Our mission at St. Louis Community College is to expand minds and change lives every day. We do this by offering high-quality educational experiences leading to degrees, certificates, employment, university transfer, and life-long learning. For many of our students, the word “employment” stands out. All agree that education and training are essential in today’s increasingly complex and technological workplace. For our students, this essential education is the means to the end goal of a well-paying job in a career field that is interesting, growing, and rewarding.

In order for the College to successfully prepare our students for the workforce, we need to understand the complex and changing economic environment. That’s why we are very pleased to present this 2019 State of the St. Louis Workforce Report. For the past eleven years, the College and its research partners have surveyed our region’s employers, from the recovery after the Great Recession through the growth of the decade-long bull market we find ourselves in now. The workforce report has given the College and the St. Louis community insight into the workforce trends that help us respond to the needs of our students, community organizations, and employer partners.

The State of the St. Louis Workforce Report alternates each year between a look at a composite of the region’s employment trends and, in the alternating year, a focus on particular sectors or disciplines. For 2019 the College and its partners surveyed over 1,100 employers across sixteen employer categories, representing a composite of the St. Louis regional economy, to produce this report.

We’ve seen a number of trends continuing from the last few years. The national unemployment rate has remained low – at 3.6% it is at its lowest level since December 1969. Unemployment in the St. Louis region has consistently tracked slightly lower than the national rate. The United States enjoyed 120 months of continuous job growth through December of last year, with 2.6 million jobs added in 2018 alone. And we have strong rates of labor participation as well, which at 63.1% is lower than our pre-recession rate but on an upward trend. While in our 2017 State of the St. Louis Workforce Report we wondered whether we had achieved a full employment economy, it seems like this debate is well settled now.

While this is good news for most job seekers, it means that companies have a hard time finding employees to fill the jobs they have, and that many jobs remain unfilled for long periods, potentially slowing our region’s economic growth.

However, in the St. Louis region, like regions across the country, not everyone has benefited equally from this jobs boom. In our 2019 report we take a deeper look at three demographic groups – African American men aged 18-24, people with disabilities, and justice-involved individuals, all of whom experience significantly higher rates of unemployment than the regional average. Our goal is to try to understand at some level
the answers to three questions: Who is being left behind? Why? What are employers doing to address the issue?

The 2019 State of the St. Louis Workforce Report continues to be supported with the partnership of our region’s top economic and workforce institutions. Along with the help of our decade-long partners at the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center, we appreciate the collaboration with the Nine Network of Public Media’s American Graduate initiative, the St. Louis Federal Reserve Bank, the Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and others.

The information in this report includes labor market information from public sources such as the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Census Bureau. To provide deeper insights, we also used advanced analytical tools such as Burning Glass Labor Insight, JobsEQ, and others. The information gathered reflects strength and opportunity for our region’s economy, yet highlights some areas where we need to do better in matching workers with jobs.

We would like to thank and acknowledge our employer, research, and media partners without whom we would not be able to bring this informative workforce report to the region. We hope you will find this report valuable and use its findings for the benefit of your organization and our community.
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Executive Summary

With this 11th publication, the State of the St. Louis Workforce Report is now entering its second decade of providing information and insight into the economic conditions and workforce issues facing our region. Since St. Louis Community College’s first report in 2009, we have tracked the region’s transition from the high unemployment of the Great Recession through the last ten years of growth to a labor market now constrained by a lack of available workers.

The State of the St. Louis Workforce Report is divided into three sections. The St. Louis Economy compiles labor market information, which is publicly available, as well as data that is gathered through proprietary analytical tools. The Employer Survey is based on a telephone survey of 1,144 employers across 16 employer categories representing a composite of the region’s economy. Finally, we have a narrative section that seeks to understand who is being left behind in our full-employment economy, why, and what employers and community partners are doing to eliminate these gaps.

In December 2007, when the recession began, the national unemployment rate was 5%. By October 2009 it had peaked at 10%. As of April 2019 both the national and St. Louis Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) unemployment rate stood at 3.6%. While two years ago we were surrounded by evidence of economic growth and a full employment economy, our report this year provides indications that employers are at least somewhat concerned about the future and are taking steps to reduce risk.

For now, however, the economic conditions continue to reflect a decade of recovery and growth. In the 12 months ending this past April, an additional 2.8 million jobs had been added to the U.S. economy. The gap between the unemployment rate and the number of job openings, used as a measure of labor demand, was at its lowest level ever. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ April 2019 Job Openings and Labor Turnover (JOLT) Survey, there were 7.4 million job openings but only enough hiring to fill 5.9 million of those openings. In July 2009, there were 6.4 unemployed workers for each job opening. By May 2019, we had less than one unemployed person (0.8) per opening.

In July 2009, there were 6.4 unemployed workers for each job opening. By May 2019, we had less than one unemployed person per opening.
A broader measure of unemployment level is the U-6 unemployment rate. It includes the unemployed but also those marginally attached to the labor force or working part time for economic reasons. The U-6 rate for May 2019 was 7.1%, down slightly from the May 2018 level of 7.7% but less than half of the peak rate of 17.1% in April 2010. The Labor Force Participation (LFP) rate was 62.8% in May 2019, unchanged over the previous two years. As noted in previous versions of this report, the broader unemployment measure and the static labor force participation rate represent significant challenges to employers trying to find enough applicants for open positions.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth increased considerably in the past year, averaging 3.2% over the last four quarters, compared to 2.6% in the preceding four. The 3% increase was the largest in more than a decade and is in line with the U.S. government’s target growth rate. However, many forecasters see GDP growth easing in the remainder of 2019 after the recent surge.

The unemployment rate for the St. Louis MSA continues to mirror the national trend. As of April 2019, the St. Louis unemployment rate stood at 3.6%, up very slightly from the 3.5% rate of April 2018 and exactly matching the national rate of 3.6%. However, the St. Louis MSA unemployment rate continues to lag behind the state rate of 3.3%. The number of unemployed individuals in the St. Louis MSA stood at 52,137 as of April 2019, up 1,385 from the previous year.

Unemployment rates vary greatly with age and sex. Younger workers, particularly those under age 22, had unemployment rates at or above 8.5% in the St. Louis metro during 2017. Men in the 16-19 age range had the highest rate at 16.7%. While there is a large disparity in unemployment rates between males and females in younger and older groups, rates were similar in the 45-59 age groups. St. Louis reflects the state and national trend of higher unemployment rates in workers less than 22 years of age.

The St. Louis age profile has changed over time with workers aged 55 and older having increased as a share of the workforce, while the 35-54 age groups have decreased. The 55+ age groups have grown from 17.5% in 2008 to 23.6% in 2018. With nearly one-fourth of the workforce in the 55+ age groups, St. Louis mirrors the national trend of an aging workforce, which is helping drive the demand for healthcare employment as well as the need to replace workers who are retiring. Nearly half of the region’s population 25 and older have a high school diploma but no post-secondary degree, lower than the state rate of 53%, while 43% have an associate degree or greater, higher than both the state rate (37%) and the national rate (40%).

The 2019 Employer Survey attempts to get a picture of employers’ expectations and challenges across the range of industry classifications that make up our regional economy and job market. We are able to draw comparisons and trends from our
previous surveys to understand how employers are responding to market changes and to identify areas of focus for educators and community partners.

Looking at the responses of employers to questions about hiring over the past 12 months and anticipated hiring over the next 12 months gives us a picture of overall job growth in the last year, but early signs that the steady job growth of the last ten years may be cooling off. Thirty-seven percent of employers increased employment in 2019 which is up from 33% in 2017. Just under half of respondents (48%) indicated that employment levels remained consistent over the last 12 months, which is down slightly from past composite surveys where this response ranged from 51.9% to 55.6%. Looking forward, 62% of respondents this year plan either no change or decreases in employment levels compared to only 58% in 2017.

A Shortage of workers with knowledge or skills remains the primary barrier to expanding employment in the 2019 employer responses, which is consistent with reporting over the last two cycles. However, this response is down from 52% only two years ago to 46% today. In addition, fewer companies reported barriers across most of the listed categories compared to past years. Economic conditions, which had been the primary barrier as recently as 2013, rose slightly as a barrier in the 2019 responses and will be an indicator to watch since it had been on a downward slide since 2011. Lack of transportation access as a barrier had increased since 2013 to a high of 23% in 2017 before falling to 18% this year.

Employers were once again asked about their perceptions of the shortcomings of applicants for their positions across several different descriptors (e.g. poor work ethic, lack of communication or interpersonal skills, lack of critical thinking and problem solving ability, lack of teamwork or collaboration). Overall, companies reported seeing fewer shortcomings in job applicants compared to past years. The two largest deficiencies remained poor work habits at 66% of the responses and lack of communication or interpersonal skills at a 56% response rate. Poor work habits increased significantly from previous years and was one of only three shortcomings that increased in 2019, the others being inability to interact with different cultures or socio-economic backgrounds reporting a 42% rate and lack of communication or interpersonal skills with 56% of the responses.

In another sign that employers might be increasingly concerned about the future, the percentage of employers reporting they will hire new full-time employees dropped by six percent.

The percentage of employers reporting they will hire new full-time employees dropped by six percent.
Slightly over one-third of employers, 33.5%, reported that they were experiencing a shortage of skilled applicants. This is up slightly from the 2017 figure of 31%, but a huge reduction from the 2015 level of 55%. For the second time we asked employers about the skill level (low, middle, or high) of jobs needed to address their skill shortage. The most frequent response was middle, chosen by 45% of employers and closely tracking the result from 2017.

When employers were asked about skill shortages in functional areas, the top responses were skilled trades and customer service with 24% and 20% of employers reporting shortages respectively. The effective rate of response for skill shortages for skilled trades is nearly 60%, similar to the results in 2017 and validating significant anecdotal evidence STLCC received from employers in the region.

Employers with patient care, information technology, and accounting/finance functions all reported increasing shortages of skilled applicants in these areas in 2019. The percentage of respondents employing IT staff increased from 20% in 2017 to 26% in 2019, with the rate of shortage increasing from 4% to 7% in this year's response.

Our survey showed a decrease in the percentage of jobs at higher levels of education and experience and an increase in the percentage of jobs at lower levels of education and experience from 2013 to 2015, when the job market began to tighten. However, this pattern did not continue from 2017 to 2019, when the demand for greater experience and education rose slightly. With the small shifts reported, it seems employers are continuing to balance a desire for experience and education with the need to maintain a pipeline of candidates in a low unemployment economy.

The vast majority of employers responded indicating they had positions requiring a low-skill education, 83%, with well more than half, 62%, of employers indicating that they had middle-skill education positions. The lowest response rate by employers was for positions at the high-skill education level with 44% indicating they had these positions in their organizations. In all cases, the percentage of employers responding increased slightly.

For the last three surveys, we asked employers about the percentage of jobs in their organizations that would be available to applicants who had completed short-term training, defined as no more than six months past high school and relevant to their industry. The percentage of companies that
reported that jobs are available to these individuals has been remarkably consistent – 69% in both 2019 and 2015 and only slightly higher in 2017 at 70%.

With the decade-long decrease in the unemployment rate and significant evidence that employers are finding it more and more difficult to find employees to fill open jobs, we were interested in examining what potential pools of workers remain. Our 2019 report takes a closer look at three populations in the St. Louis region that are continuously underrepresented in the workforce: people with disabilities, justice-involved individuals, and African American men aged 18-24.

We partnered with three local organizations that serve these groups to obtain direct perspectives about the people being left behind, why, and what is currently being done about it.

- **Mission: St. Louis** offers a closer look at *the complex path to employment for justice-involved citizens*.
- **Paraquad** provides insights into *the workforce inclusion quest for people with disabilities*.
- **The Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis** shares considerations about *the perpetual trend of joblessness among 18- to 24-year-old African American men*.

Our hope by providing these insights is that employers and community leaders are inspired to consider how we can all continue working together to ensure St. Louis is a place where employment opportunities truly do exist for every member of our community.
A Closer Look: St. Louis MSA Unemployment Rate

Unemployment Rate, St. Louis Metropolitan Area and Its Component Counties, Not Seasonally Adjusted

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With this publication, the State of the St. Louis Workforce Report is now entering its second decade. St. Louis Community College is proud to participate in the conversation about our regional economy and to provide this information and insights into the economic conditions and workforce issues that challenge employers and job seekers. This year’s report follows the format of previous versions by including three distinct parts: the *St. Louis Economy*, a compilation of labor market information using public and proprietary sources and tools; the *Employer Survey*; and a narrative section, *Opportunities for All Some*, focusing on three of the populations in the St. Louis region that are continuously underrepresented in the workforce.

### St. Louis Economy

As in previous reports, this year’s report includes an analysis of available data from public sources, such as the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the United States Census Bureau, which describe the characteristics of the labor force and correlate unemployment with various labor force demographics. Also included is an analysis of real-time labor market demand aggregated through the proprietary Burning Glass Labor Insight tool, which searches web-based job boards to discern the level of demand for certain occupations and the skills and certifications which employers are requesting.

### Employer Survey

The State of the St. Louis Workforce report relies heavily on first-person telephonic interviews of regional employers. As shown in the table on the following page, for the 2019 employer survey 1,144 local companies in 16 industry categories were surveyed during spring and summer 2019, encompassing the 23 2-digit NAICS (North American Industry Classification System) codes that represent a composite picture of the St. Louis regional economy.

Survey respondents were asked a series of 14 questions, some with multiple parts, related to hiring trends and skill needs. Companies interviewed for the survey were selected from a categorized list of the 71,300 St. Louis MSA business establishments from the Reference USA employer database provided by the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center (MERIC). The survey is provided as Appendix I.

### Narrative Section

St. Louis Community College partnered with three local organizations that serve populations continuously underrepresented in the workforce to obtain direct perspectives about the people being left behind, why, and what is currently being done about it. This section sheds light on the particular employment challenges faced by justice-involved citizens, people with disabilities, and African American men aged 18-24.
## 2019 State of the St. Louis Workforce Employer Survey

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<td>13.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAICS 71</td>
<td>Arts, entertainment, and recreation</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAICS 72</td>
<td>Accommodation and food services</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>7.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAICS 81</td>
<td>Other services</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>8.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Small Sectors and Unclassified*</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>6.73%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1,144</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(*) Other Small Sectors with Less than 1% of STL MSA Establishments:
- NAICS 11 Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting
- NAICS 21 Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction
- NAICS 22 Utilities
- NAICS 55 Management of companies and enterprises
The bi-state St. Louis Missouri-Illinois Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) includes 16 counties that straddle the Mississippi River with an estimated population of over 2.8 million. According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, the area had a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of over $160 billion in 2017. The industry with the highest GDP was Professional and Business Services, with $23 billion. Private Sector Service Providers accounted for 73% of the region’s output, followed by Goods-Producers (17%), and Government (10%).

