



# LABOUR MARKET NEEDS

# ASSESSMENT

## PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION CORPORATION

June 29, 2022

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Portage la Prairie Community Revitalization Corporation (PCRC) is a not-for-profit community development organization that serves populations experiencing low income, homelessness, and marginalization, as well as newcomers to Canada. It is generally accepted that recent immigrants, Indigenous peoples, and youth are under-represented in the workplace and are less likely to find meaningful work. Between June and December 2021, research was undertaken to better understand these issues and propose solutions.

Although the targeted populations are demographically distinct, at the end of the day the issues and solutions were very similar. Obstacles to finding meaningful work can be summarized as follows:

1. There is a need for enhanced and individualized training opportunities for specific populations.
2. There is a general unfamiliarity with Canadian workplace expectations, sometimes described as the “culture of work.”
3. There needs to be greater mentorship and networking opportunities in Portage la Prairie, both within targeted communities, between targeted communities, and between all communities.
4. Discrimination exists within the community and within workplaces.
5. COVID-19 has exacerbated existing employment challenges in Portage la Prairie, resulting in long-term challenges to the local economy.
6. Although the issues and challenges are often common across all communities, the solutions are unique and best delivered in a culturally appropriate environment.

It is worth noting that COVID-19 has had an impact on the local economy (as it has across the globe). The best way to describe this impact is perhaps ‘uneven.’ Different industries and populations are impacted differently, and additional time will be required for us to understand both the short and long-term impacts on our communities.



# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The Portage la Prairie Community Revitalization Corporation (PCRC), established in 2008, is a not-profit organization that “works together with the community to empower citizens, enhance neighbourhoods, foster community spirit, and build the capacity of community organizations.” In March 2021, Urban Systems was retained by the PCRC to complete a Labour Market Needs Assessment of the community. The Needs Assessment is intended to support improved labour market outcomes for populations – namely immigrants, youth, and Indigenous peoples – who often struggle to find meaningful work in the community. The broader purpose of the project is also to support local businesses in finding the staff that they need for both now and into the future, so that the economic development opportunities available in the community can be fully realized.

Broadly speaking, the purpose and objectives of the Needs Assessment includes:

- To provide an overview of the labour and employment market in Portage la Prairie.
- To identify strategies that will ensure that the supply and capacity of skilled workers is sufficient to meet the needs of employers within the Portage la Prairie market.
- To identify strategies that will ensure that the labour force in Portage la Prairie, and in particular youth, immigrants, and Indigenous peoples, are equipped with the necessary skills and access to opportunities that allow them to fully participate in the labour market.

The Labour Market Needs Assessment builds upon previous work in the community, including the Portage la Prairie Urban Indigenous Study (2019), Newcomer Readiness Research Phase I Report (2019) and Economic Impact of Immigration (2021) study, commissioned by the PCRC and Portage Local Immigration Partnership (LIP).

Portage la Prairie is changing and growing, as evidenced by the many new employers and associated population growth characterizing the community. At the same time, demographic changes in Portage (mainly an aging population) may lead to further labour market challenges. Immigration can help to address shortfalls in skilled labour, but Portage competes in a global market for immigrants. As our communities play a larger role in the global economic community, changes in labour markets and labour mobility that we see taking place across the country and around the world will play a more influential role in our communities going forward. It is a good time to take stock of the situation locally, identify trends (both positive and negative), and formulate strategies to ensure that our communities continue to grow and prosper for the benefit of all residents.

## 1.2 METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

The Needs Assessment used a comprehensive research strategy including reviewing existing data from Statistics Canada and other sources, reviewing case studies, completing a literature review, surveying employers, employees, and students, as well as conducting focus groups and stakeholder interviews. The research methods were comprehensive and took into account limitations that resulted from ongoing changes to public health requirements resulting from COVID-19. These research methods will be discussed in further detail below.

### 1.2.1 ADVISORY COMMITTEE

A volunteer Advisory Committee, representing many of Portage's educational and economic development institutions, was established at the outset of the project. In addition to participating in regular check-ins with PCRC staff and the project team, the Advisory Committee reviewed the survey instruments and assisted with their distribution.

### 1.2.2 CASE STUDIES AND LITERATURE REVIEW

As part of the project, roughly 40 relevant documents were reviewed to inform the research. Eleven sources were reviewed in greater detail, with a brief summary provided to highlight key points and opportunities for further research.

### 1.2.3 SURVEYS

The project team completed three online surveys with employers, students, and community members in Portage la Prairie.

The employer and community member surveys were distributed online through Survey Monkey between June 14<sup>th</sup> and June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Members of the Advisory Committee shared the survey through their respective social media channels and email lists. This included the Portage la Prairie & District Chamber of Commerce and Portage Regional Economic Development.

A total of 45 employers and 160 community members completed the surveys. Of these 160 community members, 38 identified as Indigenous, 40 identified as newcomers, and 9 identified as youth.

A separate survey was distributed to Grade 11 and Grade 12 students at the Portage Collegiate Institute through Google Forms between June 14<sup>th</sup> and June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2021. A total of 85 students completed the survey.

### 1.2.4 INTERVIEWS

In August and September of 2021, 17 interviews were conducted with local employers. Each interview was roughly 30-45 minutes in length, and conducted virtually through Zoom, Teams, or by telephone. Employers ranged in size from less than 10 to over 500, and included the health sector, retail sector, manufacturing, food processing, social services, professional services, property development, and others. Questions were open-ended with the following statements used to generate discussion:

- 1. Can you tell us a bit about your organization, and your role in it?**
  - What services/products does it offer?
  - How long has it operated in Portage? Does it operate elsewhere?
  - How many people does it employ? Full-time, part-time, seasonal?
  - How long have you been working at it?
  
- 2. What skills does your organization need to meet its current needs in Portage la Prairie? What skills do you anticipate it will need to meet its future needs?**
  - Do you think there is a shortage of these skills in Portage la Prairie?
  - Would you like to see more training or education in these areas?
  
- 3. How does your organization primarily recruit new employees in Portage la Prairie?**
  - Do you have a dedicated HR department/staff member?

- 4. Does your organization have challenges finding qualified applicants to fill positions in Portage la Prairie?**
  - Can you describe these challenges? What do you think is causing them?
  - Have they gotten worse or better in recent years?
  - How do you think COVID has impacted this?
  - Can you think of any solutions to address this?
  
- 5. Has your workplace become more or less diverse in the last few years? (in terms of newcomers, Indigenous peoples, youth)?**
  - How has this changed over time?
  
- 6. Does your organization have hiring policies that aim to increase diversity? If so, can you describe them?**
  - Has your organization benefitted from increasing diversity in your workplace?
  - Do you think hiring strategies that increase diversity have been successful?
  - Would you recommend them to other organizations?
  
- 7. Once hired, does your organization have challenges retaining employees in Portage la Prairie?**
  - Can you describe these challenges? What do you think is causing them?
  - Have they gotten worse or better in recent years?
  - How do you think COVID has impacted this?
  - Can you think of any solutions to address this?
  
- 8. What are your organization's future hiring plans in Portage la Prairie?**
  - Do you expect to increase or decrease the number of employees?
  - Do you anticipate any challenges with your plans?
  - Has COVID impacted this?
  
- 9. What changes would you like to see in Portage la Prairie to improve labour market outcomes, particularly for Indigenous people, newcomers, and youth?**
  - Who should implement these changes? City? Province? Federal gov't? PCRC? Chamber?
  
- 10. Is there anything else you want to share?**

### 1.2.5 FOCUS GROUPS

In November of 2021, five focus groups were conducted with newcomers, youth, and Indigenous people in order to have a broad discussion about the challenges and opportunities they face in finding meaningful employment. In total, 18 community members participated in the focus groups. One session was dedicated to addressing Indigenous issues, and one session was held via Zoom in order to accommodate those who were not comfortable meeting in person. The remaining sessions were held at the PCRC office. Each focus group was roughly 90 minutes in length. Participants were compensated \$50 for their time.

## 2.0 COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

The following data provides a snapshot of the City and Rural Municipality of Portage la Prairie, with additional information on neighbouring First Nations communities where possible. Population data was obtained from the 2016 Statistics Canada census, as data from the 2021 census will not be available until late 2022. Additional information was obtained from Environics Research including estimated data for 2020, and projected data for 2025 and 2030.

### 2.1 POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

#### Population

The population pyramids below show the percentage of residents in the City and RM in five-year increments. When compared to Manitoba as a whole, both the City and RM of Portage have a higher proportion of non-working age residents (below 19 and above 50) than Manitoba. This means that, relative to the province as a whole, there are fewer residents working and potentially generating tax revenues for the public sector, and a greater number of residents not working and potentially consuming services including education and health care.

Population in the City of Portage by Age, 2016

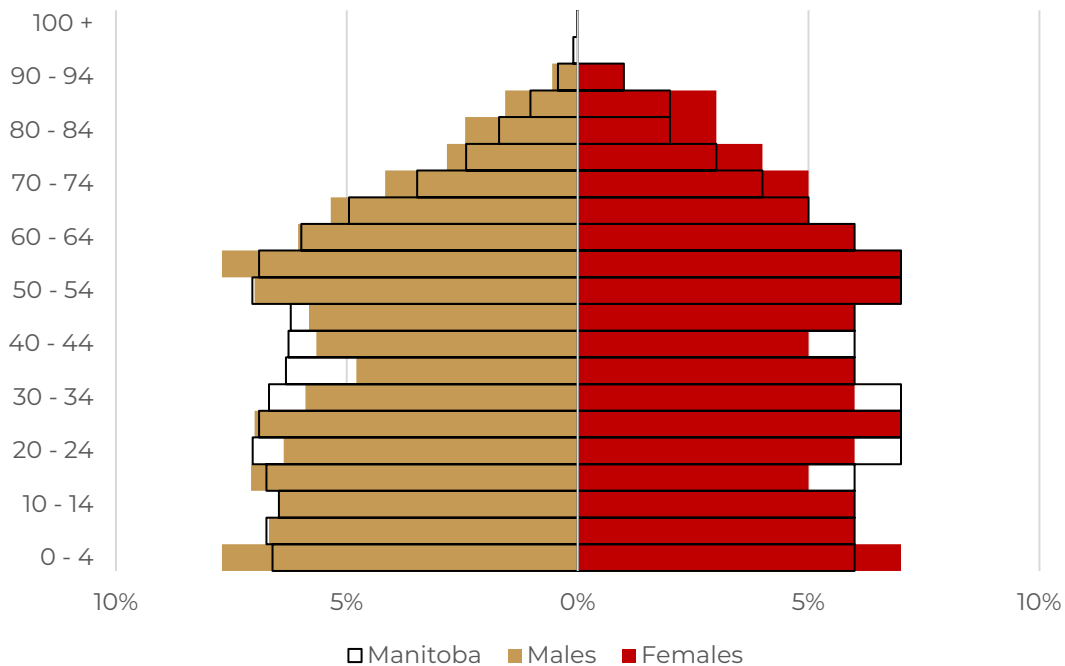


Figure 1: Population in the City of Portage la Prairie by Age, 2016

Population in the RM of Portage by Age, 2016

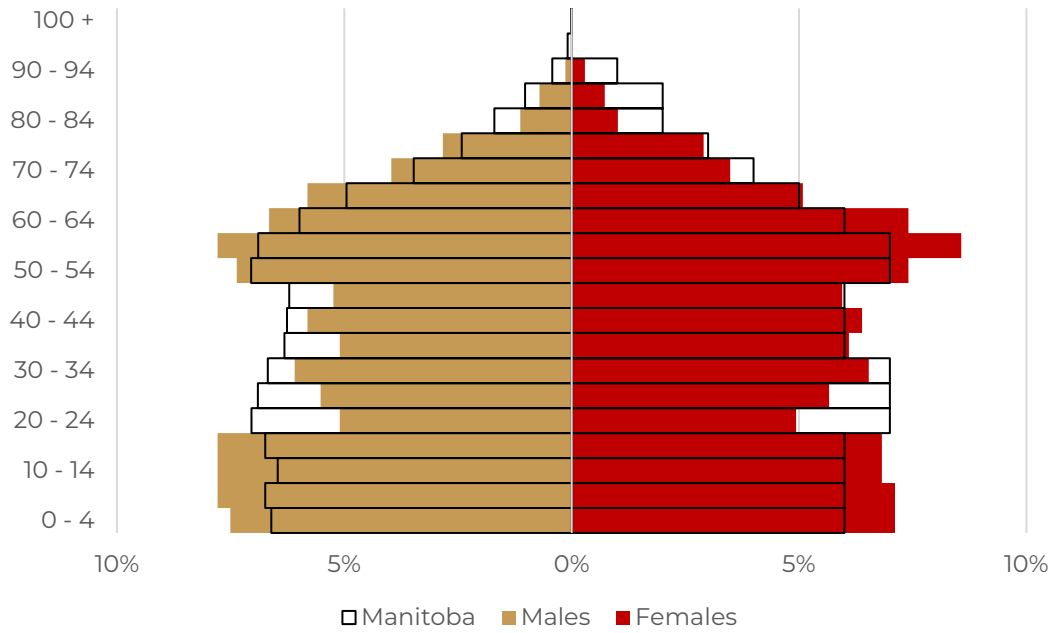


Figure 2: Population in the RM of Portage la Prairie by Age, 2016

### Indigenous Populations

In terms of Indigenous populations, both the City and RM have higher proportions of Indigenous peoples than does Manitoba as a whole (over 30% in the City almost one in five in the RM, compared to roughly one in six in Manitoba). Note that there was not a statistically significant number of Inuit residents in either the City or RM.

Indigenous Population, 2016

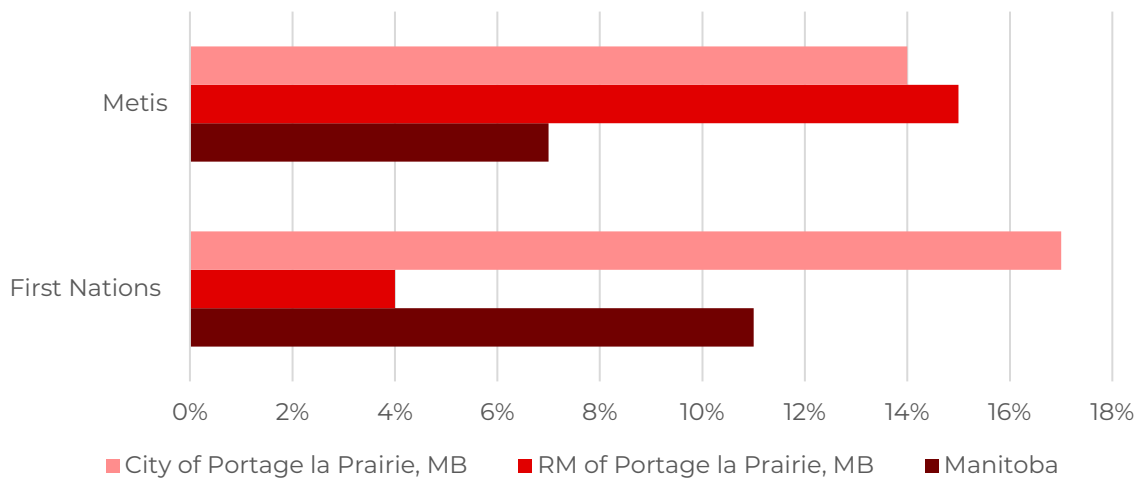
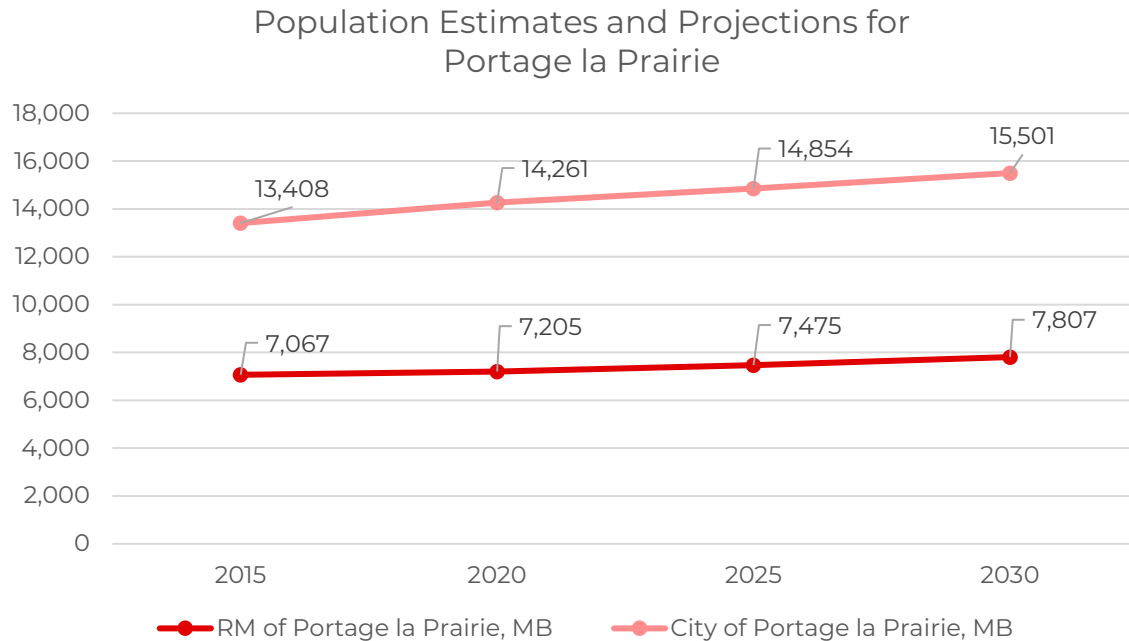


Figure 3: Indigenous Population, 2016

## Population Projections

Statistics Canada data from 2016 was used, supported with data from Environics Research for 2015 and 2020 (estimated) and 2025 and 2030 (projected). These estimates suggest that the population of the region will grow by approximately 2833 residents, or 13.8%, between 2015 and 2030. Growth in the City is roughly 50% greater than growth in the RM during that time period.



**Figure 4: Population Estimates and Projections for Portage la Prairie**

Population projections for two nearby First Nations communities are shown below. The population of Long Plain is estimated to grow by approximately one-quarter, while the population of Dakota Tipi is expected to remain relatively flat.

### Population Estimates and Projections for First Nations near Portage la Prairie

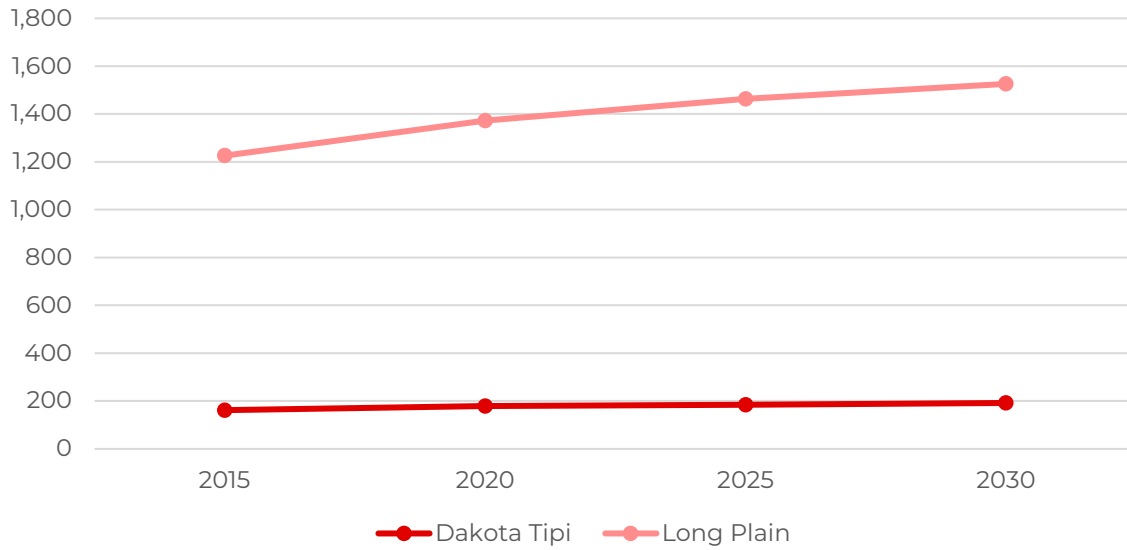


Figure 5: Population Estimates and Projections for First Nations near Portage la Prairie

## 2.2 IMMIGRATION

### Immigration

The total number of immigrants in Manitoba is projected to increase from 18% in 2016 to 23.4% in 2030. The number of immigrants in Portage la Prairie is currently projected to increase at a slower rate. In the City, the rate is projected to increase from 6% in 2016 to 6.9% in 2030 while in the Rural Municipality, the rate is projected to increase from 4% in 2016 to 4.9% in 2030.

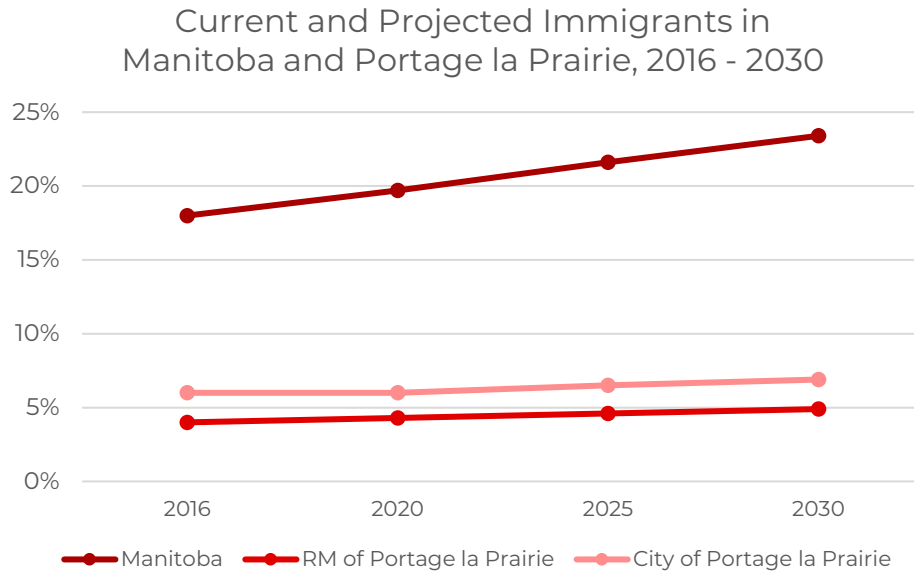
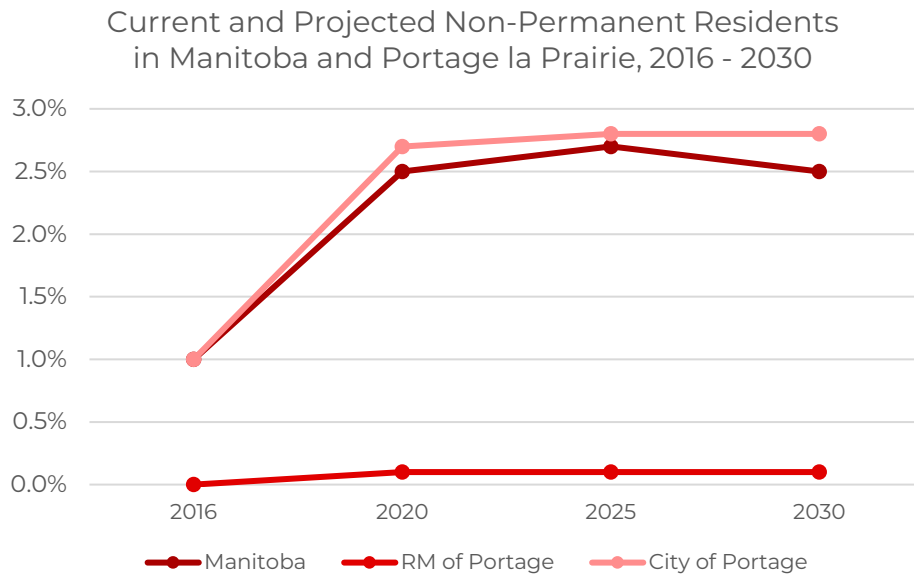


Figure 6: Current and Projected Immigrants in Manitoba and Portage la Prairie, 2016 – 2030

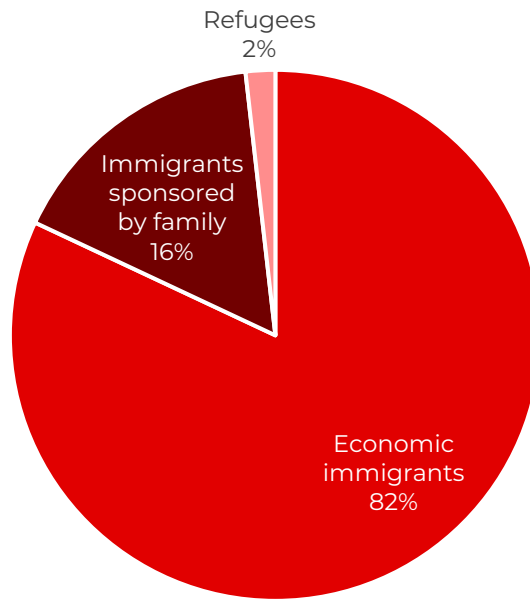


**Figure 7: Current and Projected Non-Permanent Residents in Manitoba and Portage la Prairie, 2016 – 2030**

1. Note: 2020 data is estimated; 2025 and 2025 data is projected.
2. The number of non-permanent residents in the City of Portage la Prairie is projected to increase in the next 10 years

Between 1980 and 2016, more than four out of five immigrants in the Portage la Prairie census division (similar to the City) belonged to the Economic Immigrant classification. An additional 16% were sponsored by family, while only 2% were considered to be Refugees.

## Immigrants in Portage la Prairie by Admission Category, 1980 - 2016



**Figure 8: Immigrants in Portage la Prairie by Admission Category, 1980 – 2016**

With regard to Period of Immigration, the City of Portage most closely approximates data from Manitoba as a whole. Roughly one-third of immigrants arrived before 2001, compared to 32% in Manitoba. 62% of immigrants arrived in the RM before 2001, suggesting that the rate of immigration in the RM has decreased over time. In the City of Portage, roughly 15% of immigrants have arrived since 2017, compared to 19% for the Province as a whole. 10% of immigrants in the RM have arrived since 2017.

