

Where Are the Workers?

GREATER NEW ORLEANS

Research Overview





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Who We Are

Intro to Trepwise and the team behind this research



We are a New Orleans based consulting firm with the mission to unlock the potential of purpose-driven organizations by aligning people, process, and vision.



Trepwise Team



Isaac MacDonald

Director of Planning and Impact,
WATW GNO Oversight

Isaac offered strategic support to this project, applying his expertise in systems coordination and his landscape knowledge from prior engagements with Clover, GNOF, and YouthForce Nola.



Haley Burns

Advisor,
WATW GNO Project Lead

Haley oversaw the success of research and report creation, leveraging her background in leading multiple New Orleans-based research projects focused on collecting and communicating hard-to-find community data.



Khi Van Allen

Associate,
WATW Project Manager

As project manager, Khi managed the coordination of Access Partners, supported in focus group facilitation, and assisted in report creation.



STRATEGY CONSULTING



ORGANIZATIONAL PLANNING

Solidify your strategic vision and identify the steps to bring it to life.

- Refine your **model** and **approach**
- Outline new paths **forward**
- Ignite lasting **change**



SYSTEMS COORDINATION

Collaborate with changemakers and institutions to address social challenges.

- Increase **collaboration** across stakeholders
- Identify shared **pain points** and **goals**
- Refine and reimagine **systems**



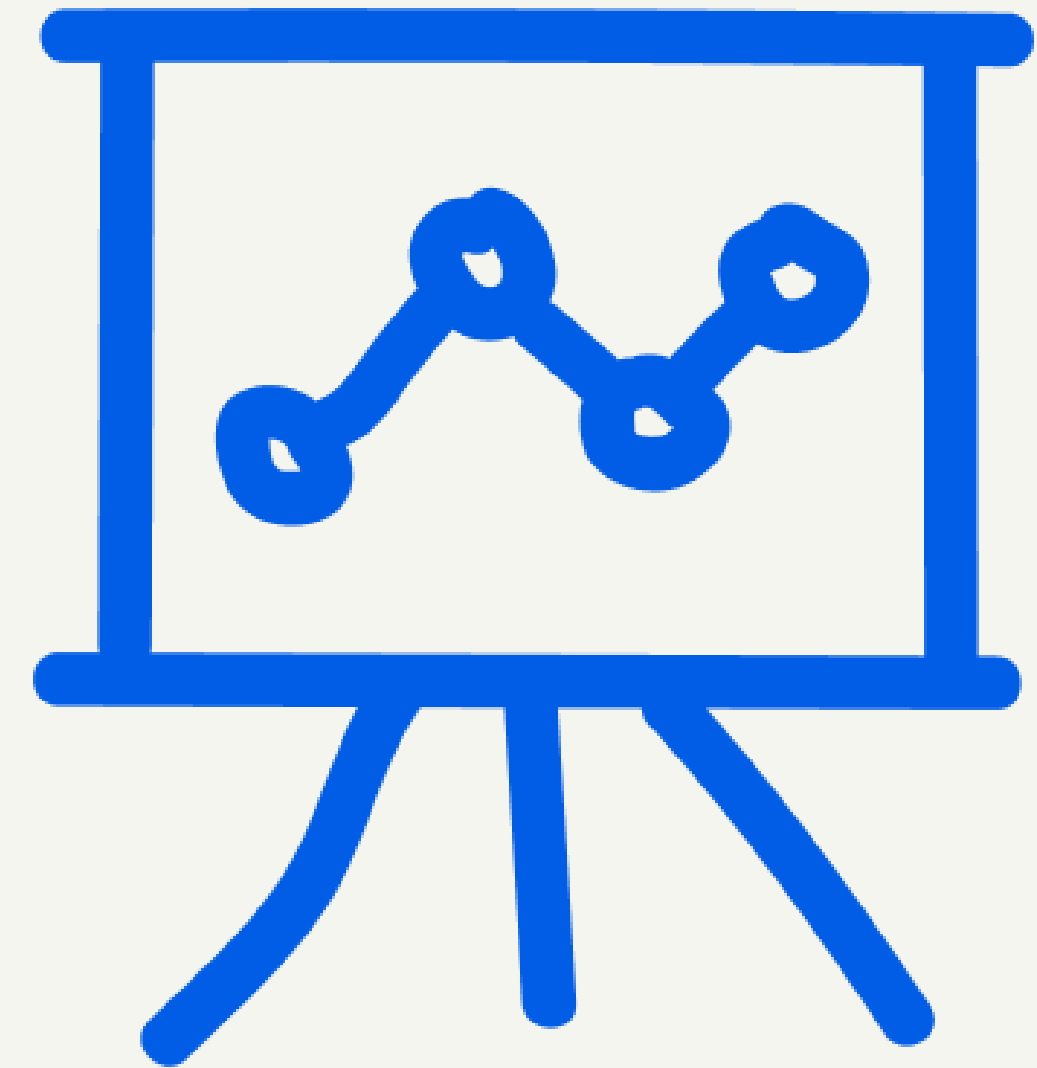
SOLUTIONS LAB

Come with a challenge, leave with a path forward.

- Find **answers** to complex questions
- Launch **new initiatives**
- Strengthen your **team** and organizational **culture**

About the Research

Overview of our methods, data, and the WATW GNO report.



Research Questions

What are the experiences and barriers to sustainable employment for underemployed or unemployed people that live below the ALICE threshold?"

What is the biggest opportunity for job training programs to drive recruitment, retention, and completion?

What is the role of employers and businesses, as well as service providers, in meeting the needs of today's workforce?

How can the ecosystem of service providers strategize collaboration to support job seekers?

Data Collection Methods

ONLINE SURVEY

An online survey was distributed through partner channels including newsletters, social media, and flyers. Our survey was modified from the original WATW project in Ohio and was open to anyone 16 years or older living or working in Orleans or Jefferson Parishes. Participation was incentivized via random selection of 2 participants to receive \$100 gift cards. The survey was open for 34 days.



FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups were conducted both virtually and in-person. Participants were given \$50 gift cards for their time and participation.

Survey participants were invited to sign up for focus groups, which were organized by employment status.

