanding the labor force in the Central Missouri Labor Region, there are some limitations associated with these statistics. These limitations occur because the Civilian Labor Force *excludes* individuals who may be willing and able to be gainfully employed but have not made specific efforts to find employment in the last four weeks. These individuals may include full-time students, homemakers, the unemployed who are no longer seeking employment, military personnel who may be leaving military employment soon, and retired individuals who may be available for work but have not been looking for work recently.

In addition, most new employers draw their workforce from those who are presently employed. Bureau of Labor Statistics data (such as the Civilian Labor Force) do not specifically address the possibility of workers moving from one industry to another in search of other employment opportunities.

Defining the Available Labor Pool

An alternative to the Civilian Labor Force is the "Available Labor Pool.[8]" The Available Labor Pool is composed of workers of working age (18-65) categorized as either 1) currently not working *and* looking for employment, 2) currently not working *but* might be interested in employment, 3) currently working *and* looking for other full-time employment, and 4) currently working and not looking *but* might be interested in different employment for the right opportunities.

[8] The Available Labor Pool includes potential workers excluded from the Civilian Labor Force (such as full-time students willing to take a job, homemakers who have not yet sought employment, military personnel who may be leaving military employment soon, and retired individuals who may be willing and able to be gainfully employed).

There are two key differences between the Civilian Labor Force and the Available Labor Pool. First, the Available Labor Pool methodology expands the pool of potential workers by including workers excluded from the Civilian Labor Force.[9] Secondly, the number of potential workers is then *restricted* to those working-age workers who indicate they are looking for work or that may be interested in new employment for the right opportunities. The advantage of this methodology is that it allows researchers to examine those members of the labor pool who have a propensity to consider a job opportunity given their employment expectations. Even with these restrictions, it should be noted that, in practice, not all members of the Available Labor Pool would apply for a new job opportunity. However, the Available Labor Pool figure for the region reveals to current and potential employers better information about the quantity and quality of the labor pool than Civilian Labor Force data and unemployment statistics alone. The Available Labor Pool represents a substantial number of working-age workers and potential workers for employers to draw upon in the Central Missouri Labor Region.

Description of Survey Research Methods

For studies conducted in 2005, 2009, 2012, 2015, and 2018, data were collected from a random digit telephone survey of area adults, using the Docking Institute's Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) system. The primary data collection method in 2025 included address-based sampling (ABS) and paper booklet questionnaires. The Institute purchased an address-based sample of households from an expert sampling vendor. Questionnaire instructions asked that an adult (18 or older) in the household participate in the survey. The self-administered questionnaire booklet was designed to be taped shut and dropped in the mail upon completing the questions, as the back cover is printed with business-reply postage and pre-addressed for return to the Docking Institute. Respondents were also given an opportunity to complete the survey online.

The initial booklet was sent to 28,500 area residents in April 2025. A second wave to non-responding households was sent in May 2025. A postcard reminder was sent to non-responding households following the second wave of booklet. The postcard contained a QR Code and instructions to complete the survey online. Email invitations asking respondents to complete the survey online were also sent to members of non-responding households.

The combined mailings and online surveys resulted in 988 complete interviews. The response rate was 3.71% after excluding undeliverable booklets. Assuming no response bias, the sample's margin of error is ±3.12%, meaning we can be 95% confident that the survey results are within 3.12 percentage points of the true values we would obtain if the entire population of interest were surveyed.

[9] The additional number added to the Civilian Labor Force is derived from survey respondents who identify as full-time students, homemakers, military personnel, retirees, disabled individuals, or long-term unemployed *AND* who indicate they are seeking employment or open to the right job opportunity. This subgroup is expressed as a proportion of total respondents, and that quotient is then multiplied by the total number of working-age individuals (ages 18 to 65) in the labor basin.

From Labor Basin to Available Labor Pool

The Available Labor Pool (Pool) consists of working-age individuals interested in new or different employment. As such, survey respondents aged 65 and older and retired and not interested in new employment were not asked the entire battery of survey questions and are not included in the analysis presented in this report. The remaining 637 respondents (comprising employed and non-employed individuals) represent the eligible sample. Of these, 58% (or 373 people) expressed interest in pursuing another job or exploring new employment opportunities under the right conditions. This group constitutes the Available Labor Pool for the Central Missouri Labor Region. The margin of error for this subgroup is ±5.08%.