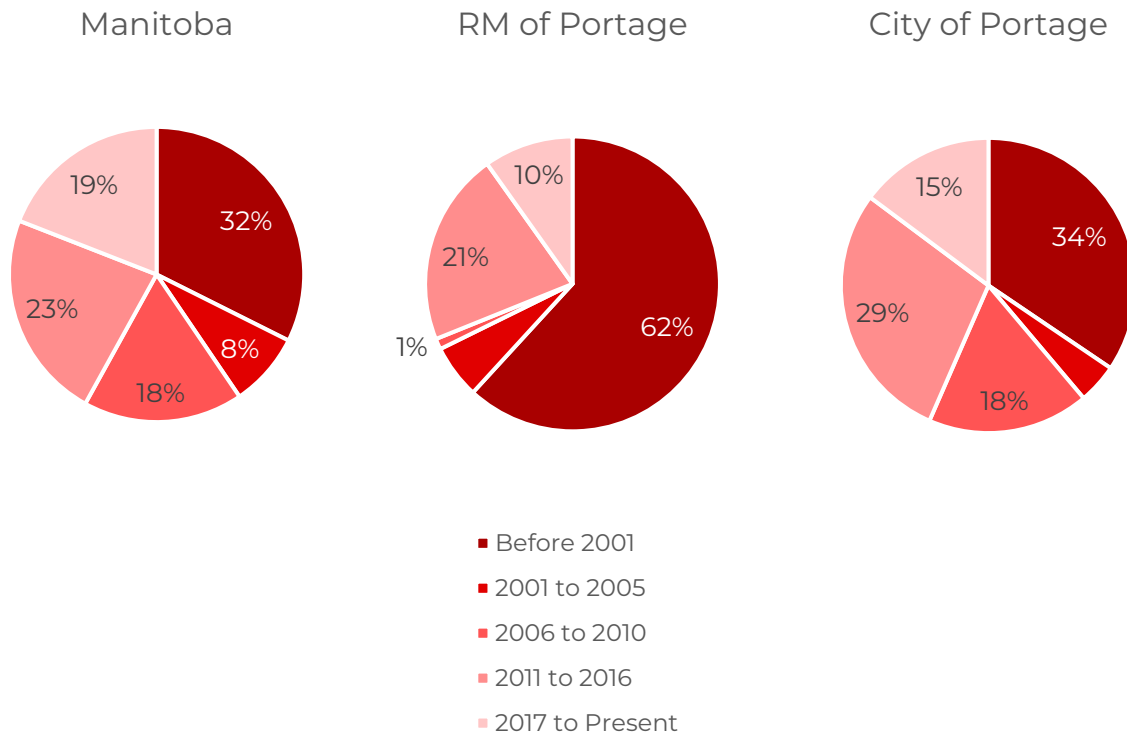


Figure 9: Immigrants by Period of Immigration

### Recent Immigration by Place of Birth in the City of Portage la Prairie, 2016

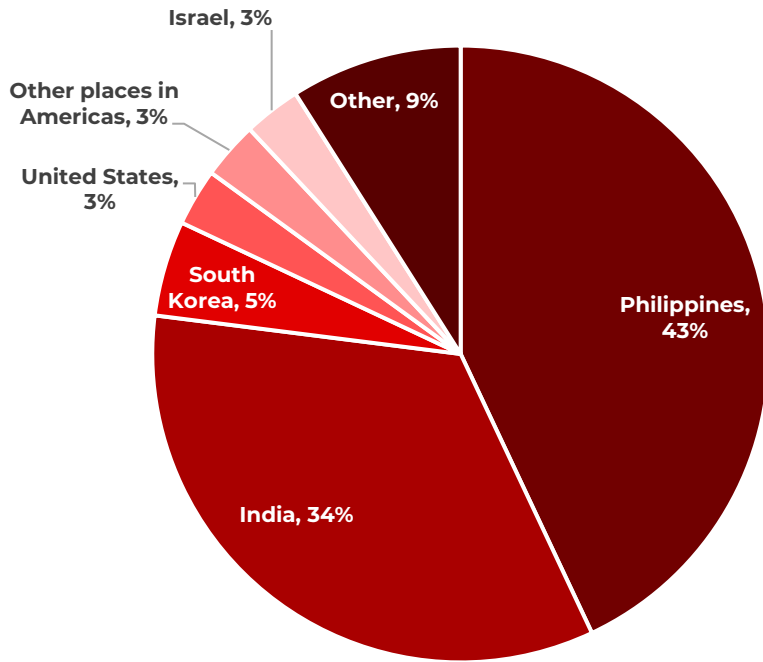


Figure 10: Recent Immigration by Place of Birth in the City of Portage la Prairie, 2016

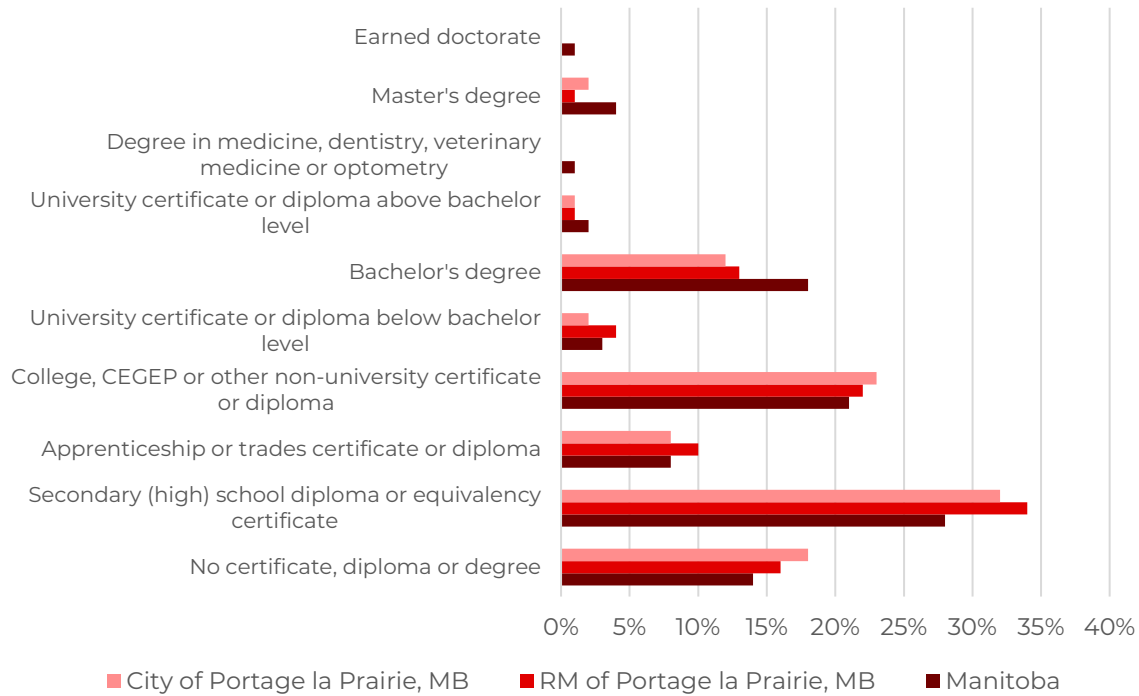
Note: data is provided only for the City of Portage la Prairie. Data is insufficient on new immigrants in the RM to make a meaningful chart.

The most common place of birth for recent immigrants to Portage la Prairie is the Philippines followed by India and South Korea.

## 2.3 LABOUR MARKET DATA

### Education and Training

Population Aged 25 to 64 by Educational Attainment, 2016

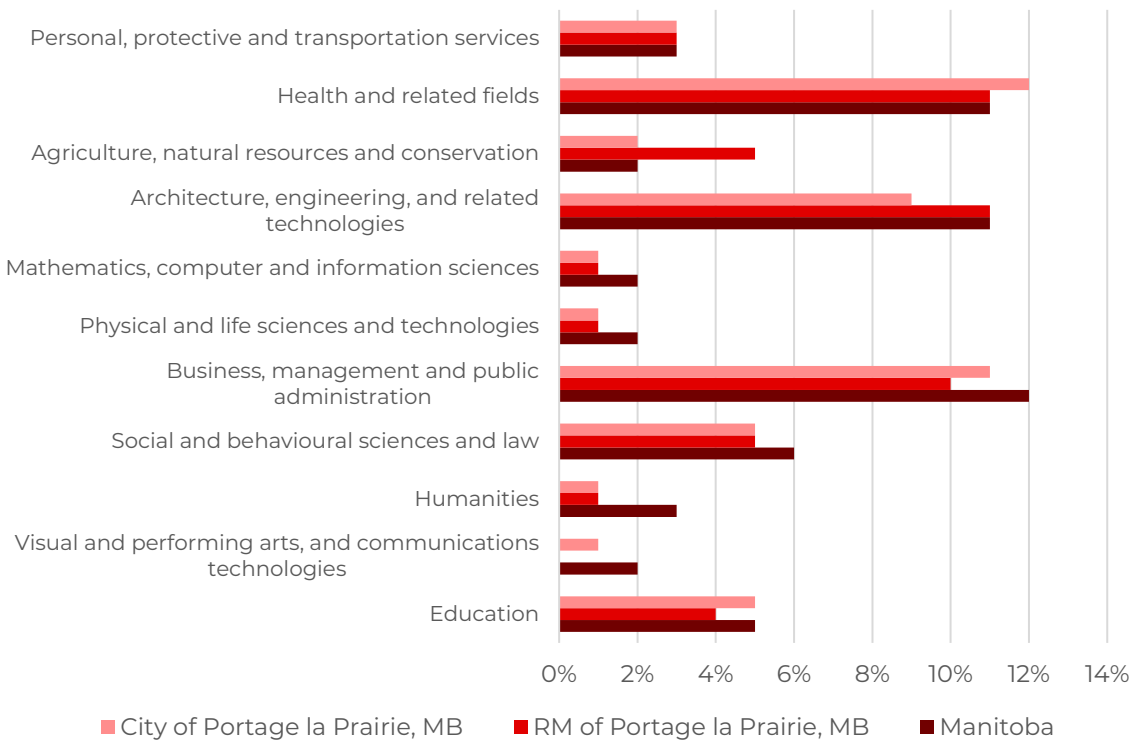


**Figure 11: Population Aged 25 to 64 by Educational Attainment, 2016**

Generally speaking, residents of Portage la Prairie have lower education levels than Manitoba as a whole. As well, there are a higher proportion of residents with only a high school or college degree in the City and RM compared to Manitoba.

A smaller proportion of Portage residents have a university degree when compared to Manitoba overall.

## Major Field of Study in Post-Secondary Education, Ages 25 to 64



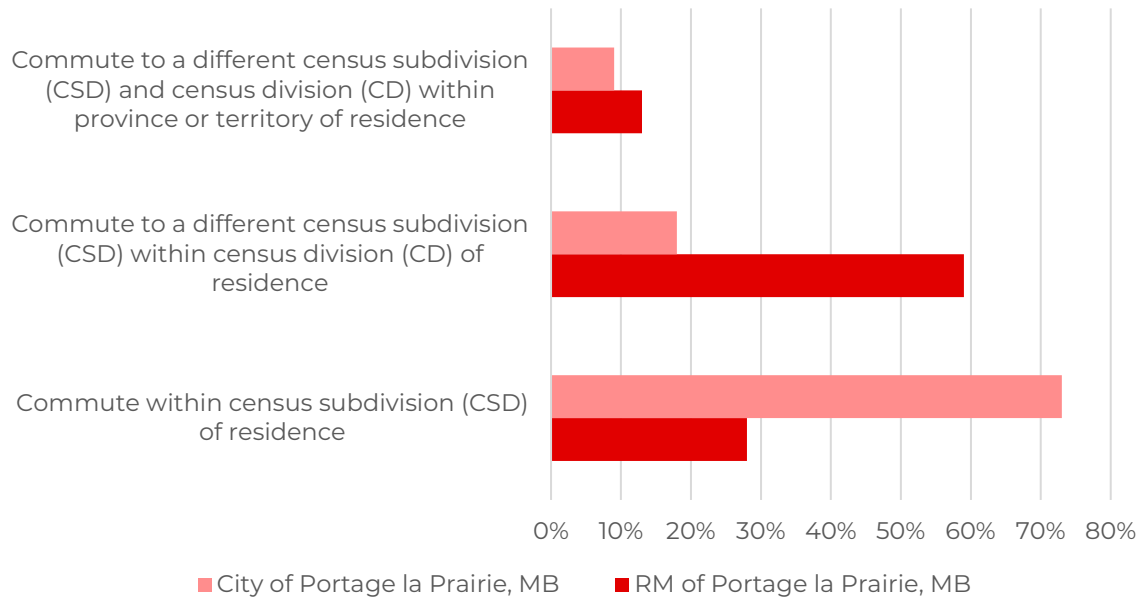
**Figure 12: Major Field of Study in Post-Secondary Education, Ages 25 to 64**

Note that data is based on entire population (including those without a postsecondary education). The figure does not show proportion of residents without postsecondary training.

The Portage la Prairie region has higher proportion of residents with education in health and related fields, as well as agriculture/natural resources/conservation.

## Employment

### Labour Force by Commuting Destination, 2016

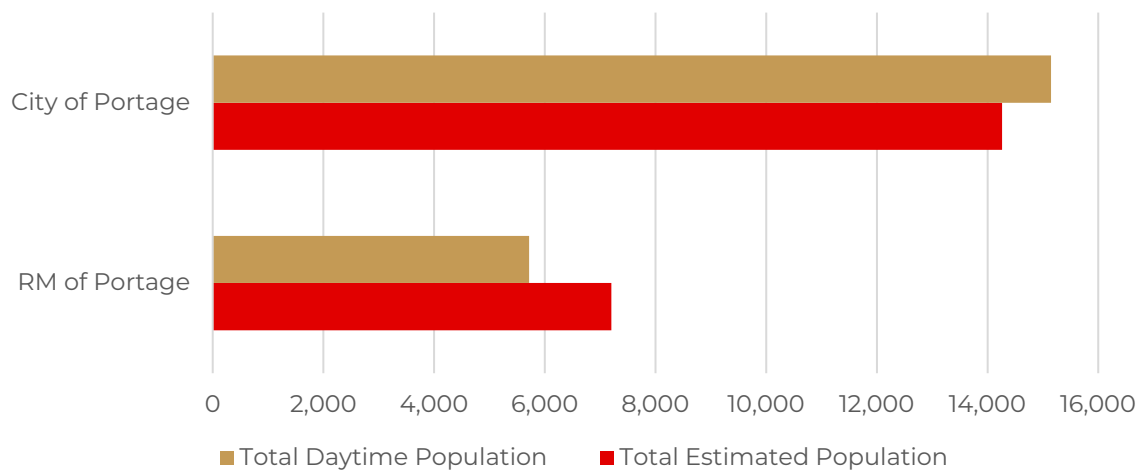


**Figure 13: Labour Force by Commuting Destination, 2016**

Most residents of the City of Portage la Prairie work within the City. However, less than a third of residents of the RM work within the RM.

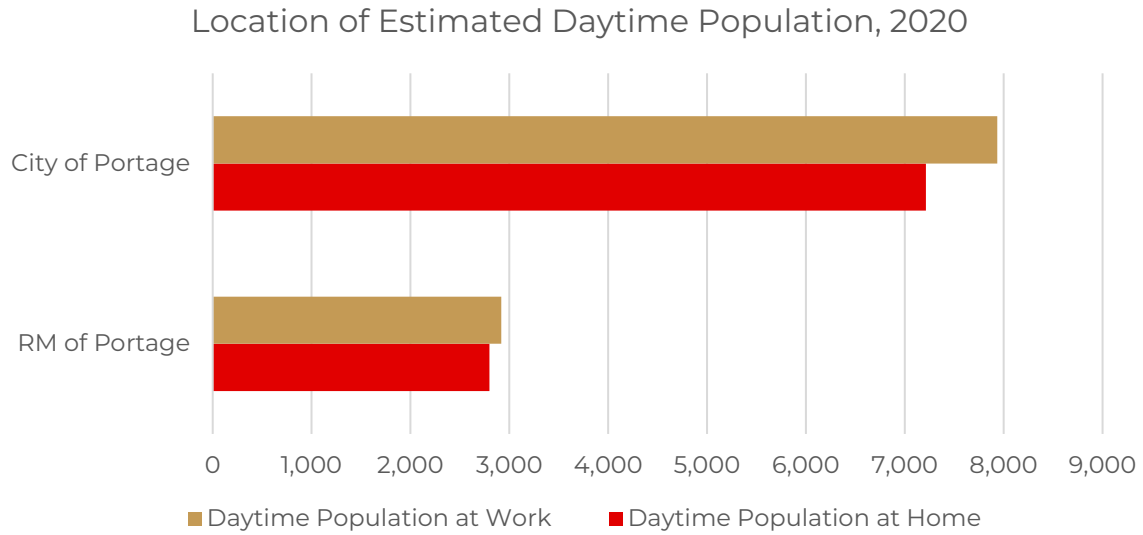
Nearly 60% of residents of the RM work within Census Division #9; as Portage la Prairie is the largest city within the census division, many of these residents of the RM may be working within the City.

### Total and Daytime Estimated Population, 2020



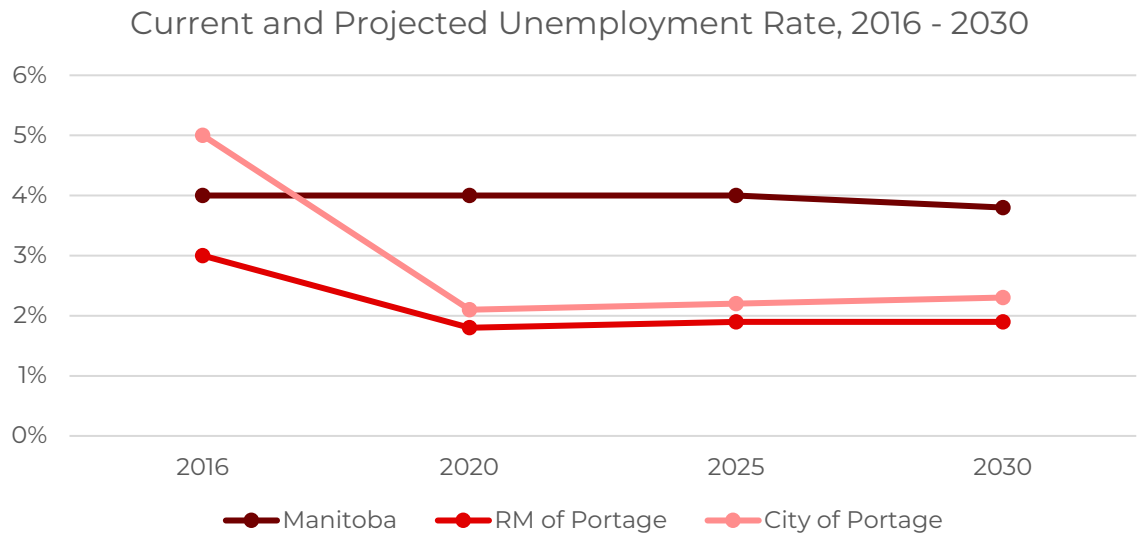
**Figure 14: Total and Daytime Estimated Population, 2020**

The daytime population of the City is greater than the estimated population, which means more people come to the City to work than leave. The opposite is true of the RM.



**Figure 15: Location of Estimated Daytime Population, 2020**

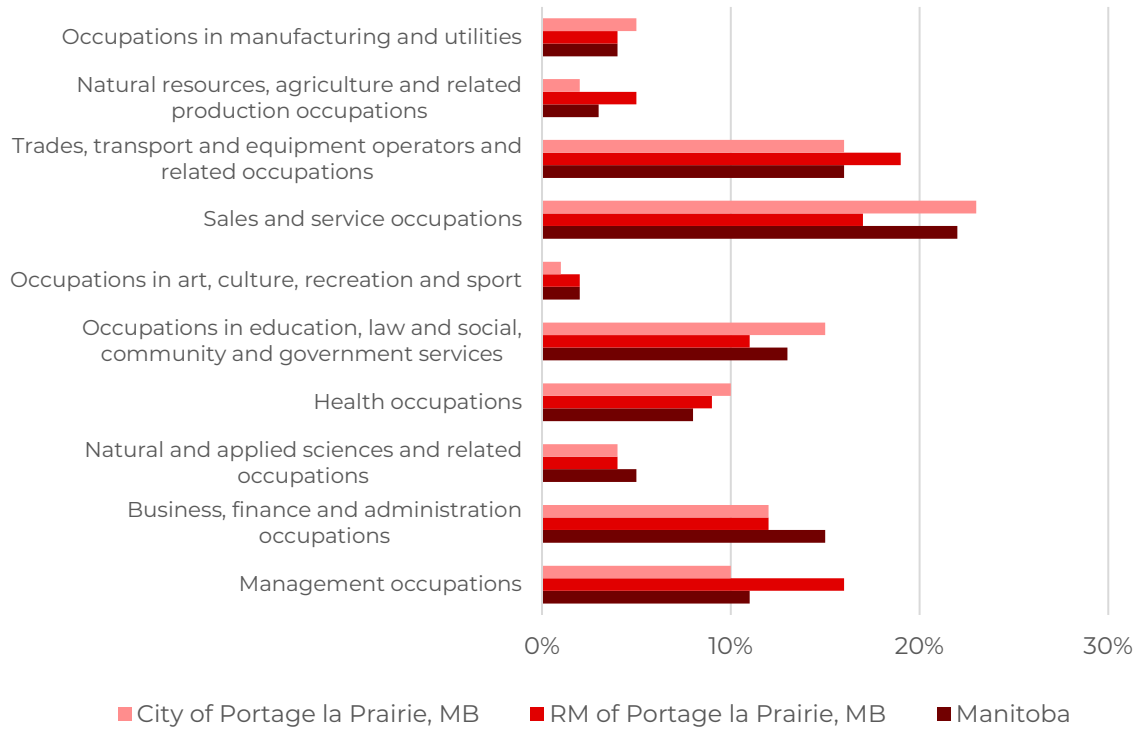
Slightly more of the daytime population is at work rather than at home in both the City and the RM.



**Figure 16: Current and Projected Unemployment Rate, 2016 - 2030**

Note that 2016 data is from the Statistics Canada census; 2020 is estimated; 2025 and 2030 is projected.

## Labour Force by Occupation, 2016



**Figure 17: Labour Force by Occupation, 2016**

This data is from the 2016 Statistics Canada census. Note this is the occupation of individuals who LIVE in these places, not WORK in these places. For example, a health care worker who lives in Portage but works in Winnipeg would show up under Portage even though they do not work there.

## Estimated Labour Force by Occupation, 2020

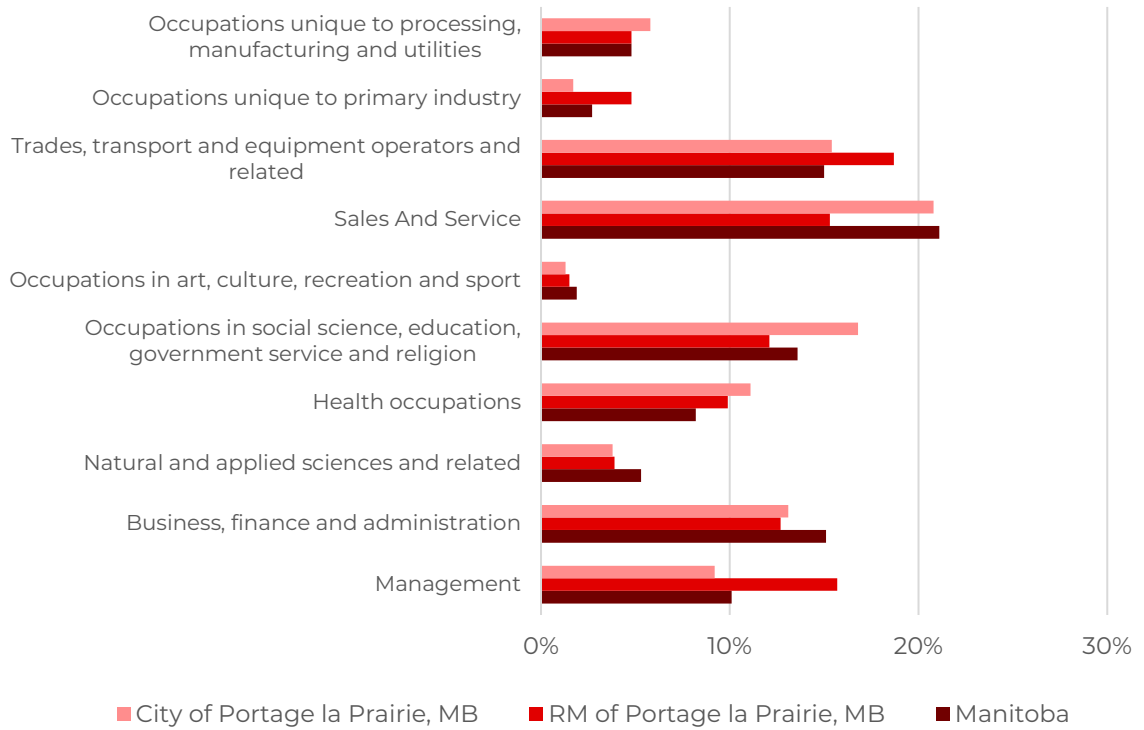
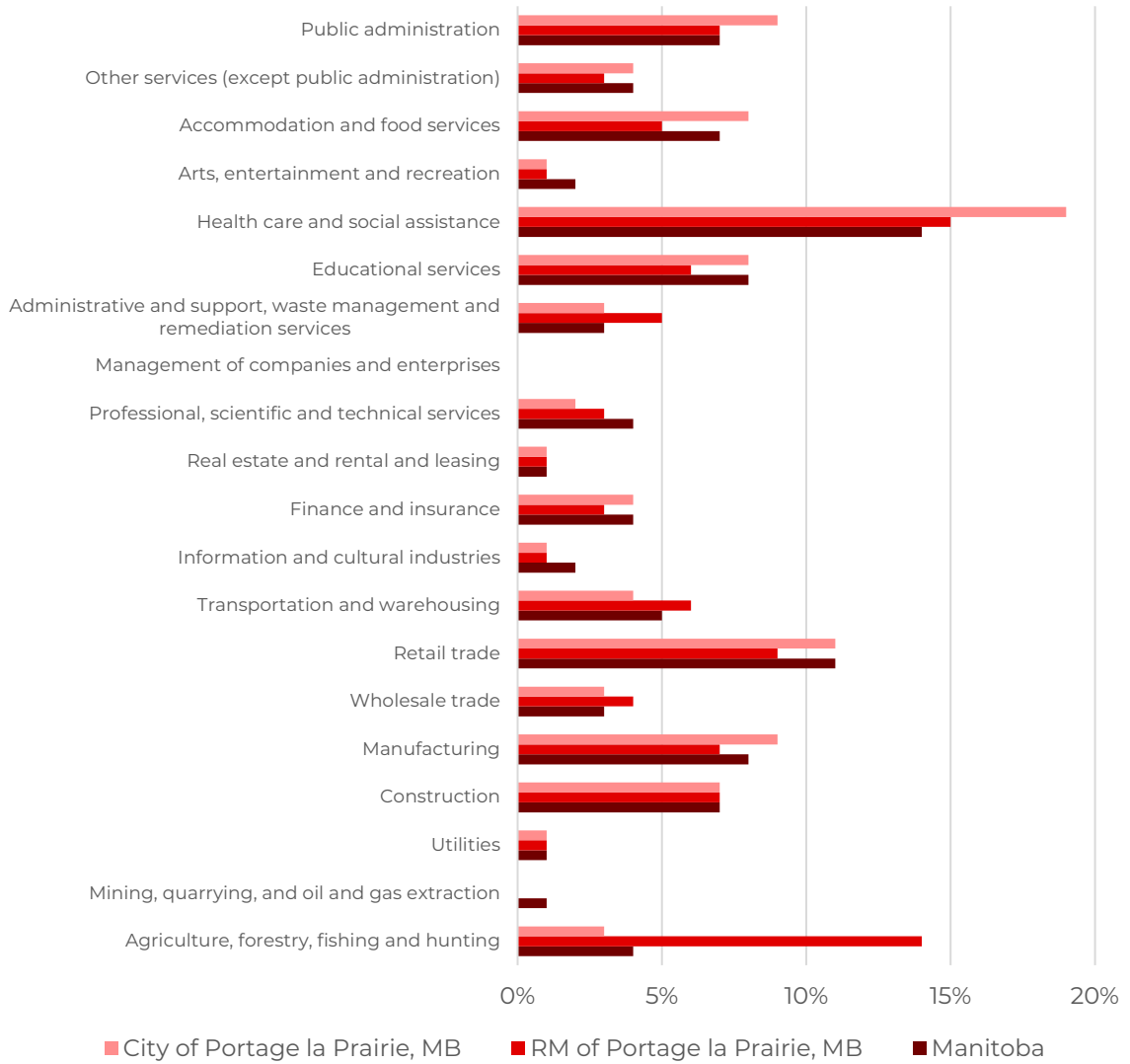


Figure 18: Estimated Labour Force by Occupation, 2020

## Labour Force by Industry, 2016



**Figure 19: Labour Force by Industry, 2016 (Statistics Canada)**

Note that this is the occupation of individuals who live in these communities, not work in these communities.

## 2.4 CASE STUDIES AND LITERATURE REVIEWS

### Rural Canada and Manitoba

#### **Rural Challenges, National Opportunity: Shaping the Future of Rural Canada (2018)**

In May 2018, the Federal of Canadian Municipalities published a report titled *Rural Challenges, National Opportunity: Shaping the Future of Rural Canada*. The report highlighted current challenges facing rural communities, including limited telecommunications infrastructure, youth retention, an aging workforce, and safety concerns.

After young people leave communities to attend postsecondary education, many do not return to rural Canada to pursue employment opportunities. As ageing rural residents retire, there are fewer potential workers to fill their positions. The report notes that to address this demographic shift, communities need to retain new residents including Indigenous people, immigrants, and young people. Municipalities can do this by providing more services like public transit, recreational opportunities, childcare, libraries, and affordable housing options.

The report includes several recommendations for the federal government to improve rural Canada. These include investing in telecommunications infrastructure, supporting a housing strategy for rural communities, connecting rural communities to international markets, supporting climate change adaptation, and enhancing safety in rural communities.

#### **State of Rural Canada 2021: Opportunities, Recovery, and Resiliency in Changing Times (2021)**

The State of Rural Canada is a biennial report published by the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation. In September 2021, the Foundation released the *State of Rural Canada 2021: Opportunities, Recovery, and Resiliency in Changing Times*. The report highlighted how the pandemic and other major shifts like climate change are impacting rural communities across the country.

The report includes a chapter focused on rural communities in Manitoba. This chapter highlighted the 'digital divide' between rural and urban residents in Manitoba, which is larger than in most other provinces. Rural residents have less access and ability to use digital technologies like cellular phone and the Internet than their urban counterparts. This divide limits rural residents' ability to participate in education and workforce opportunities. This problem was particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. The report recommends improving broadband in rural communities.

The chapter on Manitoba also emphasized that rural Manitoba is becoming increasingly diverse. This is because of the province's growing Indigenous population and because of successful immigration initiatives in rural communities. As a result, rural Manitoba is expected to grow over the next two decades. However, the report notes that many communities struggle to improve settler-Indigenous relations and create a welcoming environment for new immigrants and refugees. Racism also remains a significant challenge in many rural communities. The report recommends that rural communities undertake initiatives to support reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

## INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

**Employment as a Social Determinant of First Nations, Inuit, and Metis Health.** National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health (2017).

The report, prepared for the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, notes that while the Canadian population at large is aging (with a greater proportion now between 55 and 64 years of age), the Indigenous population is young and growing faster than any other segment of the Canadian population. Because of these trends, the Indigenous population is expected to 'comprise a significantly larger proportion of the Canadian labour market in the next decades.'

