

Employer Survey 20 Report 23

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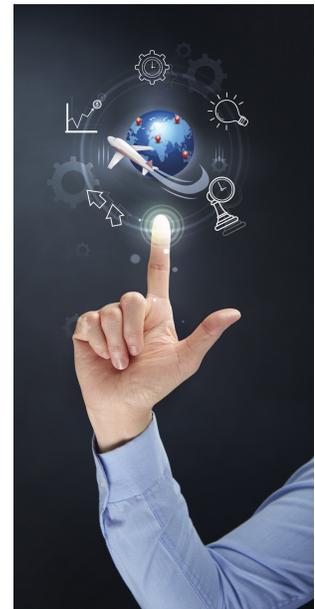
About this Report

This report presents results and provides analysis of a survey of Anchorage area employers.

The report is intended to inform employers about what their competitors are doing to attract and retain workforce; it is also intended to help inform job seekers, career counselors, and other participants in Anchorage's workforce development system to understand what employers are seeking in prospective employees and what they are offering to attract them.

Demographic trends are shifting the US and especially the Alaska labor market from a place of labor abundance (where workers competed for jobs) to one of labor scarcity (where employers are competing for workers).

Efficiently allocating our workforce to ensure we have the requisite skills to fill the highest value roles maximizes the potential compensation for Anchorage workers and minimizes the cost of workforce shortages to businesses and Anchorage's overall economic growth.



About the Survey

This survey and report were made possible through the generous support of PeopleAK. This survey was designed, distributed and collected by Anchorage Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) between March and April 2023 and collected a total of 171 responses. The report was compiled by AEDC staff.

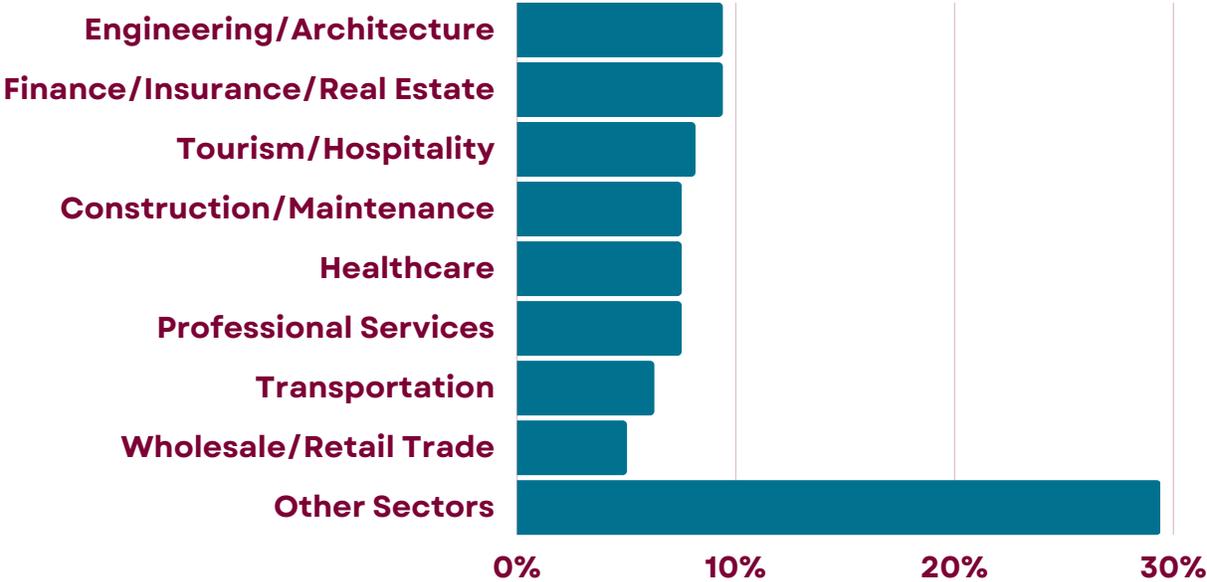
AEDC would like to thank all survey respondents for their time and insight, and especially to thank Peppercini's Deli and Catering for the generous donation of a catered lunch for the office of one lucky respondent.

Thank you for your interest in the Anchorage economy!



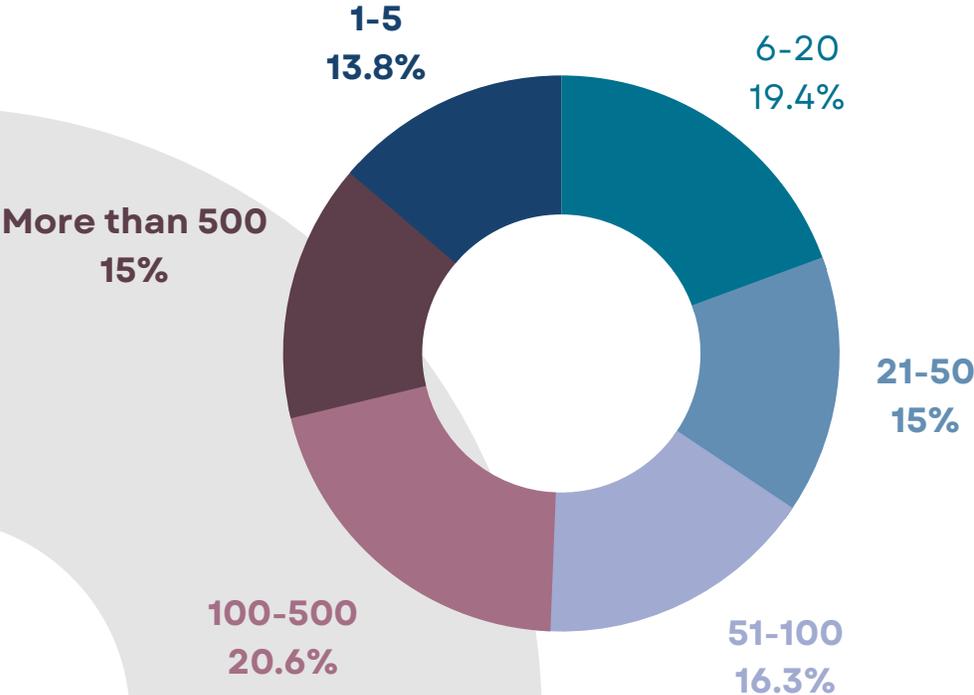
Who Responded?

Which best describes the economic sector your organization occupies?