**Employment**

The St. Louis MSA has a diverse economy with a labor force of over 1.3 million that work in a wide range of industries. Healthcare & Social Assistance and Wholesale & Retail Trade each make up 16% of total employment. Healthcare & Social Assistance has increased 26% over the last 10 years, going from nearly 170,000 employees in 2008 to 214,000 in 2018. Construction had the largest decrease, with employment declining by nearly 20,000. Overall, the St. Louis economy added just over 24,600 employees in the last 10 years.

St. Louis is home to several industry clusters. Large employment concentrations in a mix of sectors highlight areas of regional economic strength. St. Louis is home to major investment and banking firms such as Edward Jones and Enterprise Bank & Trust. Health Science and Services represent businesses spanning a wide variety of health care needs, including insurers, health care providers, and product manufacturers. St. Louis is home to several Fortune 500 companies including Centene, Emerson Electric, and Jones Financial.
Unemployment

Estimates from the Bureau of Labor Statistics show the St. Louis MSA seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 3.6% in April 2019, up slightly from last year’s rate of 3.5% in April 2018. This is equal to the national rate of 3.6% and higher than the state rate of 3.3%.

Nationally and regionally, the unemployment rate has declined. The chart below shows how the job market has changed across the nation over the past decade. Job openings and unemployment rates provide a measure of labor demand based on the gap between the two measures. In good times the gap is small (generally less than 2%) but during a recession the gap widens as the October 2009 peak of 8.2% illustrates. In January 2018 the job openings rate (4.3%) was higher than the unemployment rate (4.1%) for the first time, and the gap has continued to grow, with a 0.9% difference in March of 2019.
Unemployment Demographics

Unemployment rates vary greatly with age and sex. As the chart indicates, younger workers, particularly those under age 22, had unemployment rates at or above 8.5% in the St. Louis metro during 2017. Men in the 16-19 age range had the highest rate at 16.7%. While there is a large disparity in unemployment rates between males and females in younger and older groups, rates were similar in the 45-59 age groups. St. Louis mirrors the state and national trend of higher unemployment rates in workers less than 22 years of age. Nationally, the unemployment rate for all ages was 5.3% for males and 5.2% for females. This is slightly higher than the St. Louis rate of 5.2% for males, and 4.7% for females. Missouri showed lower unemployment rates for males (4.8%) and females (4.3%).

St. Louis MSA Unemployment Rates by Age and Sex

![Chart showing unemployment rates by age and sex for St. Louis MSA](chart_image)


The old saying "education pays" is still true as it relates to income and risk of unemployment. For example, 2017 St. Louis MSA data show that having some college or an associate degree, versus a high school diploma, reduces the unemployment rate by 2.2 points and provides $4,804 annually in average extra earnings. A bachelor's degree or higher further reduces the unemployment rate by 1.6 points and increases median earnings.

St. Louis MSA Unemployment Rates and Earnings by Education, Population 25 Years and Older

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unemployment Rates</th>
<th>Educational Attainment</th>
<th>Median Earnings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>Less than high school graduate</td>
<td>$21,475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>High school graduate or GED</td>
<td>$31,369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>Some college or associate degree</td>
<td>$36,173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>Bachelor's degree or higher</td>
<td>$59,462*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Bachelor's ($52,438) and graduate ($66,486) degree medians. 
The highest unemployment rates and lowest wages belong to those workers with less than a high school education. Unemployment rates for workers who do not have a high school diploma or GED are nearly double those of high school graduates, and five times higher than workers with a bachelor’s degree or higher. Missouri shows similar trends, with workers who do not have a high school education having an unemployment rate of 10.6%, and a rate of 5.3% for high school graduates. Young and/or less educated job seekers have a more difficult time finding employment.

**Workforce Characteristics**

In 2018, the majority of jobholders were ages 25-34, representing 21.8% of the workforce. The 45-54 age group closely followed, representing 21.3% of the workforce. Workers age 14-21 made up only 7.1% of the workforce. The St. Louis age profile has changed over time with the 55+ age group having increased as a share of the workforce, while the 35-54 age group has decreased. The 55+ age group has grown from 17.5% in 2008 to 23.6% in 2018. With nearly one-fourth of the workforce in the 55+ age group, St. Louis mirrors the national trend of an aging workforce, which is helping drive the demand for healthcare employment as well as the need to replace workers who are retiring.

**St. Louis MSA Age of the Workforce**

Source: Quarterly Workforce Indicators, U.S. Census Bureau.

**Education Attainment**

Nearly one-half (48%) of the region’s 25 years and older population have a high school diploma but no post-secondary degree. This is similar to the national rate of 47% and lower than the state rate of 53%. Thirty-four percent of the St. Louis population have a bachelor’s degree or greater, which is higher than both the state (29%) and national (32%) rates.
Educational Attainment of the Population


Labor Shed

2019 estimates from the Bureau of Labor Statistics show that St. Louis employs almost 1.4 million people. 2015 Census Bureau data showed most workers living in the area, but 126,250 commuted into the MSA for jobs. Slightly over 100,000 of the residents commuted outside of the St. Louis MSA for work.

Commuting Distance

St. Louis MSA Workforce

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distance</th>
<th>% of Workforce</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 10 miles</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 24 miles</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 50 miles</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater than 50 miles</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application, Primary Jobs 2015.

Nearly half (46%) of the workforce commuted less than 10 miles to work, while 9% traveled more than 50 miles.

Current Job Demand

Through new job growth or companies needing to fill vacant positions, there are always job openings.

One way to measure current employment demand is to track job postings. Over the past year, there were over 280,000 online job postings in the St. Louis MSA. The table on the next page lists jobs, grouped by typical education or training needed, with the most advertisements from June 1, 2018 through May 31, 2019 in the St. Louis MSA.

The top posted job overall was Registered Nurses (12,346) followed by Applications Software Developers (10,470) and Computer Occupations, All Other (9,890).
### Top St. Louis MSA Job Advertisements in the Past Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Now: High School or Less and/or Short-Term Training</th>
<th>Online Job Ads</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retail Salespersons</td>
<td>7,637</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Service Representatives</td>
<td>7,604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers</td>
<td>3,227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers</td>
<td>3,088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janitors and Cleaners</td>
<td>2,565</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare Workers</td>
<td>2,195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners</td>
<td>2,170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waiters and Waitresses</td>
<td>1,985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security Guards</td>
<td>1,891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stock Clerks and Order Fillers</td>
<td>1,743</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Next: Moderate/ Long-Term Training to Associate Degree</th>
<th>Online Job Ads</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registered Nurses</td>
<td>12,346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing</td>
<td>9,521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers</td>
<td>7,509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers</td>
<td>4,353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretaries and Administrative Assistants</td>
<td>3,348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance and Repair Workers, General</td>
<td>2,833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer User Support Specialists</td>
<td>2,819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks</td>
<td>2,648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Service Managers</td>
<td>2,288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing Assistants</td>
<td>2,239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Assistants</td>
<td>2,002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Later: Bachelor's Degree or Higher</th>
<th>Online Job Ads</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Software Developers, Applications</td>
<td>10,470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Occupations, All Other</td>
<td>9,890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers, All Other</td>
<td>6,497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical and Health Services Managers</td>
<td>3,293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Managers</td>
<td>3,009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resources Specialists</td>
<td>2,996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management Analysts</td>
<td>2,853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Systems Analysts</td>
<td>2,689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountants and Auditors</td>
<td>2,647</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


All of these positions, with the exceptions of Food Service Managers and Stock Clerks, saw a significant increase in the number of online job ads over the previous year. Janitors (98%), Truck Drivers (87%), Maintenance and Repair Workers (82%), Sales Representatives (60%), Medical Assistants (58%), Customer Service Representatives (54%), Accounting and Auditing Clerks (52%), Security Guards (52%), and Laborers (50%) saw the largest year-to-year increases in the number of online job ads.
Skills and Certificates

Basic skills are requested in the majority of job advertisements, with Communication Skills being the top demand of employers, requested in over one-fourth (28%) of total job postings. The number one specialized skill was Customer Service, followed by Scheduling and Sales. These same top five specialized skills have been requested since 2017 (with minor ranking changes). Microsoft Excel, Office, Word, and PowerPoint and SQL have remained the top requested software and programming skills since 2016.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Basic Skills</th>
<th>Online Job Ads</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication Skills</td>
<td>80,992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork / Collaboration</td>
<td>43,468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Skills</td>
<td>38,444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
<td>34,797</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Abilities</td>
<td>32,452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microsoft Excel</td>
<td>32,561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detail-Oriented</td>
<td>31,771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>30,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microsoft Office</td>
<td>29,086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>26,346</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Specialized Skills</th>
<th>Online Job Ads</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customer Service</td>
<td>45,996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduling</td>
<td>31,182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>31,288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budgeting</td>
<td>20,292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Management</td>
<td>17,824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Contact</td>
<td>16,609</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repair</td>
<td>16,397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient Care</td>
<td>15,680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning</td>
<td>15,022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Industry Knowledge</td>
<td>13,815</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Top requested certificates are often associated with certain occupations or a group of related jobs, such as registered nurse or Certified Public Accountant. The top requested certificate was a valid driver’s license, followed by registered nurse and security clearance. One-half of the top requested certificates were health care related. Several of the top requested certificates are available through short-term training or through courses offered at a community college.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Certificates</th>
<th>Online Job Ads</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Driver's License</td>
<td>25,060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered Nurse</td>
<td>10,942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security Clearance</td>
<td>4,996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial Driver's License</td>
<td>4,276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Aid CPR AED</td>
<td>4,141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Life Support (BLS)</td>
<td>3,328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certified Public Accountant</td>
<td>2,561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Cardiac Life Support</td>
<td>2,460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Management</td>
<td>2,366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Cardiac Life Support</td>
<td>1,761</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Software and Programming Skills</th>
<th>Online Job Ads</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Microsoft Excel</td>
<td>32,561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microsoft Office</td>
<td>29,086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microsoft Word</td>
<td>14,254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microsoft PowerPoint</td>
<td>11,749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQL</td>
<td>10,695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Java</td>
<td>8,567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Software Development</td>
<td>8,394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oracle</td>
<td>6,315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>5,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JavaScript</td>
<td>5,023</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hard to Fill Jobs

Despite the fact that the economy has shifted significantly over the last ten years, some occupations have remained near-constant on the hard to fill list. Healthcare jobs – especially registered nurses – and technology jobs once again take up a number of the top spots. These high-demand positions typically take over a month to fill, which restrains a company’s ability to grow and provide needed services.

St. Louis MSA Top 30 Hard to Fill Jobs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>O*NET Occupation</th>
<th>BLS/OES Salary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registered Nurses</td>
<td>$67,870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers</td>
<td>$50,910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Software Developers, Applications</td>
<td>$99,730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing</td>
<td>$70,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Salespersons</td>
<td>$29,770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Service Representatives</td>
<td>$36,820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers, All Other</td>
<td>$90,840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers</td>
<td>$43,220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers</td>
<td>$20,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretaries and Administrative Assistants</td>
<td>$37,910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical and Health Services Managers</td>
<td>$112,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Managers</td>
<td>$134,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers</td>
<td>$34,050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management Analysts</td>
<td>$86,890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resources Specialists</td>
<td>$68,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance and Repair Workers, General</td>
<td>$41,440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer User Support Specialists</td>
<td>$50,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Systems Analysts</td>
<td>$90,840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Systems Engineers/Architects</td>
<td>$83,330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janitors and Cleaners</td>
<td>$28,690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks</td>
<td>$40,210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General and Operations Managers</td>
<td>$118,790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Service Managers</td>
<td>$53,130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Technology Project Managers</td>
<td>$83,330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutors</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing Assistants</td>
<td>$26,370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners</td>
<td>$23,960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waiters and Waitresses</td>
<td>$22,160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Assistants</td>
<td>$33,410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Intelligence Analysts</td>
<td>$83,330</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Projected Job Demand

It is also important to look into what jobs will be in demand in the future to ensure the workforce is prepared. Employment projections through the year 2026, developed by the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center (MERIC) in partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor, estimate the jobs expected to be in greatest demand over the next decade.

#### Jobs by 2026 with the Most Projected Openings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Now: High School or Less and/ or Short-Term Training</th>
<th>Annual Openings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers</td>
<td>5,977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cashiers</td>
<td>4,535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Salespersons</td>
<td>4,144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waiters and Waitresses</td>
<td>4,105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Care Aides</td>
<td>3,914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Service Representatives</td>
<td>3,244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janitors and Cleaners</td>
<td>2,737</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers</td>
<td>2,555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Clerks, General</td>
<td>1,867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stock Clerks and Order Fillers</td>
<td>1,687</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Next: Moderate/ Long-Term Training to Associate Degree</th>
<th>Annual Openings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registered Nurses</td>
<td>2,408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretaries and Administrative Assistants</td>
<td>2,851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing Assistants</td>
<td>2,136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooks, Restaurant</td>
<td>1,716</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks</td>
<td>1,348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation &amp; Serving Workers</td>
<td>1,333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Representatives, Services, All Other</td>
<td>1,294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers</td>
<td>1,186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance and Repair Workers, General</td>
<td>1,096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers</td>
<td>1,065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing</td>
<td>1,024</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Later: Bachelor’s Degree or Higher</th>
<th>Annual Openings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General and Operations Managers</td>
<td>1,522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountants and Auditors</td>
<td>1,140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education</td>
<td>705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Operations Specialists, All Other</td>
<td>698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists</td>
<td>677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Software Developers, Applications</td>
<td>578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resources Specialists</td>
<td>472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Systems Analysts</td>
<td>467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary School Teachers, Exc. Special &amp; Career/ Technical Education</td>
<td>448</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Long-Term Occupational Projections 2016-2026, St. Louis Workforce Development Area, MERIC.
a ten-year period. The table shows the occupations, by typical education or training needed, with top job openings by the year 2026.