The study sponsors and Institute personnel agreed upon the survey items used, with the former identifying the study objectives and the latter developing items and methodologies that were valid, reliable, and unbiased. Question wording and design of the survey instrument are the property of the Docking Institute.[10]

[10] A detailed summary of the method of analysis used in this report can be found in Joseph A. Aistrup, Michael S. Walker and Brett A. Zollinger, "The Kansas Labor Force Survey: The Available Labor Pool and Underemployment." *Kansas Department of Human Resources*, 2002.

Glossary of Terms

Central Missouri Labor Region – This region encompasses 114 ZIP Code areas across Bates, Benton, Carroll, Cass, Chariton, Cooper, Henry, Howard, Jackson, Johnson, Lafayette, Morgan, Pettis, Ray, Saline, and St. Clair Counties in Missouri. Each selected ZIP Code lies within a 30- to 35-minute one-way commute to one of the central hubs of five labor basins, located in Henry, Johnson, Lafayette, Pettis, and Saline Counties.

Civilian Labor Force – The Civilian Labor Force represents "the civilian non-institutional population, 16 years of age and over classified as employed or unemployed." The Bureau of Labor Statistics defines "non-institutional civilians" as those individuals who are not inmates in institutions and who are not on active duty in the Armed Forces; and "unemployed civilians" as civilians available for work and who had "made specific efforts to find employment" in the previous four weeks.

Available Labor Pool – The Available Labor Pool is composed of workers and potential workers categorized as either 1) currently non-employed *and* looking for employment, 2) currently non-employed *but* interested in a new job given the right opportunities, 3) employed (full- or part-time) *and* looking for other full-time employment, and 4) currently employed and not looking, *but* interested in different employment given the right opportunities.

Expected Wage – The hourly wage that a respondent would expect to earn at a new or different job given the right opportunities. If a respondent offers a yearly salary instead of an hourly wage, an hourly wage is computed by dividing the salary by 2,080.

Underemployment – Individuals who perceive themselves as possessing skills and/or training levels that exceed the responsibilities of their current job, have educations that exceed those necessary for their current job, have earned a higher salary/hour wage for a previous but similar job, or are unable to work as many hours as desired at their current job.

Job Sectors – "Job sectors" include (with examples shown):

> ***Semi-skilled labor*** includes occupations such as cleaning, construction, delivery, and maintenance.
>
> ***Highly Skilled Labor*** includes occupations such as police, firefighting, postal worker, welder, high-skilled mechanics, welder, computer technician, and lab technician.
>
> ***Service Sector*** includes occupations such as clerical worker, server, retail salesclerk, bookkeeper, para-professional, certified nurse's assistant, nurse, teacher, and small business manager.
>
> ***Professional Sector*** includes occupations such as administrator, business executive, professional salesperson, doctor, lawyer, professor, and engineer.

Appendix 1: Hourly Wage to Annual Salary Conversion Chart

Table 18: Hourly Wage/Annual Salary

Hourly Wage	Annual Salary
$5.00	$10,400
$5.50	$11,440
$6.00	$12,480
$6.50	$13,520
$7.00	$14,560
$7.50	$15,600
$8.00	$16,640
$8.50	$17,680
$9.00	$18,720
$9.50	$19,760
$10.00	$20,800
$10.50	$21,840
$11.00	$22,880
$11.50	$23,920
$12.00	$24,960
$12.50	$26,000
$13.00	$27,040
$13.50	$28,080
$14.00	$29,120
$14.50	$30,160
$15.00	$31,200
$15.50	$32,240
$16.00	$33,280
$16.50	$34,320
$17.00	$35,360
$17.50	$36,400
$18.00	$37,440
$18.50	$38,480
$19.00	$39,520
$19.50	$40,560
$20.00	$41,600
$20.50	$42,640
$21.00	$43,680
$21.50	$44,720
$22.00	$45,760
$22.50	$46,800
$23.00	$47,840
$23.50	$48,880
$24.00	$49,920
$24.50	$50,960
$25.00	$52,000
$25.50	$53,040
$26.00	$54,080
$26.50	$55,120
$27.00	$56,160
$27.50	$57,200
$28.00	$58,240
$28.50	$59,280
$29.00	$60,320
$29.50	$61,360
$30.00	$62,400
$30.50	$63,440
$30.50	$63,440
$31.00	$64,480
$31.50	$65,520
$32.00	$66,560
$32.50	$67,600
$33.00	$68,640
$33.50	$69,680
$34.00	$70,720
$34.50	$71,760
$35.00	$72,800
$35.50	$73,840
$36.00	$74,880
$36.50	$75,920
$37.00	$76,960
$37.50	$78,000
$38.00	$79,040
$38.50	$80,080
$39.00	$81,120
$39.50	$82,160
$40.00	$83,200
$40.50	$84,240
$41.00	$85,280
$41.50	$86,320
$42.00	$87,360
$42.50	$88,400
$43.00	$89,440
$43.50	$90,480
$44.00	$91,520
$44.50	$92,560
$45.00	$93,600
$45.50	$94,640
$46.00	$95,680
$46.50	$96,720
$47.00	$97,760
$47.50	$98,800
$48.00	$99,840
$48.50	$100,880
$49.00	$101,920
$49.50	$102,960
$50.00	$104,000
$50.50	$105,040
$51.00	$106,080
$51.50	$107,120
$52.00	$108,160
$52.50	$109,200
$53.00	$110,240
$53.50	$111,280
$54.00	$112,320
$54.50	$113,360
$55.00	$114,400
$55.50	$115,440
$60.00	$124,800