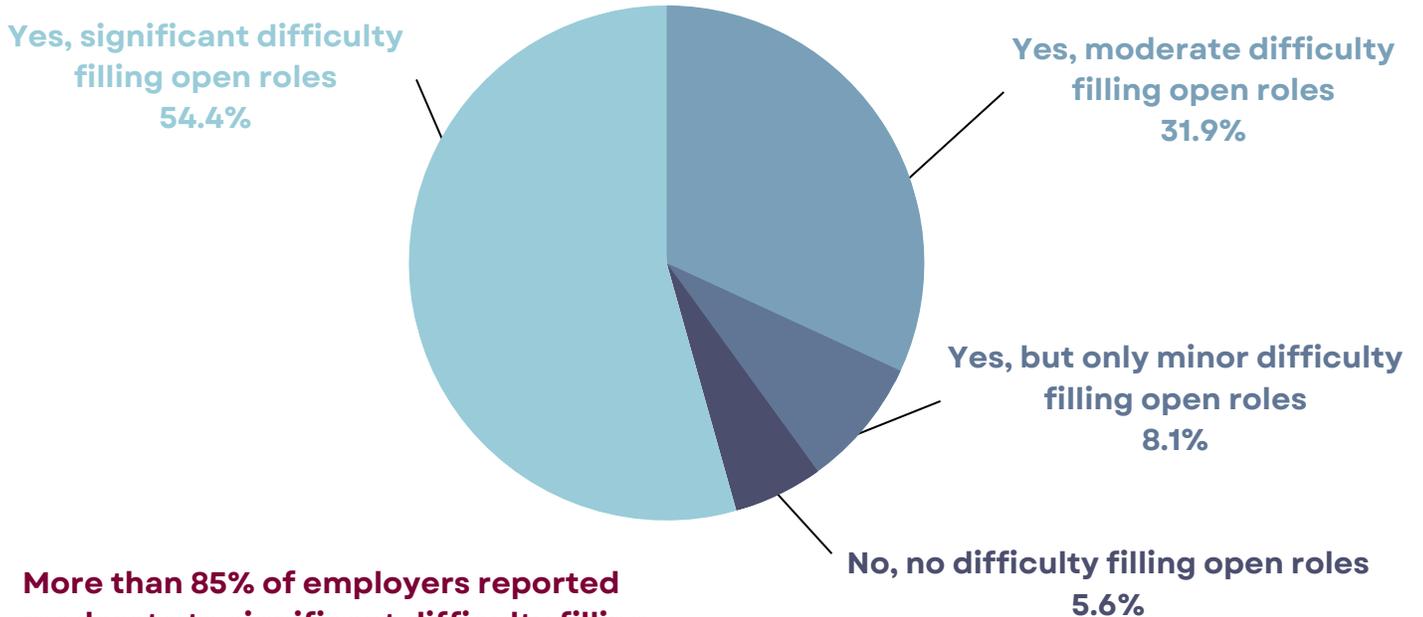
"Other Sectors" includes responses from (in order of most to least frequent): Alaska Native Corporations, Government/Military, Mining/Oil Support Services, Education/Childcare, Manufacturing, Mining/Oil Production, Information Technology, Utilities, Media/Communications, Arts, and Social Services.

How many employees does your organization currently employ?



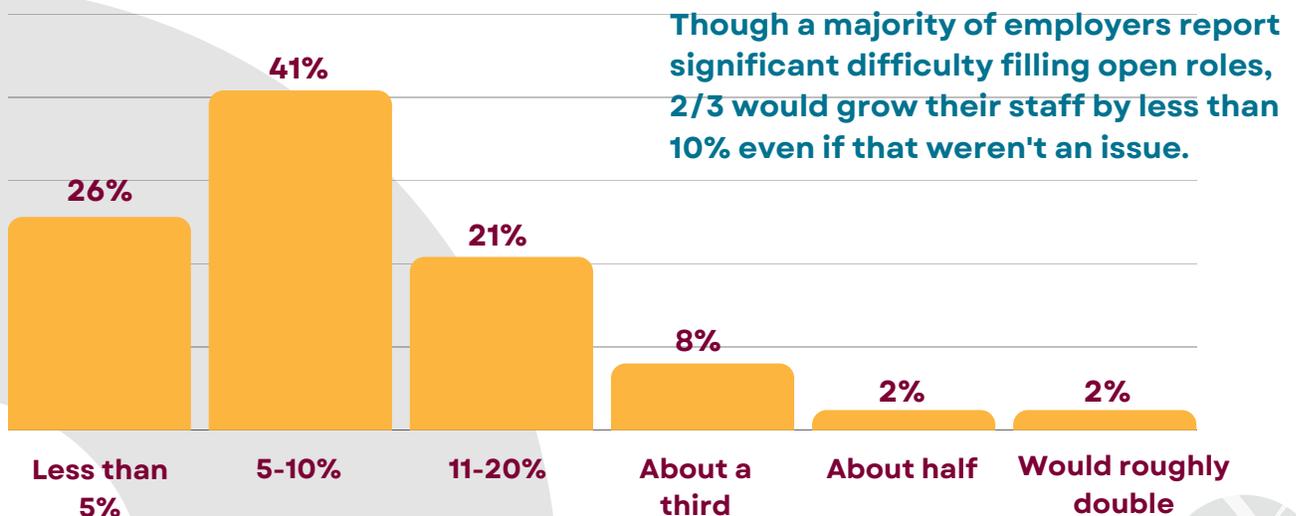
Labor Needs

In the past year, has finding and hiring new staff been a challenge?

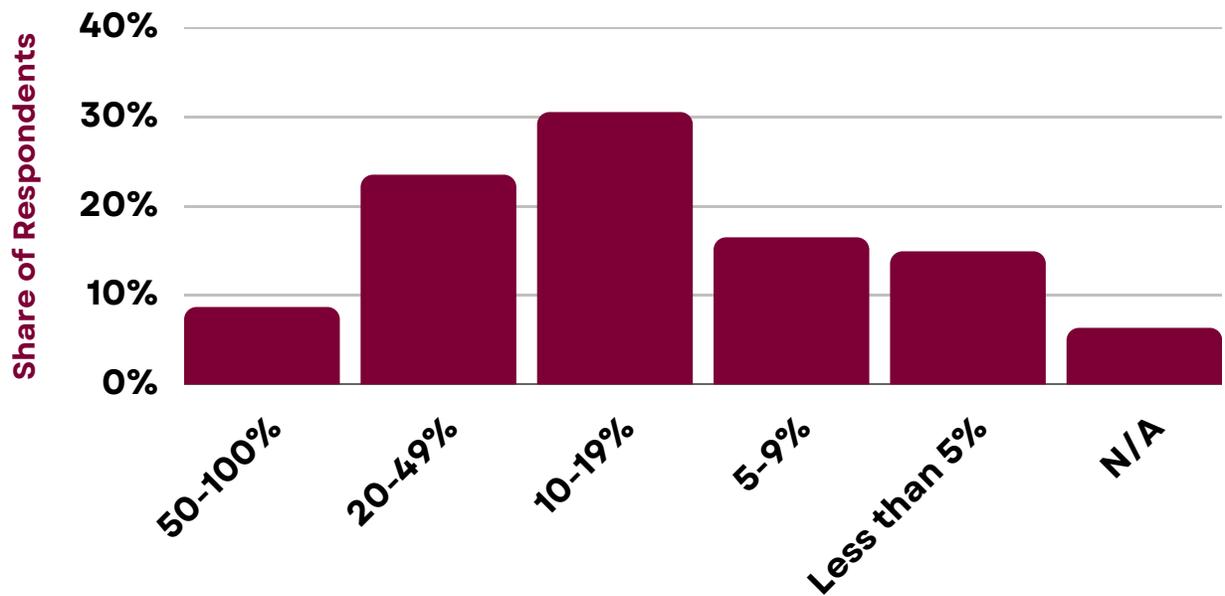


More than 85% of employers reported moderate to significant difficulty filling open roles. Looking at demographic trends, this seems likely to remain the new normal.

