

**THE
OCONEE COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA
AREA
LABOR AVAILABILITY REPORT**

September, 2009

Compiled and Prepared by



THE PATHFINDERS

www.thepathfindersus.com

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INTRODUCTION

The Pathfinders has employed its many years of experience in workforce assessments for corporate site-selection clients and civilian workforce assessments for the Department of Defense in locations that faced military base closures to produce this evaluation of the Oconee County area workforce. In site-selection projects, the question that most often drives the search is whether the candidate location has the workforce needed for a new or expanding operation; consequently, an analysis of an area's workforce became a key component of site searches conducted by The Pathfinders. Senior human resources executives from among corporate clients assisted in refining the methodology and report format.

While unemployed workers are a source considered in hiring, companies typically also staff a new operation with individuals who are working but who desire better jobs and who appear to possess the skills, education, and experience to qualify them for those better jobs. **By that definition**, those individuals can be considered "underemployed" and are identified as such in this report.

The Pathfinders was retained to quantify the extent to which both unemployment and underemployment exist in the Oconee County area. This report also represents the objective and professional view of The Pathfinders with regard to workforce quality, availability, costs, experience and skills that a new or expanding employer can expect in the Oconee County region.

The information presented in this report has been developed independently of the client, and the client has not influenced the findings.



KEY FINDINGS

- The Oconee County area, referred to in this report as the “labor shed”, has a household population of approximately 582,300; a civilian labor force of approximately 300,000; and a pool of approximately 35,800 unemployed persons who are actively seeking work.
- The results of this survey indicate that a new or expanding employer will be able to attract employees from an additional pool of about 80,800 underemployed workers.
- The desired pay rates of the underemployed workers are reasonable when compared to their existing pay rates. The median current pay rate of the underemployed workers is \$16.11 per hour, and their median desired pay rate is \$17.90 per hour.
- The median desired pay rate of the unemployed workers who are actively seeking work is \$12.25 per hour.
- Survey results indicate 7% of the underemployed and 9% of unemployed, actively seeking work individuals have less than a high school degree.
- In addition to the underemployed and those unemployed individuals who are actively seeking work, survey results indicate approximately 11,500 unemployed individuals in the labor shed who are not actively seeking work but would consider re-entering the workforce.
- In total, the Oconee County area has approximately 128,100 available workers for new or expanding businesses.



METHODOLOGY

The first step in assessing the workforce of the Oconee County area was to determine the boundaries of the area to be assessed. To accomplish this task, The Pathfinders applied the same reasoning that would be used during a site search for a corporate client considering the area as a potential location. The Oconee County survey area includes those locations from which workers might be drawn to a new employer and is referred to in this report as the “labor shed”. This labor shed consists of Oconee, Pickens and Anderson Counties in South Carolina; Hart, Franklin, Stephens, Habersham and Rabun Counties in Georgia; and Macon, Jackson and Transylvania Counties in North Carolina.

Selected online resources were used in this project. Additionally, The Pathfinders conducted interviews with individuals throughout the Oconee County region. Those individuals were proportionally stratified across age, household income, and zip codes. The purpose of these surveys was to ascertain availability for work with a new employer; determine desired pay rates; and, collect information on such factors as age, education, commuting patterns, experience, and skills.

The data obtained as a result of those interviews enabled The Pathfinders to apply and employ a proprietary methodology that accurately determined the existence of underemployment and the quality and characteristics of both the underemployed and unemployed workers in the area. Further, The Pathfinders applied a proprietary process to the analysis of the data to correct for invalid responses. For example, those persons indicating they would take a new job but also indicating the desire for increased or decreased pay that is unreasonable are not included in the results.

It is important to note that companies making location decisions based upon these surveys have reported that when staffing actually began, the numbers reported by The Pathfinders proved to be accurate.



NUMBER OF AVAILABLE WORKERS

The Oconee County Area Labor Shed

The Oconee County area labor shed has a household population of approximately 582,300. The civilian labor force numbers approximately 300,000, and the labor shed contains approximately 35,800 unemployed people who are actively seeking work.

The results of this assessment determined that approximately 80,800 workers can be defined as underemployed: those individuals who are currently working but would take a better job if offered by a new or existing employer and who appear to possess the skills, education, and experience to qualify them to do so. Another 11,500 individuals would consider re-entering the workforce. Together with the unemployed, actively seeking work individuals, the Oconee County area has approximately 128,100 available workers for new or existing employers.

TOTAL AVAILABLE WORKERS

Number of underemployed workers	80,800
Number of unemployed, actively seeking work individuals	35,800
Number of unemployed individuals who are considering re-entering the workforce	11,500
Total Number of Workers Available for Employers*	128,100

* The reader is cautioned that, while the number of workers identified in the region, as well as their skills, experience, education, and costs, is accurate, all of those individuals may not be acceptable candidates for an employer. Their previous work records, stability, integrity, intelligence, appearance, and other factors are not considered in this report.



ASSESSMENT OF THE UNDEREMPLOYED WORKFORCE

The Oconee County Area Labor Shed

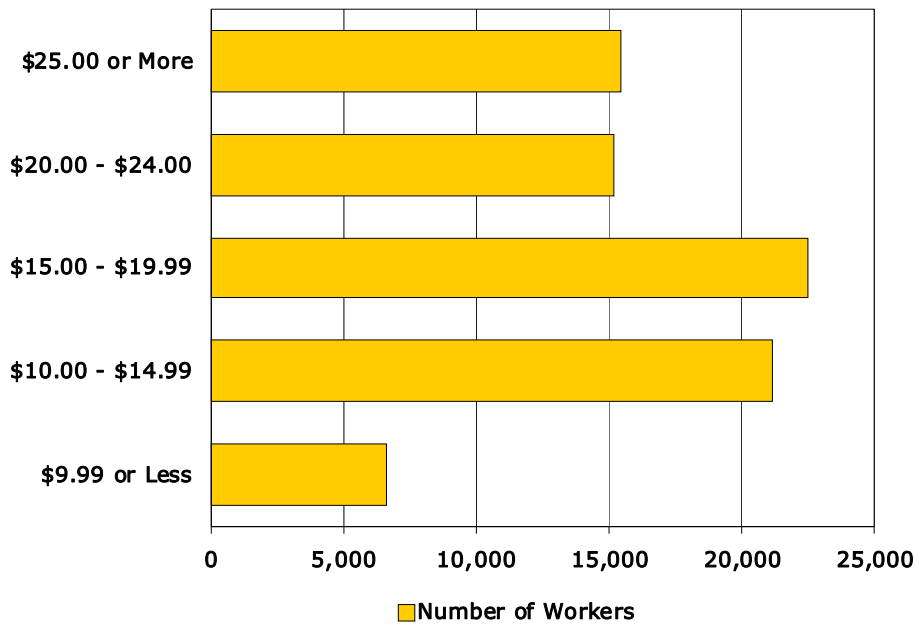
The 80,800 underemployed workers identified in this report might also be termed “upgraders”. They desire to move into an upgraded job and appear to possess the skills, education, and experience to enable them to do so. The following charts represent the desired pay rates of the underemployed individuals in the labor shed. Desired wages are shown by specific rates, range and percentiles.

NUMBER OF UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS AVAILABLE AT SPECIFIC WAGE RATES PER HOUR (rounded)

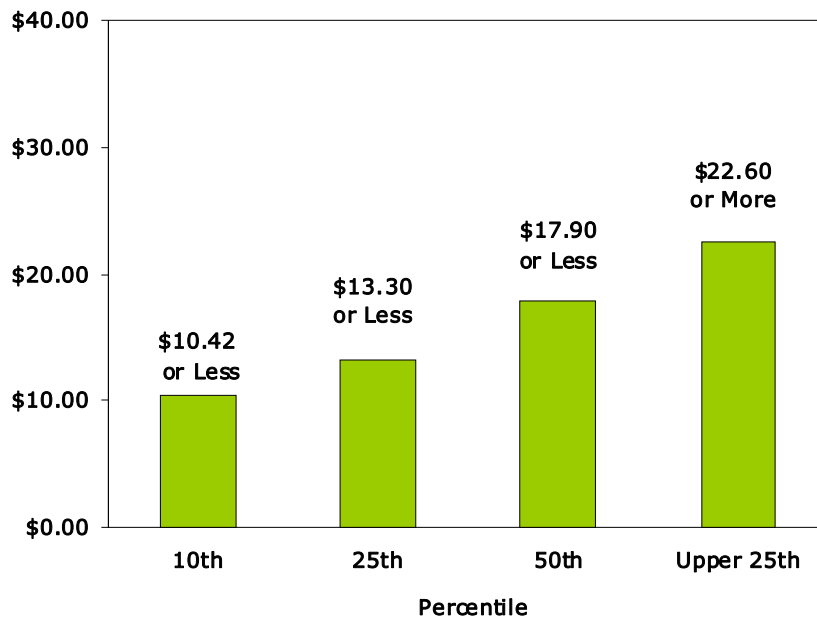
Desired Pay Rate	Number Available
\$7.99 or Less	1,500
\$8.00 - \$9.99	5,100
\$10.00 - \$11.99	5,800
\$12.00 - \$13.99	10,900
\$14.00 - \$15.99	10,900
\$16.00 - \$17.99	6,500
\$18.00 - \$19.99	9,500
\$20.00 - \$21.99	8,700
\$22.00 - \$23.99	3,600
\$24.00 - \$25.99	5,800
\$26.00 - \$27.99	700
\$28.00 - \$29.99	3,700
\$30.00 - \$31.99	800
\$32.00 or More	7,300



