



2023 Job Seeker Survey:

What Job Seekers Are Looking For
And The Obstacles In Their Way

September 2023
DataWise Consulting, LLC



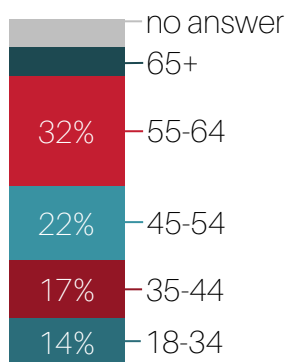
Survey respondents came from a variety of backgrounds. Most were in a period of transition regarding their employment.

27,000+ people who had been involved with West Michigan Works! in the past year were invited to take the annual survey.

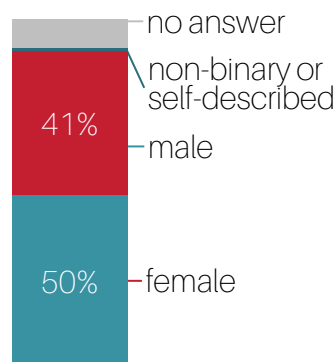
702 people took the survey during June and July 2023.

50.4% of respondents were employed when they took the survey.

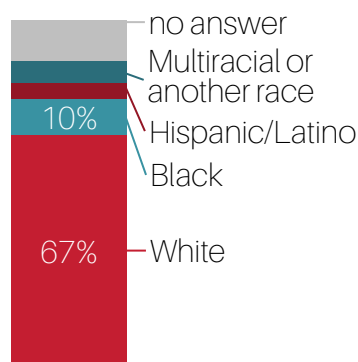
Age



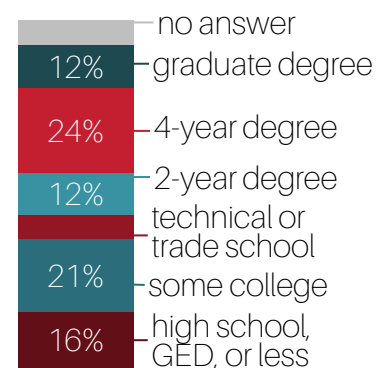
Gender



Race & ethnicity



Education level



Nearly two-thirds of respondents were actively looking for work and half were learning new job skills.

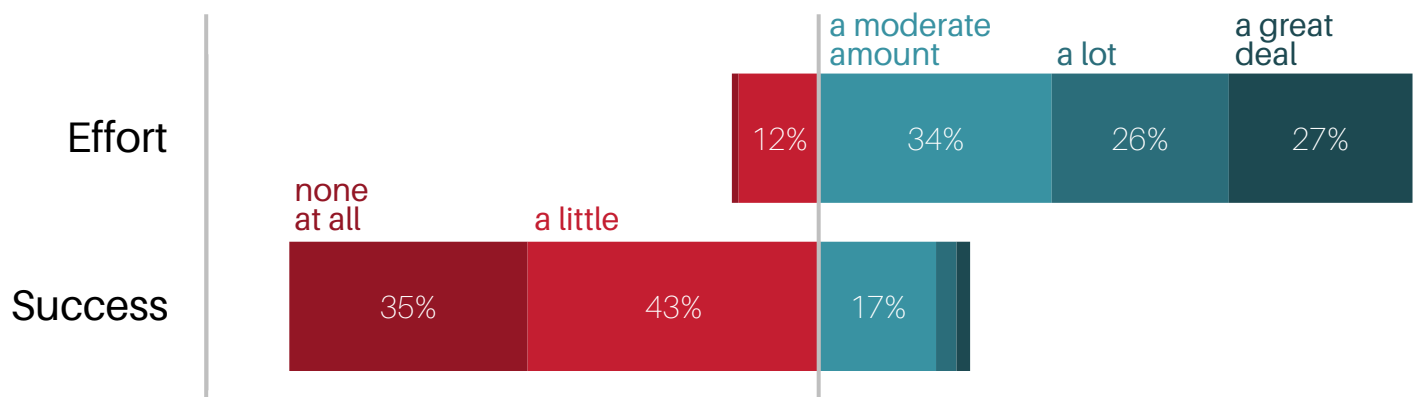


Of employed respondents, many were thinking about leaving their job or were worried about being laid off.

