

Bayou Region Workforce Study

Sponsored by



South Central Industrial Association

and



South Louisiana Economic Council

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Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the Bayou Region labor force, from the perspective of employers, in a detailed fashion. Of particular interest are the specific characteristics of the area labor scene, including workforce quality and availability, projected growth by occupation, productivity and turnover, benefits offered, job preparation (including education and training), and challenges facing area employers.

The study was commissioned by the South Central Industrial Association and the South Louisiana Economic Council.

Methodology

A sampling frame was drawn from databases kept by the SCIA and other local industrial groups. A total of 205 firms were mailed surveys, of which 32 responded, for a response rate of 15.6%. This response rate is typical of mail surveys in general, and good for lengthy mail surveys. Importantly, respondents represent many of the area's largest employers. Respondents employ over 8500 full-time workers in the Bayou Region.

Survey Findings

Major findings are discussed below, followed by a detailed presentation of results for all survey questions.

Major Findings

- When asked about their top reason for locating their firm in the Bayou Region, 59% of respondents answered that their firm was started here, 38% answered that they are here because of access to markets, and 31% answered that their location was due to access to the Gulf, but only 7% answered that their location choice was due to low business costs. This latter finding suggests that the area is vulnerable to losing firms to lower cost areas. However, unionization does not seem to pose a serious threat to competitiveness of local firms, as few workers are represented by unions in bargaining agreements. Only 2 of the 32 firms responding to the survey reported union representation within their workforces.
- A noteworthy positive is that 53% of respondents expect overall employment in their firms to be at least 6% higher 12 months from now. Over 23% expect their workforces to grow by 10% or more. On the other hand, only 3% expect their firms to employ fewer people 12 months from now, and none of those expect a decline greater than 5%. On average (weighted by number of full-time employees) area employers expect to increase their number of employees by 6% in the next 12 months, or by 513 employees of the 8523 full-time employees represented by survey respondents.
- Respondents were asked to detail their current openings and their hiring plans over the next 12 months, with 613 immediate openings in those occupations versus 197 immediate openings in all other occupations. The following table summarizes these plans, and paints a telling picture of the Bayou Region economy:

Job Category	Current Number of Openings Today	Estimated New Hires in Next 12 Months
General Business & Office Support	37	77
Management & Supervisory	18	24
Technical & Professional	140	153
Production Maintenance & Distribution	613	1233
Computer & Information Systems	2	4

Two numbers stand out above the others. First, the number of current openings and expected new hires among Production Maintenance and Distribution workers is very large, at 613 and 1233, respectively. This is nearly 12% of the combined current workforce of responding firms. Second, and equally telling, is the lack of demand—hence opportunity—for managerial and supervisory positions, with only 18 current openings and 24 expected new hires over the next 12 months being reported. The shortage of production workers, especially skilled tradesmen, is well-known throughout the Bayou Region and has been confirmed in this study. What gets significantly less attention is the relatively weak demand for professional and managerial employees. Keeping the brightest and most academically gifted young people from the Bayou Region in the area and stemming the “brain drain” from Louisiana to other states presents the Bayou Region with a great challenge. As things stand now, however, the Bayou Region presents only limited opportunities for talented, well educated professionals. As a result, the risk of net migration from the area among well-educated young people is likely to continue for some time into the future.

Some evidence for the “brain drain” can be seen by looking at U.S. census estimates of the components of population change for U.S. “Counties” from 2000-2003. One of these components is net internal migration, or net migration of those already here in the U.S., as opposed to international

migration. What is seen is that in this time period, the number of people moving away outpaced those moving in, as a percent of 2000's population, by 1.5% of state, 2.4% for Assumption, 0.2% for Lafourche, 4.4% for St. Mary and 1.3% for Terrebonne. Those who migrate are those with the highest payoff from migrating which are generally the more highly educated and younger residents.

- While job openings are primarily in the production, maintenance and distribution (transportation) occupations, these were largely the types of occupations where employers were most dissatisfied with quality. Particularly, employers found these applicants to be deficient in basic skills, work ethic, and job readiness. Employers were considerably more satisfied with the quality of managerial and professional applicants, with few deficiencies, with critical thinking and leadership skills being the most cited. Respondents noted significant weaknesses in the non-managerial / non-professional workforce in several key areas. Specifically, over half of respondents rated these workers as less than satisfactory in Initiative (59%), Stress Management (55%), and Interpersonal Skills (50%). More than four out of ten also offered unsatisfactory ratings for Responsibility (48%), Attendance (44%), Appearance/Hygiene (44%) and Teamwork/Cooperation (42%). By contrast, the professional / managerial workforce was rated satisfactory or excellent by over 90% of respondents in every category. The relatively low ratings for non-managerial workers are symptomatic of a tight labor market in skilled trades, where demand outstrips supply. In these situations, workers are less motivated to conform to workplace norms and expectations, as risk of sustained unemployment is relatively low. Unfortunately, such behavior has a meaningful negative effect on productivity and work quality, and in this way the firm suffers twice (the first being wage pressure).
- When asked about basic skill areas of applicants, almost two-thirds of employers noted deficiencies. Of those who said that applicants tended to have deficiencies in basic skills, 58% listed communications skills as a problem, 42% listed reading, 32% listed thinking skills and 11% mentioned math. Further, in rating the basic skill levels among non-managerial and non-professional applicants, fair or poor ratings were given by 72% of employers for written communication skills, 70% for math skills, 62% for computer skills, 60% for reading comprehension, and 50% for thinking and judgment skills, giving an overall rating for basic skills in the fair or poor category by 66% of the employers. On the other hand, basic skills were rated fair or poor by at most about 10% of employers for any category, and rated poor by none of the employers.
- Average absenteeism among hourly workers was moderate (4.8% daily overall), but was notably higher in larger firms (5.9% daily). As noted above, this is likely a symptom of a tight labor market for skilled workers.
- Turnover rates among responding firms were relatively high. On average, firms reported 18% of employees leaving the organization for another job annually. Another 14% were terminated, and just under 2% retired. Taken together, it suggests an average annual turnover of nearly 35%. Such rates drive up costs of hiring and training and are often have a significant negative effect on productivity. This can be especially true in firms whose products involve complex, custom fabrication and/or teamwork among skilled craftsmen.
- Not surprisingly given the above, average absenteeism and poor performance were the most frequently cited reasons for involuntary turnover.
- Despite the perceived workforce deficiencies noted above, 60% of respondents agreed with the statement that workers today are more productive when compared to those five years ago, but only 53% agreed with a similar statement that compared today's workers with those of 10 years ago.

- Many of the workforce deficiencies detailed above can be traced to educational attainment and quality. Below we compare educational attainment in the surveyed workforce with that of the Bayou Region in general:

	Percent in Surveyed Workforce	Percent in 4-Parish Bayou Region (Census)
Four-year degree or higher:	16%	11%
Associate degree:	4 %	3%
Some college or post-high school training:	17%	15%
High school / G.E.D.:	53%	37%
Less than high school:	9%	34%

Note that workers employed at surveyed firms, on the whole are substantially better educated than the population in the 4-parish Bayou Region, but it should also be noted that the area's population is substantially less well educated when compared to the nation as a whole. For instance, while only 66% of the area's residents have graduated from high school, 80% of the nation's residents have. Similarly, 11% of the Bayou Region's population has attained a 4-year college degree or higher, but over 24% of the U.S. population have at least a Bachelor's degree. In a recent study by Dr. Coats of the impact of high school non-completers and college graduates on average incomes, it was noted a ten-percentage point increase in high school non completion percent led to an \$875 reduction in per capita income in Louisiana. Also, a ten-percentage point increase in college graduates, on the other hand, led to a \$ 2050 increase in per capita income across the state. Also, Cameron and Heckman (1993) and Murnane, Willett and Boudett (1997) find that the wages and other labor market characteristics of those with GEDs but with no further education or training and high school dropouts are indistinguishable, that is, they have virtually the same wages and employment rates, so having a GED did not seem to increase incomes over high school dropouts.

- Respondents were asked to evaluate training provided by high schools, technical and community colleges, and universities. At both high schools and community/technical colleges, a majority of respondents cited a need for improvement in basic skills, verbal communication, job-preparedness skills and critical thinking skills. At four-year colleges and universities, leadership and critical thinking skills were cited as needing improvement by a majority of respondents. These findings are consistent with previously noted workforce deficiencies.
- Related to this, when asked about in-house training programs, more than half of respondents reported programs in safety skills (69%) and leadership skills (52%). Computer skills training is offered by 48% of respondents, while 45% have programs that focus on basic skills. The latter number is noteworthy, as a lack of basic skills (reading, writing, and communication) were the most commonly cited deficiencies among hourly workers.
- When employers were asked about the difficulty of recruiting certain types of employees, 32% of employers found it either difficult or impossible to recruit managers from *within the Bayou Region*, 35% found it difficult to recruit professionals, 40% said that it was difficult to recruit technicians, but most notable is that **50% said that it difficult to recruit skilled craft workers**. Recruiting skilled craft workers and managers from *outside the Bayou Region* was said to be difficult by around 40 of

employers, but the greatest difficulty, by 58%, was seen to be finding opportunities for trailing spouses when recruiting.

- Quite importantly, 4 out of 10 firms responding said that the availability or the quality of the workforce limits their ability to grow their business. While most businesses are not constrained by the availability and quality of the area workforce, a substantial number of employers are constrained, and these are primarily larger firms. Of the larger firms (with more than 60 full-time employees) 56% said that they were constrained by workforce availability and quality, while 44% of the larger firms said that they were not limited by the workforce. On the other hand, 79% of the smaller employers (those with less than 60 full-time employees) said that they were not constrained by the workforce quality and availability, while only 21% said that the workforce held them back.
- When asked to name the most important step that could be taken to improve the quantity and/or quality of the Bayou Region workforce, respondents offered a diverse set of recommendations. Many cited basic infrastructure issues, such as education, roads/transportation, housing, and location challenges. Location has recently become a greater challenge for recruiting from outside the area in the wake of two recent storms that devastated coastal Louisiana and its economy. Others were more specific, suggesting closer ties between schools at all levels and the business community. Some cited business conditions (competitive environment, low margins, non-competitive salaries, escalating costs, etc.), and still others noted a generally poor work ethic or the state's poor reputation. Among these comments, suggestions for closer ties between educators and business, particularly at the technical/community college level, would seem most actionable.

Section I. Background Information

1. What is the name of your company? (note: individual responses are confidential)
2. What is your Zip Code?

Companies and organizations from nine different zip codes responded to the survey, with half of respondents based in West Houma and South Houma (below the airport).