DESIRED WAGE RATES PER HOUR BY RANGE
80,800 Underemployed Workers



DESIRED WAGE RATES PER HOUR BY PERCENTILE
80,800 Underemployed Workers



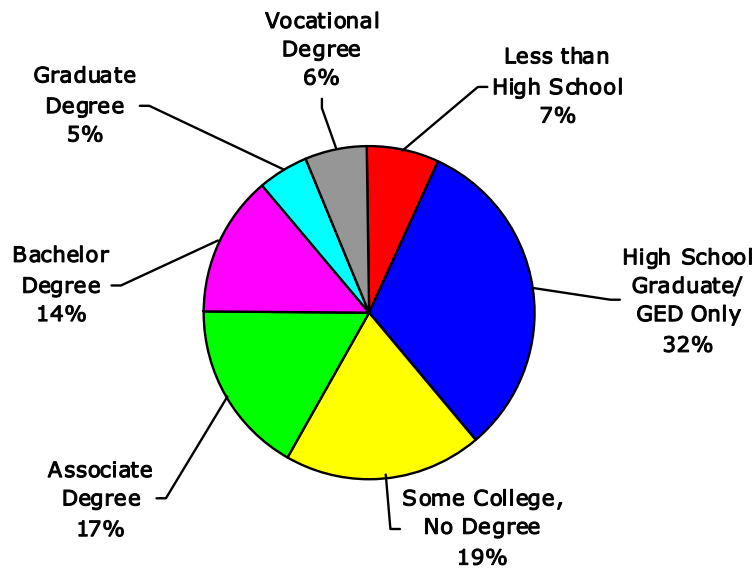
CHARACTERISTICS OF UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS

The Oconee County Area Labor Shed

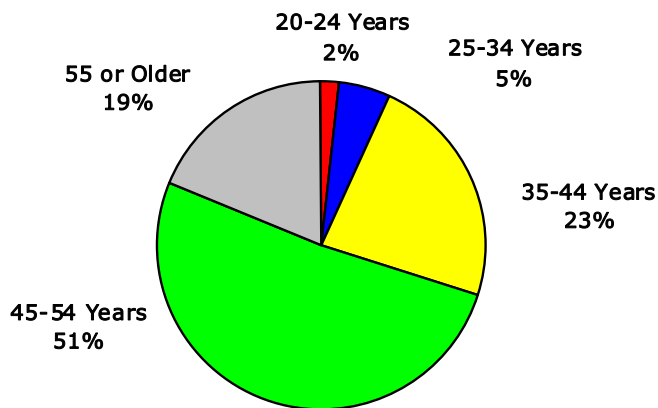
80,800 Underemployed Workers

The following charts provide information on various characteristics of the underemployed workers in the labor shed. As these data relate solely to those individuals in the labor shed who are underemployed, they will vary from data representative of the population and civilian labor force as a whole.

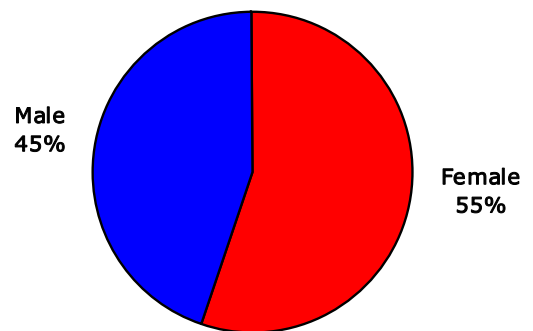
EDUCATION



AGE

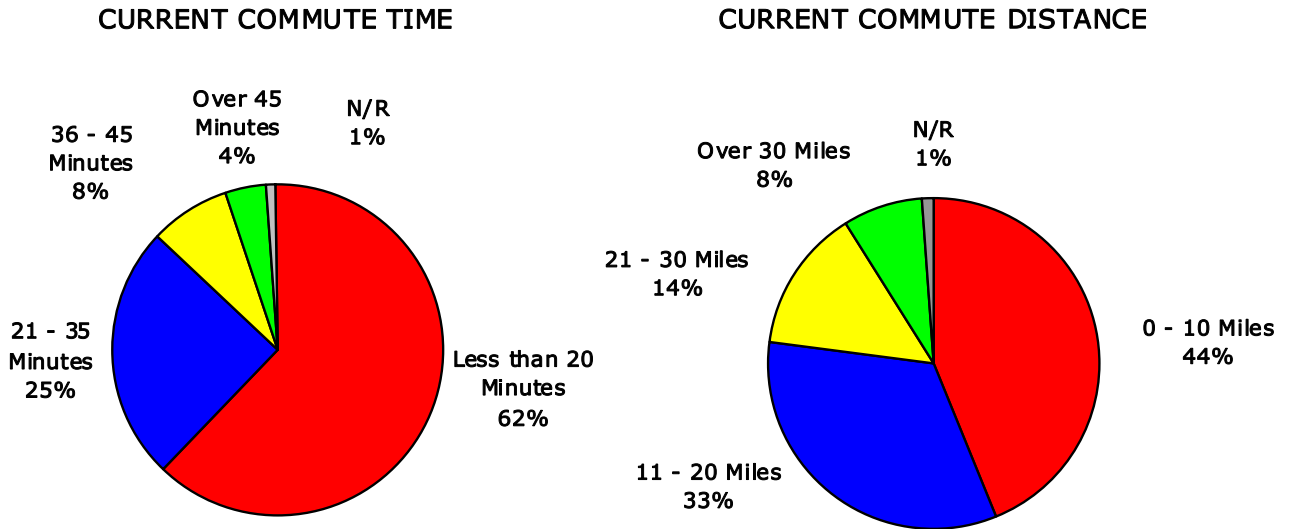


GENDER



CHARACTERISTICS OF UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS

80,800 Underemployed Workers



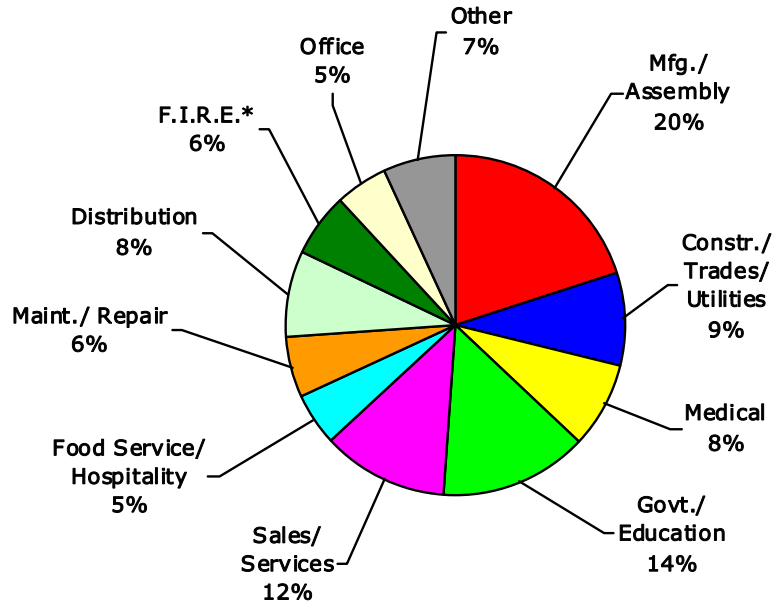
LENGTH OF TIME IN CURRENT JOB



CHARACTERISTICS OF UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS

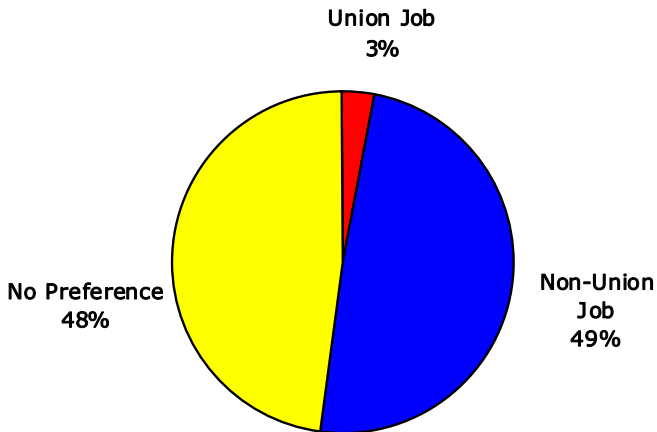
80,800 Underemployed Workers

CURRENT AREA OF EMPLOYMENT

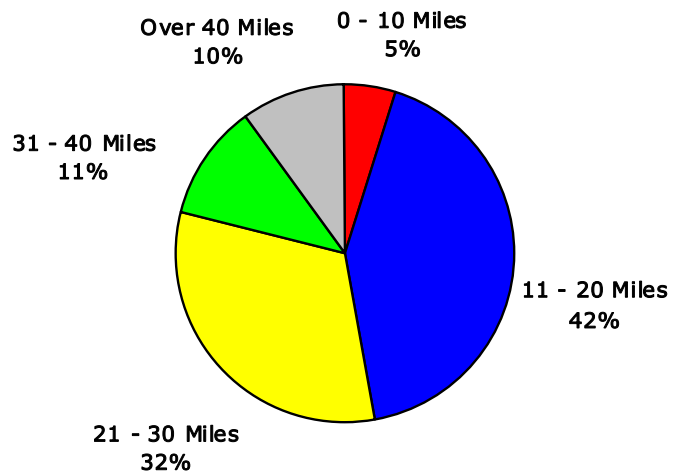


*Finance, Insurance, Real Estate

UNION PREFERENCE



MILES WILLING TO COMMUTE



EXPERIENCE AND SKILLS – UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS**80,800 Underemployed Workers**

Experience Category	Number of Workers (Rounded)	Percentage of Total	Average Years of Experience
Customer Service	50,900	63%	10
Office Operations	50,100	62%	13
Manufacturing/Assembly/Fabrication	48,500	60%	12
Warehouse/Distribution/Transportation	41,200	51%	9
Information Technology	27,500	34%	9
Maintenance/Installation/Repair	24,200	30%	12
Medical/Health Sciences	11,300	14%	11
Call Center	10,500	13%	8

The similarities between the experience and skills categories are designed to ensure inclusiveness considering the multitude of tasks and job titles present in most business, government and institutional operations. It should be noted that individuals polled normally have experience and/or skills in multiple categories.