Appendix 2: Infographics

Figure 45: Infographic – Available Labor, Employed, Underemployed

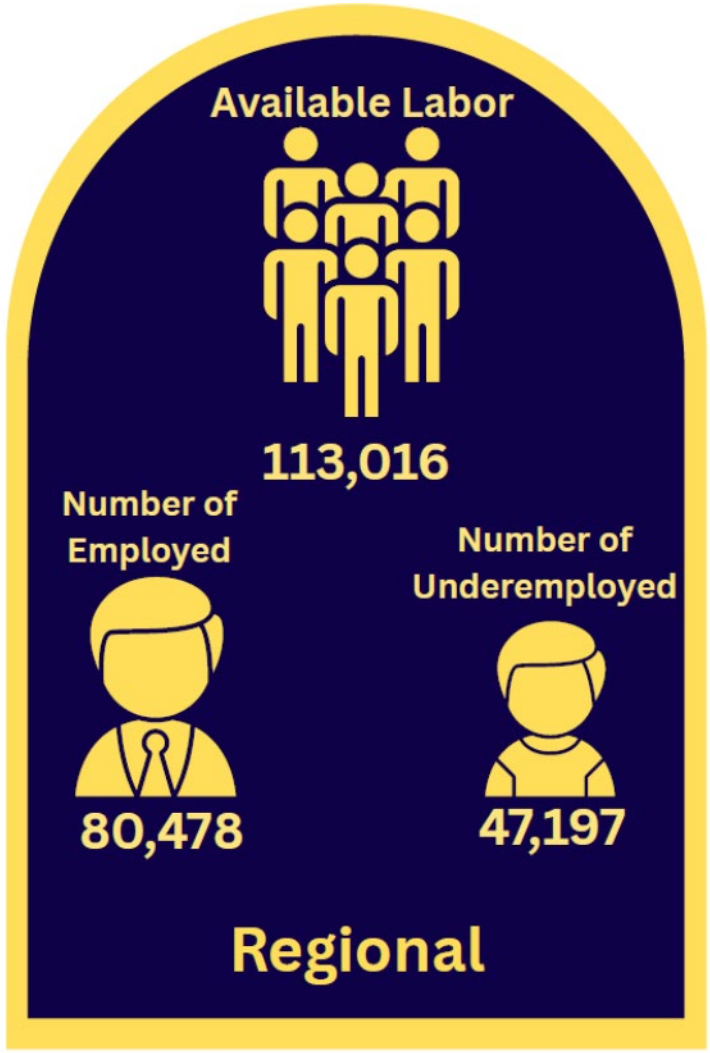


Figure 46: Infographic – Job Sectors

Figure 47: Infographic – Education Level

