Montana Employer Workforce Satisfaction

Employers' experience with entry-level employees

Spring 2024 survey

Work-based Learning Collaborative MONTANA

Work-based Learning Collaborative

Vision: *Every young adult in Montana will have multiple pathways to economic mobility, supported by a statewide work-based learning system that honors the potential of students and addresses the workforce needs of Montana businesses, today and tomorrow.*

- Formed: 2021
- Members: 30 private, public, or nonprofit organizations
- Backbone organization: Reach Higher Montana, a nonprofit organization
- Staff: Director & Data Analyst

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Why the employer satisfaction survey?

- Inform work of Work-based Learning Collaborative and partners
- Provide one method of measuring workforce health
- Study longitudinal changes in employer satisfaction around recruitment, readiness, and retention

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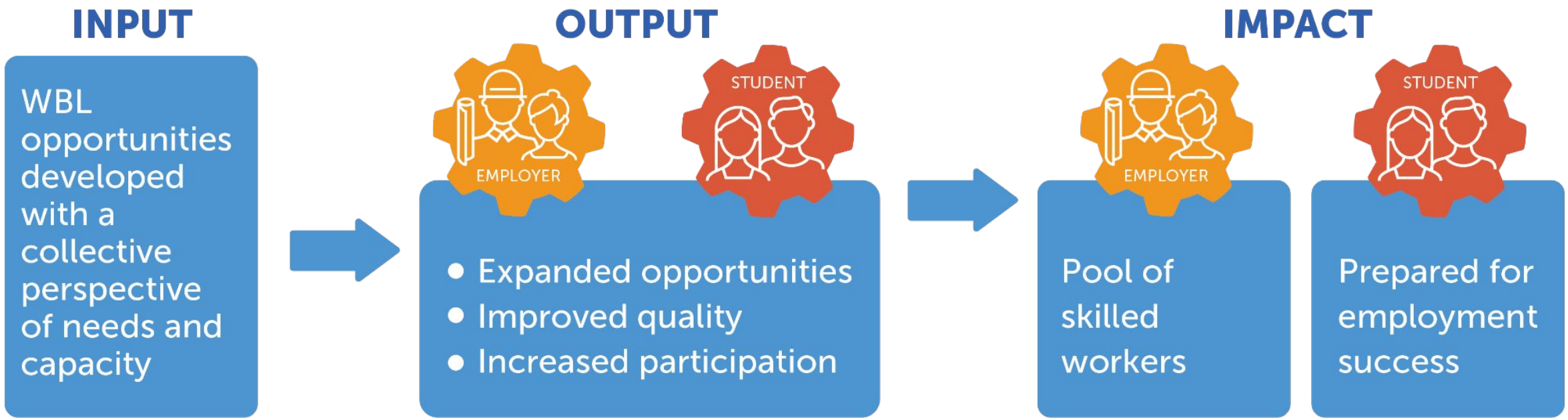
We plan to distribute survey every 2 years to collect longitudinal data.

WBLC Data Theory of Change



Indicator data for WBLC includes **Workforce Health**

- Employer's satisfaction with ability to hire by level of experience.
- Ability to hire skilled workers from MT.
- Employer's satisfaction with readiness of new hires by level of experience.
- Ability to retain skilled workers in MT.

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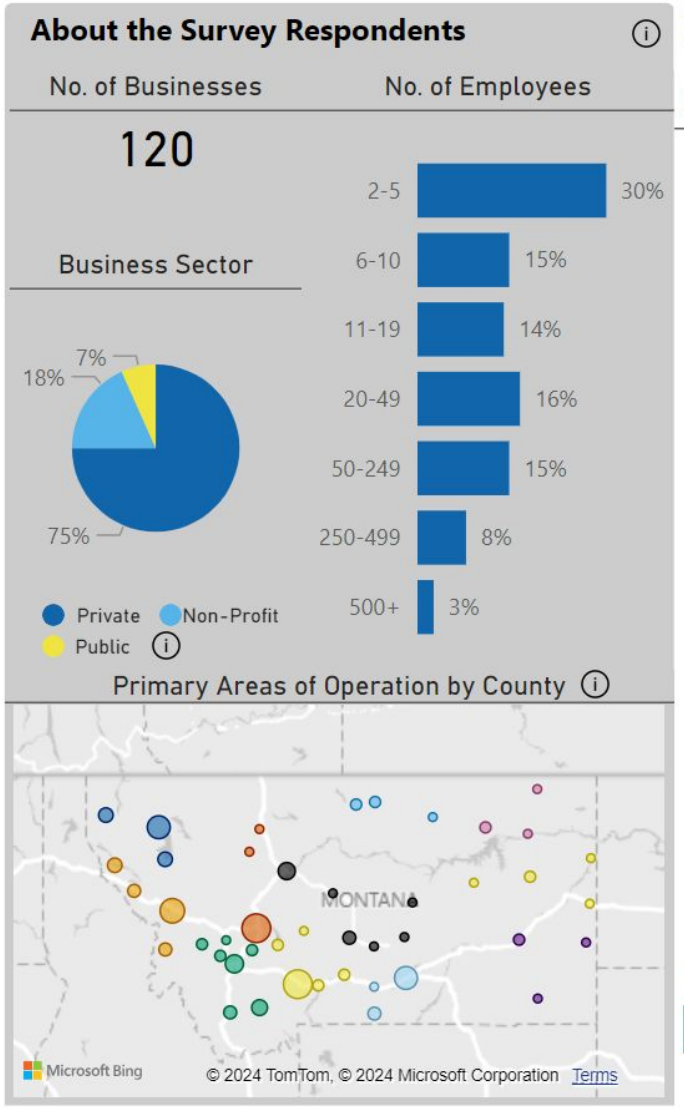
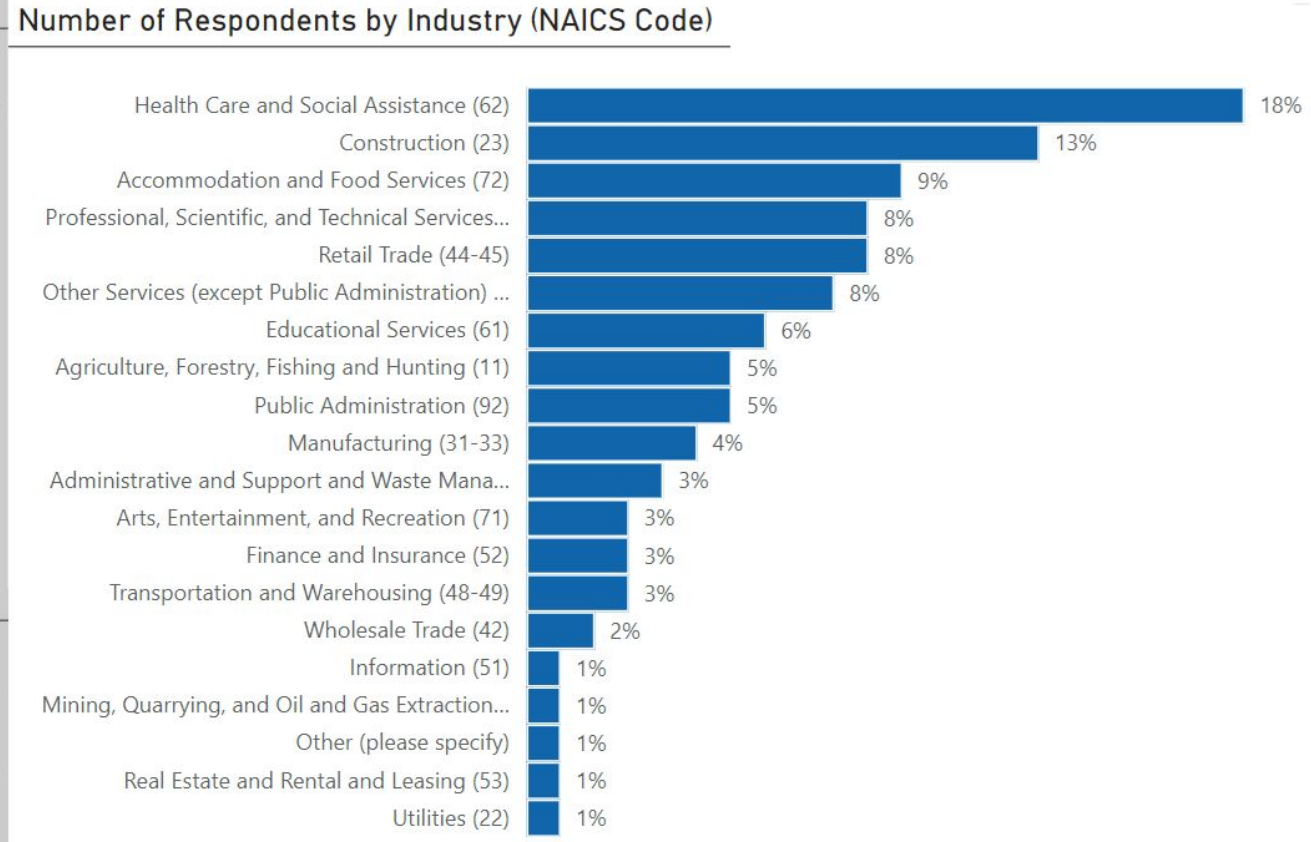
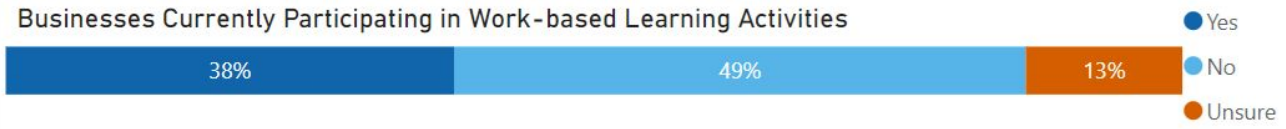
Employer workforce satisfaction survey respondents