Skills	Number of Workers (Rounded)	Percentage of Total
Office Operations	55,800	69%
Manufacturing/Assembly/Fabrication	48,500	60%
Warehouse/Materials Handling	46,900	58%
Information Technology	34,700	43%
Technician/Quality Assurance	29,900	37%
Maintenance/Installation/Repair	29,100	36%
Electronics/Engineering	16,200	20%
Medical/Health Sciences	13,700	17%



FACTORS AFFECTING JOB DESIRABILITY

80,800 Underemployed Workers

In an effort to identify those factors most important to the Oconee County area's underemployed workers relative to consideration of an employer's desirability, the surveyed individuals were asked to rate the following job factors on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being "extremely important" and 1 being "not important". The table below presents the ratings for each factor.

Factor	5 Extremely Important	4 Very Important	3 Important	2 Somewhat Important	1 Not Important
Insurance Benefits	68%	22%	8%	1%	1%
Financial Stability of the Company	66%	29%	3%	1%	1%
Retirement Benefits	64%	25%	8%	1%	2%
Salary	54%	35%	8%	2%	1%
Opportunity for Advancement	44%	37%	14%	2%	3%
Location	41%	31%	21%	5%	2%
Paid Training Programs	40%	36%	19%	4%	2%
Physical Working Environment	38%	41%	15%	3%	3%

As shown above, the underemployed workers in the Oconee County labor shed rated insurance benefits and financial stability of the company as the two factors most important to them in consideration of a job change. This does not mean that the remaining factors are unimportant to the underemployed workers.



ASSESSMENT OF THE UNEMPLOYED WORKFORCE

The Oconee County Area Labor Shed

This report documents two groups of unemployed individuals in the Oconee County area labor shed who would be available workers for a new or expanding business. The groups are classified as:

- Individuals who are actively seeking work
- Individuals who are considering re-entering the workforce

Published statistics document 35,800 unemployed workers in the labor shed who are actively seeking work. This number could possibly be higher due to individuals looking for work who are not on the roles of the state unemployment agencies. Survey results suggest that an additional 11,500 people, who are not currently employed or actively seeking work, would consider re-entering the workforce.

In total, the labor shed has approximately 47,300 unemployed individuals who would be considered potential workers for a new or expanding operation.

UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS

Number of unemployed, actively seeking work individuals	35,800
Number of unemployed individuals who would considering re-entering the workforce	11,500
Total Number of Unemployed Individuals Available for Employers	<hr style="width: 100%; border: 0.5px solid black;"/> 47,300

The determinations for these two segments of the workforce have a larger statistical variance than that for the underemployed.

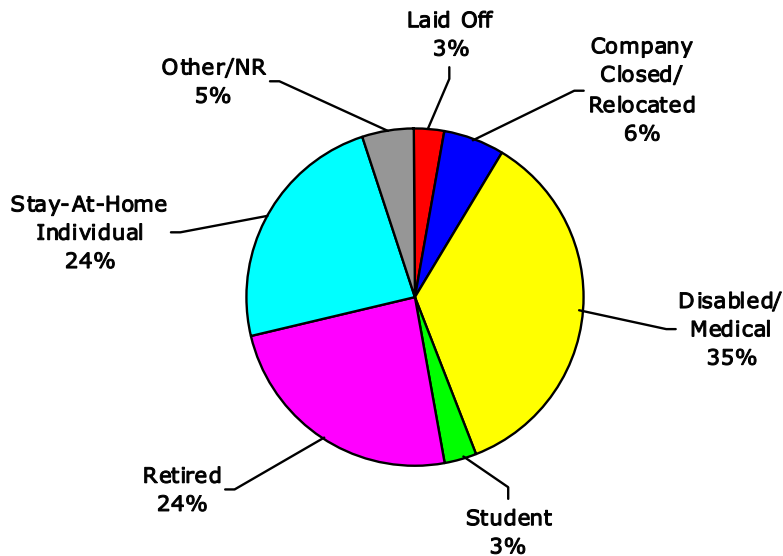


ASSESSMENT OF INDIVIDUALS WHO WOULD CONSIDER RE-ENTERING THE WORKFORCE

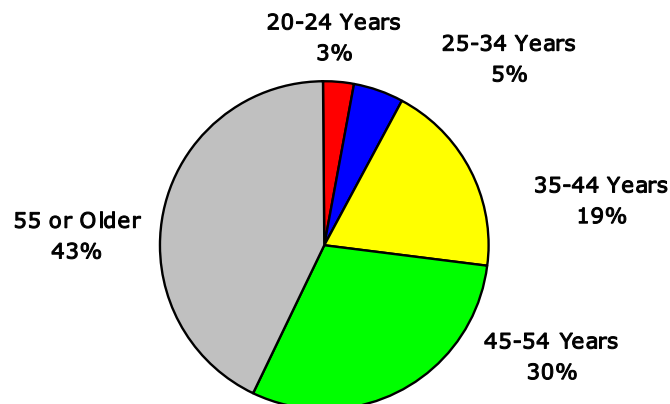
The Oconee County Area Labor Shed

The following charts provide information on that segment of unemployed individuals in the labor shed who would consider re-entering the workforce. **As these data relate solely to those individuals in the labor shed who are unemployed, they will vary from data representative of the population and civilian labor force as a whole.**

REASONS FOR UNEMPLOYMENT



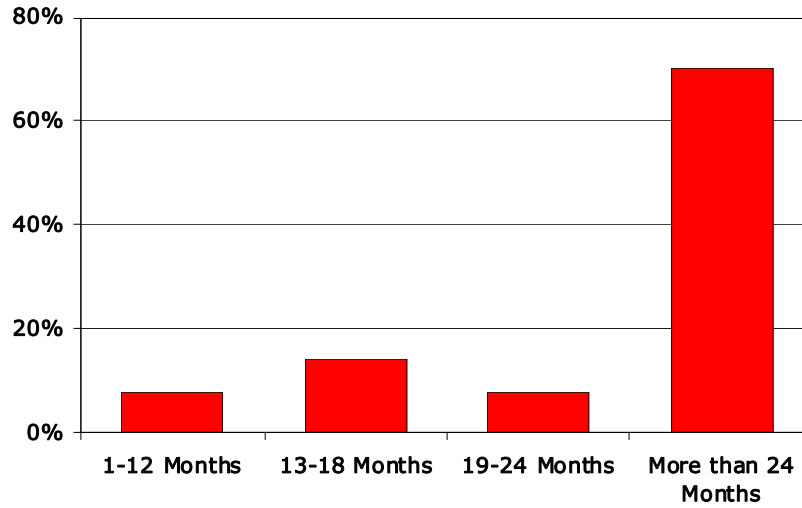
AGE



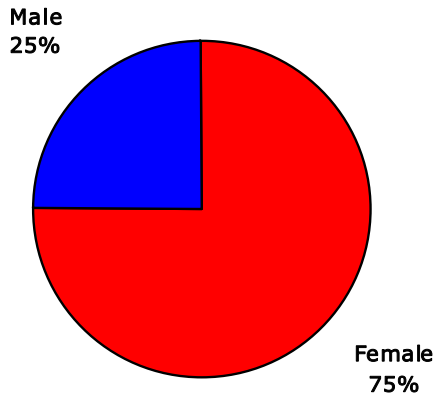
**CHARACTERISTICS OF INDIVIDUALS WHO
WOULD CONSIDER RE-ENTERING THE WORKFORCE**

11,500 Potential Workers

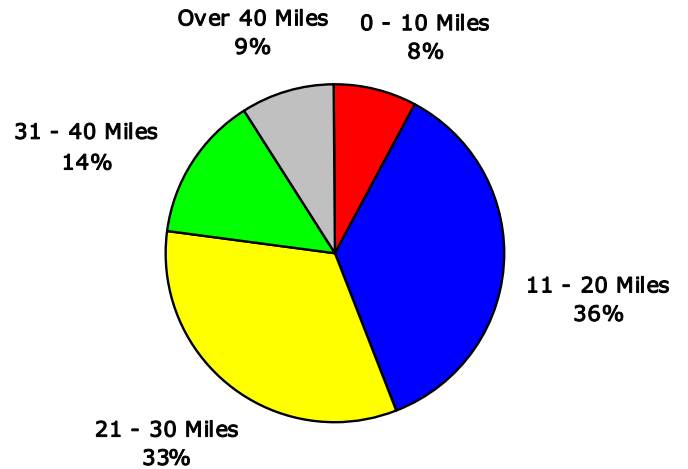
LENGTH OF TIME UNEMPLOYED



GENDER

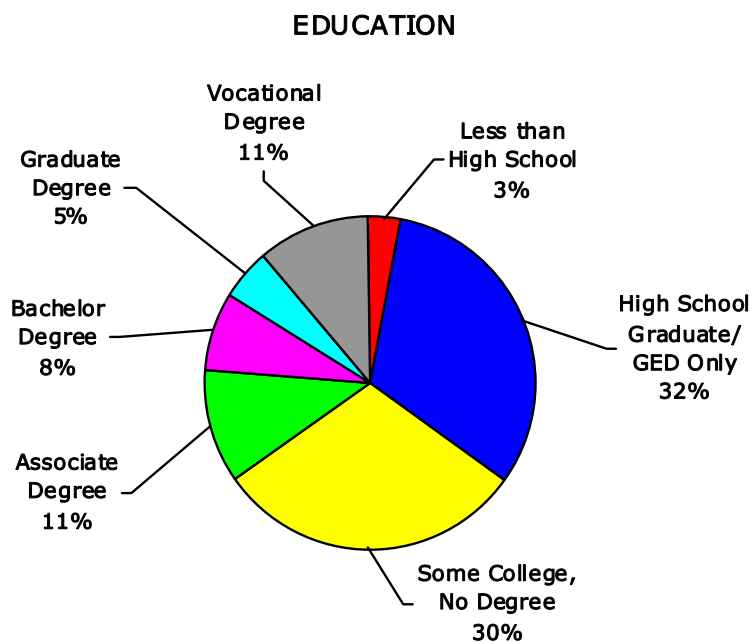


MILES WILLING TO COMMUTE



CHARACTERISTICS OF INDIVIDUALS WHO WOULD CONSIDER RE-ENTERING THE WORKFORCE

11,500 Potential Workers



- The median desired pay rate of the unemployed individuals who would consider re-entering the workforce is \$13.73 per hour.