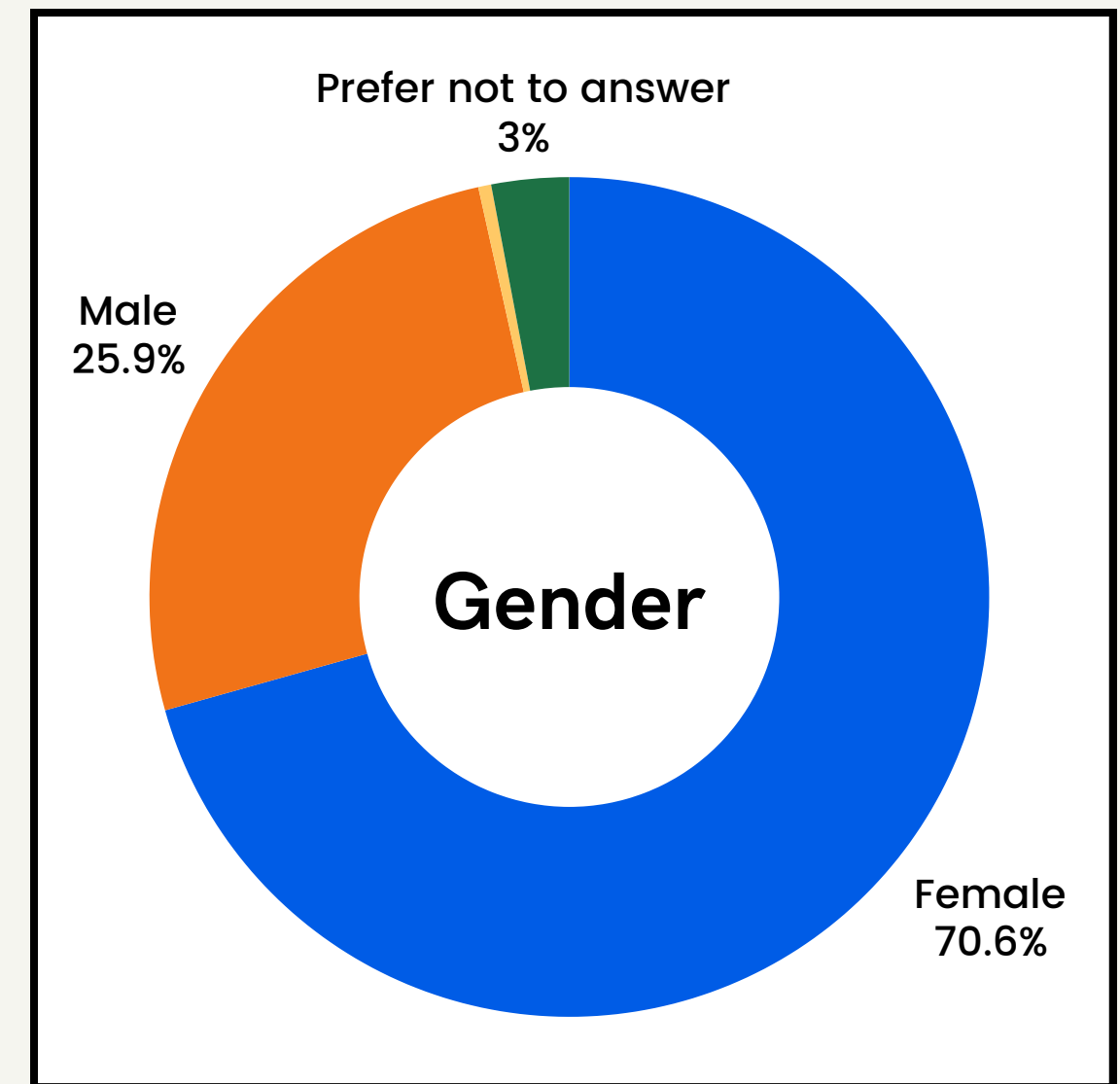
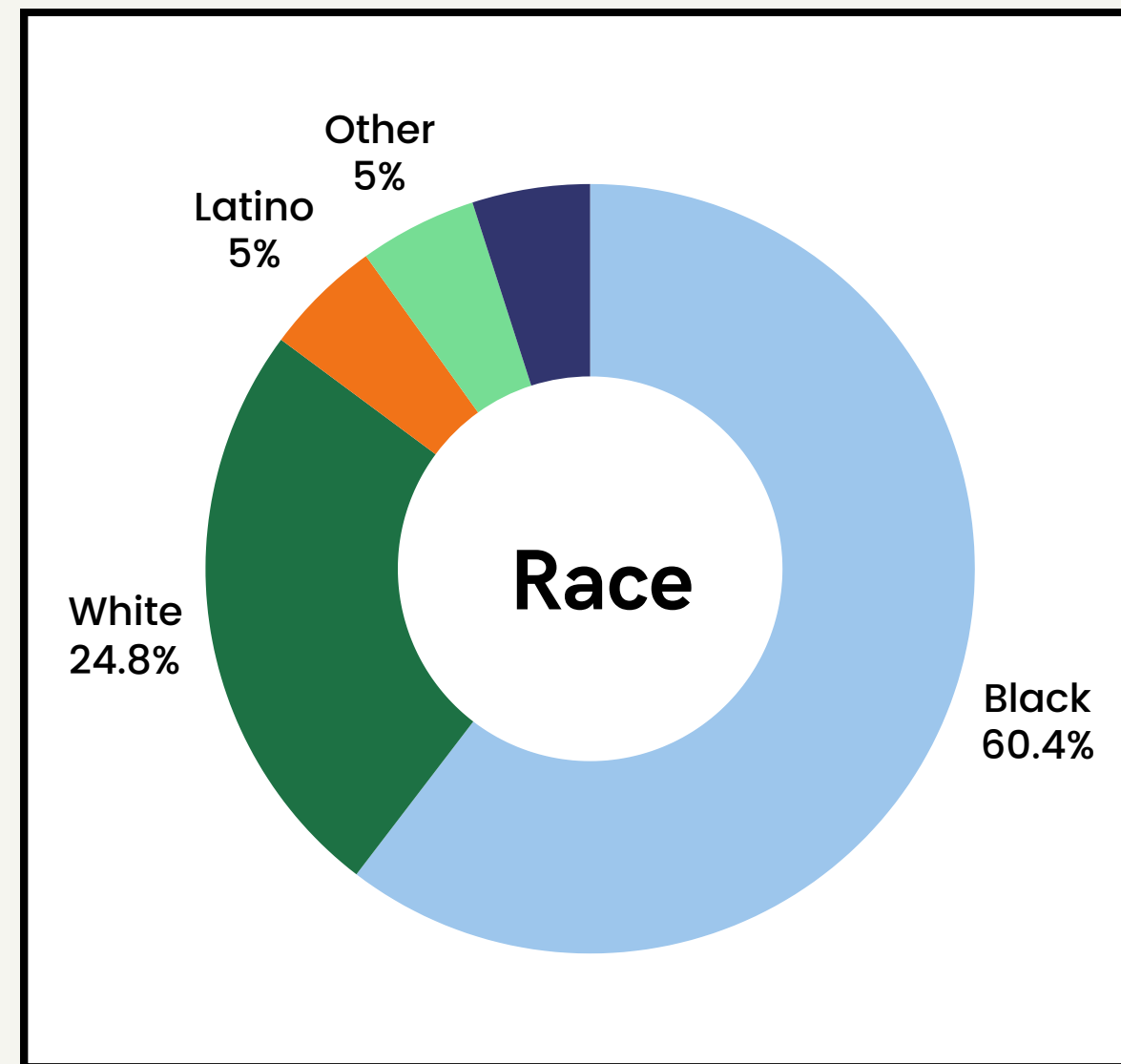
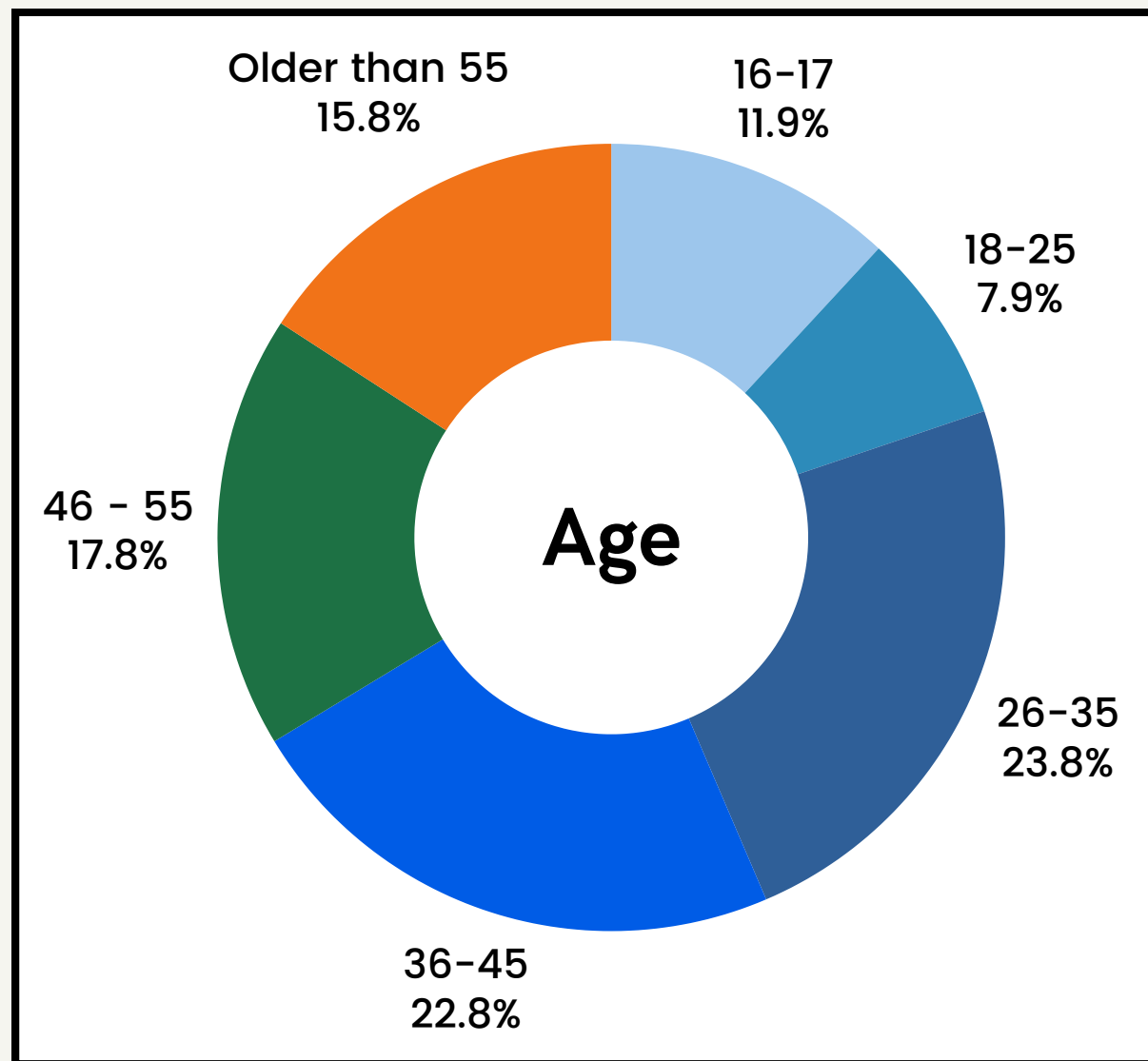