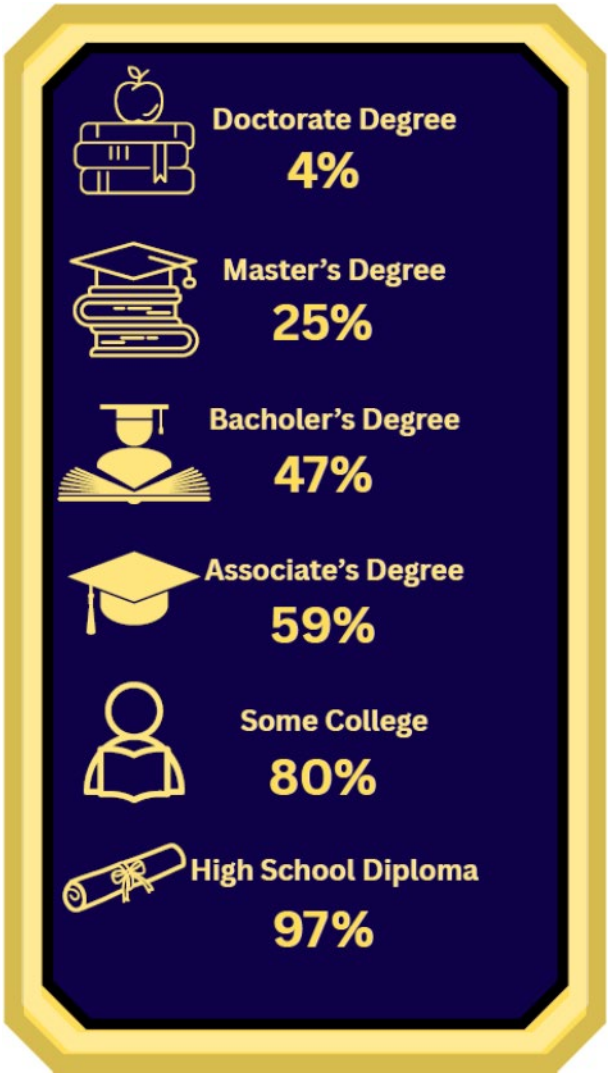


Figure 48: Infographic – Job Satisfaction

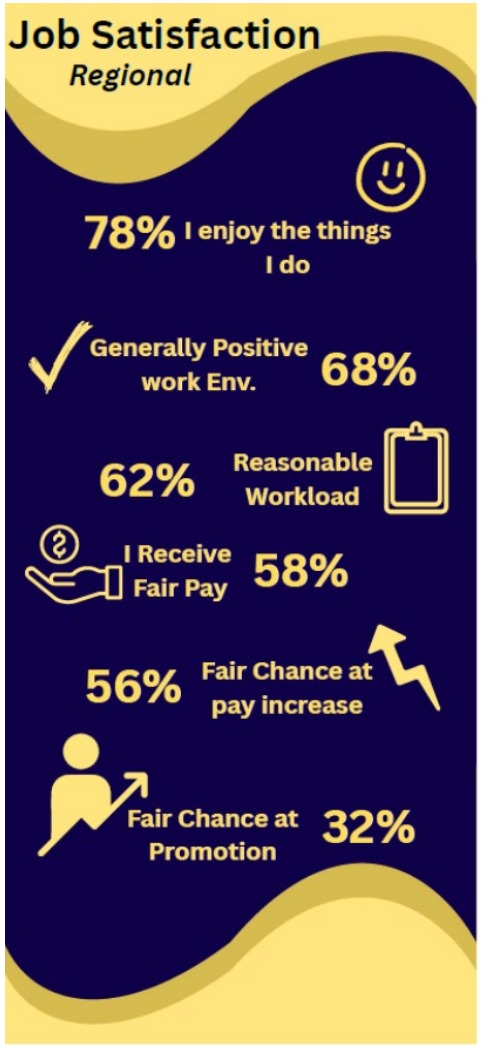


Figure 49: Infographic – Shift Options

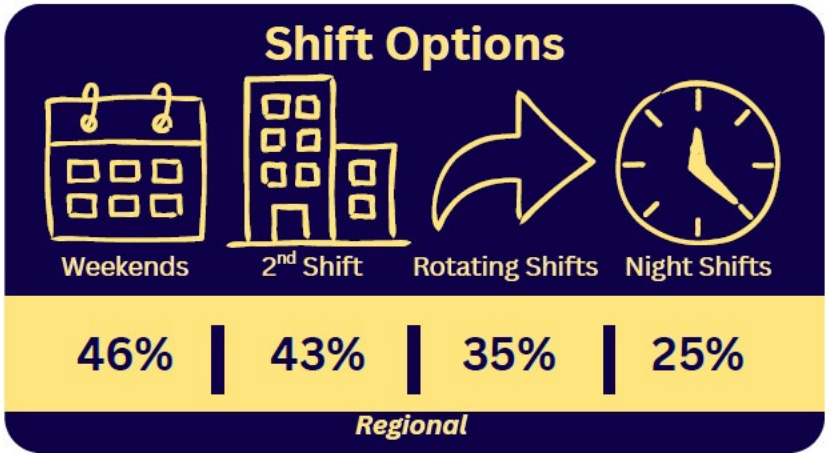


Figure 50: Infographic – Top Job Benefits