- The largest category of most recent employment for the unemployed individuals who would consider re-entering the workforce is education.

- The two factors most important to the unemployed individuals who would consider re-entering the workforce relative to consideration of a potential employer are insurance benefits and salary.

- 3% of the unemployed individuals who would consider re-entering the workforce would prefer a union job; 14% a non-union job; and, 83% have no preference.



**EXPERIENCE AND SKILLS – INDIVIDUALS WHO
WOULD CONSIDER RE-ENTERING THE WORKFORCE**

11,500 Potential Workers

Experience Category	Number of Individuals (Rounded)	Percentage of Total	Average Years of Experience
Office Operations	6,600	57%	9
Customer Service	6,400	56%	9
Manufacturing/Assembly/Fabrication	5,200	45%	13
Warehouse/Distribution/Transportation	4,900	43%	7
Maintenance/Installation/Repair	3,100	27%	9
Medical/Health Sciences	2,500	22%	14
Information Technology	2,200	19%	3
Call Center	600	5%	7

The similarities between the experience and skills categories are designed to ensure inclusiveness considering the multitude of tasks and job titles present in most business, government and institutional operations. It should be noted that individuals polled normally have experience and/or skills in multiple categories.

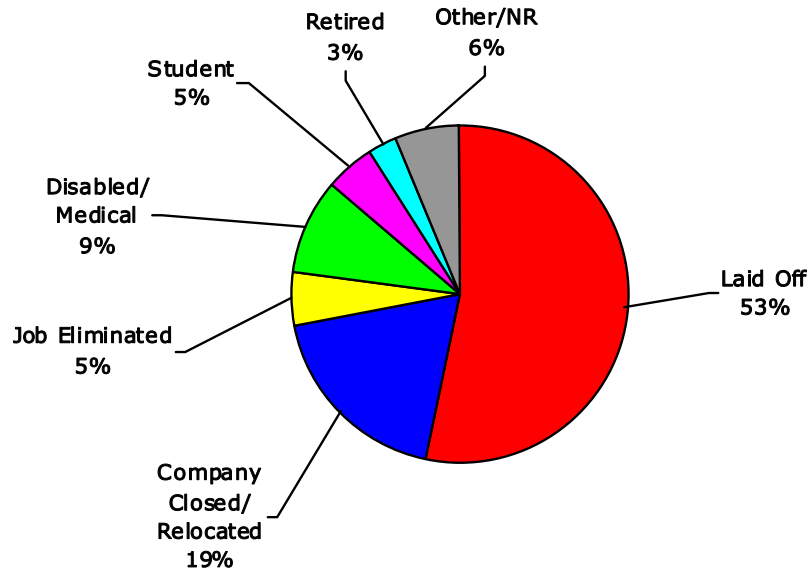
Skills	Number of Individuals (Rounded)	Percentage of Total
Office Operations	6,900	60%
Manufacturing/Assembly/Fabrication	5,300	46%
Warehouse/Materials Handling	4,000	35%
Technician/Quality Assurance	3,900	34%
Maintenance/Installation/Repair	3,500	30%
Information Technology	2,800	24%
Medical/Health Sciences	2,100	18%
Electronics/Engineering	1,800	16%



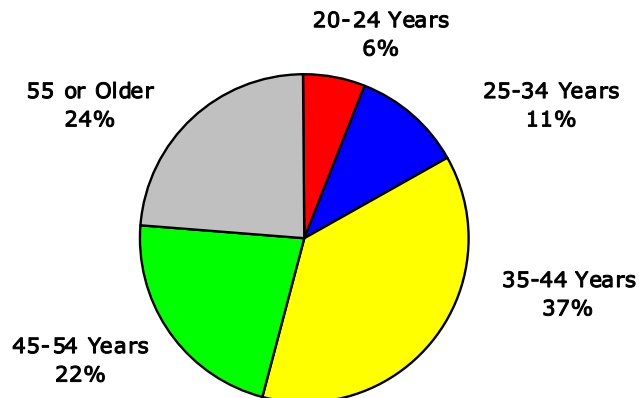
CHARACTERISTICS OF UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ACTIVELY SEEKING WORK 35,800 Workers

According to survey results, the following charts provide information on those unemployed workers in the labor shed who are actively seeking work. **As these data relate solely to those individuals in the labor shed who are unemployed, they will vary from data representative of the population and civilian labor force as a whole.**

REASONS FOR UNEMPLOYMENT



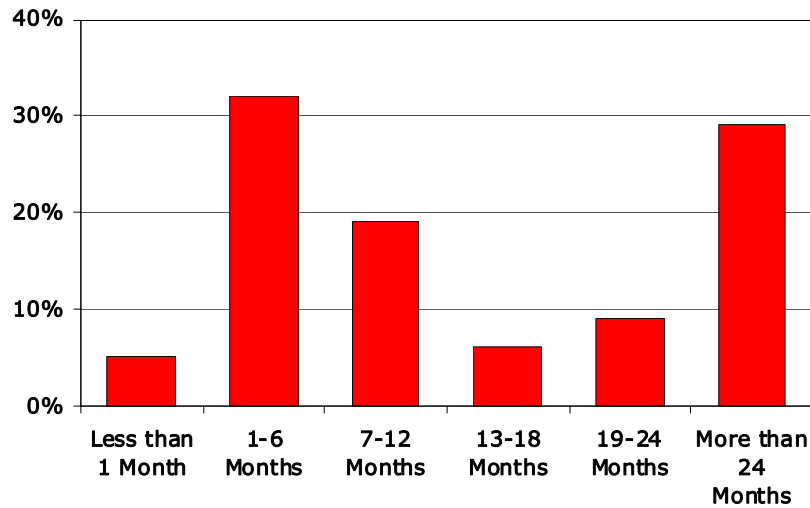
AGE



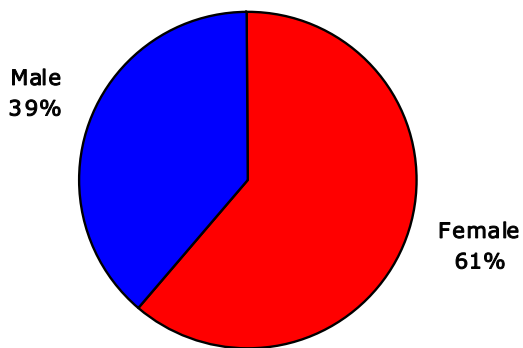
CHARACTERISTICS OF UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ACTIVELY SEEKING WORK

35,800 Workers

LENGTH OF TIME UNEMPLOYED



GENDER

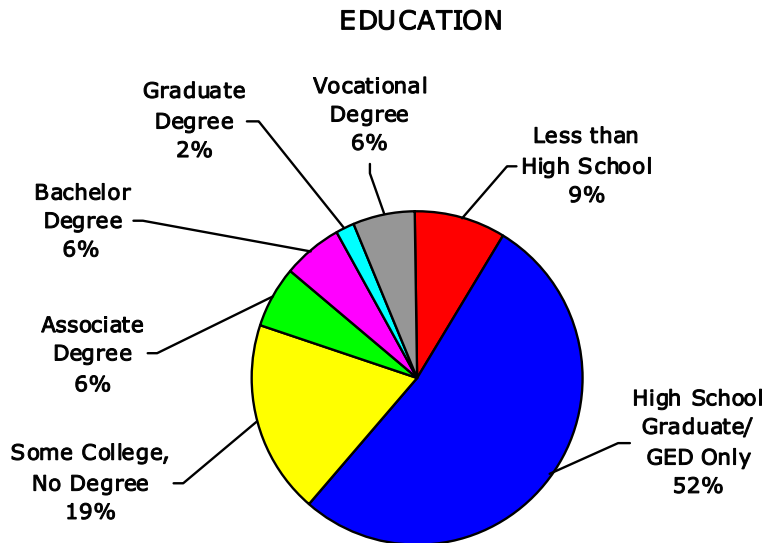


MILES WILLING TO COMMUTE



CHARACTERISTICS OF UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ACTIVELY SEEKING WORK

35,800 Workers



- The median most recent pay rate of the unemployed workers who are actively seeking work is \$12.40 per hour. The median desired pay rate of these individuals is \$12.25 per hour.
- The largest category of most recent employment for the unemployed individuals who are actively seeking work is manufacturing.
- The two factors most important to the unemployed individuals who are actively seeking work relative to consideration of a potential employer are insurance and retirement benefits.
- 5% of the unemployed individuals who are actively seeking work would prefer a union job; 15% a non-union job; and, 80% have no preference.