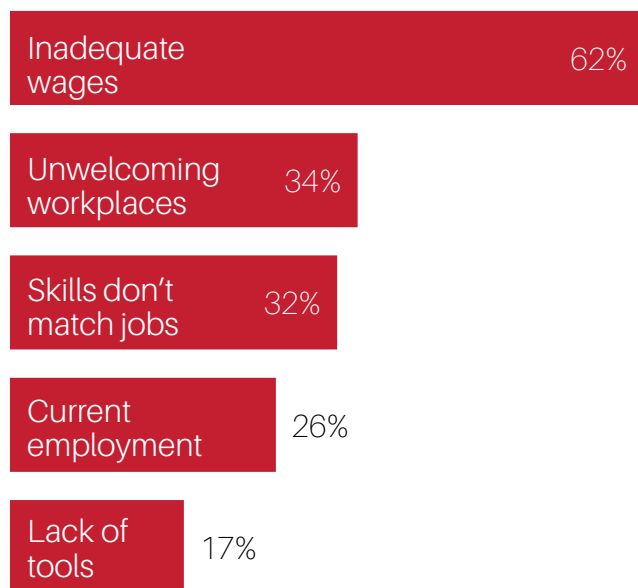


Although 87% of job seekers were dedicating at least moderate effort to their job search, only 22% were having at least moderate success.

There was a clear mismatch between the amount of effort job seekers were spending on looking for work and the success they experienced.



Many challenges make it hard to find work. 62% of job seekers said that inadequate wages was a barrier.



Several respondents shared about their frustrations with the job application and interview process.



Job search functions are poorly designed. Hours go by paging through garbage [search engine] results.

I gave up on the application process because it was difficult for no reason.

Companies are saying they are hiring but they are not really hiring.

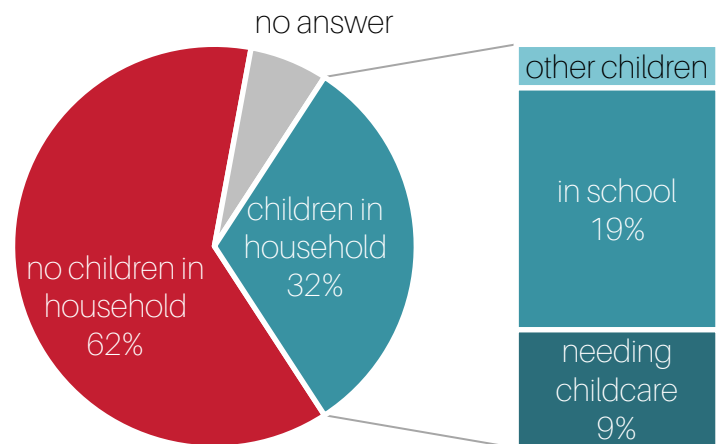
Employers often 'ghost' applicants in the recruitment process.

Almost nothing is communicated from potential employers.

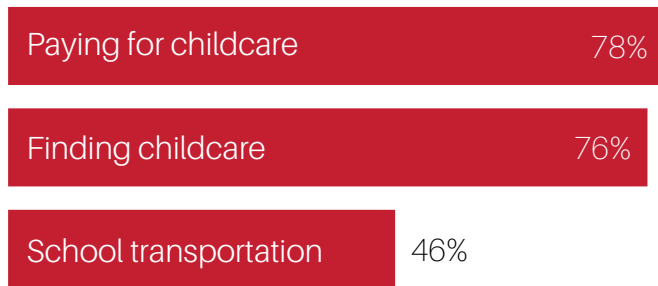


Job seekers with children face a unique set of challenges that can be addressed through childcare assistance and flexibility.

32% of survey respondents had one or more children living in their household; 9% have at least one child who needs childcare. Childcare issues lead to an annual **\$2.88 billion** in lost economic value in Michigan.¹



Among parents, the top three barriers to working were related to childcare and schooling.



Parents would be more likely to use resources related to childcare and flexibility than any other resource.



I work two jobs, about 95 hours every two weeks, and am considering getting back on WIC. Childcare needs are crippling financially.

Highly skilled and employable [individuals] are not able to get back to work without childcare.

¹U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation. (2023). *MI Untapped potential: How childcare impacts Michigan's workforce productivity and the state economy.* <https://www.michamber.com/miuntappedpotential/>

Job seekers who are older, have a disability, care for someone who is sick, or have a criminal record face bias and other challenges.



People who were older or had worked for only one organization felt that employers were passing them by.

Being 61 years old, I am finding it hard to find the right job.

Employers want a younger person with less skills so they can pay less.

I worked at one company for 34+ years in the utility industry. I am not sure how to show my transferable skills.



12% of respondents said that caring for someone who is sick makes it hard for them to work.

[I am the] caretaker for my Mother.

I'm taking care of my son.

I am going to have to move out of Michigan to get work when my husband dies of cancer. No one wants to hire older workers here.



Job seekers with a disability shared that it is a challenge to find work that provides accommodations.