If you had an unlimited pool of qualified candidates, how many more people would you hire? (Relative to current number of employees)

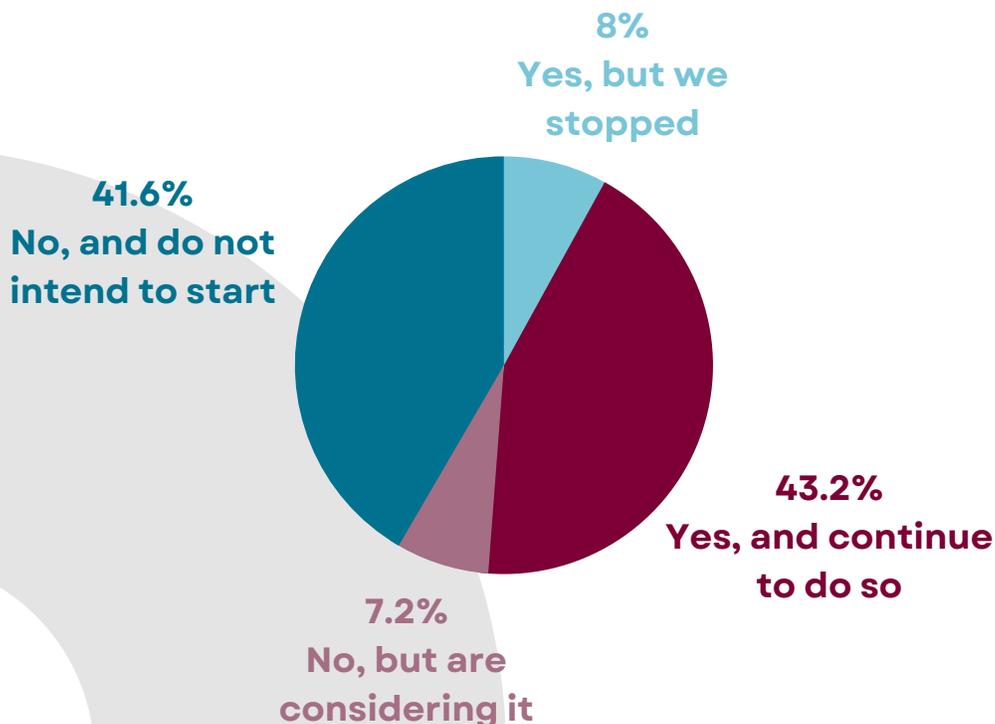


What percentage of your total number of positions need to be hired each year due to departures and retirements?

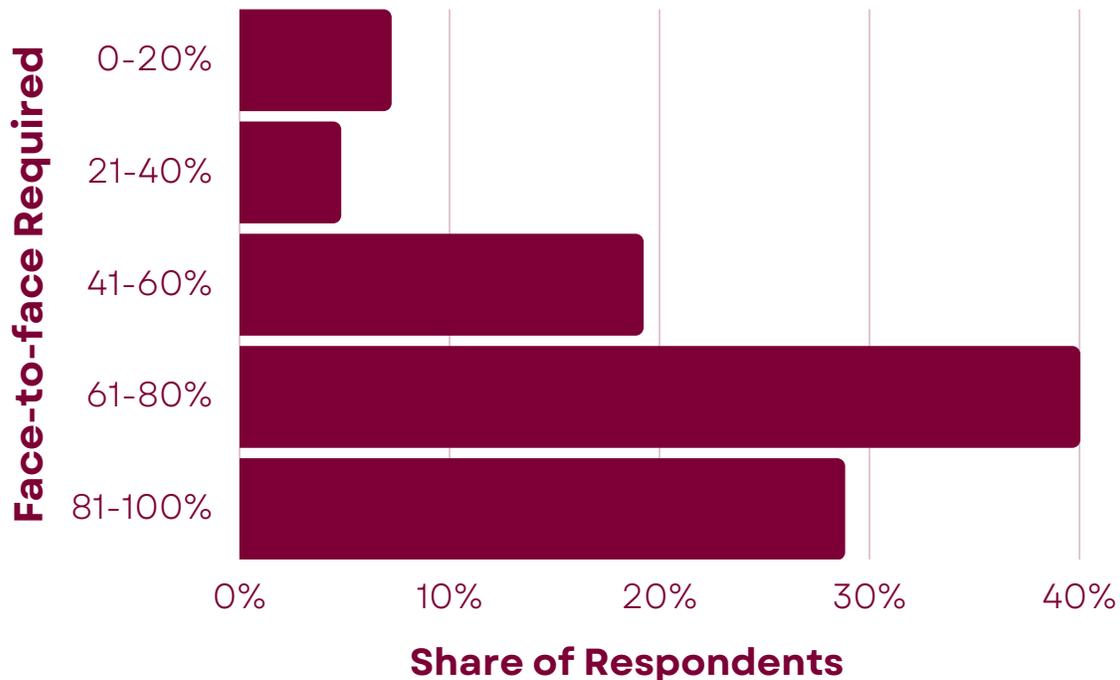


Another way to read this question is by average employee tenure. If you hire an average of 20% of your total staff each year, then your average employee stays with your organization about 5 years.

Has your organization recruited for hybrid or fully remote workers?



Roughly what percentage of your organization's work requires face-to-face interaction?



The pandemic required and/or encouraged many employers to experiment with remote work policies, while the ensuing national labor shortage has encouraged retaining flexibility to work from home at least part-time as an incentive to attract talent.

