



NARRATIVE
RESEARCH

Labour Market Assessment Membership Report

July 2021

Prepared for:





Introduction and Methodology

Background & Introduction:

To support strategies aimed at addressing labour market shortages and accessibility restrictions TIANs commissioned Narrative Research to conduct an online survey with its members across the province. The overall purpose of this research was to better understand the perceptions and the various issues currently impacting hiring and employee retention (i.e., recruiting and hiring temporary foreign workers, high job vacancy rates in specific industries/occupations, etc.) within the tourism sector, and examine interest in potential initiatives aimed at addressing some of these issues.

Research Methodology:

To meet project objectives, an online survey was undertaken with TIANs stakeholders. Invitations to participate in the survey were sent directly to the database of members by TIANs, and the survey was promoted through a variety of social media and other outlets. Respondents could complete the survey in English only. The survey included responses from 50 stakeholders and was conducted between June 1st and 23rd, 2021.

The following summary report provides an executive summary of study findings, and a detailed analysis of results. Throughout the report data tables are referenced which breaks down each survey question by key demographics. When reviewing subgroup analysis, small sample sizes warrant caution in interpreting results. Data tables are appended this report, as is a list of stakeholders requesting further information on specific training programs.

50
surveys
completed

Field Dates:
June 1 – 23, 2021

13
minutes
Average
completion time



Results of the ***Labour Market Assessment Study*** reveal that many stakeholders are currently experiencing human resources challenges, specifically in relation to hiring and employee retention. While there appears to be opportunities to further engage stakeholders and assist them in addressing their unmet labour needs, there is only modest interest in the potential skills training workshops and resources being considered by TIANs.

There is general acknowledgement among stakeholders that the tourism industry has been impacted by COVID-19, with a clear majority of stakeholders personally reporting operating with modified hours or service. The vast majority of stakeholders have had to reduce employee hours and their staff complement as a direct result of COVID-19, with the impact being profound for many. Indeed, a notable minority of stakeholders (42%) report that the number of employees working for them over the last three month is down more than 50% compared to last year during the same time frame. Moreover, the future outlook for many appears very uncertain as nearly one-half of respondents anticipate future job losses over the coming months. Despite these job losses, many businesses report difficulty filling current job openings, with few or no qualified applicants being received.

Going forward, results show that stakeholders are currently facing a wide-range of human resource challenges, particularly in relation to recruiting skilled workers/employees, challenges in finding workers due to a perception that wage subsidy programs motivate people not to work, downsizing due to changing market conditions, and issues related to operating while being short-staffed. Moreover, nearly one-half of respondents are worried their business will not be able to meet its operational needs this year due to labour shortages.

When it comes to temporary foreign workers, few stakeholders have had direct experience in this area, although a notable minority have considered such hires. For the few who are currently facing challenges in recruiting foreign workers, stakeholders identify insufficient government supports to guide their efforts and the general inability to access foreign workers as top hurdles.

Finally, when asked about assistance in meeting unmet labour needs, stakeholders offer a wide-variety of suggestions as to what would help them, with attracting staff/personnel and financial support/help being mentioned most often. Notwithstanding these challenges, openness to free assistance from TIANs through various skills training workshops and resources is modest, despite being told that these resources would be offered at no cost. In fact, between 32 and 38 percent of respondents expressed interest in any specific program or offering, although there may be opportunity to further showcase the relevancy and benefits of these initiatives in order to build interest going forward.



Labour Market Changes

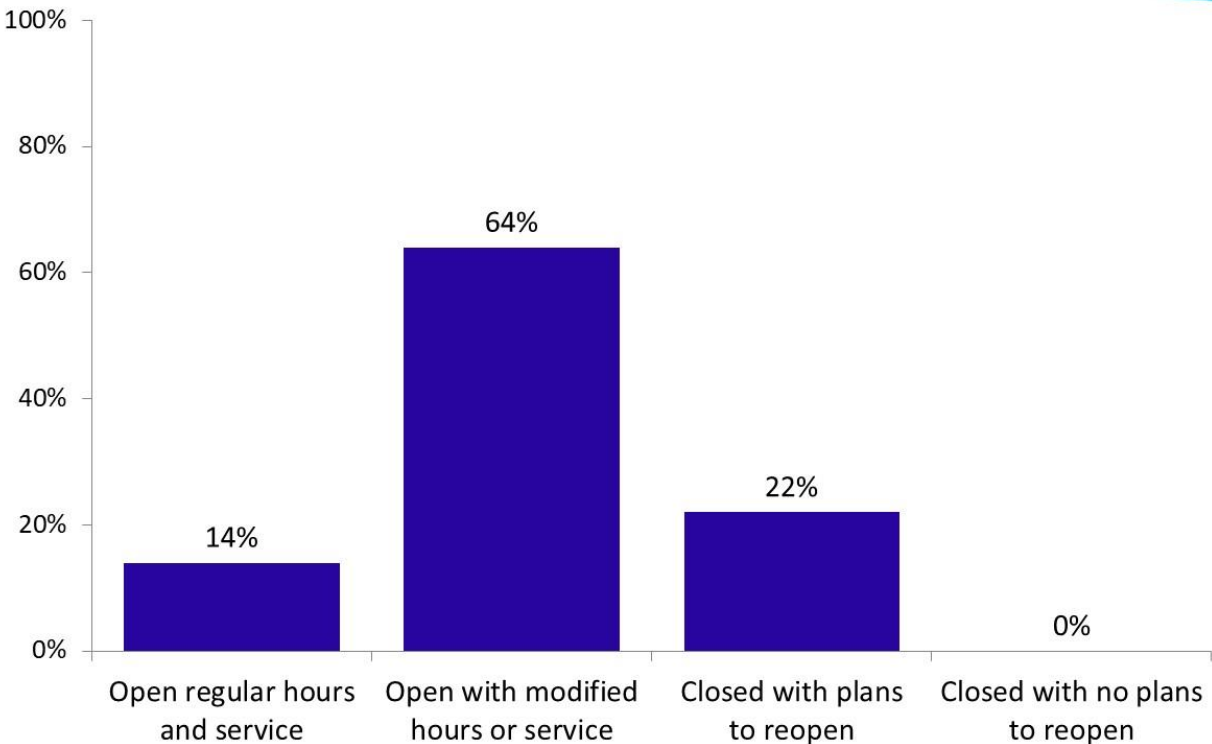
This section of the report outlines feedback from stakeholders' on current labour market changes.

Many in the tourism industry have had to modify their operations.

To better understand the how operations may have adjusted within the Nova Scotia’s tourism sector given current economic situation, respondents were asked about their organization’s current operational status.