The report also notes that employment outcomes have 'remained consistently poorer for Indigenous peoples compared to the general Canadian population. They have a harder time finding work and they face higher rates of unemployment.' While outcomes are improving for Metis and Inuit populations, the report notes that the gaps in employment and labour force participation increased for First Nations peoples living on reserve during the 2006-2011 period.

Gender disparities are evident as well. Indigenous women have generally had lower employment and labour force participation rates than Indigenous men, due in part (according to the report) to increased family responsibilities for Indigenous women. However, Indigenous women had had lower levels of unemployment than Indigenous men.

Since 2011 however Indigenous women have outperformed Indigenous men and non-Indigenous men and women in labour market growth. This may be due to higher levels of education, greater access to employment in the service sector and knowledge industry, and greater entrepreneurship when compared to Indigenous men.

Indigenous youth struggle in comparison with both older workers and non-Indigenous workers.

### **Indigenous Employment and Skills Strategies in Canada. OECD Reviews on Local Job Creation, 2018.**

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is "an international organisation that works to build better policies for better lives." The organization was founded in 1961 to stimulate economic progress and world trade. Today there are 38 member countries. It draws its history from the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation, established in 1948 to help administer the Marshall Plan and support the reconstruction of Europe after World War II.

Recently, the OECD has been working to "guide employment and skills policies as well as the design of local strategies targeted to Indigenous People and integrate them with stronger economic development and entrepreneurship initiatives." Research on this topic has taken place across the globe. In Canada, the project focused on economic and social outcomes of Indigenous people, as well as key programs and policies.

The report notes that Canada's Indigenous population is increasing more rapidly than the population as a whole – from 3.8% of the population in 2006 to 4.9% in 2016. During the same time period, the urban Indigenous population increased by 59.7%. In total, 51.8% of the total Indigenous population lives in an urban setting (2016).

The report takes a case study approach in understanding how to improve labour market outcomes for Indigenous people. Most significantly, the report notes that "*programs are most successful when they are delivered and managed by Indigenous people for Indigenous people.*"

Other factors identified for continued success include:

- **Governance through partnerships and engagement:** Effective governance is critical in making decisions that are informed, open, and transparent. Continuous engagement with Indigenous organisations to discuss workforce gaps and opportunities can ensure that all levels of government (federal, provincial, and municipal) ensure on-going improvements in the effectiveness of programmes and services to meet Indigenous Peoples' needs.
- **Access to culturally-sensitive services for urban Indigenous People:** Many non-Indigenous urban service delivery organisations do not necessarily provide culturally sensitive services to Indigenous people. Furthermore, information on where and how to access programmes and services is sometimes not readily available to urban Indigenous people. This situation can be especially challenging for Indigenous people who are moving from their community into an urban area. Programmes have the greatest chance of success when delivered in a culturally-sensitive manner.
- **Local leadership:** City mayors regularly participate in meetings with Indigenous communities; therefore, they have an important role to play in fostering trust. The examples from Winnipeg, Thunder Bay, Fredericton and Calgary show a clear leadership role being taken by the municipal government. These cities have strategic policy frameworks targeted to the urban Indigenous population, providing good examples that can be used for continuous improvement in other Canadian cities.
- **Social capital and community-driven initiatives:** Social capital enhances local co-operation. The most significant improvements in the lives of Indigenous people come from within the community itself. Any policy or programme that seeks to improve the well-being of Indigenous people needs to ascertain how Indigenous people wish to define success in a local development context, based on the principles of reconciliation and self-determination.

Overall, the federal government is making strong efforts to reset the policy discourse around Indigenous People in Canada. Stronger partnerships with Indigenous communities based on open dialogue and learning can only favour better outcomes over the long term. This report makes the following recommendations: -

- Consider injecting additional flexibility into the management of Indigenous labour market and skills training programming, by **easing the reporting and accountability requirements** on Indigenous service providers and establishing longer-term funding arrangements.
- **Improve alignment of federal and provincial Indigenous labour market programming** and build on the activities and successes achieved through partnerships in the delivery of Indigenous programming, especially at the urban level.
- **Leverage the role of cities as policy spaces** of opportunity to test new ideas and pilot new ways of partnering with urban Indigenous organisations, ensuring that cities are safe, rewarding, and productive environments.
- **Improve the collection and use of Indigenous Labour Market Information (LMI)** so that issues and context are more accurately understood, potentially through increased collaborations with Indigenous groups.
- Look for opportunities to enhance skills training for Indigenous people through **targeted work experience programmes** and providing supports for life-long learning opportunities, especially for Indigenous peoples who are already working.
- **Expand access to higher education** opportunities to support Indigenous students, particularly within knowledge-based occupations.
- Increase the use of **mentorship** as a key tool for supporting Indigenous employment, improving employee retention and building cultural awareness about Indigenous people in the workplace.

- Explore the use of **social enterprises** as a pathway to economic prosperity for Indigenous people, addressing difficulties obtaining start-up funding and supporting the development of social enterprises as they balance both social and profitability goals.

## IMMIGRATION

**The Economic Impact of Immigration to Portage la Prairie.** LJS Consulting for the Portage Local Immigration Partnership. June 2021.

In June 2021, the Portage Local Immigration Partnership released a report prepared by LSJ Consulting attempting to understand the social and economic impact of immigration on the community. As noted in the Request for Proposals, the Portage LIP is “meant to enhance the coordination of services for newcomers. This means that the PLIP works to avoid duplication and pool resources to allow service providers to work towards a common goal. The Portage LIP does not work directly on attraction and retention activities. However, they coordinate community activities to enhance these efforts, such as holding working groups, conducting research, and developing and implementing actions plans.”

The objective of the project, as outlined in the Request for Proposals, was to determine to what extent immigration has benefited the city of Portage la Prairie in the following areas:

1. To what extent have immigrants, newcomers, or refugees (henceforth referred to as simply immigrants) contributed to the local economy of Portage la Prairie, particularly in the following areas:
  - a. Consumer spending
  - b. Investment
  - c. Job creation
  - d. Entrepreneurship
2. To what extent have immigrants contributed to the social and cultural wellbeing of Portage la Prairie, particularly in the following areas:
  - a. Number of Cultural or Religious Events
  - b. Variety of Ethnic Food
  - c. Contributions of time, skill, and effort to community organizations, non-profits, and/or charities.
3. To what extent have immigrants contributed to the tax base of Portage la Prairie.
4. To what extent have there been immigrant impacts on the housing market including housing prices, rental availability, and transitional housing.
5. Compare the economic impact of immigrants in Portage la Prairie to other similar sized communities in Manitoba or Canada.

Of the 67 responses received, the majority (58%) were from permanent residents while the balance identified as temporary foreign workers or international students. Roughly 40% of respondents had lived in Canada between 5 and 10 years, while just over half had lived in Canada between 1 and 5 years.

70% of respondents indicated that they had obtained a university or college degree, and a further 18% had obtained designation in skilled trades.

Generally speaking, the responses indicate that:

- Respondents have generally found employment in the local job market, with over 88% being employed.
- Respondents found it easy to obtain employment.

- Most respondents arrived having already completed a university degree.
- Respondents are generally satisfied with their job.
- Less than half of respondents were able to find employment in their profession. However, most respondents indicated that they were able to find employment that made use of their skills.
- Over half indicated that they were able to continue studying for recognition of their skills and credentials.
- Over 90% agreed with the following statement: “My community provides educational opportunities for newcomers.” However, no similar question was asked with regard to employment opportunities for newcomers.

Results are available in greater detail in Appendix D of this report.

**DIVERSEcity Community Resources Society. Orientation, Retention and Promotion: A Guide for Building Welcoming and Inclusive Workplaces for New Immigrant Workers. 2018.**

**Orientation, Retention and Promotion** is a document intended to ‘support employers in the orientation, retention, and promotion of new immigrant workers.’ The initiative includes a guidebook, website, social media, and training.

The Guide addresses this fundamental question: “Why is it important for employers to improve their ability to orient, retain, and promote new immigrant workers?” The Guide is focused on the British Columbia context, but is applicable across the country.

The Guide notes that generally speaking, we have a labour and skills shortage resulting from increased retirements and relatively low birth rates (188 out of 224 countries). At the time the report was prepared, 8% of the BC workforce was at retirement age, and 70% of all job openings will result from people leaving the workforce.

In addition, the Guide notes that:

- Our aging population and a surging retirement rate will result in “unprecedented job vacancies.”
- Majority of immigrants today are skilled or economic immigrants.
- Although Canada accepts roughly 300,000 new immigrants each year, this may not be enough to meet growing workforce demand.
- Immigrants will select their destination based on where they see the strongest prospects for employment, career development, and success. If finding meaningful work is too difficult, they will not come or not stay.
- Policies reflecting Recruitment, Training, Career development, and Staff management must be continuously reviewed and adapted. “Different cultures, communication, and work styles need to be better understood.” These issues should be reflected in both policies as well as vision/mission/mandate statements.

In order to retain and promote new immigrant workers, the Guide draws the following conclusion:

To attract and retain workers, it is essential that . . . employers provide new immigrants with work environments that are inclusive and supportive. To continue to attract and improve retention of new immigrant workers, policies related to recruitment, training, career development and staff management must be continuously reviewed and adapted. Different cultures, communication, and work styles need to be better understood.

One case study referenced in the Guide describes the efforts undertaken by Shaw Communications, recognized as one of Canada's Best Diversity Employers in 2018. Among other initiatives, Shaw participates in monthly Employer Cafes for new Canadian jobseekers, facilitated by Manitoba Start.

The toolkit, Hiring and Retaining Skilled Immigrants, is available at [www.cphrbc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/itiguide.pdf](http://www.cphrbc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/itiguide.pdf).

The Guide offers the following suggestions to increase the likelihood of a successful employment:

- **Advertising the job.** Know where potential employees are, what they read, and who they talk to. Advertise in locations where immigrants are now.
- **Screening applications.** Different cultures may approach the application process differently. Keep that in mind when reviewing applications and don't unnecessarily screen out applications that may be unfamiliar in format or content.
- **Interviewing and Testing.** Use plain language and understand body context and style.
- **Reference checking.** Acknowledge that references may require translation. Credentials can be evaluated through a number of online services.
- **Offering the job.** Use plain language and be clear about expectations.
- **Give feedback.** If the candidate is unsuccessful, providing feedback regarding all aspects of the process is helpful.

Finally, the Guide identifies **Benefits of a Culturally Diverse Workforce** including:

- Reduction in skill shortages.
- Access New Markets and Customers.
- Access International Markets.
- Stronger Referral Network.
- Improved Customer Service.
- Expertise and Experience.
- Dynamic and Successful Workplace.
- Reduced Cost/Increased Success for International Projects.

### **Surrey Local Immigration Partnership (prepared by Human Capital Strategies). Immigrant Labour Market Research Project. Final Report (November 2015).**

In 2015, the City of Surrey, British Columbia would receive roughly 7,000 immigrants every year. The community recognized that immigrants often have difficulty integrating into the local economy, and that access to employment supports is critical for successful immigrant settlement and workforce integration.

The Surrey Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) represents a committee of approximately thirty organizations. The report was intended to identify "actionable solutions and practices" to facilitate gainful employment in Surrey, with the findings being used to inform the LIP's Strategic Plan.

The Goals of the study are to:

- Obtain an understanding of Surrey's current and looming labour market needs.
- Understand the barriers and challenges faced by Surrey employers in their attempts to recruit, hire and retain new immigrant and refugee workers.
- Understand the successful practices of Surrey employers who have and are currently recruiting, hiring and retaining new immigrant and refugee workers.

- Understand the successful practices, supports, and key steps taken by new immigrants and refugees who have successfully entered the labour market.
- Identify the gaps in service between the needs and demands of immigrants and refugees and the recruitment/employment demands and expectations of employers in Surrey.
- Identify improved means and methods of connecting employers with local immigrant talent.

The Surrey LIP report was based on primary research involving 174 participants, a literature review covering 30 reports, and an employer survey. The conclusions below (in italics) are provided directly from the report.

- *Nearly one-third of employer respondents are immigrants themselves*
- *The **majority (69%) of employers surveyed are forecasting employee growth** in the next three years with biggest increases seen in **business generalist roles and skilled trades***
- *The vast majority of employers employ immigrants and **recruit through referrals** from their existing employees*
- *While over 70% of employer respondents have a workforce diversity policy, **only 35% proactively recruit immigrants***
- *There is a **strong desire by employers for assistance** in verifying foreign credentials, recruiting qualified immigrants, training grants and information on legal working requirements for immigrants*
- ***Less than one third of employer respondents have worked with an immigrant-serving organization (ISO) in the past***

Key findings from Employer Interviews include:

- ***Employers rely heavily on online postings** (not always accessible to new immigrants) and referrals from existing employees to recruit new hires. In cases where the existing employee base has a high number of immigrants, referrals tend to result in more immigrant hires.*
- *Most employers have training in place for new hires but **none of it is specifically designed to accommodate the needs of new Canadians.***
- ***Employers are not formally tracking the ratio of immigrant to Canadian-born employees** and estimates range from 10% to 80% of the workforce.*
- *There was general **acknowledgement among employers that immigrants work hard** despite (or perhaps because of) challenges including limited English language skills, a lack of awareness of Canadian workplace culture, minimal Canadian work experience and difficulty matching foreign qualifications to their Canadian equivalent.*
- *Finally, 'awareness' was a significant theme among employers. Employers reported that while they were aware of some support programs, there were many programs and services that were simply 'off their radar'. **Many employers in the survey and focus group demonstrated a commitment to actively seeking ways to enhance their awareness of available programs and services as a result of their participation in this study.***

Key findings from in-depth interviews with immigrants include:

- *The majority of respondents said that they **chose to come to Surrey to join other family members** and because of Surrey's **reputation for good schools** and **relatively affordable housing**.*
- *Many interviewees said that while they had **hoped to continue the careers they began in their home country**, there were **few opportunities to do so**. This resulted in many new immigrants taking what they called '**survival**' work – just to **make ends meet**. A common theme was that the immigration 'points system' gave them hope that skills and experience*

gained in their home country would be in demand in Canada. Often, this proved not to be the case.

- Interviewees said that, for the most part, they did not reach out to their respective ethnocultural community for help in securing employment. Instead, they **tended to seek help from their professional or religious communities**. None of the interviewees reported experiencing any active discrimination.
- When asked about their awareness of immigrant programs and services, many were surprised to learn that there were **'so many' organizations willing to help**.
- When asked about what they felt would break down some of the barriers to employment in their chosen field, many said they would be **willing to volunteer** if doing so would allow them to earn Canadian experience.

Finally, immigrant interviewees suggested that **more coordination and better communication among ISOs and immigrants** (especially new immigrants) would be a significant benefit to them.

Key findings from eight interviews with immigrant-serving organizations include:

- It is more common for ISOs to reach out to employers than for employers to approach ISOs.
- Mandates among ISOs differ: settlement, employability skills (i.e. language), credentials.
- It is challenging to follow up on individuals once they have been hired. As a result, ISOs prefer to work with employers. It is important to build relationships with supportive employers.
- Certain occupations offer a 'higher level of successful workforce attachment' than others, particularly entry-level positions in hospitality, health care, retail, manufacturing, IT and others.

Key findings from the Focus Groups: Employer, Immigrants, and ISOs include:

- **Immigrants** continued to meet informally to support each other formally and in the job search process
  - Create more opportunities for job shadowing, volunteer work, and internships
  - Employers should be encouraged to increase diversity in the workplace
  - Federal Internship for Newcomers Program should be expanded
  - Ontario's Career Edge language training initiative is a good model
- **Employers** suggested that networking offered the greatest opportunities, including:
  - *Tapping into the hidden job market*
  - *Meeting potential employers and connecting with them 'at a personal level'*
  - *Learning about work culture*
  - *Meeting fellow ex-pats*
- General employer comments include:
  - Employers need to make sure there is a workplace culture onboarding process
  - Help new immigrants build professional networks and find local opportunities
  - It is ultimately the responsibility of the candidate – learning English in particular

### Themes of Key Challenges

- *Language profile is a significant issue*
- *Unfamiliarity with Canadian work culture*
- *There is a need for additional training and internship opportunities*
- *Employer Capacities and Knowledge*
- *Lack of Central Coordination*
- *Entrepreneurship and Self-Employment Opportunities*
- *Funding Challenges*

Recommendations and Conclusions from the Research Project for the Surrey LIP include:

- *Surrey LIP should strengthen coordination of immigrant employment/employer related programs and services*
- *Partner with Surrey School District to enhance English language training*
- *Encourage employers to adopt on-site language training strategies*
- *Create a Surrey Labour Shortage Task Force*
- *Surrey LIP to create an employer/employee jobs portal*
- *Strengthen business sector involvement in the Surrey LIP*
- *Engage Local Professional Immigrant Networks*
- *Host an annual Surrey Immigrant Employment Conference or Summit*
- *Increase employer/industry awareness of ISOs and capacity for employing immigrants*
- *Leverage increased funding for immigrant employment strategies*
- *Encourage and increase immigrant development in entrepreneurship and self-employment*
- *Advocate for and work with ISOs, governments, and industry to increase immigrant bridging and internship programs*
- *Pursue opportunities for further research on immigrant employment in Surrey*

An analysis of British Columbia-specific literature also identified a number of barriers to finding and maintaining meaningful employment. Although the literature referenced BC studies, it is reasonable to assume that generally speaking, the findings are relevant to the Manitoba context. Barriers identified in the literature include:

- Credential recognition
- Regulatory and licensing barriers including Canadian work experience requirement
- Conscious and unconscious bias in hiring and promoting
- Undervaluing international experience
- Lack of local networks (most employers use networks for hiring)
- Service delivery organizations offer services that do not meet the needs of highly skilled professional newcomers
- Inadequate pre-arrival information (licensing, credentialing, market demand info)
- Non-inclusive workplaces
- Employer perception of immigrants as 'risky'
- Racism

### **Themes Identified in the Literature**

- Larger employers (including public sector, unionized) are more likely to have formal immigrant recruitment policies in place. These employers employ 'best practices.'
- Need to communicate the positive impact of immigrant employees on the local economy more clearly, to residents as well as businesses.
- Immigrants need to be better informed about labour market conditions, employment rules, regulations, and timelines prior to their arrival in Canada. Government is responsible for providing this information.
- Employers agree that immigrant workers have good work ethics. Employers need to ensure that immigrants understand business and company needs – understand the culture of work. Employers need to acknowledge and address that racism continues to exist in the workplace.
- All levels of government, industries, regions need to work together to address issues they are responsible for.

- Employers do not believe that credential recognition process supports labour mobility and creates barriers for workers and employers. They perceive that professional bodies continue to be a barrier.
- Employers suggest that technology be incorporated into hiring immigrants in their home countries (e.g. Zoom interview).
- Small and medium sized businesses need more help than large enterprises with HR issues including credential recognition support, language and information training, etc.
- Prepare and update an inventory of employer labour market needs.

Employers indicated that they require ongoing programs to support workplace skill development and educate immigrants about employers requirements.

- Employers need an Employer Resource Centre.

Promising Practices identified in the Research Project include:

- The Surrey Board of Trade's HR Solutions for Immigrant Talent Initiative (2013), which helped match needs of employers with skills of newcomers through partnerships between SMEs and local trade school. The initiative involved workshops, resources navigation, training and immigrant HR support for employers with a mobile HR specialist.
- The Library Champions Program. Library Champions are immigrants who participate as volunteers in a three-month community outreach project. Champions connect with newcomers to raise awareness of library resources. The Program builds communication and public speaking skills in particular.
- Provincial Immigrant Networks. PINs are 'established groups of internationally trained workers.' They can be occupation/industry-specific (Community Planners), ethnic specific (Indian Planners), or geography-specific (Neighbourhood Planners for example). The Networks help to make connections between employers and potential employees.
- Career Bridge, a program sponsored by CareerEdge (a social enterprise) provides 4-12 month paid internships in professional environments.
- Other relevant initiatives include:
  - Skills Connect
  - Connector Program
  - Meeting Employers
  - Mini Job Fair
  - MAPLE 2.0 unpaid mentorship or placement program

## YOUTH

**Strategies for a New World of Work: 13 Ways to Modernize Youth Employment in Canada.** Report from the Expert Panel on Youth Employment, 2017.

The report, released in 2017, reflects the work of an expert panel asked 'to assess the barriers young people encounter in their job searches, and to examine innovative practices used by governments, non-governmental organizations, and employers to improve labour market performance.' The research included data analysis as well as interviews with 358 organizations across the country as well as online surveys, social media, and round table conversations (focus groups). Recommended Actions include:

- Enhance the YES and Skills Link programs to provide additional supports to at-risk youth.
- Expand Canada Summer Jobs to Canada Youth Jobs.

- Focus on Indigenous youth, both in urban and rural/First Nations environments, including encouraging entrepreneurialism.
- Consider devolving federal programming to the Provinces.
- Enhance the job bank using civic technology.
- Hire more young people directly, including those in rural and remote areas where employment opportunities are fewer.
- Engage employers and encourage mentorship.
- Update labour standards to reflect the type of work youth are often engaged in.
- Broaden employment insurance eligibility.
- Develop additional supports for young entrepreneurs.
- Enhance the monthly Labour Force Survey to provide better data and understanding of the issues.

Although it appears as though the intended audience for this document is broad, the recommendations appear to be targeted towards the Government of Canada and provide high-level policy direction rather than on-the-ground strategies and recommendations.

**Improving Employment Outcomes for Vulnerable Youth.** Burns Memorial Fund (Merrill Cooper, Guyn Cooper Research Associates), 2018.

This research report is intended to improve employment outcomes “for young people who face serious barriers to employment and are at risk of long-term social exclusion.” The report notes that young people are “increasingly challenged to find lasting and meaningful work” due to factors including changing labour market conditions, automation, the rise of precarious employment and the “gig economy,” mismatches between supply and demand, etc.

The purpose of the report is to “provide information to inform the development of employment programming for youth aged 15 to 24 years and especially those aged 20 to 24 who face multiple barriers to entering and succeeding in the workforce, and are at risk of social and economic exclusion.” In addition to quantifying the need in Calgary (where the report is focused,) the report:

- Describes barriers to employment faced by these youth and best/promising practices in youth employment initiatives.
- Suggests indicators of movement towards employment that can be used to track a participant’s progress over time.

Which youth are vulnerable? The ‘vast majority’ of youth not in education, training, or already employed are not vulnerable to social exclusion. Men tend to be more vulnerable than women, particularly as resource, construction, and manufacturing industries (with traditional higher male participation) tend to be less stable.

Canada’s Expert Panel on Youth Employment identified barriers to finding and maintaining employment faced by Canadian youth as a whole in their 2017 noted earlier. To summarize, the Panel “paid special attention to vulnerable youth, including Indigenous youth, youth with disabilities, recent immigrant youth, and youth without a post-secondary education and concluded that the key six key barriers for youth in finding and maintaining employment in Canada are:

- a lack of labour market information for youth and a lack of employment data for policy-makers.
- a perceived reluctance by employers across Canada to hire young people.

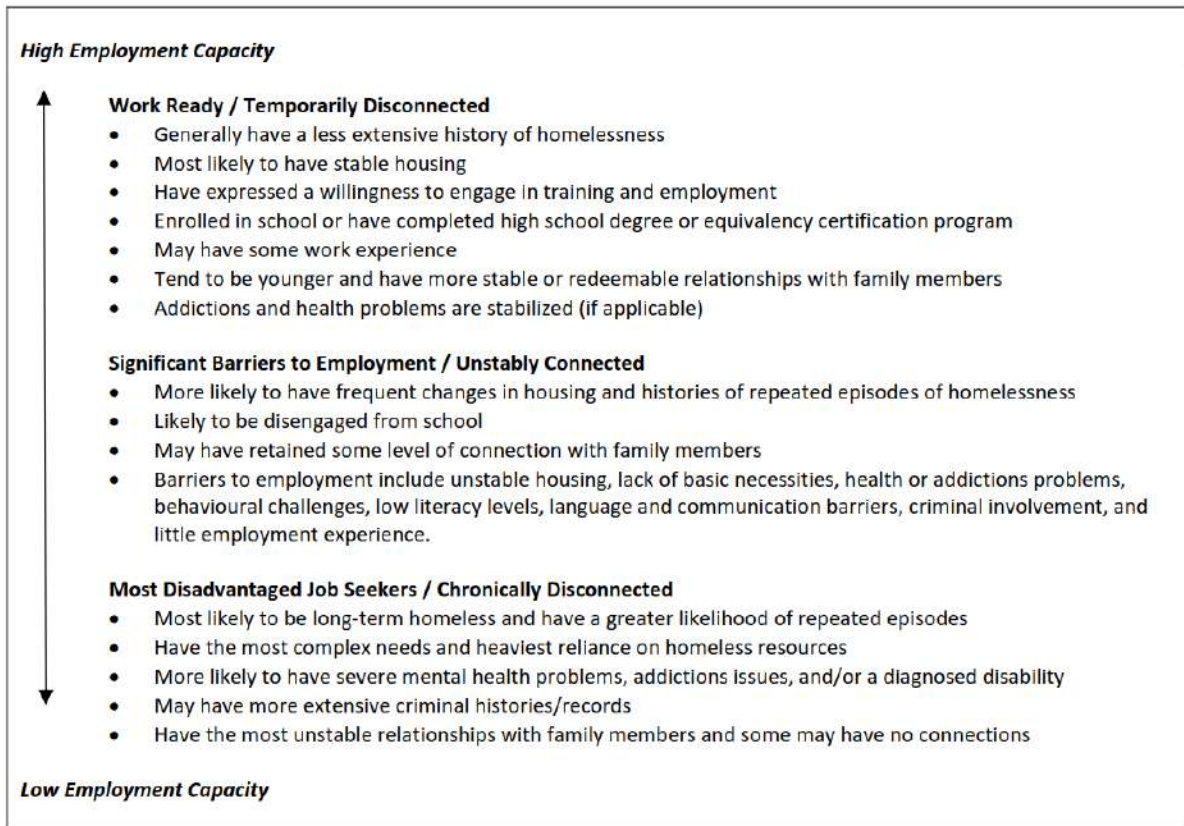
- uncertainty faced by young people about both a rapidly changing world of work and an increasing number of young people who find themselves in less-stable part-time and/or contract employment.
- inadequate preparation for the workplace and requisite life skills to succeed.
- systemic and indirect discrimination experienced by marginalized youth.
- a lack of resources for Indigenous youth to lead and positively impact their communities.”

To address these barriers, the report identified best practices in employment programs serving vulnerable youth. Generally speaking, the four best practices that apply to all types of workplace employment and training programs (not just youth, immigrants, or Indigenous people) are:

1. assessing employee needs and skills.
2. determining employer business priorities and job performance requirements.
3. providing training aligned with both employer and employee needs.
4. providing supports to ensure employee retention including ongoing skills and learning opportunities.

The report also refers to work done by Fletcher and Muller (2015) that describe a spectrum that they refer to as the “Employment Readiness Continuum.” The support and interventions required will be different depending on whether or not the individual’s employment capacity is high, low, or somewhere in between, as noted in the following chart.

The report notes that those exhibiting characteristics of the “Most Disadvantaged Job Seekers/Chronically Disconnected,” including homelessness and mental health challenges, cannot be served with employment training, suggesting that “the needs of these difficult to serve youth are met with a comprehensive, youth-centred approach that combines employment training with several other necessary components: housing, education, and intensive personal support.”



There are three models which may address vulnerable youth in the mid- to top end of the spectrum. These models include the “Foyer Model,” social enterprise programs, and supportive employment training.

The Foyer Model could be described as the “Housing First” model for homeless youth and is not referenced further in this report.

Supportive employment training initiatives “work to enhance the employability of young people who face multiple challenges integrating into the labour market” but are not as challenged as those considered to be Chronically Disconnected in the table above. They target youth with ‘low human and social capital and provide them with the necessary skills to prepare them to successfully compete for and keep jobs’ – a combination of hard technical skills and soft skills that focus on work readiness (including job search and interview strategies, conflict management, etc. The intent is to provide workplace, life, and essential skills training into one package that also addresses counselling, coaching, and ongoing mentoring.

There are three types of supportive employment training programs depending on the capacity and needs of the individual youth, including:

- **Employment readiness preparation**, including daily life skills training, independent living skills, and social skills training.
- **Skills training development**, including job search skills and work certifications.
- **Employment placement facilitation**, offering work experience placements.

Canadian case studies outlined in the report also provide ‘intensive personal supports’ including support workers, available to participants 24/7 to provide support for any issue the young person is facing.

**Social Enterprises** are identified as a 'promising way' of employing and improving workplace skills of vulnerable youth, particularly those who are less disadvantaged. As this is a relatively new strategy there is little long-term data available, and most information is anecdotal. However, organizations such as the McCreary Centre Society (Vancouver) and the Jasper Place Wellness Centre (Edmonton) may be worthy of further research. Jasper Place runs 'several interrelated businesses including junk removal and mattress recycling' which provides entry-level jobs to hundreds of jobseekers looking for first-time or stable employment for whatever reason. Social enterprises tend to be financially self-supporting, although they may require initial start-up funding.