LANDSCAPE REVIEW

The report includes national and regional context on the current trends of today's workforce. We also conducted an extensive literature review of best practices and evaluations of workforce development programs to help shape our recommendations for the GNO ecosystem.

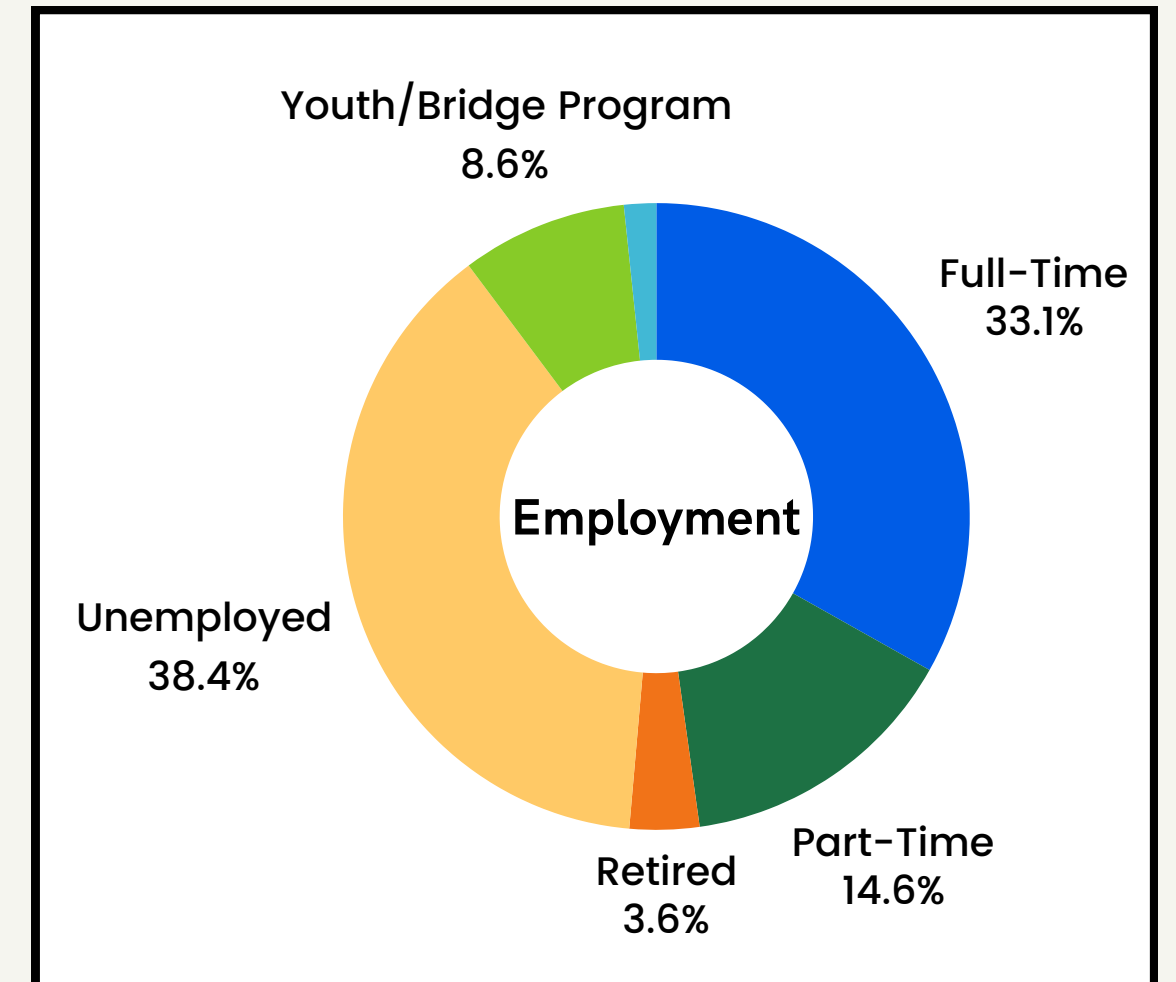
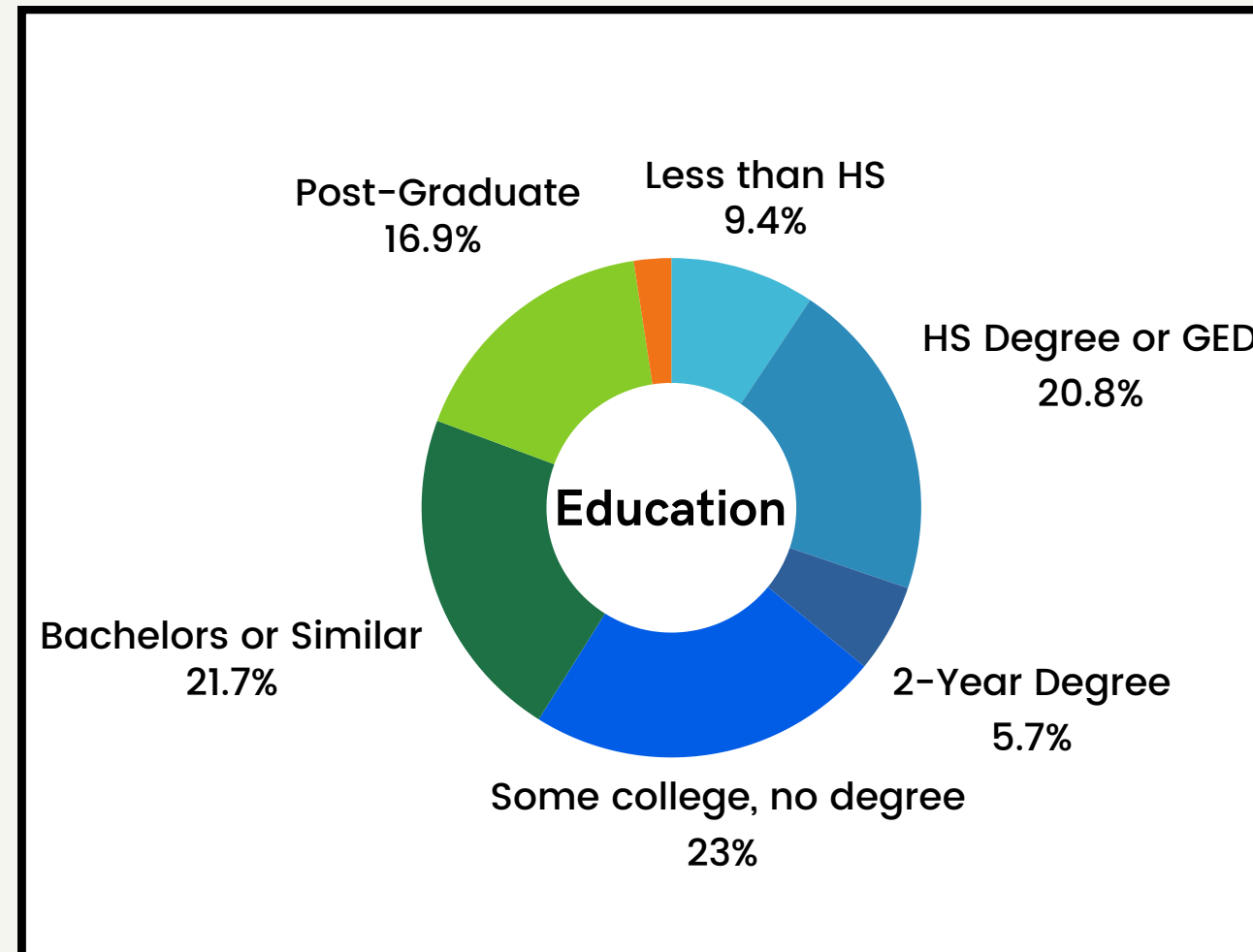
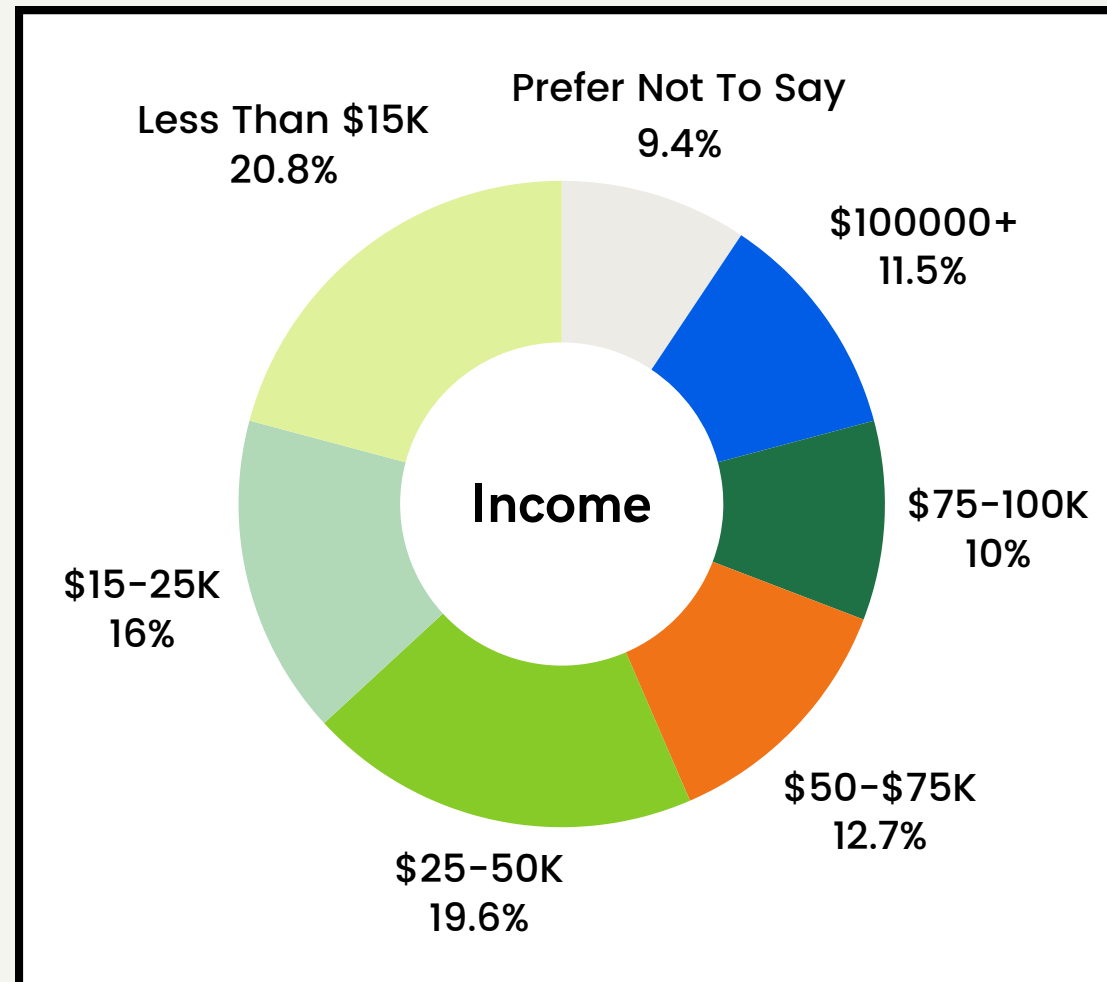
Respondent Demographics

The WATW GNO online survey had 362 complete responses.



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The WATW GNO online survey had 362 complete responses.



Report Contents

Where to navigate for more information

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2. National and Regional Workforce Landscape
3. Methodology and Data Overview
4. Challenges to Finding and Keeping Good Jobs
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8. A Brief Look at Youth Perceptions
9. Literature Review - Workforce Development Best Practices
10. Key Findings and Recommendations
11. Questions for Continued Investigation
12. Appendix - Agendas, survey instrument, online survey info



Key Findings

A selection of
unique insights

Key Findings: Challenges

The findings from our research suggest that worker perceptions are tied to a set of broader challenges that exist in the New Orleans job landscape.

Perceptions of Limited Opportunities and Nepotism

Age Discrimination and Wage Disparities

Lack of Awareness and Skepticism Towards Workforce Programs

Disconnect Between Program Satisfaction and Employment Outcomes

Systemic Inequities and Barriers to Program Participation

Remote and Hybrid Work Trends and Digital Skills Gap

What is a good job?