- Nearly two-thirds (64%) of stakeholders report that they are **currently opened, but with modified hours or service**. At the same time, more than two-in-ten (22%) are **currently closed, but have plans to reopen**. Only 14 percent of stakeholders report being open with **regular hours and service**. On a positive note, none of the stakeholders who answered the survey reported being closed with no plans to reopen. (Table 5)
- Of note, stakeholders in the accommodations sector were more likely than others to report being open with regular hours and service, *though small sample sizes warrant caution in the analysis of results*.

Organization is Currently...



Q.5: Is your organization currently... (n=50)

In response to COVID-19, a clear majority of stakeholders reduced their staff complement and employee hours.

- When asked about the impact the pandemic had on operations in terms of staffing, the vast majority (84%) reported having **reduced their staff complement**, while three-quarters (76%) **reduced employee hours**. At the same time, more than two-in-ten (22%) **reduced employee salaries/wages** because of COVID-19. Across sectors, those in accommodation were slightly more likely to report staff reduction and reduced employee hours. (Tables 9a-c)
- When comparing current staff complement over the past three months to what was in place one year ago, approximately two-thirds reported their staff complement had **decreased** by at least 25 percent, with more than four-in-ten (42%) reporting job losses of more than 50 percent. Alternatively, fewer than one-in-ten (8%) **increased** their staff complement during this timeframe. Those in the accommodation sector and those operating year-round were more likely than others to report a decrease in staffing over the last three months. (Table 10a)

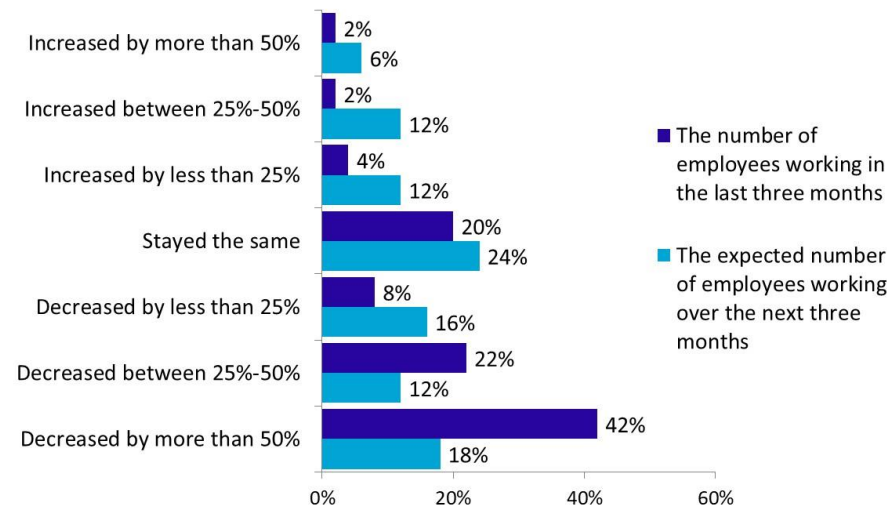
Actions Business Has Undertaken Due to COVID-19

% Saying 'Yes'



Q.9a-c: Which of the following actions, if any, has your business undertaken, because of COVID-19? (n=50)

Change in the Number of Employees Working in Business Compared with Last During Same Time Frame



Q.10a-b: More specifically, please indicate how the number of employees working in your business has changed, compared with last year during the same time frame. (n=50)

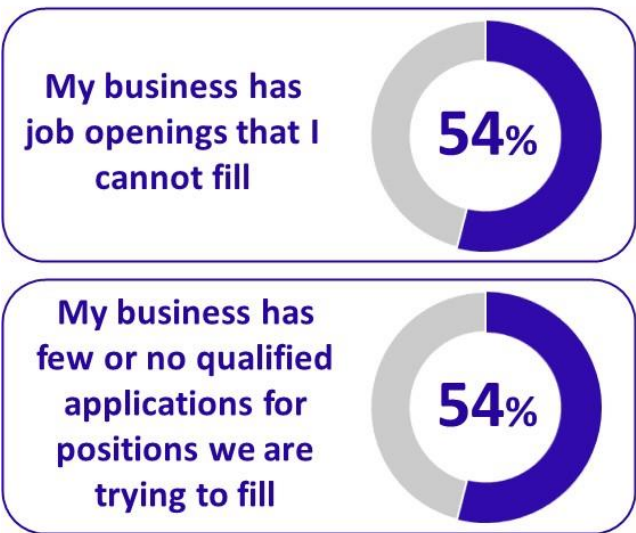
- Looking to near future, while results appear somewhat more positive, staffing continues to be an area of concern for some. Despite entering the traditionally busier months for tourism in the region, nearly one-half (46%) are expecting their staff complement to decrease over the next three months, albeit to varying degrees. Alternatively, one-quarter (24%) anticipate their staffing levels to remain stable over this timeframe, while three-in-ten (30%) predict staffing increases over the next few months. Very few (6%) expect an increase of more than 50 percent. (Table 10b)

Despite overall loss of tourism jobs due to COVID-19, a slight majority of stakeholders having unfulfilled job openings and few or no qualified applicants.

- Despite the majority of stakeholders reporting job losses as a result of the pandemic, just over one-half (54%) report having current job vacancies that they are unable to fill, while the same portion (54%) of stakeholders have few or no qualified applicants for the positions they are currently trying to fill.
- Of note, those operating year-round were slightly more likely than seasonal businesses to report being unable to fill job openings, and having few or no qualified applications for the jobs they trying to fill. (Table 11a-b)

Current Situations...

% Saying 'Yes'



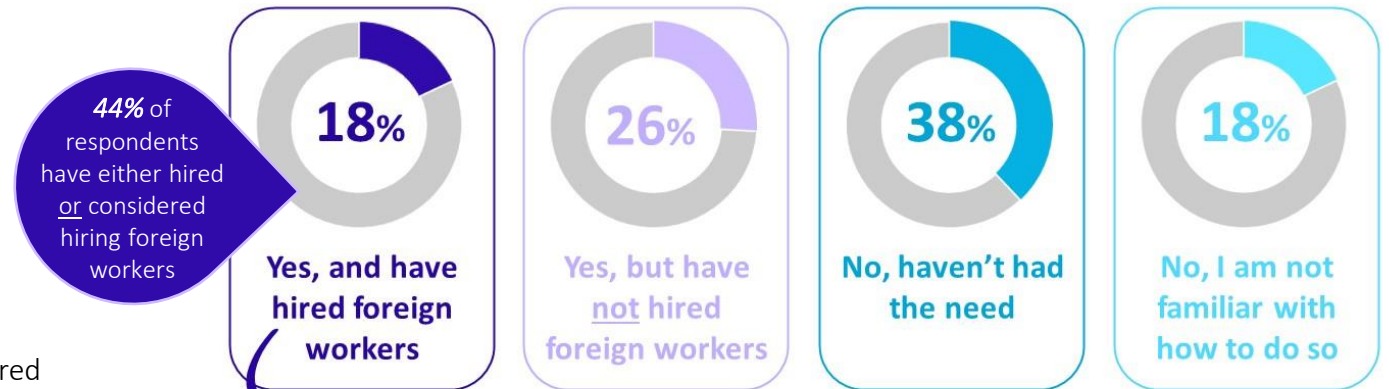
Q.11a-b: Which of these situations currently apply to your business? (n=50)

Few stakeholders have experience hiring foreign workers.

