



# 2023 West Michigan Job Seeker Survey

Findings and Recommendations

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## Background and Purpose

West Michigan Works! (WMW) contracted [DataWise Consulting, LLC](#) to conduct a survey to help workforce development teams and employers better understand the current state of the job market and workforce pool in West Michigan. Specifically, the survey was designed to gather feedback people who had been involved with WMW and its programs about:

- Their perceptions of their employment status
- Whether they were actively looking for work
- What barriers they face to finding work
- What barriers they face to working
- What resources would be most helpful for job seekers

## Method

### Survey development

In spring 2021, West Michigan Works! partnered with DataWise Consulting (formerly the Calvin University Center for Social Research) to develop a survey about unemployment, especially given the COVID-19 pandemic. In spring 2022, the survey was fielded across the entire state of Michigan. In summer 2023, the survey once again focused on the WMW region only. Minor changes to question wording and format were made each year. See the questionnaire in the **Appendix**, or visit [this link](#) to preview an online version.

### Survey distribution and responses

Survey recruitment and responses occurred online. West Michigan Works! provided DataWise with a list of 27,917 email addresses for people who had been involved with WMW from May 1, 2022, to April 30, 2023. The email list was uploaded into Qualtrics software.

Survey invitations were sent through Qualtrics on June 6, 2023, and reminder emails were sent on June 12 and June 21. Of the 27,917 email addresses, 741 were marked by Qualtrics as bounced, leaving 27,176 potential respondents. As of July 5, 528 people completed the survey, yielding a response rate of 1.9%.

In effort to reach more people and increase response rate, WMW sent additional emails on July 6 and July 10 to encourage participation. As of July 31, 702 people completed the survey, bringing the final response rate to 2.6%.

# Respondent demographic characteristics

**Table 1** presents the demographic characteristics of the 702 survey respondents. The number of respondents (*N*) varied across counties, with four counties yielding over 50 respondents each and seven counties yielding fewer than 10 respondents each. Respondents represented a wide range of income levels, education levels, age groups, and other demographic characteristics. At the time people took the survey, nearly 20% reported an annual household income of less than \$10,000 and nearly half reported an annual income of less than \$40,000.

Table 1 Respondent demographic characteristics

Demographic Characteristics	<i>N</i>	%
County		
Allegan	61	8.7%
Barry	25	3.6%
Berrien	1	0.1%
Clinton	1	0.1%
Eaton	8	1.1%
Ingham	3	0.4%
Iona	29	4.1%
Kalamazoo	2	0.3%
Kent	242	34.5%
Mecosta	2	0.3%
Montcalm	12	1.7%
Muskegon	80	11.4%
Newaygo	15	2.1%
Ottawa	121	17.2%
Wayne	1	0.1%
No answer/Bad ZIP	99	14.1%

Demographic Characteristics	N	%
<b>Age Range</b>		
18-24	22	3.1%
25-34	77	11.0%
35-44	116	16.5%
45-54	151	21.5%
55-64	221	31.5%
65 or older	60	8.5%
Prefer not to answer	55	7.8%
<b>Race / Ethnicity</b>		
White	471	67.1%
Black or African American	71	10.1%
Hispanic or Latino	32	4.6%
Asian	8	1.1%
Native American or Alaska Native	2	0.3%
Multiracial	20	2.8%
Another race or self-described	16	2.3%
Prefer not to answer	82	11.7%
<b>Education</b>		
Less than high school	11	1.6%
High school graduate	103	14.7%
Some college	146	20.8%
Technical or trade school	49	7.0%
2-year degree	85	12.1%
4-year degree	171	24.4%
Graduate degree	87	12.4%
Prefer not to answer	50	7.1%