Examples of Employment Program case studies referenced include:

- **Train for Trades**, provided by Choices for Youth in St. John's, Newfoundland, which targets youth aged 16 to 21 and provides safety training and a 42-week work placement accompanied by life skills training. Work placements are with the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation completing home energy efficiency retrofits. 24/7 support including housing and mental health care is available.
- **BladeRunners**, provided by Aboriginal Community Career and Employment Services Society in British Columbia, which targets vulnerable youth and provides employment readiness programs for the construction and hospitality industries. 90% of participants are Indigenous and traditions are embedded in the program.
- **Toronto Youth Job Corps**, provided by JVS Toronto, West Neighbourhood House, and West Scarborough Neighbourhood Community Centre, which connects youth aged 16 to 29 to the workplace. TYJC is administered by the City of Toronto and delivered by community agencies selected through a request for proposals. The programs served 400-500 youth in 2017/2018. The program includes in-house workshops, community painting projects that simulate work environments, up to 24 weeks paid work experience with employers, and individualised client-centred case management.
- **Pay for Success demonstration project**, provided by multiple partners in Manitoba and Nova Scotia and funded through Employment and Social Development Canada, which utilizes a 'pay for performance' model meaning that the service provider receives outcome-based funding depending on long-term retention and for helping job-seekers achieve milestones. The projects involved needs assessment and service planning, employment preparation, and placement and retention.

**Conversations with the Community: Improving Youth Employment Outcomes.** Community Foundation of Mississauga, 2012.

In 2011, the Community Foundation of Mississauga completed a community analysis with results presented in a Vital Signs report. The analysis indicated that 21% of Peel Region residents between the ages of 18 and 25 were unemployed – a rate that the community found surprisingly and unacceptably high. In response, the Community Foundation held a Community Knowledge Forum to discuss how the community could 'fulfill our obligation to provide youth with sustainable jobs.' In order to address the issue, the Forum identified the following strategies:

- **Mentorship and On-the-Job Training.** Participants at the Forum agreed that the "willingness (of employers) to mentor young people and allow them to develop and refine their abilities can make a real difference in the employment outcomes for those who are starting their careers." Although educational institutions can help students develop appropriate skills, real-life workplace experience is an invaluable asset. Mentorship programs can also help employers

access talented individuals more efficiently and effectively than through traditional recruitment processes.

- **Education.** Career apprenticeship and cooperative education programs can be a great benefit to students and help inform their career decisions. Secondary schools can help coordinate this process. These programs can help provide real-world experience, encourage familiarity and opportunities with trades, and dispel misconceptions about the 'automatic employability' associated with university education. Additional programming also helps to ensure that students complete secondary school rather than dropping out due to lack of interest or other factors.
- **At Risk Youth:** The Forum defined at-risk youth as those with unstable home lives and/or unidentified mental health issues. These youth have specific needs in terms of securing and maintaining employment. The forum discussed the shared responsibility and balance between individual and societal responsibility in caring for and supporting these young people.
- **Competition for Jobs:** High jobless rates can have a lasting impact on the quality of life for a generation of young people. Not finding the right job can also cause frustration and high job turnover, ultimately resulting in lower incomes and unstable tenures. Youth are also facing additional competition for entry-level positions from new Canadians.
- **Access to Work:** Challenges in finding employment are significantly increased when a physical disability is an issue. Life skills training as well as reliable and affordable public transportation can help support successful outcomes.

#### **The State of Mentoring in Canada: Areas for Action.** Mentor Canada, 2021.

Mentor Canada, launched in 2019 by Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada and regional partners, is a "coalition of organizations that provide youth mentoring (in order to) build sector capacity to expand access to mentoring across Canada." Mentor Canada reports that children and youth who were mentored were more likely to report better outcomes, including:

- Report good or excellent mental health
- Feel that they belong in their local community
- Have completed high school
- Have pursued further education after high school
- Be studying and/or employed
- Be interested in mentoring others.

The report noted that just over half of all respondents recalled having a mentor between the ages of 6 to 18. Only 16% of respondents had a formal mentor, while 40% had informal mentors. 44% did not have any mentor.

Mentorship generally has been proven to improve outcomes in a number of areas with regard to youth, immigrants, and Indigenous people. With regard to youth specifically, Mentor Canada has outlined the following Areas for Action:

1. Expand mentoring programs' capacity to meet the needs of our young people;
2. Support and enhance innovations, including e-mentoring, strengthening social connections, and the identification and recruitment of mentors;
3. Bringing mentoring opportunities to young people in places where they are at; and
4. Cultivate a culture of mentoring in our communities.

The report concludes by presenting a number of Recommended Actions to encourage the mentorship of youth in Canada, some of which are reflected specifically in this report.

# 3.0 WHAT WE HEARD

Between June and November 2021, a series of surveys, interviews, and focus groups were conducted with residents and employers in Portage la Prairie. The following chapter summarizes the responses received and provides context for the recommendations which follow.

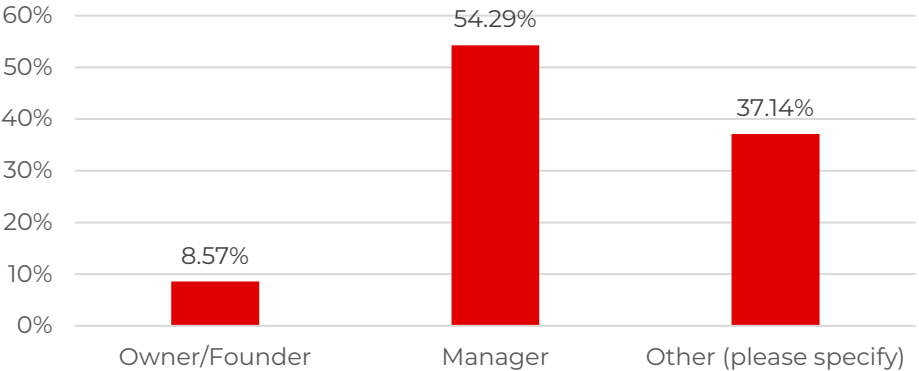
## 3.1 EMPLOYER SURVEY

### Background

In June of 2021, an online survey was distributed to employers in Portage la Prairie through the Portage la Prairie and District Chamber of Commerce and Portage Regional Economic Development. In total, 23 questions were asked and 45 employers responded to the survey. Questions and comments are summarized in the data below.

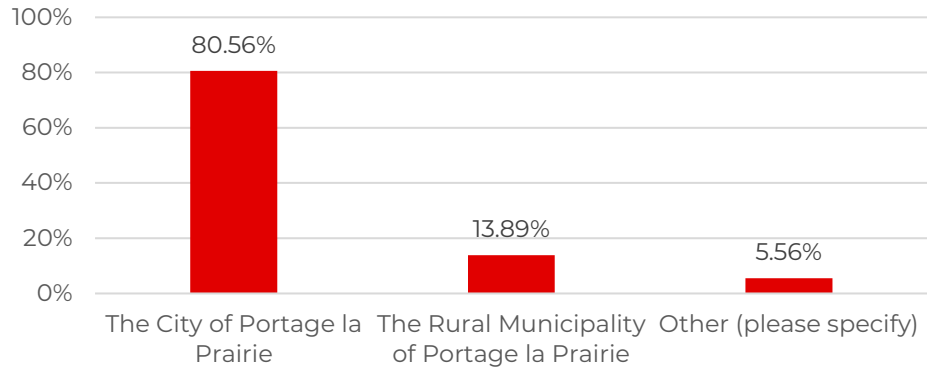
#### Q1. What is your role in your organization?

Thirty-five (35) respondents answered this question. Just over half of respondents (19) indicated that they were a manager while three (3) indicated that they were an owner/founder. Under the 'Other' category, respondents included a variety of answers including human resources, executive assistant, director, and coordinator.



#### Q2. Where is your organization located?

A total of thirty-six (36) respondents answered this question. The majority said their organization was located in the City of Portage la Prairie. Five (5) individuals said their organization was in the RM of Portage and two (2) said it was located elsewhere.

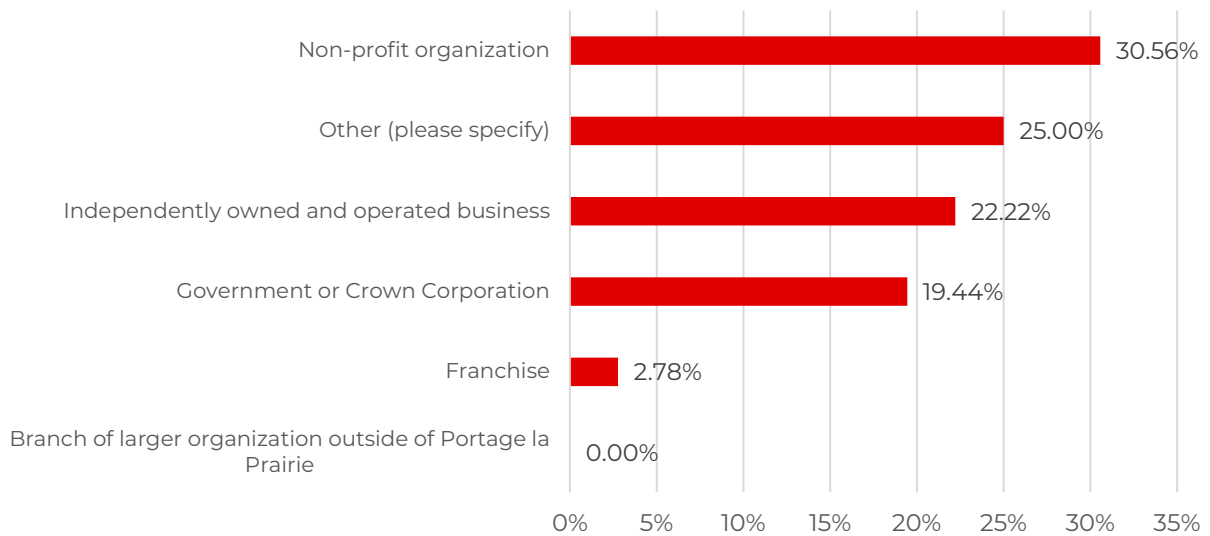


**Q3. What type of organization do you work at?**

Thirty-six (36) respondents answered this question. Eleven (11) worked at non-profit organizations, while another eight (8) worked at independently owned and operated businesses. Seven (7) worked for government or crown corporations.

Nine (9) said they worked at 'Other'. Some of the responses for this category included:

- Restaurant
- Health care
- Regional health authority
- School division

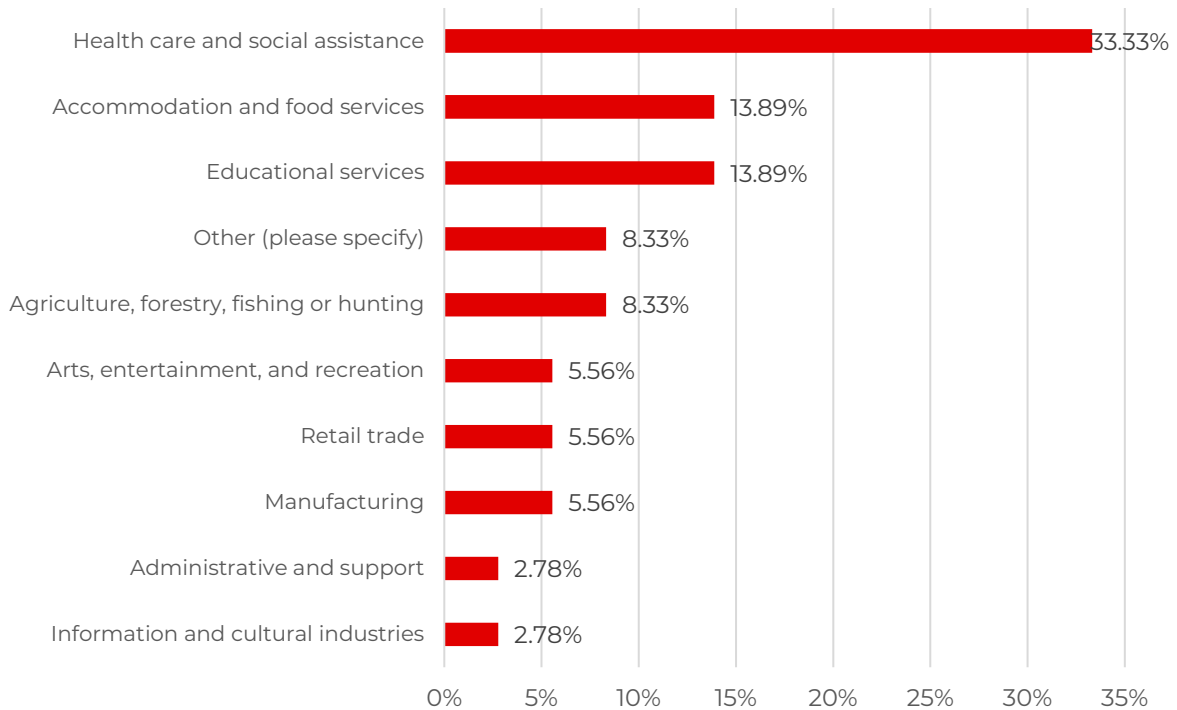


**Q4. Which of the following best describes the industry is your organization in?**

Respondents were asked which industry best described their organization based on the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) used by Statistics Canada. Categories with zero responses were not included below. Thirty-six (36) respondents answered this question.

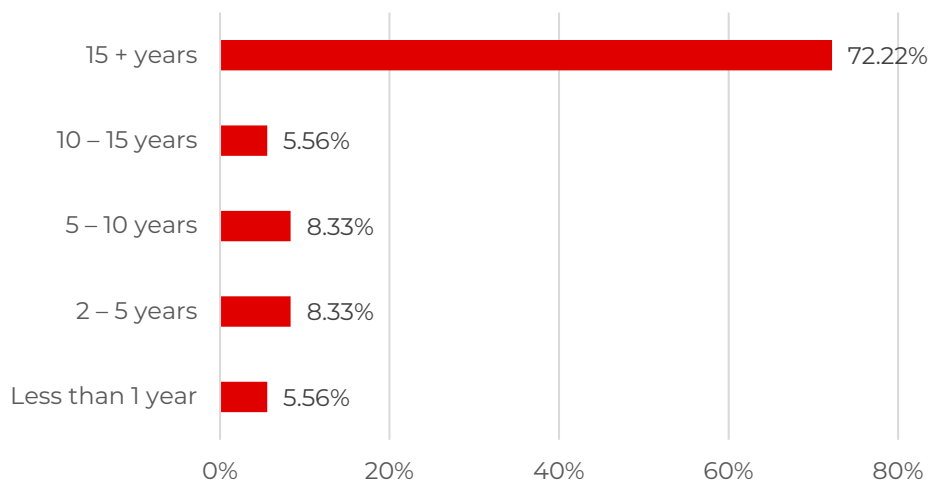
The most common industry was health care and social assistance, which twelve (12) respondents selected. Following this, accommodation and food services and educational services, which each had five (5) respondents. Three (3) individuals selected 'Other' and included the following responses:

- Child care
- Real estate
- Commercial cleaning



**Q5: How long has your organization operated in Portage la Prairie?**

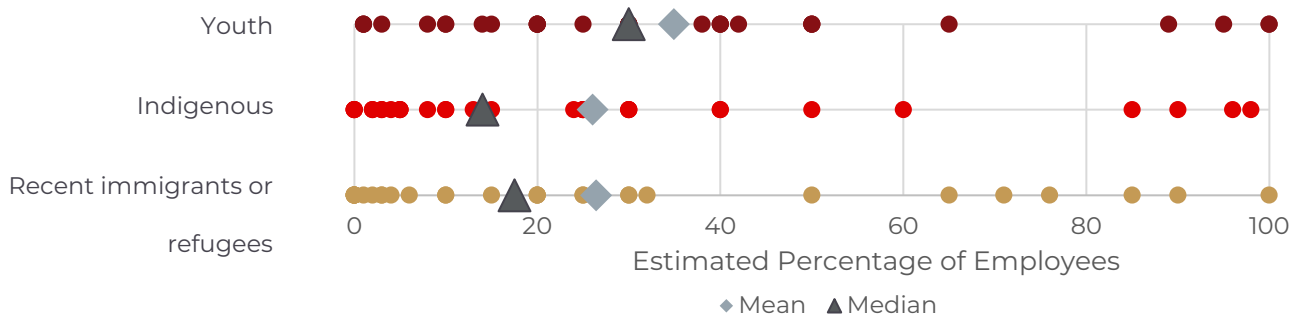
Most respondents said their organization had operated in Portage la Prairie for fifteen years or more.



**Q6 – 8: In Portage la Prairie, what proportion of your staff do you estimate identify as Youth, Indigenous, or Recent Immigrants?**

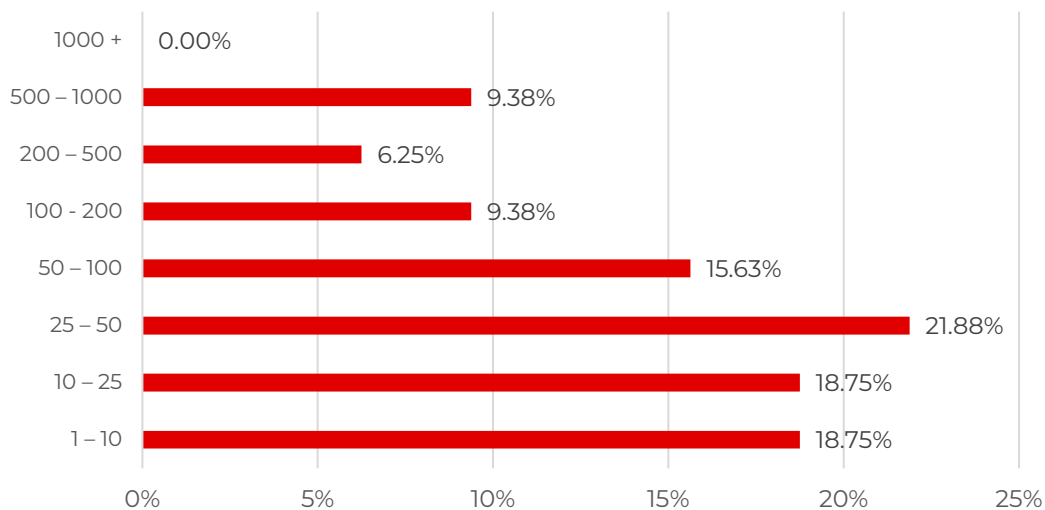
In three questions, respondents were asked what proportion of their employees identified as either: (1) immigrants or refugees, (2) Indigenous, and (3) youth under the age of 30. On the following figure, each dot represents one response. The grey diamond is the mean while the grey triangle is the median for each question.

The average and median responses, respectively, for the estimated proportion of youth were 35 percent and 30 percent. For Indigenous people, the average and median responses, respectively, were 26 percent and 14 percent. For recent immigrants or refugees, the average and median responses, respectively, were 26 percent and 18 percent. On average, roughly a third of the individuals employed by the businesses were youth, while a quarter were either Indigenous or recent immigrants or refugees.



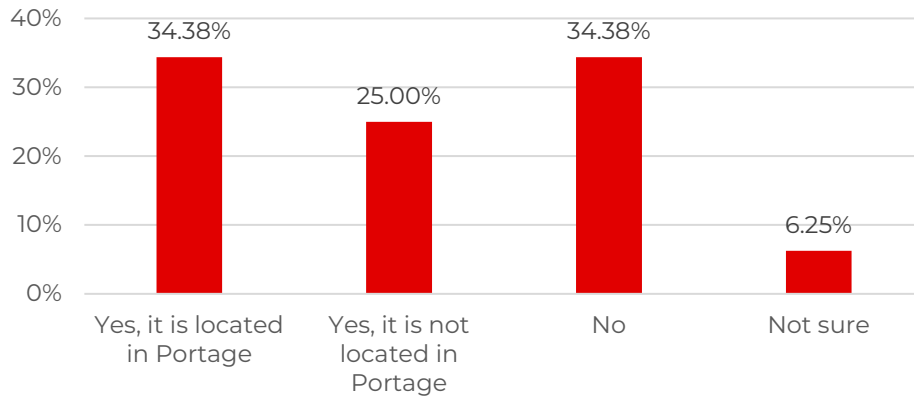
**Q9: How many individuals does your organization employ in Portage la Prairie? (excluding contractors)**

Thirty-two (32) respondents provided an answer to this question. The most common response was between 25 to 50 employees, which seven (7) respondents selected. Six (6) respondents selected between 1 to 10 employees, while another six (6) selected between 10 and 25.



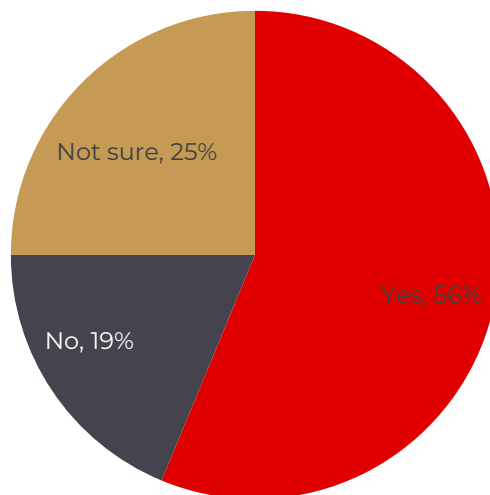
**Q10. Does your organization have a dedicated Human Resources staff and/or department?**

Thirty-two (32) respondents provided answers to this question. More than half said their organization had a dedicated Human Resources staff and or/department, while roughly a third said their organization did not. Two (2) respondents did not know.



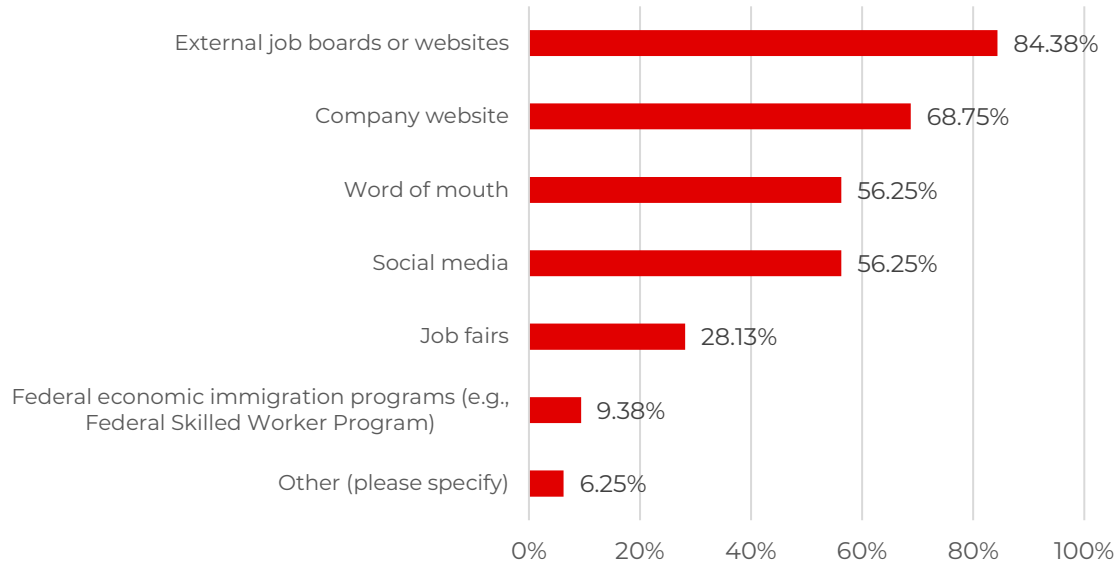
**Q11. Does your organization hire independent contractors in Portage la Prairie?**

Thirty-two (32) employers responded to this question. More than half said their organization hires independent contractors in Portage la Prairie.



**Q12. How does your organization primarily recruit new employees? Please check all that apply.**

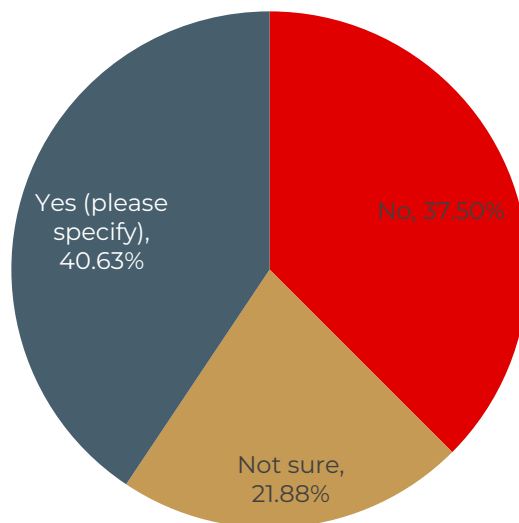
Thirty-two (32) employers responded to this question. Twenty-seven (27) said their organization uses external job boards or websites, while twenty-two (22) said they use their company website to advertise jobs. Word of mouth and social media were the next most common methods, with eighteen (18) responses each. Two (2) employer said they used other sources, which included government job boards and putting up job postings in individual businesses in Portage la Prairie.



**Q13. Does your organization have hiring policies that aim to increase diversity in your workforce? If yes, please explain.**

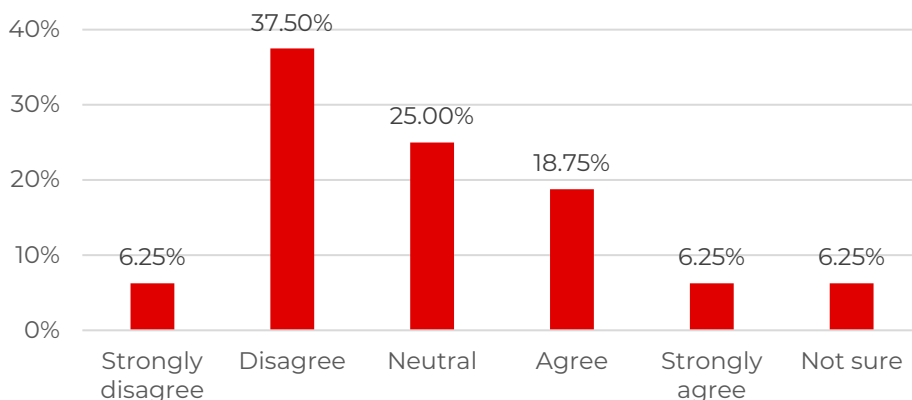
Thirty-two (32) employers responded to this question. Thirteen (13) said their organization did have hiring policies to increase diversity, while twelve (12) said they did not.

Employers with hiring policies to increase diversity were asked to explain the policies. Multiple organizations had Indigenous employment strategies or programs, including one program targeted at Indigenous high school students. Other employers said they actively recruit Indigenous people, women, newcomers, and people with disabilities. Some also noted that applicants can self-identify as part of the employment process.



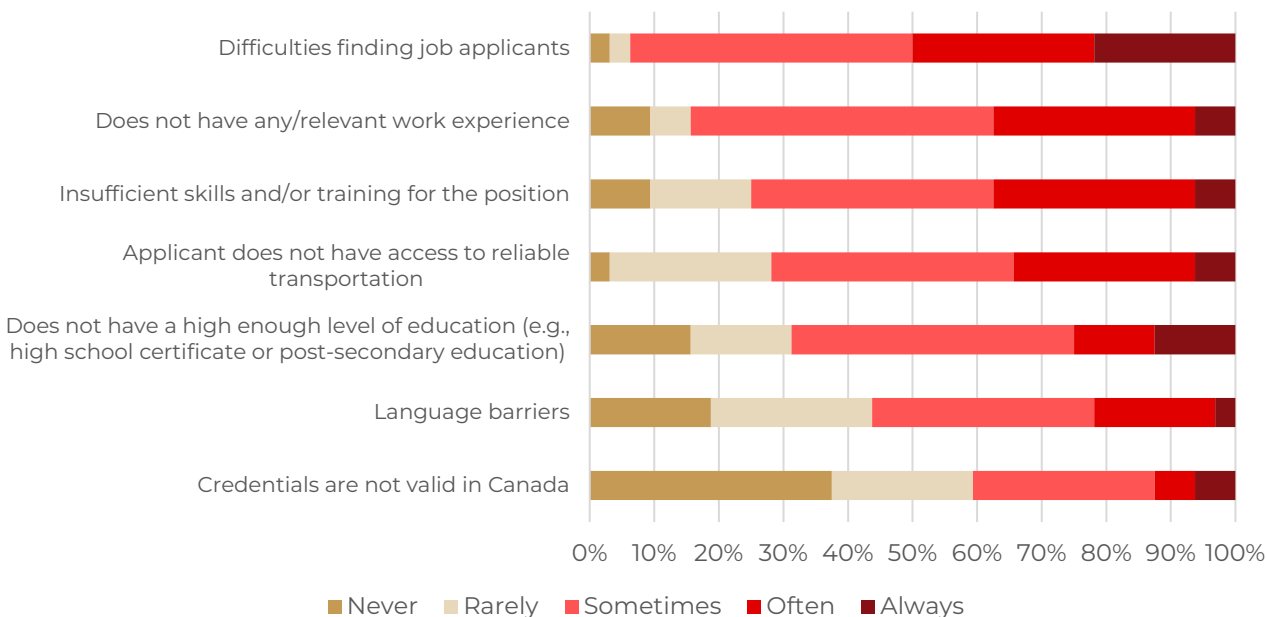
**Q14. Please rate the following statement: Portage la Prairie’s labour force adequately meets my organization’s current labour needs?**

Thirty-two (32) employers responded to this question. Fourteen (14) employers—which represent more than forty percent—disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that Portage la Prairie adequately meets their organization’s current labour needs. Eight (8) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.