Respondent Characteristics

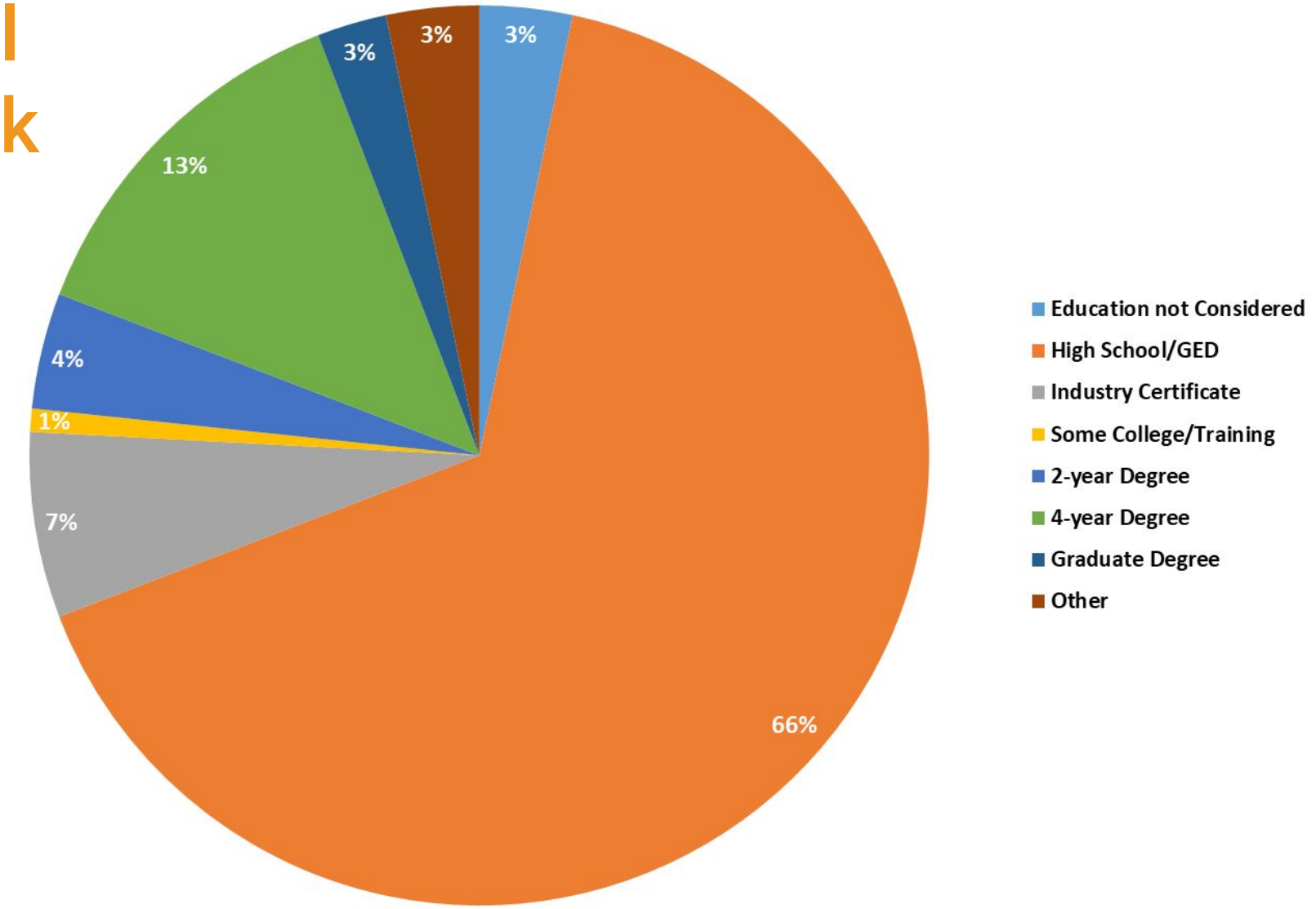




Survey was distributed to businesses across Montana by WBL Collaborative members, partner organizations, and industry associations.

Education level employers seek in entry-level employee

The survey asked about an ideal entry-level employee, so this education level may or may not be required for the position.



