

LABOR AVAILABILITY STUDY

ANNUAL REPORT FY 2023-2024



NEBRASKA

Good Life. Great Connections.

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

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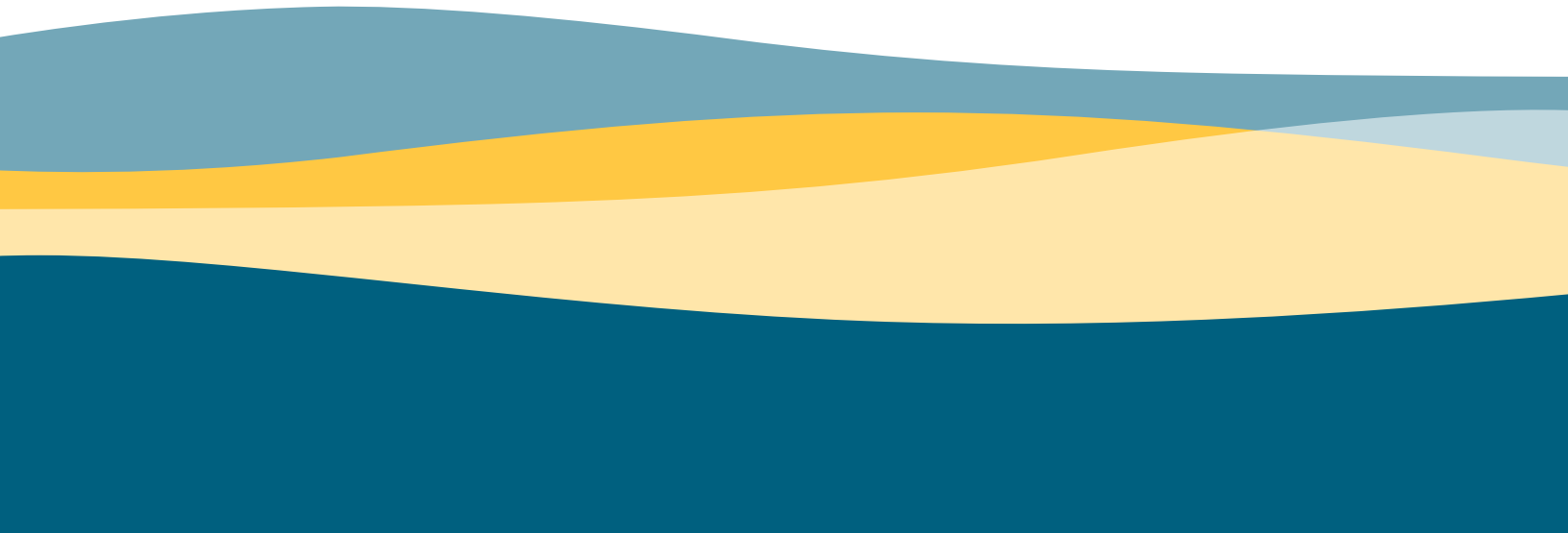
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Background and Purpose

In 2016, Neb. Rev. Stat. §48-3401 to 48-3407 created the Sector Partnership Program, which allowed the Nebraska Department of Labor (NDOL) and the Department of Economic Development (DED) to continue collaborating on the research project known as the Labor Availability Study (LAS). The goal of the research project is to conduct labor availability, employer needs, and skills gap studies for selected communities in Nebraska. Neb. Rev. Stat. §48-3401 to 48-3407 states that an annual report shall be provided to the Governor and the Business and Labor Committee detailing the process and results of the labor availability, hiring needs, and skills gap studies.

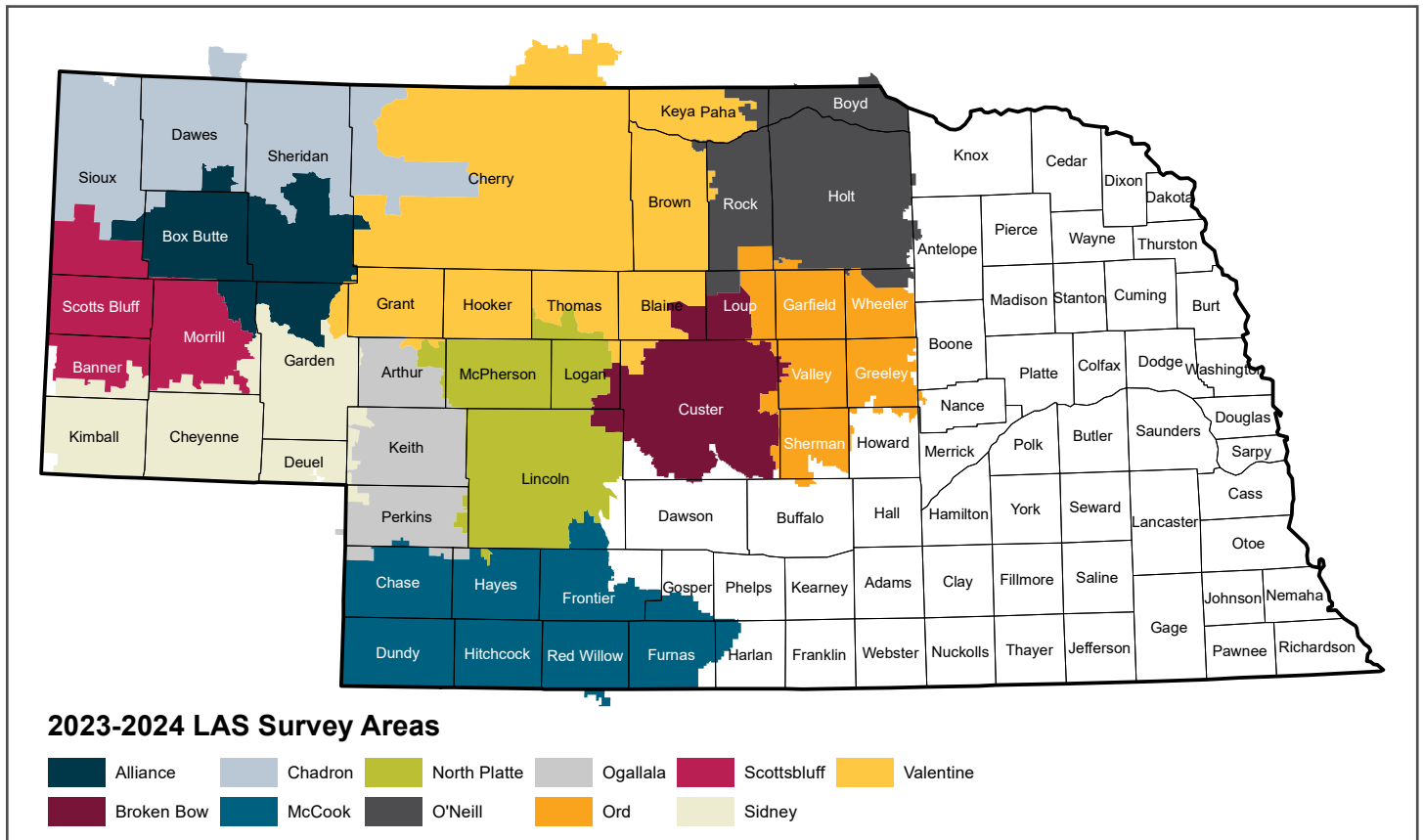
LAS funding began with a federal grant, and the first pilot studies were funded through the Department of Economic Development’s Manufacturing Extension Program. As part of the Sector Partnership Program, the Departments of Labor and Economic Development each initially transferred \$250,000 from the Job Training Cash Fund and \$250,000 from the Nebraska Training and Support Cash Fund. Beginning July 1, 2017, the Nebraska Department of Labor has continued to fund these important surveys through the use of the Nebraska Training and Support Cash Fund.