**Q15. Please rate how often you experience the following barriers when hiring or retaining new employees in Portage la Prairie:**

Thirty-two (32) employers responded to this question. The most common barrier was difficulties finding job applicants, which sixteen (16) respondents said was always or often a barrier. Twelve (12) employers also said applicants not having relevant work experience was always or often an issue, while another twelve (12) said applicants always or often had insufficient skills or training for the position. The least common barrier was invalid credentials, which nineteen (19) employers said was either never or rarely an issue.



### **Q16. What skills does your organization require to meet its existing labour needs in Portage la Prairie?**

Twenty-eight (28) employers provided open-ended answers about the type of skills they needed. Some key themes were:

1. Seven (7) employers emphasized the importance of strong communication skills
2. Four (4) employers said they looked for professional training related to project management, human resources, marketing, or community development
3. Three (3) employers said they required care giver skills, including for young children
4. Three (3) said food training and safety skills were required
5. Another three (3) said they needed employees who could work flexible schedules, including shift work during evenings and nights
6. One (1) said they required safe transportation options for their female staff members to get home at night, while another one (1) said they required employees with driver's licenses

### **Q17. How have your employment needs changed in Portage la Prairie over the last five (5) years?**

Twenty-eight (28) employers answered this question. Key themes were:

- Nine (9) said there were no or few changes to their employment needs
- Six (6) said they had fewer applicants and/or it was harder to find qualified people to hire
- Two (2) said they had increased the number of employees
- Two (2) said their organization recognized the importance of diversity and reconciliation with Indigenous people more in recent years

One employer who said it is difficult to find qualified workers explained:

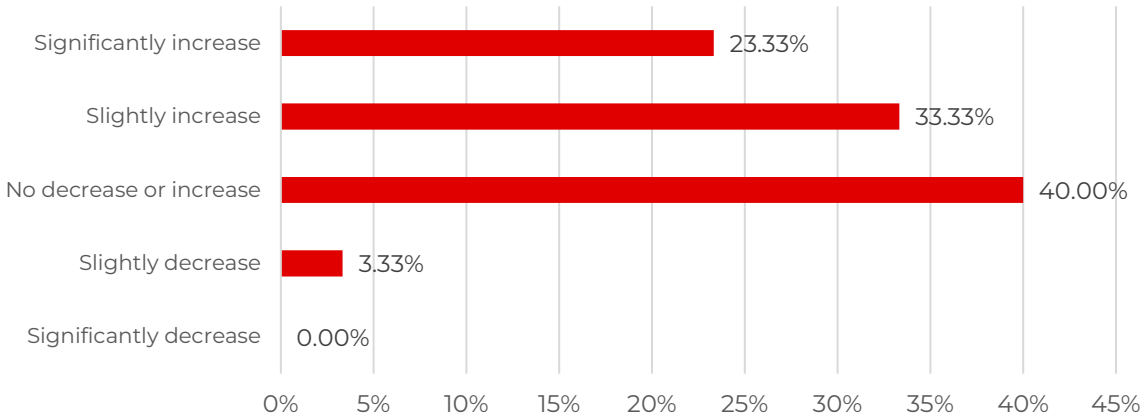
*It is challenging to recruit staff for some professions requiring specific credentials (ie nursing). Changes to the regulatory bodies have made registration more difficult for foreign-trained workers. We are also finding that it is challenging to recruit workers for support services work and health care aide roles. Workers have trouble finding reliable day care with a backup, and may not be available for evenings/nights/weekend work - all of which is required for front line health care workers.*

Another employer explained that it has become more difficult to hire people since the pandemic:

*Since the current pandemic, I have gone from being comfortably staffed, to constantly looking for new staff. Before Covid, I would receive on average 10-20 resumes per month, since Covid (over 15 months) I haven't received that many resumes total. I can't find anyone willing to work. In my 20+ years in this industry, I have never seen it like this.*

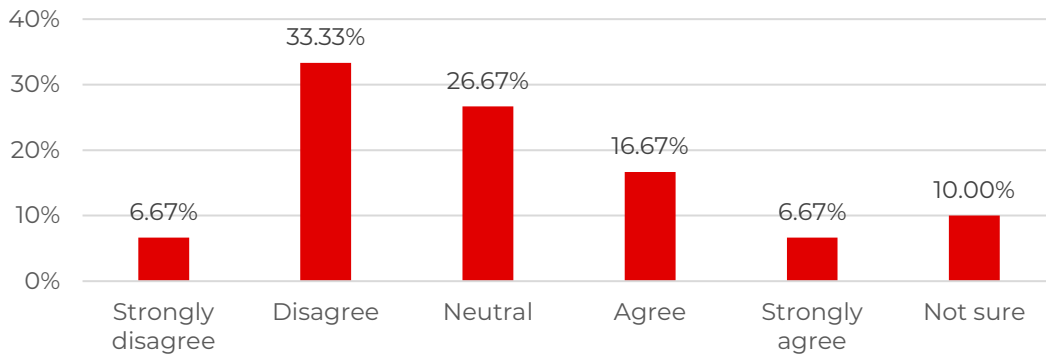
### **Q18. How do you anticipate the number of employees in your organization based in Portage la Prairie to change in the next five (5) years?**

Thirty (30) employers completed this question. Seventeen (17) said they anticipated the number of employees in their organization would either significantly increase or increase in the next five years. Another twelve (12) anticipated no increase or decrease in their number of employees.



**Q19: Please rate the following statement: Portage la Prairie’s labour force will adequately meet my organization’s future labour needs?**

Thirty (30) employers responded to this question. Twelve (12) disagreed or strongly disagreed that Portage la Prairie’s labour force will meet their organization’s future needs. In contrast, seven (7) employers either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement.



**Q20. Do you anticipate employment gaps in Portage la Prairie in the future? Please explain.**

Twenty-six (26) employers answered this question. Eleven (11) said they anticipated employment gaps in the future. Some key themes include:

- Two (2) employers said the ‘baby boomer’ generation is retiring and there are fewer young people to fill positions.
- One (1) said there is a low birth rate
- One (1) said people are moving away to ‘greener pastures’
- Another one (1) said it was difficult to find employees during the pandemic as many were concerned about working on the front lines

Five (5) said they did not anticipate employment gaps and four (4) were not sure.

**Q21: Are there specific education opportunities and/or skills training programs you would like to see added to or expanded in Portage la Prairie? Please explain.**

Twenty-five (25) employers responded to this question. Employers said they would like to see more:

- Language programs or public speaking opportunities (3)
- Training for nursing, including more opportunities to help newcomers with foreign credentials obtain their nursing license (2)
- More of a focus on trades (2)
- More food handling courses, including in the high school (2)
- More early childhood education training (2)

**Q22: Has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your company's future hiring plans in Portage la Prairie? If so, please explain.**

Twenty-six (26) employers responded to this question. Fourteen (14) said the pandemic impacted their hiring plans while nine (9) said it did not. Some key themes from respondents who said the pandemic did impact their hiring plans include:

- Five (5) said it is difficult to recruit new employees right now, especially in health care professions
- Four (4) said their business had to operate at a reduced capacity or close temporarily, which meant they were hiring fewer staff and/or had to lay off employees
- Two (2) said there were more employees needed to fill positions due to the pandemic
- Two (2) said they switched to phone interviews or virtual work

**Q23: Do you have any other comments about current and future labour market needs in Portage la Prairie?**

Seven (7) employers included detailed responses to this question. Several included suggestions for improving labour market outcomes, which include:

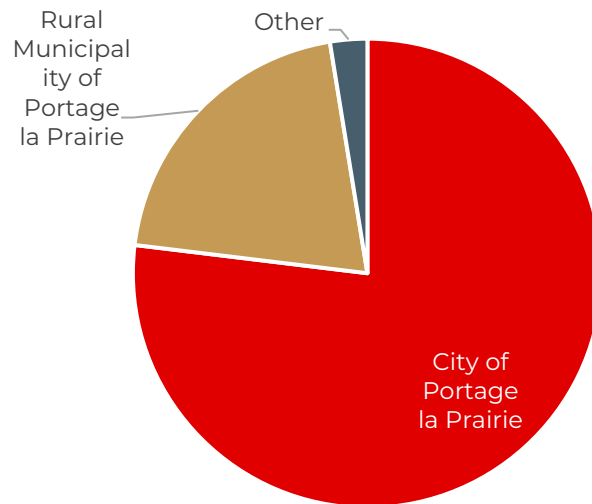
- Language training
- Reliable child care
- Public transportation
- Accessible design
- Computer skills
- Food handling training

## 3.2 YOUTH SURVEY

Based on feedback from the Portage Collegiate Institute, a separate survey was developed primarily for high school students. The survey was distributed through Google Forms between June 14 and June 18<sup>th</sup> to all Grade 11 and 12 students at the Portage Collegiate Institute. To encourage participation, students who completed a survey were entered into a draw to win one of five \$25.00 Tim Hortons gift cards. In total, eighty-five (85) students responded to the survey.

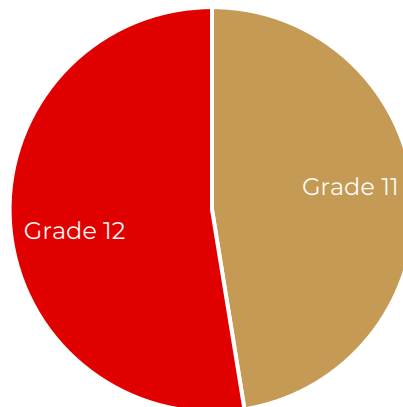
### Q1. Where do you live?

Seventy-eight (78) students responded to this question. Most of the students who responded lived in the City of Portage la Prairie. Fifteen (15) students lived in the Rural Municipality, while two (2) lived elsewhere (North Norfolk and Long Plain First Nation).



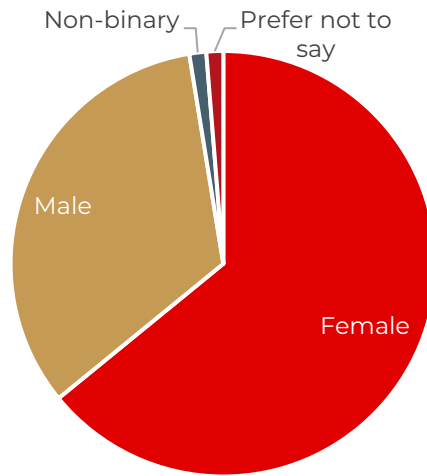
### Q2. What grade are you in?

Seventy-eight (78) students responded to this question. Just under half—or thirty-seven (37) students—were in Grade 11 while forty-one (41) were in Grade 12.



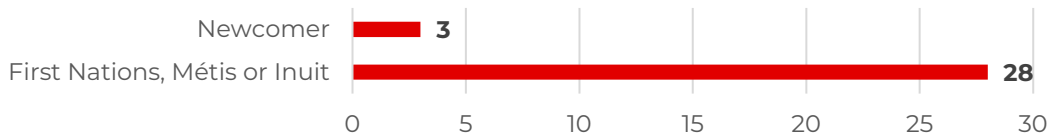
### Q3. What is your gender?

The majority of respondents—or fifty (50) out of seventy-eight (78)—were female. One (1) identified as non-binary and one (1) preferred not to answer the question.



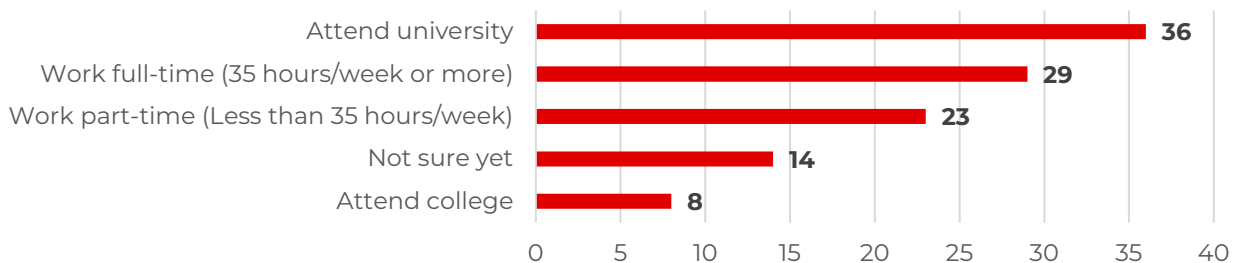
### Q4. Do you identify as any of the following?

Twenty-eight (28) respondents identified as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit while three (3) identified as newcomers including recent immigrants, refugees, and non-permanent residents.



### Q5. What are you planning to do when you complete high school? Please check all that apply.

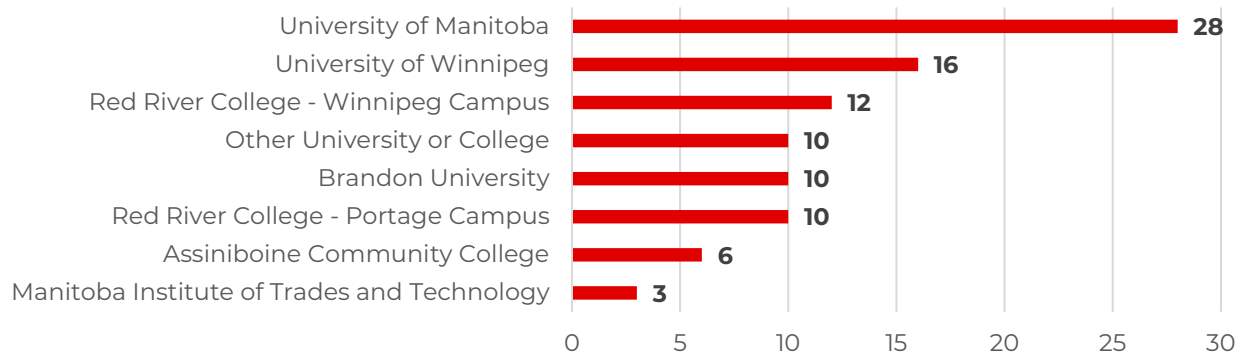
Seventy-eight (78) students responded to this question. The most common response to this question was attend university, which thirty-six (36) students selected. Twenty-nine (29) students said they planned to work full-time while twenty-three (23) planned to work part time. Students were able to select more than one answer.



**Q6. If you are planning to attend college or university, what institution(s) are you interested in attending? Please check all that apply.**

Sixty-three (63) students answered this question. The most common response was the University of Manitoba followed by the University of Winnipeg and Red River College. Ten (10) students said 'other' universities or colleges. Some of these included:

- |                                   |                           |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Dalhousie University           | 5. Bishop's University    |
| 2. Royal Military College         | 6. University of Calgary  |
| 3. University of British Columbia | 7. University of Regina   |
| 4. Toronto Film School            | 8. University of Victoria |



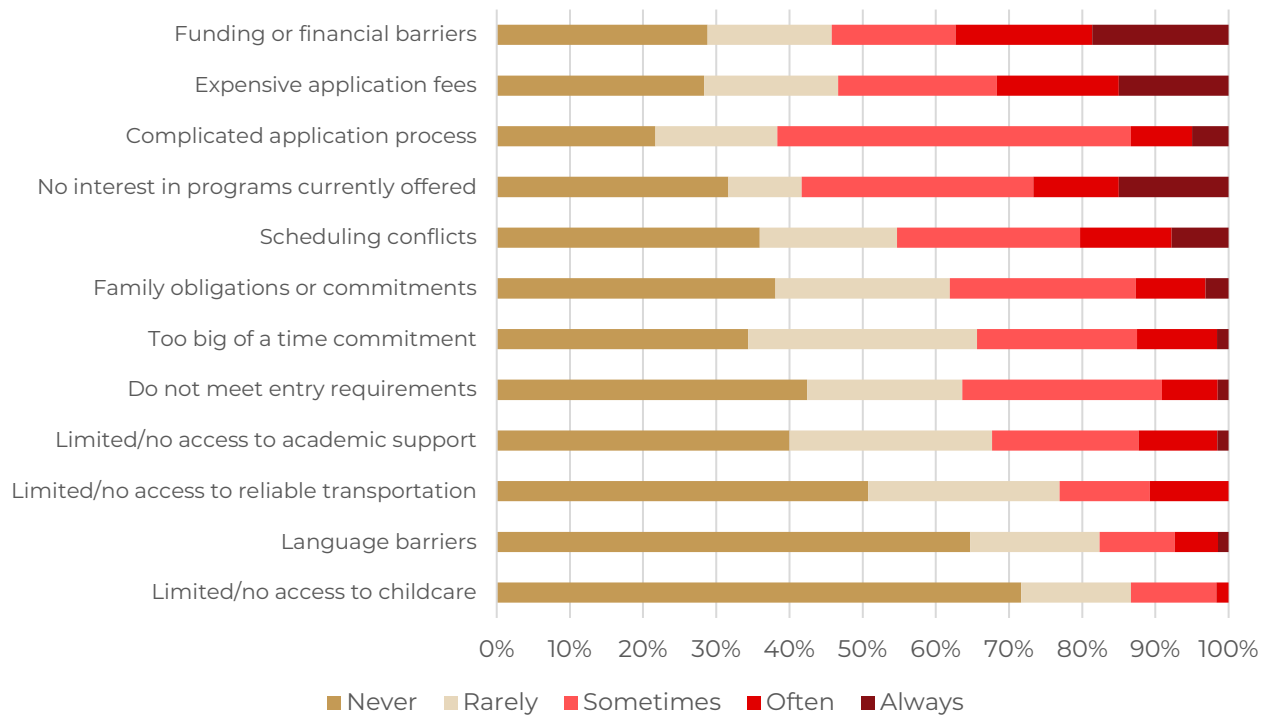
**Q7. If you are planning to attend college or university, what programs are you interested in? Are these programs offered in Portage la Prairie?**

Sixty-two (62) students responded to this question. The most common answers were:

- |                   |                                |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Science (11)   | 6. Computer science (3)        |
| 2. Psychology (5) | 7. Agriculture (3)             |
| 3. Business (4)   | 8. Health care or medicine (3) |
| 4. Education (4)  | 9. Law (2)                     |
| 5. Nursing (3)    |                                |

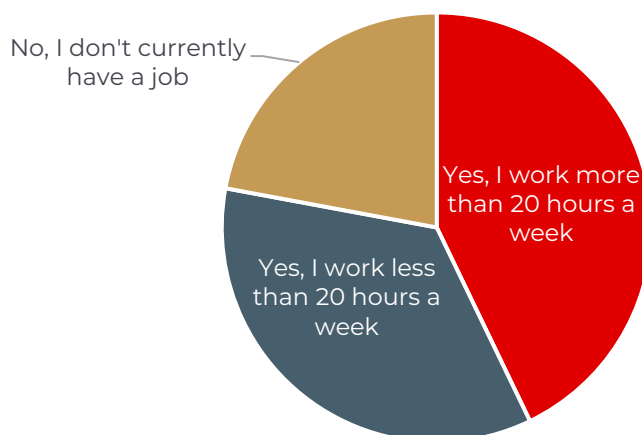
**Q8: Have you or do you think you will encounter the following barriers when accessing training or education in Portage la Prairie?**

Seventy-one (71) students responded to this question. The most common barrier was 'funding or financial barriers', which twenty-two (22) students said was either always or often a barrier. The next most common barriers were 'expensive application fees' and 'complicated application process'.



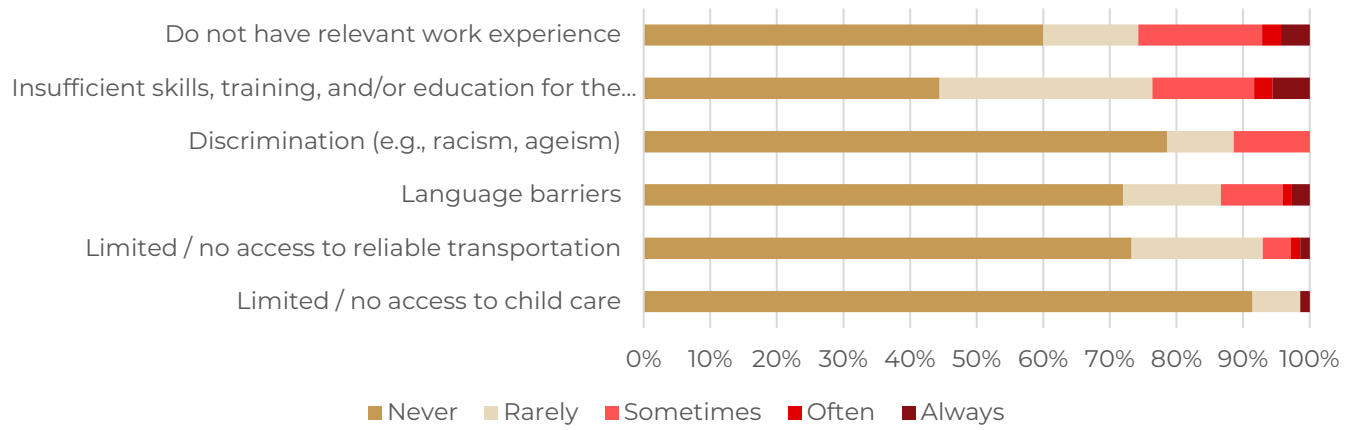
**Q9. Do you currently have a job?**

Seventy-seven (77) students responded to this question. Most of the students who responded currently work. Thirty-three (33) said they work more than 20 hours a week, while another twenty-seven (27) said they work less than 20 hours a week.



**Q10. Have you encountered the following barriers when working or attempting to find work in Portage la Prairie?**

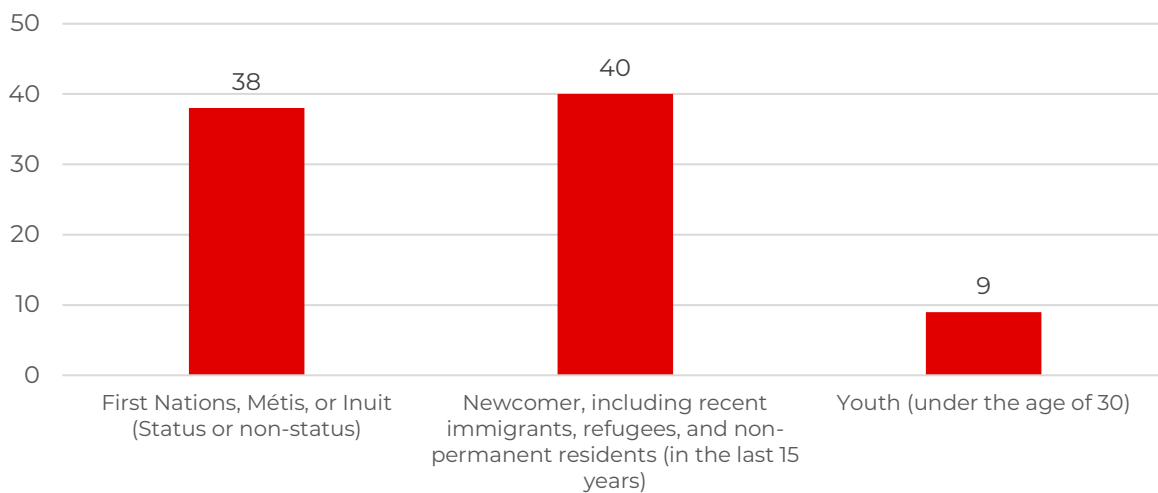
Seventy-five (75) students answered this question. The most common barrier was a lack of relevant work experience, followed by insufficient skills, training and/or education for the position.



### 3.3 LABOUR SURVEY

An online survey was distributed through Survey Monkey between June 14<sup>th</sup> and June 25<sup>th</sup>. Members of the Advisory Committee shared the survey through their respective social media channels and email lists including the Portage la Prairie Community Revitalization Corporation, the City of Portage la Prairie, Community Building Youth Futures, and the Red River College – Portage Campus. Members of the committee also asked the Portage Friendship Centre, Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council, and the Portage Learning and Literacy Centre to distribute the survey through their accounts. To encourage participation, respondents were entered into a draw to win \$250.00 in local gift cards.

In total, 160 people responded to the survey. Survey respondents were asked whether they identify as Indigenous, a newcomer or a youth under the age of 30. Overall, 38 of the respondents were Indigenous, 40 were newcomers, and 9 were youth. In some questions, the responses are segmented based on these three categories. The responses are summarized below.

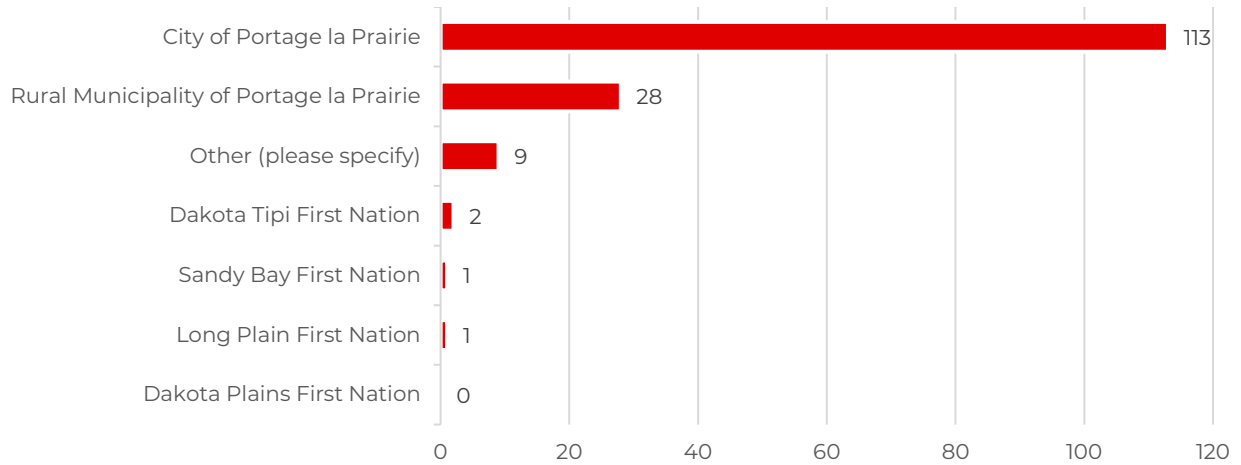


#### Q1: Where do you live?

There were 154 responses to this question. The majority of respondents lived in the City of Portage la Prairie, while just under a fifth of respondents lived in the RM of Portage la Prairie.

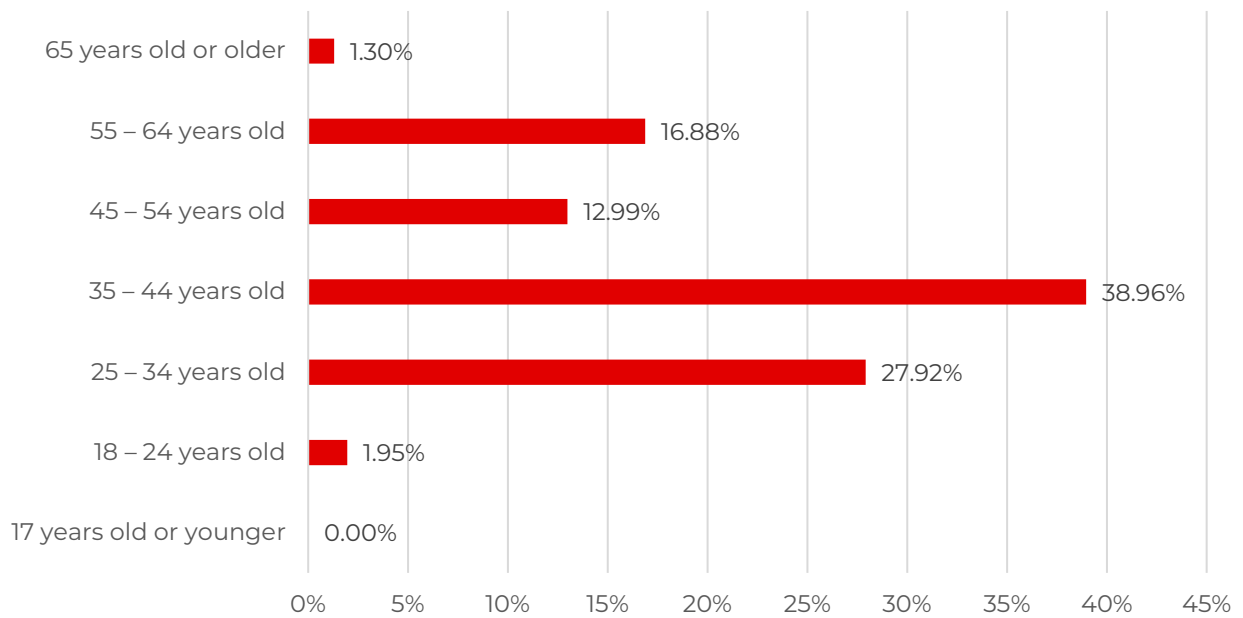
Nine (9) individuals selected 'Other' and lived in the following places:

- Bagot
- Brandon
- Lorne
- MacGregor
- Southport
- St. Francois Xavier
- Westbourne
- Winnipeg (2)



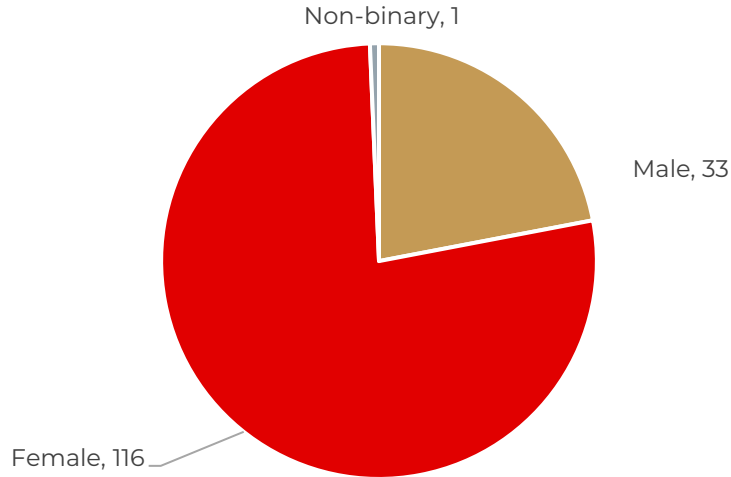
### Q2: What is your age?