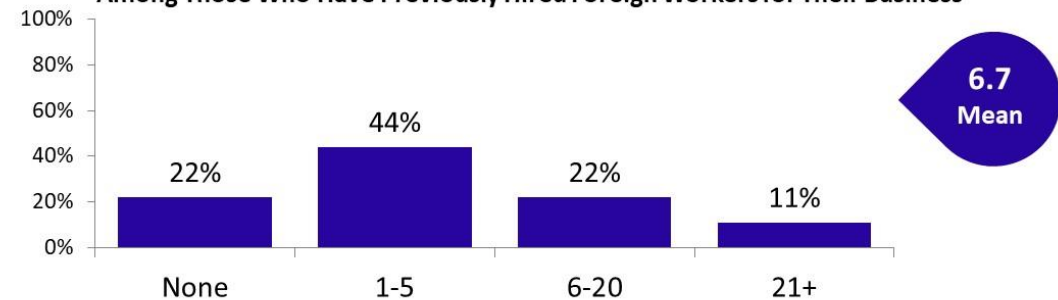
To better understand usage of temporary foreign workers to address labour needs and workforce shortages, respondents were asked about their past experience with such hires.

- Fewer than two-in-ten (18%) respondents reported having hired foreign workers for their business in the past, while an additional one-quarter (26%) stated that while they considered it, they had yet to make such a hire. Alternatively, just under two-in-ten (18%) indicated they had not considered hiring temporary foreign workers due to a lack of familiarity with the process, while nearly four-in-ten (38%) reported not having a need for temporary foreign workers. Of note, none of the seasonal operators responding to the survey (n=18) reported having previously hired foreign workers. (Table 7)
- Of the few who reported having hired temporary foreign workers (n=9), respondents most commonly reported hiring between one and five temporary foreign workers each year. (Table 8)

Considered Hiring Temporary Foreign Workers for Business



Number of Temporary Foreign Workers Hired Each Year Among Those Who Have Previously Hired Foreign Workers for Their Business



Q.7: Have you considered hiring temporary foreign workers for your business? (n=50)

Q.8: [IF 'YES, AND HAVE HIRED FOREIGN WORKERS' IN Q.7] Typically, how many temporary foreign workers do you hire each year? (n=9)* **Caution: Small sample size.*



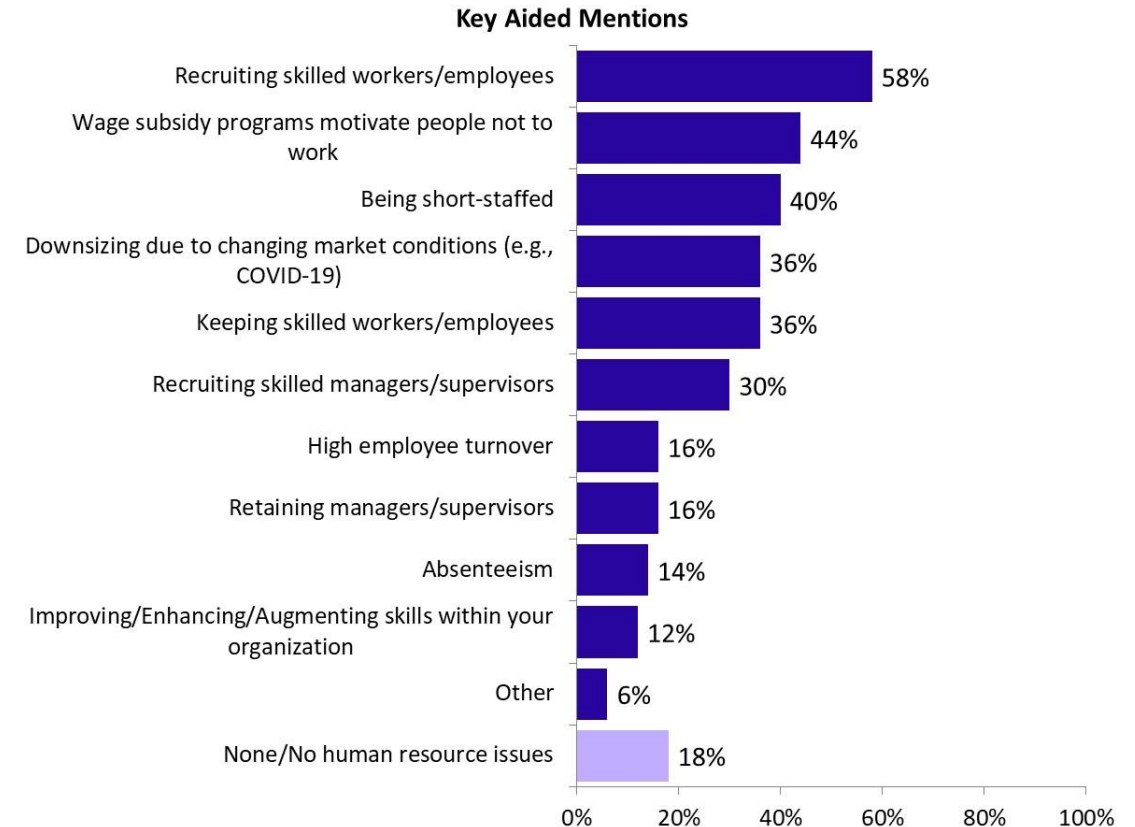
Human Resource Challenges

This section of the report outlines current HR challenges, concerns, and needs/interest in various supports.

Many businesses are experiencing a wide variety of challenges, with recruiting skilled workers/employees being most common.