**EXPERIENCE AND SKILLS OF UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE
ACTIVELY SEEKING WORK**

35,800 Workers

Experience Category	Number of Workers (Rounded)	Percentage of Total	Average Years of Experience
Customer Service	20,400	57%	10
Office Operations	18,600	52%	8
Manufacturing/Assembly/Fabrication	18,300	51%	11
Warehouse/Distribution/Transportation	16,500	46%	8
Maintenance/Installation/Repair	11,500	32%	9
Information Technology	10,400	29%	7
Medical/Health Sciences	6,100	17%	6
Call Center	5,000	14%	2

The similarities between the experience and skills categories are designed to ensure inclusiveness considering the multitude of tasks and job titles present in most business, government and institutional operations. It should be noted that individuals polled normally have experience and/or skills in multiple categories.

Skills	Number of Workers (Rounded)	Percentage of Total
Warehouse/Materials Handling	19,300	54%
Manufacturing/Assembly/Fabrication	18,600	52%
Office Operations	17,500	49%
Maintenance/Installation/Repair	10,400	29%
Information Technology	10,000	28%
Technician/Quality Assurance	9,300	26%
Medical/Health Sciences	9,300	26%
Electronics/Engineering	5,400	15%

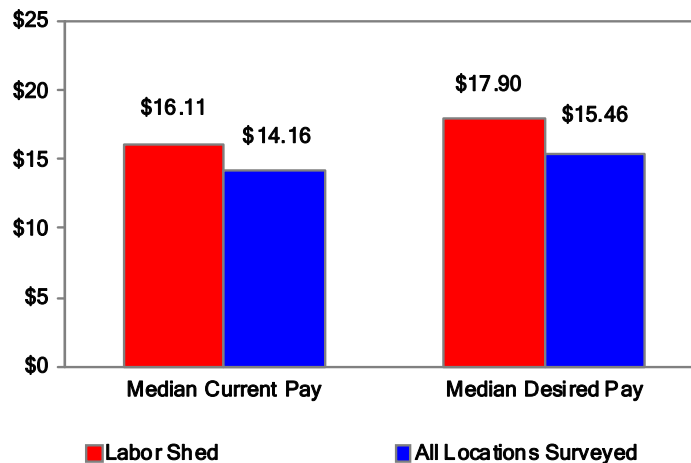


NATIONAL COMPARISONS OF UNDEREMPLOYED WORKFORCE

This section of the report provides comparisons of the pay rates, experience and skills of the labor shed’s underemployed workforce with the underemployed workforces in other areas previously surveyed by The Pathfinders. A prospect company considering the Oconee County region as a location will judge its workforce on a comparative basis. The comparative data for other locations used in the following charts reflect information accumulated over the past eighteen months. The Pathfinders maintains a continuing database of over 700 surveyed counties and communities and more than 30 million workers. In the charts, the Oconee County region is referred to as “labor shed”.

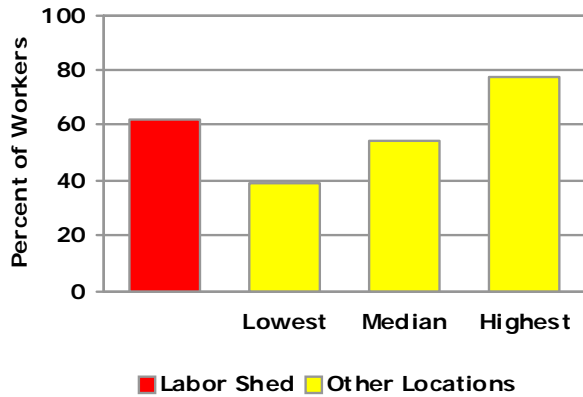
The chart below illustrates the median current and desired wages of the underemployed workers in the Oconee County labor shed as compared to those underemployed workers in all locations surveyed by The Pathfinders over the past eighteen months. As indicated, the median current pay of all surveyed, underemployed workers over the past eighteen months is \$14.16 per hour, and the median desired pay of these workers is \$15.46 per hour. As shown, survey results indicate that the Oconee County region’s underemployed workers have higher pay rates in both median current pay and desired pay than other locations surveyed.

COMPARISON OF MEDIAN CURRENT / DESIRED WAGES (per hour)

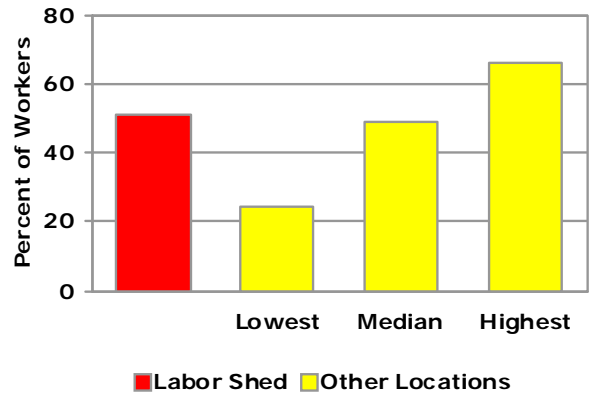


**COMPARISON OF EXPERIENCE
UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS
The Oconee County Area /
Locations Surveyed Over the Past 18 Months**

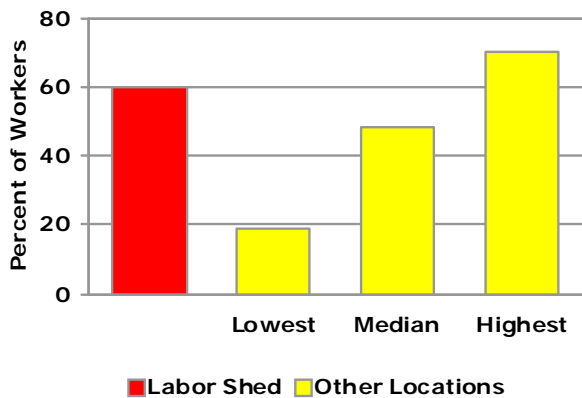
OFFICE



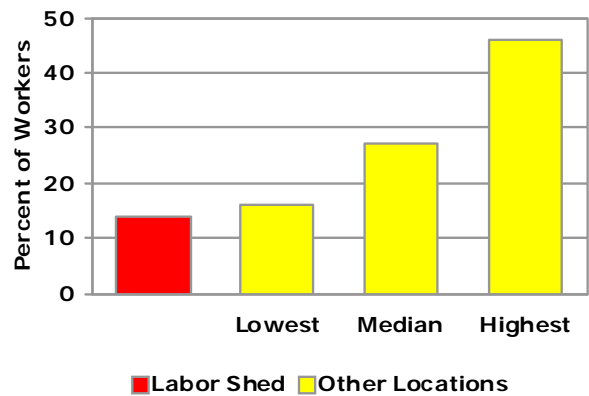
**WAREHOUSE / DISTRIBUTION /
TRANSPORTATION**



**MANUFACTURING / ASSEMBLY /
FABRICATION**



**MEDICAL /
HEALTH SCIENCES**



**COMPARISON OF EXPERIENCE
UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS
The Oconee County Area /
Locations Surveyed Over the Past 18 Months**