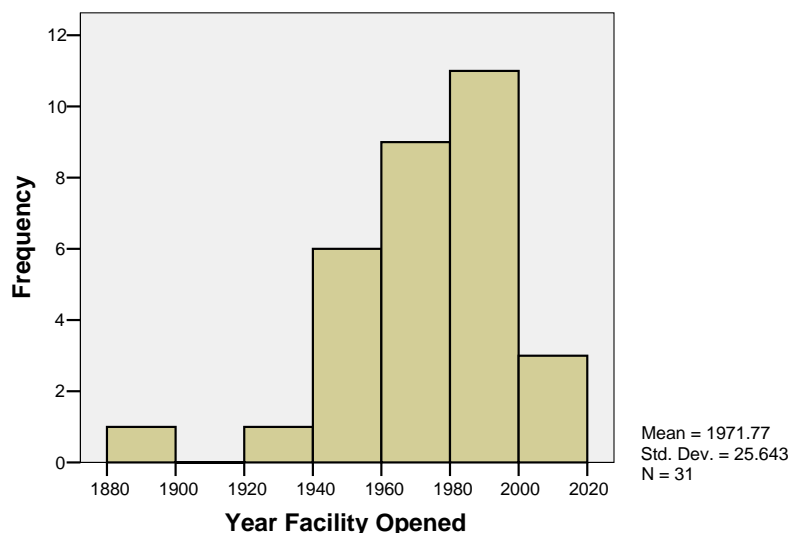
Location

Town	Zip	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
S. Houma	70363	28.1	28.1
W. Houma	70360	21.9	50.0
E. Houma	70361	12.5	62.5
Thibodaux	70301	9.4	71.9
Larose/Cut Off	70345	6.3	78.2
Amelia	70340	3.1	81.3
Chauvin	70344	3.1	84.4
Gray	70359	3.1	87.5
N. Houma	70364	3.1	90.6
Lockport	70374	3.1	93.7
Morgan City	70380	3.1	96.8
Plattenville	70393	3.1	100
Total		100	

3. In what year was this facility opened?

Average opening date for firms/facilities in this study was 1972, while nearly half opened their doors after 1980. Only eight of the 31 firms reporting opening dates of 40 or more years.

Histogram



4. Which choice best describes the control of your company? (place an "X" on the appropriate line)
(n=31)

- 26% Single plant with local control or ownership
- 26% Multiple plants with local control or ownership
- 32% Ownership is outside of the Bayou Region (but in the USA)
- 0% Ownership is outside of the United States
- 16% Other (please specify): 3=Public/Govt. Agency; 1=Publicly traded Company)

Over half of firms responding are locally owned, while just over one-third are owned outside the Bayou Region or publicly traded. Three organizations responding are public or governmental agencies.

Q5 and Q6 NAICS/SIC code and Primary Product or Service

A relatively wide variety of industries are represented in the survey, from shipbuilding, to labor services, oil and gas supply and pipelines to metallurgical testing, governmental agencies to hospitals. While not all industry categories are represented, respondents seem to be a reasonably diverse collection of area businesses and organizations, and typical of the Bayou Region economy.

7. Please estimate the average one-way commute time (in minutes) for the following employee groups:
(MEAN Reported Commute)

- Skilled hourly employees: 27.8 minutes (n=28)
- Clerical and office non-exempt employees: 21.8 minutes (n=29)
- Management and other professionals: 22.4 minutes (n=29)

Average reported commute was longest for hourly workers (nearly 28 minutes), while clerical and managerial employees spend a little less time in their cars, driving about 22 minutes each way. The longer commute for hourly workers likely reflects the relative shortage of qualified workers in certain skilled trades, forcing employers to cast a wider net to fill these positions.

8. What are the principal reasons your company chose to locate in the Bayou Region? (n=29)

- 14% Labor supply
- 38% Access to markets
- 7% Access to suppliers
- 31% Access to Gulf of Mexico
- 0% Electric power rates
- 59% Business started locally
- 7% Low overall business costs
- 10% Other (please specify: governmental/state/public agency)

Surprisingly, access to the Gulf of Mexico was listed by just under one-third of respondents as a principal reason for locating in the Bayou Region. Most respondents (59%) cite local start-up as the primary motivation for being in the Bayou Region; however, many of these businesses are tied to the Gulf. Of note, only 7% cited low business costs as a reason for locating here, suggesting the area is vulnerable to losing firms to lower cost areas.

9. Please indicate the functions or operations at your location (place an "X" on the line for all that apply): (n=32)

- 22% Distribution / Wholesale
- 3% Transportation Services
- 25% Labor Services
- 31% Headquarters
- 16% Regional/District/Branch Office
- 13% Education / Training
- 31% Professional Services
- 6% Health Care
- 3% Hospitality / Service / Retail
- 47% Mfg. / Fabrication / Repair / Maintenance

As mentioned previously, and demonstrated above, survey respondents engage in a wide variety of industries and business functions. SCIA membership (from which the survey was drawn) is more highly concentrated in the manufacturing and industrial sector than retail and services sector.

Section II. Employees

Confidential Employment Data. This data will be combined for analysis. Your individual response **will not be disclosed**. Please answer the following questions:

10. What is your current number of full-time employees? (n=32)

MEAN:	266.3	25 TH PERCENTILE:	13
MEDIAN:	62.5	75 TH PERCENTILE:	490
MINIMUM:	2	MAXIMUM:	1141
TOTAL (SUM):	8523		

11. What is your current number of part-time employees? (n=32)

MEAN:	6.3	25 TH PERCENTILE:	0
MEDIAN:	1	75 TH PERCENTILE:	3
MINIMUM:	0	MAXIMUM:	75
TOTAL (SUM):	203		

The average numbers of full-time and part-time workers were 266 and 6, respectively, and half of firms responding had more than 62 employees. Nearly one quarter of firms responding had 500 or more employees. All told, the 32 firms represented in this survey employ 8523 full-time workers, and 204 part-time workers.

12. What is your current number of temporary employees? (n=32)
- | | | | |
|--------------|------|------------------------------|-----|
| MEAN: | 27.6 | 25 TH PERCENTILE: | 0 |
| MEDIAN: | 0 | 75 TH PERCENTILE: | 7.8 |
| MINIMUM: | 0 | MAXIMUM: | 468 |
| TOTAL (SUM): | 884 | | |
13. What is your current number of alien workers? (n=31)
- | | | | |
|--------------|-----|------------------------------|----|
| MEAN: | 9.1 | 25 TH PERCENTILE: | 0 |
| MEDIAN: | 0 | 75 TH PERCENTILE: | 8 |
| MINIMUM: | 0 | MAXIMUM: | 81 |
| TOTAL (SUM): | 281 | | |
14. What is your estimated number of seasonal employees? (n=32)
- | | | | |
|--------------|-----|------------------------------|----|
| MEAN: | 1.6 | 25 TH PERCENTILE: | 0 |
| MEDIAN: | 0 | 75 TH PERCENTILE: | 0 |
| MINIMUM: | 0 | MAXIMUM: | 17 |
| TOTAL (SUM): | 50 | | |

Temporary and/or alien workers were used by only about one-third of firms surveyed, for a total of 884 and 281 employees, respectively. Seasonal employees were even less commonly used (five firms).

15. What percent of company employees are represented by one or more unions? (n=32)
- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| 0% representation | 93.8% of firms (n=30) |
| 20+% representation | 6.2% of firms (n=2; MAXIMUM=38%) |

The employers reported that, on average, only 1.8% of their workers were represented by unions. In firms with less than 60 full-time employees, 2.5% of the workers were represented by unions, while in firms with more than 60 full-time employees only 1.2% of employees were represented by unions. Only two firms reported that 20% or more of its employees were represented by unions.

16. Approximately what percent of your employees have the following levels of education: (MEAN values reported)

Four-year degree or higher:	15.7 % (n=29)
Associate degree:	3.7 % (n=26)
Some college or post-high school training:	16.7 % (n=27)
High school / G.E.D.:	53.2 % (n=27)
Less than high school:	9.0 % (n=26)

On average, 16% of employees had at least a Bachelor's Degree, 4% had at least an Associate's Degree, 17% had some College and 53% had a High School diploma or a GED, while only 9% had less than a High School Diploma (averages here weighted by number of full-time employees).

17. How would you rate your ability to recruit workers *in the Bayou Region* in each of the following job categories (place an “X” on the appropriate line):

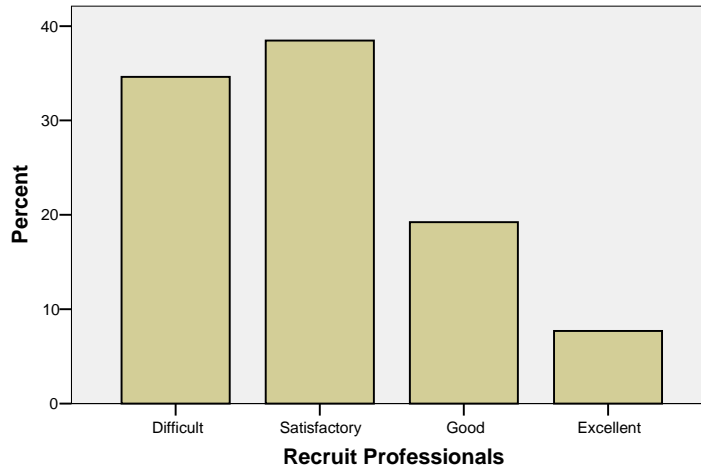
Category	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Difficult	Impossible
Officials and Managers:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Professionals:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Technicians:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Sales Workers:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Office and Clerical:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Craft Workers (skilled):	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Operatives (semi-skilled):	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Laborers (unskilled):	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Service Workers:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Questions 17 and 18 asked questions about the ability of employers to recruit certain types of employees in and outside of the Bayou Region. Results for each of these categories are discussed below.



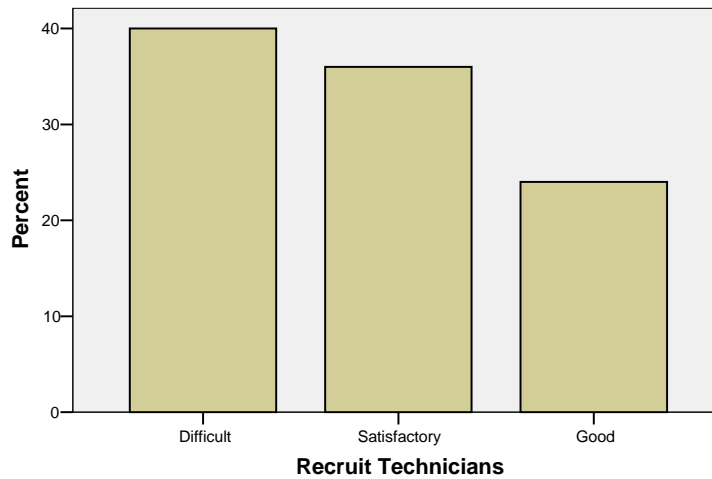
In recruiting company officials and managers, 3% of employers said that it was impossible to recruit within the Bayou Region, 29% said that they found it difficult to recruit in the region, 39% said that recruiting in the region was satisfactory, 23% said that recruiting in the region was good, while 7% found it to be excellent to recruit within.

Recruit Professionals



In terms of recruiting professional, 8% found recruiting to be excellent in the region, 19% found it to be good, 39% found it satisfactory, while 35% found it difficult.