- Overall, businesses are currently facing a variety of human resource challenges. Nearly six-in-ten respondents (58%) report challenges in **recruiting skilled workers/employees**, while **issues with wage subsidy programs** (motivating people not to work) (44%), being **short-staffed** (40%), **downsizing to changing market conditions** (36%), and **retaining skilled workers/employees** (36%) were each cited as human resource challenges face by more than one-third of respondents.
- Three-in-ten (30%) respondents reported challenges **keeping skilled managers/supervisors**, while other human resource challenges are less common, including **high employee turnover** (16%), **retaining managers/supervisors** (16%), **absenteeism** (14%), and **improving/enhancing/augmenting skills** within their organization (12%).
- Fewer than two-in-ten (18%) stakeholders have experienced no challenges related to human resources. (Table 12)

Human Resource Challenges Facing Business



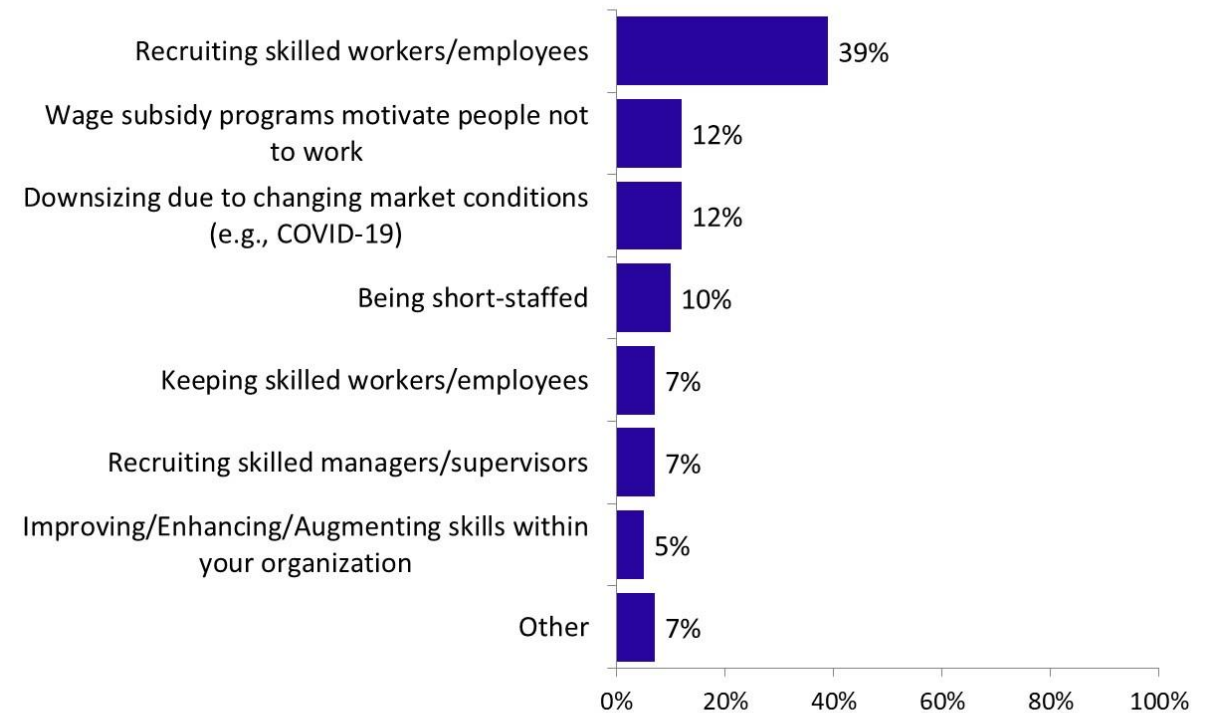
Q.12: Which of the following **human resource challenges** are facing your business? (n=50)

Those who reported experiencing multiple human resource challenges (n=41) were then asked to indicate the single greatest challenge facing their organization.

- Again, **recruiting skilled workers/employees** was identified as the most common top challenge encountered (39%), distantly followed by the perception that **wage subsidy programs** motivate people not to work (12%), **downsizing due to changing market conditions** (12%), and being **short-staffed** (10%). Few mentioned alternative human resource challenges as being a top concern for their business. (Table 13)

Greatest Human Resource Challenge Facing Business

Total Aided Mentions Among Those Who Selected More Than One Challenge in Q.12

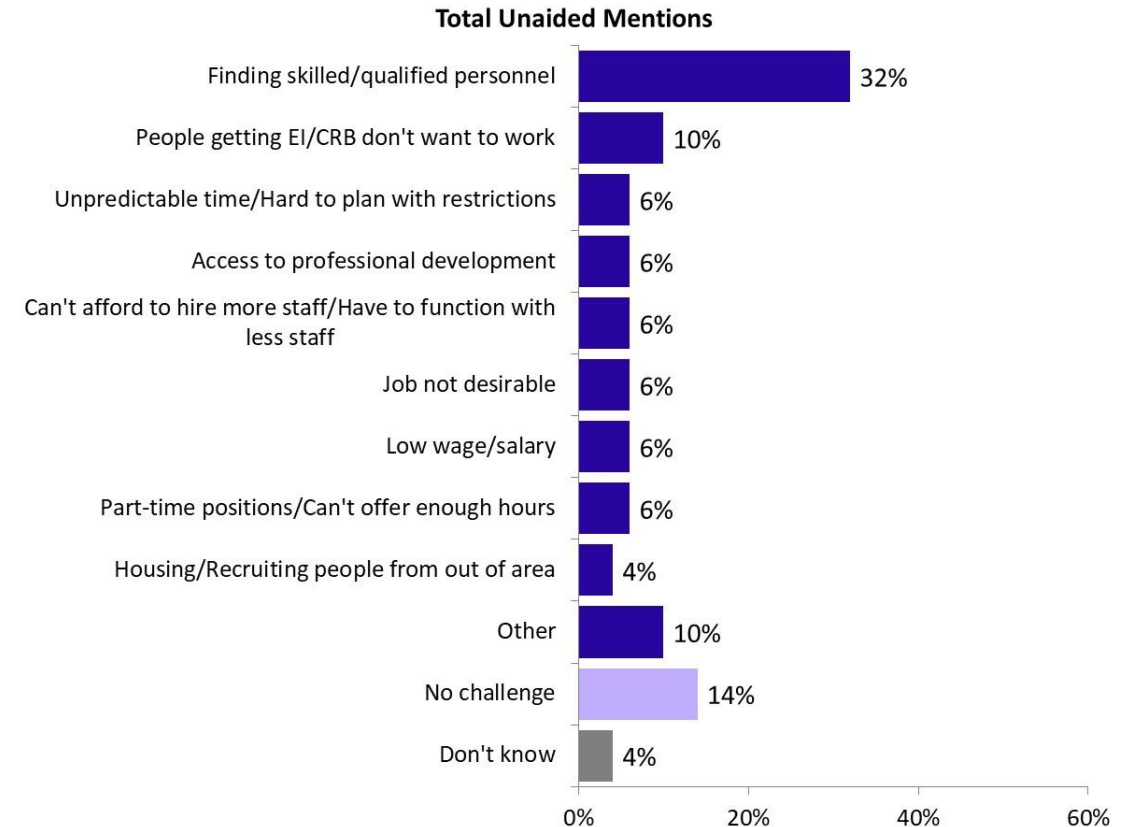


Q.13: [IF SELECTED MORE THAN ONE CHALLENGE IN Q.12 (SHOW SELECTED STATEMENTS ONLY) AND NOT IF 'NONE/NO HUMAN RESOURCES ISSUE' IN Q.12] Of those, which would you consider to be the greatest human resource challenge facing your business? (n=41)* **Caution: Small sample size.*

To further explore the specific human resource challenges businesses are currently facing, respondents were asked, unaided, to provide further details on their greatest challenges.