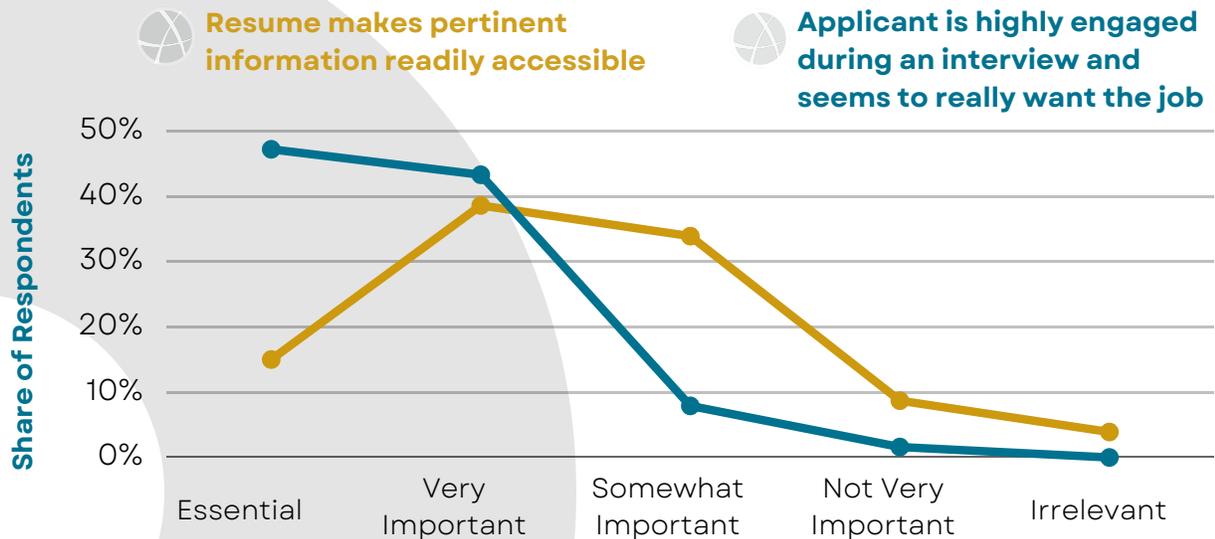
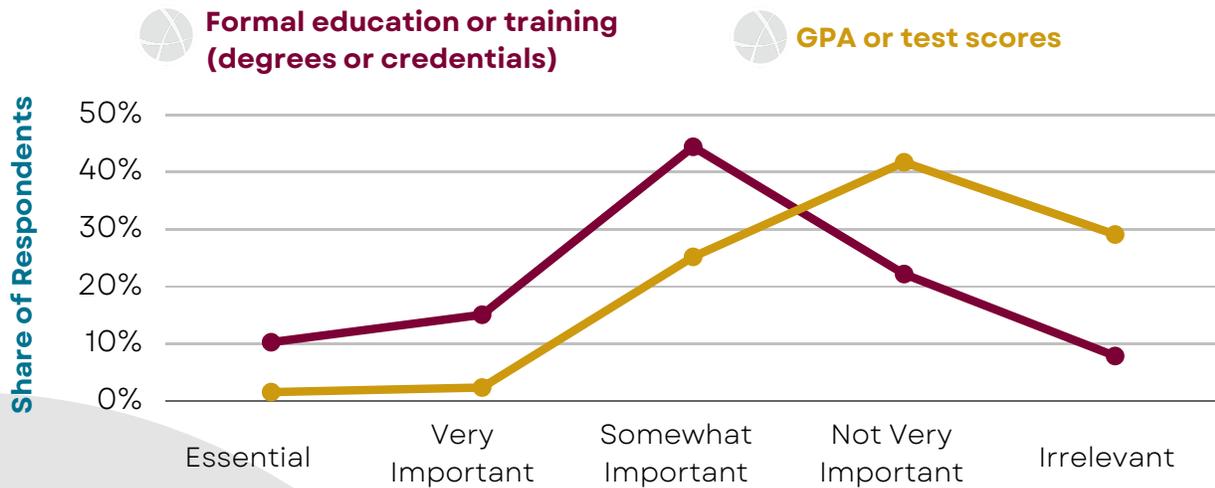
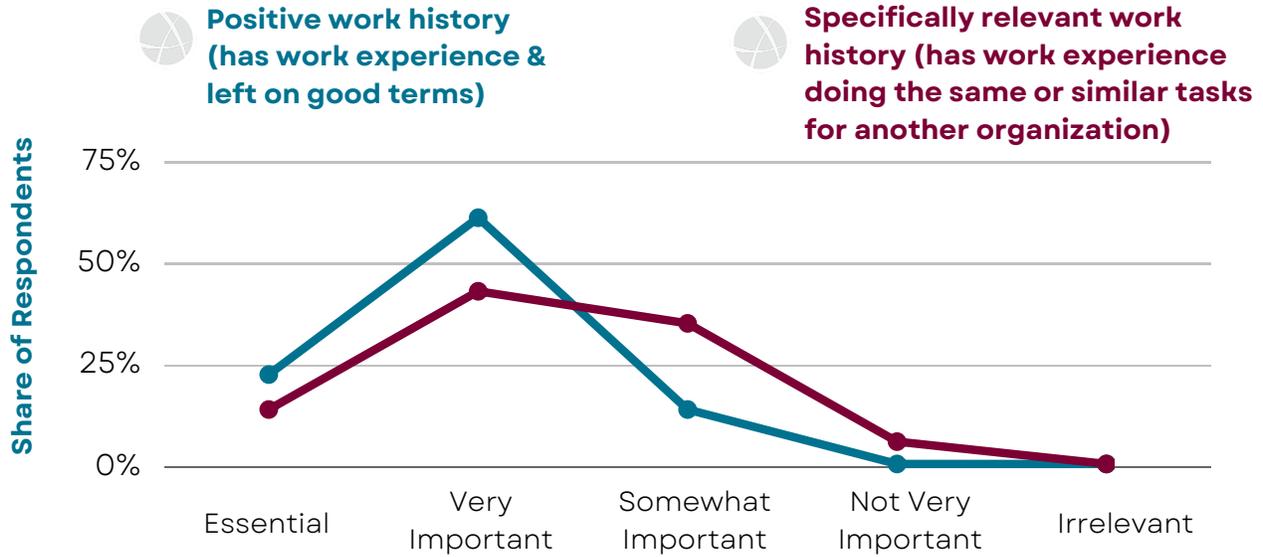
When asked how they distinguish their organization as a desirable place to work, 47% of employers reported greater flexibility for employees to set their own schedule as a way they make themselves more appealing than the competition

Anchorage appears to be reaching an equilibrium that aligns the amount of work that responding employers identified as requiring face-to-face interaction with the roughly half of employers who report recruiting for hybrid or fully remote positions.



Employer Priorities

Employers were asked to rate the following job seeker characteristics on an importance scale, from irrelevant to essential.