Recruit Technicians



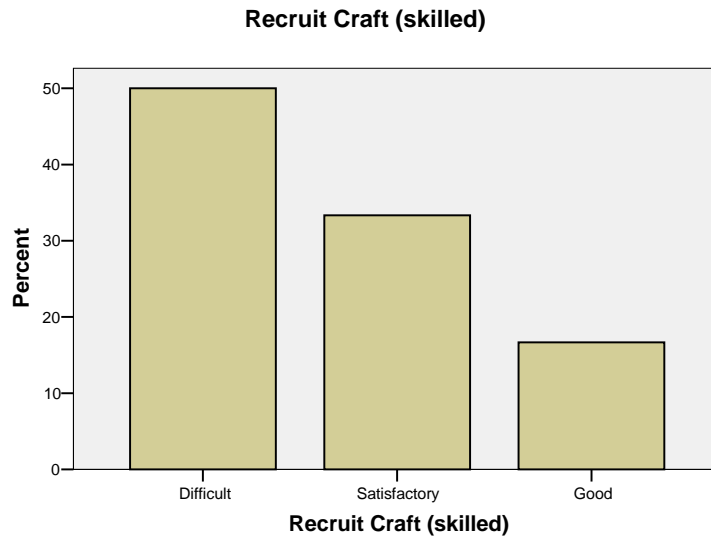
In recruiting technicians, 40% of employers said it was difficult, another 36% said that it was satisfactory, while the remaining 24% found the Bayou Region to be good recruiting grounds for these workers.



In recruiting their sales force, 36% of employers found recruiting within the Bayou Region to be good, 48% found it satisfactory and the remaining 16% found it to be difficult.



In recruiting office and clerical workers within the Bayou Region, 47% reported that it was good, 37% reported it was satisfactory, and 10% said that it was difficult, while 7% said that it was excellent.



In recruiting skilled craft workers, half reported that it was difficult, a third said that it was satisfactory, while only a the remaining one-sixth said that it was good—none reported impossible or excellent.



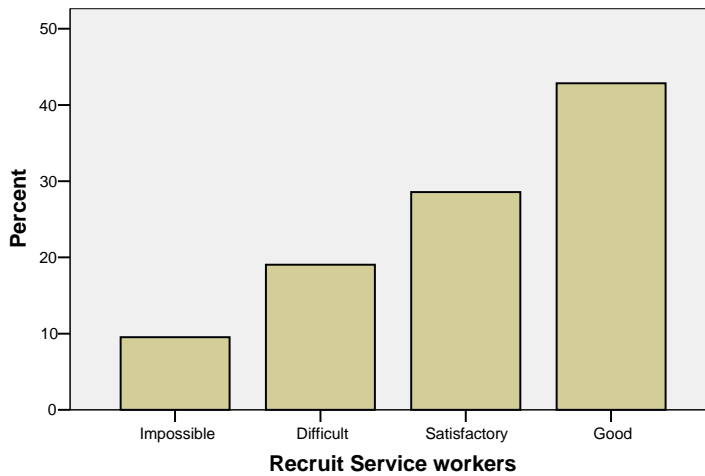
In recruiting operatives or semi-skilled workers in the region, a third said that it was difficult, slightly more than two-fifths said that it was satisfactory, and a quarter said that it was good.

Recruit Laborers (unskilled)



One-fifth of employers said that it was difficult to recruit unskilled laborers in the region, almost two-fifths said that it was satisfactory, and a little more than one-third said that it was good, while only 4% said that it was excellent.

Recruit Service workers

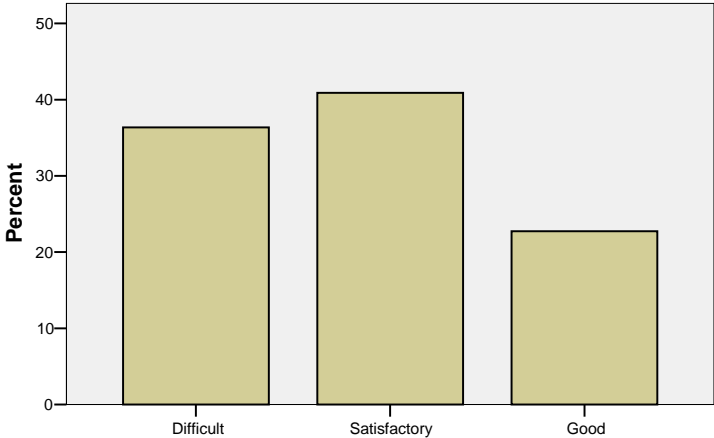


In recruiting service workers, one-tenth said that it was impossible, nearly one-fifth found it difficult, a little more than one-fourth found it satisfactory and a little more than two-fifths reported that it was good.

18. Please indicate your experience with recruiting workers from *outside the Bayou Region* in each of the following three categories using the scale below:

Category	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Difficult	Impossible
Skilled Production Crafts:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Managers / Professionals:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Employment Opportunities for Trailing Spouses:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

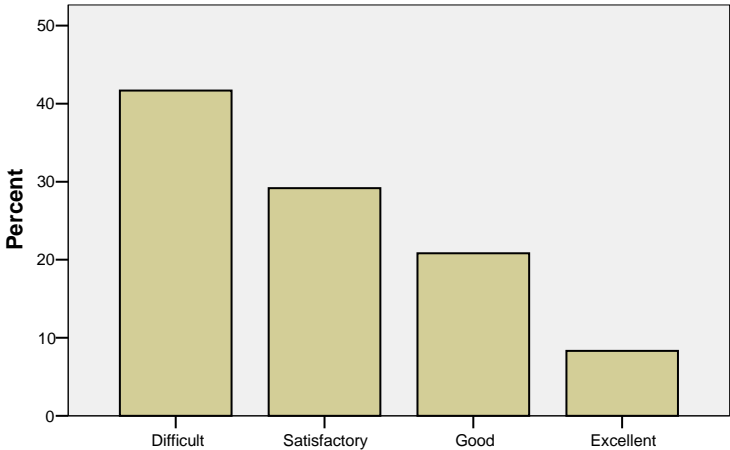
Recruit Outside Crafts (skilled)



Recruit Outside Crafts (skilled)

In recruiting from skilled craft workers from outside of the Bayou Region, 36% found that it was difficult to recruit, 41% found it satisfactory, while 23% found it to be good.

Recruit Outside Managers



Recruit Outside Managers

In recruiting managers from outside of the Bayou Region, 42% of employers reported that it was difficult, 29% reported that it was satisfactory, 21% said that it was good, and about 8% reported that it was excellent.

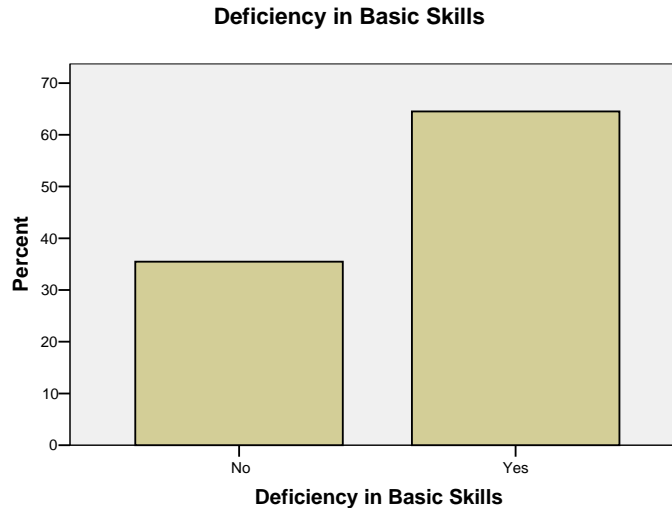
Recruit Outside Trailing Spouses



Trailing spouses presented more of a problem for recruiting from outside of the area, with 58% saying that it was difficult, 26% it was satisfactory, while only 16% saying that it was good, that trailing spouses did not present much of a problem.

Section III. Basic and Soft Skills of Job Applicants

19. Have you noted a deficiency in basic skills (e.g., writing, reading, math, thinking) among job applicants? (place an "X" on the appropriate line) 65.5% Yes 35.5% No



- 19b. If "YES" above: What is the most common deficiency?

A total of 19 respondents noted a deficiency (some listed multiples):

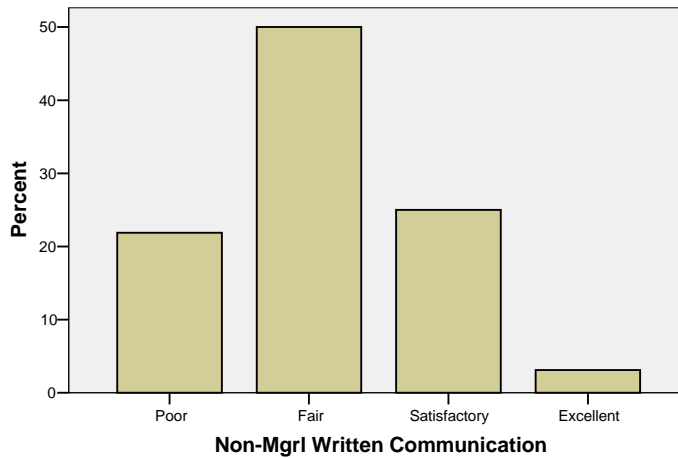
- 58% Communication Skills (Writing, Speaking) (n=11)
- 42% Reading Skills (n=8)
- 32% Critical Thinking / Reasoning Skills (n=6)
- 11% Math Skills (n=2)
- 6% Unable to Complete Job Application (n=1)

Questions 19-24 asked about the basic-skill and soft-skill levels of job applicants. When respondents were asked if they noted a deficiency in basic skills (e.g. writing, reading, math, and thinking) among job applicants, almost two-thirds (65.5%) responded "Yes," with 58% of those who answered "Yes" listing communication skills as a deficiency, 42% listing reading as a deficiency, 32% listing thinking as a deficiency, and only 11% listing math as a deficiency.

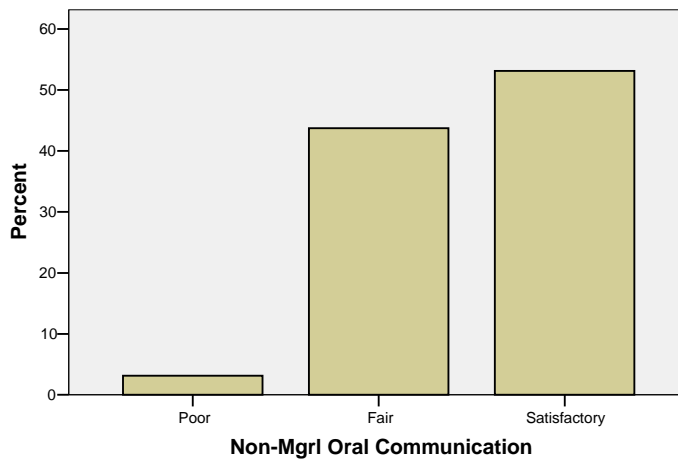
20. Please rate the basic skill levels you most commonly see among your **non**-managerial and **non**-professional job applicants (place an "X" on the appropriate line):

Basic Skill Category	Excellent	Satisfactory	Fair	Poor
Written Communication	3.1%	25.0%	50.0%	21.9%
Oral Communication	0%	53.1%	43.8%	3.1%
Reading Comprehension	3.3%	36.7%	43.3%	16.7%
Thinking / Judgment	0%	50.0%	36.7%	13.3%
Arithmetic / Math	3.3%	26.7%	60.0%	10.0%
Computer Skills	3.4%	34.5%	41.4%	20.7%
Overall	0%	34.4%	53.1%	12.5%