Occupations with the most openings are determined by looking at openings created by new job (net) growth, as well as those created through the need for replacement workers. Replacement openings occur due to retirement, turnover, or transferring to another occupation.

The top long-term jobs with the most projected openings are *Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers*, *Cashiers*, and *Retail Salespersons*.

Several occupations, such as *Registered Nurses*, *Secretaries & Administrative Assistants*, and *Combined Food Preparation & Serving Workers*, were among the top long-term growth jobs and in the top job advertisements over the past year. This indicates those occupations are in demand now, and will be in demand in the future.
The 2019 employer survey marks our 11th annual telephone survey of local companies in the St. Louis metropolitan area. Our goal with this survey is to understand the business climate, hiring trends, occupational skills and demands from businesses across the St. Louis region. This year’s survey targeted over 1,100 employers in 16 employer categories across 23 industry segments as defined by the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). These industries were selected because they represent a composite picture of the regional economy. A statistically significant sample was surveyed from each of the industry categories in the ratio that they compose the St. Louis Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). Geographically, the firms interviewed also represented the entire St. Louis MSA. The number of employers surveyed in each category are listed in a table in the Methodology section.

**2019 Employer Survey Categories**
Although the companies interviewed reflect a wide range of size as measured by number of employees, the majority of respondents for this year’s survey consisted of small and mid-sized businesses with less than 50 employees. Companies employing fewer than five employees were not selected for interview.

Each employer surveyed was asked a series of 14 questions, several with multiple parts, in order to understand the hiring outlook and challenges of individual employers as well as practices that either created barriers to – or opportunities for – employment and advancement.

**Hiring Trends - Past Year**

Employer responses mirrored the larger economic trends of overall job growth, with 37% of employers reporting increased employment in 2019 compared to only 33% in 2017. Just under half of respondents (48%) indicated that employment levels have remained the same over the last 12 months, which is down slightly from past composite surveys where this response ranged from 51.9% to 55.6%. This year saw increased change at both ends of the hiring spectrum, with the number of employers reporting significant increases (10%), slight decreases (12.5%) and significant decreases (2.3%) at higher levels than our responses dating to 2013. While those employers reporting slightly increased employment levels was higher (27.2%) than the 2017 survey, it is less than in 2015 and at the same level as our 2013 results.
The 2017 survey reported the highest levels of employers keeping employment levels the same (55.6%), indicating the regional economy may have reached stasis in terms of expansion and contraction in hiring. However, the results from our last two surveys show an increase in dynamism of employment levels – fewer companies remaining the same and more companies either increasing or decreasing employment. We will be interested to see if this pattern of increased dynamism continues in future years.

**Hiring Trends - Future Plans**

When asked about anticipated employment levels over the next 12 months, most employers (57%) indicated that they expected levels to remain the same. A slow but steady increase in this response has been a trend since 2015 when the response stood at 54%. However, there are early signs that the steady job growth of the last 10 years may be cooling off, as 62% of respondents this year plan either no change or decreases in employment levels compared to only 58% in 2017.

Survey responses for 2019 indicated that more employers anticipated decreasing employment as compared to 2017 (4.6% to 2.2%), a doubling in the (admittedly low) rate. Correspondingly, the number of employers expecting to increase employment dropped compared to the last comprehensive survey (38.3% vs. 41.7%).

**Barriers to Expanding Employment**

One of the key questions posed in the State of the St. Louis Workforce Report survey asks employers about their perceived barriers to expanding employment. Since the inception of the report, the top three reasons cited have been economic conditions, shortage of workers with knowledge or skills, and government policies or regulations.
While shortage of workers with knowledge or skills remains the primary barrier to expanding employment in the 2019 responses, overall fewer companies reported barriers across most of the listed categories compared to past years. Economic conditions, which had been the primary barrier as recently as 2013, rose slightly as a barrier in the 2019 responses and this will be an indicator to watch closely to see if a trend emerges.

### Potential Barriers to Expanding Employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shortage of Workers with Knowledge or Skills</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Conditions</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Policies or Regulations</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Transportation Access</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Childcare Access</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shortage of Available Training Programs</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Information</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Less than half (46%) of 2019 respondents cited the shortage of workers with knowledge or skills as the primary barrier to expanding employment, down significantly from the 52% reported in 2017. However, the response of economic conditions as a barrier to employment increased slightly from 27% to 30%, reversing the steady decrease seen since 2011.

Likewise, the response of government policies or regulations as a barrier to expanding employment nudged up slightly to 22% of employers responding, mirroring the 2015 rate but significantly down from the responses seen in 2013 and earlier. The large number of healthcare, finance and other heavily-regulated industries in the St. Louis region means that this response will likely always remain a concern, but fluctuations still provide insight into barriers to expansion.

All other response choices remained consistent with past surveys with the exception of lack of transportation access. This response had increased since 2013 to a high of 23% in 2017 before falling to 18% this year. While this puts transportation concerns ahead of other barriers such as childcare or available training programs, it no longer rivals...
economic conditions or government policies or regulations as a barrier to employment. Since the regional public transportation system has not grown or changed significantly in the past two years, this could indicate that the ongoing strength of the economy is allowing more people to access other transportation options, particularly private vehicles, to get to work. It’s worth mentioning, however, that access to transportation remains top-of-mind for left-behind populations, as discussed in the narrative section of this report.

The survey also asks employers to rate the criticality of the barriers they cite using a five-point scale with five being the most critical. The highest weighted average response for any barrier cited (excluding an all other category) was 3.95 for government policies and regulations, making this the third all-industry survey in a row where this factor has been the most critical barrier. While the number of employers citing government policies and regulations as a barrier in 2019 fell slightly from 2017, it remained a very critical barrier for those respondents. The previous survey’s pattern continued with the next highest weighted response of 3.94 for shortage of workers with knowledge or skills and economic conditions in third place with a score of 3.82. Shortage of available training programs was the fourth-highest once again, but respondents weighted the importance of this category much higher this year, increasing from 3.43 in 2017 to 3.80 in 2019.

The 2019 survey responses to this question continue to paint the picture of a tight labor market for skilled workers with government policies and regulations continuing to be a critical barrier to employment in our region. Economic conditions as a significant barrier to expanding employment is on the rise, although only slightly for now. The spike in criticality of the shortage of available training programs compared to the 2015 and 2017 surveys is certainly a call to action for St. Louis Community College and our community partners to ensure we are evolving to provide the training that our businesses need.
Adding Employees

In 2019, the percentage of employers reporting they will hire new full-time employees dropped by six percent compared to the 2017 response (63% vs. 69%). The number of employers indicating they will hire new part-time workers grew from 66% to 69%, the highest level seen in at least the last eight years. Other methods to add new workers, including contractors, temp agencies, or recalling laid-off employees, continued to track with previous results.

Methods to Add Workers

The throttling back in adding new full-time employees and the possible substitution into part-time workers appears to be another indicator that employers are beginning to become more conservative in their hiring practices. Combined with the slightly more pessimistic future hiring plans noted above, we start seeing a more complete picture of a regional job market that may be slowing down or even pausing the recent rapid growth.

Shortcomings of Job Applicants

Overall, companies reported seeing fewer shortcomings in job applicants compared to past years. The two largest deficiencies remained poor work habits (66%) and lack of communication or interpersonal skills (56%). The poor work habits response was an outlier in two ways, being both a significant spike from the previous years (discounting the 2015 report which used modified questions for this section that resulted in outlier results) as well as being one of only three shortcomings that increased in 2019 from 2017, the others being lack of communication or interpersonal skills and inability to interact with different cultures or socio-economic backgrounds (42% of respondents).

Less than half of the respondents reported candidates with shortcomings of critical thinking and problem solving (49%), and lack of teamwork or collaboration (47%) which is a decrease from the 2017 results. We saw decreases in every other category, including
significant drops in lack of basic math skills (34%) and inability to understand written and graphical information (28%) as job applicant shortcomings.

With the national attention on the opioid addiction crisis, and recent state policy changes on marijuana legalization, we added a new question in 2019 to ask employers about a new shortcoming – inability to pass a drug test or has a substance abuse issue. Only five percent of our respondents saw this shortcoming in applicants, a relatively small number compared to the other categories, but logical when considering the high number of employers who require drug screening for some or all jobs (see the responses to the “What percentage of jobs in your firm requires a drug screen prior to hire?” survey question later in this report). Applicants with substance abuse issues may well be self-selecting out and not applying in the first place, recognizing that they will not be able to pass the screening.

The decrease in shortcoming responses overall, combined with two-thirds of employers indicating that poor work habits are a top concern, creates an interesting picture of a workforce that is somewhat more prepared in technical and critical thinking skills than in past years, but is challenged by concerns about its work ethic.
As with barriers to employment, we asked employers to rate the criticality of the shortcomings they cited on a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being the most critical. The highest weighted average scoring, poor work ethic with 4.41, was reported as slightly more critical than in the employer responses in 2017 (4.38). The next most critical shortcomings included lack of teamwork or collaboration (4.14), lack of communication or interpersonal skills (4.09) and unwillingness or inability to learn (4.09), all of which comprised the top four in the last two surveys. Lack of teamwork or collaboration moved up in criticality this year compared to the 2017 and 2015 surveys, taking the place of unwillingness or inability to learn.

**Importance of Applicant Shortcomings**

Poor work ethic continues to be the most significant combination of frequency and criticality of response, and has even increased in importance to employers since 2017. Although few employers reported experiencing many applicants with the shortcoming inability to pass a drug test or has a substance abuse issue, employers ranked this issue as third in overall weighted average importance (4.12) when considering all possible shortcomings, and fourth looking only at the significant and critical responses.

**Importance of Shortcomings by Number of Employer Responses**

Methods of Skill Acquisition

On-the-job training has been consistently listed as the most common method to assist workers in obtaining new or increased skills, and 2019 was no exception. Ninety-three
percent of employers used this method to upskill workers or resolve skill gaps, up slightly from 2017, although the response has never fallen below 90% since the inception of this survey. In-house classroom training (63%) regained the second most common spot after briefly dropping to third in 2017, followed by flexible schedule for continuing education used by 62% of respondents.

Despite many discussions about finding new ways to keep incumbent workers engaged and provide for career advancement, the responses to most methods of skill acquisition have been remarkably consistent over the history of our employer surveys. Forty-two percent of employers listed vendor training as a skill acquisition method, while online education (36%), tuition reimbursement (28%), community college provided customized training or education (22%), apprenticeship programs (25%), and vocational training (18%) were all within a few percentage points from past surveys.
Addressing Company Skill Shortages

Slightly over one-third of employers (33.5%) reported that they were experiencing a shortage of skilled applicants. This is up a small amount from 30.9% in 2017, but a drastic reduction from the 2015 level that was likely due to the larger sample size of small employers that year.

Employers were once again asked about the skill level required to address their skill shortages. The choices included high-skill – requiring a four-year degree or higher, middle-skill – requiring training or education beyond high school but less than a four-year degree, or low-skill – requiring high school or less. The responses this year closely mirrored those from 2017, with middle-skill the most frequent response chosen by 45% of employers, followed by low-skill cited by 37% of employers. The least frequent response was high-skill with only 18% of employers. These employer responses track with regional workforce groups and other industry discussions noting that middle-skill jobs have the largest gap between the demand for and supply of labor.

Skill Levels Required to Address Skill Shortages

Even though more employers reported an absolute shortage of skilled applicants, the measures taken to address skill shortages were very similar to those reported in both 2015 and 2017. The most frequent response by employers (79%) was that of being forced to hire less experienced workers and train them, although this percentage has been decreasing slowly in recent years. Offering increased wages due to the shortage of experienced workers increased slightly to 42% of employers in 2019. This continues...
to be a more frequent response compared to our 2012 and 2013 results and tracks with the recent data on wage growth in Missouri and across the United States.

**Measures Taken to Address Applicant Skill Shortages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures Taken to Address Applicant Skill Shortages</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forced to Hire Less Experienced Workers and then Train Them</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offering Increased Wages Due to Shortage of Experienced Workers</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiring Contractors</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiring from Outside the St. Louis Region</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invest in Automation</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiring from Outside the United States</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Except for the choice of *invest in automation* as a means of addressing company skill shortages, which remained flat at 20%, the other employer responses increased. Both hiring contractors and hiring outside the St. Louis Missouri-Illinois region jumped significantly compared to the 2017 results (24% vs. 20% and 24% vs. 19% respectively) although they were still within the range seen in previous years.

Despite the tight labor market, it is interesting to note that only one-fifth of employers are resorting to automation as a substitute to meet their labor needs. Although we have only included this possible answer in the last two surveys, the consistency of response is notable. The generally smaller size of the companies surveyed may have an effect on this response since automation often requires access to considerable capital.

**Skills Shortages in Functional Areas**

Digging deeper into the data, we once again asked employers whether they were experiencing skill shortages in certain functional areas. The highest overall response, at 24%, reported shortages in skilled trades, a result that has increased steadily since 2013. Forty-two percent of all respondents indicated that they employed staff in the skilled trades in 2019, up slightly from previous years. This means the effective rate of
The second-most common reported functional area shortage was in customer service, with 20% of respondents lacking skilled applicants. This is down three percent from the prior survey but remains notable since nearly three-fourths of respondents (72%) report employing staff in customer service.

Another way to look at this information is to analyze the “effective rate” of the functional skill shortages. That is the ratio of the number of employers reporting they have a functional skill shortage to the number of employers that employ workers in that specific functional area.
Employers with patient care, information technology, business management, and accounting/finance functions all reported increasing shortages of skilled applicants in these areas in 2019, while the number of employers employing staff in each of these functions remained largely the same, with the exception of information technology (IT). The percentage of respondents employing IT staff increased from 20% in 2017 to 26% in 2019, with the effective rate of IT shortage increasing from 22% to 28%.

The functional area manufacturing/maintenance was offered for the second time, and both the number of employers employing staff (23%) and reporting shortages (11%) increased from 16% and 8% respectively. About half of employers that reported employing individuals in the manufacturing/maintenance area have a skill shortage, which is consistent with the 2017 results.

In order to gauge the skill level required to meet the shortages in each of the functional areas, employers were given a choice of high-skill – requiring a four-year degree or higher, middle-skill – requiring training or education beyond high school but less than a four-year degree, or low-skill – requiring high school or less. Middle-skill was the most cited skill level for five of the seven functional areas (manufacturing/maintenance, accounting/finance, information technology, business management, and skilled trades), while patient care and customer service most cited high-skill and low-skill, respectively. The largest response of middle-skill as the required level to address a shortage was for skilled trades at 63%, followed by manufacturing/maintenance and information technology with 50%. Patient care saw a massive middle-skill increase, from 21% in 2017 to 41% in this year’s report, indicating a huge shift in the available jobs over the last few years.