2023-2024 Survey Areas

During FY 2023-2024, LAS surveyed eleven cities in Western Nebraska including: Alliance, Broken Blow, Chadron, McCook, North Platte, Ogallala, O’Neill, Ord, Scottsbluff, Sidney, and Valentine (surveyed between August 2023 and November 2023).

Individual Labor Availability and Hiring Needs reports were published for Scottsbluff, Sidney, Alliance, and Chadron (Summer 2024). Reports for the remaining survey areas, as well as Skills Gap reports for the Panhandle, Sandhills, and Mid Plains economic regions of the state are expected to be published in August and September of 2024. These reports can be found on the NDOL Nebraska Labor Availability Study Publications page of NEworks.

Preparations for FY 2024-2025 began in early 2024, with plans to produce in-depth reports and analysis of LAS data collected between 2021-2023, which covers the majority of the state.



Methodology

The Survey of Hiring and Training Needs is conducted by the Department of Labor's Labor Market Information unit. Survey samples are created using the most recent Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages Enhanced Quarterly Unemployment Insurance (EQUI) files. Privately owned businesses with an average employment of three employees or more are selected for the final sample. The sample is designed to include establishments representing the range of industries and employment levels typical in the survey area. In FY 2023-2024, NDOL sent Hiring and Training Needs questionnaires to 3,565 businesses, which resulted in 1,175 responses and an overall response rate of 34.1%.

NDOL Labor Availability Surveys are conducted by the Department of Labor's Labor Market Information unit in collaboration with the Bureau of Sociological Research (BOSR) at the University of Nebraska—Lincoln. The survey area is determined by analyzing commuting patterns in and out of the target city and consists of a random sample of households in the area. Data collection and survey processing is handled by BOSR, and NDOL analyzes the results and produces the final reports. In FY 2023-2024, BOSR sent surveys to 22,000 households, which resulted in 3,625 responses and an overall response rate of 16.5%.



Report Findings

Labor Availability

Labor availability describes how many people within a given area are available and willing to take a new job. While there are some datasets available that count certain types of job seekers, such as unemployed individuals or active job seekers, a few key segments of the labor pool, such as people who are currently employed but may change jobs given the right opportunity, or those who are not working but may reenter the labor force, are often unaccounted for in estimates of labor availability.

NDOL's labor availability study is primarily focused on the specific groups of people defined as potential job seekers and active job seekers in an area. A potential job seeker is an employed person who answered either "yes" or "maybe" to the question "Are you likely to change jobs in the next year if a suitable job is available?" A potential job seeker is also a non-employed person who answered "yes" or "maybe" to the question "Are you likely to reenter the workforce in the next year if a suitable job is available?" The potential job seekers group includes all individuals who indicated that they may accept a new job within the next year, given that a suitable job is available. Active job seekers are a subset of potential job seekers who answered "yes" to the question "Are you actively seeking a new job?"

LAS pilot projects began in Northeast Nebraska in 2013 and were published by NDOL and DED staff in the fall of 2014 with the release of the Northeast Nebraska Labor Availability Reports.

Potential Job Seekers and Active Job Seekers

At the time of the surveys conducted in FY 2023-2024, there were an estimated 49,851 potential job seekers across the entire Western Nebraska survey region, of which 18,760 were actively seeking new employment. The percentage of respondents identified as potential job seekers varied by region, ranging between 22.7% in the O'Neill area and 34% in the Scottsbluff area.

Survey Area	Percent of Respondents who are Potential Job Seekers in Survey Area	Percent of Respondents who are Active Job Seekers in Survey Area	Survey Area Population Age 18 and Over	Estimated Number of Potential Job Seekers Age 18 and Over	Estimated Number of Active Job Seekers Age 18 and Over
Western Region	29.3%	10.5%	173,121	49,851	18,760
Alliance	24.2%	7.9%	8,360	2,022	663
Broken Bow	26.2%	8.8%	8,211	2,152	720
Chadron	30.3%	11.0%	11,139	3,380	1,222
McCook	31.1%	11.1%	20,637	6,408	2,287
North Platte	31.0%	14.9%	20,637	6,408	3,069
Ogallala	25.1%	13.9%	27,376	6,880	3,808
O'Neill	22.7%	5.7%	8,845	2,009	503
Ord	27.0%	6.9%	10,253	2,765	708
Scottsbluff	34.0%	8.5%	31,241	10,625	2,659
Sidney	27.8%	11.7%	13,211	3,671	1,544
Valentine	26.7%	11.9%	13,211	3,532	1,577

Important Factors for Potential Job Seekers

Potential job seekers were presented with a list of factors related to jobs and were asked to indicate how important each factor was to them when evaluating a new job opportunity.

The factors included in the survey cover a wide range of factors that could influence a job seeker's decision. These factors include traditional elements such as salary, job security, paid vacation, retirement benefits, and health insurance, as well as work-related considerations, such as the opportunity to use existing skills, learn new skills, level of responsibilities, and flexible work schedules. The survey also includes factors related to the local community, including commute time, availability of housing, access to public transportation, and accessible child care.

By covering a comprehensive range of factors, the survey aims to provide a more complete picture of what potential job seekers value when considering job opportunities. The data collected from the survey can be valuable for employers and policymakers in tailoring job offers to meet the preferences and needs of job seekers in different industries, occupations, and regions, ultimately leading to better job-market matches and increased job satisfaction.

The table below shows the percentage of potential job seekers indicating a particular factor was "important" or "very important" when considering a job opportunity. Salary and job security/stability were the most cited important factors across survey areas, but other highly-ranked factors vary considerably on an area-by-area basis. Factors including tuition reimbursement, accessible child care, and public transportation ranked among the lowest considerations when potential job seekers evaluate job opportunities. However, these factors can hold increased significance for individuals who find themselves in specific situations, such as being a student, a parent, or without regular transportation.

