

## Addressing the Labour Market Gap: Kootenay Region

In recent years, employers have found themselves grappling with the pressing need to adapt to the needs and expectations of job seekers to attract and retain skilled staff. Meanwhile, job seekers face the daunting task of securing employment despite the myriad opportunities available. The *Addressing the Labour Market Gap Report* is the culmination of an extensive research effort, drawing upon the valuable input of 1,225 job seekers and 812 employers across the province.

Within the Kootenay region, 78 job seekers and 89 employers participated in the provincial survey between February 7 and March 3, 2023.

The region had slightly more jobseeker respondents who indicated that they are out of work and looking for employment (40%) compared to the provincial average (32%). Among employers in this region, there were slightly more single-owner businesses compared to the provincial average (28% compared to 24%). Despite relatively similar education profiles, the survey illustrates income disparities between employers and job seekers. For instance, 44% of job seekers indicated their household income was below 50K/year, compared to 4% of employers. Further, job seekers in the Kootenay region were less likely to participate in the gig economy compared to other regions surveyed. Over 65% of job seekers indicated that they had never participated in the gig economy, compared to 36% provincially. Finally, the pandemic appears to have impacted employers and job seekers in the Kootenay region differently. 79% of employers surveyed reported it was harder to find qualified candidates after the pandemic, which is higher than the provincial average of 62%, and the highest among all regions surveyed. Conversely, only 28% of job seekers reported it was harder to find a job now compared to before the pandemic, which is lower than the provincial average of 39%, and the lowest among the regions surveyed.

Key highlights of the findings from the Kootenay region are outlined below.

- **Top Challenge** | Employers in the Kootenay region identified finding applicants in the region where the business is located as the top challenge they face. This differs significantly from findings at the provincial level where employers most commonly cited finding qualified candidates that match job description as the top challenge. Job seekers in the Kootenay region equally ranked finding jobs that they are interested in, finding jobs that fit their qualifications, and finding jobs that meet their salary expectations as the top challenges they face.
- **Recruitment Process** | At both the provincial level and in the Kootenay region, employers found it most difficult to define salary ranges and offers as part of the recruitment process. Similarly, job seekers in this region felt that negotiating salaries and offers was the largest challenge, which is similar to findings at the provincial level.
- **Job Postings** | Employers and job seekers had different ideas about what features are most important in job postings. Employers across BC and in the Kootenay region both ranked work environment/office culture as the most important “selling feature” of a job posting. In contrast, salary was seen as the most important feature of any job posting according to job seekers both in the Kootenay region and provincially.
- **Salaries** | 57% of employers described challenges finding qualified candidates within the salary range they offered while 68% of job seekers found it challenging to find jobs that meet their salary



expectations. While the findings among employers are similar to the BC average, job seekers in the Kootenay region found it relatively more difficult to find jobs that meet their salary expectations (68%) compared to the BC average (49%).

- **Diversity and Inclusion** | Both job seekers and employers identified “creating a workplace that is safe and fair for workers of different backgrounds to feel welcome” as one of the most important factors influencing worker retention. However, the *Report* illustrates gaps in policies to support this: while 79% of employers in the region reported having policies in place to support a diverse workforce, only 65% of job seekers reported experiencing such policies at their previous workplace. This gap between employer policies and jobseeker experience reflects findings from across BC.

To access the full "Addressing the Labour Market Gap Insights Report," please visit <https://bcchamber.org/addressing-the-labour-market-gap/>