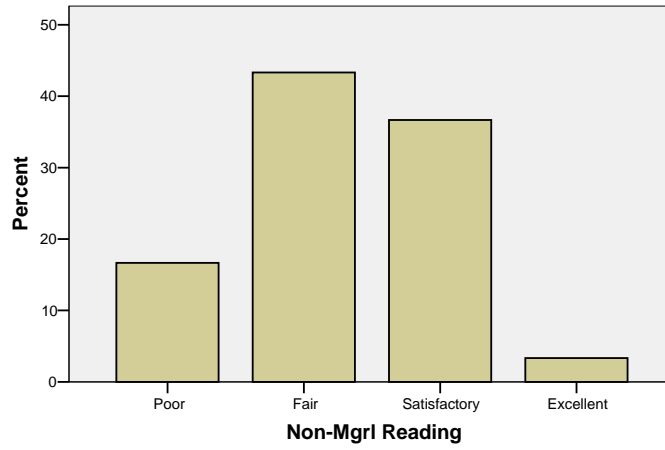
Non-Mgrl Written Communication



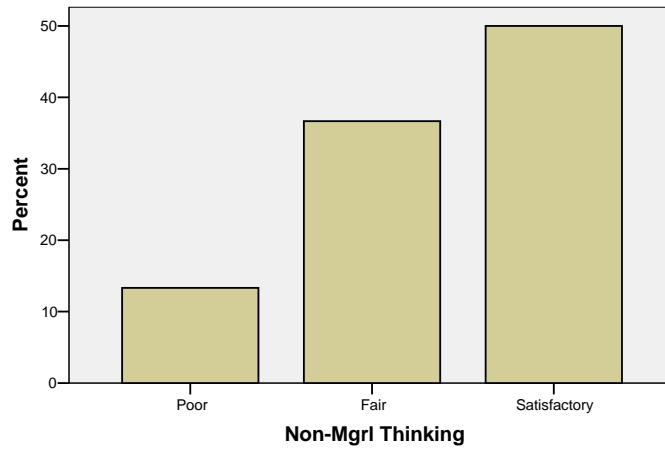
Non-Mgrl Oral Communication



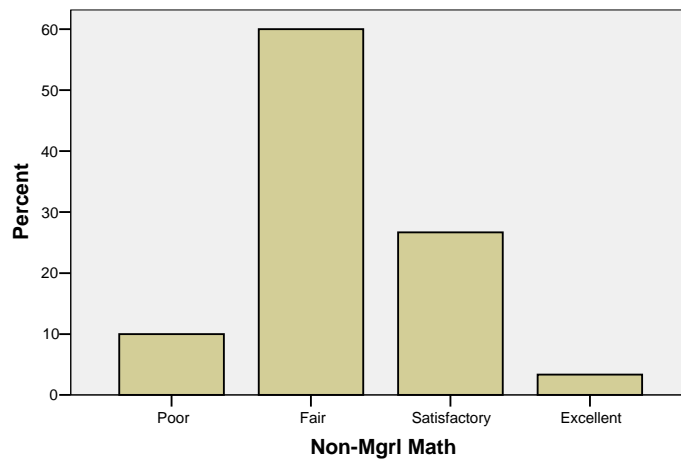
Non-Mgrl Reading

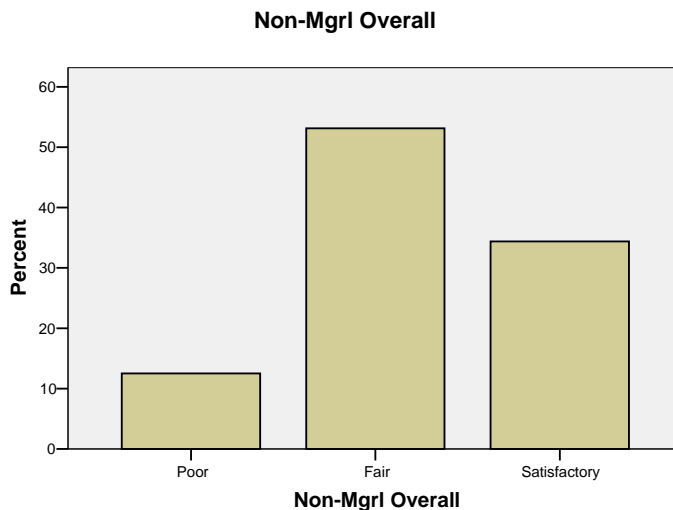
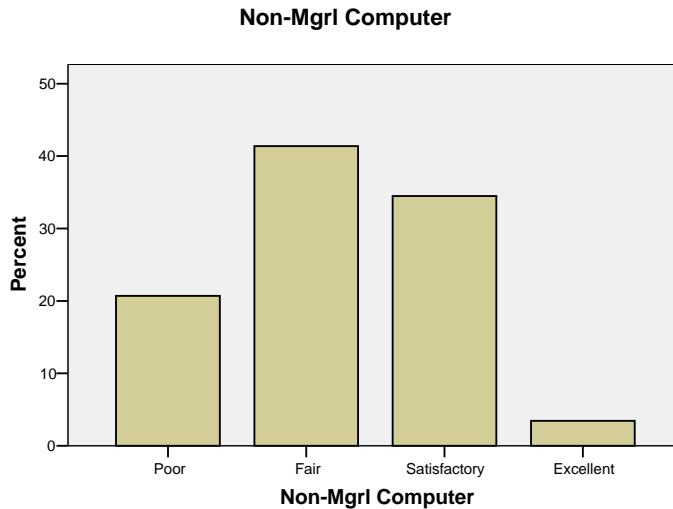


Non-Mgrl Thinking



Non-Mgrl Math





When asked to rate the basic skill levels among non-managerial and non-professional job applicants, written communication skills were rated as poor by a little more than a fifth, as fair by half and satisfactory by a quarter, with only 3% rating written communication skills of this group as excellent. Oral communication skills were rated as poor by only 3% of employers, and as fair by 44%, as satisfactory by 53%, with none giving an excellent rating. Reading skills were rated as poor by 17% of employers, as fair by 43%, as satisfactory by 37% and as excellent by only 3% of employers answering. Thinking skills were rated as poor by 13% of employers, as fair by 37% as satisfactory by half of the employers. Math skills were rated as poor by a tenth of the employers, as fair by three-fifths of employers and as satisfactory by slightly more than a fourth, with only 3% rating excellent. Again, among non-managerial and non-professional job applicants, computer skills were rated as poor by 21% of employers, as fair by 41%, as satisfactory by 35% and as excellent by only 3%. The overall basic skills of non-managerial and non-professional job applicants were rated as poor by 13% of employers, as fair by 53% and as satisfactory by 34%, with none issuing an “excellent” rating.

21. Please rate the basic skill levels you most commonly see among your *managerial* and *professional* job applicants (place an “X” on the appropriate line):

Basic Skill Category	Excellent	Satisfactory	Fair	Poor
Written Communication	27.6%	62.1%	10.3%	0%
Oral Communication	20.7%	69.0%	10.3%	0%
Reading Comprehension	24.1%	75.9%	0%	0%
Thinking / Judgment	24.1%	75.9%	0%	0%
Arithmetic / Math	27.6%	69.0%	3.4%	0%
Computer Skills	20.7%	69.0%	10.3%	0%
Overall	17.2%	79.3%	3.4%	0%

When asked to rate the basic skill levels among managerial and professional job applicants, written communication skills were rated as fair by only 10%, as satisfactory by 62%, and as excellent by 28%, with none issuing a “poor” rating. Oral communication skills of managerial and professional job applicants were similarly rated as fair by only 10% of employers, as satisfactory by 69%, as excellent by 21% of employees, again, with none issuing a “poor” rating. Reading skills of managerial and professional job applicants were rated as satisfactory by a little more than three-fourths of employers and as excellent by the remaining employers with none giving either a poor or fair rating. Thinking skills were much like the reading skills, with three-fourths of employers and as excellent by the remaining employers. Math skills were rated similarly to the reading and thinking skills, but 3% of employers rated job applicants as only fair, with 69% giving a satisfactory rating and the remaining 28% giving an excellent rating. Managerial and professional job applicants were rated a little lower on their computer skills, with 10% of employers giving a fair rating, 69% giving a satisfactory rating, and 21% giving an excellent rating. Overall, managerial and professional job applicants were given a fair rating by only 3% of employers, a satisfactory rating by 79% and an excellent rating by 17% in the basic skills category.

22. Please rate the level of soft skills you most commonly see among your *non-managerial* and *non-professional* job applicants (place an “X” on the appropriate line):

Soft Skill Category	Excellent	Satisfactory	Fair	Poor
Attendance / Punctuality	3.1%	53.1%	28.1%	15.6%
Appearance / Hygiene	3.1%	53.1%	34.4%	9.4%
Substance-Free	19.4%	51.6%	25.8%	3.2%
Stress Management	3.2%	41.9%	51.6%	3.2%
Interpersonal Skills	0%	50.0%	46.9%	3.1%
Teamwork / Cooperation	0%	58.1%	41.9%	0%
Willingness to Learn	6.3%	68.8%	25.0%	0%
Initiative	0%	40.6%	56.3%	3.1%
Integrity / Honesty	12.5%	59.4%	25.0%	3.1%
Responsibility	6.5%	45.2%	45.2%	3.2%
Respect	3.1%	65.6%	28.1%	3.1%
Overall Work Ethic	3.1%	62.5%	31.2%	3.1%

Employers were also asked to rate the levels of soft or work-readiness skills of non-managerial and non-professional job applicants. In rating non-managerial and non-professional job applicants in terms of attendance and punctuality, 16% of employers gave applicants a poor rating, 28% gave fair ratings, 53% gave satisfactory ratings, and only 3% gave excellent ratings to job applicants. For appearance and hygiene, job applicants were rated as poor by 9% of employers, as fair by 34%, as satisfactory by 53% and as excellent by only 3%. In rating job applicants in terms of being substance

free, job applicants were rated as poor by 3%, fair by 26% of employers, as satisfactory by 48%, and as excellent by 19%. Also, 3% marked in a rating half-way between fair and satisfactory. As far as their skills in managing stress, applicants were rated as poor by 3%, as fair by 52% of the employers, as satisfactory by almost that amount at 42% and as excellent by the remaining 3%. Interpersonal skills among job applicants were rated as poor by 3% of employers, as fair by 47%, and as satisfactory by one-half (50%) with none rating excellent. Teamwork skills were rated as satisfactory by three-fifths of employers with the remaining two-fifths giving a fair rating.

Willingness to learn among non-managerial and non-professional applicants was rated as fair by a fourth of employers, as satisfactory by slightly more than two-thirds of employers, and as excellent by a remaining 6% of employers. Initiative was rated as poor by only 3% of employers, as only fair by 56%, and as satisfactory by 41%. Integrity of job applicants was rated to be poor by 3% of employers, as fair by a fourth, as satisfactory by three-fifths, and as excellent by an eighth of employers. Job applicant responsibility was rated as excellent by 7% of employers, as satisfactory by 45% of employers, as fair by 45% of applicants and as poor by the remaining 3% of employers.

Respect by job applicants was rated to be excellent by only 3% of employers, as fair by a fourth, as satisfactory by almost two-thirds, and as poor by 3%. Ratings of half-way between fair and poor were given by 3% of employers and half-way between fair and satisfactory 3% was also rated as the proper response for another 3% of employers. The overall work-ethic or work-readiness of non-managerial and non-professional rating of job applicants was poor by 3% of employers, fair by a 28%, as satisfactory by 63% of employers and as excellent by only 3% of employers. Another 3% marked overall work-readiness by non-managerial and non-professional applicants as half way between poor and fair.