Consideration Factor	Western Region	Alliance	Broken Bow	Chadron	McCook	North Platte	O'Neill	Ogallala	Ord	Scottsbluff	Sidney	Valentine
Salary	89.4%	84.0%	94.6%	91.7%	92.5%	92.1%	96.4%	86.2%	89.7%	85.4%	90.5%	84.4%
Job security/stability	86.4%	83.5%	90.6%	86.9%	86.2%	89.5%	87.7%	88.4%	80.6%	84.6%	90.2%	81.4%
Company values	84.2%	85.6%	83.2%	70.6%	88.6%	84.4%	83.7%	79.7%	81.7%	87.0%	86.0%	86.1%
Paid vacation	83.4%	79.7%	82.7%	74.6%	84.2%	86.5%	81.2%	81.4%	79.1%	84.2%	92.3%	79.6%
Retirement benefits	82.3%	76.4%	77.3%	82.5%	86.2%	83.6%	76.4%	80.3%	81.4%	86.4%	80.5%	75.2%
Paid sick leave	81.5%	79.6%	79.3%	77.2%	78.6%	82.3%	85.4%	81.0%	77.1%	85.1%	82.1%	80.1%
Paid holidays	81.2%	77.2%	77.7%	75.1%	84.8%	83.6%	80.0%	81.2%	74.6%	81.9%	89.5%	75.9%
Health insurance	78.5%	73.2%	77.0%	77.4%	82.7%	75.9%	83.2%	69.9%	74.1%	82.0%	77.5%	82.9%
Use existing skills	78.2%	78.3%	76.2%	72.8%	75.1%	74.9%	78.3%	89.4%	79.0%	83.1%	77.3%	74.5%
Level of responsibilities	74.4%	66.1%	76.4%	69.2%	67.0%	78.7%	72.6%	81.4%	76.0%	77.4%	70.7%	73.4%
Flexible work schedule	73.9%	80.7%	72.6%	74.1%	80.6%	72.1%	77.1%	67.2%	73.7%	73.3%	67.4%	77.3%
Dental insurance	72.6%	73.3%	62.1%	73.6%	75.4%	71.8%	71.9%	63.2%	65.5%	78.5%	70.6%	73.2%
Learn new skills	72.5%	69.3%	69.3%	67.3%	67.9%	79.8%	68.0%	79.1%	63.1%	76.8%	67.1%	68.3%
Opportunity for advancement	72.4%	75.5%	72.2%	70.4%	70.6%	78.8%	59.1%	70.6%	71.3%	75.1%	66.3%	68.2%
Vision insurance	70.4%	70.1%	57.4%	71.8%	76.5%	67.0%	68.1%	66.0%	62.7%	77.3%	67.3%	72.9%
Paid family leave	68.8%	73.4%	74.7%	60.9%	73.3%	69.9%	66.2%	60.9%	63.6%	71.4%	66.2%	63.8%
Commute time	68.2%	66.6%	74.2%	74.0%	65.6%	70.0%	75.1%	80.0%	79.6%	59.9%	66.8%	63.5%
Community	63.9%	66.0%	63.3%	68.4%	71.9%	67.8%	58.2%	60.5%	66.4%	62.8%	51.6%	56.5%
Use education/training/degree	55.9%	55.2%	55.1%	54.7%	54.2%	52.1%	50.8%	57.8%	53.1%	62.9%	53.7%	54.0%
Available housing	40.5%	33.5%	59.6%	42.1%	39.1%	40.1%	40.3%	40.1%	42.1%	37.9%	38.5%	41.0%
Work from home/telecommuting	29.2%	31.6%	32.2%	30.0%	31.5%	24.6%	29.1%	26.2%	36.4%	26.9%	38.7%	25.1%
Tuition reimbursement	29.1%	29.6%	33.2%	23.4%	33.4%	37.2%	27.7%	21.8%	23.1%	31.5%	19.3%	16.8%
Accessible child care	24.4%	27.6%	35.4%	24.5%	28.2%	27.6%	31.3%	16.2%	27.6%	18.3%	16.8%	26.7%
Near public transportation	10.4%	10.2%	10.3%	12.0%	6.0%	6.7%	17.6%	19.2%	6.8%	15.3%	6.9%	4.6%

Obstacles to Employment for Potential Job Seekers

The following table shows the percentage of potential job seekers across the FY 2023-2024 survey areas indicating various obstacles that may prevent them from changing jobs or reentering the workforce in the next year. While inadequate pay offered, lack of job opportunities, and inadequate benefits were the most prevalent obstacles cited across the entire region, each area reported its own unique ranking of top five obstacles.

Obstacle	Western Region	Alliance	Broken Bow	Chadron	McCook	North Platte	O'Neill	Ogallala	Ord	Scottsbluff	Sidney	Valentine
Inadequate pay offered at local area employers	77.5%	70.3%	81.8%	69.8%	79.2%	77.1%	65.3%	67.6%	70.9%	86.2%	80.3%	75.0%
Lack of job opportunities in local area	76.4%	75.7%	75.4%	82.4%	80.7%	74.0%	69.0%	77.0%	67.3%	79.1%	78.0%	73.5%
Inadequate benefits at local area employers	71.6%	67.8%	72.7%	71.2%	73.2%	70.9%	62.1%	64.7%	61.2%	78.4%	76.2%	66.3%
Work schedule flexibility	63.4%	64.2%	72.1%	61.7%	72.0%	61.0%	68.9%	59.1%	62.7%	64.2%	58.1%	52.1%
Required relocation	56.8%	54.8%	54.3%	58.3%	56.3%	46.3%	67.2%	60.8%	65.5%	59.6%	60.1%	55.9%
Inadequate hours offered at local area employers	56.1%	53.6%	50.2%	60.5%	61.7%	48.5%	51.4%	46.1%	51.3%	64.6%	59.5%	52.4%
Family commitments	41.0%	48.3%	38.3%	42.5%	50.7%	40.7%	43.6%	38.4%	44.7%	37.0%	27.8%	46.4%
Lack of training	34.0%	35.7%	31.6%	35.3%	39.8%	38.4%	36.8%	39.1%	31.2%	32.6%	22.9%	24.9%
Time to search/apply for jobs	32.4%	23.7%	30.7%	32.9%	34.3%	28.3%	33.9%	38.9%	28.3%	38.0%	32.8%	25.3%
Available housing	30.4%	22.2%	40.6%	35.1%	32.9%	27.8%	39.3%	23.6%	28.4%	32.4%	20.0%	32.8%
Lack of education	25.2%	25.6%	24.2%	27.0%	30.3%	30.3%	28.8%	24.0%	22.7%	22.6%	14.1%	25.1%
Overqualified	24.7%	19.9%	30.8%	16.5%	26.4%	19.0%	25.9%	26.7%	24.7%	28.0%	32.5%	21.8%
Transportation	22.0%	15.4%	24.1%	28.7%	21.0%	18.7%	30.4%	30.4%	23.2%	18.9%	27.1%	20.9%
Language barriers	18.9%	16.7%	18.1%	21.4%	21.6%	14.2%	23.8%	16.2%	19.3%	17.5%	23.3%	25.7%
Lack of job experience	18.6%	18.4%	14.0%	19.4%	27.7%	24.5%	18.5%	18.4%	11.9%	15.0%	15.3%	14.0%
Lack of childcare	16.2%	14.9%	23.4%	19.0%	17.4%	19.4%	15.6%	10.8%	18.5%	12.1%	12.4%	18.7%
Contractual commitments	13.5%	19.9%	12.0%	16.4%	15.7%	10.0%	11.9%	12.0%	5.1%	16.8%	12.4%	12.1%
Disability	10.7%	6.8%	4.9%	14.2%	6.2%	10.9%	6.7%	18.2%	5.8%	13.4%	16.3%	7.8%
Poor credit	10.1%	9.0%	8.3%	10.2%	9.8%	7.7%	6.6%	11.2%	5.6%	12.6%	12.6%	14.2%
Employment history	6.2%	7.1%	2.8%	7.9%	4.7%	6.3%	6.1%	8.4%	2.8%	7.6%	5.6%	5.7%
Criminal record	3.0%	5.2%	3.4%	0.9%	0.0%	2.6%	2.1%	1.2%	3.8%	4.0%	5.5%	3.6%