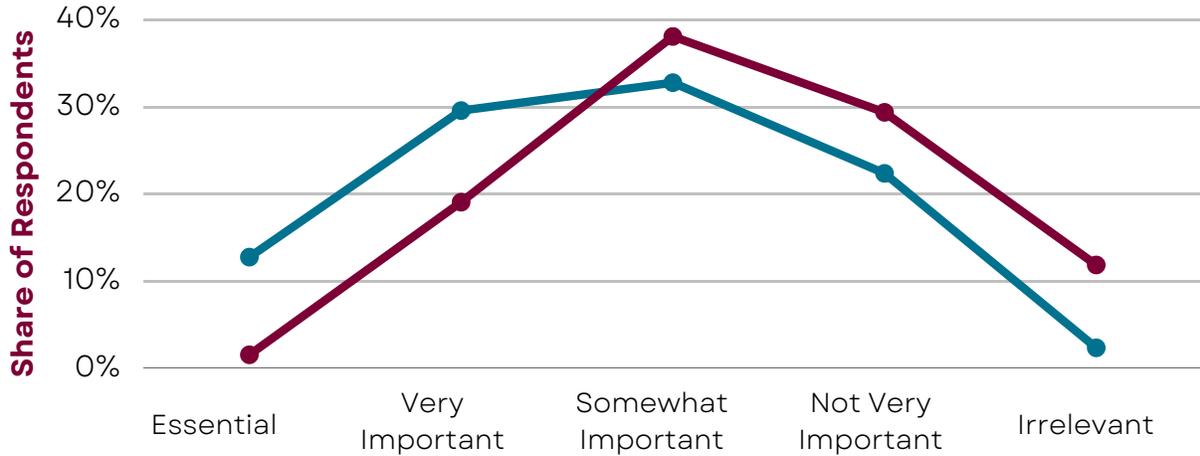




Examples of past work performed by applicant (projects or writing samples from education or past work)



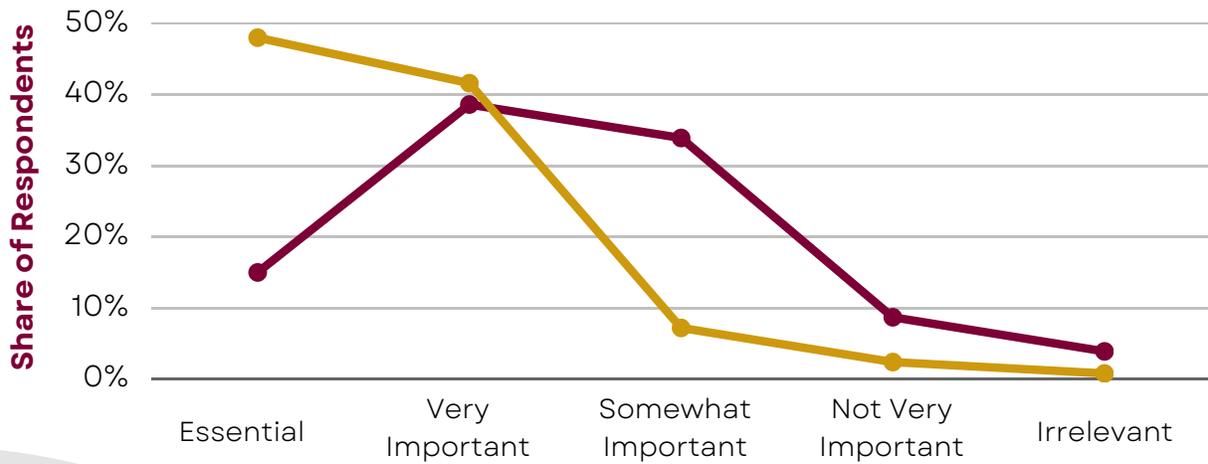
Strong letter of recommendation from someone who knows the applicant well



General interpersonal skills (applicant seems like a good fit with your team)



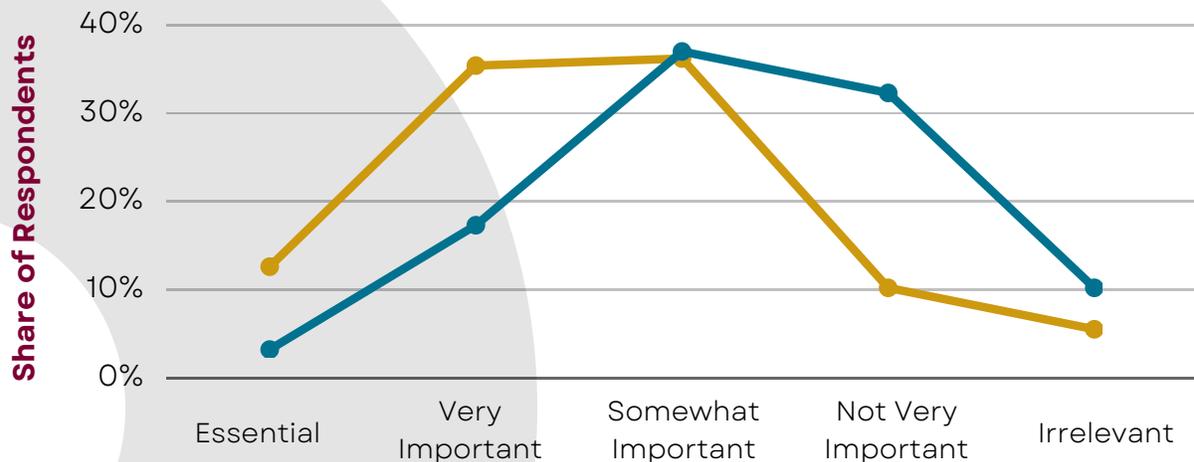
Applicant show up to an interview on time and looking presentable



General office skills (e.g. typing, phone systems, email, Microsoft Office suite)



Specific office skills (e.g. familiarity with industry-specific software)