**MAINTENANCE /
INSTALLATION / REPAIR**



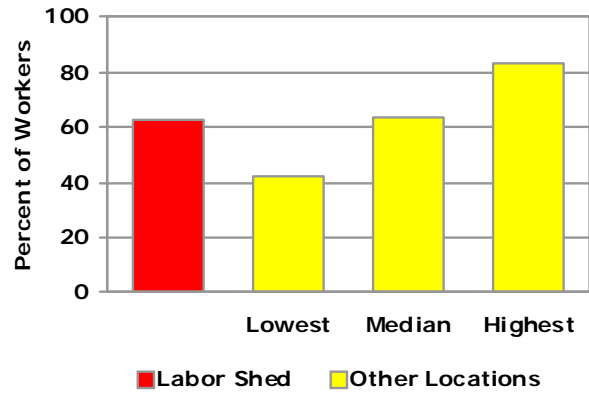
CALL CENTER



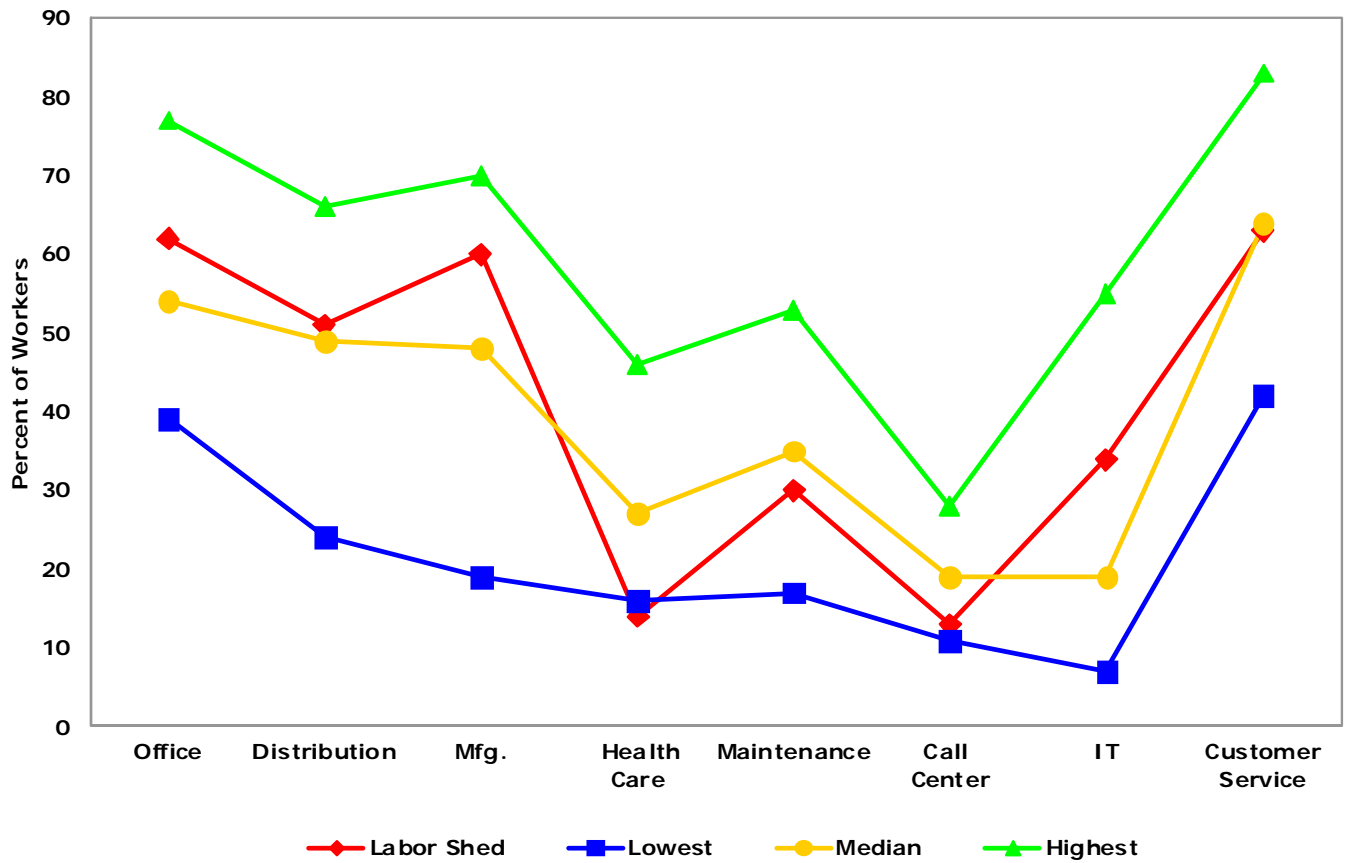
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY



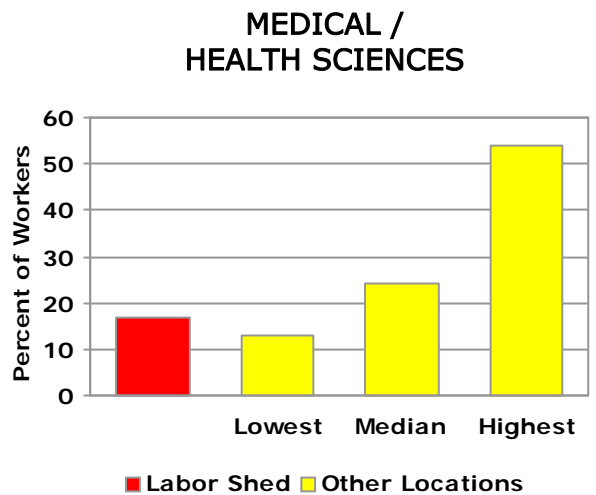
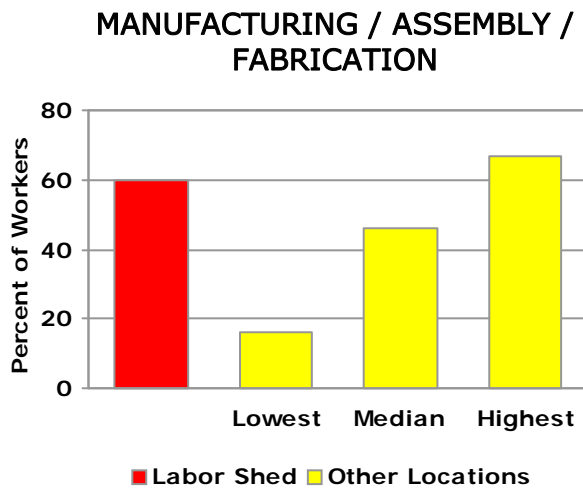
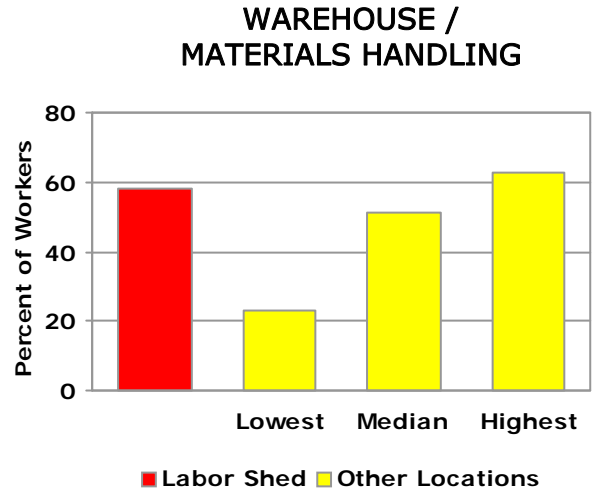
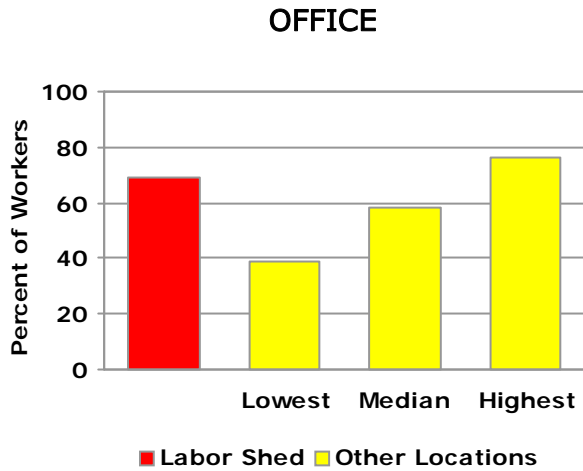
CUSTOMER SERVICE



SUMMARY COMPARISON OF EXPERIENCE
UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS
The Oconee County Area /
Locations Surveyed Over the Past 18 Months

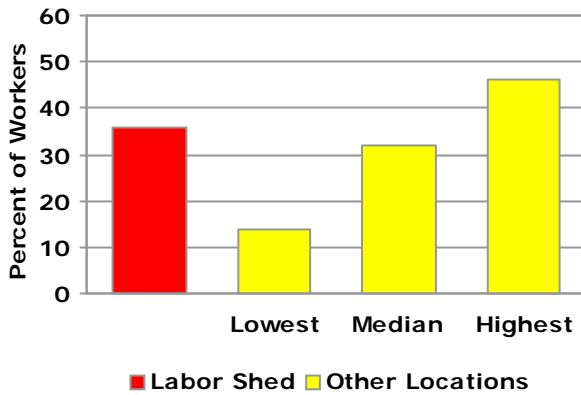


**COMPARISON OF SKILLS
UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS
The Oconee County Area /
Locations Surveyed Over the Past 18 Months**



**COMPARISON OF SKILLS
UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS
The Oconee County Area /
Locations Surveyed Over the Past 18 Months**