- 01 Compensation, Benefits, and Security
- 02 Positive Work Culture
- 03 Work-Life Balance & Fit
- 04 Meaning and Purpose
- 05 Opportunity for Continued Learning & Development

Challenges to Finding & Keeping Good Jobs

Low Wages + High Cost of Living

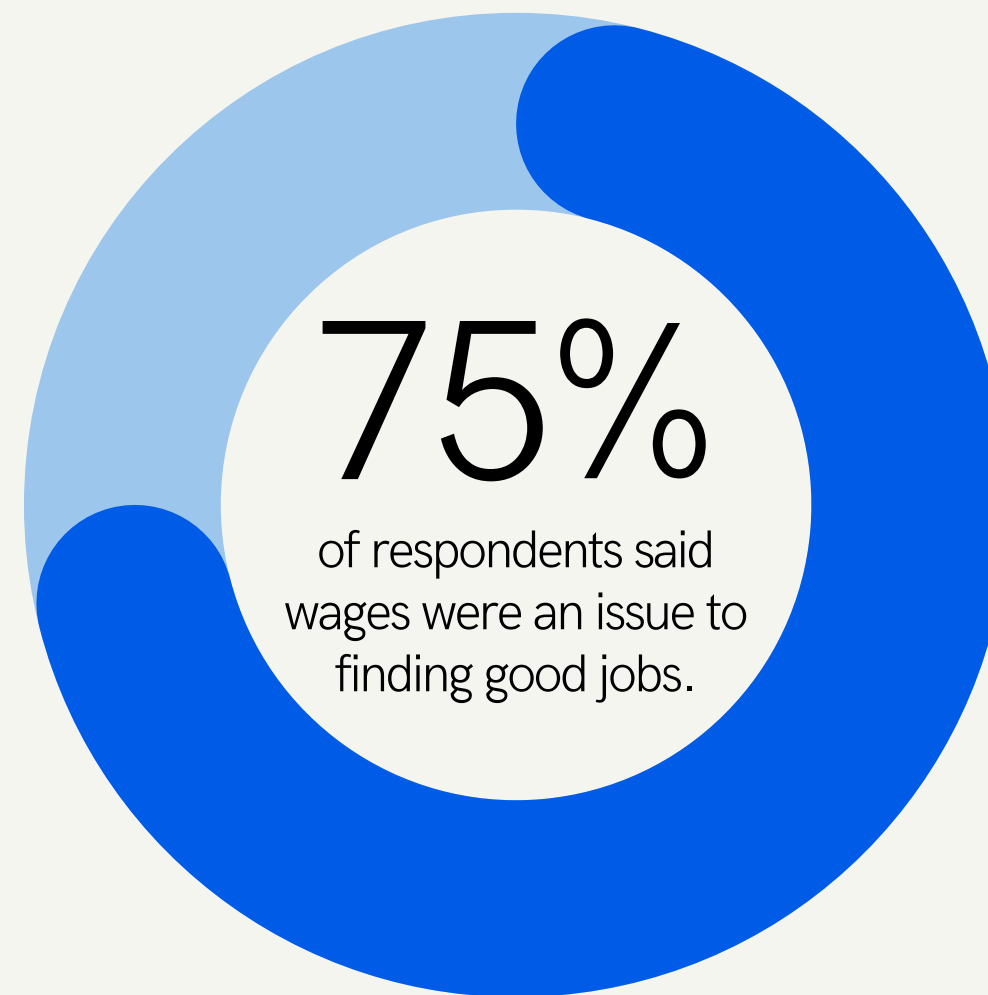
75% of the most common occupations in Louisiana pay less than \$20 an hour

Childcare & Caregiving

Of the 163 respondents who reported 1 or more dependent, 53% cited childcare as a challenge to their job prospects.

Nepotism

The feeling that hiring and promotion processes are influenced by “who you know” was mentioned in all 6 of our focus groups.



Transportation & Safety

30% of survey respondents cite transportation as an issue, affecting ALICE participants more

Poor Communication from Prospective Employers

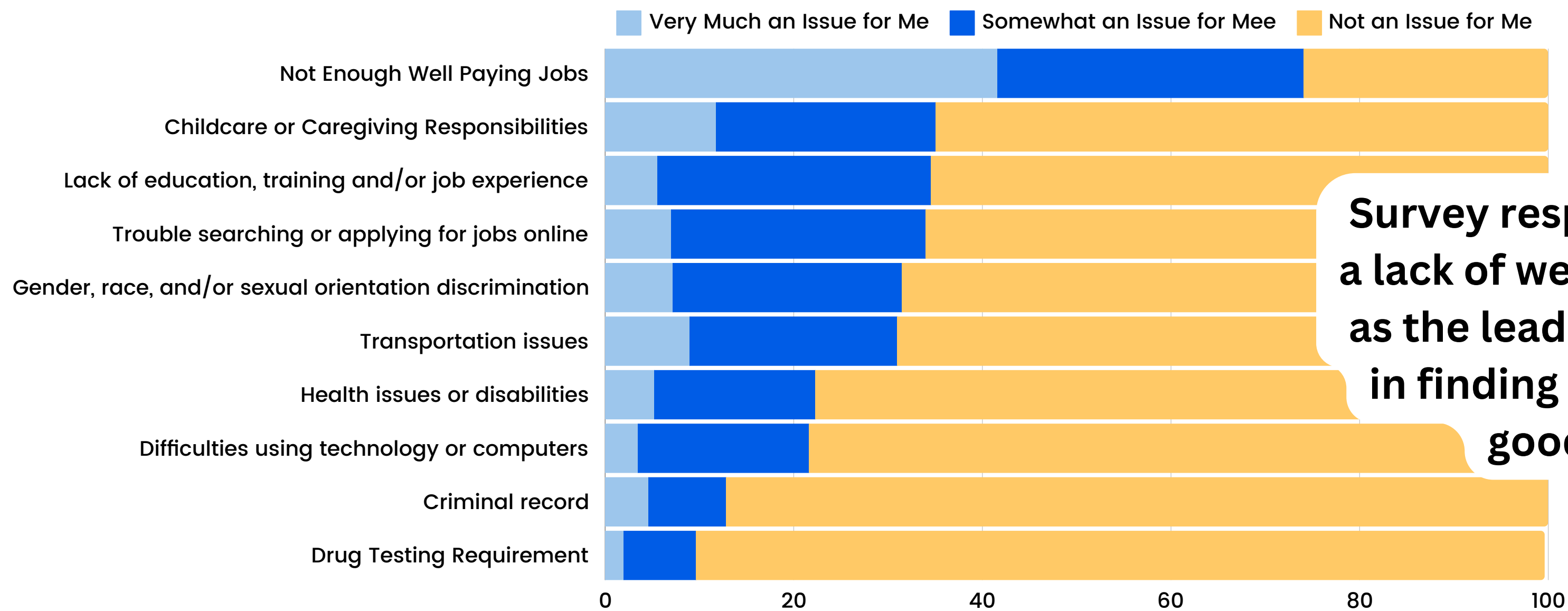
“The jobs that I apply to don't call me in for an interview, so there's no feedback of what I need.”

Discrimination

Age discrimination was commonly cited with older workers struggling to find employment after pandemic-related layoffs.

Challenges to Finding & Keeping Good Jobs

Which of the following are issues or challenges you have experienced in applying, finding, or keeping a job?



Survey respondents see a lack of well-paying jobs as the leading challenge in finding and keeping good jobs.

N = 307; Data excludes full-time students and retired survey respondents.