### Skill Levels Needed to Meet Functional Skill Shortages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functional Area</th>
<th>Low-Skill</th>
<th>Middle-Skill</th>
<th>High-Skill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skilled Trades</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing / Maintenance</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Technology</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Management</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting / Finance</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient Care</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Shortages in high-skill jobs were most common in the patient care functional area (51%) while employers with customer service skill shortages reported low-skill as the most common (56%).

Employers were asked to rate the importance of middle-skill shortages to their business. The rating was on a five-point scale with 5 as most important.
The results this year showed some changes compared to past surveys, as the importance rating for *middle-skill shortages* varied slightly from the frequency in which employers cited *middle-skill* as the level required to meet their skill shortage. *Patient Care* (4.89) overtook last year’s leader *skilled trades* (4.53) with the highest average importance rating, following the strong demand for middle skill jobs in this field mentioned earlier. This was followed by *manufacturing/maintenance* (4.66) and *accounting/finance* (4.62). While only 42% of employers in *accounting/finance* reported middle-skill as the level needed to meet their skill shortage, they rated the importance of these jobs nearly as highly as did employers in *manufacturing/maintenance*.

![Importance of Functional Skill Shortages](image)

When asked about the skill level required to meet their shortages, the most frequent response was *middle-skill* with the majority of employers in five of the seven functional areas reporting that level as the required level. Finally, the level of importance reported for *middle-skill* was high even for the functional areas where this was not the most frequent required skill level reported.

**Experience and Education**

During the height of the Great Recession, many employers increased education and experience requirements when they had dozens of candidates competing for each job opening. That trend unwound as the applicant pool shrunk, and employers reported having available jobs with lower experience and educational requirements. Our own survey showed a decrease in the percentage of jobs at higher levels of education and experience and an increase in the percentage of jobs at lower levels of education and experience from 2013 to 2015 when the job market began to tighten. However, this pattern did not continue from 2017 to 2019, when the demand for greater experience and education rose slightly. With the small shifts reported, it seems employers are continuing to balance a desire for experience and education with the need to maintain a pipeline of candidates in a low unemployment economy.

**Experience**

We once again asked employers if they had positions requiring various levels of experience. In 2019, 62% of employers reported having positions requiring *four or more years of experience*, an increase from 56% in 2017 and continuing the upward trend
since 2015. Sixty-eight percent of employers reported having positions that required a minimum of one to three years of experience, which tracks very closely with the responses from the last four surveys. The percentage of employers reporting that they had positions requiring some experience but less than one year increased significantly from 55% to 61% compared to last year’s survey, while jobs requiring no experience decreased by a similar amount from 62% in 2017 to 56% in 2019.

**Percentage of Employers with Jobs at Specified Experience Levels**

While demands for significant work experience have decreased somewhat, we also saw a slight decrease in no experience required positions. In 2019, 30% of employers with entry level positions reported that half or more of their positions required no experience, down slightly from 33% in the 2017 survey. At the same time, the 2017 survey found that 32% of employers reported half of their positions required four or more years of experience, while in the 2019 survey only 25% of employers reported the same.

**Percentage of Positions Requiring the Indicated Level of Experience**

We asked employers about the education requirements for their positions at each of the skill levels as described in our model of skills by low, middle and high. Once again, these levels are defined as high-skill – requiring a four-year degree or higher, middle-skill – requiring training or education beyond high school but less than a four-year degree, or low-skill – requiring high school or less.
As seen in the 2017 survey, the vast majority of employers responded indicating they had positions requiring a low-skill education (85%) with well more than half (62%) of employers indicating that they had middle-skill education positions. The lowest response rate by employers was for positions at the high-skill education level with 45% indicating they had these positions in their organizations. In all cases, the percentage of employers responding to each education level increased slightly, although it is too early to tell if a pattern is emerging.

**Percentage of Employers with Jobs at Specified Education Levels**

Employers were also asked about the percentage of positions they had at each of these levels, with the results being little changed from 2017. Of the employers who indicated that they had positions requiring a low-skill level, 70% indicated that more than half of their positions had this requirement. Of the employers reporting that they had middle-skill positions, 25% indicated that over half their positions were middle-skill. Once again, the lowest percentage of positions was cited by employers who reported high-skill positions, with only 11% having more than half their positions at this level.

**Percentage of Positions at the Specified Education Level**
Opportunity and Advancement

Short-term training and certification is commonly used during economic downturns to give displaced workers the skills needed to find new employment. Despite the strong economy and low unemployment rate, increasing numbers of institutions are offering accelerated programs – often six months or less of training – in fields ranging from health care to transportation to information technology.

For the last three surveys, we asked employers about the percentage of jobs in their organizations that would be available to applicants who had completed short-term training, defined as no more than six months past high school and relevant to their industry. The percentage of companies that reported that jobs are available to these individuals has been remarkably consistent – 69% in both 2019 and 2015 and climbing only slightly to 70% in 2017. However, we have seen a slow but steady increase in the percentage of jobs within companies available to short-term training graduates over this same timeframe for employers that welcome them: in 2015 only 39% of companies said that half or more of their jobs were open to individuals with short-term training. In 2017 this response was 42% and it climbed to 43% in the 2019 survey.

Employment Barriers

The low unemployment rate and number of open jobs has meant that many employers have begun to turn to pools of potential employees that have traditionally been overlooked. We examine some of these groups in the next section of this report. But due to the decade-long decline in the unemployment rate and other national trends such as the opioid crisis, medical marijuana and the increasing focus on opening pathways to employment for justice-involved individuals, we were interested in understanding how employers were adjusting business policy in relation to the oft-cited employment barriers of drug screening, background checks, and the hiring of individuals with felony convictions. We compared these results to our 2015 report, which asked the same questions.
Drug Screens

Employers in 2015 were evenly split on the policy of drug screening prior to hire, with half reporting they did require a screen and half saying they did not. Four years later, this landscape has shifted significantly, with 61% of employers reporting that they require a drug screen for at least some jobs prior to hire. Looking in a bit more detail, the shift has been from those companies that did not require a screen in 2015 changing policy to require a screen for at least some positions.

Although the number of employers that drug screen has increased, the number that drug screen all positions has significantly decreased. In 2015, 40% of employers responded that they required drug screens for 100% of their positions. In 2019, this has now changed to only 13% of employers requiring drugs screens for all positions.

Background Checks

We next asked employers if their firm requires a background check prior to hire. In 2015, only 61% of respondents required it for all jobs while over a quarter (26%) did not require a background check for any job. In 2019 we saw a monumental shift in results, with only 1% of respondents saying they do not
require a background check for any of their positions, and 98% of employers requiring it for all positions. This question needs to be clarified in future surveys to continue being useful, but this year’s response may be due to the easier availability of federal employment checks such as eVerify (which came online in 2016) or third-party background check providers.

**Percent of Jobs That Require a Background Check Prior to Hire**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent of Positions</th>
<th>No Jobs Checked</th>
<th>1% to 49%</th>
<th>50% to 100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Justice-Involved Individuals**

One of the most interesting trends this year has been the changing employer perception around *justice-involved individuals*. In 2015, just over a quarter of employers (26%) reported that they would *not consider hiring an applicant convicted of a felony offense* who had completed his or her sentence and probation. Thirteen percent indicated they would hire such an applicant for *any job he or she was qualified for*, while the rest reported it would *depend on the felony* (46%) or they would *hire for some jobs* (15%).
Only four years later, the number of employers reporting they would *not consider an applicant convicted of a felony* had dropped to less than one percent. Both the responses to *any job qualified for or depends on the felony* remained somewhat consistent (13% and 42% respectively) but the *some jobs category* surged to 44% of respondents. While this openness to consider justice-involved individuals for employment is not always validated in practice by civic organizations working in this field, the significant change in such a relatively short timeframe is evidence that mindsets may be changing. Human resources policies often follow.

**Summary**

Producing this State of the St. Louis Workforce Report from the Great Recession through ten years of economic growth has allowed us to view the labor market pendulum swing from a peak of 9.8% unemployment in 2010 to the recent 20-year lows. We have watched how employers in our region have responded to a changing employment market as evidenced through hiring practices and actions to attract and keep good workers. We’ve also seen changes in employer-reported applicant skill shortcomings. With this year’s report, we also see small indications that the labor market pendulum may be starting to slow down or even reverse course.

While the 2019 employer survey gives us a view of a robust job market over the last 12 months – more than eight in 10 employers report either job growth or holding employment levels steady – we are seeing the first signs that optimism for future employment growth is waning. More employers plan to keep employment levels flat or eliminate jobs. More importantly, employers are pulling away from hiring new full-time employees in favor of part-time workers, a common practice when faced with uncertainty about future economic conditions.

For the fourth straight full-market survey (2013-2019), employers have cited the *shortage of workers with knowledge or skills* as the most significant barrier to expanding employment. While other barriers remain relatively low compared to responses from the surveys immediately post-recession, the number of companies reporting *economic conditions* as a barrier to employment has started to trend upward.

At the same time, fewer employers are reporting specific shortcomings in the job applicants they see. While two-thirds report shortcomings in *poor work ethic* and *lack of communications or interpersonal skills* is reported by 56% of employers, we saw significant decreases in almost every other category. This included some STEM areas often cited as gaps, such as *basic math* or *general computer skills*. 
Just as in the 2017 survey, employers are still choosing to hire less experienced workers and train them and offering increased wages due to the shortage of experienced workers as the primary methods to address company skill shortages. But despite an even tighter labor market, we have not seen an increase in employers investing in automation to address skill shortages, with only one-fifth of companies taking this path. This result may well be a function of the business sizes we surveyed.

Shortages in the skilled trades and manufacturing/maintenance functional areas remain persistent, reported by 57% of businesses employing skilled trades and 49% of those employing manufacturing workers. The percentage of employers reporting that they have jobs available with only short-term training (six months or less) remains closely in line with previous reports, at 69%.

For the second survey in a row, several survey questions asked employers about the skill level to address their company’s skill shortages. Once again, the most frequent response was middle-skill cited by 45% of employers followed by low-skill with 37% of employers responding and finally high-skill cited by 18% of employers. When analyzing skill shortages by functional areas, employers cited middle-skill positions as the highest need in five of the seven functional area choices: accounting/finance, information technology, manufacturing/maintenance, business management, and skilled trades.

When we last asked about barriers to employment through the lens of economic opportunity in 2015, the death of Michael Brown and the events of Ferguson were at the top of many St. Louisans’ minds. Four years later, the survey results point to social shifts, both restrictive and inclusive, in employer hiring practices. Drug screening increased in frequency, but few employers reported encountering applicants who had substance abuse issues or who failed to pass a drug screening. The use of background checks has become near universal at 99% of respondents. Yet the most interesting shift may have been in how employers view applicants with criminal records, where in four years’ time the considerable number – more than one-fourth – of employers who said they would not hire applicants convicted of a felony had dropped to near zero. Employers seem much more aware of how justice-involved applicants could fit into their organizations and, at least during a phone interview, appear willing to provide the all-important second chance.

As we close upon ten years of a growing economy and tightening labor market, employers still face challenges finding enough skilled workers to fuel continued growth. Companies that successfully tap into previously overlooked pools of potential employees could gain a competitive advantage over those who do not. We will examine who is being left behind, why, and what is being done about it in our next section.
A Closer Look: Opioids and the Workforce

Opioid overdose deaths across the U.S. hit 47,600 in 2017,¹ and it is estimated that nearly one in three Missourians have been impacted by this epidemic.² The St. Louis region is a major hotspot: in 2017, 70% of opioid deaths occurred in the eastern portion of this state, with 50% of them in St. Louis City and St. Louis County.³

The 2019 St. Louis Employer Survey showed a major uptick in the use of drug screens and background checks, which could be keeping opioid users out of the workforce. But, how prepared are employers to deal with this issue for existing employees? According to a recent survey by the National Safety Council, 75% of U.S. employers have been directly affected by opioids but only 17% feel extremely well prepared to deal with the issue.⁴

St. Louis employers can do their part in the fight against the opioid epidemic by offering education, access to help and support to impacted employees. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration offers a drug-free workplace toolkit at https://www.samhsa.gov/workplace/toolkit to help employers develop and sustain successful drug-free workplace programs.

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² Opioid Summit Compilation (Short), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VeqpfHzSjJU. Official Missouri State Government YouTube Channel, Published on Jun 26, 2018.
Who Is Being Left Behind? Why? And What Is Being Done About It?

As we have reported in the previous sections, national and regional unemployment rates are at 20-year lows, a comforting indicator of economic health to many people across the country. And yet, there are specific St. Louis demographics who consistently do not experience the full benefits of a strong economy.

This section sheds light on a few of the populations continuously underrepresented in the workforce: justice-involved citizens, people with disabilities, and African American men aged 18-24. We partnered with three local organizations that serve these groups to obtain direct perspectives about the people being left behind, why, and what is currently being done about it.

- **Mission: St. Louis** offers a closer look at the complex path to employment for justice-involved citizens.
- **Paraquad** provides insights into the workforce inclusion quest for people with disabilities.
- **The Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis** shares considerations about the perpetual trend of joblessness among 18- to 24-year-old African American men.

Our hope by providing these insights is that employers and community leaders are inspired to consider how we can all continue working together to ensure St. Louis is a place where employment opportunities truly do exist for every member of our community. At the end of this section, we address what employers can do to become more inclusive and take advantage of the value uniquely afforded by a more diverse workplace.
Justice-Involved Citizens and the Complex Path to Employment

*Mission: St. Louis walks alongside residents seeking a fresh start*

If you head north on St. Louis' popular Grand Boulevard between U.S. Route 40 and Interstate 70, you’ll experience a stark change in your surroundings – as if you had left one entire city and entered another. What starts on the south end as a bustling thoroughfare buzzing with collegiate high-rise buildings, high-end theaters, art galleries and lively dining establishments abruptly shifts into a noticeably less thriving part of town, where the abandoned skeletons of historic brick buildings serve as a sobering reminder of what happens when economic opportunity takes its business elsewhere.