Hiring and Training Needs

The aim of the Survey of Hiring and Training Needs is to collect information related to the local business landscape and labor issues within a specific area. These surveys aim to understand the workforce needs of local businesses by gathering data from employers about the specific occupations they are actively hiring for, including educational qualifications, certifications, and skillsets required for these positions. Additionally, the surveys explore various aspects of the workforce, such as the types of training provided by businesses to their employees, challenges faced in hiring suitable candidates, benefits offered to employees, concerns related to retiring employees, obstacles to expansion, the skill levels of current employees, and the prevalence of teleworking. The data obtained from these surveys can be utilized to inform workforce development, address skill gaps, and support local businesses in fostering a skilled and competitive workforce.

NDOL Hiring and Training Needs surveys were first conducted in 2014 for the Omaha and Lincoln metropolitan areas in partnership with the Bureau of Business Research at the University of Nebraska—Lincoln. Since 2016, the surveys have been conducted by the Nebraska Department of Labor's Labor Market Information Unit.

Difficulty Hiring

Employers were asked to name the top two occupations that were most frequently hired at their location and were asked to indicate whether it was difficult to find workers for those occupations. Additionally, employers were prompted with reasons why it might be difficult to find workers. The table below displays the percentage of businesses reporting difficulty hiring and reasons for difficulty across the FY 2023-2024 survey areas.

Hiring Difficulty	Western Region	Alliance	Broken Bow	Chadron	McCook	North Platte	O'Neill	Ogallala	Ord	Scottsbluff	Sidney	Valentine
Percentage of Businesses indicating Difficulty Hiring	90.5%	84.2%	92.3%	89.8%	94.3%	87.3%	93.6%	93.5%	86.8%	91.2%	89.3%	88.8%
Reasons for Difficulty Finding Workers												
Not enough applicants	87.6%	95.0%	86.1%	86.5%	89.7%	84.1%	92.7%	85.8%	88.5%	84.1%	81.7%	92.0%
Poor work history	58.7%	64.4%	65.6%	49.5%	62.0%	61.9%	60.6%	56.9%	56.2%	55.6%	63.9%	47.7%
Lack of work experience	52.1%	57.2%	53.1%	49.5%	51.1%	58.1%	57.4%	43.5%	44.2%	49.7%	55.8%	51.7%
Wage demands too high	51.3%	46.5%	57.9%	39.0%	50.3%	57.6%	57.8%	47.7%	39.9%	53.9%	51.4%	51.9%
Lack of occupation-specific skills	43.0%	49.1%	45.8%	48.3%	38.3%	42.3%	44.2%	33.0%	43.3%	42.8%	55.4%	38.7%
Unavailable for required shifts	36.4%	38.0%	41.6%	28.5%	45.8%	39.2%	36.5%	27.8%	36.8%	30.1%	39.9%	26.3%
Available housing in your area	35.8%	11.6%	54.8%	32.9%	44.5%	20.5%	40.4%	52.3%	54.9%	9.8%	32.5%	58.7%
Applicants lack childcare	29.1%	19.6%	47.9%	18.7%	29.8%	23.0%	38.3%	27.5%	37.9%	15.8%	26.7%	43.4%
Lack of required licenses/certificates	23.7%	25.8%	23.8%	26.5%	20.6%	22.0%	25.9%	16.7%	26.6%	25.3%	31.4%	19.7%
Location of your business	23.3%	23.9%	27.1%	27.1%	28.6%	12.2%	26.2%	21.5%	28.4%	10.0%	34.7%	30.3%
Failed background check/drug screen	21.7%	18.5%	24.6%	4.2%	25.7%	19.0%	13.4%	18.7%	21.0%	29.7%	35.5%	14.6%
Lack of required education	17.4%	19.1%	18.0%	12.5%	18.2%	14.3%	16.8%	18.1%	19.7%	19.3%	26.3%	10.3%
Citizenship/work authorization	9.6%	6.1%	11.2%	9.2%	13.8%	9.2%	8.8%	4.4%	7.3%	4.6%	13.4%	13.6%
Language barrier	7.5%	5.4%	13.6%	6.9%	8.6%	6.1%	9.6%	8.3%	10.5%	4.0%	4.8%	6.9%
Applicants are overqualified	5.5%	1.9%	2.3%	4.8%	6.4%	9.2%	7.4%	1.7%	6.6%	6.1%	9.5%	0.0%

Percentage of Employers Offering Benefits to Some or All Full-Time Workers

Businesses were asked whether they offered a variety of benefits to all, some, or none of their full-time employees. Paid vacation leave and paid holiday leave were ranked first and second, respectively, across all survey areas, while child care assistance and tuition reimbursement ranked lowest.