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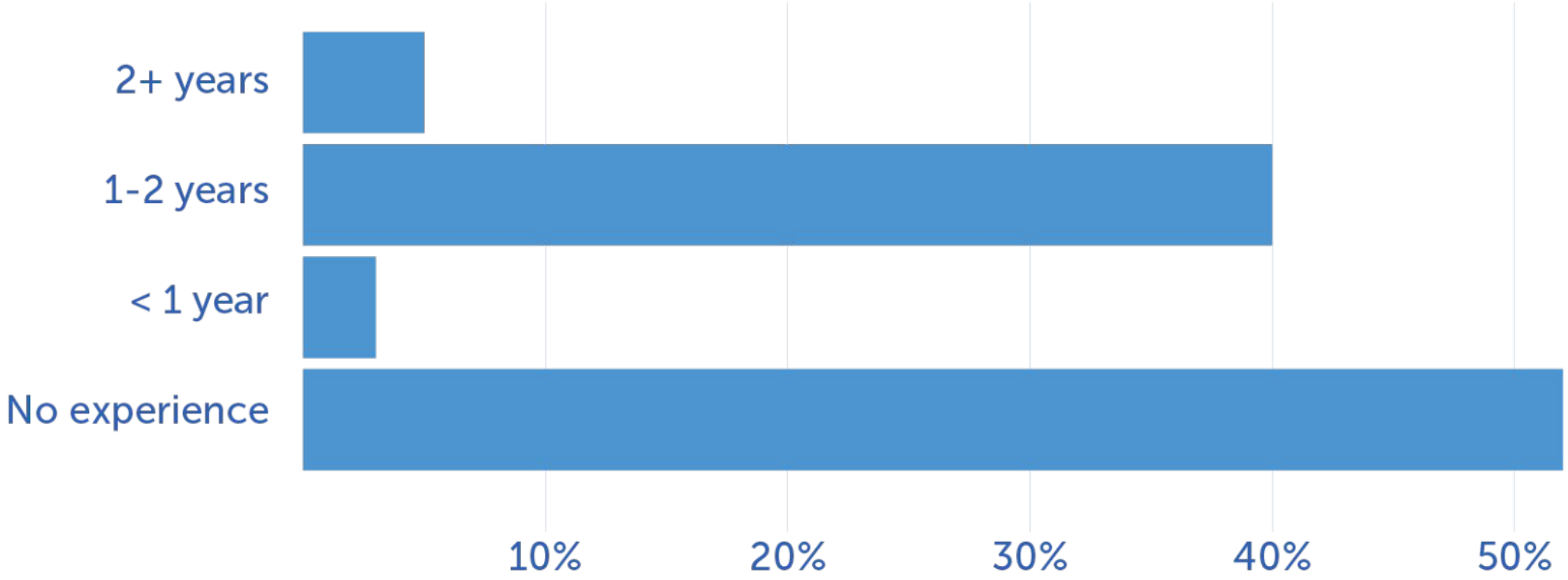
Experience employers seek in entry-level employee



We asked about ideal (not required) experience. Under “other”, many of the responses stated that no experience required but applicants with relevant experience are desired.

Common skills needed for entry-level positions

- Basic computer skills/office productivity software
- Basic math and measurement skills
- Construction/mechanical/technical skills
- Problem solving/troubleshooting
- Professional communication skills
- Sales & food service skills

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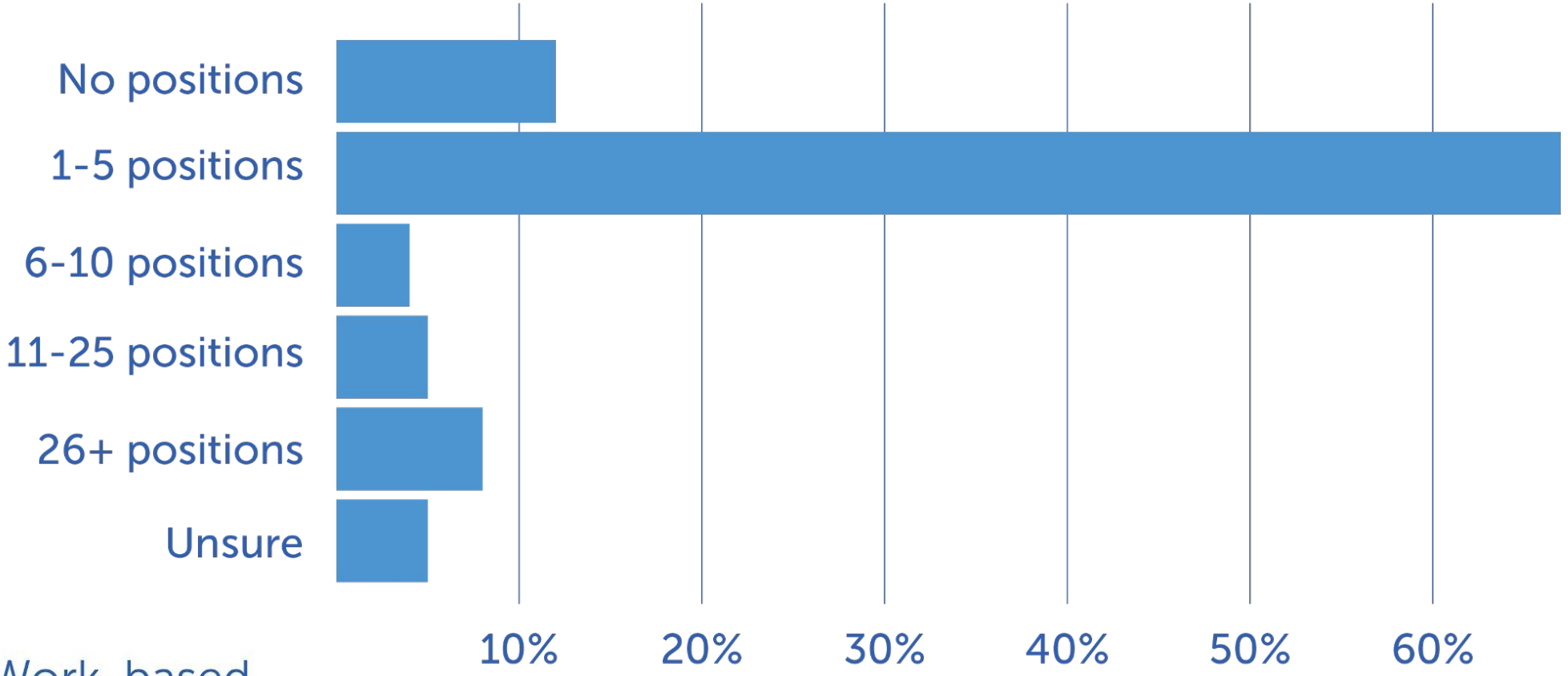
Needed/desired licenses, credentials, or certifications