154 individuals responded to this question. More than a third of respondents were between the ages of 35 to 44 years old, while roughly a quarter were between the ages of 25 and 34. Only three (3) individuals between the ages of 18 and 24 completed the survey.



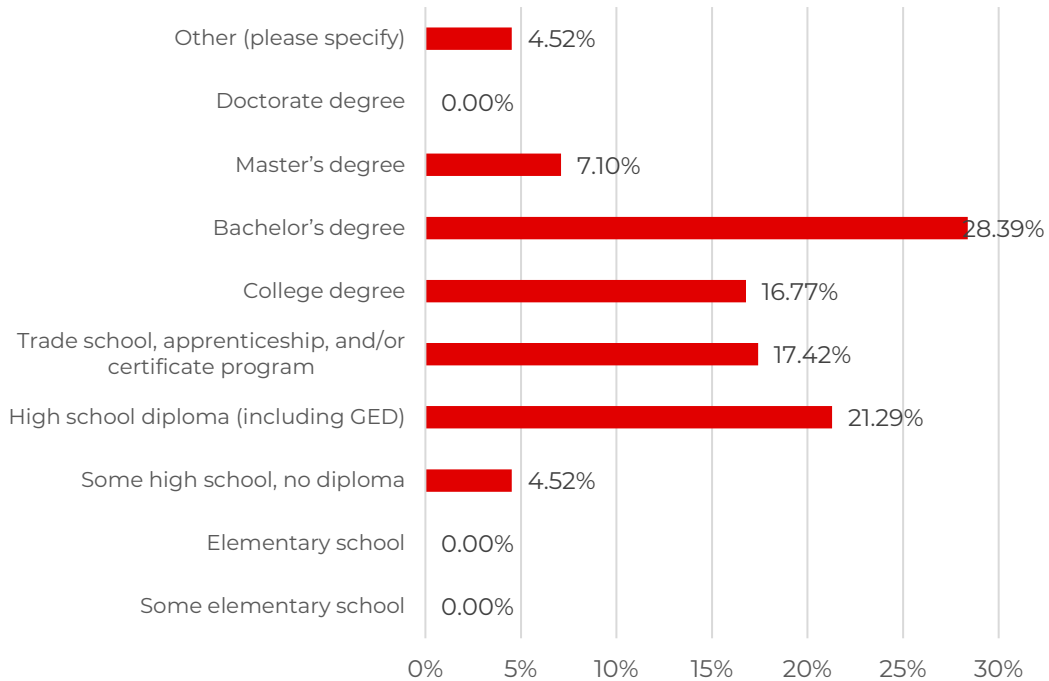
### Q3. What is your gender?

150 individuals responded to this question. More than three-quarters of respondents identified as female. Respondents were also given the opportunity to select 'Prefer not to say' or 'Prefer to describe, below' but no one selected these options.



### Q4: What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?

155 individuals responded to this question. The most common response was a bachelor's degree, which 44 people—or 28 percent—said was their highest degree.



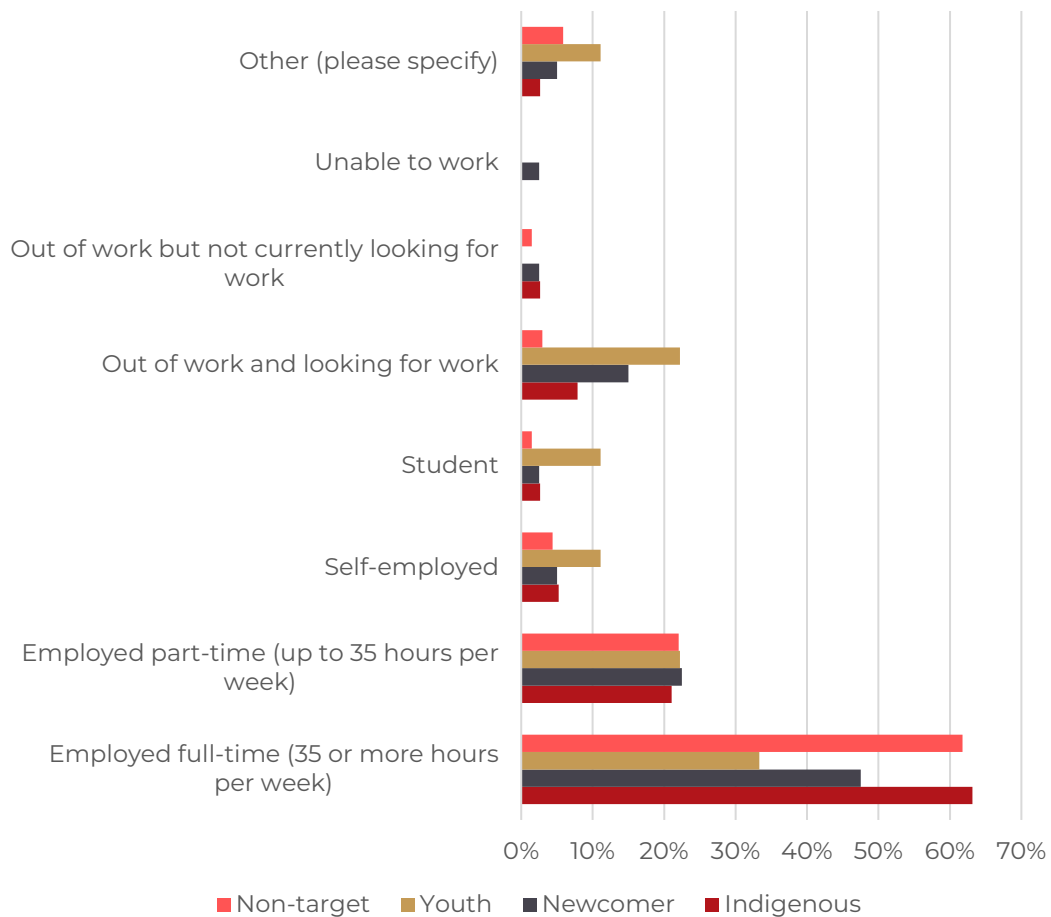
**Q5: If trades or higher, please list your area(s) of focus or specialization.**

Ninety-nine (99) individuals answered this question. Some of the most common areas of specialization were:

- Nursing and health care (20)
- Science including biology and chemistry (11)
- Business administration (9)
- Social sciences including psychology, economics, criminal justice, and planning (8)
- Social work (6)
- Education (6)
- Trades (4)
- Tourism (3)

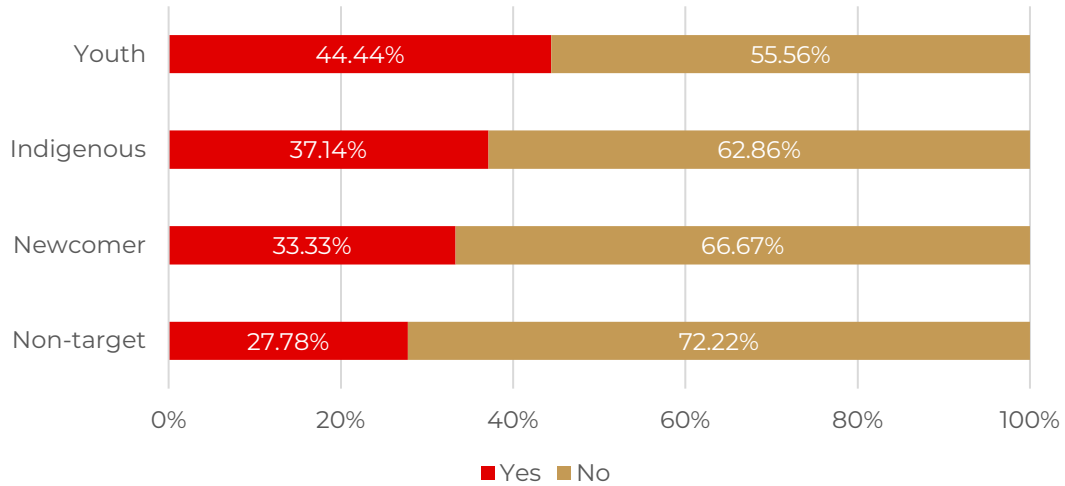
**Q6: What is your current employment status? Please check all that apply.**

155 people responded to this question. Overall, more than half of respondents were employed full-time, including 63 percent of Indigenous respondents. However, only 48 percent of newcomers and 33 percent of youth under the age of 30 were employed full time. Youth were also the most likely to be out of work and looking for work.



**Q7: Have you accessed educational and/or training opportunities in Portage la Prairie?**

134 people responded to this question. 44 percent of youth said they had accessed educational and/or training opportunities in Portage, while only 33 percent of newcomers said the same thing.



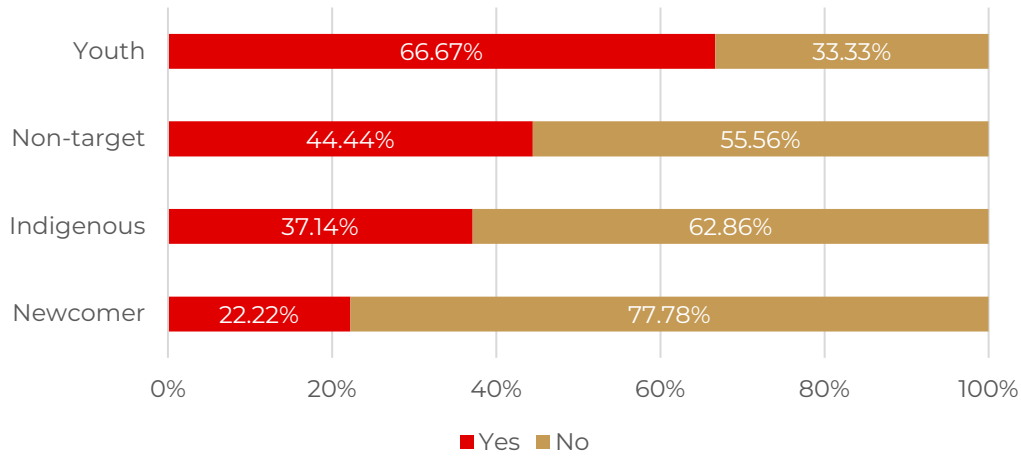
**Q8: If yes, where did you access education and/or training? What was your experience like?**

Sixty-three (63) individuals responded to this question. Some key responses were:

- Twenty (20) attended Red River College. Ten (10) of these said the experience was positive, one (1) said it was okay, and the others did not provide details.
- Fourteen (14) accessed training at the Portage Learning and Literacy Centre. Six (6) said the experience was good or great
- Three (3) attended Assiniboine Community College, and two (2) said the experience was good

**Q9: Have you accessed educational and/or training opportunities through online or distance education facilities?**

134 people answered this question. Two-thirds of youth said they had accessed educational and/or training opportunities through online or distance facilities. However, only 22 percent of newcomers and 37 of Indigenous people had accessed these services.



**Q10: If yes, where did you access online or distance facilities? What was your experience like?**

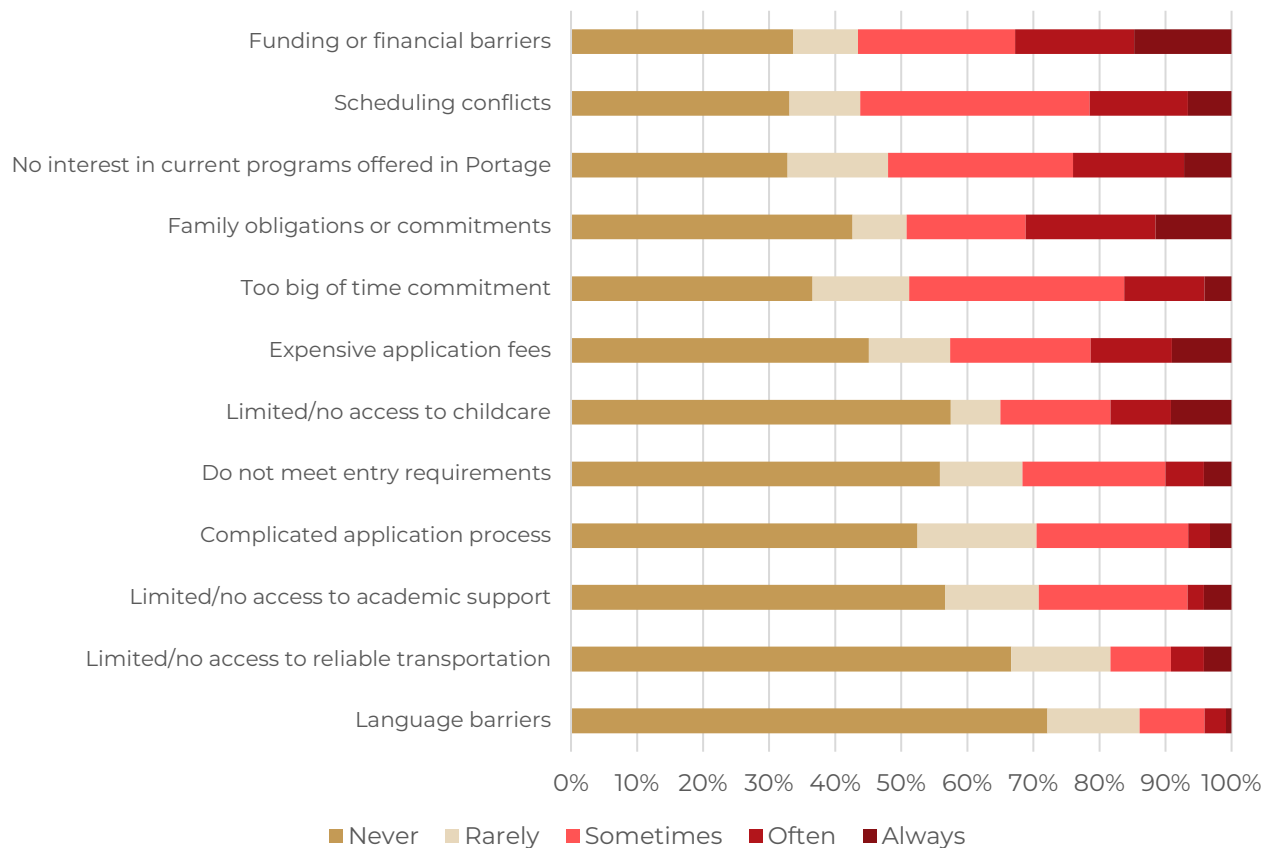
Seventy (70) individuals responded to this question. They listed various online universities and colleges including:

- University of Manitoba
- University of Winnipeg
- University of Brandon
- University of Calgary
- University of British Columbia
- University of Regina
- Assiniboine Community College
- Red River College
- Booth University College
- Coursera

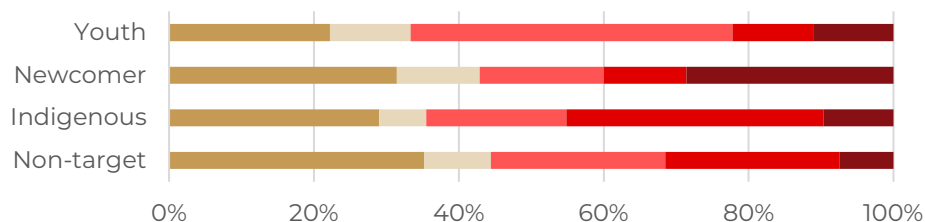
Most respondents said they had a good experience with online or distance courses, though some said it was more challenging than in-person classes.

**Q11: Have you encountered the following barriers when attempting to access or complete education and/or training in Portage la Prairie?**

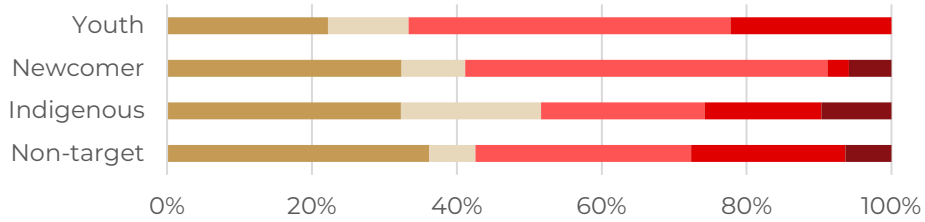
126 people answered this question. Respondents were asked to fill out a matrix indicating whether twelve factors were never, rarely, sometimes, often, or always a barrier. The figure below shows the twelve barriers in the order of significance. The biggest barriers were funding or financial barriers, and scheduling conflicts. However, these barriers impact Indigenous people, newcomers, and youth in different ways, as shown in the detailed figures below. The legend for each of these figures is the same.



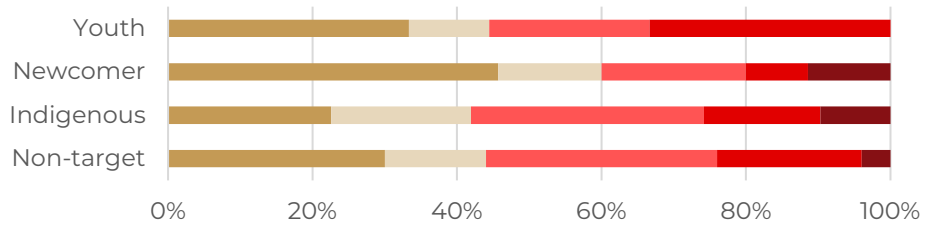
**Funding or financial barriers**



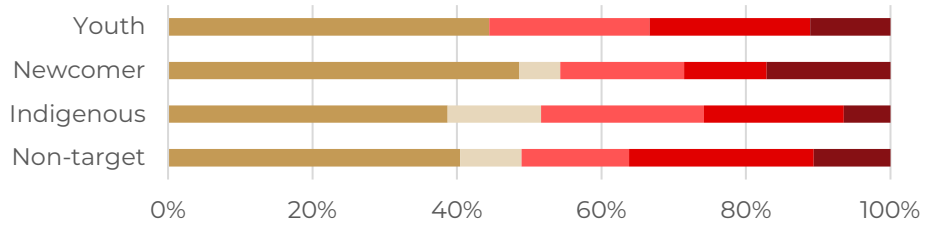
### Scheduling conflicts



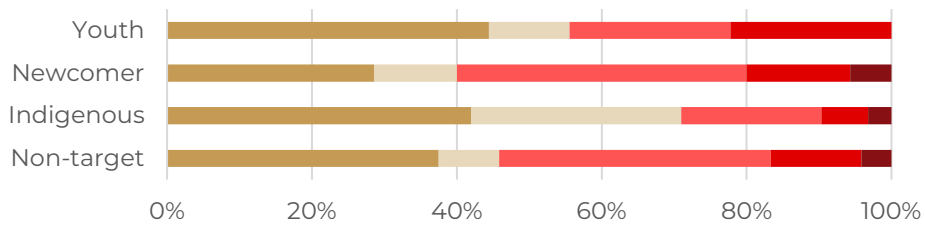
### No interest in current programs offered in Portage



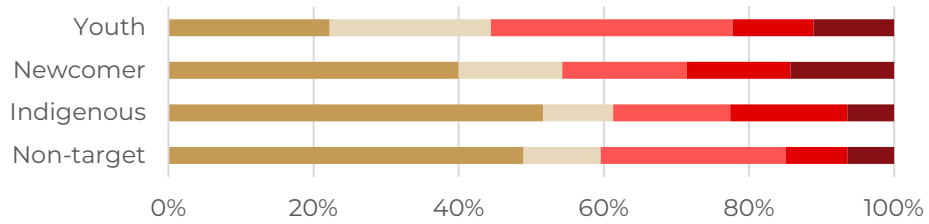
### Family obligations or commitments



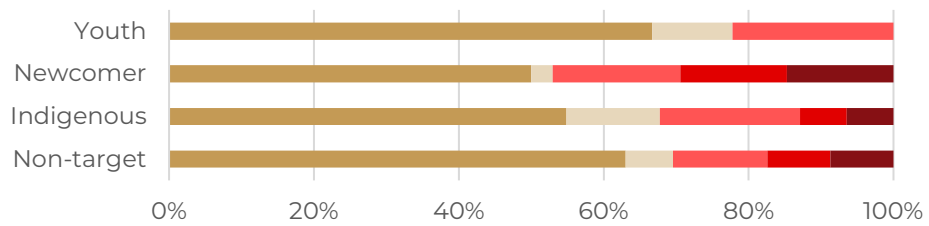
### Too big of time commitment



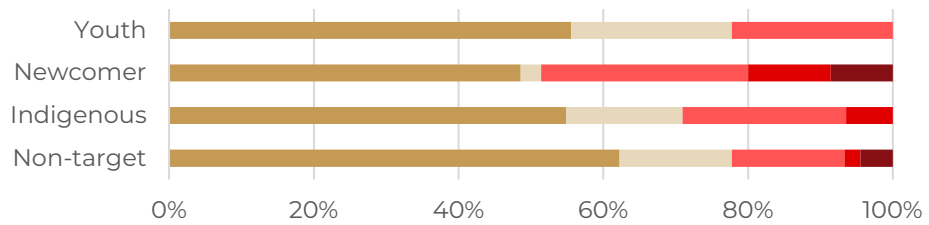
### Expensive Application Fees



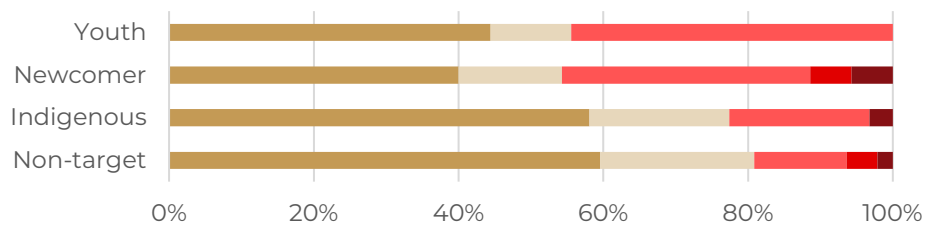
### Limited/no access to childcare



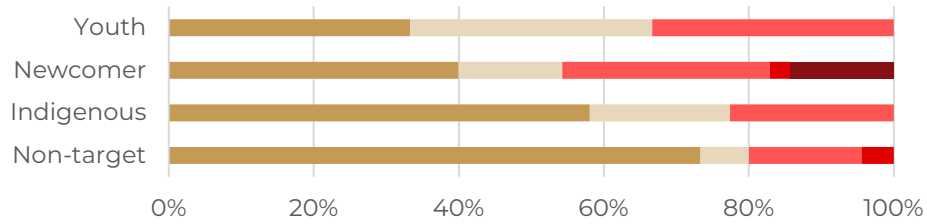
### Do not meet entry requirements



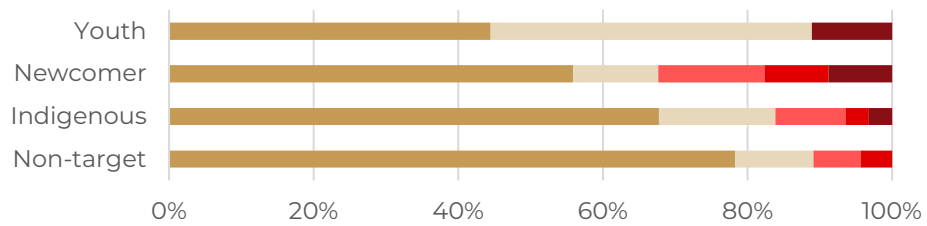
### Complicated application process



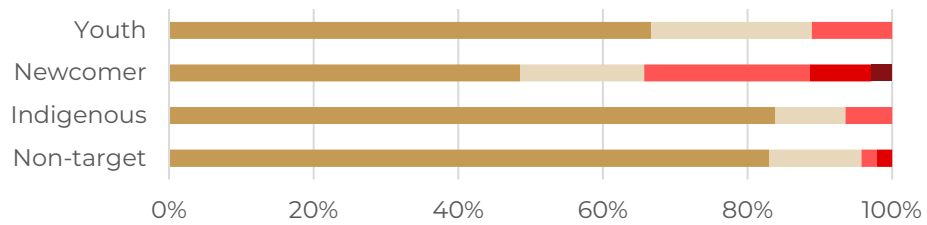
### Limited/no access to academic support



### Limited/no access to reliable transportation



### Language barriers



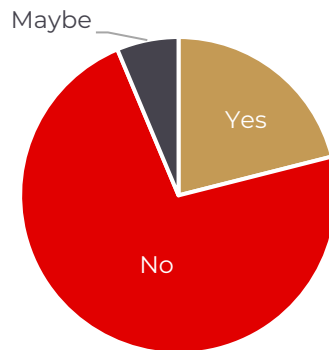
**Q12. Are there training programs that are currently not offered in Portage la Prairie that you would be interested in taking? If yes, please describe.**

Ninety-seven (97) people responded to this question. Forty-six (46) said no to the question. Other responses include:

- Nursing (5)
- Business (5)
- Trades (5)
- Computer courses (4)
- Social work (3)
- Food training (2)
- Mental health (2)
- Technologist courses (2)
- French (2)
- Indigenous studies (2)

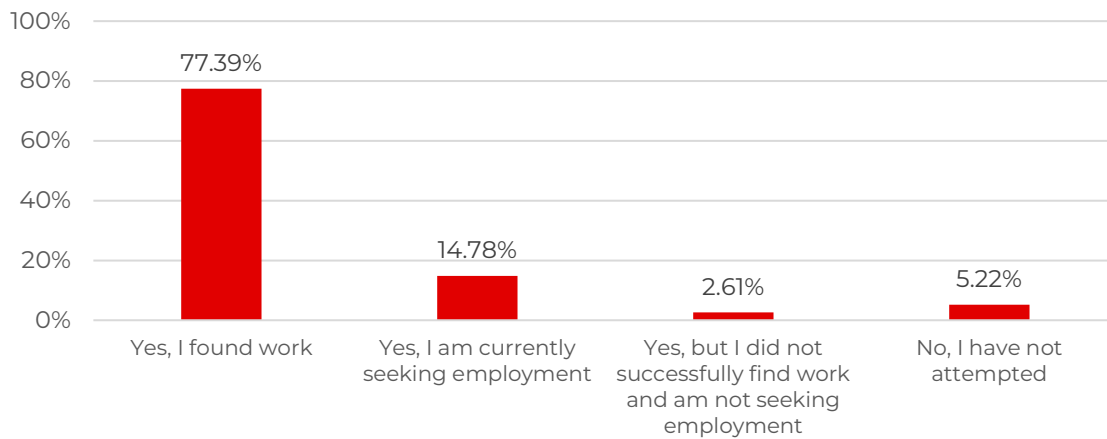
**Q13. Have you considered/are you considering moving to a different city outside of Portage la Prairie to pursue educational and/or training opportunities? If yes, please describe.**

Ninety-seven (97) individuals responded to this question. The majority said they were not considering moving to a different city. Some of those who said they were considering moving said they were thinking of going to Winnipeg or Brandon to pursue training opportunities.



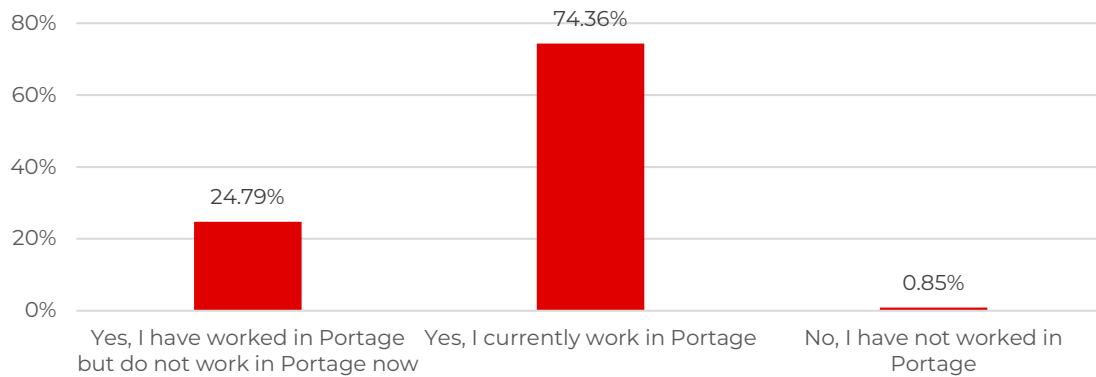
**Q14: Have you attempted to find work in Portage la Prairie?**

115 individuals responded to this question, 77 percent said they found work in Portage la Prairie while another 15 percent said they are currently looking for work in Portage.