- While respondents again identified a range of issues encountered, ultimately, ***finding skilled/qualified personnel*** was the most common challenge identified (32%), distantly followed by ***EI/CRB benefits*** (10%) which were perceived to discourage people from working.
- Other specific challenges were less common, and reflected general market conditions as well as job-specific or industry-specific issues.
- Fewer than two-in-ten reported encountering no challenges (14%) or were unable to provide details on the specific challenges they face (4%). (Table 14)

Details of Human Resource Challenges Facing Business



Q.14: Please provide details on why that is the greatest human resource challenge that you face? (n=50)

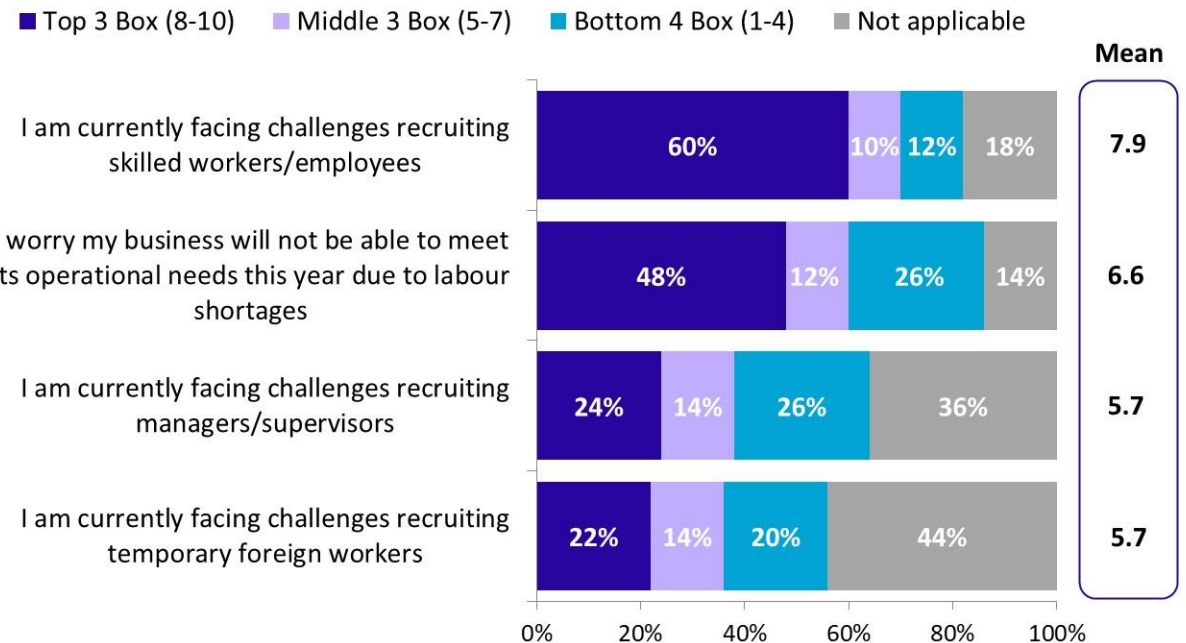
Consistent with other findings, recruiting skilled workers/employees appears to be a key challenge for many, with nearly one-half of stakeholders expressing concern that they will not be able to meet their operational needs due to labour shortages.

Stakeholders were asked their level of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements related to their labour force using a 10-point scale whereby '1' meant *completely disagree* and '10' meant *completely agree*.

- Six-in-ten (60%) respondents strongly agree (scores 8-10) that they are currently facing challenges **recruiting skilled workers/employees**, while nearly one-half (48%) are worried their **business will not be able to meet operational needs this year due to labour shortages**.
- Concern over **recruiting managers/supervisors** and **temporary foreign workers** is less prevalent, with nearly one-quarter of respondents offering strong agreement to each statement (24% and 22%, respectively). A notable portion stated these factors were not applicable to their situation (36% and 44%, respectively). (Tables 14a-d)
- As may be expected, those with experience hiring foreign workers were slightly more likely than others to agree they're currently facing challenges in making such hires (33% vs. 20%).

Agreement with Statements about Business' Labour Force

Ratings on a 10-pt. Scale Where 1=Completely Disagree and 10=Completely Agree



Q.14a-d: Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (n=50) *Note: Responses of 'Not applicable' are excluded from the mean calculations.*

Cooks/chefs and housekeeping staff were identified as the most challenging positions to recruit.

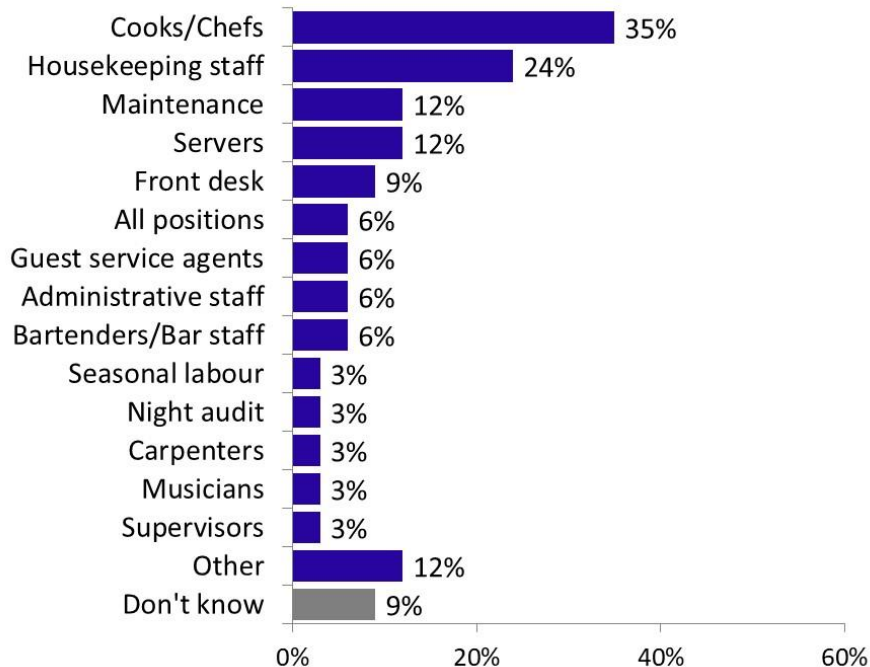
Those who agreed that recruiting skilled workers/employees was a challenge (scores of 6-10; 10-point scale; n=34) were then asked to indicate what specific skilled worker positions they found most challenging to recruit.