*Often so people can just get to work

Estimated empty entry-level positions the next 2 years



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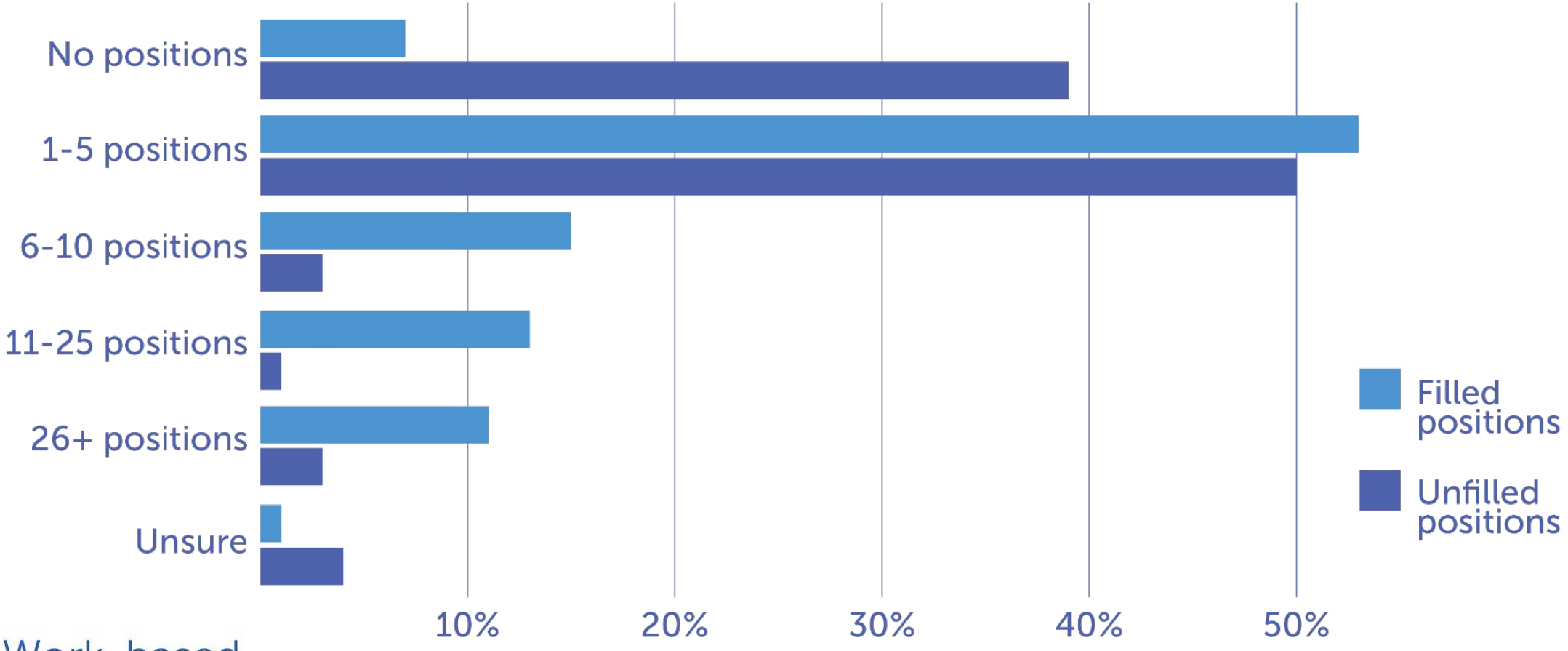
Number of entry-level positions in past 2 years



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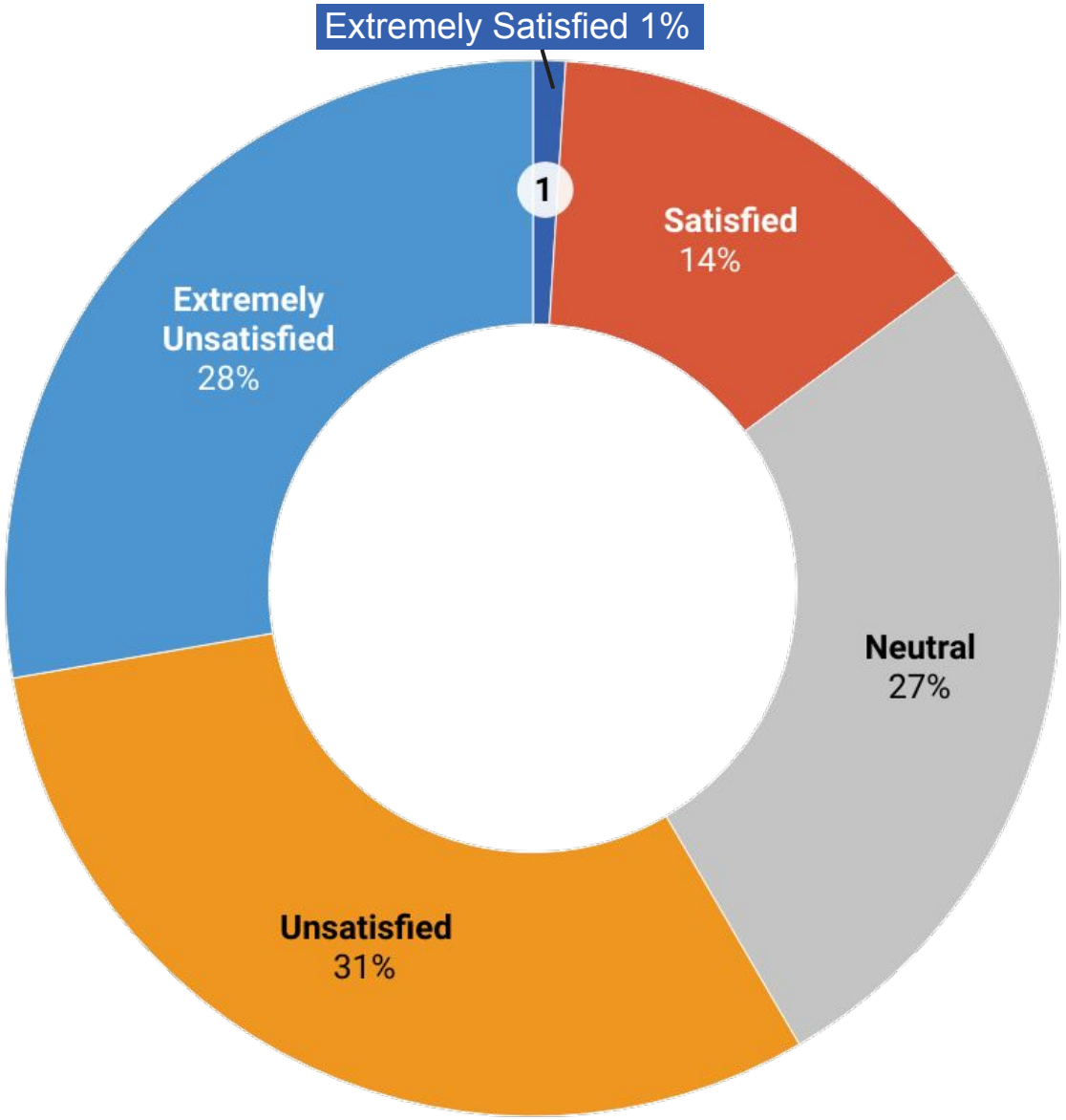
Employer satisfaction with new entry-level employee recruitment



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Types of difficult to fill entry-level positions

- **Laborers** (i.e. construction, maintenance, kitchen)
- **Drivers** (i.e. warehouse, delivery, passenger)
- **Technicians** (i.e. laboratory, installation, health-related)
- **Assistants** (i.e. legal, laboratory, Certified Nursing Assistant)
- **Office** (i.e. clerk, bookkeeper, front desk)

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Reasons positions were difficult to fill

- 63% reported a low number of applicants
- 56% reported applicants lack sufficient interpersonal skills
- Others reasons:
  - Position is low pay
  - Hours/shifts of position
  - Type of work