What you’ll also find if you head north on Grand Boulevard is the 87,000 square-foot structure that houses Mission: St. Louis, an organization dedicated to empowering people to transform their lives, families and neighborhoods. Mission: St. Louis is strategically situated in the heart of a part of town that needs transformation most: the poverty rate in North City is *three times* the national average and the unemployment rate is *four times* the national average.

It’s no coincidence that high-poverty areas are also places many justice-involved citizens call home. The U.S. Department of Justice states that each year more than 650,000 ex-offenders are released from prison, and from there the road to reentry into society is paved with vast complications. Some have no home, many have no money, and most have no job.

According to a study conducted by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, men who had a first incarceration lasting more than six months that ended by the time they were age 19 or older were drastically less likely to have jobs after their incarceration than other men. Just a little over 30% of these men had a job in the first few weeks after their release from jail or prison, and still only about 50-58% had jobs a year and a half after release. In comparison, the share of men age 23 and up who had never been arrested or incarcerated who were employed ranged between 82-87%.

To compound the issue, when formerly incarcerated people do find employment, the positions they take are often the most insecure and lowest paying. A 2018 report from the Brookings Institution used IRS data to show that most employed people recently released from prison receive an income that puts them well below the poverty line. The graph on the following page, created by the Prison Policy Initiative, sharply illustrates this income disparity.
Mission: St. Louis founder, president, and executive director, Josh Wilson, saw similarly glaring income and opportunity discrepancies firsthand in pockets of the St. Louis community more than a decade ago through his work with a local faith-based organization. What started as a grassroots effort to further understand areas of need in the community grew into a nonprofit entity with a grand vision to uncover deep-seated issues and find meaningful ways to address systemic poverty. Through years of lessons, pivots and evolutions, Mission: St. Louis has found a model proven to connect residents seeking a fresh start – especially those attempting to reenter society post-incarceration – to employment, self-sustainability, health and, most of all, hope.

Why are justice-involved citizens being left behind?

The mental and physical factors that keep a population stuck

The barriers to employment for people with a record are primarily perception-related and may seem obvious, but there’s more to it than one might think. When considering a prospective employee, employers often find themselves wondering about the risks associated as well as skills and reformation of the individual.

- **Risks**: What is the risk to my organization if we hire an employee with a criminal record?
- **Skills**: Are the skills of this person who has spent time in prison up to our desired standards?
• **Reformation**: Should our organization place trust in an individual we know has made a poor choice in the past?

The decision an organization makes about whether to hire an individual is subjective and heavily influenced by what is appropriate for the position and industry. That said, state laws and federal guidelines may prohibit employers to use criminal histories against an applicant and businesses must understand the regulations that exist.

On the skill development side, more and more vocational training programs are emerging in prisons to prepare individuals for post-incarceration employment and, ideally, reduce recidivism. Just this past May, the first 10 graduates of the Washington University Prison Education Project earned associate degrees at the Missouri Eastern Correctional Center state prison for men after completing 60 credits taught by WashU instructors. Saint Louis University launched a similar program in 2008 at the corrections facility in Bonne Terre and, to date, none of its graduates have returned to prison.

As it relates to reform, **Mission: St. Louis holds tightly to the belief that with the right systems and support, people can absolutely change**. Their programs not only inform employers about the unique value these underrepresented people bring to the workplace, but the organization also works alongside the individuals they serve to help them evolve their own attitudes about themselves, an element that is key to cultivating lasting change.

While it appears many justice-involved citizens seek Mission: St. Louis' help to improve the tangible sides of their lives, their real work is internal. They often leave incarceration acutely aware of the beliefs prospective employers will have about them and need Mission: St. Louis' programs to build their confidence and overcome what they believe to be a huge blemish on their records before they can even consider a career pathway.

Beyond the mental obstacles to opportunity, there are physical barriers and limitations that keep justice-involved individuals as well as others in various parts of the St. Louis area from accessing jobs that can provide a sustainable living. Transportation is a major issue for many, and larger corporations and higher-paying jobs are often located in distant, less accessible parts of the metropolitan area. Additionally, the high costs of travel and childcare can quickly negate a decent wage, leaving them geographically and financially confined. Add a felony to a résumé, and the prospects for someone reentering society can seem grim, but Mission: St. Louis has designed its programs to consider a wide range of factors.

"Just because you're coming out with a criminal history or a felony does not mean that you can never work again," Wilson said. “But the amount of opportunity that typically is removed – it's much more difficult to find housing, it's much more difficult to find the stabilization pieces, to find employment, all of that. And so that's where hopefully we're stepping in, and specifically in a time like this when there is desperation for employees.”
What is Mission: St. Louis doing to connect justice-involved citizens to employment opportunities?

*Creatively, powerfully positioned in the center of the workforce gap*

Mission: St. Louis and its network of partners aim to build bridges between the business community in need of skilled labor and a slice of the population still lagging in employment rates. This task is particularly vital now as job creation outpaces the number of available workers.

“We have this front-row view of how big this gap is for this population,” Wilson declared. “What we're hoping to do is to stand in this gap between desire to work, desire for skilled training, desire for career pathways and the opportunity to secure that. Our biggest asset right now is we have an unending pipeline of people looking to get into the workforce. We have no problem recruiting, we have no problem bringing people into this process.”

As economy and business writer, Ben Casselman, states in his New York Times article, As Labor Pool Shrinks, Prison Time Is Less of a Hiring Hurdle, “A rapidly tightening labor market is forcing companies across the country to consider workers they once would have turned away. That is providing opportunities to people who have long faced barriers to employment, such as criminal records, disabilities or prolonged bouts of joblessness.”

To meet and exceed demands, hiring managers must think creatively and consider tapping into historically underrepresented pools of talent. Joy Clarke, Mission: St. Louis vice president of development, highlighted one way the organization came up with their own creative solution to connecting justice-involved individuals to employers, softening the perceived risks of hiring justice-involved individuals.

"One of the things that we did being a nimble, rather young organization was we set up an employment agency, Hire St. Louis, so we can provide the workers' compensation and some of those background services that help businesses feel a little more comfortable bringing somebody into their environment,” Clarke said.

Linking people with job prospects is just one piece of the puzzle. The organization’s Beyond Jobs programs – Job & Leadership Training (JLT), Hire St. Louis, SkillUP, Switch Coffee and Beyond Jail – empower participants with much more than employment connections. The organization discovered that to truly transform and restore confidence to the population they serve, their programs needed to involve members within that community who have overcome similar obstacles, an integrated approach centered on one very key ingredient: relationships.

“The mentality of dignity, relationship, you’re not alone, you matter, peer support is really baked inside everything you see at Mission: St. Louis,” said Wilson. “What we are doing is saying, ‘Hey, come be a part of this family,’ and in the midst of that there are pathways to employment and success in a variety of different ways.”
The JLT program offers a comfortable, community-oriented opportunity for men to achieve job-readiness and dig deep into the core issues that lead to justice-involvement and poverty, so they can live into their true potential. Through JLT, Mission: St. Louis assists around 60 men each quarter who make a 14-month commitment to the program, starting with an intense, eight-week paid “bootcamp” where they spend half of their time in a classroom and the other half working with an employer. This holistic program unites soft skill and career training with multi-dimensional discussions on the big topics of health, worldview, manhood, financial management, trauma, identity and more.

Spring 2018 JLT graduate Darrell Standard came to Mission: St. Louis seeking a complete lifestyle transformation after he was released from prison. He quickly felt connected to the staff and inspired to make a change.

“They help you realize the person you really are and the impression you have on people,” said Standard. “I learned time management, communication skills, and how important it is to be on your best behavior at all times. It really opened me up more. It was a place where I didn’t feel judged, I felt like people could relate. It was a family environment.”

Standard remained committed to the process and it paid off: one week prior to JLT graduation, he was given an opportunity to interview with Slalom, an international business and technology consulting firm. He landed an internship, continued to make a great impression, and is now a full-time Slalom employee.

“When Slalom offered me the job, I almost cried I was so happy,” said Standard. “I never knew I had this in me. A year later, I still can’t believe it.”

Mission: St. Louis has honored Standard with the Staying Power Award for rising above his situation to become an active member of society and dedicated father of three children. Standard’s story is one that speaks alongside the statistics to the efficacy of the JLT program:

- **4% of JLT participants are employed at the start of the program, whereas 73% are employed six months after graduation.**
- **25% of JLT graduates receive their first paycheck because of the program.**
- **94% of JLT graduates have no new legal offenses (a 6% recidivism rate).**

Mission: St. Louis has also witnessed the clear tie between wellness and the workforce; North St. Louis City and County rank last in health outcomes in our region. As a result, the organization is in the process of launching a full ecosystem of care with the help of various health and education partners. Called Employment and Community Health as One (EACH1), this workforce and wellness center aims to address the additional elements that impact employment longevity and livelihood, such as trauma, mental health, legal services and public health. The goal is to alleviate as many barriers as possible for individuals seeking employment.

"Everything in this building is going to point to sustainable workforce," said Wilson. "We’re going to be using community health workers as our intake process,"
representation from this culture, in this community, from this area. To receive all the resources you need, especially without transportation, I don’t know that you're going to be able to manage that in a day. And, so, with cultural contextualization as well as integrated services, we think that we can really change the game.”

**What does the future hold for Mission: St. Louis and the justice-involved citizens they serve?**

*Partnerships, ownership and relentless persistence*

It takes a village to transform a community. Mission: St. Louis has developed a breadth of partnerships supporting their undertakings, ranging from educational entities and financial institutions to healthcare providers and technology companies.

“It’s just amazing to look at all the industries that we've had long-term relationships with...to see what's happening now is just an answer to prayer,” Wilson said.

From both a funding and shared-vision perspective, Mission: St. Louis and St. Louis Community College have found tremendous value in complementing one another's services to help transform a community in need.

“We have this really beautiful opportunity to be creative with St. Louis Community College,” said Wilson. “We may not be starting to talk [with an individual] about an associate degree right off the bat, but what the College brings to the table is stackable accreditations and credentials. What we know happens is when people start to experience success after success after success, their worldview and their ability to get where they want to be drastically expands.”

While workforce infiltration is key, Mission: St. Louis’ hope for the residents they serve is that pathways can continue to be plowed all the way from first paycheck to entrepreneurial endeavors.

“If we care about systemic issues of poverty, we also have to care about ownership, power and control, and that means that indigenous leadership, indigenous businesses must be birthed out of this place,” Wilson said. “If the pipeline is: walk in with never having a paycheck before, experience a paycheck, and get some career pathways, we also need to be laying the foundation [so that] even if you're justice-involved, even if you have a felony, does not mean that you cannot start a business. And in our community and my neighborhood, these buildings up and down Grand definitely need businesses in them.”

The Mission: St. Louis team and its network of partners know the gravity of the cause, but the mission keeps growing and the community is transforming as a result.

When asked what the future holds, Wilson smiled.
"If twenty years from now you said, 'Hey look, Mission: St. Louis helped train $X$ amount of folks, and out of that there were $this$ amount of businesses started, and the streets around us and in this community look different because these people own their own homes,' I'll give my life to that."

The Workforce Inclusion Quest for People with Disabilities

*Paraquad develops immersive, innovative solutions to enable employment and independent living for all*

On August 9, 1959, Max Starkloff endured a tragic car accident in rural Missouri that left him a quadriplegic at age 21. Doctors only expected Starkloff to live a few days, but he proved them wrong – his first great act of overcoming in what would become a legacy of pioneering change for people with disabilities.

Starkloff spent years in a nursing home after his accident, vividly daydreaming of a world where people with all abilities could not only live and work, but pursue passions, thrive and experience life like anyone else. His vision became his unrelenting pursuit, one that allowed him to leave the nursing home with a greater level of autonomy, find love, start a family and establish Paraquad – a nonprofit whose mission is to empower people with disabilities to increase their independence through choice and opportunity.

The organization has already accomplished much since it was founded in 1970, and it has not slowed down in its mission to change attitudes among employers about people with disabilities. This endeavor is particularly critical now as **people with disabilities still comprise a demographic highly underrepresented in the workforce despite the existence of a tight labor market and record low unemployment rates.**

"It's an interesting era that we're in; there's a real workforce crisis," said Aimee Wehmeier, president and CEO of Paraquad. "We don't have enough workers to meet the needs of the state of Missouri, so I think it's a real opportunity for companies to consider populations that were not previously considered."

According to a report by the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), the unemployment rate for people with a disability in 2018 more than doubled the unemployment rate for people with no disability (8.0% vs. 3.7%). This is not a monumental improvement over 2017 when the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reported that the unemployment rate for people with a disability was also more than twice that of people with no disability, 9.2% compared with 4.2%. 

Why are people with disabilities being left behind?

*Persistent misconceptions, fears and substandard accommodations*

It has been almost 30 years since the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Act was passed and signed. A civil rights law that prohibits discrimination based on disability, ADA requires covered employers to provide reasonable accommodations to employees with disabilities. Despite the ADA's existence, many people with disabilities are still left out of the workforce.

“People with disabilities are half as likely to be employed and twice as likely to live in poverty as the overall population,” said Kevin Condon, Paraquad director of development and marketing. “That really hasn’t changed since 1990 when the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed.”

One study published in the Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation explored why employers don’t hire and retain workers with disabilities, and respondents cited the primary reasons as being a lack of awareness of disability and accommodation issues, concern over costs and fear of legal liability. Paraquad’s perspective of the local market is that misconceptions or lack of information, systemic issues and physical barriers are the primary drivers of the consistently high unemployment rate of people with disabilities.
“I think there are still attitudinal barriers and misconceptions that people with disabilities either don't have the skills, they don't have the ability, or they don't have the experience to do the job,” said Wehmeier.

Experience can be quite a hurdle. Many people with disabilities remain on the sidelines while their relatives and peers get entry-level experience working in fast food or retail, and those “starter” jobs are often what build an individual’s résumé in a manner that leads to bigger opportunities with higher wages and, ultimately, greater financial independence down the road.

"The biggest challenge facing people with disabilities is sustainable living, and a key piece of that, of course, is to be gainfully employed," said Wehmeier. “And to do that you have to have opportunities to get first experiences."

When working with Paraquad, many employers express fears about their own aptitude to hire a worker with a disability.

"I work with the businesses trying to hire individuals and I always hear, 'Yes, I want to hire people with disabilities,' but the businesses either don't know how to recruit, they don't know how to interview, or they don't know how to train, and they're afraid to ask," said Bonnie Forker, Paraquad employment services manager.