Benefits Offered to All or Some Full-Time Employees	Western Region	Alliance	Broken Bow	Chadron	McCook	North Platte	O'Neill	Ogallala	Ord	Scottsbluff	Sidney	Valentine
Paid vacation leave	82.7%	74.5%	83.4%	81.6%	81.9%	80.3%	81.6%	81.5%	88.1%	88.2%	81.9%	81.3%
Paid holiday leave	73.1%	69.2%	65.4%	77.6%	75.5%	70.7%	70.0%	76.4%	73.3%	78.8%	75.0%	67.2%
Paid sick leave	61.2%	46.8%	68.8%	66.1%	66.0%	53.9%	55.5%	65.1%	57.9%	69.8%	48.2%	60.8%
Retirement	55.6%	54.2%	50.4%	56.0%	60.7%	52.2%	55.9%	42.0%	66.7%	61.4%	57.3%	44.6%
Health insurance	51.4%	41.1%	60.8%	54.5%	55.8%	38.1%	47.1%	43.4%	63.0%	53.6%	59.3%	47.6%
Short-term and/or long-term disability insurance	40.0%	23.9%	52.1%	38.6%	39.9%	25.8%	34.6%	32.6%	58.2%	43.4%	45.7%	44.8%
Dental insurance	39.4%	30.2%	46.1%	43.1%	42.5%	27.2%	37.1%	28.8%	48.0%	40.3%	53.1%	38.3%
Paid family and/or medical leave	37.3%	23.3%	49.7%	50.3%	36.3%	30.0%	36.5%	47.6%	35.3%	32.3%	37.8%	42.4%
Vision insurance	36.4%	27.4%	45.4%	34.7%	38.3%	23.9%	30.5%	31.0%	43.3%	38.9%	51.6%	37.0%
Tuition reimbursement	20.6%	11.6%	25.5%	16.0%	21.4%	17.0%	29.0%	18.2%	17.5%	18.9%	30.7%	18.8%
Childcare assistance	15.9%	4.5%	26.8%	20.2%	18.1%	8.6%	12.2%	16.3%	21.8%	14.3%	23.5%	11.7%

Skills Gaps

The primary objectives of a skills gap study are to identify and assess the disparities between the skills and qualifications possessed by the current workforce and those required by employers in a specific industry or region. These studies aim to analyze the existing skill sets of employees, pinpoint the areas where there is a shortage of necessary skills, and determine the potential implications for productivity, economic growth, and overall competitiveness. By understanding these gaps, policymakers, businesses, and educational institutions can develop targeted strategies and initiatives to bridge the divide, ensure a well-equipped workforce, and foster sustainable economic development.

Traditionally skills gaps in these reports have been assessed based on congruency of supply of workers and demand of jobs for those workers. As seen in many occupations during COVID-19 and following, many occupations with minimal skill or education requirements lacked workers—as workers sought other employment arrangements that more met their most important factors.

In FY 2015-2016, NDOL began commissioning regional skills gap reports from the Bureau of Business Research at the University of Nebraska—Lincoln. In FY 2022-2023, NDOL began producing its own skills gap reports, the first one being the Greater Lincoln Skills Gap Report. For the Western Region surveyed in FY 2023-2024, three Skills Gap reports are due to be published in August 2024 for the Panhandle, Sandhills, and Mid Plains economic regions of the state.

Western Region Key Findings:

- Worker shortages exist primarily in occupations that have lower formal-education and work-experience requirements. They range across industries and occupations, including H3 (High wage, High skill, High demand) designated occupations.
- The single most prevalent driver of difficulty hiring is 'not enough applicants.'
- Local secondary and post-secondary graduates who remain in the area are comparable to known job openings numbers in aggregate.

Mid-Plains Key Findings

- The Mid Plains region area workforce is well educated. While desirable in and of itself, this can pose problems for staffing lower-skill occupations that higher-educated workers may not accept due to return-on-investment on education-costs by the worker.
- In the Mid-Plains, potential job seekers in the McCook and Ogallala had low willingness to relocate to another Nebraska city, North Platte PJS had much higher willingness to relocate either inside or outside of Nebraska. Those expressing willingness to leave the state were those seeking higher wages. A majority of Mid Plains region potential job seekers surveyed cite: lack of area opportunities, area wages, and benefits, as obstacles to employment.
- Local secondary and post-secondary graduates who remain in the area are larger than known job openings numbers in aggregate.

Panhandle Key Findings

- The Panhandle region area workforce is well educated. While desirable in and of itself, this can pose problems for staffing lower-skill occupations that higher-educated workers may not accept due to return-on-investment on education-costs by the worker.
- In the Panhandle, individuals in all the survey areas had low willingness to relocate to another Nebraska city, however Scottsbluff and Chadron had much higher willingness to relocate outside of Nebraska. Those expressing willingness to leave the state were younger workers or those with higher wages. A majority of Panhandle region potential job seekers surveyed cite: area wages, lack of area opportunities, and benefits, as obstacles to employment.

Sandhills Key Findings

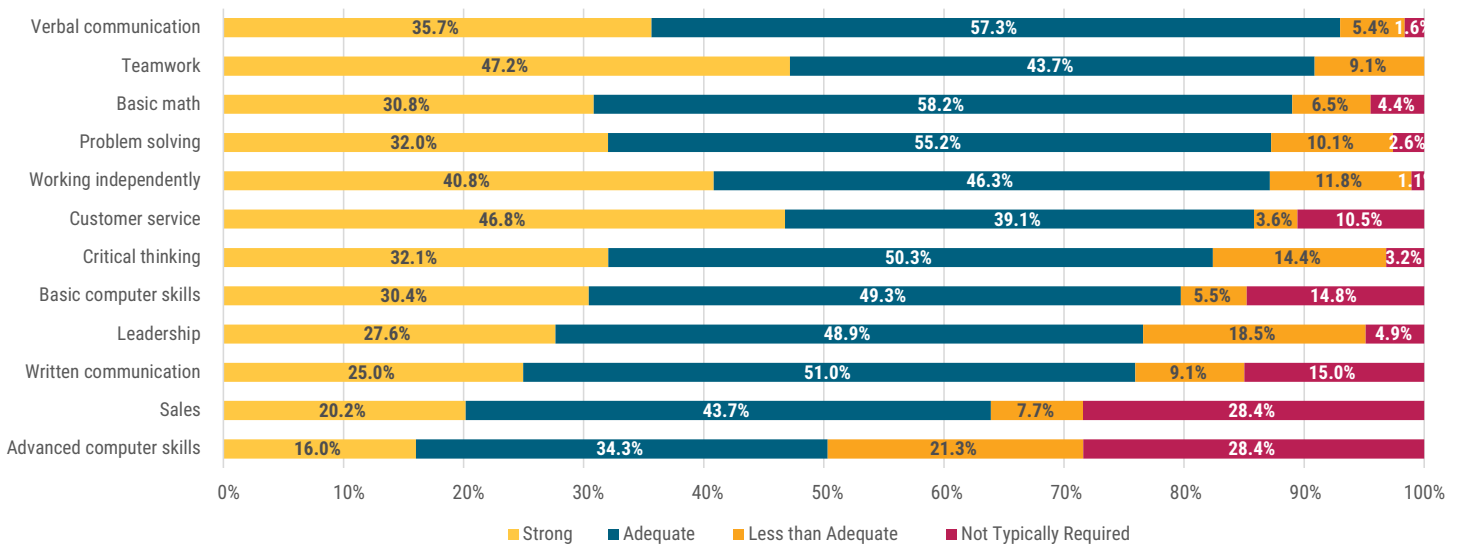
- The Sandhills region area workforce is well educated. While desirable in and of itself, this can pose problems for staffing lower-skill occupations that higher-educated workers may not accept due to return-on-investment on education-costs by the worker.
- In the Sandhills, potential job seekers had low willingness to relocate to another Nebraska city, O’Neill PJS had much higher willingness to relocate and commute (from another city within Nebraska) while Valentine had higher skills willingness to relocate inside of Nebraska. A majority of Sandhills region potential job seekers surveyed cite: lack of area opportunities, area wages, and benefits as obstacles to employment.