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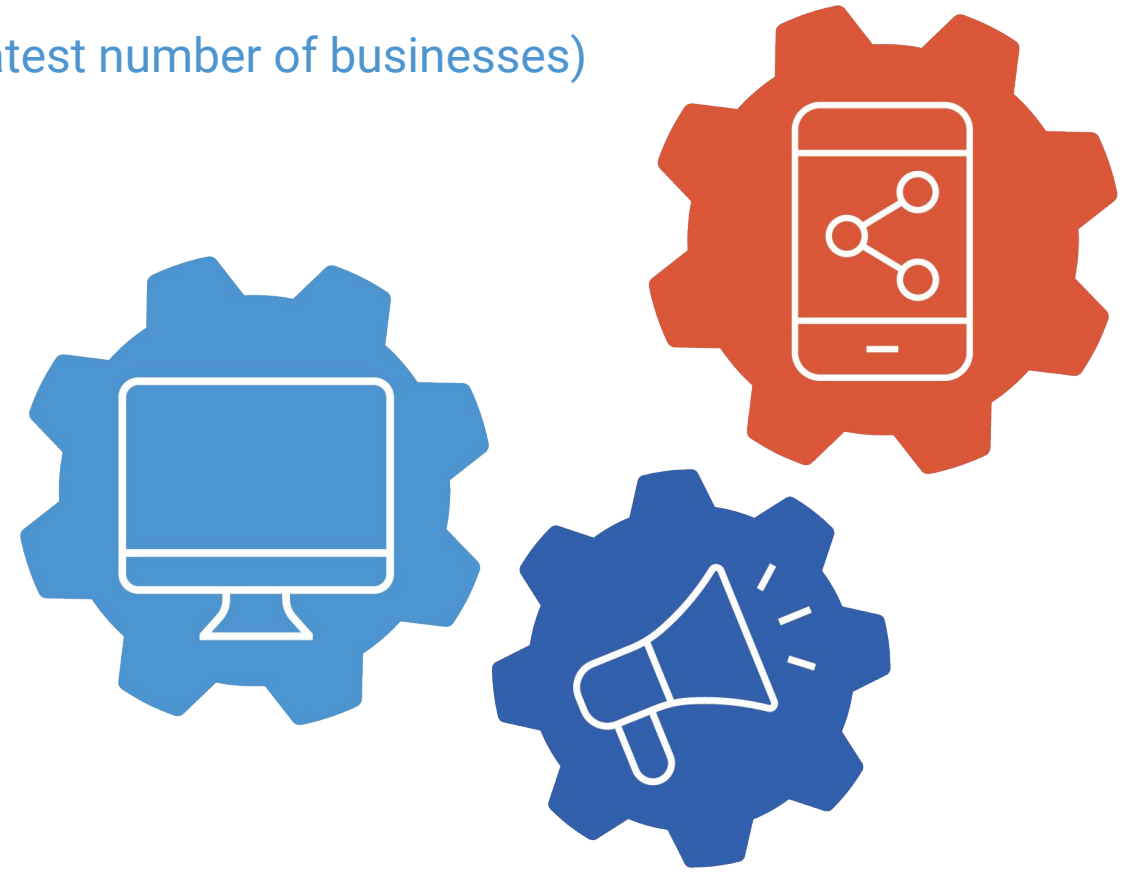
Successful recruitment strategies

- Word of Mouth (strategy used by greatest number of businesses)
- Online Job Sites
- Social Media
- Organization's Website



These four strategies were the strategies most businesses used.

Somewhat successful recruitment strategies

- Sign posted at their business
- Work-based Learning opportunities

  I.e. career fairs, job shadows, internships, apprenticeships
- Partnership with an educational institute

  College or high school provides a direct recruitment pipeline

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Least successful recruitment strategies

Many employers reported not using these strategies; for those who reported using them, these were least successful.

- Radio, TV, or newspaper advertising
- Partnership with a non-profit organization
  - Not many respondents reported having partnerships with nonprofits
- Recruiting/temp agencies
  - Only strategy a majority of respondents reported as not successful for recruiting long-term employees

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Recruitment incentives

- Over half of the respondents did not offer any recruitment incentives
- The most common recruitment incentives offered are referral bonuses and signing bonuses
- Other incentives offered include:
  - immediate start on benefits (i.e. insurance, paid leave)
  - paid training
  - moving expenses
  - flexible shifts
  - remote work possible
  - tuition reimbursement

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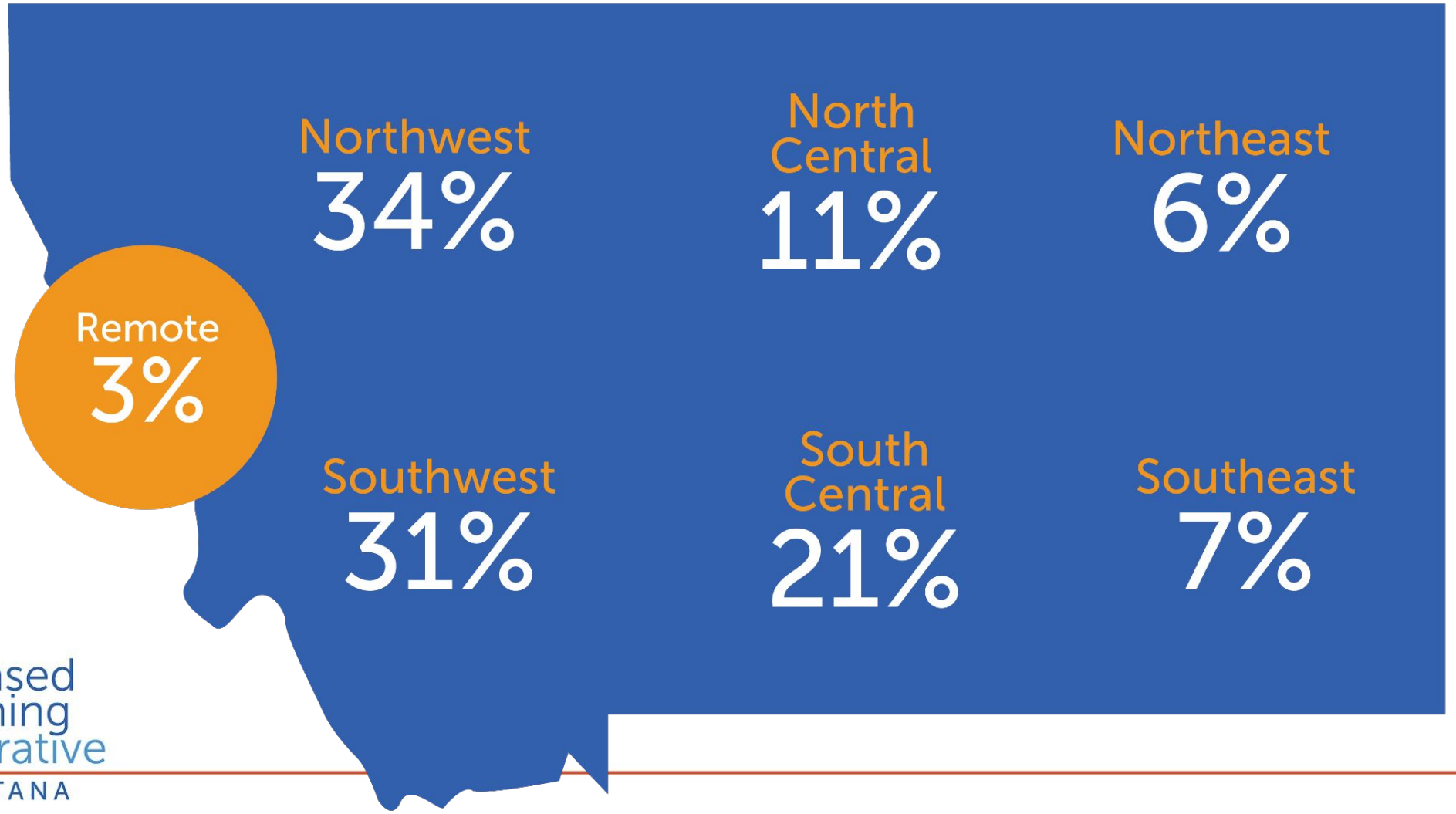
Regional vacancies