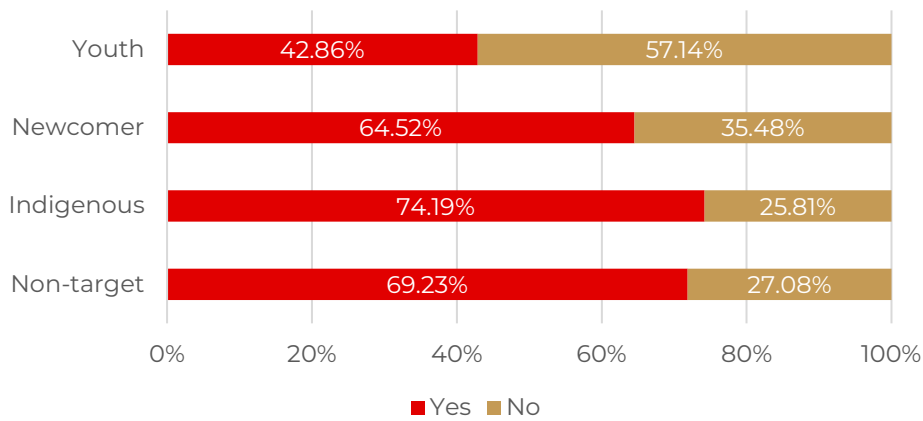


**Q15. Have you worked in Portage la Prairie?**

115 individuals answered this question. Only one person said they had not worked in Portage la Prairie.

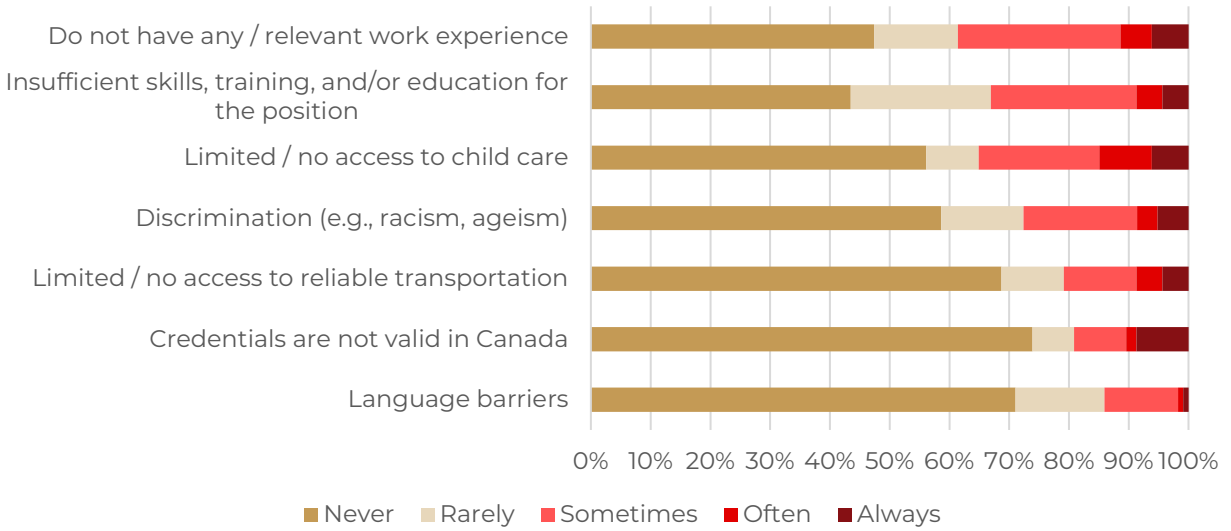


**Q16: Have you been able to find employment in a field that is related to your educational background (e.g., your area of focus, specialization, or major)?**

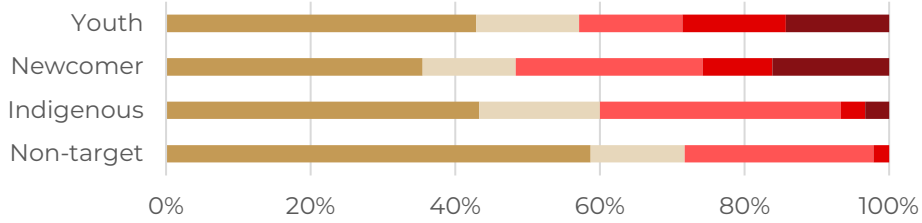


**Q19. Have you encountered the following barriers when working or attempting to find work in Portage la Prairie?**

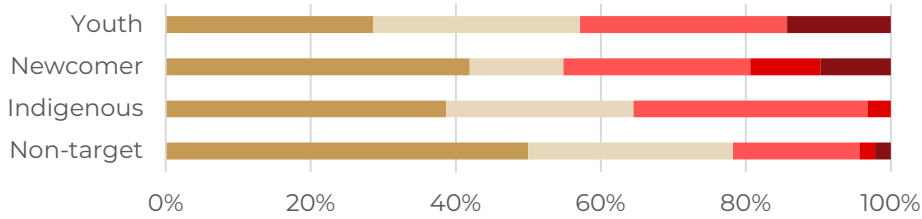
116 people responded to this question. Respondents were asked to fill out a matrix indicating whether seven factors were never, rarely, sometimes, often, or always a barrier. The figure below shows the barriers in the order of significance. The biggest barriers were a lack of relevant work experience and insufficient skills, training or education for the position. However, these barriers impact Indigenous people, newcomers, and youth in different ways, as shown in the detailed figures below. The legend for each of these figures is the same.



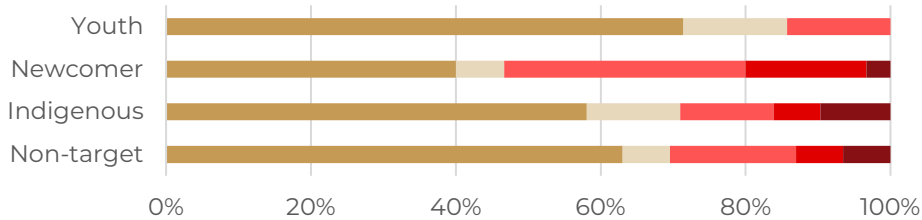
### Do not have any / relevant work experience



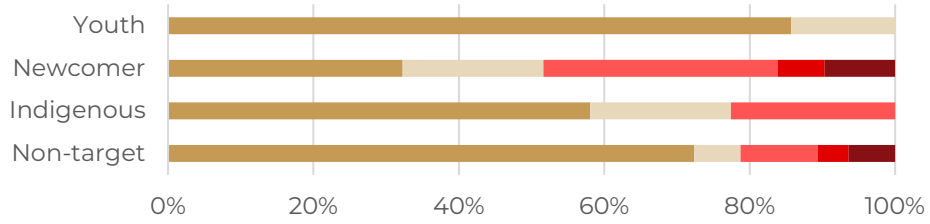
### Insufficient skills, training, and/or education for the position



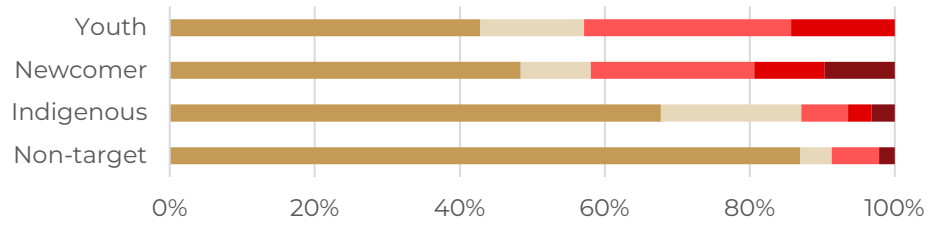
### Limited / no access to child care



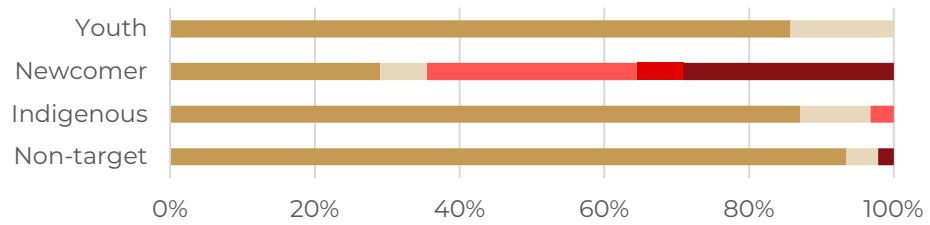
### Discrimination (e.g., racism, ageism)



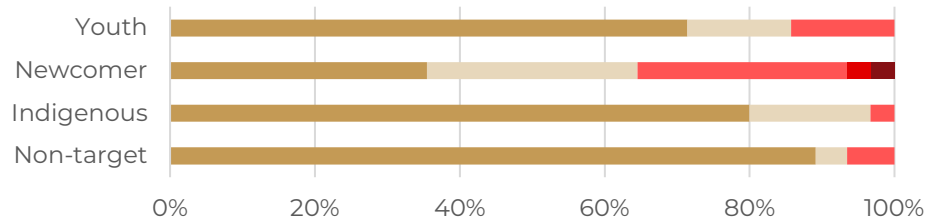
### Limited / no access to reliable transportation



### Credentials are not valid in Canada

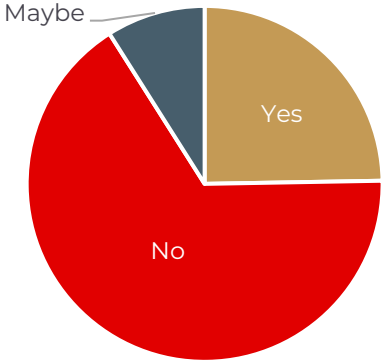


### Language barriers



**Q20. Have you considered/are you considering moving to a different city outside of Portage la Prairie to pursue employment opportunities? If yes, please describe.**

Eighty-nine (89) individuals completed this survey. Roughly two-thirds said they were not considering moving away from Portage la Prairie to pursue work opportunities. Twenty-two (22) said they were considering moving. Some respondents said they were considering moving to Brandon or Winnipeg because there were more opportunities and/or higher paying jobs there. Eight (8) said they were unsure and might consider moving.



## 3.4 EMPLOYER INTERVIEWS

### Background

In August and September of 2021, 17 interviews were conducted with local employers. Each interview was roughly 30-45 minutes in length, and conducted virtually through Zoom, Teams, or by telephone. Employers ranged in size from less than 10 to over 500, and included the health sector, retail sector, manufacturing, food processing, social services, professional services, property development, and others. Questions were open-ended with the following statements used to generate discussion:

- What skills does your organization need to meet your current needs?
- What skills does your organization need to meet your future needs?
- How does your organization primarily recruit new employees?
- Does your organization have challenges finding qualified applicants to fill positions?
- Has your workplace become more or less diverse in the last few years (primarily in terms of newcomers, youth, and Indigenous people)?
- Does your organization have hiring policies in place to increase diversity? If so, please describe them.
- Once hired, does your organization have challenges retaining employees?
- What are your organizations future hiring plans in Portage la Prairie?
- What changes would you like to see in Portage la Prairie to improve labour market outcomes, particularly or Indigenous people, youth, and newcomers?

### Findings

- General Themes
  - The supply of both skilled and unskilled labour in Portage is limited and appears to be decreasing.
  - It is more challenging to recruit and maintain unskilled labour than skilled labour. Skilled trades are driven by salary, but unskilled labour is driven by other factors more difficult to address or resolve (family requirements, 'culture of work' issues, etc.)
  - The largest skills gap is with trades.
  - Skills gaps exist with semi-skilled positions like welding as well.
  - Employers are turning to communities as far away as Winnipeg and Brandon to supply labour.
    - Employers are providing shuttles and supporting ride-sharing initiatives.
  - It can be difficult encouraging trades to move from Winnipeg to Portage.
    - Mileage and company vehicles are used as incentives.
    - Once hired, there is no trouble retaining staff if wages and conditions are competitive.
  - The Portage workforce is aging.
  - Transportation limitations within the region reduces the labour pool.
  - Employers looking for unskilled labour (customer service, retail, restaurant, etc.) are concerned that new manufacturing plants will exacerbate labour shortages (both perceived and actual).
  - Challenges in hiring administrative positions as well.
    - RRC programs offered locally are addressing that issue.
  - Turnover in unskilled positions is more common. Expectations (from youth) are 'unreasonable', and employers are less likely to want to hire them from the outset.

- Senior/managerial positions are more stable. Retirements are happening earlier, not later.
  - Construction industries are having difficulty filling seasonal jobs, truckers, and labourers.
  - Youth are looking for short term jobs, not careers, and not willing to move into positions with responsibility.
  - Business owners are interested in sponsoring staff to immigrate but are not familiar with the process. The process appears to be time-consuming and bureaucratic.
  - Drug and alcohol-free workplaces are becoming a challenge with the legalization of marijuana.
  - Trades are still not seen as desirable careers compared to university programs.
  - Youth need to develop basic skills – time management, language, accounting, etc.
- Human Resources
  - Although most employers philosophically support a diverse workplace, few employers (if any) have any policies related to encouraging diversity.
  - Federally-regulated industries (trucking for example) are required to produce an employment equity strategy annually. This strategy addresses pay equity with regard to gender and skills.
  - Most (but not all) larger employers have more sophisticated human resource strategies to encourage workforce development. Most small to medium-sized employers have little human resource capacity.
  - Technical skills can be learned more simply than 'culture of work' issues.
  - Workplaces are becoming more diverse but that is because Portage is becoming more diverse, and the workplace is reflecting that.
- Work-Life Balance
  - Younger staff have different expectations; HR is slow to adapt to changing demands.
  - Shift work does not adequately accommodate work/life balance.
  - Seasonal industries (even tax filing/accounting) does not support a desired work-life balance.
  - Work-life balance issues are different from 'culture of work' issues.
- Impact of COVID
  - COVID has resulted in increased labour shortages for both skilled and unskilled positions. It is unclear why that is the case.
  - COVID has seen fewer applications submitted but has not impacted employee retention.
- Recruitment and Retention
  - Human Resource departments in Portage la Prairie are generally focused on benefit administration. They are not proactive in terms of recruitment and retention.
  - Hiring is occasionally done remotely or by third parties. Outcomes appear to be less successful than in-person.
  - Most positions are filled through PortageOnline.com rather than government websites.
  - Employee referrals (word of mouth) result in better employment outcomes.
  - Employees like working with the latest technology.
  - Jobs are advertised in many different venues/media. A physical location with supports may be helpful to ensure that potential employees can navigate the process.
  - Family connections/history increases the likelihood that employees will stay for the long term.
  - Portage is becoming a 'training office' for larger offices/larger municipalities.
- Community Life
  - Portage needs to be a more attractive community in order to retain staff.

- Housing and transportation are challenges for lower-wage positions both within Portage and in the industrial parks.
  - Few rental units; often unaffordable for lower-wage positions.
  - No public transportation; many youth/newcomers/Indigenous people do not drive (higher proportion than general public); private shuttles are unreliable.
- Portage may be perceived as unsafe; many staff live in the RM or adjacent communities, not in Portage itself.
- There are 'disconnects' relating to social, cultural, and economic inclusion between people living in Portage and those in adjacent areas (including but not limited to First Nations).
- Newcomers prefer to work in cities with larger cultural communities. Efforts must be made to make Portage attractive for newcomers.
- Mentorship and community connections is important.
  - Employees, students, etc. appreciate culturally-appropriate mentorship and role models

## Conclusions and Strategies

- The majority of employers surveyed do not have formal policies to encourage diversity or inclusion. It may be helpful to educate employers as to the benefit of a diverse workplace as well as how to address the challenges associated with this strategy.
- Many employers would benefit from human resource advice.
- 'Culture of work' issues require a significant commitment to address. One on one mentorship is helpful.
- Requirements for language and skills development are inconclusive.
- Employers want to sponsor and employ immigrants.
  - Immigration advice offered in-house through economic development office?
- Challenges found within the workplace are evident within the community as a whole (diversity, inclusion, poverty, racism).
- RRC can produce labour market forecasts locally when requested.
- Trades need to be seen as a viable career choice.
  - Businesses need to demonstrate, through marketing, that trades are more than unskilled work (good salaries, work-life balance, own your own business, flexibility and independence, stability, benefits).

## 3.5 COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUPS

### Background

In November of 2021, five focus groups were conducted with newcomers, youth, and Indigenous people in order to have a broad discussion about the challenges and opportunities they face in finding meaningful employment. In total, 18 community members participated in the focus groups. One session was dedicated to addressing Indigenous issues, and one session has held via Zoom in order to accommodate those who were not comfortable meeting in person. The remaining sessions were held at the PCRC office. Each focus group was roughly 90 minutes in length. Participants were compensated \$50 for their time.

The findings below paraphrase comments raised during the focus groups. They do not reflect conclusions or recommendations; rather, they attempt only to summarize and categorize themes that arose during the focus group discussion.

## Findings

Challenges identified by newcomers, youth, and Indigenous people in finding meaningful work include:

- **Affordability**
  - Difficult to find a high-paying job in Portage. Most available positions seem to be low-wage, part-time, 'unskilled' jobs in the food processing/ manufacturing/ cleaning industries.
    - Wages are too low. One participant was working 4 separate jobs to make ends meet in Portage.
    - Difficult to afford to live as a single-person in Portage—even while working full-time—between rent/home ownership, food, gas, taxes, home repairs, etc.
  - The need to pay for a criminal record and child abuse check during the application can be a barrier.
  - Some individuals may be disincentivized from working due to government benefits (e.g. CERB).
- Much of the available work in Portage seems to be physically demanding labour and can be a challenge for older adults or those with disabilities.
- **Discrimination, racism, and cultural awareness.**
  - Despite diversity in community, leadership/management positions are still mostly filled by white people with familial/personal connections to Portage (e.g. city council, school administration). Racism and nepotism in the hiring process are real challenges.
  - Racism in the workforce also a challenge. Some workplaces want to hire token person-of-colour, but casual/everyday racism still a problem.
  - One participant experienced casual racism in administrative jobs in Portage, which caused her to quit.
  - There is a lack of cultural awareness/sensitivity, and occasionally discrimination and racism in many workspaces (both between employees and with the general public).
  - I apply for many jobs but don't get responses – not sure if it is racism.
  - Many Indigenous people have qualifications but are not confident in their skills/abilities and don't apply.
  - Employers don't know how to deal with racism, mental health issues, addictions. Feels like a town out of the 1980s.
  - Sexism is still a big issue. Many women are expected to do administrative work in workplaces, not management/leadership positions.
- **Lack of Social Networks**
  - Socializing, networking, meeting new people as a newcomer in Portage is also difficult, which can make it hard to find new jobs as many people get hired through social connections.
  - One participant wants to work in real estate but is having trouble 'breaking in' to the well-established community, where all of the real estate agents already have clients, social connections that make it easier to get clients.
  - Racism and nepotism are big challenges. Participants who were white said they knew they were privileged and were able to get their jobs because they were white.
  - 'Small town' mentality, where everyone knows everyone and it can be difficult for newcomers to get positions, develop networks. Few social/recreational opportunities for newcomers to meet new people.
  - Good local references are really important for getting jobs, which are a challenge for newcomers
- **Lack of Affordable Housing**

- Affordable housing is really hard to find. Rent has gone up a lot in recent years.
  - New apartments are being built but cannot afford them.
  - Manitoba Housing units are not always safe, comfortable for families, children.
  - Lack of affordable rentals. Even as dual-income professional household, could not find affordable, suitable comfortable rentals for family.
- Lack of Transportation Options
  - Limited transportation options (no public transit, undependable taxi service) in Portage make it difficult for those without a car to get to work on time regularly.
  - Lack of public transportation options was not communicated to newcomers before they arrived in Portage, was a real shock when they arrived.
  - Regular regional transportation (e.g. to Winnipeg, Brandon, airport) would be useful
  - Transportation is a major barrier, both within Portage and between Portage and reserves and regionally.
  - Many jobs are not located centrally but rather on the outskirts, industrial parks, or in the Rural Municipality.
  - Many people have to walk to work or use taxis, which can be expensive, unreliable and unsafe for Indigenous women. Taxis are often late, and a family may require two taxis to travel together.
  - Most people in positions of power have multiple vehicles and don't see the need for transit.
  - Limited bike paths/walking paths, limited lighting along existing paths.
- Lack of Child Care in Portage
  - Makes it difficult for parents (women in particular) to get a job.
  - Some of the existing spots are very expensive and difficult to justify when they cost almost as much as minimum wage.
  - COVID-19 has added extra challenges as children have to stay home from daycare if they have any symptoms, which means parents still have to pay for daycare spot but have to miss work.
  - Lack of childcare forced participant to quit job. Difficult to find childcare in Portage, especially if you are working shiftwork/evenings/nights.
- Lack of Educational Opportunities
  - Getting further education in Winnipeg is intimidating; would be nice to have options in Portage or Brandon.
  - Limited training opportunities available on nearby reserves.
  - Participant wants to upgrade education at RRC but courses only offered at Winnipeg campus. Very difficult to manage this with a family, full-time work while living in Portage. May have to move as a result.
  - Many services (specialized dental, training, healthcare) are only available in larger cities like Winnipeg and Brandon. As a result, participant said Portage doesn't feel like a 'real city' but instead was a bedroom community to larger places, which made it difficult to settle in without access to these services.
- Job Search issues
  - Lack of cell phones, Internet, public library (due to COVID-19) make it difficult to see job postings.
  - Some participants had trouble knowing which online sites to look for jobs through.
- Difficulty with basic language skills.
  - English skills are challenging for newcomers. One participant didn't get a job because she had trouble understanding one question in an interview, and the interviewer refused to reword the question.

- Difficulty in transferring credentials.
  - Newcomers face challenges when trying to obtain/transfer international credentials. One participant was an engineer in India but could not pursue necessary courses/training/testing to transfer his credentials to Canada because he had to work in order to be eligible to apply for permanent residency. He would not have been eligible to apply for PR without his job.
  - Another newcomer said she was transferring healthcare credentials and also went to Ontario originally to get certification because it was easier than Manitoba.
  - When trying to transfer health care/nursing credentials, it is easier in Ontario to pass the English requirements as boss can write a letter vouching for your English skills. Many newcomers will start their paperwork and get their nursing license in Ontario and then move elsewhere for this reason.
  - Can take many years to get credentials recognized from other countries in Canada.
- Portage la Prairie's small-town feel can be beneficial.
  - One newcomer initially moved to Toronto but then came to Portage for affordability/small town feel/job opportunities. Had to work at a series of low-wage jobs but was able to move up over time.

## Conclusions and Strategies

Most of the issues raised during the focus groups relate more to Portage la Prairie as a community, and less to various workplace or employment issues. As a community, participants suggested that improving access to the following services would be helpful:

- Specialized education and training opportunities (including language training).
- Public transportation (within Portage in particular but also within the region).
- Social networking opportunities, both for personal and employment/business development purposes.
- Improved housing opportunities.
- Improved access to child care, particularly for shift workers.
- Increased advocacy regarding the credentialing issue.

In the workplace, participants suggested the following:

- More flexible work arrangements including part-time positions.
- Cultural sensitivity training for staff at every level.
- Providing the opportunity to smudge and practice other cultural traditions in the workplace.
- Job fairs specifically for Indigenous peoples in Portage.
- More conversations with Chamber of Commerce about how to incorporate Indigenous people, youth, women, elders, etc. into workforce.
- Elders in residence in the local school division to support Indigenous youth.
- Consider changes to human resource policies so that a criminal record doesn't disqualify people from work.
- Support for upgrading/transferring international credentials for newcomers.
- More support for writing resumes, practicing job interviews, understanding 'culture of work' issues, etc.
- More co-op, internship opportunities through RRC.
- More networking opportunities to meet industry representatives.
- Assistance for people to get their driver's license.

## 4.0 BARRIERS, STRATEGIES, AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

### 4.1 BARRIERS

Our research indicates that youth, immigrants, and Indigenous people face a number of obstacles in finding meaningful employment in Portage la Prairie, as outlined below.

#### 4.1.1 YOUTH

- **The “Culture of Work.”** There seems to be a gap between employer and employee expectations in terms of work/life balance and other issues. Anecdotally, it appears as though youth today have less work experience today than in the past, and youth are less prepared to participate in today’s workplace. Employers commented that youth today have less ‘life experience’ than in the past, resulting in less independence in the workplace. Employees value flexibility and have enjoyed the benefit of a generally healthy economy for a number of years, resulting in many options in terms of jobs. All of these factors contribute to different expectations between employers and employees with regard to the “Culture of Work.”
- **Limited parental support for work.** Parents may not view youth employment as a priority, and may not provide the necessary support particularly with regard to transportation needs. Family holidays may also cause conflict.
- **Lack of relevant work experience.** For anyone entering the workforce, the lack of relevant work experience becomes a “chicken and egg” question. Employers must be more accommodating of youth with less experience as the supply of labour diminishes.
- **Insufficient skills/training for jobs.** There is a general view that youth lack the (life) skills and training necessary for job, both skilled and unskilled.
- **Youth are not seen as having a strong drive for work or work ethic.** Although this is related to the ‘culture of work’ theme, this issue relates more to values than expectations.

#### 4.1.2 IMMIGRANTS

- **Immigrants experience racism and “micro-aggressions”** (*indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group*) on a daily basis.
- Highly skilled and educated immigrants experience **challenges in having their credentials recognized** in order to obtain permission to practice in Canada.
- The **lack of social and professional networks** in Portage becomes a challenge for both their personal and professional lives. Most jobs are filled through word of mouth and networking, not through publicly advertised postings. As immigrants are generally new to the community, they are not integrated into existing social network that have better access to employment opportunities.
- The **lack of local job references** becomes a challenge as employers are less likely to check or trust references that are unfamiliar.
- Immigrants report that **obtaining a Driver’s License is a complicated process**, which limits employment opportunities due to the lack of transportation alternatives.
- There are **challenges with English examinations** and inconsistent application or interpretation of requirements.
- It is **difficult to meet people and build relationships** in Portage, and difficult to integrate into Portage society generally.

### 4.1.3 INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

- Indigenous people report experiencing **overt racism and micro-aggressions** as well as institutionalized racism resulting from the Indian Act.
- There is a **lack of transportation options from nearby First Nations** to Portage. Taxis are considered to be unsafe by women in particular.
- Indigenous people report that they **lack confidence in their skills**.
- There are **limited training and educational opportunities** on First Nations.
- It is **difficult to meet people in Portage outside of your community** if you are not already established socially.
- **Intergenerational trauma** has impacted the entire community to various degrees.
- Indigenous people report that they often struggle to **balance competing family and work obligations** as well as manage the expectations of employers (similar to Culture of Work issues that youth encounter).

### 4.1.4 GENERAL EMPLOYMENT ISSUES NOT SPECIFIC TO PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE

The issues noted above affect youth, Indigenous people, and immigrants specifically. However, other issues were raised during our research that relate to the entire community of Portage la Prairie and not just to our target groups. These issues include:

- **COVID-19 has had a negative impact on employment in the community.** There is a perception that CERB and other government supports may discourage some from working. As well, COVID-19 has made it more difficult to work for those with children as schools and daycares have closed. It does appear however that the overall number of jobs have not been affected in the long term. Rather, jobs are transitioning away from sectors hit hard by COVID-10 (hospitality, tourism, entertainment, etc.) and towards housing and consumer goods. It is too early to determine the full impact of COVID-19 and how medium-sized communities such as Portage should respond.
- **Too many jobs are considered to be undesirable.** Employees noted that many jobs are physically demanding, low paying, and involve shift work or irregular schedules. These jobs tend to be entry-level positions and are often the first step in seeking employment for many in our target groups. However, employers note that the nature of work and the working conditions haven't changed substantially over the years – what has changed, are the expectations and perceptions of labour.
- **Well-paying jobs aren't advertised.** As well, labour noted that nepotism is common in the hiring process. This provides additional challenges for those who have under-developed social and economic networks in Portage.
- Participants noted that **sexism in the workplace** appears to be common, with women expected to perform administrative roles in many workplaces.
- Labour faces **general obstacles in the job search**, including:
  - Difficult to find employment without access to internet, cell phones, etc.
  - The cost of a criminal record check, child abuse check etc. can be prohibitive.
  - Criminal records can result in an automatic disqualification.