Current Worker Skills

Mid-Plains

As seen in Figure 1, employers described their workers as either ‘adequate’ or ‘strong’ most of the time. The skills where Mid-Plains region workers were rated ‘less than adequate’ the most were advanced computer skills (21.3%), leadership (18.5%), and critical thinking (14.4%).

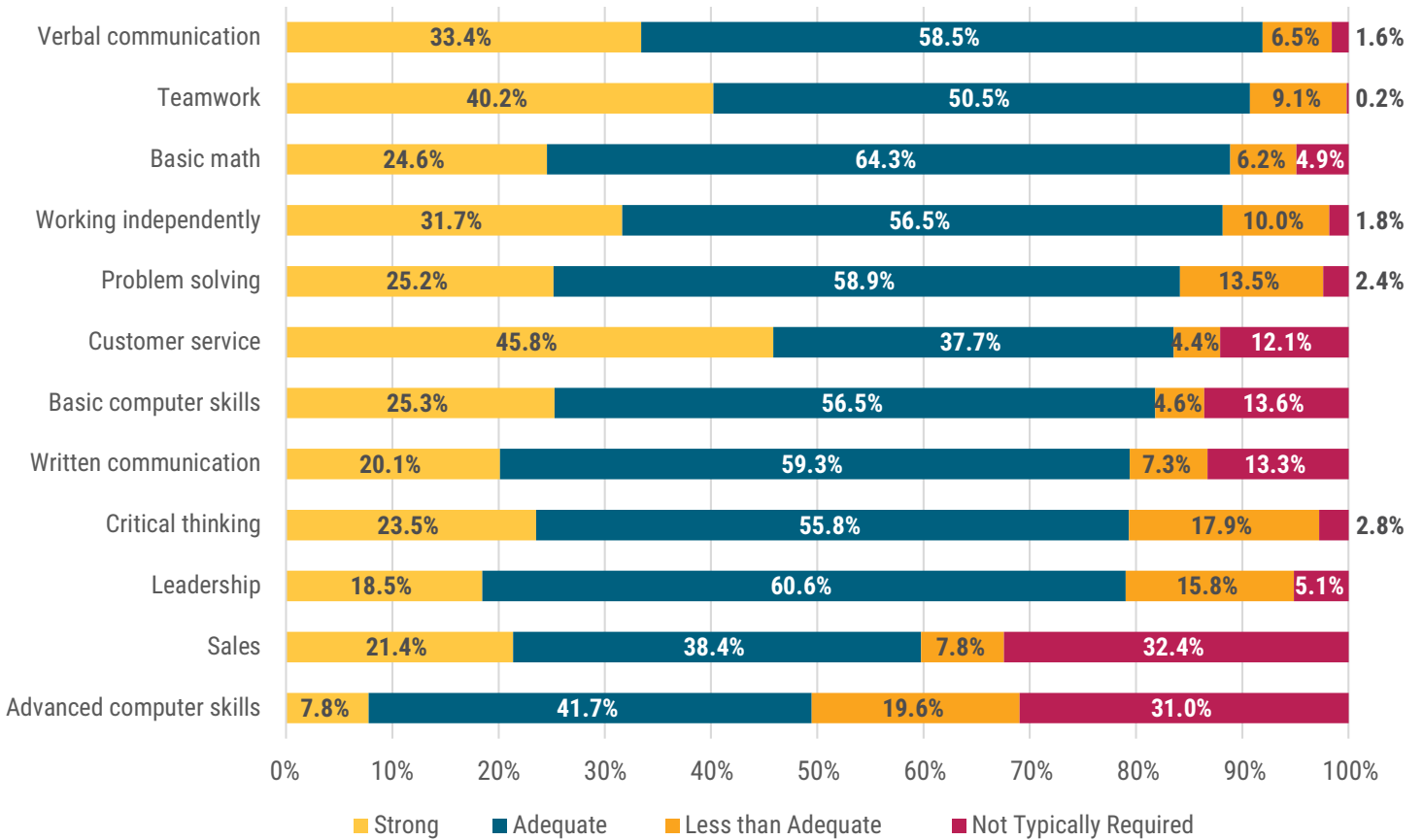
Figure 1: How Employers Rate Current Worker Skills



Panhandle

As seen in Figure 2, employers described their workers as either 'adequate' or 'strong' most of the time. The skills where Panhandle region workers were rated 'less than adequate' the most were advanced computer skills (19.6%), critical thinking (17.9%), leadership (15.8%).

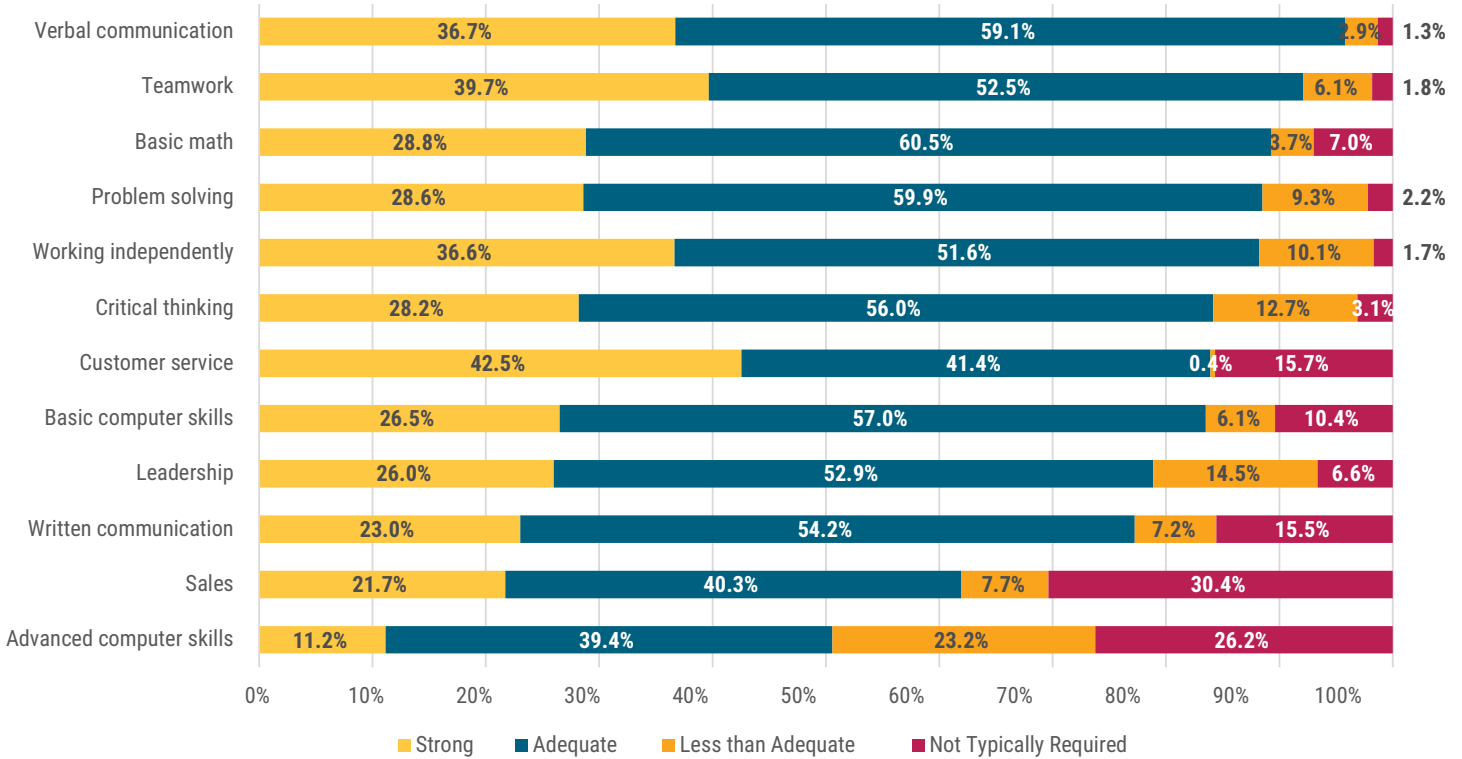
Figure 2: How Employers Rate Current Worker Skills