- Overall, and reflective of the fact that most survey respondents are in the accommodations and food and beverage sectors, respondents most commonly expressed having the greatest difficulty in filling *cooks/chefs* and *housekeeping* staff positions, followed by positions in *maintenance*, and *servers*. (Table 15)

Skilled Worker Positions Most Challenging to Recruit

Total Unaided Mentions Among Those Who Rated the Challenges of Recruiting Skilled Workers/Employees 6 or Higher in Q.14a

68%
are currently facing
challenges recruiting
skilled workers/
employers
(Ratings of 6-10)



Q.15: [IF 'RECRUITING SKILLED WORKERS/EMPLOYEES' IS 6 OR HIGHER IN Q.14A] What skilled worker positions are most challenging to recruit? (n=34)* **Caution: Small sample size.*

Those looking to hire foreign workers encounter an inability to access foreign workers and a lack of government supports to guide their efforts.

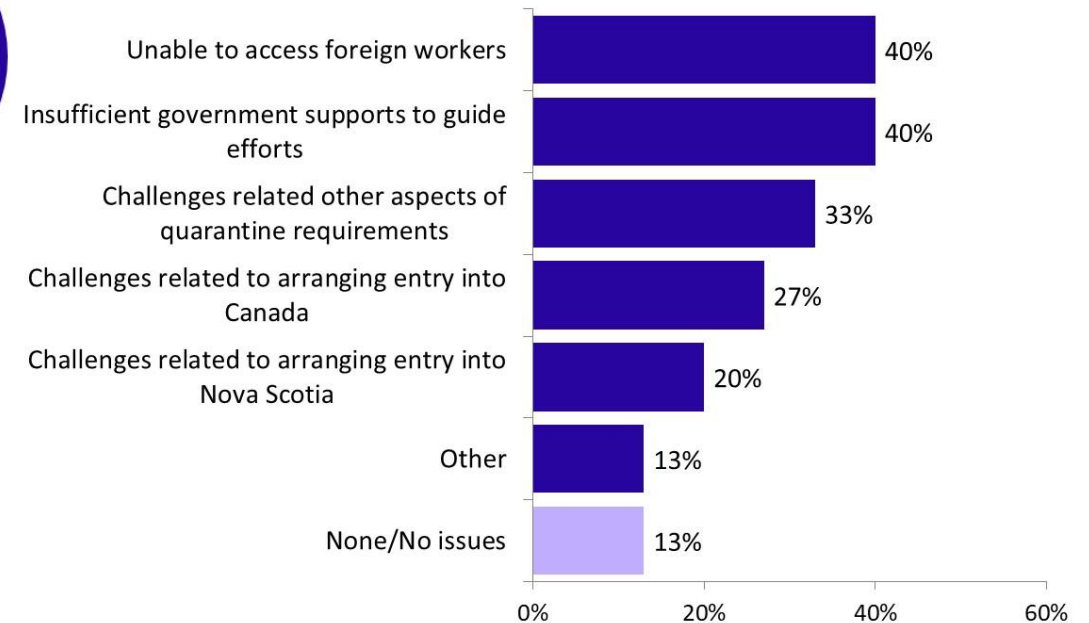
Those who offered some level of agreement that recruiting temporary foreign workers was a challenge (scores of 6-10; 10-point scale; n=15) were asked to indicate the specific challenges they encounter.

- In their efforts to hire foreign workers, respondents most commonly expressed challenges related to an overall ***inability to access such workers*** and having ***insufficient government supports*** available to guide their efforts, followed by challenges related to ***other aspects of quarantine requirements***, challenges related to ***entry into Canada***, and challenges related to ***entry into Nova Scotia*** specifically. (Table 16)

30%
are currently facing
challenges recruiting
temporary foreign
workers
(Ratings of 6-10)

Challenges Encountered When Hiring Foreign Workers

Total Aided Mentions Among Those Who Rated the Challenges of Recruiting Temporary Foreign Workers 6 or Higher in Q.14c



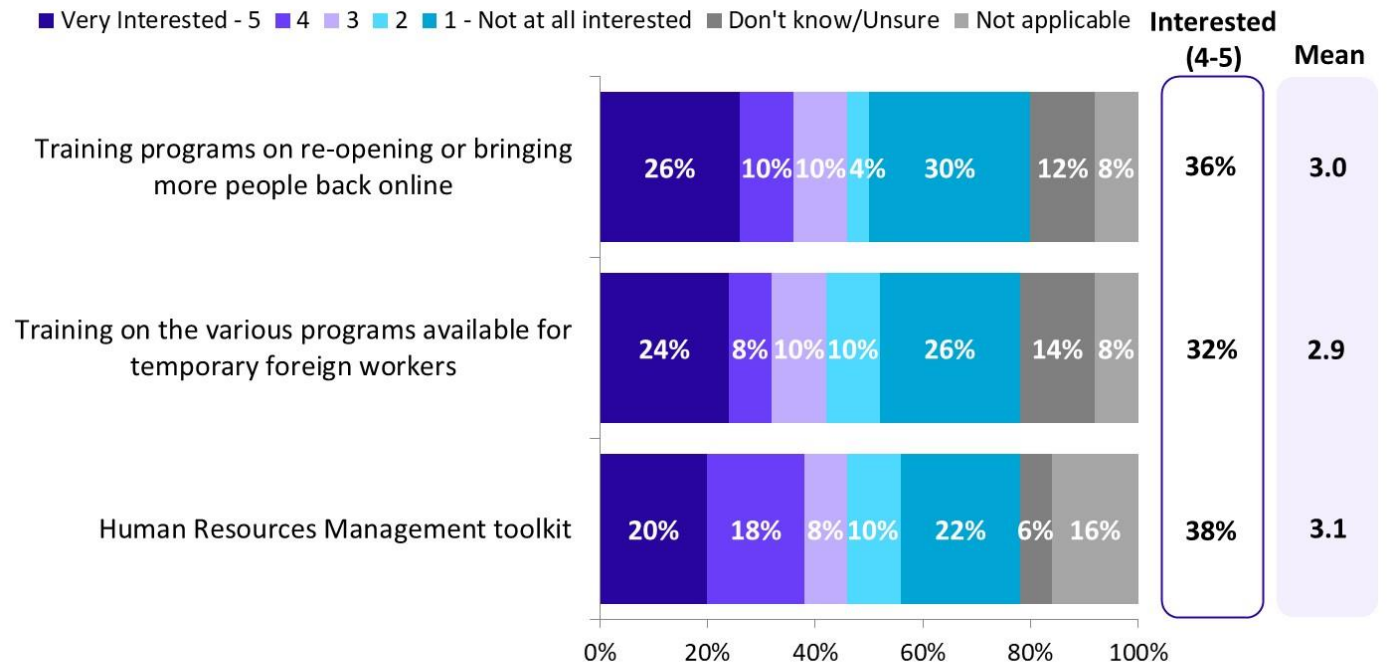
Q.16: [IF 'RECRUITING TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKERS' IS 6 OR HIGHER IN Q.14C] What specific challenges have you encountered when hiring foreign workers? (n=15)* **Caution: Small sample size.*

Overall, there is modest interest in skills training workshops or resources offered by TIANs to its membership, at no cost.