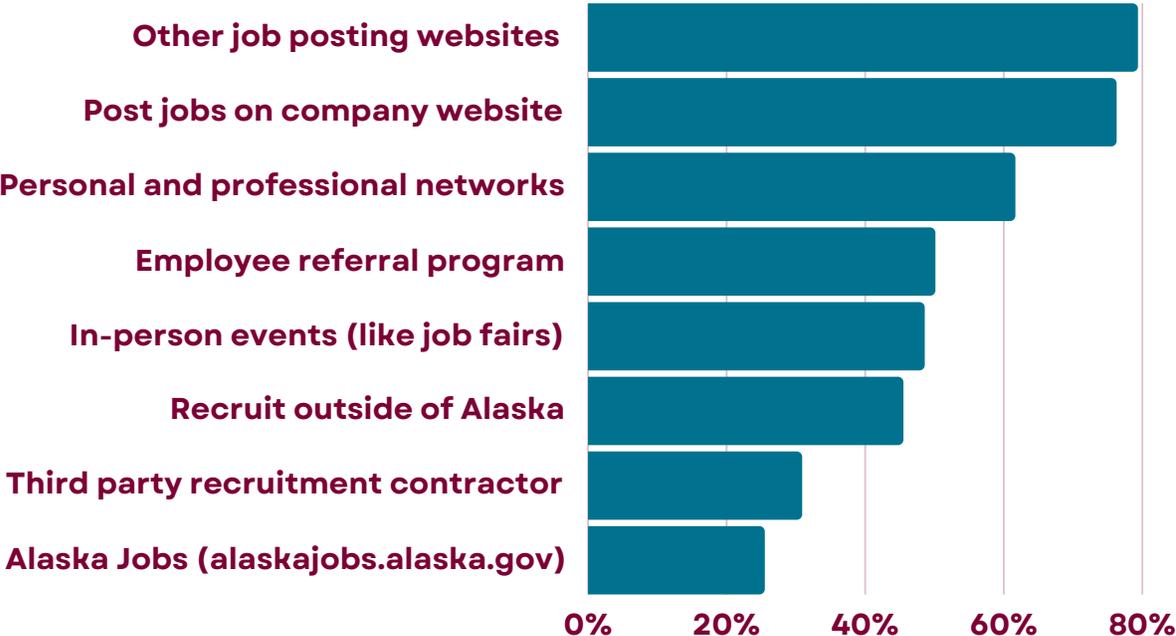
Summary of Employer Priorities

- Respondents indicated that employers seek applicants with a desire to be there. Applicants being **engaged and seem to really want the job** and **showing up on time and looking presentable** were the highest rated factors, with average ratings between 'very important' and 'essential'.
 - Reliability and professionalism through the application process is a significant screening mechanism in hiring across industries.
- **General interpersonal skills**, and having **prior employment where applicant left on good terms** are also near-musts across the board.
- Traditional staple hiring factors made up the entire pack of middling importance: **specific work history**, **resume**, **general office skills**, and **samples of past work** each fell between 'somewhat' and 'very' important.
- If someone is a good worker, employers reported willingness to teach or otherwise help them learn the job. **Formal education** and **specific office skills** are near the bottom of employer priorities, with an average rating between 'not very' and 'somewhat' important.
 - *This observation tracks with the 40% of employers who reported covering some or all of employees' tuition to any postsecondary institution; as well as the 58% of employers who reported "more or better opportunities for professional development" as a way they distinguish themselves as a desirable place to work.*
- At the bottom of employers' priority of hiring factors were **letters of recommendation** and, by far the least impactful metric, **GPA or test scores**.

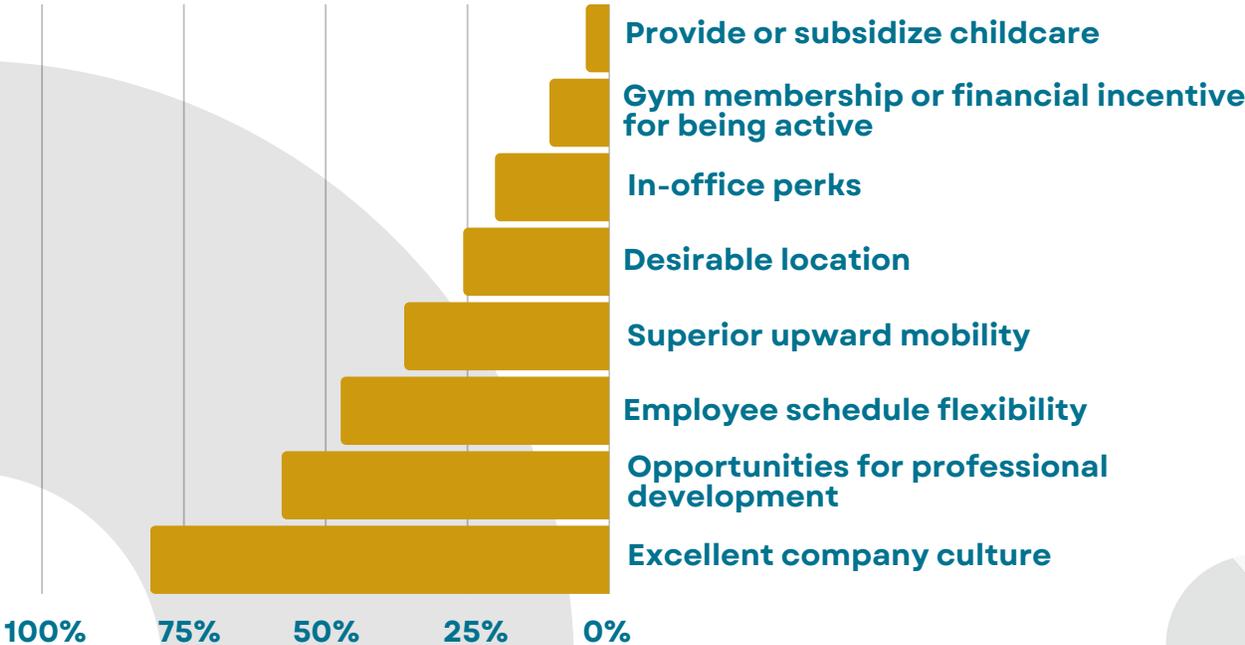


Recruitment Strategies

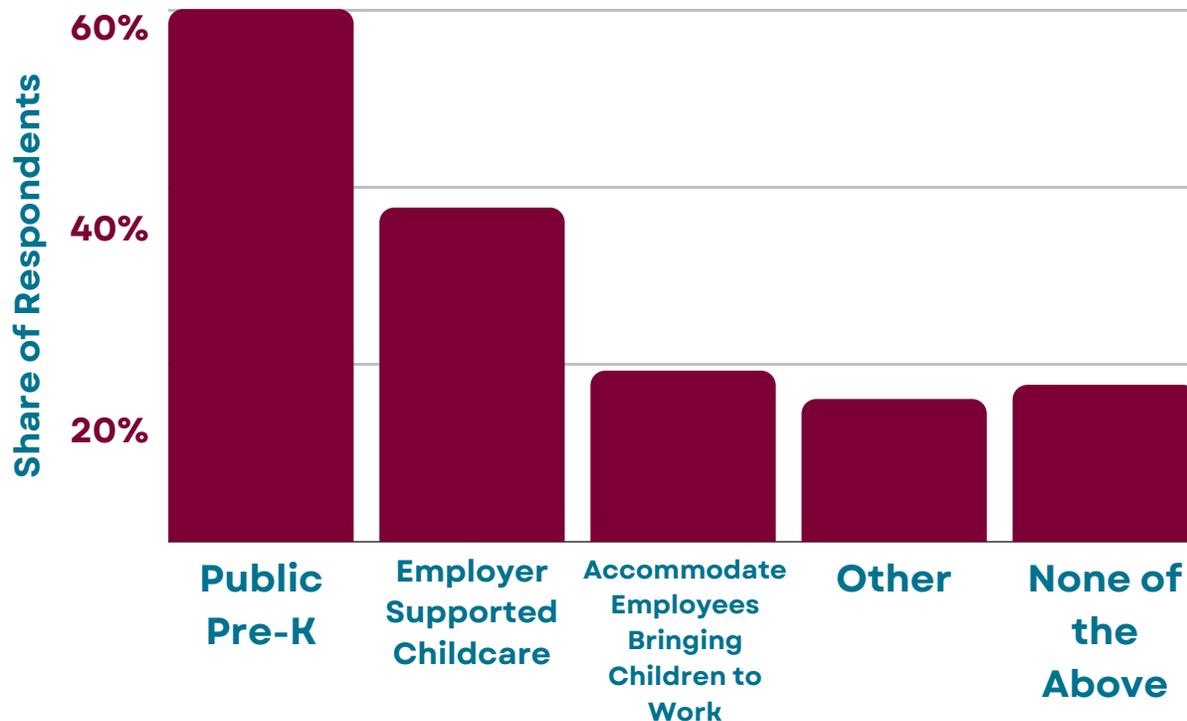
What tools and approaches does your organization currently use to recruit applicants for open positions?