## 4.1.5 GENERAL ISSUES IN PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE

In addition to employment-related issues in Portage la Prairie, we also heard about general issues contributing to the quality of life and economic opportunity in Portage la Prairie. These issues include:

- Participants report that the **cost of living is high** relative to their salary, particularly in terms of housing.
- The **lack of public transit limits access to employment opportunities** outside of their neighbourhood, particularly in higher-paying jobs located in an industrial park or other suburban location.
- **Street lighting along pathways is limited**, resulting in an unsafe pedestrian environment.
- **Taxi service** is described as **unreliable, unsafe, and expensive**.
- Many **jobs are located** outside the core, **away from where people live**.
- There is a **lack of regional transportation** to other cities.
- **Affordable housing** (and Manitoba Housing in particular) **is in short supply** and is **perceived to be unsafe**.
- Access to **daycare is limited** and **expensive**. It is especially challenging for those working shifts.
- Portage is generally **perceived to be unsafe**.
- **Portage is divided** in terms of race, wealth, and culture.
- Portage **doesn't offer the services** needed to retain employees and grow the community over the long term.

## 4.2 SOLUTIONS

The solutions below were identified in part through a review of best practices taking place across the country, as well as through discussions with employers and labour. Although we have attempted to sort solutions into categories, there is much overlap between the many initiatives. It is also worth noting that, generally speaking, the solutions can be broadly applied to youth, Indigenous people, and immigrants alike, as long as the individual programs are tailored to and ideally delivered by members of the individual communities. Many case studies have indicated that having Indigenous staff help to mentor and train junior Indigenous employees for example will result in improved outcomes.

### 4.2.1 BUILD CONNECTIONS

- **Improve communication and enhance relationships between service organizations** such as the Chamber of Commerce, newcomer servicing organizations, Indigenous service providers, First Nations leadership, and other relevant stakeholders in order to more efficiently and effectively deliver services. Many of the solutions proposed in this report will be new, but some are already being delivered. Coordination between all service providers in Portage – particularly those who may not traditionally communicate – is important.
- **Develop a mentorship program**. Many people looking for work have the skills and experience necessary to gain employment. They may however lack confidence, connections, and other intangible components that are critical in securing meaningful employment. They may not be aware of jobs because they don't travel in the same social circles as others, or they may not feel they are competitive because they do not know who they are competing against. Mentorship programs, offering one-on-one support, have proven to be successful in a professional environment.

- **Improved physical connections will lead to improved social and economic connections.** Enhanced cycling and other active transportation opportunities would be welcomed by many.

## 4.2.2 ENHANCE SUPPORTS FOR EMPLOYERS

- **Provide support to employers** so that they are able to implement best practices in their Human Resource (HR) departments. HR departments are critically important in ensuring that the workplace is a supportive environment. We heard from employers that HR responsibilities are changing rapidly. Many larger employers are able to provide sufficient resources to their HR departments so that they are able to keep on top of the latest theories and trends. However, many smaller employers provided HR services in conjunction with other services, and even the largest organizations often struggled to provide appropriate service. It is important that the Human Resource departments focus not just on benefit administration and hiring/firing, but on improving access to training, access to internal opportunities, inclusive workplace strategies, etc.
- Consider establishing a local network of HR professionals to support each other, share knowledge, and identify local best practices.
- Employers require assistance in verifying foreign credentials, recruiting qualified immigrants, training grants and information on legal working requirements for immigrants. Employers would also appreciate information on potential wage subsidies and other supports to business.

## 4.2.3 CREATE A MORE WELCOMING WORKPLACE

- **Everyone**, including businesses, newcomer service organizations, education and training providers, and advocacy organizations, **has a responsibility to create a more welcoming workplace.** A welcoming workplace recognizes the abilities of each individual, and helps them achieve their full potential. Employers and labour both express a desire and to increase dialogue and work together – they do not however necessarily see those opportunities exist in today's workplace. Many youth, Indigenous people, and recent immigrants require individual support in order for them to secure and maintain meaningful work. Solutions identified during our review of case studies as well as discussions with employers and labour include:
  - Help employers navigate the immigration process to bring skilled newcomers to Canada for work and family support.
  - Promote trades as a viable career path to newcomers, youth, and First Nations.
  - Develop workplace inclusion strategies allowing, for example, smudges and other cultural traditions in the workplace.
  - Provide personal and professional networking opportunities within the workplace, so that youth, Indigenous people, and recent immigrants can connect socially and professionally with others in their workplace outside of their traditional networks.
  - Consider adapting workplace inclusion strategies for the general community, so that lessons learned in the workplace can be applied within the broader community.
  - Provide training for newcomers specifically (and the entire community more generally) with regard to Indigenous issues and the rationale for Reconciliation.

- Consider revising Human Resource policies so that a criminal record doesn't result in an automatic disqualification and that an application can be judged on its own merit.
- Establish more flexible workplace arrangements including part time and flex hours, hybrid arrangements, minimize shift work as much as possible, etc.
- Employers could provide or subsidize/sponsor in-house daycare, transportation, and housing supports.
- Address the lack of transportation to workplaces specifically and within the community generally through exploring options to provide public transit, carsharing, carpooling, and employer-sponsored initiatives.

#### 4.2.4 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to opportunities addressed earlier, job seekers identified the following training opportunities as desirable:

- Resume writing workshops.
- Workshops that address 'culture of work' issues and other workplace expectations.
- Job fairs on First Nations.
- Elder in Residence programs at local schools.
- Personalized training opportunities.
- Enhanced networking opportunities (both personal and professional).
- Enhanced and coordinated co-op, internship, and volunteer opportunities.
- Enhanced language training (through PLLC and others).
- Improved recognition of credentials (it was noted specifically that many nurses travel to Ontario to pass their English exam where it is easier to obtain their license, then return).
- Provide support for workers to get their Driver's License.

#### 4.2.5 IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE

Finally, we learned that most respondents consider the quality of life in Portage la Prairie to be high. Although some comments were made about the lack of educational opportunities as well as access to health and dental services, the range of services is generally considered to be good. However, many youth and newcomers in particular desire a more 'urban lifestyle' only available in larger cities. A mid-sized city, close to a larger regional centre, meets the needs of many when searching for a place to live, work, and belong.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

It is generally accepted that across Canada, youth, Indigenous people, and recent immigrants face challenges in finding meaningful work. This assumption was confirmed in part through a review of relevant literature and data. In order to determine whether or not the Portage la Prairie labour market exhibits similar characteristics, a combination of surveys, interviews, and focus groups were conducted with both employers and employees between June and November, 2021 which confirmed our assumptions with regard to the Portage labour market.

Strategies to address these challenges were identified through a review of relevant case studies as well as through discussions with both employers and employees. These strategies are outlined in previous chapters but generally include strategies that make Portage la Prairie a more welcoming, both at the community and employer level.

The most challenging factor – one in which smaller communities are well-positioned - is to improve the sense of belonging for all members of our target groups. Youth, Indigenous people, and recent immigrants all express a sense of isolation in Portage la Prairie generally and in the workplace specifically. Strategies and supports must be developed that address and serve each citizen individually, providing ongoing, one-on-one support from both employers as well as community services and institutions.

# APPENDIX A: FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

## FOCUS GROUP #1: NOVEMBER 23, 1:00 – 2:30 PM, PCRC BOARD ROOM

### ATTENDANCE

- Three community members attended:
  - o One was a senior who recently returned to part time work
  - o One worked in the social development field
  - o One was a newcomer who had been in Portage for less than 2 years

### CHALLENGES

- Need to pay for criminal record check, child abuse check during application, which can be a barrier.
- Limited transportation options (no public transit, undependable taxi service) in Portage make it difficult for those without a car to get to work on time regularly.
  - o Regular regional transportation (e.g. to Winnipeg, Brandon, airport) would be useful.
- Difficult to find a high-paying job in Portage. Most available positions seem to be low-wage, part-time, 'unskilled' jobs in the food processing/manufacturing/cleaning industries.
- Wages are too low. One participant was working 4 separate jobs to make ends meet in Portage.
- Difficult to afford to live as a single-person in Portage—even while working full-time—between rent/home ownership, food, gas, taxes, home repairs, etc.
  - o Affordable housing is really hard to find. Rent has gone up a lot in recent years.
- Some individuals may be disincentivized from working due to government benefits (e.g. CERB).
- Much of the available work in Portage seems to be physically demanding labour and can be a challenge for older adults or those with disabilities.
- Despite diversity in community, leadership/management positions are still mostly filled by white people with familial/personal connections to Portage (e.g. city council, school administration). Racism and nepotism in the hiring process are real challenges.
- Racism in the workforce also a challenge. Some workplaces want to hire token person-of-colour, but casual/everyday racism still a problem. Participant experienced casual racism in administrative jobs in Portage, which caused her to quit.
- Socializing, networking, meeting new people as a newcomer in Portage is also difficult, which can make it hard to find new jobs as many people get hired through social connections.

### POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES/SOLUTIONS

- Higher wages would make it easier to afford to live in Portage.
- Some employers (Simplot) are solving the issue by busing workers in from Winnipeg for every shift, but this doesn't help Portage.

- Small businesses could be more flexible with work arrangements (e.g. more part-time work).
- Small businesses need to be more aware of wage subsidies available to them to hire people.
- Guaranteed income supplement for low-income earners.
- PLLC offered good services (e.g. English classes, job training).
- More programs for people over the age of 30.
- More transportation services (both in Portage and regionally).
- More affordable housing.

## **FOCUS GROUP #2: NOVEMBER 23, 3:00 – 4:30 PM, PCRC BOARD ROOM**

### **ATTENDANCE**

- Focused on Indigenous participants
- Four Indigenous participants attended

### **CHALLENGES**

- Getting further education in Winnipeg is intimidating, would be nice to have options in Portage or Brandon.
- Lack of cultural awareness/sensitivity in many workspaces.
- Apply for many jobs but don't get responses – not sure if it is racism.
- Many Indigenous people have qualifications but are not confident in their skills/abilities and don't apply.
- Transportation is a major barrier, both within Portage and between Portage and reserves and regionally.
  - o Many jobs are not located centrally but rather on outskirts or in the RM.
  - o Many people have to walk to work or use taxis, which can be expensive, unreliable and unsafe for Indigenous women.
  - o Most people in positions of power have multiple vehicles and don't see the need for transit.
  - o Limited bike paths/walking paths, limited lighting along existing paths.
- Limited training opportunities available on nearby reserves.
- Lack of cell phones, Internet, public library (due to covid) makes it difficult to see job postings.
- Participants have experienced discrimination, racism in jobs in Portage.
- Lack of affordable housing in Portage.
  - o New apartments are being built but cannot afford them.
  - o Manitoba Housing units are not always safe, comfortable for families, children.
- Difficult to find daycare spots, which makes it difficult for parents (women in particular) to get a job.
  - o Some of the existing spots are very expensive and difficult to justify when they cost almost as much as minimum wage.

- COVID-19 has added extra challenges as children have to stay home from daycare if they have any symptoms, which means parents still have to pay for daycare spot but have to miss work.

### **POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES/SOLUTIONS**

- Cultural sensitivity training for workplaces.
- Ability to smudge & practice other cultural traditions in workplaces.
- Job fairs specifically for First Nations people in Portage.
- More conversations with Chamber of Commerce about how to incorporate Indigenous people, youth, women, elders, etc. into workforce.
- Elders in residence in the local school division to support Indigenous youth.
- Changes to human resource policies so that criminal record doesn't disqualify people from work. Many people have a criminal record from their past but want to work and cannot get a job for that reason.

## **FOCUS GROUP #3: NOVEMBER 23, 5:00 – 6:30 PM, PCRC BOARD ROOM**

### **ATTENDANCE**

- Four people attended:
  - Two were newcomers, married to each other.
  - One was a PCRC employee.
  - One recently moved from Alberta to Portage.

### **CHALLENGES**

- Difficult to work full-time with kids, especially during COVID-19.
- Administrative positions in health care in Portage are very difficult to get, almost never are available.
- Lack of childcare forced participant to quit job. Difficult to find childcare in Portage, especially if you are working shiftwork/evenings/nights.
  - COVID-19 has made it more difficult as parents have to stay home with children if they have any symptoms.
- Lack of public transportation make it very difficult to get to many jobs in Portage including food processing plants.
- Cannot always rely on cabs as they sometimes do not come, which can make you late for work.
- Difficult to find meaningful work in Portage.
- Lack of affordable rentals. Even as dual-income professional household, could not find affordable, suitable comfortable rentals for family.

- English skills are challenging for newcomers. One participant didn't get a job because she had trouble understanding one question in an interview, and the interviewer refused to reword the question.
- Newcomers face challenges when trying to obtain/transfer international credentials. One participant was an engineer in India but could not pursue necessary courses/training/testing to transfer his credentials to Canada because he had to work in order to be eligible to apply for permanent residency. He would not have been eligible to apply for PR without his job.
- Participants have not decided if they will stay in Portage long term.
  - o May move for training opportunities elsewhere.
  - o One participant wants to work in real estate but is having trouble 'breaking in' to the well-established community, where all of the real estate agents already have clients, social connections that make it easier to get clients.
- Racism and nepotism are big challenges. Participants who were white said they knew they were privileged and were able to get their jobs because they were white.
- Sexism is still a big issue. Many women are expected to do administrative work in workplaces, not management/leadership positions.
- 'Small town' mentality, where everyone knows everyone and it can be difficult for newcomers to get positions, develop networks. Few social/recreational opportunities for newcomers to meet new people.
- Employers don't know how to deal with racism, mental health issues, addictions. Feels like a town out of the 1980s.
- Very divided community physically – part of the community is very prosperous/white, and part is not.
- Good local references are really important for getting jobs, which are a challenge for newcomers.
- Some food processing plants are understaffed, which means the employees that are working are expected to do extra work, which is challenging.

## **POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES/SOLUTIONS**

- Racism and cultural awareness training.
- Social/networking opportunities for newcomers.
- English classes at PCRC are helpful.
- Support for upgrading/transferring international credentials for newcomers.

## FOCUS GROUP #4: NOVEMBER 24, 10:00 – 11:00 AM, VIRTUAL THROUGH ZOOM

### ATTENDANCE

- Three participants attended.

### CHALLENGES

- Participants struggling to find work in their fields (bookkeeping/accounting, social work).
- Another participant was a newcomer who then got nursing education and was able to find work.
- Was difficult as a newcomer to transfer credentials from other countries.
- When trying to transfer health care/nursing credentials, it is easier in Ontario to pass the English requirements as boss can write a letter vouching for your English skills. Many newcomers will start their paperwork and get their nursing license in Ontario and then move elsewhere for this reason.
- Can take many years to get credentials recognized from other countries in Canada.
- One participant took business administration course at RRC in Portage. Thought the program was a bit too condensed and could have been a bit longer.
- Some participants had trouble knowing which online sites to look for jobs through.
- Getting around Portage without a vehicle is very difficult. One participant had to bike around Portage for years or rely on coworkers for rides to work before being able to afford a vehicle.
- Taxis are very expensive.
- Difficult for newcomers to also get their licence recognized in Manitoba, depending on the country they are coming from. Some need to go through the testing process again.
- One woman in healthcare had trouble getting childcare after her maternity leave was over and had been unable to go back to work due to lack of childcare. Was still trying to find a flexible, affordable option so she could go back to work.

### POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES/SOLUTIONS

- More support for writing resumes, practicing job interviews, etc.
- More co-op, internship opportunities through RRC.
- More networking opportunities to meet industry representatives.
- Easier provincial process for transferring health care credentials (similar to Ontario).
- Local bus within Portage.

## FOCUS GROUP #5: NOVEMBER 24, 5:00 – 6:30 PM, VIRTUAL THROUGH ZOOM

### ATTENDANCE

- Four participants attended.

### CHALLENGES

- One participant lived in Portage for a few years but then moved to Winnipeg as they wanted to pursue studies that weren't offered in Portage.
- One newcomer initially moved to Toronto but then came to Portage for affordability/small town feel/job opportunities. Had to work at a series of low-wage jobs but was able to move up over time.
- Another newcomer said she was transferring healthcare credentials and also went to Ontario originally to get certification because it was easier than Manitoba.
- Difficult for families without a car/licence to get around. One participant had a spouse and three kids, so they had to take 2 taxis to get anywhere as a family.
- Lack of affordable housing in Portage.
- Limited transportation, difficult to get to jobs on the edge of the city. Difficult to get taxis early in the morning, sometimes they are late and cause you to be late for work.
- Lack of public transportation options was not communicated to newcomers before they arrived in Portage, was a real shock when they arrived.
- Participant wants to upgrade education at RRC but courses only offered at Winnipeg campus. Very difficult to manage this with a family, full-time work while living in Portage. May have to move as a result.
- Many services (specialized dental, training, healthcare) are only available in larger cities like Winnipeg and Brandon. As a result, participant said Portage doesn't feel like a 'real city' but instead was a bedroom community to larger places, which made it difficult to settle in without access to these services.
- One participant wants to work in architecture and is unable to find work in that field in Portage, may have to move to Winnipeg for work.

### POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES/SOLUTIONS

- Newcomers talked about being able to work their way up through low-wage jobs into more senior positions over time.
- PLLC helped newcomers get settled, improve English, connect with job opportunities.
- More information on getting drivers licence would be useful.

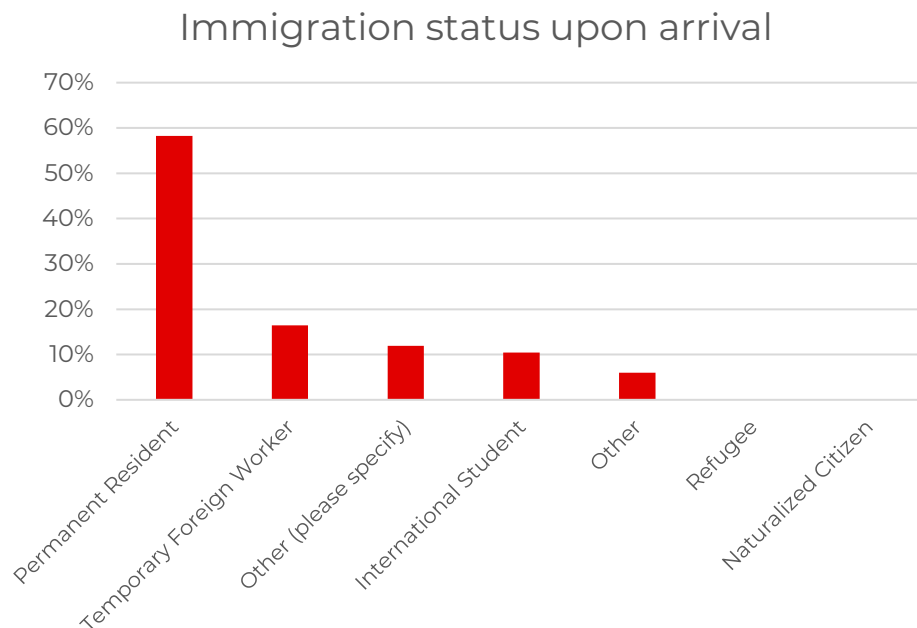
# APPENDIX B: ECONOMIC IMPACT SURVEY

## RESULTS

The Economic Impact of Immigration to Portage la Prairie. LJS Consulting for the Portage Local Immigration Partnership. June 2021.

The following charts reflect the data obtained from a survey of 67 community residents. Refer to XXX for a report summary.

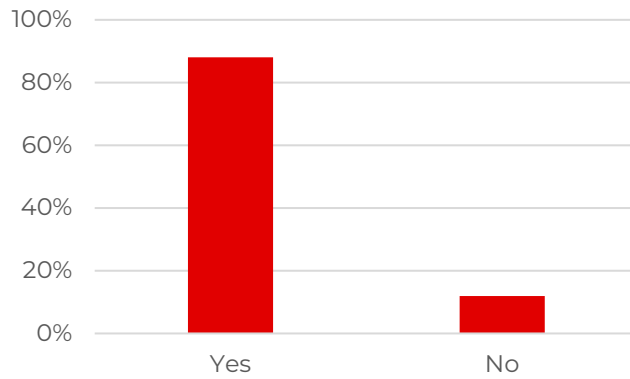
### Q3: Please indicate your immigration status upon arrival



### Q4: Are you employed?

59 out of 67 respondents – or 88 percent – were employed.

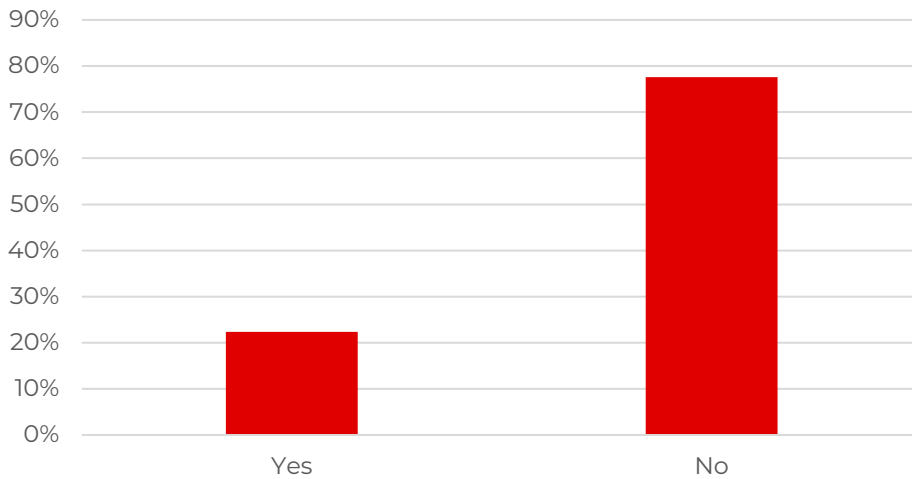
### Are you employed?



#### Q5: Was it hard to find employment?

52 out of 67 – or 78 percent – said it was not hard to find employment.

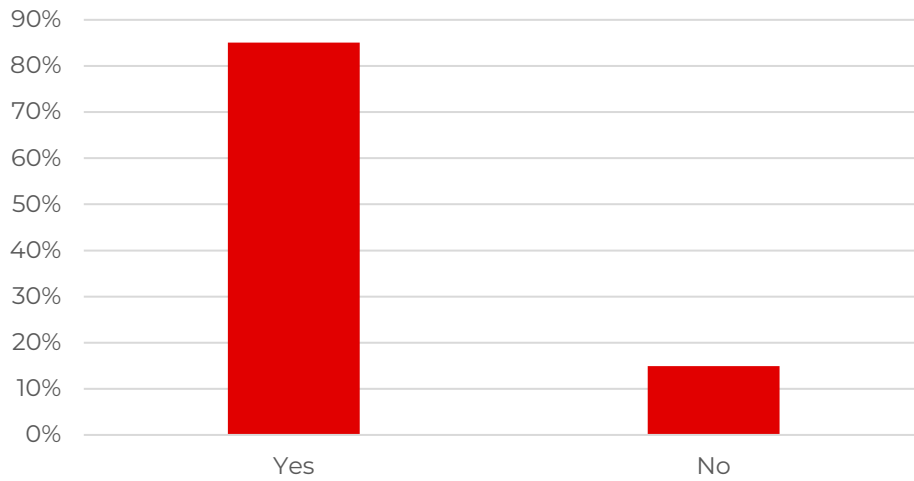
### Was it hard to find employment?



#### Q6: Are you satisfied with your current job?

57 out of 67 – or 85 percent – said they were satisfied.

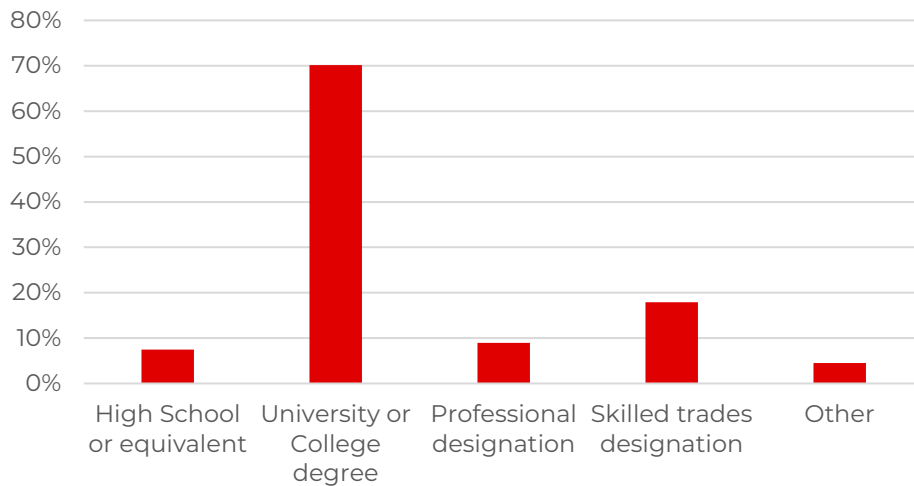
## Are you satisfied with your current job?



### Q8: What is your level of education or training in your first country?

47 out of 67 had university or college degrees, another 6 had professional designations, and 12 had skilled trades.

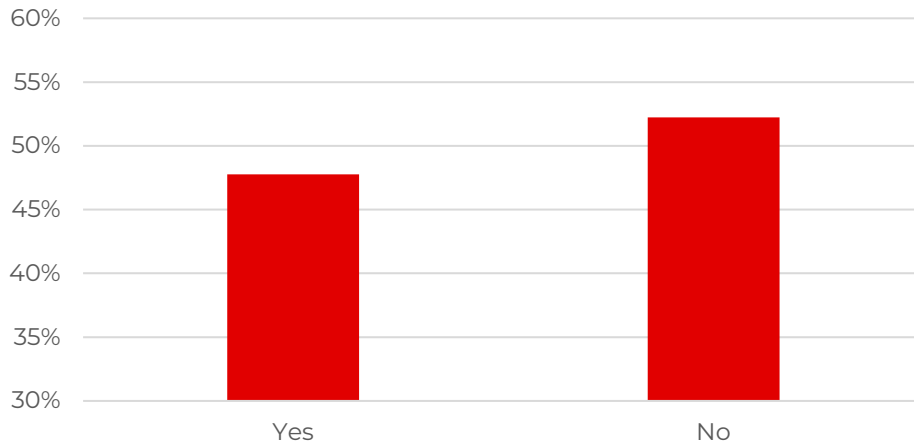
## Level of Education or Training in First Country



### Q9: Were you able to find employment related to your profession?

Less than half – or 32 out of 67 – said they were able to find employment related to their profession.

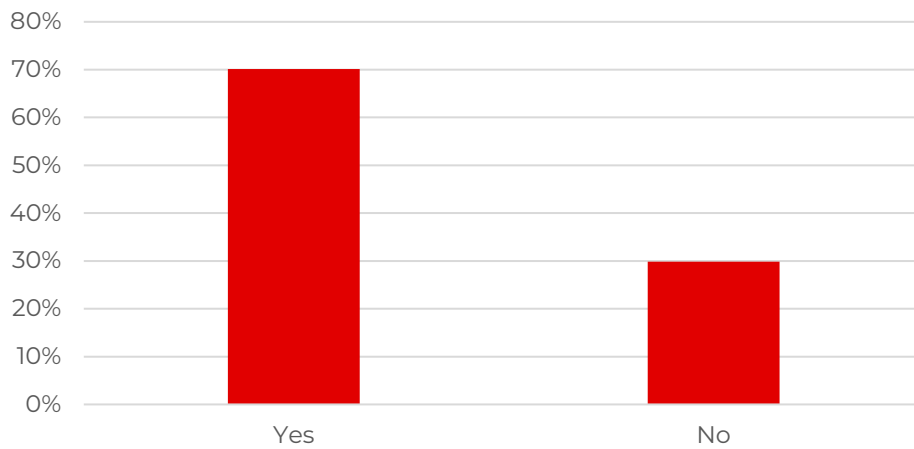
### Were you able to find employment related to your profession?



### Q10: Were you able to find employment related to your skills?

47 out of 67 – or 70 percent – said they were able to find employment related to their skills.

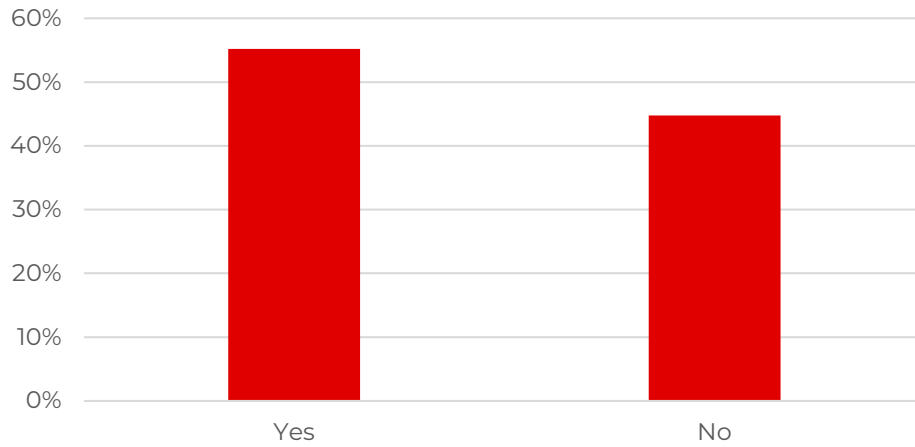
### Were you able to find employment related to your skills?



### Q11: Were you able to continue studying in Canada for credentials/qualification recognition?

37 out of 67 – or 55 percent – said they were.

Were you able to continue studying in Canada for credentials/qualification recognition?



**Q12: Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statement: My community provides educational opportunities for newcomers.**

"My community provides educational opportunities for newcomers"