To better understand potential uptake in future free TIANs offerings to its membership, respondents were asked their level interest in specific offerings using a 5-point scale whereby '1' meant they *not at all interested* and '5' meant they were *very interested*.

- Overall, interest in the various potential offerings by TIANs is mixed.
- Nearly four-in-ten (38%) expressed some level of interest (scores 4-5) in receiving a **Human Resources Management toolkit**, while slightly fewer expressed interest in **training programs on re-opening or bringing more people back online** (36%) and **training on various programs available for temporary foreign workers** (32%). (Tables 17a-c)
- Of note, seasonal operators are less likely than those operating full time to be interested in these various offerings. Further, as may be expected, among those who have hired or considered hiring foreign workers (n=22), interest (scores 4-5) in training programs specifically related to temporary foreign workers is higher than respondents overall (55% vs. 32%).

Interest in Skills Training Workshops or Resources at No Cost



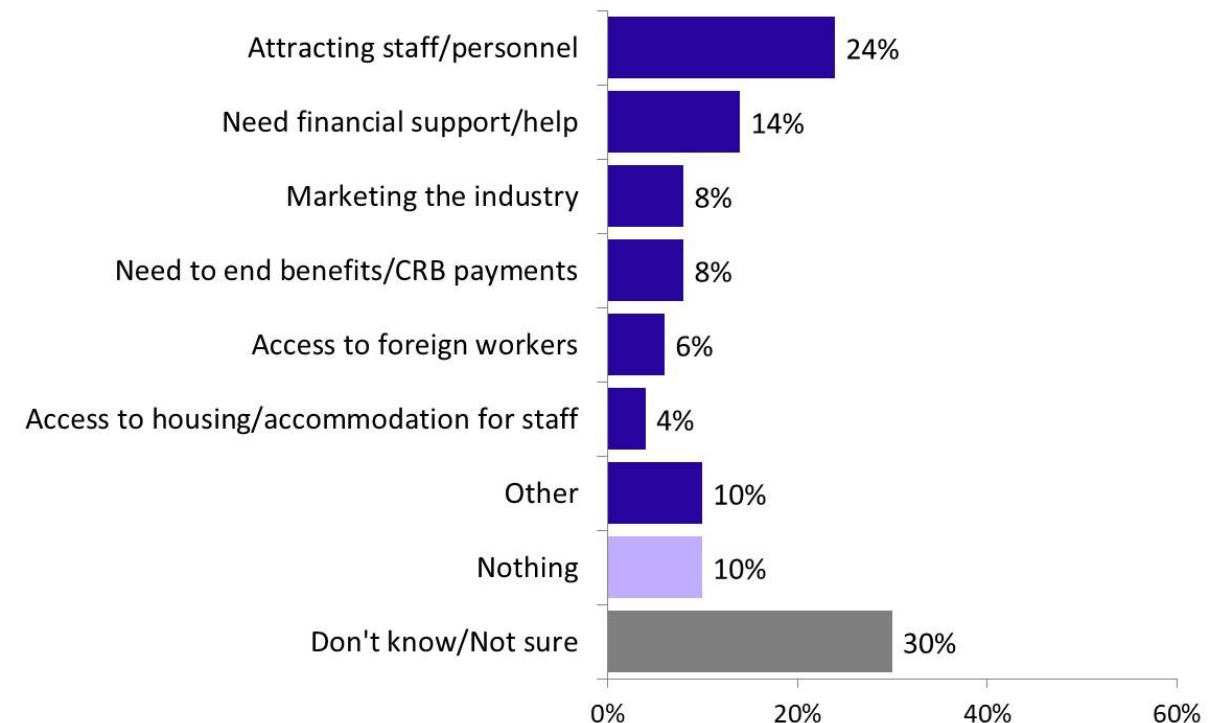
Q.17a-c: Thinking of your business, how interested would you be in each of the following **Skills Training Workshops or Resources** for you or your staff, available at no cost. (n=50) *Note: Responses of "Not applicable" and "Don't know/Unsure" are excluded from the mean calculations.*

There are opportunities to further engage stakeholders and assist them in meeting their unmet labour needs.

- Despite many stakeholders experiencing human resource challenges, three-in-ten (30%) respondents were unsure what, if anything, would help them in meeting their unmet labour needs. That said, **attracting staff/personnel** was the most common area stakeholders identified that they would benefit from assistance (24%), followed by receiving **financial support/help** (14%). Other forms of help were each mentioned by fewer than one-in-ten respondents, including **general marketing of the industry** (8%), **ending benefits** (i.e., CRB payments) (8%), **access to foreign workers** (6%), and **greater access to housing/accommodation for staff** (4%).
- Only 10 percent of respondents require no assistance to meet their unmet labour needs. (Table 18)

Would Help Meet Unmet Labour Needs

Total Unaided Mentions



Q.18: What, if anything, would help you meet your unmet labour needs? Please be as specific as possible. (n=50)



Respondent Profile

The following section profiles stakeholders responding to the survey.

Survey respondents operate in a variety of regions, with Halifax Metro, Cape Breton and South Shore being the most common. The accommodations sector is most represented among survey respondents.

- Business operations are most common in Halifax Metro, with one-quarter of respondents reporting operations in the region, closely followed by mentions of operations in Cape Breton and the South Shore. Meanwhile, fewer stakeholders operate out of the Northumberland Shore, Bay of Fundy, Eastern Shore, Yarmouth and Acadian Shores, and province wide, comparatively. (Table 1)
- Stakeholders in the **accommodations** sector account for the bulk of the survey respondents. Only eight percent of respondents work in the **food and beverage** sector, while other sectors were each represented by no more than four percent of respondents. Nearly two-in-ten of respondents identify some other sector or a combination of pre-identified sectors. (Table 2)

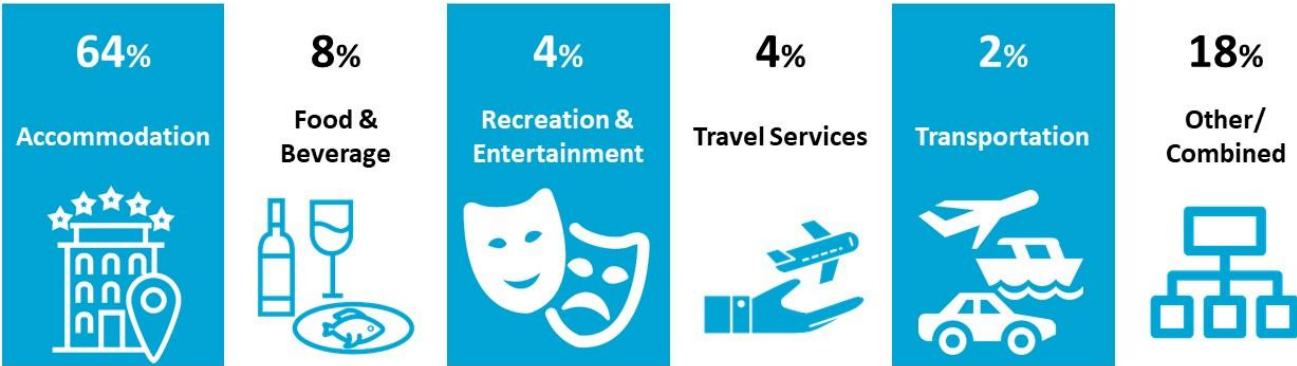
Area of Nova Scotia Business Operates



	(n=50)
Halifax Metro	26%
Cape Breton	24%
South Shore	22%
Northumberland Shore	12%
Bay of Fundy	8%
Eastern Shore	8%
Yarmouth and Acadian Shores	6%
Province wide	4%
Other	2%

Q.1: Please indicate in which area of Nova Scotia you operate.