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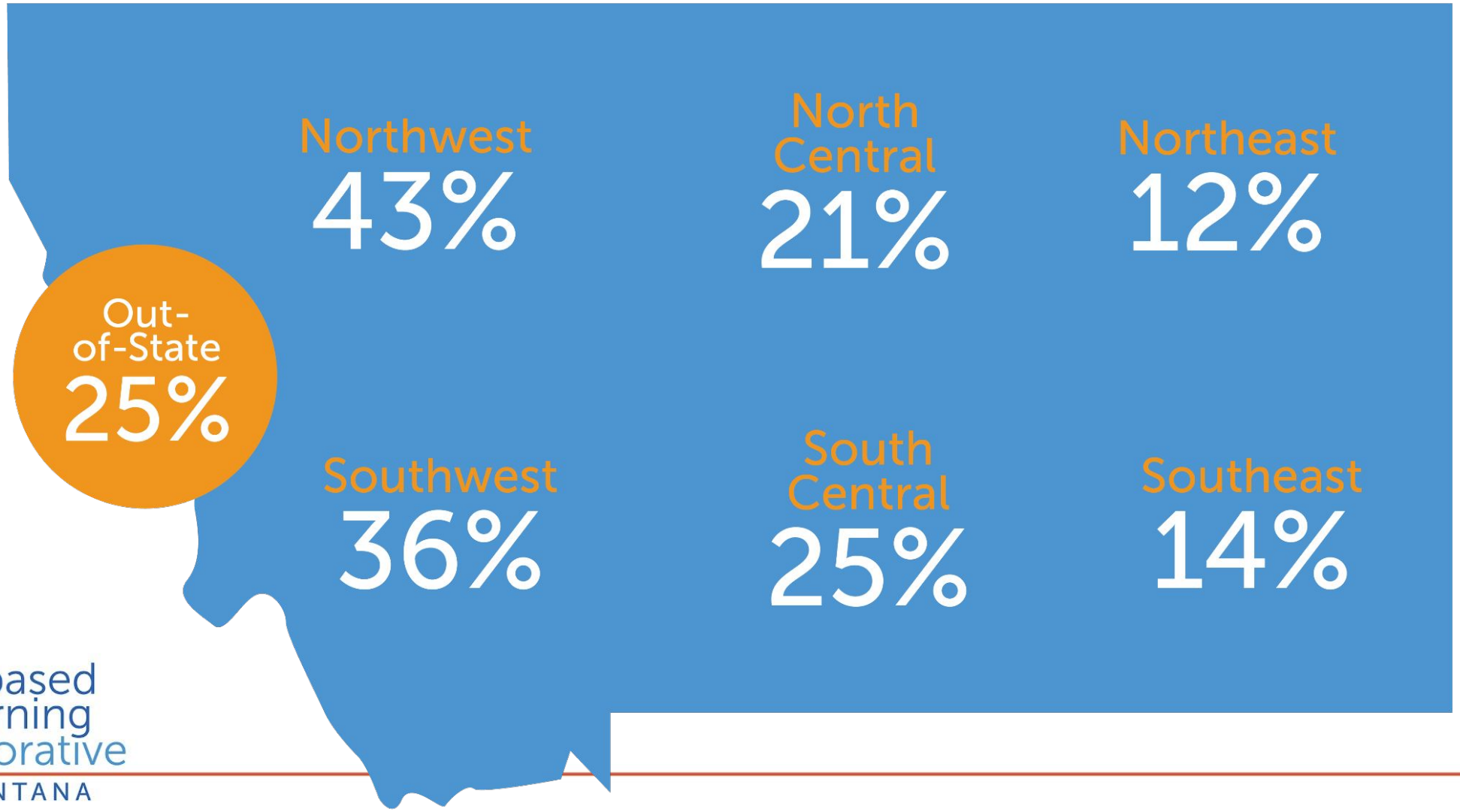
Regional recruitment



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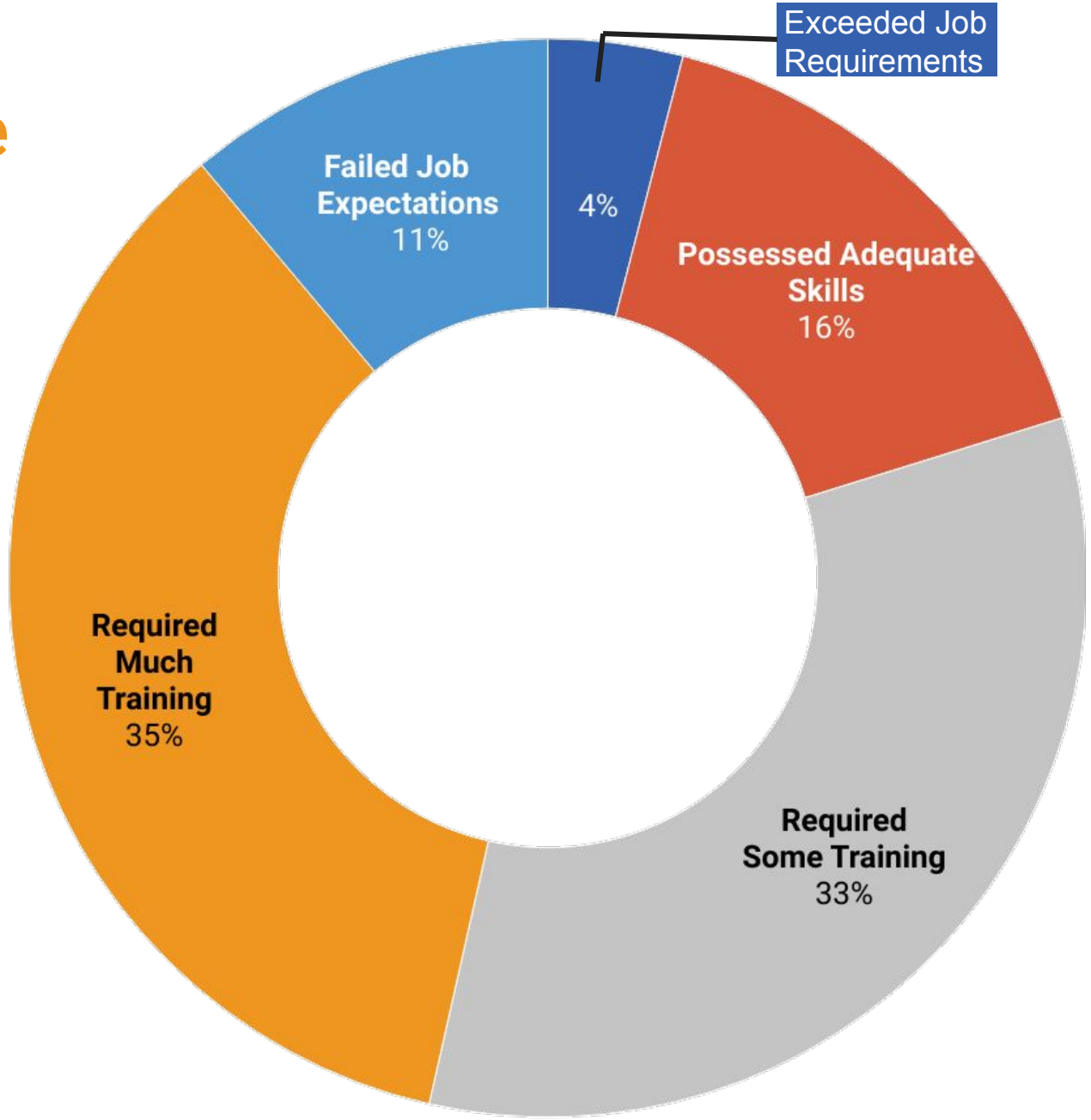
Employer perspective on new entry-level employee readiness



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Training required for new entry-level employees

- Nearly 70% of new entry-level employees required some level of training
- Of the new employees needing training, approximately 70% needed training in technical skills
- Just over half needed training in employability skills
  - Dependability/Timeliness
  - Time Management
  - Critical Thinking
  - Work Ethic
  - Leadership
- Basic education skills were generally reported as sufficient

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Training methods to develop employees' skills

- Nearly every employer used some form of informal on-the-job training
- Over half of employers used a more formalized training program customized for their business
- Nearly half of employers utilized self-study or online training programs
- Other regularly used were seminars or conferences and formal training provided by product vendors

Note: these answers are not mutually exclusive, so one employer could use multiple training methods.