23. Please rate the level of soft skills you most commonly see among your *managerial* and *professional* job applicants (place an "X" on the appropriate line):

Soft Skill Category	Excellent	Satisfactory	Fair	Poor
Attendance / Punctuality	48.4%	51.6%	0%	0%
Appearance / Hygiene	41.9%	58.1%	0%	0%
Substance-Free	51.6%	45.2%	3.2%	0%
Stress Management	19.4%	74.2%	3.2%	0%
Interpersonal Skills	22.6%	74.2%	3.2%	0%
Teamwork / Cooperation	29.0%	67.7%	3.2%	0%
Willingness to Learn	29.0%	64.5%	6.5%	0%
Initiative	29.0%	64.5%	6.5%	0%
Integrity / Honesty	45.2%	54.8%	0%	0%
Responsibility	45.2%	51.6%	3.2%	0%
Respect	48.4%	51.6%	0%	0%
Overall Work Ethic	32.3%	67.7%	0%	0%

Employers were almost split in their ratings of managerial and professional job applicants on punctuality and attendance, with 52% rating them as satisfactory and 48% rating them as excellent. For appearance and hygiene, managerial and professional job applicants were rated as satisfactory by 58% and as excellent by 42%. In rating job applicants in terms of being substance free, managerial and professional job applicants were rated as satisfactory by 45% of employers and as excellent by 52%, with another 3% rating applicants as only fair.

In managing stress, managerial and professional applicants were rated satisfactory by almost three-fourths of the employers, while almost one-fifth rated managerial and professional applicants as excellent, with 7% ranking them as only fair. These applicants were rated excellent in their interpersonal skills by 23% of the employers, as satisfactory by almost 74% of the employers and as only fair by 3%.

Teamwork skills of managerial and professional applicants were judged to be satisfactory by a little more than two-thirds of employers, as excellent by nearly three-tenths and as only fair by the remaining 3%.

Willingness to learn among managerial and professional applicants was rated as fair by 7% of employers, as satisfactory by 65% of employers, and as excellent by 29% of employers. The initiative of managerial and professional applicants was rated as fair by 7% of employers, as satisfactory by 65% and as excellent by 29%. Employers were nearly evenly split between satisfactory and excellent ratings of these applicants in their integrity, with 55% rating them as satisfactory and the remaining 45% rating them as excellent. The responsibility level of these applicants was rated as excellent by 45% of the employers, as satisfactory 52% of employers, as fair by 3%. Respect by managerial and professional job applicants was rated to be excellent by 48% of the employers and as satisfactory by the remaining 52%. The overall work-ethic or work-readiness skills of managerial and professional job applicants was rated as satisfactory by two-thirds of employers and as excellent by the remaining one-third of employers.

Section IV. Computer Skills of Job Applicants

24. Computer skills among....

	Strongly Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Strongly Disagree
...clerical / office (non-managerial) job applicants are adequate for our needs	22.6%	71.0%	6.5%	0%
...manufacturing / fabricating job applicants are adequate for our needs	13.6%	59.1%	22.7%	4.5%
...managerial / professional job applicants are adequate for our needs	34.5%	62.1%	3.4%	0%

Questions 24 and 25 asked about the computer skills of job applicants. Question 25 asked the respondent if they strongly agreed, agreed somewhat, disagreed somewhat or strongly disagreed with a statement about the adequacy of computer skills of job applicants for the needs of the employer. Of those who answered, only 7% answered that they disagreed somewhat with the statement that computer skills were adequate with regard to office and clerical workers, while 71% agreed somewhat and 23% strongly agreed, with none strongly disagreeing. With regard to manufacturing and fabrication employees, 5% strongly disagreed, 23% somewhat disagreed, 59% agreed somewhat and 14% strongly agreed with the statement. Managerial and professional job applicants fared even best in meeting employer expectations regarding computer skills, with only 4% somewhat disagreeing with the statement and 96% agreeing (with 35% strongly agreeing) with the statement.

25. For each of the job categories below, please list the most important deficiency, if any, in computer skills you have observed among job applicants:

Clerical / Office job applicants: _____
 Manufacturing / Fabricating job applicants: _____
 Managerial / Professional job applicants: _____

Question 25 asked about specific computer-skill deficiencies seen in three classes of job applicants: clerical/office applicants, manufacturing/fabrication applicants, and managerial/professional applicants. Clerical and office personnel were deemed adequate in basic knowledge and knowledge of basic computer applications by only 77% of employers, and deficient specifically in knowledge of spreadsheets by 9%, in PowerPoint by 3%, and 3% each in trouble shooting, in internet navigation and if fear of computers. Manufacturing and fabricating applicants were deemed adequate in basic knowledge of computers by approximately 73% of the employers, with some specifically mentioning deficiencies with spreadsheet, company-specific software, navigation and operating system familiarity, quality control programs, and general knowledge and training with computers. Managerial and professional employees were said to be adequate with computers by 96% of employers, overall, but deficient in spreadsheets by 7% of the employers, with willingness to learn, basic knowledge, presentation software and skills, spreadsheets and company-specific software mentioned as main deficiencies.

Section V. Productivity and Turnover

26. What is your average daily absenteeism among hourly employees: MEAN = 4.8%

The average daily absenteeism among hourly employees reported by those answering this question was 4.8%, but was only 3.75% among smaller employers (those with less than 60 employees) and 5.9% among larger employers.

27. Based on your experience, would you say workers in the Bayou Region are...

	Strongly Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Strongly Disagree
...more productive today than they were five years ago	10.0%	50.0%	36.7%	3.3%
...more productive today than they were ten years ago	20.0%	33.3%	26.7%	20.0%

Of the employers who answered the question comparing Bayou Region workers' productivity now relative to their productivity 5 years ago, 60% agreed somewhat (50%) or strongly agreed (10%) that workers are more productive now, with 37% somewhat disagreeing with the proposition and only 3% strongly disagreeing. Relative to productivity 10 years ago, approximately 53% thought that Bayou Region workers are more productive (a third somewhat agreeing and a fifth strongly agreeing) about 47% disagreed with the proposition (a fifth strongly and a fourth somewhat).

28. In the most recent year, what percentage of your employees has left your organization...
 ...for another job: MEAN = 18.3% (n=29)
 ...due to retirement: MEAN = 1.8% (n=29)
 ...involuntarily (termination): MEAN = 14.3% (n=27)

Of those answering the question on the percentage of employees that have left the respondent's organization in the last year, 18% was the average percent of those who left for another job, but this was only 8% in smaller firms and was 28% for larger firms. 1.8% was the average of those who left due to retirements, but only .8% among small firms and 2.5% among larger firms. The average of those who left due to involuntary termination was 14%, but was 7.1% among smaller firms and 20% among larger firms.

29. What is your average involuntary turnover rate among first-year employees: MEAN 13.2% (n=29)

The average involuntary turnover rate among first-year employees was 13%, but was 7% among smaller firms and 19% among larger firms.

30. Please rank the top three reasons for involuntary turnover in your organization (place a "1", "2", and "3", respectively, in the appropriate spaces below):

1 st	2 nd	3 rd	
18%	15%	41%	Violation of Company Policy
0%	11%	19%	Employee / Customer Relations
43%	30%	4%	Absenteeism / Tardiness
29%	41%	26%	Poor Performance
7%	0%	11%	Reduction in Workforce
4%	4%	0%	Other (please specify: _____)

When asked their reasons for involuntary termination from your organization, violation of company policy was listed as the top reason by 18% of the employers, as the second reason by 15% and as the third reason by 41%. Employee and/or customer relations was not listed as the top reason by anyone, was listed as the second reason by 11% and as the third reason by 19%. Absenteeism/tardiness was listed as the top reason for involuntary dismissal by 43% of employers, as the second reason by 30%, and as the third reason by 4%. Poor performance was listed as the top reason by 29% for involuntary dismissal, as the second reason by 41%, and as their third reason by 26%. A reduction in workforce was the top reason for involuntary dismissal by only 7% of employers, and as the third reason by only 11%, with none rating as the second most common reason. Other reasons were listed by only one respondent for the top and second reasons.

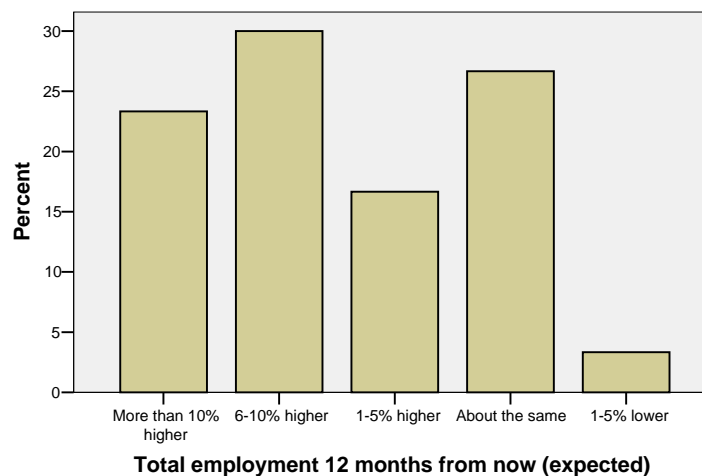
So, 96% listed poor performance as one of their top three reasons. Violation of company policy was listed as one of the top three reasons by 74% of employers. Absenteeism and tardiness was listed as one of the top 3 reasons by 77% of the employers. Employee or customer relations was listed as one of the top three reasons by only 30% of the employers.

Section VI. Labor Demand, Availability and Recruiting

31. Compared to our current total employment, I expect our total employment 12 months from now to be: (place an "X" on the appropriate line)

23.3%	More than 10% higher
30.0%	6%-10% higher
16.7%	1%-5% higher
26.7%	About the same
3.3%	1%-5% lower
0.0%	6%-10% lower
0.0%	More than 10% lower

Total employment 12 months from now (expected)



One of the most significant findings of the survey was that about 53% of the employers answering the question on their projection of their company's employment level in 12 months answered that they expected it to be 6% or higher, with 23% expecting it to be more than 10% higher. Only 26% expected the status quo while only 4% expected lower employment, but even then, only reductions in the 1-5% range. On average (weighted by number of full-time employees) area employers expect to increase their number of employees by 6% in the next 12 months, or by 513 employees of the 8523 full-time employees represented by survey respondents.

Since the survey respondents were largely in employment base industries more so than is representative for the region, and base industries are the ones that bring about the most economic growth, we would expect substantial increases in the supporting industries in the region, such as hospitals, banks, schools, and retail operations.

Based on other work we have done in the past and from this survey, we would fully expect a 4% to 6% increase in employment in general in the area within about 2 years, realizing that while many firms would like to hire more, sometimes they are not able to hire all that they want in a tight labor market.