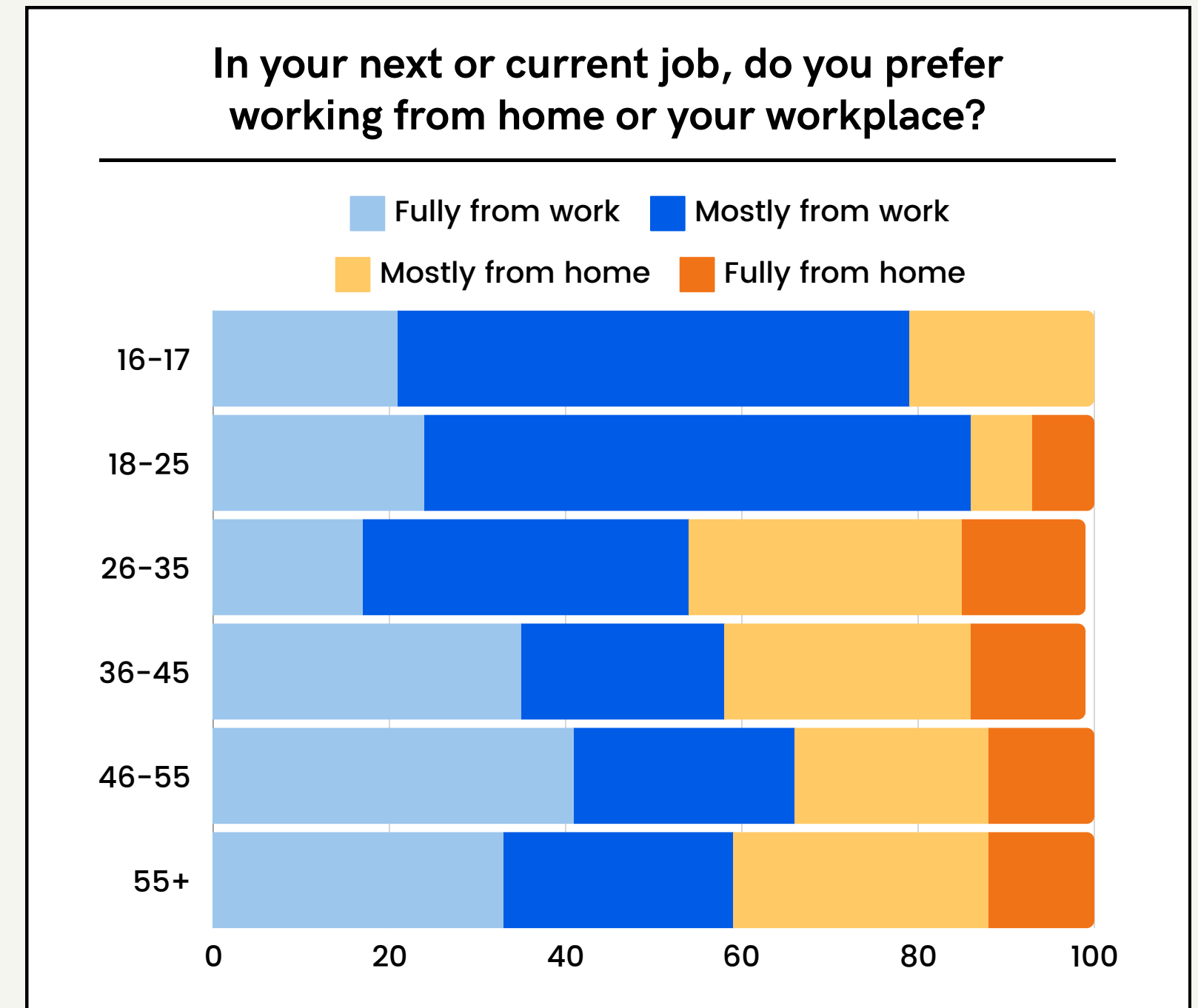
Remote Work & the Digital Divide

The pandemic accelerated a trend towards remote and hybrid work, creating opportunities but increasing the importance of closing the digital divide.

Survey responses show a significant demand for hybrid work, where workers have the flexibility to work both remotely and on-site. This is especially true for respondents under 35.

Despite interest in remote and hybrid work, there remains a digital skills gap which is most prevalent among unemployed workers.

Overall, skills specifically with software such as **Microsoft Office** is where workers report the least comfort (in comparison to using the internet, smartphones, computers, or email communication).



Program Participation

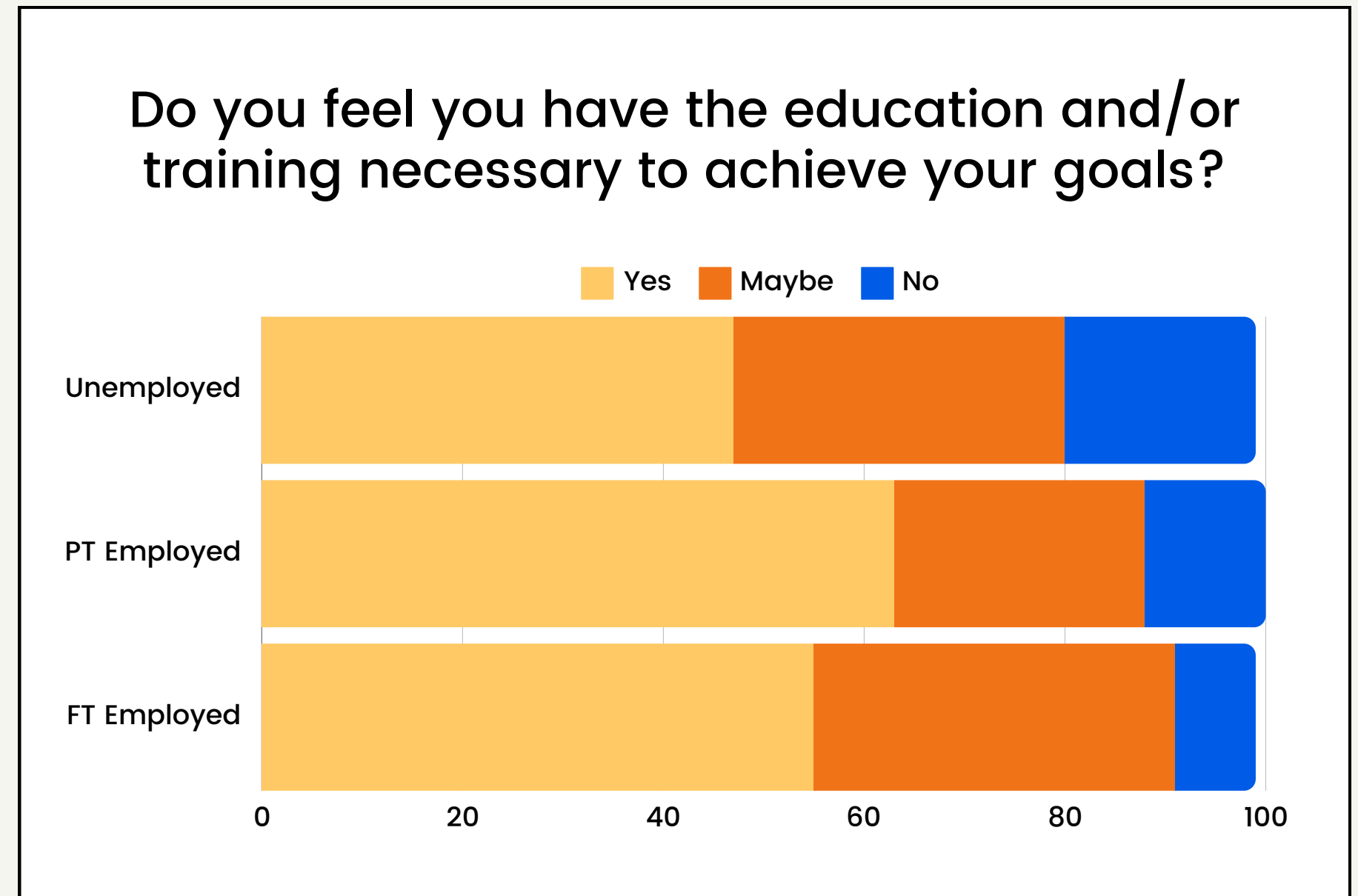
A little over half of survey respondents had participated in some type of workforce or job training program. Male participants were more likely to have participated in a program (63%) compared to females (50%)

Workforce Training – Perceptions & Challenges

Training Needs

Most respondents feel they have the skills or training they need for their desired job.