How do you distinguish yourself as a more desirable employer than other organizations competing to hire the same employees?



Which of the following solutions [to the employment barrier created by unaffordable or unavailable childcare] appeal to you?



Employers broadly recognize the need and value of childcare, as evidenced by only 18% supporting none of the listed options. Employers also reported a clear preference for the Government taking on that responsibility via public pre-K (60% support) over employers taking the burden (38% support)

While employers may prefer the public option, almost 40% reported "supporting" employer supported childcare. This contrasts with the fewer than 5% who currently provide or subsidize employee childcare.

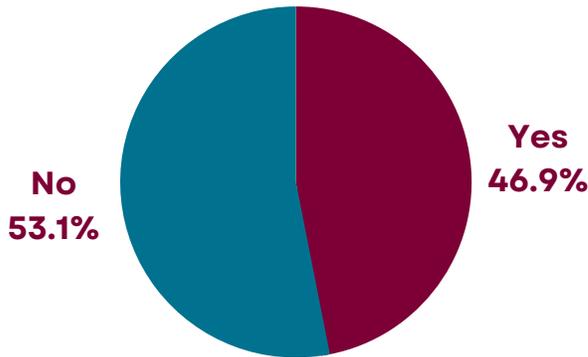
"Other" solutions proposed by respondents:

- Childcare voucher system or other types of subsidies for parents.
- Direct subsidies for childcare providers.
- Create more childcare providers.
- Greater flexibility on work schedule/location for parents.
- On-site/workplace child care.

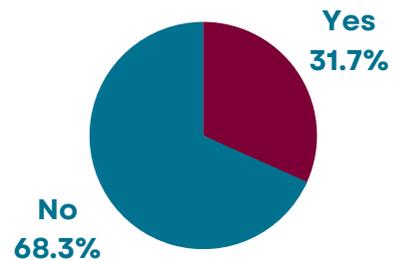


Veterans and Felons

Can your organization hire applicants with a past felony conviction?

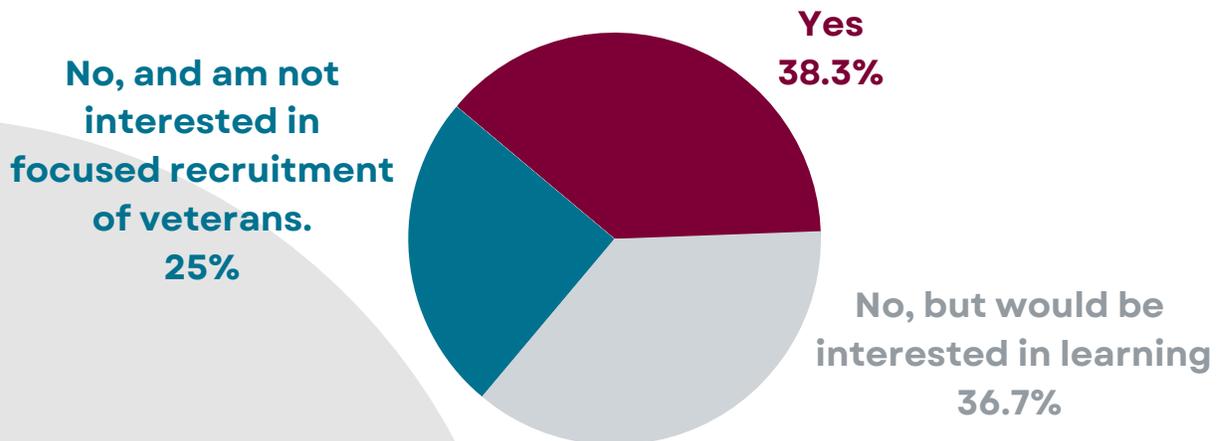


Are you interested in learning more about programs to support employers hiring employees exiting Alaska's corrections system? (asked to respondents replying 'Yes' to the prior question)



A felony conviction is a massive strike against employability. Not only did a majority of employers report being unable to even consider hiring applicants with a felony on their record, fewer than 1/3 of the organizations who could expressed interest in learning more about the "financial incentives and liability protections" available for employers who do so.

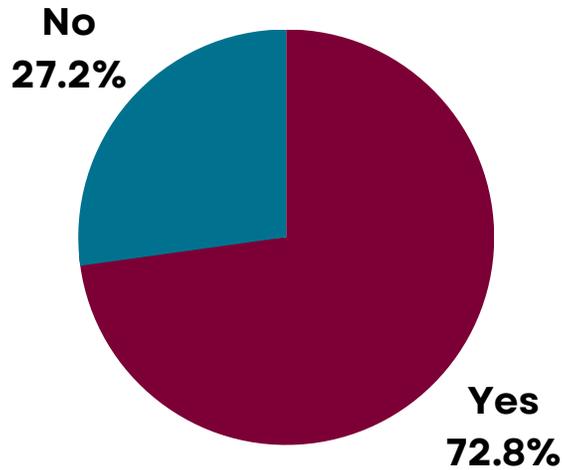
Do you actively recruit veterans leaving military service?



Anchorage's veterans are already a core component of our workforce and community. According to the 2020 American Community Survey, 12.9% of the Anchorage adult population has served in the armed forces compared to 7.1% nationally. Though 75% of respondents expressed an interest in targeted recruitment of separating veterans, nearly half of those organizations are not presently doing so.