**MAINTENANCE /
INSTALLATION / REPAIR**



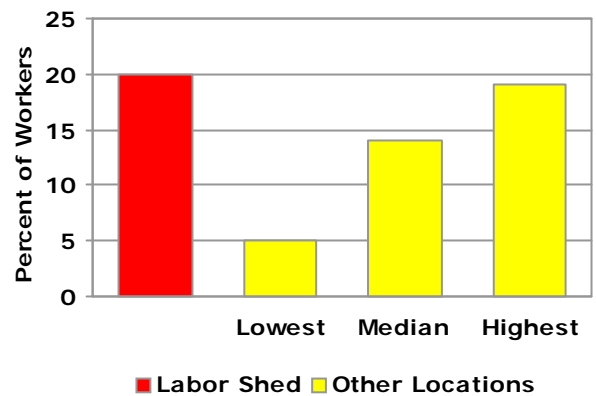
**TECHNICIAN / QUALITY
ASSURANCE**



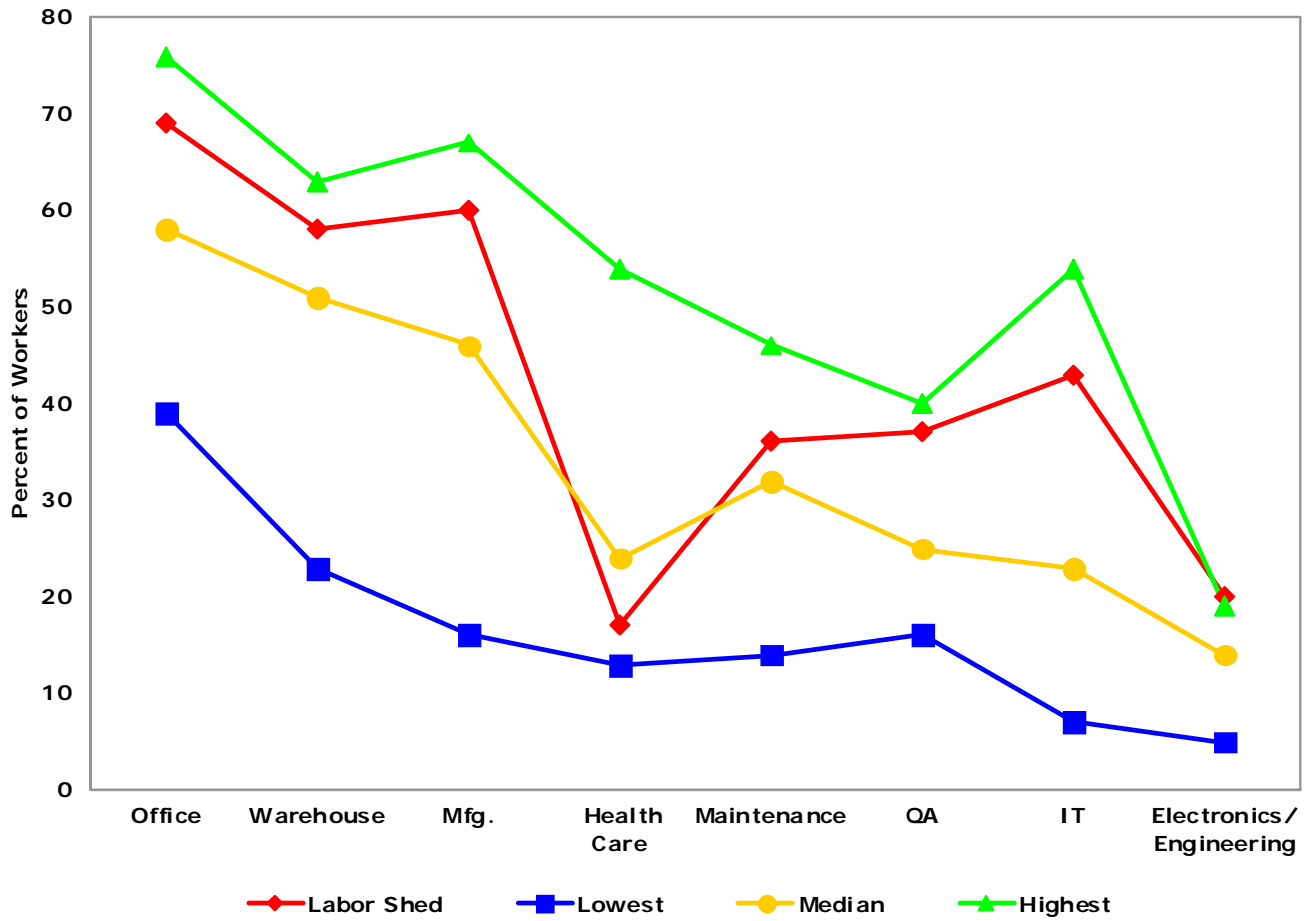
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY



**ELECTRONICS /
ENGINEERING**



**SUMMARY COMPARISON OF SKILLS
UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS
The Oconee County Area /
Locations Surveyed Over the Past 18 Months**



EMPLOYERS' VIEWS OF THE THE OCONEE COUNTY REGION TOTAL WORKFORCE

In developing a profile of existing workers in the Oconee County region, The Pathfinders considered such factors as labor availability, productivity, unionization, attitudes, costs, and education. The analysis was based upon interviews conducted with senior management and human resources professionals from companies located in the region.

As determined from the employer interviews, the tables below reflect the top two methods used to recruit hourly and salaried workers in the Oconee County region and the percent of employers utilizing each method. Employers may use multiple recruitment methods.

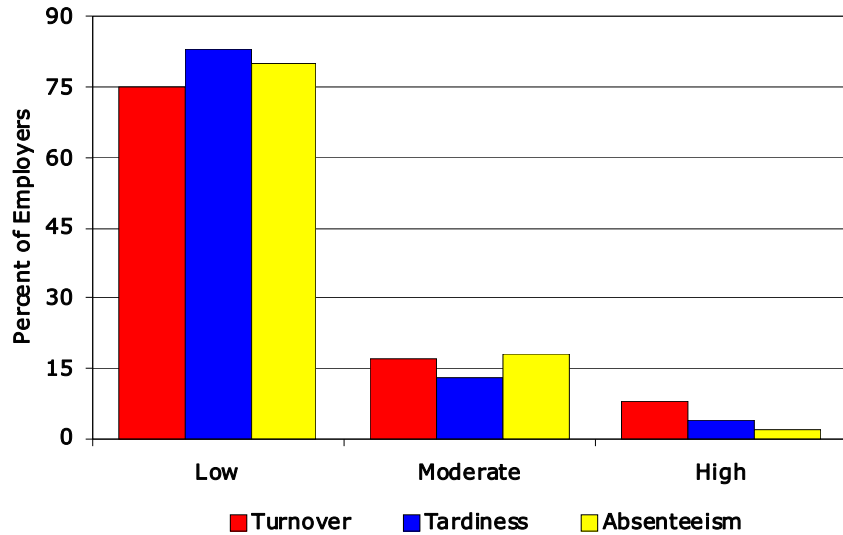
Recruiting Methods – Hourly Workers	% of Employers
Staffing/Temp Service	57%
State Agency	22%

Recruiting Methods – Salaried Workers	% of Employers
Internet	42%
Newspaper Ads	37%

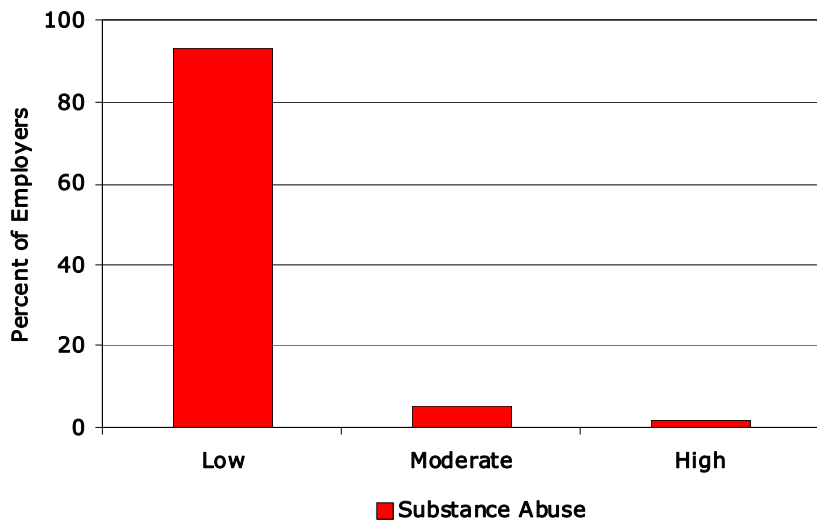
72% of the employers interviewed stated their companies had operations in other regions of the United States. Of these employers, those familiar with the workforces in those other locations reported that their Oconee County area operations were comparable to or better than the other regions in terms of profitability and production.



Based upon the experience of The Pathfinders in evaluating labor forces in numerous locations, a definite correlation between productivity, absenteeism, tardiness, turnover, and substance abuse appears to exist. That correlation goes beyond the fact that an absent worker is obviously unproductive. Rather, those factors are indicative of an employee’s attitude toward the job. The chart below shows the percent of employers ratings for turnover, tardiness and absenteeism.

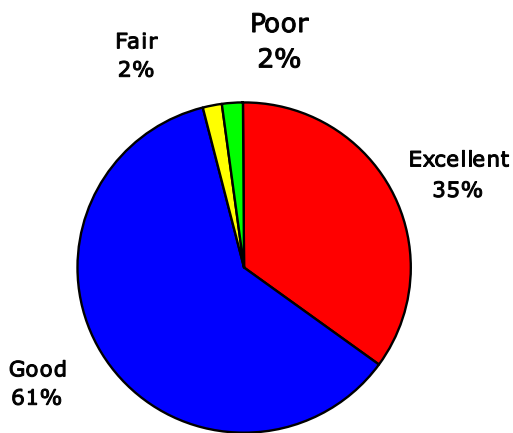


Additionally, in the Oconee County region, 92% of the employers interviewed stated their companies tested for substance abuse, primarily pre-employment. Substance abuse within the workforce, as reported by the participating employers, is shown in the chart below.

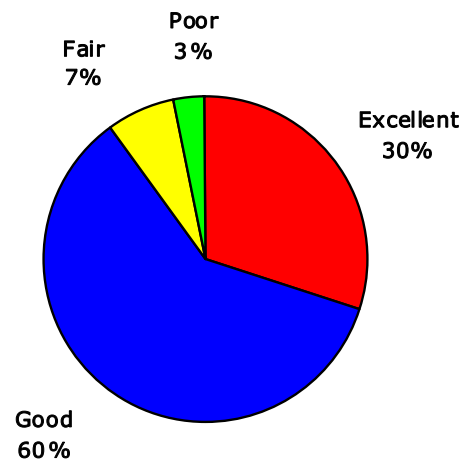


In consideration of all factors, 96% of the employers in the Oconee County region rated the productivity of the workforce as "Good" to "Excellent". Worker attitudes received high marks from 88% of the employers.