I have ADA accommodation needs and when I mention it, I don't move to the next step of the interview process.

I have to find a job where in the winter I am indoors due to neuropathy.

I am limited to the jobs available as my ADA requires at-home work.



Job seekers with a criminal record felt like their options were limited to sectors such as manufacturing.

It is hard to find a decent job when you have a past criminal record.

It would be amazing if MI Works had programs for felons to attain employment other than factory work so that people who can't do that type of work would have the opportunity to get a job.

Wages are the top concern. Amid inflation and rising interest rates, many job seekers find that jobs simply don't pay enough.

62% of job seekers said that inadequate wages was a barrier to finding work. In fact, wages were a barrier for nearly twice as many people as the next biggest barrier.

Two-thirds of respondents said that wages were among the top three factors when considering job offers.



48% of employed respondents were not earning enough to meet their needs, and nearly half had a household income of less than \$40,000/year.

Job seekers shared that they need work that pays enough to cover their expenses and support their family.



Wages do not match the increase in rent, utilities, food and overall cost of living.

Jobs frequently want employees with unrealistic skills and expertise at unreasonably low wages.

Most employers seem to want someone with 25+ years' experience. But the wages are for someone 18 - 20 years old.

Every job I apply for is a step back, a heavier salary pay cut, or I am forced to work nights, weekends, and holidays again.



Job seekers also care about factors that affect their work-life balance, such as benefits, hours, location, flexibility, and health supports.

Benefits, hours, location, and work/life balance were among the top three factors for at least 1-in-3 respondents.



Needs vary from person to person. Some people need fully remote work, whereas others need flexible hours.



A lot of jobs you are treated as a body and not a person.

I also want a job that offers growth opportunities, work/life balance, and a good work culture.

I need to work remotely as I cannot drive at night or in bad weather.

Many [employers] want 8 hr shifts. My situation doesn't allow for that.

[Employers] need an incentive to employ people full time and offer good benefits packages that don't cost more [to the employee] than their wages.



56% of respondents wanted employers to have a clear plan for protecting the health of their employees.



50% of respondents would benefit from more flexibility in the number of hours and the times they work.



48% of respondents said they would be likely to use mental health services if they were easier to access.



Top actions include improving the application process, addressing bias, better communication, and ensuring adequate childcare options.

Workforce development agencies, employers, and society should:



1. Improve the application process by listing wages on job ads and reviewing algorithms that may be biased or miss qualified candidates.

2. Update applicants about the status of their application and notify them when a position they applied for is filled.



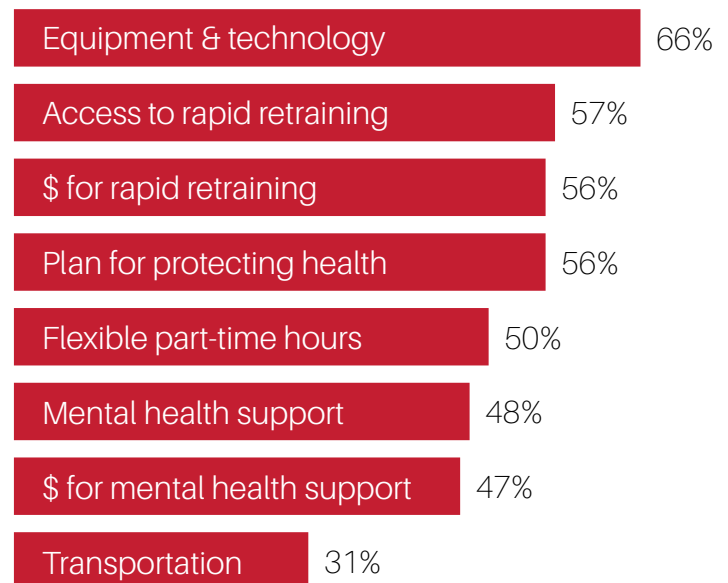
3. Assess whether bias is affecting hiring processes and make any needed changes to avoid being influenced by age or other factors.



4. Ensure that affordable childcare is available so that parents can work consistently, which would save employers billions each year.¹



Respondents were enthusiastic about potential resources that would help them address barriers to employment.



I'm glad for this survey. The job market is horrible. I realize that this [comment] is just stats on a spreadsheet, but something needs to be done... I have two degrees, great experiences. No hits. No jobs. I am living paycheck to paycheck. If I didn't have a friend to employ me, I'd still be unemployed.



¹U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation. (2023). *MI Untapped potential: How childcare impacts Michigan's workforce productivity and the state economy*. <https://www.michamber.com/miuntappedpotential/>