32. What percent of your workforce is 60 years old or older? MEAN = 5.4% (n=30)
33. What percent of your workforce do you expect to retire in the next five years? MEAN = 5.7% (n=30)
34. Approximately how many of your full- and part-time employees are previously retired from another career? Full-time: MEAN = 0.99 (n=10) Part-time: MEAN = 0.21 (n=2)
35. In the next twelve months, what is your best estimate of the percent of new hires who have previously retired from your firm or from some other organization? MEAN = 1.3% (n=26)

Based on the responses to the survey, a little bit more than 5.4% of the local workforce 60 years old or older, and this was approximately the same for both small and large employers. The most an employer reported in the over 60 category was 30% of their employees. Similarly, (Q33) employers in the Bayou Region expect to see approximately the same percent of their employees retiring in the next 5 years, at 5.7%, with small employers expecting 5.2% to retire and large employers expecting 6.1% to retire in the next 5 years. (Q34) Approximately 1% of current full-time employees were previously retired, while approximately 0.2% of part-time employees were previously retired. (Q35) Employers expect that 1.3% their new hires will be individuals who had previously retired, the 1.5% of new hires at large firms expected to come from the ranks of the retired, while only 1.1% of new hires at small firms expected to be previously retired.

36. Please indicate the three most frequently used recruiting methods employed by your company by placing a "1", "2", and "3" in the appropriate blanks below:

PCT Mentioning in Top 3:

46.9%	Walk-ins / Unsolicited resumes	9.4%	"Temp to perm"
62.5%	Employee referrals	0%	Job / Career Fairs
50.0%	"Word of mouth"	3.1%	Employment agencies, recruiters
12.5%	Customer or vendor referrals	9.4%	State Employment Office
6.3%	Billboards	0%	Louisiana "One-Stop" Program
59.4%	Newspaper advertising	0%	Workforce Plus
15.6%	Internet	15.6%	Colleges / Universities
0%	Industry / Occupation Publications	0%	Community Colleges
0%	Other Media	0%	Technical Colleges
0%	Other		

In looking at the top methods used for recruiting employee referral was listed by 38% of employers as their most frequently used method, another 19% considered employee referral as their second most used recruiting method, while another 7% considered it as their third most used recruiting method, meaning that 64% listed employee referral as one of their top 3 methods of recruiting. Word-of-mouth was given as the top reason by 19% of employers, with 52% listing word-of-mouth as one of their top three methods of recruiting. Newspaper advertisement was listed as one of the top three recruiting methods by 61% of the employers answering, but only 9% gave it as their top method. College recruiting was given by only 16% of those answering. The State Employment Offices were given as top choices by only about 10% of those answering as being one of their top 3 recruiting methods (evenly divided between 1st, 2nd and 3rd method). Walk-ins were listed in the top three recruiting methods by 49% of the employers but only 13% gave that as their top recruiting method.

37. The following items will be used to gauge workforce needs in a number of job categories. The list is long, but critical to gaining a clear understanding of workforce needs, and in particular, areas where there may be shortages of qualified applicants. Please respond to each to the best of your ability.

As of today (the day you fill out this survey), please tell us the current number of openings in each job category. If you do not employ workers in a particular category, please respond "N/A."

Next, based on your recruiting experience over the past twelve (12) months, please rate the availability of qualified applicants for the job categories listed below, where 1 is unavailable and 5 is plentiful. If you have no experience or information to rate worker availability, please just respond with "N/A."

Then, in the second column, please indicate your *best current estimate* of the number of workers in this occupation that you intend to hire in the next twelve (12) months. If you employ workers in a particular job category but do not expect any new hires in the next 12 months, please write in zero ("0"). If you do not employ workers in a particular category, please respond "N/A."

Job Category	SUM of Responses	MEAN	SUM of Responses
	Current number of Openings Today	Availability (1=unavailable 5=plentiful, or N/A)	Estimated New Hires in Next 12 Months
<i>I. General Business & Office Support</i>			
Accounting clerks / bookkeepers	6	3.8	11
Administrative assistants	4	3.7	13
Clerical workers	17	4.3	26
Customer service representatives	5	3.7	18
Medical records technicians	0	3.0	0
Medical secretaries	0	3.0	0
Shipping clerks	0	3.1	5
Other office support worker (specify):	1	3.0	4
<i>II. Management and Supervisory</i>			
Customer service manager	1	2.2	1
Management trainees	3	2.4	2
Management, experienced	9	1.7	12
Office supervisors, clerical	0	3.4	7
Production supervisors	14	1.6	8
Other mgmt and supervisory worker	0	n/a	0
<i>III. Technical and Professional</i>			
Accountants	0	3.7	2
Financial Managers	1	3.0	0
Human Resource Professionals	4	2.5	2
Purchasing agents/professionals	2	2.2	3
Sales representatives	3	2.8	2
Safety professionals	9	2.7	7
Estimators	8	2.0	6
CAD drafters	3	1.7	4
Engineers, Chemical and Petroleum	0	3.5	0
Engineers, Civil	7	2.2	5
Engineers, Electrical	0	2.3	0
Engineers, Mechanical	4	3.0	5
Engineers, Other: _____	0	--	0
Engineers--Associate (2-year degree)	1	3.5	2
Marine Architect	0	3.0	0

III. Technical and Professional (cont.)	Current number of Openings Today	Availability (1=unavailable 5=plentiful, or N/A)	Estimated New Hires in Next 12 Months
Captains (marine)	4	2.3	9
Divers	20	5.0	40
Vessel engineers	4	3.5	2
Scientists/environmental professionals	0	2.0	0
Licensed Practical Nurses	1	3.0	1
Registered nurses	20	1.5	30
Medical technicians	0	--	0
Radiological technologists	0	--	0
Surgical technicians	5	1.0	7
Emergency Medical Technicians	0	--	0
Therapists, occupational	0	--	0
Therapists, physical	1	1.0	1
Therapists, respiratory	0	--	0
Physical corrective therapy assistants	0	--	0
Other technical and professional worker, specify: _____	16	4.0	0
IV. Production Maintenance and Distribution			
Bench assemblers	7	1.8	7
Blaster/painters	33	2.3	145
Carpenters	27	2.2	15
CNC machine operators	12	1.4	14
Electrical and electronic repairers	2	2.3	2
Electricians	6	2.3	10
Fork lift operator	10	3.0	33
Heavy equipment operators	31	2.7	43
Janitors	3	3.6	12
Laborers/material handlers	55	3.5	112
Machine operators, no setup	5	1.8	11
Machinists	8	2.3	13
Maintenance mechanics	18	3.0	31
Pipefitters	24	2.6	92
Plumbers	1	1.8	0
Riggers	57	3.0	125
Ship's mates	3	3.3	12
Shipfitters	56	1.8	40
Structural Fitters	32	2.5	117
Tackers	54	2.5	87
Tool & die makers	0	1.7	1
Truck drivers	4	2.8	8
Unskilled laborers	41	4.1	89
Warehouse operators	54	2.1	17
Welders	45	2.3	149
Other Production Maintenance and Distribution worker, specify: _____	25	2.0	48
V. Computer and Information Systems			
Computer support specialists	0	2.7	7
Database administrators	0	2.8	2
Network systems administrators, analysts and technicians	2	1.9	4
Programmers/analysts	0	1.8	5
Other CIS	0	n/a	0

Question 37 was by far the longest question in the survey, and, as a result, many respondents skipped the question altogether, or did not answer it completely. **Question 37** really had 3 parts, first asking how many current openings an employer had for a specific field, then their estimate of the current availability of workers in that field, and then, to estimate the number of new hires in that occupation in the next 12 months. Note below the strong consistency between what employers answered in 17 and 18 above on availability of certain types of workers and what is said in this question.

Job Category	Current Number of Openings Today	Estimated New Hires in Next 12 Months
General Business & Office Support	37	77
Management & Supervisory	18	24
Technical & Professional	140	153
Production Maintenance & Distribution	613	1233
Computer & Information Systems	2	4

For general office personnel, there were 37 immediate openings, with 77 new hires expected to be made within a year.

For accounting clerks and bookkeepers, there were 6 current openings at the time of the survey, with 11 expected to be hired in the next 12 months, but employers were confident that there was a sufficient hiring pool. There were 17 openings for clerical workers, with 28 expected to be hired in 12 months, and again, employers were quite confident in finding many applicants.

In management fields, there are only 18 total openings and 24 new hires expected to be made within a year.

For experienced managers there were 9 openings with 12 expected to be hired in the next 12 months, but employers were quite concerned that they may have great trouble in finding available qualified managers. There were 14 positions for production supervisors, but expectations that employers would only be able to find 8 in the next 12 months, and again, grave concern about the availability of qualified production supervisors. There were 9 openings for safety managers, with expectation that only 7 could be hired in the next 12 months, though availability was judged to be right in the middle between unavailable and plentiful.

In all of the technical and professional categories, there were only 140 immediate positions and 153 positions within a year.

Employers had openings for 8 estimators, with expectation to hire 6 within 12 months, and estimators were expected to be rather hard to find. There were positions for 7 civil engineers, with only 5 expected to be hired in the next 12 months. Civil engineers were expected to be difficult to find.

Employers had openings for 20 divers, expecting to hire 40 new divers within the next 12 months, judging divers to be extremely plentiful.

Employers in the respondent group had immediate openings for 20 registered nurses, expecting to hire 30 in the next 12 months, but judging them to be very difficult to recruit. There were 5 immediate openings for surgical technicians in the respondent group, with 7 new hires expected in the next 12 months. Employers rated surgical technicians as being unavailable, however.

Altogether in the production, maintenance and distribution category, where most of the skilled laborers were categorized, there were immediate openings for 613 skilled workers just among the few

employers who answered this question. These employers expected to hire 1233 workers within a year in this category of workers.

There were 7 openings for bench assemblers with only those 7 expected to be hired in the next 12 months. Employers perceived it to be very difficult to find qualified, available bench assemblers, however.

At the same time there were 33 immediate openings for blaster/painters with 145 expected to be hired in the next 12 months. Employers felt that it would be difficult to hire them, but not impossible. There were also immediate openings among the survey respondents for 27 carpenters, which were judged to be somewhat difficult to fill, but only 15 new carpenters would be hired in the next 12 months. CNC (computer and numerical control) machinists faced 12 immediate openings with 14 expected new hires within a year, but these, too, were judged to be very difficult hires to make. Electricians faced 6 immediate openings, expecting to fill 10 in the next 12 months, and these were gauged to be somewhat difficult to find. There were 10 immediate openings for forklift operators, with the expectation that 33 would be hired in the next 12 months, noting that it would be moderately difficult to find qualified forklift operators. There were 31 immediate openings for heavy equipment operators with 43 new hires expected to be made in the next 12 months, but the hires are expected to be difficult to make. There were 55 openings for laborers with 112 new hires expected within a year, but these were thought to be rather available, on average.

Machine operators only had 5 immediate openings, with 11 expected to be hired in the next year, but these were also thought to be difficult to hire. Employers in the respondent group had immediate openings for 8 machinists with 13 expected to be hired within the year. Machinists were also thought to be difficult to hire. There were 18 immediate openings for maintenance mechanics, with 31 expected to be hired within 12 months and these were judged somewhat difficult to find, but not impossible.

There were 24 immediate openings for pipe fitters, with 92 new hires expected for the next year; these were also judged to be moderately difficult hires because of lack of availability. Employers had 57 immediate openings for riggers, with 125 new hires expected within the year. These were judged to be difficult, but not too difficult to make the hires. For shipfitters, there were 56 immediate openings but an expectation that only 40 new hires would take place within a year, with shipfitters very difficult to recruit. Structural fitters had 32 immediate openings with 117 new hires expected to be made within a year, with shipfitters moderately difficult to recruit. For basic tackers, there were 54 immediate positions, with 87 hires expected with the year. Tackers were judged to be only mildly difficult to recruit.