Sandhills

As seen in Figure 3, employers described their workers as either 'adequate' or 'strong' most of the time. The skills where Sandhills region workers were rated 'less than adequate' the most were advanced computer skills (23.2%), leadership (14.5%), and critical thinking (12.7%).

Figure 3: How Employers Rate Current Worker Skills



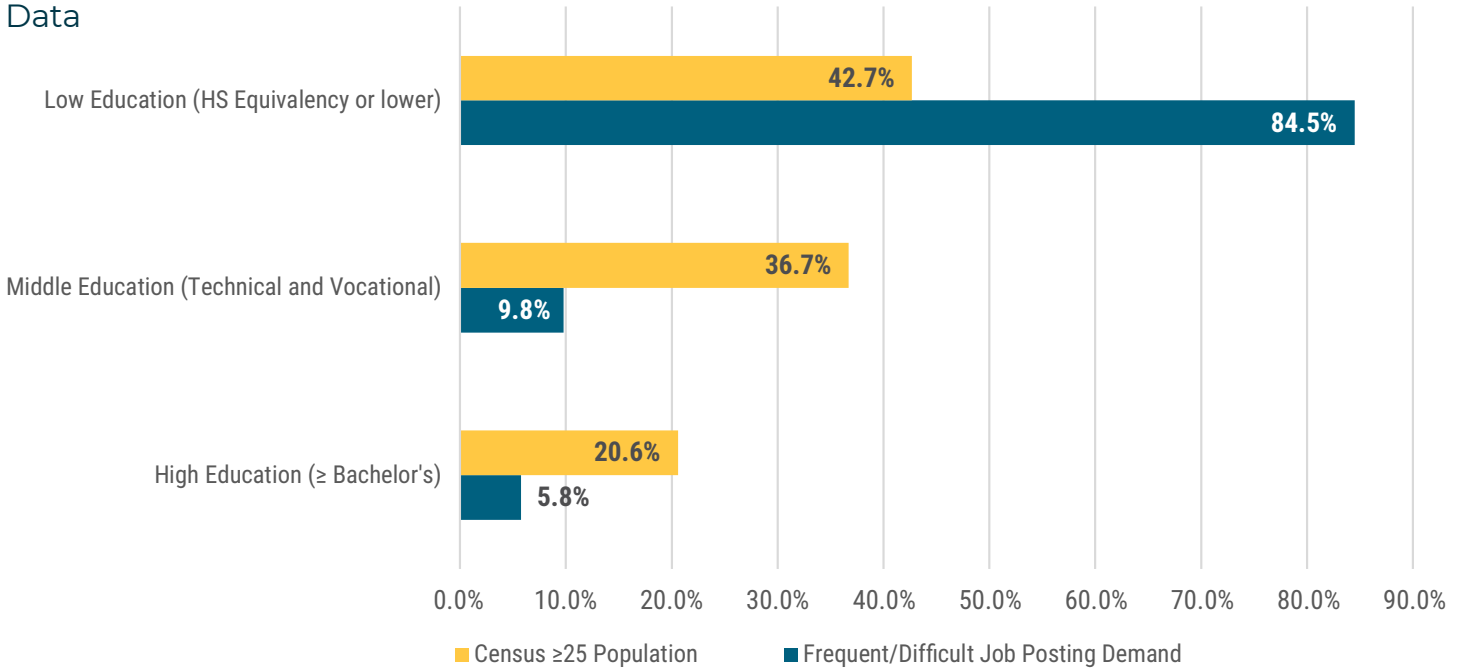
Workforce Education vs Demand

Based on LAS and Census data, Figure 4 through 6 shows the occupational supply and demand based on their education tier. As seen, there is a notable mismatch in required education of the frequently hired-jobs and of persons in the area.

This mismatch, that is undersupply of lower-skills workers and oversupply of higher skilled workers, while it isn't uncommon at a statewide and national level the extremity is noteworthy. Some of this can be attributed to: the businesses that responded to this LAS, the occupations they frequently hire, and where businesses have set their educational requirement bar in the face of regional/ local supply and business need. There is also the economics of the area and the general makeup of industries and occupations in the area. Fundamentally, at regional, state, and national levels there exists a labor force with formal schooling exceeding the occupational demand.