Employers voice concerns that a person with a disability could be costly to accommodate, but data provided by the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) tells a different story. According to the 2,387 employers that participated in JAN’s survey, 59% of accommodations cost absolutely nothing, while the rest of the accommodations had a typical cost of only $500. In addition, many people with disabilities do not require any accommodations at all.

“As a person with a disability, you become a pretty good expert about how to accommodate your own disability,” said Wehmeier.

Many people with disabilities simply cannot participate in the labor force because there are healthcare coverage implications. It is a common frustration for a person with a disability to face a tipping point where their government-backed health care could be eliminated if they make a certain income, yet moving to a private healthcare plan would push their required services financially out of reach. For instance, Paraquad recently assisted a woman who attended school in pursuit of a medical career path and wanted to work full-time, but once she found a job in her desired field she had to quit because her healthcare plan would have been eliminated and the work hours she was able to secure did not qualify her for the company’s health care.

When it comes to physical barriers, people without disabilities may not really notice just how many organizations in the metropolitan area are inaccessible. While accessibility has improved over the years, the problem is still prevalent.

Adding to the list of challenges, employers may not realize just how substantial the issue of transportation can be for people with disabilities.
“There are a lot of businesses out there where there is really no good way for an individual, especially if they have a mobility issue, to get to employment, or at least get to it on time,” added Forker.

Paratransit services are available, but they often have broad windows of time for picking up a person and dropping them off, and some employers don’t allow for that level of schedule flexibility. Not to mention, it can make for a very long day when an individual must start a work day two hours earlier and stay two hours later because of transportation.

A lack of confidence in a person with a disability can also deter them from seeking a job. According to Paraquad, some people get discouraged because they have been told “no” so many times, not just by employers but by well-meaning loved ones saying they should “play it safe” when it comes to employment.

What is Paraquad doing to connect people with disabilities to employment opportunities?

Uniquely positioned to promote inclusion and choice

What makes Paraquad distinctively positioned to help their program participants and employers is the fact that most of their staff are people with disabilities, and they believe that people with disabilities are the best experts on the support and services that can increase independence for all people.

Paraquad assists people who have a wide variety of disabilities, including physical, cognitive, visual, auditory and mental/emotional; about 15% of Paraquad’s participants have multiple disabilities. The organization takes a holistic approach to serving their program participants with the underlying belief that most people, given the right opportunity and support, can be successful.

Paraquad educates clients on the impact employment will have on their existing benefits, and their programs allow participants to gain exposure to the workforce at a level appropriate to their experience and desire whether that’s volunteering, trying a summer internship or supported employment.

Passion is a critical factor for the longevity of any employee, so Paraquad takes a very individualized approach with their participants, evaluates career choices, and then identifies opportunities that match a person’s skillset and interests.

“Some individuals want to do production or dishwashing,” said Forker, whose department works to match participants with employers. “But our team is also trying to open them up to what’s down the road. Don’t just look at a job; let’s see where this can lead as a career.”
For employers, Paraquad created AccessibleSTL, a program that helps relieve some of the concerns and barriers that prevent employers from hiring people with disabilities. The program offers customized services including interviewer training, technical assistance and more for organizations working to increase inclusion in the St. Louis region. Paraquad’s employment and volunteer services teams also assist employers by providing job analysis, candidate pre-screening, on-site job support and more.

“If you’re a business and you are trying to do something right in terms of hiring people and serving customers with disabilities, we ask, ‘What barriers are you encountering?’” said Condon. “We train HR professionals to let them know what the dos and don’ts are when you’re interviewing somebody with a disability and educate them about the value of a diverse workforce.”

Paraquad understands the concerns employers have about the bottom line, and their programs are designed to help alleviate some of the perceived risks.

“We help employers save time and money,” said Forker. “Our staff helps you with the recruitment and outreach, and once you have hired that individual, you can have an on-site mentor until everyone’s comfortable. Support will always be there.”

If an employer has accessibility concerns, Paraquad can conduct on-site surveys and provide feedback about everything from the width of the office doorways to the slopes in a parking lot to the number of accessible parking spaces.

Paraquad has seen great success in the area through the AccessibleSTL program. One of Paraquad’s biggest partners, Regions Bank, has made a commitment to accessibility and is basing every one of their new branch offices on an ADA site survey Paraquad conducted. In addition to corporations, Paraquad has helped almost every cultural institution in St. Louis improve accessibility, such as the Saint Louis Art Museum, the Missouri History Museum, the Muny, the Center of Creative Arts (COCA) and Busch Stadium. Paraquad hosts a quarterly roundtable where all organizations, corporations and advocates are invited to talk about a disability-related topic, from interviewing people with disabilities to interacting with service dogs to unconscious bias.

It is common for Paraquad to spend a good deal of time with an employer before they help them overcome fears, address accessibility issues, and break down the preconceptions to hiring an individual with a disability. It helps if an organization has a hiring manager in place who has experience interfacing with people of all capabilities.

“It’s all about personal experience and relationships,” said Wehmeier. “So, if I’m a hiring manager and I have experience in my family or my friendship group or associations and a disability isn’t something that’s uncomfortable to me, then I’m more likely to hire someone with a disability.”

Paraquad’s greatest placement success has come from the “hidden” job market, where Paraquad identifies an opportunity and sends over a candidate’s résumé to an employer with whom Paraquad already has a relationship. In some cases, trust with an employer
has been fostered for two or more years, but typically when the employer has hired a person with a disability and seen positive results, the relationship continues.

“Once they’ve hired someone – especially when working through an organization like Paraquad or another similar agency – and they’ve had good success, they’ll keep coming back,” said Wehmeier.

Paraquad's latest creative innovation in workforce development came less than two years ago in the form of Bloom Café, a restaurant that shares a building with its parent organization just west of the St. Louis Science Center. At Bloom, employees with all ranges of capabilities aim to please a customer base equally as diverse in a distinct yet incredibly comfortable environment.

"We were interested in finding a way to impact employment for people with disabilities," said Wehmeier. "We had the opportunity through New Markets Tax Credits to do something innovative and so Bloom Café was the result of that innovation."

Paraquad wanted a way to help provide those first job opportunities any individual needs to build a résumé and become competitive in the workforce. They conducted research as part of a social enterprise innovation competition offered by Washington University's Skandalaris Center for Interdisciplinary Innovation and Entrepreneurship, and learned that there was a particular need in St. Louis for people working in hospitality.

Paraquad connected with members of the St. Louis Community College-Forest Park culinary arts program as well as other community organizations and professionals to bring their concept to fruition.

“St. Louis Community College was instrumental in the development of Bloom Café," said Wehmeier. "They were really helpful and spent quite a lot of time with us. That ongoing relationship and support has been critical to us. Honestly, I don't know if we'd be doing it without them in the beginning."

When Paraquad developed the café concept, they knew this new social enterprise would support them economically and provide a chance to train individuals with disabilities, but even they didn’t expect things to unfold in such a remarkable manner.

"Bloom is interesting because of the type of workforce development opportunity," said Wehmeier. "The restaurant was separate from our training program, but when we opened the restaurant, what we didn't necessarily plan for was the fact that the majority of the people we ended up hiring had disabilities. That just happened to be how it played out."

Not only have they been pleased with the Bloom staff, but Paraquad has also been thrilled by the community response to the café.

“There are so many people who comment on their experience, and their interest and love of being in an environment where there are people of all abilities," Wehmeier said. “That’s a pretty good demonstration of value.”
Unlike many nonprofits, Paraquad has the unique advantage of using the café to allow the public to interact with and really understand the population they serve, to see firsthand the irreplaceable value people with disabilities offer.

"Not only does the café present workforce training, but it's also just such a fascinating place for people to interact with Paraquad," said Wehmeier. "That's something that very few non-profits have the opportunity to do – to bring people in to see what our vision of the world is."

What's on the horizon for Paraquad and people with disabilities in the St. Louis community?

Opportunities, partnerships and continuous innovation

"Where the ADA has made a significant impact is on access, public accommodations, and creating opportunities for people to be active in the community," said Wehmeier. "But where we're still really struggling is the economic self-sufficiency piece as it relates to workforce development. And so, I think – where are we headed for the future? We've got to have pathways to equity which means more opportunities for economic self-sufficiency."

As Paraquad approaches its 50th anniversary next year, they continue to analyze where they can have the greatest impact on helping individuals achieve independence.

"Funding is a challenge," said Wehmeier. "We rely on government funding that's gotten tighter, so looking at innovative opportunities for social enterprise, partnerships, philanthropy and bringing new people into the fold of our mission are our greatest opportunities."

On February 1, 2019, Missouri Governor Mike Parson announced that Missouri is on track to become a “model employer state” for individuals living with disabilities. This designation means that Missouri has been selected for a mentorship program through the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) to help achieve this goal. State governments can commit to hiring more people with disabilities, and thereby become a "model employer" for private businesses and nonprofits. This classification is an emerging trend developed by the National Governors Association to help more people with disabilities obtain competitive, integrated employment.17

Paraquad is hopeful that this designation helps move the needle, but in the meantime the organization is relying on partnerships and growing public interest to continue making headway in lowering the unemployment rates for people with disabilities in the St. Louis workforce.
The Perpetual Trend of Joblessness Among 18- to 24-Year-Old African American Men

The Urban League assists a demographic disproportionately underrepresented in the workforce

Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data from 2018 showed that the unemployment rate for black Americans was 6.5%, which put it 67% above the national rate for all Americans, 85% higher than white Americans and 116% higher than Asians Americans. In some communities now, unemployment rates for black Americans are even higher than they were during the Great Recession.

Historically, black unemployment rates have always been consistently higher than overall U.S. unemployment rates:

**Black Unemployment Consistently Higher than U.S. Overall**

The disparity in unemployment rates by race worsen when age and gender are considered, revealing an especially stark difference in unemployment rates among young men. According to 2018 BLS data, **24.1% of the black male labor force aged 18-19 was unemployed and 12.7% of the black male labor force aged 20-24 was unemployed**, which are far greater levels than the overall national average as well as all men of those same ages, and consistently twice or even three times that of men of other races.

**2018 U.S. Unemployment Rates by Age and Race**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>All Men</th>
<th>Black Men</th>
<th>White Men</th>
<th>Asian Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All ages</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td><strong>6.5%</strong></td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-19</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td><strong>24.2%</strong></td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td><strong>12.7%</strong></td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Missouri, the 2018 unemployment rate average of 3.2% was better than the U.S. average of 3.9%. White men held steady at the state average unemployment rate of 3.2% (compared to 3.5% for white men overall in the U.S.). However, black or African American men in Missouri had an unemployment rate average of 9.3% compared to 7.0% for black men overall in the U.S. In fact, Missouri had the 4th highest unemployment rate amongst black or African American men out of the 29 states that reported this data.21

To drill even deeper, St. Louis City statistics show that although the city claims an average 4% unemployment rate, some black majority neighborhoods experience unemployment rates ranging from 17% to 36%.

It is understandable why many 18- to 24-year-old African American men in St. Louis might not be eager to celebrate record-low unemployment rates with the rest of the country. It is not their reality.

“African American men have historically had the highest unemployment rate of any other demographic in our region as well as nationwide,” said Michael P. McMillan, president and CEO of the Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis, Inc.

The Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis has been assisting the St. Louis region and the people represented by these statistics for the last 101 years and seen firsthand how opportunity gaps play out in everyday life. The organization has made it their mission to empower African Americans and others throughout the region to secure economic self-reliance, social equality and civil rights. They live and breathe this mission by offering a breadth of programs and services designed to elevate the community, provide access to quality education, offer economic opportunity, and obtain fair and equal treatment for all individuals in all aspects of society.

**Why are 18- to 24-year-old African American men being left behind?**

*A complex, multi-dimensional, deeply-rooted issue*

Analysis conducted by the Brookings Institution, a nonprofit public policy organization, showed that “to succeed in today’s economy and earn middle-class wages, a young person needs to graduate from high school or earn an alternate credential, enroll in and complete some post-secondary education or job training, and then enter the labor market with skills that match employer demand. There are many points along that pathway at which a young person can get off-track, and many factors that can interfere with reaching those milestones. Schools, families, and neighborhoods all play a role in a young person’s trajectory—both positive and negative.”22

There is not a single, simple reason young African American men have been caught in such a high unemployment cycle for so long. However, there are some factors upon which people close to the issue agree.
Poverty begets poverty

A Brookings report on the role of race and unemployment in young adults states that while not all black people live in concentrated poverty, they form a disproportionate share of those living in neighborhoods with poverty levels above 40%. Studies show that the more time an individual is in poverty, the lower their chances of escaping it, and there is a correlation between incomes of parents and the potential incomes of their children, suggesting that poverty is frequently cyclical. Many 18- to 24-year-old African American men in the poverty-laden pockets of St. Louis are caught in that cycle.

The psychological impact of trauma

Poverty-stricken areas of St. Louis with high unemployment rates are commonly high crime areas, and the Urban League has seen just how the psychological damage of these experiences have a deep, long-lasting impact upon members of these communities.

“When you’re living in North St. Louis, or the south side, or even urban cities as a whole, you’re going through trauma every single day of your life,” said Michael Holmes, vice president of workforce development and strategic partnerships for the Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis. “Everybody expects you to go to school and learn. Last night someone may have seen that five people in their neighborhood got shot, and we want them to go to school and learn. We don’t deal with the trauma well in this region, but then we want people to be successful. I think once we deal with the trauma, then people can be successful. But we have to deal with the basics first, and, as a city, we have not.”

A shortage of reliable networks and role models

The labor market progress of low-income youth can be hindered by the lack of personal and professional network connections to opportunity. Education and social policy research nonprofit MDRC states in their Toward a Better Future report that about half of all workers in the United States find their jobs through personal connections.

As the report states, “Family and neighborhood factors, such as having a lower number of employed family members or living in a high unemployment area, may ‘degrade the job network’ of poor and minority youth because fewer people are able to pass along information about employers or job openings. The latest sociological research suggests that ‘racial minorities, particularly low-income minorities, have access to job contacts, but may be unable to effectively make use of their contacts’ social capital for a job search.’”

This perspective is consistent with what the Urban League sees in St. Louis.

“When you live in an area with the highest concentration of vacant lots and derelict buildings, and a lack of infrastructure, you really don’t have a network of people who are doing exceptional things, so you don’t think that’s something that could even be possible for you,” said McMillan. “So, having a role model for these young men is a very good thing.”
Gaps in academic achievement

Middle-wage, middle-skill jobs today require more education and skills mostly to meet increasing technological demands, which has put many 18- to 24-year-old African American men from lower income parts of St. Louis at a disadvantage.