This drives skepticism that additional training is a value to employment prospects, possibly contributing to low enrollment in local programs.



Barriers to Program Participation

Lack of Awareness or Perceived Need

38% of respondents cited lack of awareness as the reason for non participation in job training programs.

Systemic Inequities

Access to transportation and affordable childcare emerge as significant barriers, particularly for those below the ALICE threshold.

“While I did not experience barriers, I have tried to get more people in my community to complete doula and interpreter trainings, but financial limitations are significant, especially if you would need to take off work and pay for childcare to complete the training.”

Program Participation

Challenges to Completion

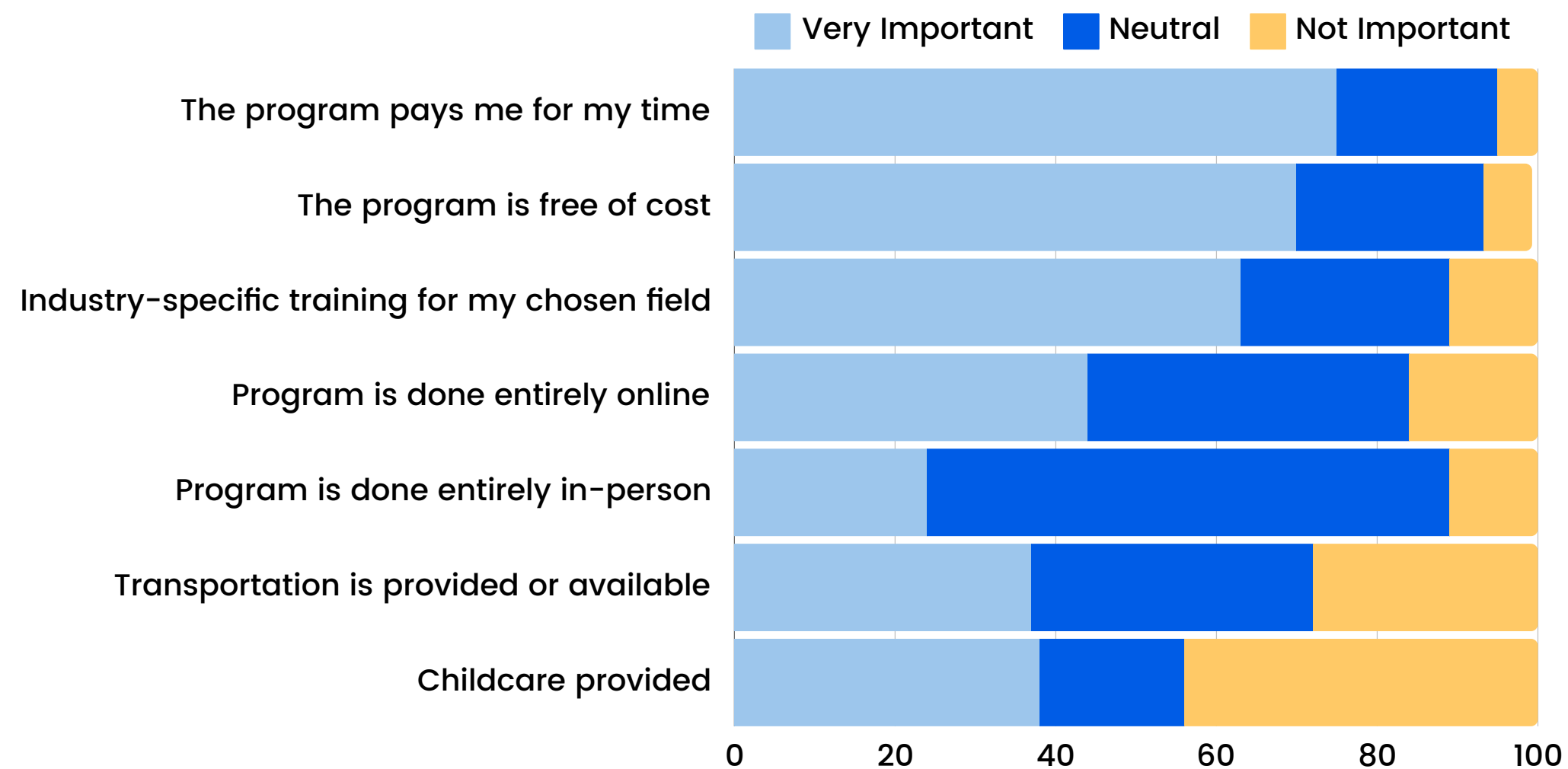
54% of survey respondents cite financial constraints as a significant challenge they experienced in completing their job training program.

Increasing Interest

Free, paid, and industry-specific programs are likely to have the highest demand and enrollment rates. Transportation, childcare, and virtual/online access are also valued.

Increasing Program Participation

Which of the following factors would increase your interest or ability to participate in a job training program?



N=157 survey respondents who had never participated in job training program; number of responses to each factor vary between 151 and 155.

The most important factors in program selection are **financial**, followed by **industry specificity**.

Some of the other areas, such as being in-person, providing transportation and providing childcare are only important for a sub-section of respondents.

Perceptions of Workforce Training

Many programs are seen as a major time investment, which can be risky for the resource-constrained.

Some feel that job training programs have little relevance for the realities of their prospective job.

Others experience discrimination or prejudice that dissuades them from further participation.

"It took me 6 months to complete the certification thinking there are jobs waiting to be filled. Yet I've applied for positions before, during and after completion and still have not even obtained 1 interview."

"These programs are not taken seriously by employers."

I haven't participated in a program because "you're often expected to learn on the job."

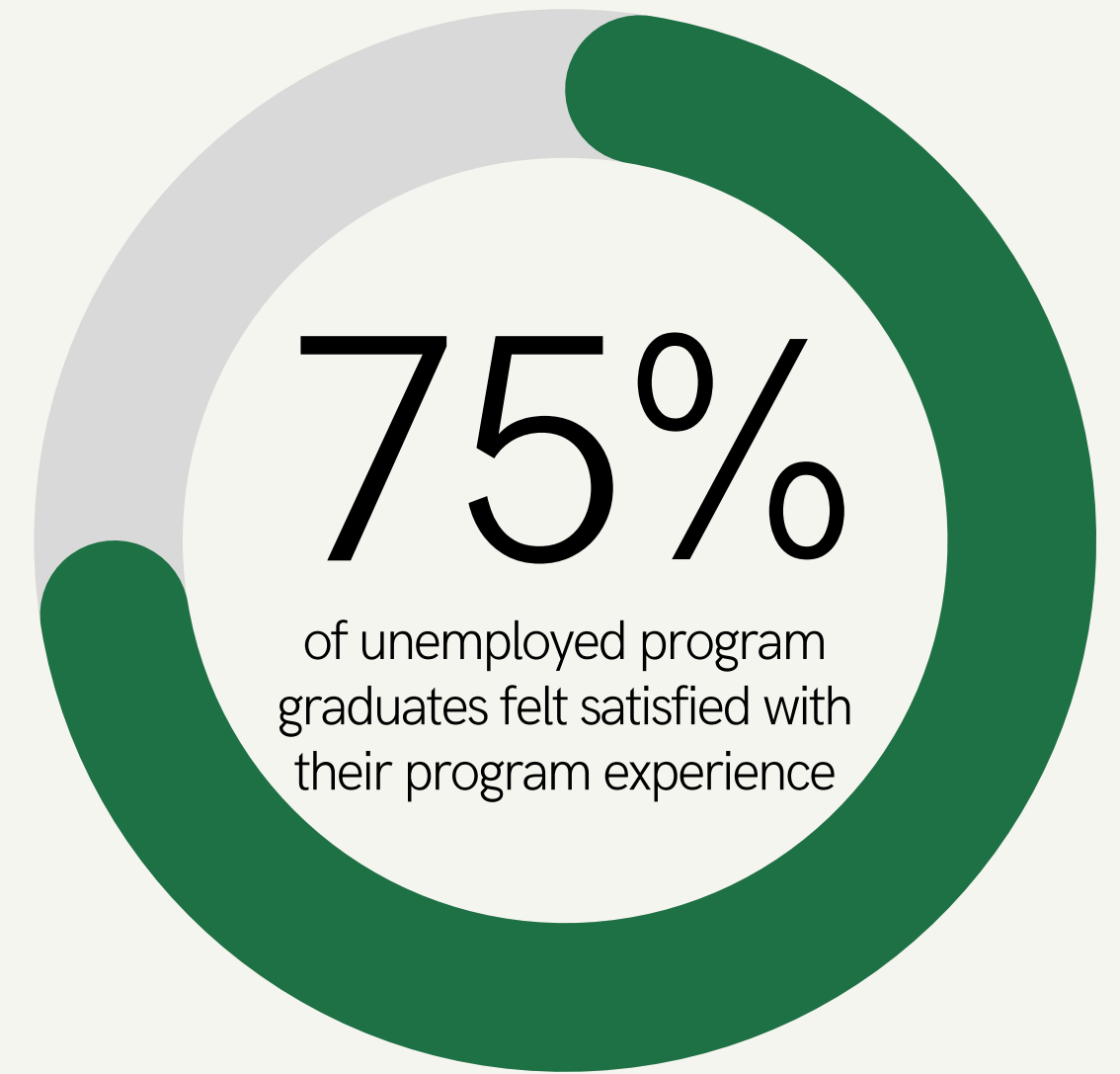
"Students attending job training often felt discriminated against."