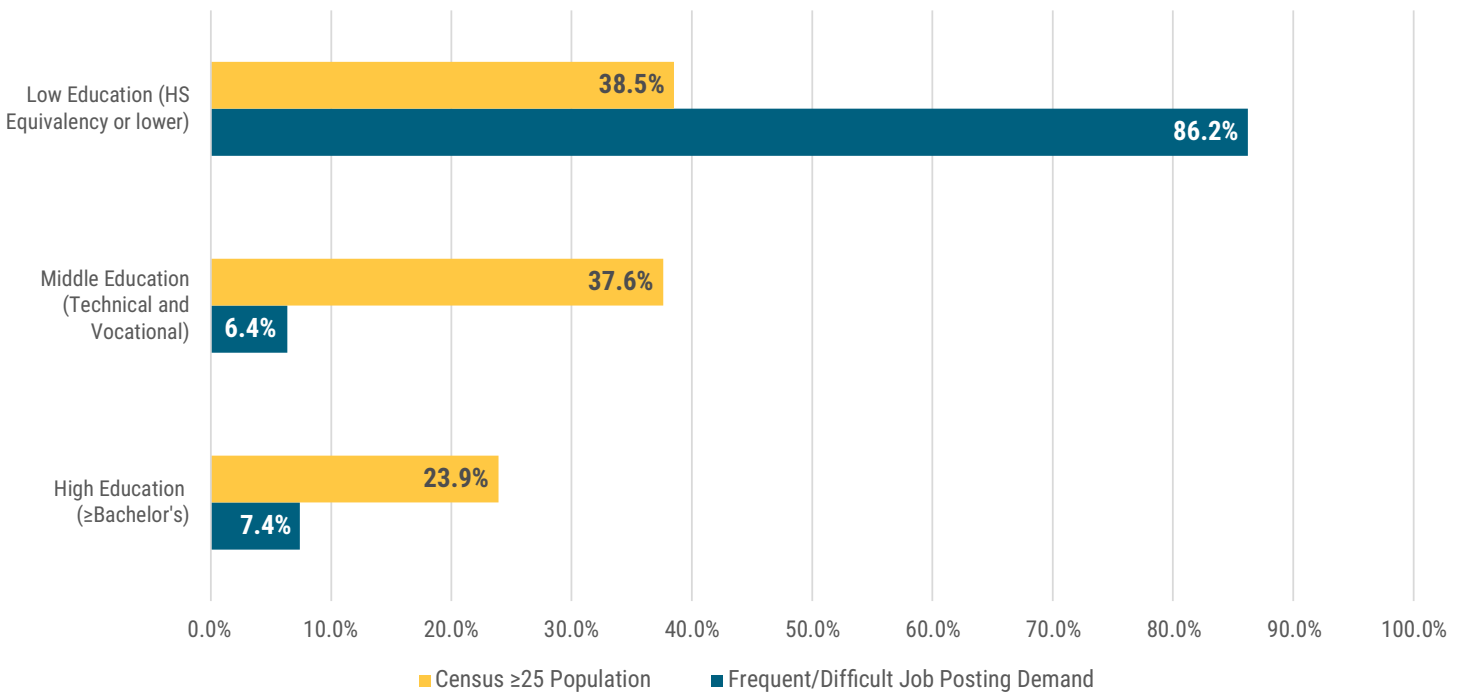
Mid-Plains

Figure 4: Mid-Plains Educational Supply and Labor Demand based on Census and LAS Data



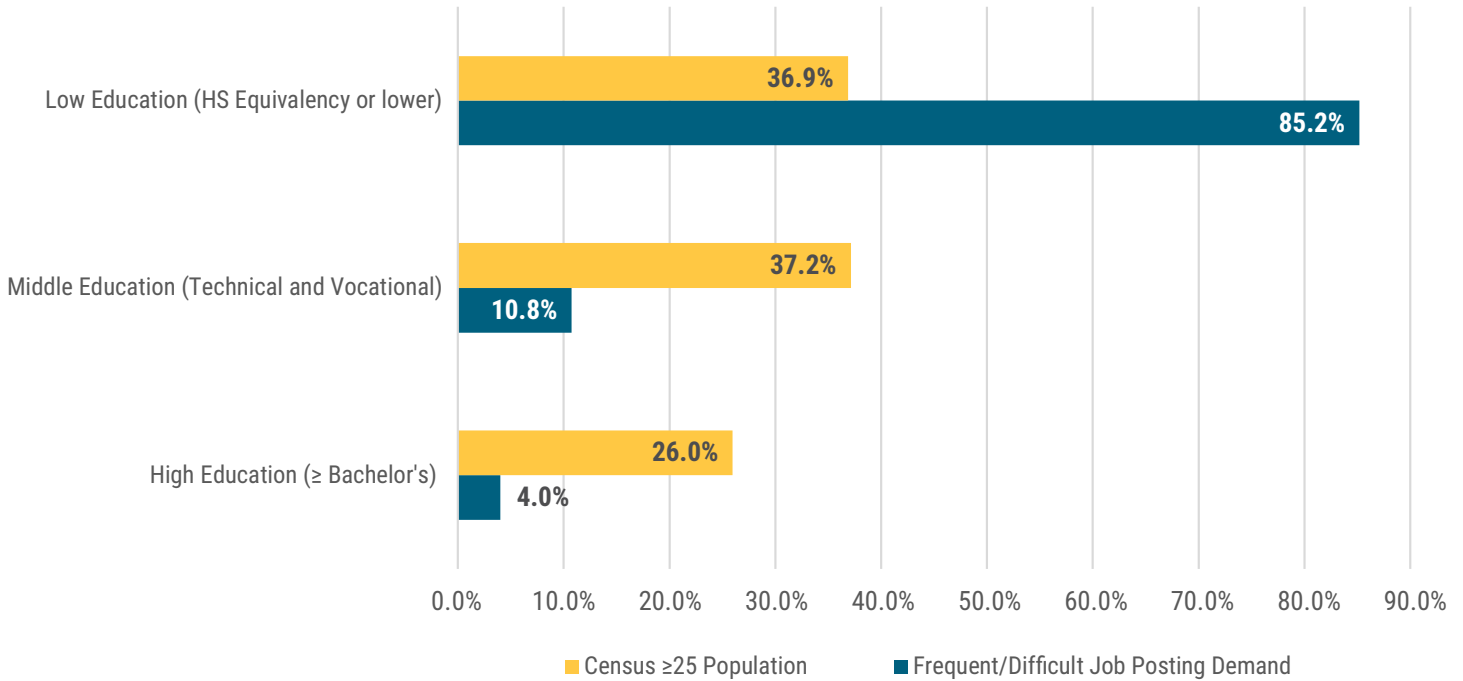
Panhandle

Figure 5: Panhandle Educational Supply and Labor Demand based on Census and LAS Data



Sandhills

Figure 6: Sandhills Educational Supply and Labor Demand based on Census and LAS Data



Community Partnerships and Engagement

In FY 2023-2024, NDOL worked to enhance the value of localized surveys by collaborating with the following local community stakeholders:

Survey Collaborations

- City of Sidney Nebraska
- Box Butte Development Corp.
- Keith County Area Development
- McCook Economic Development
- Northwest Nebraska Development Corp.
- Valentine Economic Development/Chamber of Commerce

Nebraska Workforce Trends

September-October 2023 – Labor Availability Study Results on Multiple Jobholders
<https://dol.nebraska.gov/webdocs/Resources/Trends/September/October/Trends%20September-October%202023.pdf>

Community organizations may request to collaborate on custom changes to questionnaires or reports. For example, during FY 2022-2023, NDOL collaborated with the Lincoln Partnership for Economic Development on an enhanced survey of the Greater Lincoln area, which added additional questions about hiring strategies and benefits. As a result of this collaboration, the questionnaire improvements made were then incorporated into all survey areas for FY 2023-2024.