As MDRC points out in their report, “Gaps in academic achievement develop early in childhood between poor children and those from families who are better educated and can make a greater investment in their children’s education and well-being. By the time they start kindergarten, children from poor families are already behind their more affluent peers in reading and math, and that gap only widens as they continue in school. They also face many threats to their social-emotional development — such as family or housing instability and neighborhood violence — that can affect their school experiences and social outcomes for years to come. Low-income students are five times more likely to drop out of high school than their peers from high-income families.”

Opportunities are physically and financially out of reach

Predictably, the physical locations of higher-paying companies are generally in less accessible areas for individuals from many lower income parts of St. Louis.

“There are not a lot of companies in these high crime, high poverty areas. And, of course, if you don’t have transportation, and you come from low income around $10,000 a year, you don’t have a car to get to and from work,” said McMillan.

While public transportation options exist, they are not always the right answer. Some companies ask employees to arrive at work earlier than the buses start running, and oftentimes an individual would have to wake up incredibly early to catch the multiple buses required to get to a job in Wildwood or St. Charles.

In addition, if an individual has children, the cost of daycare and logistics of managing getting children to and from a daycare facility adds another major layer of complexity from a financial and time-management perspective.

Persistent systemic, structural discrimination

As MDRC notes in their report, “For young people of color, structural discrimination and higher rates of incarceration are also major barriers to employment. In public schools, black students, especially males, are much more likely to face disciplinary actions and harsher punishments than their white peers. Black youth referred to juvenile courts are more likely to be incarcerated in adult prisons than white youth. Even though black youth make up about 16% of the overall youth population in the United States, they represent 37% of juvenile cases transferred to criminal court and 58% of juveniles admitted to adult state prisons. A history of incarceration carries enormous stigma for employers, who are ‘much more averse to hiring individuals with criminal records than any other group of disadvantaged workers.”

“Unfortunately, this is the 400th year of people of African descent having been brought to the United States, and so in the course of that four-century evolution of time, there
have been a number of things that would have been concluded by now, but have not,” said McMillan.

**Employers seek higher experience levels and/or are less willing to train**

Holmes has been working with employers to cultivate more employment opportunities for people in the St. Louis region for more than 25 years and has noticed that over time some employers have become less willing to train new hires for the skills they seek in a candidate, leaving those without work experience unable to get work experience.

“At one time companies used to take more risks with new hires, meaning they’d say, ‘You come in with these five skills, and I’ll teach you the other five,’” Holmes said. “Most companies aren’t training the way they used to. They’re saying, ‘Come in here with all this skill already,’ but if these people had all those skills, they’d already be working!”

An individual must be hired before they earn work experience, and Holmes has found that many in the population he serves do not have a chance to get a foot in the door based on the way the job descriptions are written for many of the open positions he sees.

“We’ve found that companies are writing job descriptions based on a person who has been working with them for thirty years,” said Holmes. “So, we’re saying, ‘Remember, it took that person thirty years to get those skills.’ And, we’re asking them, ‘What are the top skills you need for that job?’ and encouraging them to write the job description around that.”

A person who has repeatedly been turned down for jobs can lose the motivation to try. Success perpetuates success, and many of the African American youths being left behind in the workforce are not getting the taste of success they need to crave even more.

**What is the Urban League doing to connect 18- to 24-year-old African American men to employment opportunities?**

**Targeted, individualized programs that make a lasting impact**

For over a century now, the Urban League has been on the forefront of the initiative to connect African Americans and others in the St. Louis region to opportunities and improve their quality of life.

The organization has multiple programs to suit the multi-dimensional issues faced by the people they serve. One program that is seeing a high rate of success among 18- to 24-year-old African American men in St. Louis is the Save Our Sons (SOS) program.

Founded in January 2015, the Urban League’s SOS program seeks to help unemployed and underemployed African American men and others in St. Louis communities find
gainful employment and earn livable wages. Prior to the program, 97% of participants were unemployed, 59% had no income and 38% utilized public assistance.

The SOS program primarily assists individuals aged 18-35 from two of the Urban League’s Empowerment Center locations – one in St. Louis County and a newer location in St. Louis City. SOS expanded to the North St. Louis location to be more accessible to city residents and support St. Louis Police Chief John Hayden’s efforts in reforming a high-crime area.

SOS takes an individualized approach, understanding what the program participant needs and wants in a career pathway, helping them overcome issues like transportation and clothing, and assisting with outreach to foster connections to employment opportunities. The four-week SOS curriculum educates men on how to get and keep a job as well as how to get promoted and remain marketable in the workplace. The program assists participants in obtaining post-secondary education job training and teaches the imperative career skills and work ethics necessary to become successful employees in today’s workforce.

“We try to teach the men to be responsible fathers; to be responsible citizens; to improve the quality of their character; to be civically engaged; to understand their government from a city, state, and federal basis; to vote in every election,” said McMillan. “We have speakers come in for character building sessions and talk about, ‘This is how I made it in my career, these are the ethics you need to have to be successful, and these are the types of things a person needs to do to be respected in the workforce.’”

Once a participant has graduated from the program, the Urban League works to place them into a position and ensure they’ve maintained that position for an entire year. The program specializes in intentional target hiring, matching a participant’s needs with those of the employer. To help make long-lasting employment connections, the Urban League hosts in-house hiring fairs that exclusively include participants perfectly suited to the employers’ needs, putting the participants in the best possible position to get the job and build some much-needed confidence.

According to the most recent reports, 127 program graduates have started jobs just since the beginning of 2019. If they all keep those jobs for a year, they’ll pump $3 million into some of the poorest neighborhoods in the city.28

What’s on the horizon for the Urban League and the population they serve?

Strong communities are built by supportive partners and steadfast resolve

The Urban League continues to advance their mission to enable opportunities for all, and they rely on strategic partner organizations and corporations to help further the cause.
Strong partners have consistently played a vital role in the success of the Urban League’s programs. Examples include:

- A pilot project created by SOS and BJC Healthcare called “Options to Opportunities” which provides men who have little or no employment history and/or justice involvement the opportunity to obtain employment as a patient transporter.
- Partnerships with St. Louis Public Schools and Excel Center to see that participants have opportunities to obtain their high school diploma.
- A partnership with Cardinal Ritter Private High School in which the Urban League will offer a full ride scholarship to a young male living within the zone.
- An “adoption” by Brooks Brothers that will allow the Urban League to continue having the clothes needed to make sure their clients are dressed for success.
- A partnership with Job Corps in making available 25 scholarships for students to be dually enrolled in Job Corp and post-secondary education.

Most recently, the Urban League announced two new partnerships in conjunction with St. Louis Community College.

The first partnership stems from the donation of a Lion’s Choice restaurant to the Urban League in North County. The Urban League plans to offer a short-term, non-credit restaurant training class and is working with STLCC to offer the training. The program is based on a curriculum that has been implemented in several other cities across the country to prepare individuals for entry-level restaurant jobs. The College will also work with faculty in the culinary program to see if there is the potential for alignment or any cross-walk of credits in the future.

“If you look at jobs in the state of Missouri, almost 1,000 jobs open a day just in restaurants,” said Holmes. “The Missouri Restaurant Association is saying they have all these jobs open and they don’t have people to fill them. So, what we’re trying to do is offer a short-term, six-week training program, in partnership with St. Louis Community College, where a graduate can get prepared to go straight to work at a restaurant, or if they decide they like the industry, they will consider going to college and getting a degree in culinary arts.”

In the second partnership, the College will work with the Urban League to provide outreach to minorities regarding upcoming opportunities as patient care technicians and STLCC’s Immersive CodeCamp. Both programs have proven to be successful, and there is an immediate need for employees in both areas. To support this effort, the Department for Economic Development awarded the College additional funding to move these opportunities forward in the St. Louis region.

“A year ago, we started having a conversation with St. Louis Community College about how the College and the Urban League can really begin to recruit people of color in patient care tech and IT in the St. Louis, North St. Louis City and North County service areas, to get more minorities starting at the ground level,” said Holmes.
Programs like these can be effective in identifying and training individuals in need of a positive career pathway, but a critical key to the success – and for creating a long-lasting change in employment opportunities for the population the Urban League serves – is for employment opportunities to exist when training ends.

“We need to get partners that are willing to give interviews and willing to provide opportunities for people with real positions open,” said Holmes. “This is hard work for everybody. We understand that. But we’ve got to have real, true partners and companies step up and be a part of this.”

What Can Employers Do to Hire Great Employees and Create More Inclusive Workplaces?

*Considerations and action items for employers*

In today’s tight labor market, employers in need of new talent are beginning to open their minds to the possibility of tapping into talent pools that have historically been underrepresented in the workforce.

“The companies we have seen that are recognizing the benefits of recruiting in these populations have been extremely satisfied that they did,” said Hart Nelson, associate vice chancellor, St. Louis Community College Workforce Solutions Group.

While this list is not comprehensive, these considerations can serve as a good starting point for an organization that aims to fill open seats and establish a more inclusive environment at work.

- **Look at your employee demographics.** Of the many diverse populations that exist, which ones are underrepresented or missing from your organization?
- **Consider how accommodating your organization is to certain populations.** What is your organization doing to tap into a talent pool with transportation or budget restrictions? Do you have flexible work arrangements or childcare assistance programs?
- **Ensure your organization is up to speed on non-discrimination policies.** Is your company fully compliant with national and state legal requirements and non-discrimination policies?
- **Evaluate your job descriptions.** Are the required skills listed in a job posting going to potentially discourage any candidates you would consider from applying?
- **Offer diversity training.** Could your employees benefit from more knowledge around how to work more effectively with individuals who are demographically different than they are?
- **Create an internal mentorship program.** Once an employee is hired, are you increasing their longevity potential by connecting them with other successful employees?
✔ Add training programs to offset skill gaps. Could your organization provide specific skill training for high-aptitude job candidates?

   St. Louis Community College offers a wide variety of workforce development programs that can help grow and empower your employees. Learn more at stlcc.edu/workforce.

✔ Consider contracting individuals from underemployed demographics through other companies or employment agencies.

✔ Connect with organizations like Mission: St. Louis, Paraquad and the Urban League. Would it help to have a partner who can relieve hiring risks, foster understanding and connect you with invaluable pools of underutilized talent?
   - Mission: St. Louis – https://www.missionstl.org/
   - Paraquad – https://www.paraquad.org/
   - The Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis – https://www.ulstl.com/

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1 Website: https://www.missionstl.org/
8 Website: https://www.missionstl.org/hirestl
9 Website: https://www.slalom.com/
10 Website: https://www.missionstl.org/stayingpower
11 Website: https://www.paraquad.org/
16 Website: https://skandalaris.wustl.edu/


ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the 1,144 companies who were interviewed for their voluntary participation in the survey.

We would like to thank the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis for their support of this report and event.

We would like to thank the Nine Network of Public Media for their support as our media partner.

We would like to acknowledge the contributions of Singo Solution, Inc. for their help with the design and administration of the employer survey as well as data collection and tabulation.

Finally, we offer our deep appreciation to the leaders from Mission: St. Louis, Paraquad and the Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis for their time and invaluable insight into the challenges faced by our friends and neighbors across St. Louis.

The 2019 State of the St. Louis Workforce Report was made possible by the collaborative efforts of staff from the St. Louis Community College Workforce Solutions Group and the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center (MERIC), the research unit of the Missouri Department of Economic Development.
APPENDIX I: STATE OF THE ST. LOUIS WORKFORCE EMPLOYER SURVEY 2019

The employer survey was conducted by phone on weekdays starting March 6, 2019 and finished on May 21, 2019. Only complete surveys are used in this report.

Initial Question Employees
First, including yourself, how many employees does your company currently employ in the St. Louis area?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 5 (Thank &amp; Terminate)</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 10</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 49</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 or more</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Do not read) Refuse - Thank &amp; Terminate</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure - Thank &amp; Terminate</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Over the past 12 months, would you say your employment levels have increased significantly (by 15% or more), increased slightly (by less than 15%), remained the same as before, decreased slightly (by less than 15%), or decreased significantly (by 15% or more)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased significantly, by 15% or more</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased slightly, by less than 15%</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remained the same as before</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased slightly, by less than 15%</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased significantly, by 15% or more</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Do not read) Refuse</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure - Thank &amp; Terminate</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Looking ahead over the next 12 months, how does your business PLAN to change your employment levels?

Would you say your employment levels will increase significantly (by 15% or more), increase slightly (by less than 15%), remain the same as before, decrease slightly (by less than 15%), or decrease significantly (by 15% or more)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase significantly, by 15% or more</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase slightly, by less than 15%</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remain the same as before</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease slightly, by less than 15%</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease significantly, by 15% or more</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Do not read) Refuse</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure - Thank &amp; Terminate</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. If you were to add employees in the next 12 months, which of the following methods would you use? Read list; enter code for each method would use; enter all that apply.

(Rotate methods)

- Recalling workers from a lay-off list                     | 01   |
- Hiring new full-time employees                            | 02   |
- Hiring new part-time employees                            | 03   |
- Hiring contract workers                                   | 04   |
- Using a temporary agency                                  | 05   |
- (Do not read) Not applicable - Not wanting to expand      | 95   |
- (Do not read) Would not use any listed method             | 96   |
- (Do not read) Refuse                                      | 97   |
- (Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure - Thank & Terminate     | 98   |

4a. Please tell me if you have encountered the following barriers to expanding your employment level.

(Rotate barriers; ask "Any other barrier?" last)

- Shortage of workers with knowledge or skills              | 01   |
- Shortage of available training programs                   | 02   |
- Economic conditions                                       | 03   |
- Government policies or regulations                        | 04   |
- Lack of information regarding the occupation             | 05   |
- Lack of access to transportation to get to work           | 06   |
- Lack of access to child care                              | 07   |
- Any other barrier? (If "Yes" Record on next screen)       | 08   |
- (Do not read) Have not encountered any barriers to expanding employment level | 95   |
- (Do not read) Not applicable - Not expanding employment level | 96   |
- (Do not read) Refuse                                      | 97   |
- (Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure - Thank & Terminate     | 98   |
- (Do not read) Terminate                                   | 99   |
4b. (Re: each barrier named on Q.4a)
Please tell how large a barrier each is to your business using a 1-to-5 scale where 1 is “insignificant” and 5 is a “critical barrier.” You may also use any number between 1 and 5. And, if an item is not applicable to your business, please tell me so.