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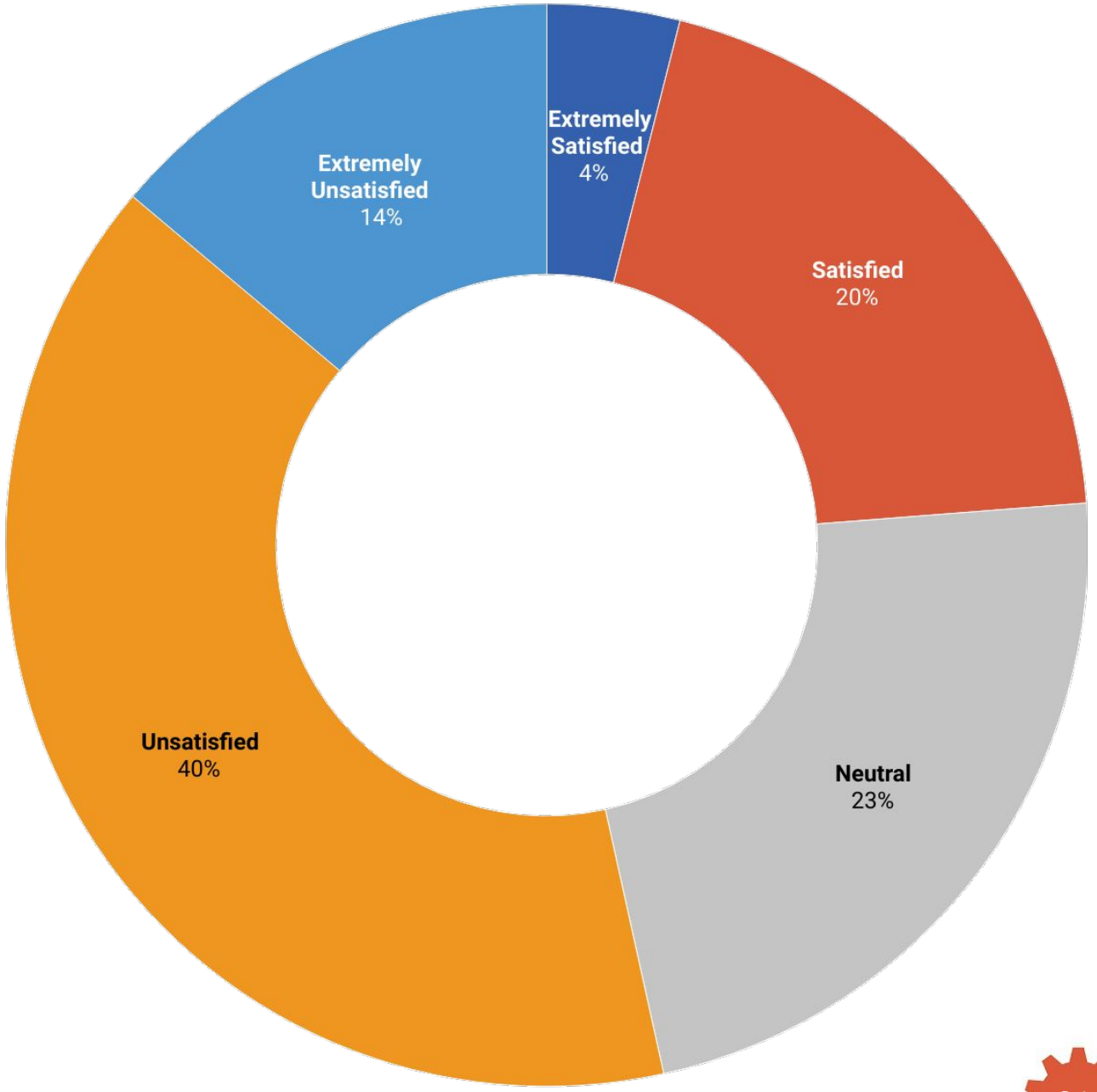
Employer satisfaction with new entry-level employee retention



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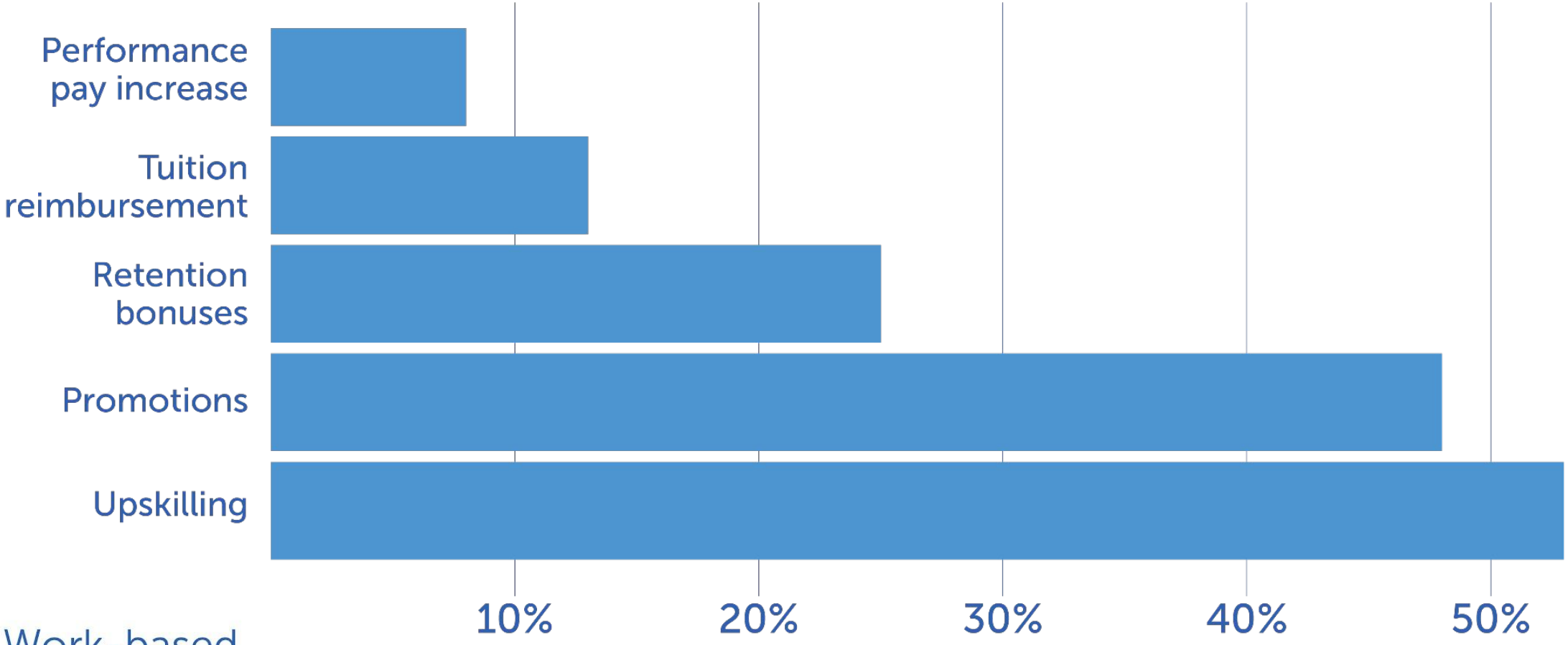
Entry-level employee retention