For unskilled laborers there were 41 immediate openings, with 89 new hires within the next 12 months, but these were judged to be not very difficult to find. There were 54 immediate openings for warehouse operators, with only 17 expected to be hired within the next 12 months, but warehouse operators were judged to be rather difficult to hire.

Welders faced 45 immediate openings with 149 new welders expected to be hired within a year, and welders were judged to be somewhat difficult to hire. There were also immediate openings for 25 other production and maintenance workers with 48 new hires expected to be made within a year, and these were judged to be rather difficult to hire.

Computer and information systems workers in all categories faced only 2 immediate openings and 4 hires expected to be made within the next 12 months.

From the few who answered this question there is much to be gleaned. For instance, there were 810 immediate openings, almost 10% of the total current full-time employment of those who responded to the survey, and the 1491 new hires within a year make up almost 18% of current total full-time employment.

38. If your company employs welders, please list the five most common types of welders you employ, and the percent of your company's total welder workforce that they represent:

Type of Welder	Percent of Welder Workforce
1. _____	_____ %
2. _____	_____ %
3. _____	_____ %
4. _____	_____ %
5. _____	_____ %
Other Welders _____	_____ %
Total:	100%

A third of the employers responding employed welders. These employers have a total of 5588 full-time employees. Weighting their welding workforce by their total employment, about 25% of their welders are flux welders, another 16% are stick welders, 9% are pipe welders of various sorts, 9% are MIG/TIG welders and about 6% are pipeline welders. While many other types of welders were mentioned (sub-arc, short-arc, aluminum, heliarc, 6GR, 3G, 4G, spray arc and so forth) these types were mentioned most often and in the greatest numbers.

Section VII. Training and Education Resources

39. Do you have a formal in-house training program in: (check all that apply)

45%	Basic Skills	48%	Computer Skills
17%	Soft Skills	52%	Leadership Skills
10%	Life Skills	7%	General Business Skills
69%	Safety Skills	45%	Job-specific Skills
7%	Other (please specify): _____		

Question 39 asked employers about formal in-house training programs offered by their firm. Ten percent of those returning the survey skipped this question. Of those answering this question, a little less than half, 45%, reported that they had a program to aid employees with basic skills, 17% reported a program for soft-skills, 10% reported a program for life skills, 69% reported a program for safety training, half, or 48%, had computer-training programs, 52% had leadership programs, 45% claimed job-specific training, while only 7% noted in-house training for general business skills.

40. How frequently have you worked with each of the following for training, apprenticeship, co-op or other job programs? (place an "X" on the appropriate line)

Organization	Regularly	Occasionally	Never
Area High Schools	10%	31%	59%
Louisiana Technical College Young Memorial Campus (Morgan City)	15%	22%	63%
Louisiana Technical College (Other Locations)	18%	25%	57%
L.E. Fletcher Technical Community College (Houma)	10%	35%	55%
River Parishes Community College (Sorrento)	0%	4%	96%
Baton Rouge Community College	0%	0%	100%
Delgado Community College	0%	14%	86%
Other Community Colleges	0%	7%	93%
Nicholls State University	10%	41%	48%
University of Louisiana-Lafayette	0%	25%	75%
University of New Orleans	0%	11%	89%
Louisiana State University	0%	33%	67%
Tulane University	0%	18%	82%
Southern University	0%	11%	89%
Other Universities	0%	15%	85%
Private Vendors	7%	33%	59%

Question 40 asked about the use of various schools for training, apprenticeship, co-op and other job programs. 14% of those who returned the survey skipped this question. Based on those answering the question, 41% either occasionally or regularly worked with area high schools in these programs (10% regularly), 37% reported working with Young Memorial Louisiana Technical College (15% regularly), 45% reported working with L.E. Fletcher Technical and Community College (10% regularly) and 43% reported working with one of the other Louisiana Technical Colleges (18% regularly).

In terms of working with other area Community Colleges 14% reported occasionally working with Delgado Community College (0% regularly), while only 4% reported working occasionally with River Parishes Community College (0% regularly) and none worked with Baton Rouge Community College.

In working with area universities and colleges, 52% reported programs with Nicholls (10% regularly), 25% reported programs with ULL (0% regularly), 11% reported programs with UNO (0% regularly), 33% reported programs with LSU (0% regularly), 19% reported programs with Tulane (0% regularly), 11% reported programs with Southern University (0% regularly), while 15% reported programs with other universities (0% regularly). 41% of employers noted programs with private vendors for training (7% regularly).

41. How do you *most frequently* conduct training of your staff for job-specific skills: (circle only one)

- 70% In-house training by company personnel
- 20% Vendors or contractors
- 10% On-the-job trainers
- 0% Online training courses
- 0% Other

For job-specific skills, 70% of those answering said that they provided training in-house, while another 20% said that they used vendors for such training. On-the-job trainers were used by the remaining 10% of those answering.

Questions 42-44 asked respondents about the skill areas that needed improvements from the high schools (Q 42), from area technical and community colleges (Q43) and from area 4-year Colleges and Universities. The following table summarizes those results and provides comparisons; responses to each question are also discussed below.

Skills that need improvement	High Schools	Technical and Community Colleges	4-year Colleges and Universities
Life	36%	23%	--
Critical Thinking	58%	60%	65%
Computer	36%	43%	23%
Interview	39%	23%	15%
Basic	66%	50%	--
Soft	--	--	8%
Verbal Communication	65%	57%	42%
Job Prepared/Career-Specific	71%	63%	46%
Leadership	--	--	69%

-- means not asked for this type of educational institution

42. Please indicate the programs that need to be strengthened or instituted to better meet your requirements among area HIGH SCHOOLS:

36%	Life Skills	68%	Basic Skills (reading, writing, mathematics)
58%	Critical Thinking	65%	Verbal Communication Skills
36%	Computer Skills	71%	Job Preparedness Skills
39%	Job Interview Skills	10%	Other (please specify): _____

Employers were asked about the preparation of potential employees trained by high schools and which needed improvement. 36% of employers said life skills needed improvement. Critical skills by high school graduates were judged deficient by 58% of employers. Computer skills of high school graduates were judged lacking by 36% of employers. Job interview skills of these applicants were said to be inadequate by 39% of employers. Two-thirds of employers said that their basic skills (math, reading, writing, thinking) were lacking. Both the verbal communication skills and career-specific skills of high school graduates were judged inadequate by a little more than two-thirds (68%) of the employers. While all of these skills could be improved, area employers are most concerned about basic skills, critical thinking, verbal communication, and job preparation skills.

43. Please indicate the programs that need to be strengthened or instituted to better meet your requirements among area TECHNICAL and/or COMMUNITY COLLEGES:

23%	Life Skills	50%	Basic Skills (reading, writing, mathematics)
60%	Critical Thinking	57%	Verbal Communication Skills
43%	Computer Skills	63%	Career-specific Skills
23%	Job Interview Skills	0%	Other (please specify): _____

When asked about the skill and preparation levels of those potential employees employers thought that needed to be improved of those they saw coming out of area technical and community colleges, only 23% thought that life skills needed to be improved, 60% thought that critical thinking skills needed to be upgraded, 43% thought that computer skills needed improvement and 23% thought that interview skills needed to be worked on more. Half thought that basic skills needed improvement, and slightly more than half thought verbal communication skills (at 54%) needed to be honed. More glaring to employers of technical and community college graduates were the job preparedness skills, with almost two-thirds saying that improvement in such skills needed improvement.

44. Please indicate the programs that need to be strengthened or instituted to better meet your requirements among area UNIVERSITIES AND 4-YEAR COLLEGES:

46%	Job Preparedness	8%	Soft Skills
65%	Critical Thinking	42%	Verbal Communication Skills
23%	Computer Skills	69%	Leadership / Managerial Skills
15%	Job Interview Skills	4%	Other (please specify): _____

Of the skills categories that employers thought that area colleges and universities needed to strengthen or address, 65% thought that critical thinking skills needed to be improved, but only 23% thought that computer skills needed to be upgraded. Most employers were satisfied with the interview and soft skills of university trained employees, with only 15% of employers feeling that interview skills needed to be improved and only 8% of the employers feeling that the basic skills of university-trained employees were deficient. However, more than 40% of employers thought that verbal communication skills of university-trained employees need to be improved, and more than two-thirds (69%) thought that leadership skills of the university trained employees needed to be improved. Critical thinking skills, verbal communication, leadership and job-preparedness skills are clearly the areas of weakness of area college graduates, according to employers.

Certainly, job-preparedness is mainly the responsibility of the departments from which students are receiving degrees, many programs at Nicholls now have internship programs in recent years. Clearly, other ways of addressing such problems could be introduced, e.g. co-op programs in which students take spend several terms with full-time positions at jobs, interleaving school and work time.

It should be pointed out that Nicholls has recently identified critical thinking skills as single most important area on which to concentrate the University's improvement efforts.

45. What training or certificate (non-degree) programs outside the Bayou Region that your firm actively recruits from or sends employees to? (please list; if none, mark "N/A")

Question 45 asked about the type of training or certificate programs from outside of the Bayou Region that employers actively sought. Only four programs were mentioned and these were mentioned by one employer each: Banking School of the South, Civil Service, career-specific welding certification, and various courses from vendors.

46. In hiring those in semi-skilled and skilled craft positions, do you have a preference for those who have completed apprenticeship programs in their field? (place an "X" on the appropriate line)

72% = YES 28% = NO

More than 7 out of 10 employers noted that they had a preference for workers who had completed an apprenticeship program in the semi-skilled and skilled craft fields.

47. Has your company participated in the Louisiana Incumbent Worker Training Program?
 (place an "X" on the appropriate line)
 33% = YES 67% = NO

Only 1 in 3 employers participated in the Louisiana Incumbent Worker Training Program.

48. In your estimation, how common is it for residents in the area to be employed below their skill levels
 (place an "X" on the appropriate line below):

Not At All Common				Very Common
<u>10%</u>	<u>13.3%</u>	<u>60.0%</u>	<u>13.3%</u>	<u>3.3%</u>

On a 5-point scale, employers rated how common they thought that workers were employed below their skill level, with 60% giving the neutral response, 23% giving answers on the not common side, while only about 16% who thought that workers were under-employed in terms of their skills. Underemployment relative to skills is not perceived to be important by employers. Of course, employees may have talents that employers do not recognize. Still, if the question were asked of employees, it is unlikely that objective responses would be given, with employees thinking that they had many untapped talents.

49. Please place an "X" in the space that best describes your experience with State training programs:

		Neither		
Mostly Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Mostly Dissatisfied
<u>8%</u>	<u>28%</u>	<u>52%</u>	<u>12%</u>	<u>0%</u>

Also on a 5-point scale, employers were asked their satisfaction with Louisiana State provided training programs. The neutral response was given by slightly more than half of the employers (52%) with more than a fourth (28%) answering that they were somewhat satisfied and another 8% answering that they were mostly satisfied. Only 12% answered that they were somewhat dissatisfied, while none answered that they were mostly dissatisfied. Apparently, the state-provided training programs are rather valuable.