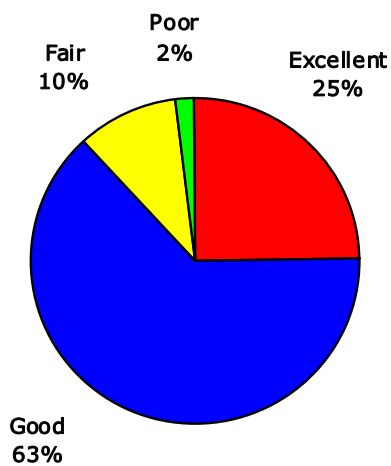
WORKER PRODUCTIVITY



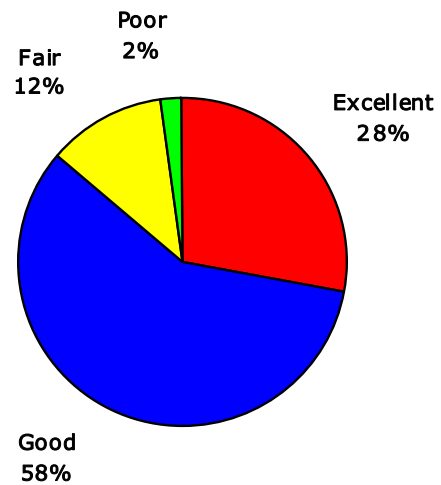
WORKER RELIABILITY



WORKER ATTITUDES

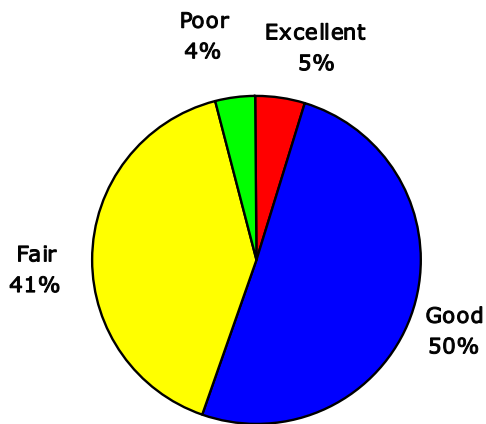


TEAMWORK SKILLS

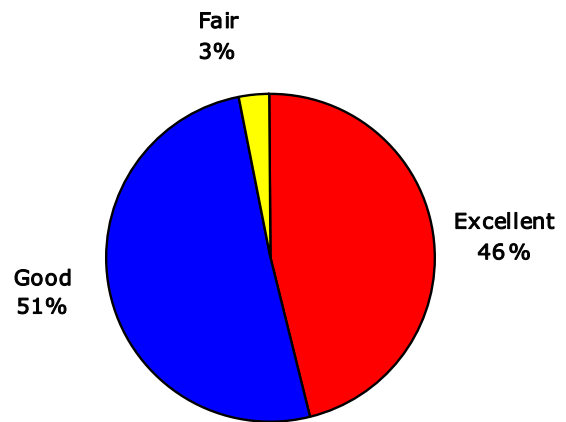


The educational competencies of employees are additional factors used to evaluate a region’s labor force. In the Oconee County region, 55% of the employers interviewed rated the local public schools as “Excellent” or “Good”, and 97% of the employers rated the local community colleges and technical schools as “Excellent” or “Good”. Ratings for basic skills and other factors are also shown.

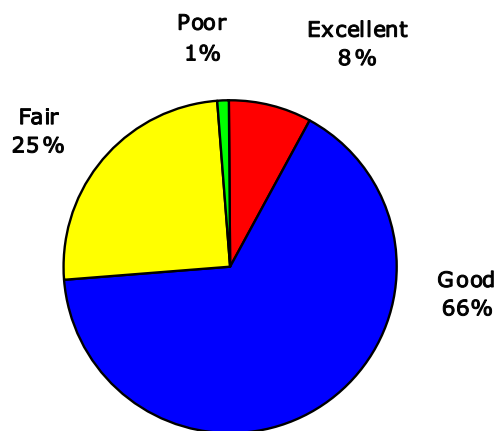
LOCAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS



LOCAL COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND TECH SCHOOLS

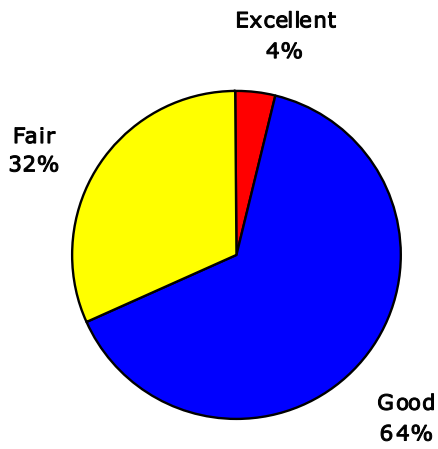


READING SKILLS

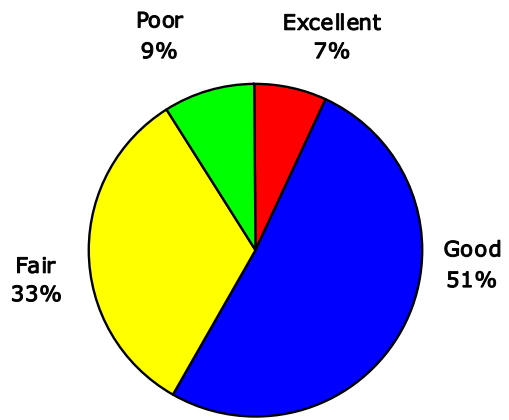


EMPLOYERS' RATINGS The Oconee County Region Labor Shed

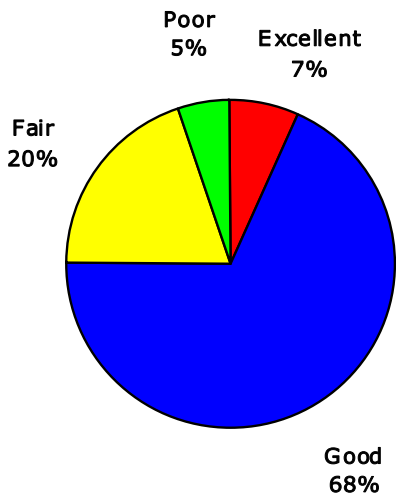
WRITING SKILLS



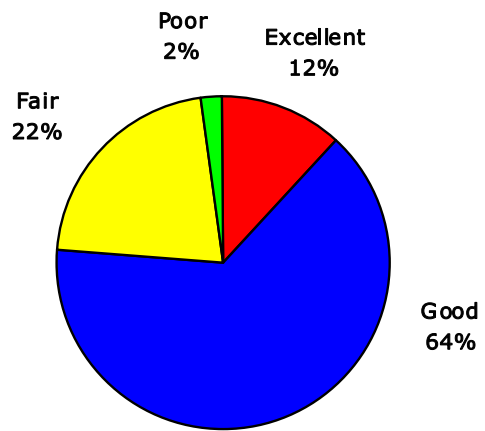
MATH SKILLS



JOB READINESS SKILLS

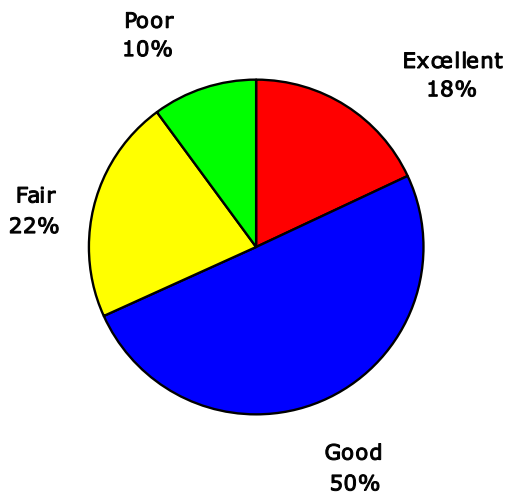


ENTRY LEVEL SKILLS

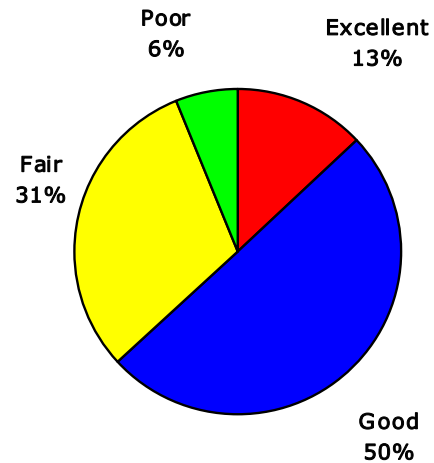


A common employer complaint relates to the shortage of skilled and technical workers. These workers are in great demand and difficult to find in the vast majority of locations. Of the companies in the region interviewed, 68% considered skilled worker availability to be "Excellent" or "Good", while 22% considered it to be "Fair". The availability of technical workers in the region was rated "Excellent" or "Good" by 63% of the interviewed companies and "Fair" by 31%. The ratings for availability of unskilled and professional workers are also illustrated in the pie charts below.

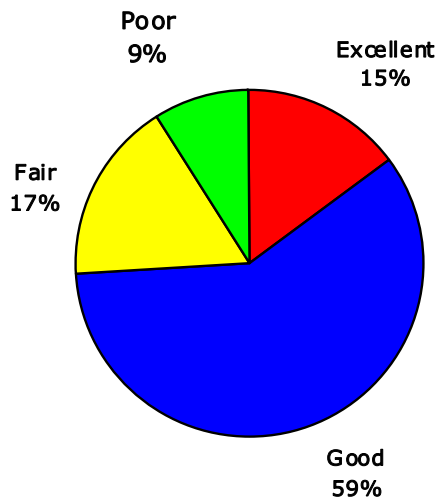
SKILLED WORKERS AVAILABILITY



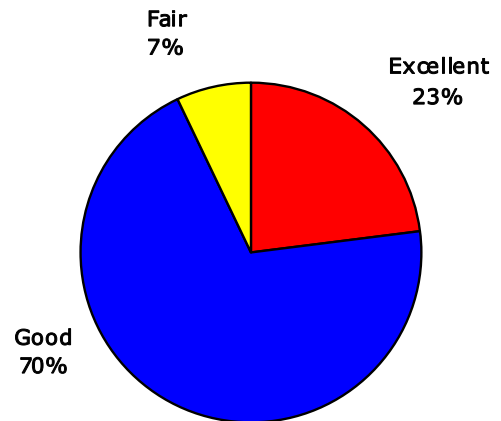
TECHNICAL WORKERS AVAILABILITY



PROFESSIONAL WORKERS AVAILABILITY



UNSKILLED WORKERS AVAILABILITY





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