Training and Professional Development

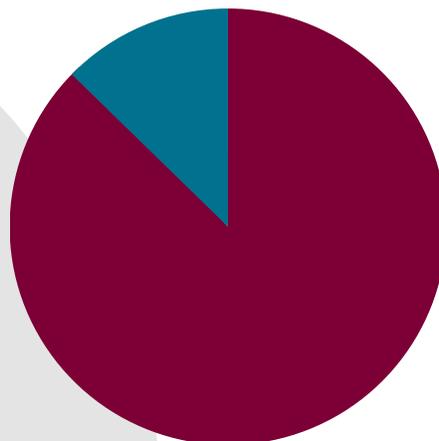
Do you provide safety training?



Does your organization provide non-safety education, training, or professional development?

(Training or education for customer service, using new or different software or other tools, developing skills to tackle new or bigger roles, team building, etc)

**No
12.7%**

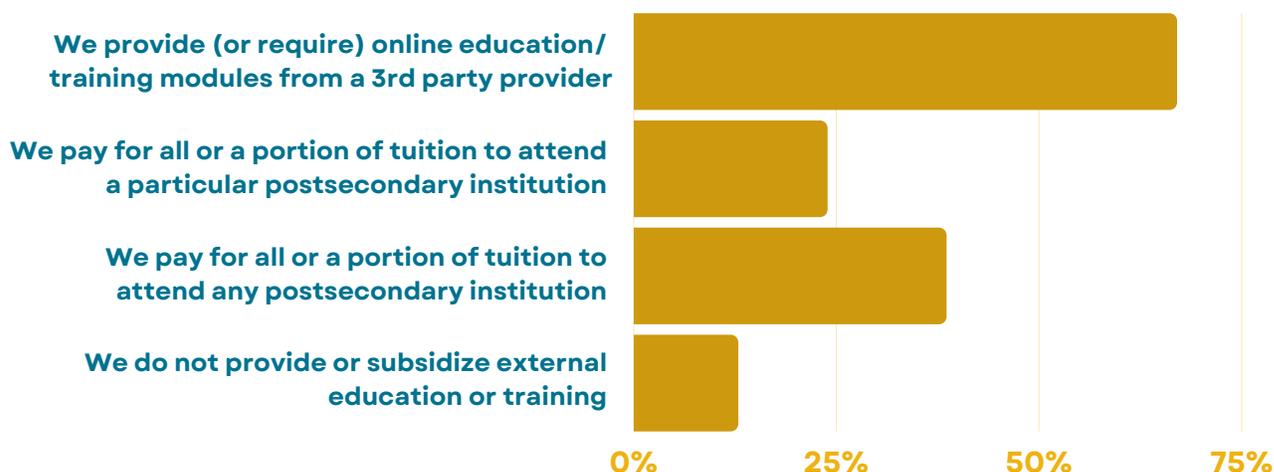


**Yes
87.3%**



Professional Development (non-safety training)

Does your organization provide or support access to external professional development, education, or training?



Does your organization provide internal professional development, education, or training?



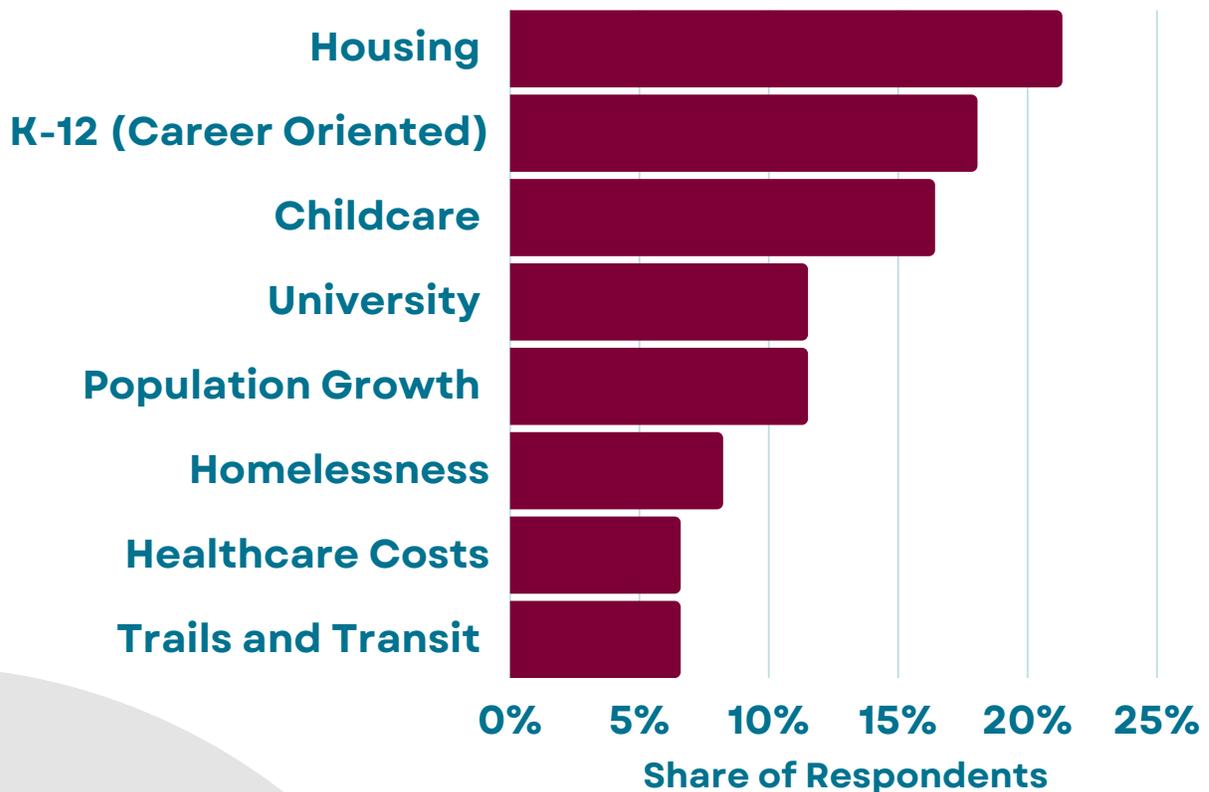
Almost 40% of responding employers report a willingness to pay for all or a portion of employees tuition to attend ANY postsecondary institution.

If a member of the workforce wants to add to their skills through formal education, tuition assistance appears to be fairly widely available in the Anchorage job market.



Opportunities for Improving Our Workforce

The employer survey concluded by asking business leaders to identify any "glaring opportunities" for improving Anchorage's workforce. Eight areas were repeatedly identified as opportunities for improvement:



- More housing, particularly affordable workforce housing, was the most commonly cited opportunity for improvement.
- K-12 education was also frequently cited, with a majority of comments mentioning some version of career pathways, trades, or vocational education
- Childcare availability and affordability rounded out the top three opportunities to improve Anchorage's workforce, with several commenters emphasizing the emergent need to grow Anchorage and Alaska's childcare provider workforce.



Thank you to our report sponsor!



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