Section VIII. Employee Benefits

50. Does your company offer the following benefits? (place an "X" on the line for all that apply)
- | | | | |
|-----|-------------------------------|-----|-----------------------|
| 0% | Subsidized day care | 25% | Wellness Program |
| 3% | On-site daycare | 66% | Long-term disability |
| 81% | Life insurance | 69% | Short-term disability |
| 91% | Health insurance | 34% | Tuition reimbursement |
| 63% | Dental insurance | 19% | Pension |
| 34% | Optical insurance | 72% | 401(k) |
| 19% | Other (please specify): _____ | | |

Question 50 asks about the variety of employee benefits available from the company. None reported having subsidized day care, but 1 respondent or 3% of the respondents answering this question, had on-site day care. Most employers offered life insurance at a rate of 9 out of 10 (88.5%). All of those answering this question offered health insurance, with nearly 9 out of 10 of those extending health care coverage to dependents (from question 52). More than two-thirds offered dental insurance, while more than a third offered optical insurance.

More than one-fourth (28%) of the surveyed employers offered wellness programs. Short-term and long-term disability insurance were offered by 76% and 72% of the respondents who answered, respectively. To attract younger employees with professional and managerial aspirations, tuition reimbursement was offered by 38% of those who answered this question, and even 14% offered tuition reimbursement for non-job related courses (see question 52) . Most employers, 79%, offered 401(k) plans, while 21%, offered more traditional pension plans.

51. What percent of the following premiums or expenses are paid by the company:
- | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----|------------------------|------|
| Daycare: | 0% | Optical insurance: | 18% |
| On-site daycare: | 0% | Long-term disability: | 43% |
| Life insurance: | 66% | Short-term disability: | 44% |
| Dental insurance: | 75% | Pension: | n/a% |
| Tuition reimbursement | 35% | 401(k) | n/a% |
| Other (please specify): _____ | | | % |

Question 51 asked employers to give the share of the benefit expense paid by the company. None in the respondent group who answered this question reported that they subsidized day care, whether on- or off-site day care. Approximately 66% of life insurance premiums offered through the company were paid for by the employer and this did not vary much between large and small employers. Roughly 75% of health insurance premiums are paid for by employers in the area, again with little difference between small and large employers. About 35% of dental premiums provided at the workplace were paid by employers, with small firms paying 48% and small firms paying 30% of premiums. Optical insurance is only provided by the larger firms in our sample, who pay an average of 18% of the premiums. Wellness programs are subsidized by firms at a rate of 43% of the premiums, with large firms paying 38% of the premiums while small firms pay about 90% of wellness program premium expenses. Long-term disability insurance, for those who offer it, is subsidized at a rate of 44% overall, with small firms paying 38% of the premiums and large firms paying 46% of the premiums.

52. Please indicate those programs offered by your company by placing an "X" on the appropriate line:
- | | | | |
|-----|---|-----|-------------------------------|
| 90% | Dependent health insurance coverage | 14% | Flextime |
| 3% | Telecommuting | 14% | Job sharing |
| 38% | Partial days off | 14% | Floating holidays |
| 62% | Employee suggestion systems | 55% | Employee recognition programs |
| 3% | Health club on-site or membership | | |
| 14% | Tuition reimbursement for non-job related courses | | |
| 6% | Other (please specify): _____ | | |

As mentioned above, nine-tenths of the employers offer health insurance for dependents. Only one firm (3%) offered telecommuting, but a third offered partial days off. Six-tenths of the firms used employee suggestions systems. Flextime is offered by only 14% of the responding firms while 14% offer job sharing and floating holidays. Slightly more than half of the firms responding used an employee recognition program.

53. Please indicate your company's vacation policy for HOURLY employees (days per year; if policy varies, please indicate the most common policy):
- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| ...After 6 months service: | MEAN = 2.4 days |
| ...After 1 year service: | MEAN = 8.0 days/year |
| ...After 5 years service: | MEAN = 12.5 days/year |
| ...After 10 years service: | MEAN = 14.9 days/year |
| ...After 15 years service: | MEAN = 16.1 days/year |
| ...After 20 years service: | MEAN = 15.9 days/year |

Questions 53 and 54 ask about the employer's vacation policies relative to hourly workers (Q 53) and to salaried workers (Q54). Both questions ask the number of vacation days per year after various lengths of service.

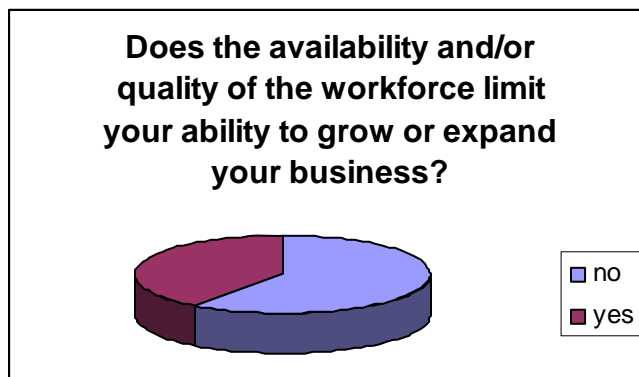
For hourly workers, the mean number of vacation days after only 6 months of service is 2.4 days, with 3.6 as the mean for small firms and 1.7 for larger firms. After a year's service, the mean number of vacation days per year is 8 days, with 8.8 days for small firms and 7.4 for larger firms. For hourly workers with 5 years of service, the average number of vacation days per year is 12.5, with 11.5 as the mean for small firms and 13 days as the mean for large firms. After 10 years of service, the mean for hourly workers is 15 days per year, with a mean of 13.9 days per year for small firms and 15.6 days per year for large firms. After 15 years of service, the average number of vacation days per year for hourly workers increases to 16, with 14.9 days as the average for small firms and 16.9 days for larger firms. While not statistically significant, the average number of days vacation per year is 15.9, with an average of 15.4 for small firms and 16.3 for large firms.

54. Please indicate your company's vacation policy for SALARY employees (days per year; if policy varies, please indicate the most common policy):
- ...After 6 months service: MEAN = 2.9 days
 - ...After 1 year service: MEAN = 8.6 days/year
 - ...After 5 years service: MEAN = 12.5 days/year
 - ...After 10 years service: MEAN = 15.3 days/year
 - ...After 15 years service: MEAN = 17.0 days/year
 - ...After 20 years service: MEAN = 17.1 days/year

For salaried workers, the mean number of vacation days after only 6 months of service is 2.9 days, with 3.3 as the mean for small firms and 2.6 for larger firms. After a year's service, the mean number of vacation days per year is 8.6 days, with 8.9 days for small firms and 8.4 for larger firms. For salaried workers with 5 years of service, the average number of vacation days per year is 12.5, with 11.9 as the mean for small firms and 12.9 days as the mean for large firms. After 10 years of service, the mean for salaried employees is 15.3 days per year, with a mean of 14 days per year for small firms and 16.3 days per year for large firms. After 15 years of service, the average number of vacation days per year for salaried employees increases to 17, with 15.4 days as the average for small firms and 18.2 days for larger firms. The average number of vacation days per year is 17.1, with an average of 15.8 for small firms and 18.2 for large firms.

Section IX. Summary

55. Does the availability and/or quality of the workforce limit your ability to grow or expand your business?



Quite importantly, 4 out of 10 firms responding said that the availability or the quality of the workforce limits their ability to grow their business. While most businesses are not constrained by the availability and quality of the area workforce, a substantial number of employers are constrained. Of the larger firms (with more than 60 full-time employees) 56% said that they were constrained by workforce availability and quality, while 44% of the larger firms said that they were not limited by the workforce. On the other hand, 79% of the smaller employers (those with less than 60 full-time employees) said that they were not constrained by the workforce quality and availability, while only 21% said that the workforce held them back.

If YES, please explain:

Those who said yes usually elaborated on their answers. One employer noted that they could not find qualified petroleum engineers. Another said that without consistent quality in the workforce, it is difficult to pursue other business opportunities. One noted that the availability of “offshore/legal” scaffold builders is very limited. Still another said “without a skilled workforce, turnover exceeds hiring capabilities.” Another noted the lack of diesel engine repair technicians. One said that Hurricane Katrina relocated much of their workforce and that it is difficult to attract these workers back. One firm suggested that if the right employees were available, the company could double in 12 months. One firm noted that their turnover rate for entry-level positions is more than half and that fewer young applicants are surprised when they are held accountable, noting further that there are no skilled personnel available and that new positions are filled through on-the-job training. Yet another employer noted that without qualified personnel, they cannot meet customer needs. Finally, one employer said that industry fluctuations cause employees to leave and that they are hard to replace with demographic increases.

56. What do you believe is the single most important step that could be taken to improve the quantity and/or quality of the Bayou Region workforce?

One employer said that we need more focus on career and long term goals. Others said to improve the roads and traffic flows. Yet other employers suggest more training and education. Along these lines, one of the Bayou Region’s larger employers suggested that high school students should be given the technical skills they need to go to work immediately after graduation. One employer suggested that a high school career path for the less academically gifted so that these students could more easily pursue trades, while others similarly suggested that more skills taught through the community colleges and vo-tech schools and viable workforce development programs such as scaffold builder training and welding. One employer suggested working with the area’s school systems based on the results of this survey and that industry, business and universities be used to bring business expectations into classrooms, and that more technical training be provided during the high school years. Similarly, one employer suggested that students be given better training in job preparedness and another suggested a greater level of commitment. One employer said that unemployment benefits are too easily available (author adds that this raises the cost of acquiring and retaining employees). One employer noted that we need to improve the soft skills of applicants and that we should focus more on training. One employer suggested something that is possible, that the parish president improve the parish and attract a workforce that business leaders could work with. Another suggested the improbable, that something could be done to reduce the fluctuations in the market peaks and valleys.

57. What are the three most important factors that make it difficult to recruit and retain qualified professionals in the Bayou Region?

Employers' top three answers are provided in the Table below.

Top Answer	Second Answer	Third Answer
Location	Cost of Living	Social Atmosphere
Basic Skills	Pay	Competition
More Money	Unwilling To Relocate	Housing Cost
Lack of Education	Lack of Education	Lack of Education
Market Volatility	Lack of Skilled Talent	Poor Work Ethic
Lack of Experienced Scaffold Builders	Lack of Scaffold Building Training	Need for Scaffold Builders Due to Katrina
None-Competitive Salaries	State's Bad Image	Poor Educational Opportunities
Lack of Ambition	Apathy	Poor Work Ethic
Geographical Locale	.	.
Traffic Flow	Declining Benefits	Rising Health Care Costs
Location	Opportunities for Trailing Spouses	Business to Enhance Community Attractiveness
Unmotivated Younger Workers	Benefit Wars Among Competitors	Revolving Door Syndrome
Low Income Housing	.	.
Dependency on Oilfield	Rural Living and Amenities	Lack of Fall-Back Opportunities
K-12 Education	K-12 Education	K-12 Education
Lack of Qualified Professionals	Workers Commute Rather Than Relocate	Low Pay Relative to Other Areas
Location	Pay Rates	Type of Industry
Location	Housing Issues	Salaries
Politics	Poorly Maintained Infrastructure	Education
Unqualified Applicants	Too Many Failed Drug Screens	Low Profit Margins
Home-grown professionals do not stay in area	Perception of S. Louisiana	Not enough employment options if the oilfield has downturn
Availability of qualified professionals	Labor market change since Katrina	New hires have a sense of entitlement

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

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