"Class bias; couldn't go to 'networking events' when I was working 3 part time jobs"

Post-Program Experiences

Although many respondents cited high satisfaction with their experience in workforce programs, this didn't always correspond with positive employment outcomes.

"After training completed, some prospective employers were not willing to adjust scheduling [to accommodate my] transportation and extended distance."



ALICE Spotlight

3x

as likely to be unaware of
training programs as their
non-ALICE counterparts

45%

cited lack of social services
as a challenge to job
training, compared to only
23% of non-ALICE

2x

as likely to work part-time
as their non-ALICE
counterparts

External Insights

Key findings from best practices review

Evaluation data is scarce.

Reluctance to record and share evaluations is perpetuating ineffective program models.

One researcher stated that the “extraordinary resistance from tech companies, nonprofits, colleges, and state agencies to publicly evaluate their own programs” caused them to repeat many avoidable mistakes when designing new programs.

Coordination is critical.

Regional partnerships that effectively align training with employer demand can empower individuals to overcome barriers to career success.

Unfortunately, such cohesive structures are scarce, necessitating wider adoption of these impactful methods to maximize the effectiveness of workforce development efforts nationwide.

Training must be practical.

Intensive boot camps with regular competency assessments and real-world practice such as apprenticeships or virtual simulations provide the experience necessary to prepare for job demands.

Employers should observe high-performing workers to pinpoint the most valuable attributes, skills, and mindsets necessary for inclusion in their program design.

External Insights

Key findings from best practices review

Employers must assess practices.

Employers must introspectively examine their own practices and consider how they contribute to talent gaps.

Skill development alone cannot solve the workforce equation. Employers must assess hiring requirements, re-skilling opportunities, and workplace culture to invest in their current and prospective talent.

Apprenticeship models may be underutilized.

Earn-and-learn and apprenticeship models create a strong bridge into employment by providing both income and access to employers while building new skills.

While apprenticeship models are relatively common in industries such as construction, one source estimates that it is possible to develop them in nearly 50 additional occupations.

Program readiness is often overlooked.

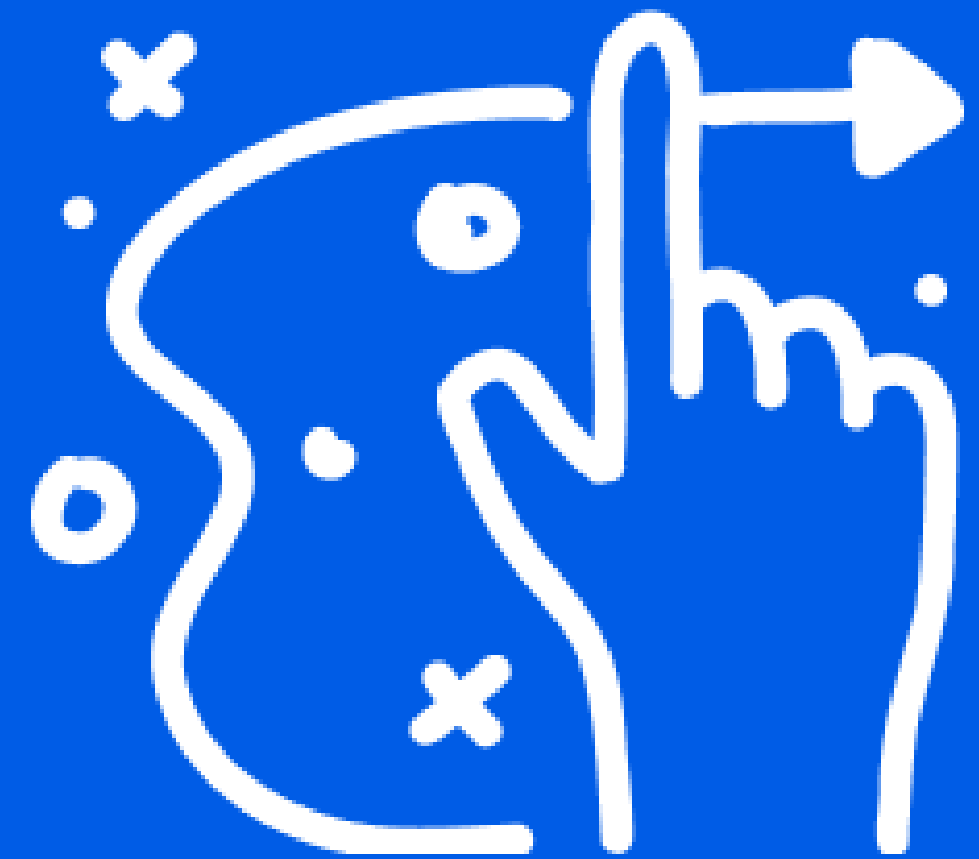
Many programs lack focus on the pre-employment skills necessary for those who are poorly prepared by the K-12 pipeline.

Checks should be done on the relevant literacy or numeracy levels, licensing requirements, or ability to pass background checks or drug tests.

Equally important is transparency and expectation-setting about the realities of the prospective job.

Recommendations

How the GNO ecosystem
may apply these insights.



Recommendations

The workforce ecosystem of providers should ensure focus on pre-program recruitment, needs assessment, program matching, and expectation-setting.

Enhance general awareness through intentional coordination

Investigate approaches to effectively match workers to relevant programs, including a digital or organizational exchange platform

Ensure workers understand the realities of prospective jobs before enrolling in a program

Recommendations

Employer collaboratives should be explored to share the costs and benefits of job training across sectors.

Increase industry and skill-specific training but don't neglect the importance of interpersonal and transferable skills.

Program providers and employers should work together to provide continued support and ensure long-term outcomes.

Workforce program funders should invest in the social services that minimize barriers to participation & the workforce ecosystem should explore how to continue these social services.

Training providers must prioritize rigorous evaluation and impact assessments, including collecting and reporting information on their failures.

Employers should increase transparency and communication throughout their hiring processes.

Thank you!