Tourism Sector Best Representing Business

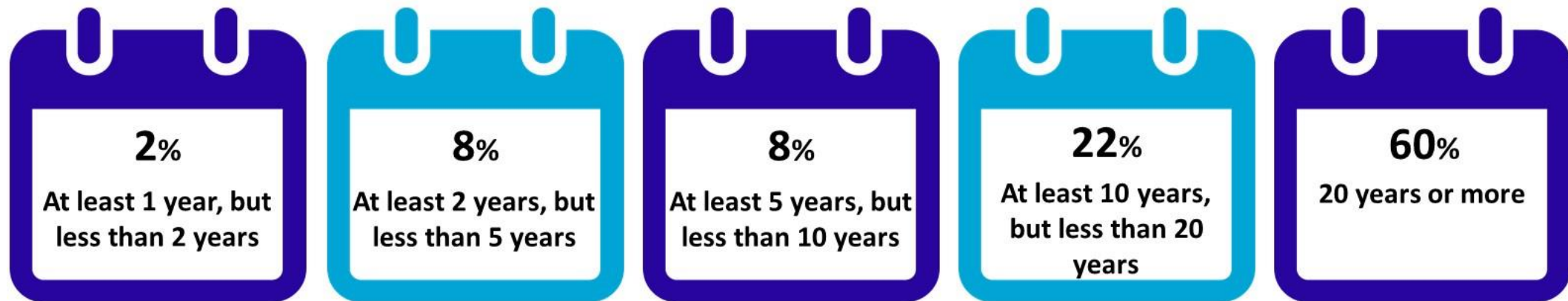


Q.2: Which sector of tourism industry best represents your business? (n=50)

The vast majority of businesses surveyed have been in operation for more than a decade, with the bulk reporting tenure of at least 20 years.

- Six-in-ten survey respondents were seasoned tourism operators with at least 20 years of operational history. In addition, just over two-in-ten have been in operation for at least ten years. Newer operations represent fewer than two-in-ten respondents. (Table 3)

Length of Time in Business

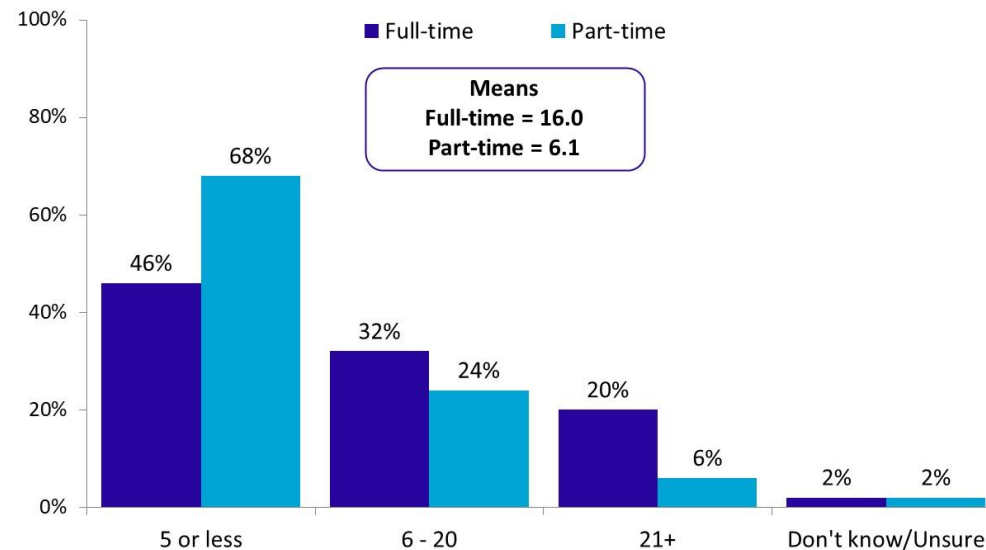


Q.3: How long have you been in business? (n=50)

Businesses tend to be smaller scale, currently employing on average, 16 full-time and six part-time employees. A greater portion of year-round businesses are represented in the survey.

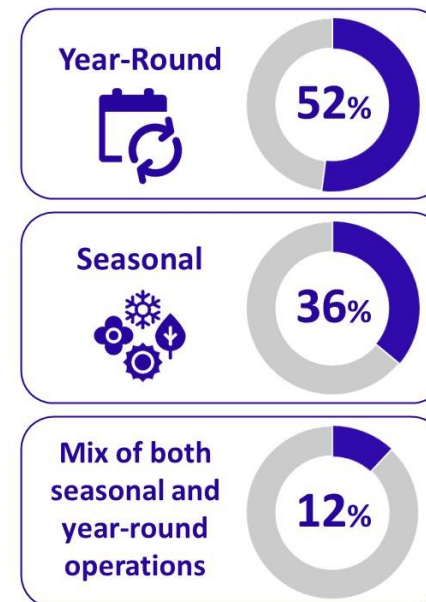
- Those surveyed tend to report operating smaller scale businesses. Currently, respondents employ, on average, 16 full-time and six part-time employees. Additionally, nearly one-half of respondents employ a maximum of five full-time workers, while just over two-thirds employ five or fewer part-time workers. Stakeholders based in Halifax and those with longer tenure (i.e., 20+ years in operation) were more likely than their respective counterparts to report higher numbers of full-time workers. (Table 6a-b)

Approximate Number of Employees Currently Work in Business



Q.6a-b: Approximately how many employees currently work in your business in Nova Scotia (including yourself, if applicable)? (n=50) *Note: Responses of 'Don't know/Unsure' are excluded from the mean calculations.*

Business Open Year-Round or Seasonal



Q.4: Is your business open year-round or is it seasonal? (n=50)

- Just over one-half of respondents operate their business year-round, while more than one-third operate on a seasonal basis. Just over one-in-ten have a mix of both seasonal and year-round operations.
- Of note, seasonal based companies are more likely than other businesses to report having 5 full-time employees or less. (Table 4)