1 - Insignificant
2
3
4
5 - Critical barrier
96 - Not applicable

97 - Refuse
98 - Don't know/Not sure

Shortage of workers with knowledge or skills __
Shortage of available training programs __
Economic conditions __
Government policies or regulations __
Lack of information regarding the occupation __
Lack of access to transportation to get to work __
Lack of access to child care __
Other barrier __

5a. Next, I am going to read some possible shortcomings of job applicants and ask if you have or have not seen these characteristics in a significant number of applicants.

(Rotate Q.5a-A thru Q.5a-N)

5a-A. Please tell me if, over the last 12 months, you have or have not noticed a significant number of applicants with a Poor work habits (including attendance, punctuality, and attention to job).

Have seen this characteristic in job applicants 01
Have not seen this characteristic in job applicants 02
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure 98

5a-B. Please tell me if, over the last 12 months, you have or have not noticed a significant number of applicants with a Lack of general knowledge about business or industry.

Have seen this characteristic in job applicants 01
Have not seen this characteristic in job applicants 02
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure 98

5a-C. Please tell me if, over the last 12 months, you have or have not noticed a significant number of applicants with a Lack of ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures and socio-economic backgrounds.

Have seen this characteristic in job applicants 01
Have not seen this characteristic in job applicants 02
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure 98

5a-D. Please tell me if, over the last 12 months, you have or have not noticed a significant number of applicants with a Lack of communication or interpersonal skills.

Have seen this characteristic in job applicants 01
Have not seen this characteristic in job applicants 02
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure 98

5a-E. Please tell me if, over the last 12 months, you have or have not noticed a significant number of applicants with a Lack of willingness to learn or inability to learn.

Have seen this characteristic in job applicants 01
Have not seen this characteristic in job applicants 02
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure 98

5a-F. Please tell me if, over the last 12 months, you have or have not noticed a significant number of applicants with a Lack of teamwork or collaboration.

Have seen this characteristic in job applicants 01
Have not seen this characteristic in job applicants 02
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure 98

5a-G. Please tell me if, over the last 12 months, you have or have not noticed a significant number of applicants with a Lack of general computer skills.

Have seen this characteristic in job applicants 01
Have not seen this characteristic in job applicants 02
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure 98

5a-H. Please tell me if, over the last 12 months, you have or have not noticed a significant number of applicants with a Lack of critical thinking and problem solving.

Have seen this characteristic in job applicants 01
Have not seen this characteristic in job applicants 02
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure 98

5a-I. Please tell me if, over the last 12 months, you have or have not noticed a significant number of applicants with an Inability to think creatively or "out of the box."

Have seen this characteristic in job applicants 01
Have not seen this characteristic in job applicants 02
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure 98

5a-L. Please tell me if, over the last 12 months, you have or have not noticed a significant number of applicants with an Inability to think creatively or "out of the box."

Have seen this characteristic in job applicants 01
Have not seen this characteristic in job applicants 02
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure 98
5a-J. Please tell me if, over the last 12 months, you have or have not noticed a significant number of applicants with a Lack of writing skills.

Have seen this characteristic in job applicants 01
Have not seen this characteristic in job applicants 02
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure 98

5a-K. Please tell me if, over the last 12 months, you have or have not noticed a significant number of applicants with a Lack of basic math skills.

Have seen this characteristic in job applicants 01
Have not seen this characteristic in job applicants 02
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure 98

5a-L. Please tell me if, over the last 12 months, you have or have not noticed a significant number of applicants with a Lack of technical skills specific to the job.

Have seen this characteristic in job applicants 01
Have not seen this characteristic in job applicants 02
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure 98

5a-M. Please tell me if, over the last 12 months, you have or have not noticed a significant number of applicants with an Inability to understand written and graphical information.

Have seen this characteristic in job applicants 01
Have not seen this characteristic in job applicants 02
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure 98

5a-N. Please tell me if, over the last 12 months, you have or have not noticed a significant number of applicants with an Inability to pass a drug test or has a substance abuse issue.

Have seen this characteristic in job applicants 01
Have not seen this characteristic in job applicants 02
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure 98

5b. Now, on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is "not at all important" and 5 is "very important," how would you rate the importance of applicant shortcomings in the following areas to your business? Again, you may use any number between 1 and 5.

1 - Not at all important
2
3
4
5 - Very important
96 - Not applicable
97 - Refuse
98 - Don’t know/Not sure

(Rotate shortcomings)

Poor work habits
Lack of general knowledge about business or industry...
Lack of ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures and socio-economic backgrounds...
Lack of communication or interpersonal skills...
Lack of willingness to learn or inability to learn...
Lack of teamwork and collaboration...
Lack of general computer skills...
Lack of critical thinking and problem solving...
Inability to think creatively or "out of the box"...
Lack of writing skills...
Lack of basic math skills...
Lack of technical skills specific to the job...
Inability to understand written and graphical information...
Inability to pass a drug test or has a substance abuse issue...

6a. Are you experiencing a shortage of skilled applicants for your organization?

Yes 01
No 02
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure 98

6b. (If experiencing shortage of skilled applicants per Q.6a)

Please tell me the skill level required to meet your skill shortages. Approximately what percentage of the shortages you are experiencing require high-skill applicants (those with a 4-year degree or higher); middle-skill applicants (training or education beyond high school, but less than a 4-year degree); and low-skill applicants (high school or less).

What percent of positions require...
Answers MUST total 100%
Refuse = 97
Don’t know/Not sure = 98
High-skill, requiring a 4-year degree or higher...
Middle-skill, training or education beyond high school, but less than a 4-year degree...
Low-skill, requiring high school or less...

6c. (If experiencing shortage of skilled applicants per Q.6a)

Please tell me if you are taking any of the following measures to meet the skill shortages of applicants.

(Rotate measures)

Hiring from outside the local area or city 01
Hiring from outside the United States 02
Hiring contractors 03
Forced to hire less experienced workers and then train them 04
Invest in automation instead of hiring 05
Offering increased wages due to shortage of experienced workers 06
(Do not read) Not taking any of listed measures 96
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure 98
7. Which of the following methods do you use to assist current workers to address your company’s need for new or increased skills?
Read list; enter all that apply.
(Rotate methods)
In-house classroom training 01
On-the-job training 02
Vendor training 03
Apprenticeship programs 04
Community college provided customized training or education 05
Vocational training 06
Tuition reimbursement 07
Online courses 08
Provide flexible schedule for outside continuing education 09
(Do not read) Not applicable - Do not need new or increased skills 95
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure 98
8. Now we have some questions about your company’s workforce by job function.
8a. Do you employ staff in the Accounting or Finance function?
Yes 01
No 02
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure 98
8aa. (If employ staff in Accounting or Finance function per Q.8a)
Are you seeing a shortage of skilled applicants in the Accounting or Finance function?
Yes 01
No 02
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure 98
8aaa. (If seeing shortage of skilled applicants in the Accounting or Finance function per Q.8aa)
Please tell me the skill level of applicants required to meet your Accounting or Finance skill shortages. Approximately what percentage of the shortages you are experiencing require high-skill applicants (those with a 4-year degree or higher); middle-skill applicants (training or education beyond high school, but less than a 4-year degree); and low-skill applicants (high school or less).
What percent of positions require...
Answers MUST total 100%
Refuse = 97
Don’t know/Not sure = 98
High-skill, requiring a 4-year degree or higher ___
Middle-skill, training or education beyond high school, but less than a 4-year degree ___
Low-skill, requiring high school or less ___
8b. Do you employ staff in the Information Technology function?
Yes 01
No 02
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure 98
8bb. (If employ staff in Information Technology function per Q.8b)
Are you seeing a shortage of skilled applicants in the Information Technology function?
Yes 01
No 02
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure 98
8bbb. (If seeing shortage of skilled applicants in the Information Technology function per Q.8bb)
Please tell me the skill level of applicants required to meet your Information Technology skill shortages. Approximately what percentage of the shortages you are experiencing require high-skill applicants (those with a 4-year degree or higher); middle-skill applicants (training or education beyond high school, but less than a 4-year degree); and low-skill applicants (high school or less).
What percent of positions require...

Answers MUST total 100%

Refuse = 97

Don’t know/Not sure = 98

High-skill, requiring a 4-year degree or higher ___
Middle-skill, training or education beyond high school, but less than a 4-year degree ___
Low-skill, requiring high school or less ___

8bb. (If seeing shortage of skilled applicants in the Information Technology function per Q.8bb)

On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 means "not at all important" and 5 means "very important," how important to your business is the shortage of applicants in the Information Technology function?

1 - Not at all important 01
2 02
3 03
4 04
5 - Very important 05
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure 98

8c. Do you employ staff in the Customer Service function?

Yes 01
No 02
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure 98

8cc. (If employ staff in Customer Service function per Q.8c)

Are you seeing a shortage of skilled applicants in the Customer Service function?

Yes 01
No 02
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure 98

8ccc. (If seeing shortage of skilled applicants in the Customer Service function per Q.8cc)

Please tell me the skill level of applicants required to meet your Customer Service skill shortages.
Approximately what percentage of the shortages you are experiencing require high-skill applicants (those with a 4-year degree or higher); middle-skill applicants (training or education beyond high school, but less than a 4-year degree); and low-skill applicants (high school or less).

What percent of positions require...
Answers MUST total 100%
Refuse = 97
Don’t know/Not sure = 98

High-skill, requiring a 4-year degree or higher ___
Middle-skill, training or education beyond high school, but less than a 4-year degree ___
Low-skill, requiring high school or less ___

8d. Do you employ staff in the Business Management function?

Yes 01
No 02
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure 98

8dd. (If employ staff in Business Management function per Q.8d)

Are you seeing a shortage of skilled applicants in the Business Management function?

Yes 01
No 02
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure 98

8ddd. (If seeing shortage of skilled applicants in the Business Management function per Q.8dd)

Please tell me the skill level of applicants required to meet your Business Management skill shortages.
Approximately what percentage of the shortages you are experiencing require high-skill applicants (those with a 4-year degree or higher); middle-skill applicants (training or education beyond high school, but less than a 4-year degree); and low-skill applicants (high school or less).

What percent of positions require...
Answers MUST total 100%
Refuse = 97
Don’t know/Not sure = 98

High-skill, requiring a 4-year degree or higher ___
Middle-skill, training or education beyond high school, but less than a 4-year degree ___
Low-skill, requiring high school or less ___
8ddd. (If seeing shortage of skilled applicants in the Business Management function per Q.8dd)

On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 means "not at all important" and 5 means "very important," how important to your business is the shortage of applicants in the Business Management function?

1 - Not at all important 01
2 02
3 03
4 04
5 - Very important 05
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure 98

8e. Do you employ staff in the Skilled Trades function?

Yes 01
No 02
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure 98

8ee. (If employ staff in Skilled Trades function per Q.8e)

Are you seeing a shortage of skilled applicants in the Skilled Trades function?

Yes 01
No 02
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure 98

8eee. (If seeing shortage of skilled applicants in the Skilled Trades function per Q.8ee)

Please tell me the skill level of applicants required to meet your Skilled Trades skill shortages. Approximately what percentage of the shortages you are experiencing require high-skill applicants (those with a 4-year degree or higher); middle-skill applicants (training or education beyond high school, but less than a 4-year degree); and low-skill applicants (high school or less).

What percent of positions require ... Answers MUST total 100%

Refuse = 97
Don't know/Not sure = 98

High-skill, requiring a 4-year degree or higher ___
Middle-skill, training or education beyond high school, but less than a 4-year degree ___
Low-skill, requiring high school or less ___

8eff. (If seeing shortage of skilled applicants in the Manufacturing, Production & Maintenance function per Q.8ff)

Are you seeing a shortage of skilled applicants in the Manufacturing, Production & Maintenance function?

Yes 01
No 02
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don't know/Not sure 98

8fff. (If seeing shortage of skilled applicants in the Manufacturing, Production & Maintenance function per Q.8ff)

Please tell me the skill level of applicants required to meet your Manufacturing, Production & Maintenance skill shortages. Approximately what percentage of the shortages you are experiencing require high-skill applicants (those with a 4-year degree or higher); middle-skill applicants (training or education beyond high school, but less than a 4-year degree); and low-skill applicants (high school or less).

What percent of positions require ... Answers MUST total 100%

Refuse = 97
Don't know/Not sure = 98

High-skill, requiring a 4-year degree or higher ___
Middle-skill, training or education beyond high school, but less than a 4-year degree ___
Low-skill, requiring high school or less ___

8ffff. (If seeing shortage of skilled applicants in the Manufacturing, Production & Maintenance function per Q.8ff)

On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 means "not at all important" and 5 means "very important," how important to your business is the shortage of applicants in the Manufacturing, Production & Maintenance function?
9. In your business, what percentage of your total positions requires each of the following levels of experience? What percent of positions require...

Answers MUST total 100%
Refuse = 97
Don’t know/Not sure = 98
A minimum of 4 or more years of experience ___
A minimum of 1 to 3 years of experience ___
Some experience, but less than 1 year ___
No experience ___

10. In your business, what percentage of your total employees requires each of the following levels of education as a minimum requirement? What percent of positions require...

Answers MUST total 100%
Refuse = 97
Don’t know/Not sure = 98
High-skill, requiring a 4-year degree or higher ___
Middle-skill, training or education beyond high school, but less than a 4-year degree ___
Low-skill, requiring high school or less ___

11. What percentage of jobs in your business are available for individuals with industry relevant short-term training, meaning not more than 6 months past high school?

No jobs 01
1 to 49% of jobs 02
50 to 100% of jobs 03
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure 98

12. What percentage of jobs in your firm requires a drug screen prior to hire?

Percentage ___

13. What percentage of jobs in your firm requires a background check prior to hire?

Percentage ___

14. Which statement best describes your company’s position on hiring an applicant convicted of a felony offense who has completed their sentence and/or probation?

Read list; single response only
Would not consider applicant for any position 01
Depends on the nature of the felony and the time since the offense 02
Would consider for some jobs but not for others 03
Would consider the applicant for any job for which they are qualified 04
(Do not read) Refuse 97
(Do not read) Don’t know/Not sure 98