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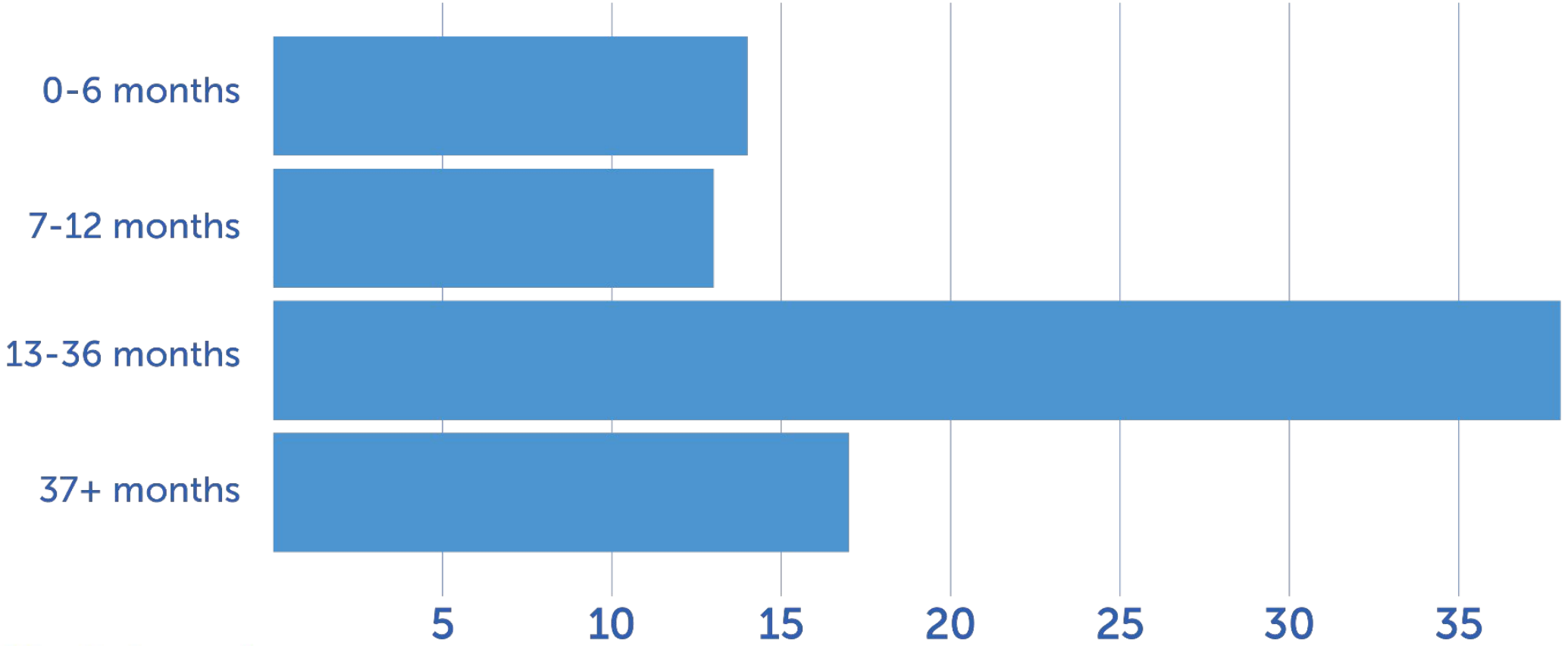
Entry-level employee retention



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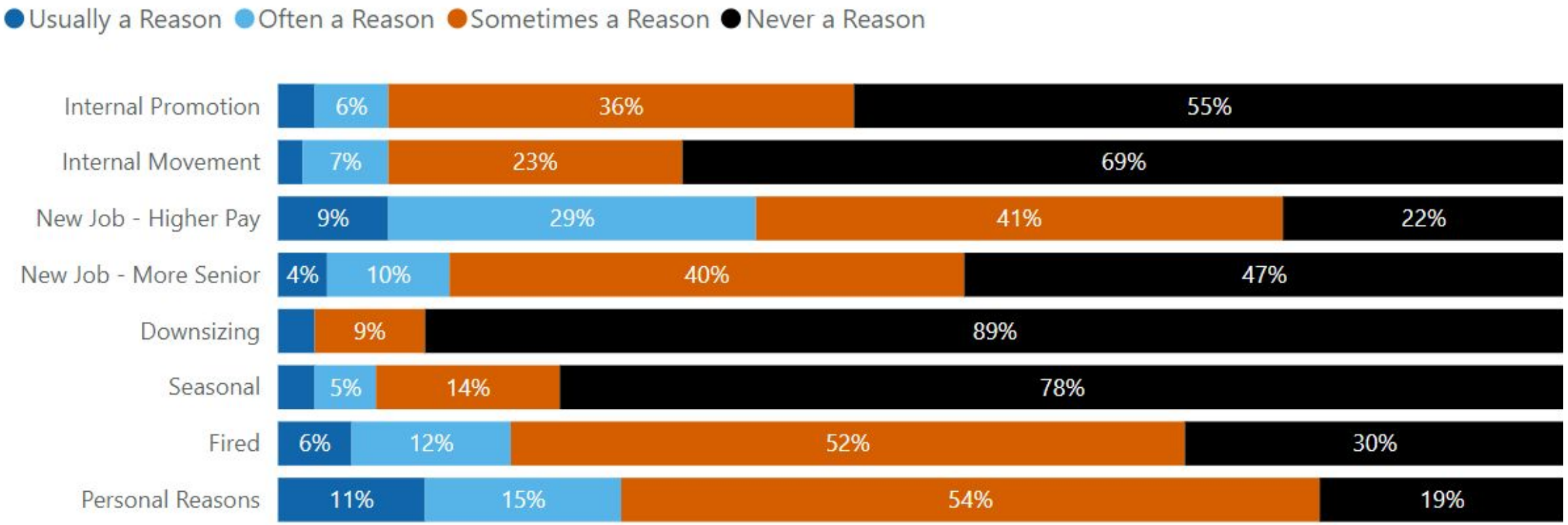
Reasons employees leave entry-level positions



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Note: these reasons are as reported by the employer, not by the employee themselves.

Questions?

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This survey was conducted with the intention of helping the WBL Collaborative and its partners coordinate and target their efforts in areas that would most benefit the workforce.

- How this information is useful to you?
- Are there any areas you would like to have more information?

Please email us with feedback!

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Thank You

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Work-based Learning Data Dashboard found at
reachhighermontana.org/wblc-data-dashboard
or on our website at wblmt.org

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