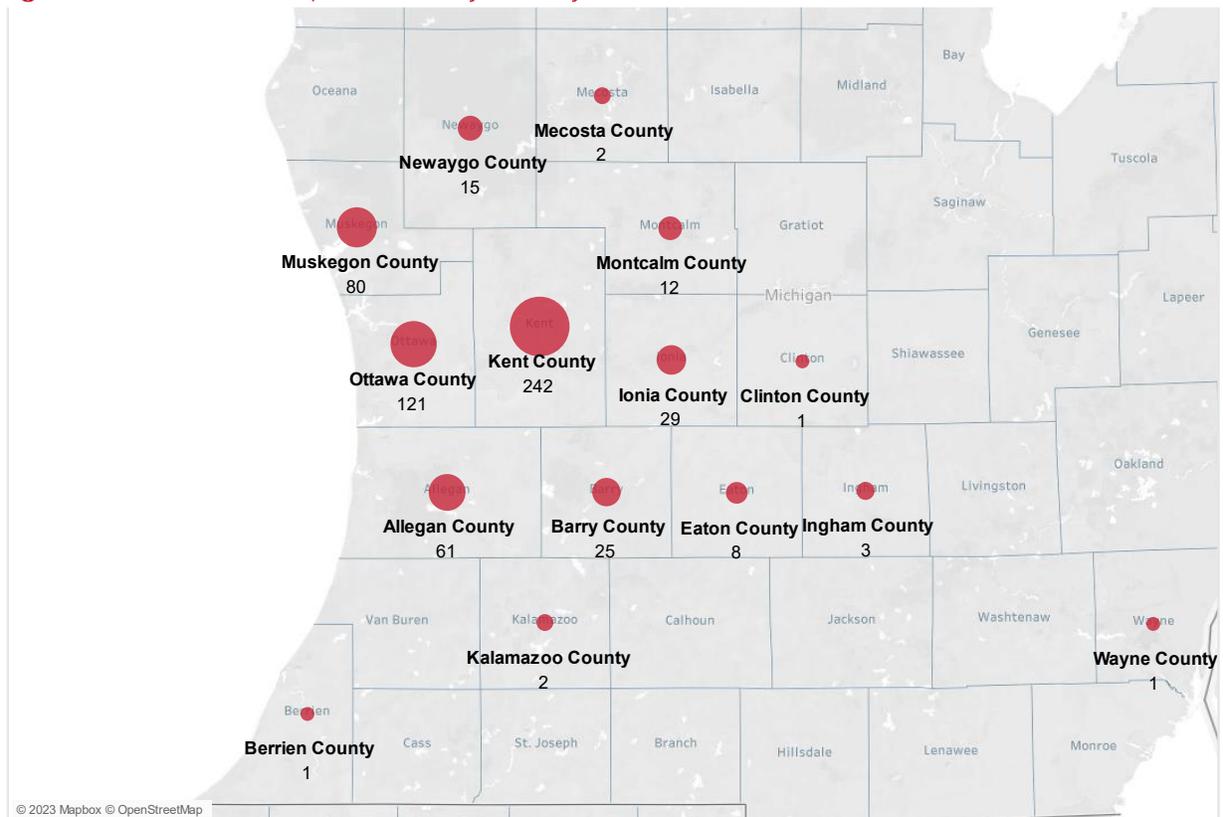
Demographic Characteristics	N	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	348	49.6%
Male	290	41.3%
Non-binary, another gender, or self-described	7	1.0%
Prefer not to answer	57	8.1%
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Never married	160	22.8%
Married	309	44.0%
Divorced, Separated, or Widowed	159	22.6%
Prefer not to answer	74	10.5%
<b>Annual Household Income as of January 1, 2022</b>		
Less than \$10,000	42	6.0%
\$10,000 - \$19,999	40	5.7%
\$20,000 - \$29,999	68	9.7%
\$30,000 - \$39,999	85	12.1%
\$40,000 - \$49,999	62	8.8%
\$50,000 - \$59,999	52	7.4%
\$60,000 - \$69,999	36	5.1%
\$70,000 - \$79,999	31	4.4%
\$80,000 - \$89,999	34	4.8%
\$90,000 - \$99,999	29	4.1%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	65	9.3%
\$150,000 or more	44	6.3%
Prefer not to answer	114	16.2%

Demographic Characteristics	N	%
<b>Annual Household Income at the Time of Survey</b>		
Less than \$10,000	120	17.1%
\$10,000 - \$19,999	54	7.7%
\$20,000 - \$29,999	74	10.5%
\$30,000 - \$39,999	68	9.7%
\$40,000 - \$49,999	41	5.8%
\$50,000 - \$59,999	37	5.3%
\$60,000 - \$69,999	35	5.0%
\$70,000 - \$79,999	27	3.8%
\$80,000 - \$89,999	26	3.7%
\$90,000 - \$99,999	21	3.0%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	45	6.4%
\$150,000 or more	24	3.4%
Prefer not to answer	130	18.5%
<b>Household Size</b>		
1	138	19.7%
2	248	35.3%
3	115	16.4%
4	77	11.0%
5 or more people	61	8.7%
Prefer not to answer	63	9.0%
<b>Children in Household</b>		
Yes	222	31.6%
No	436	62.1%
No answer	44	6.3%

Demographic Characteristics	N	%
<b>Children Requiring Childcare</b>		
Yes	64	9.1%
No	157	22.4%
Not applicable / No answer	481	68.5%
<b>Children in School</b>		
Yes	184	26.2%
No	38	5.4%
Not applicable / No answer	480	68.4%

Figure 1 shows a map of respondents by county of current residence. Larger circles represent a greater number of respondents who live in the county.

Figure 1 Number of respondents by county



## Respondent employment situation

Respondents answered several questions about their current employment situation. As listed in **Table 2**, just over half of respondents were employed at the time they took the survey. Many respondents were thinking about or planning for a job or career change: 29% were worried they might be laid off in the next few months, 34% were thinking about leaving their job in the next few months, and 56% said they would like to change careers or professions in the next year or two. Half of respondents said they were actively learning new job skills.

Table 2 Respondent employment situation

Employment Characteristics	N	%
<b>Employment Status</b>		
Employed	354	50.4%
Unemployed	347	49.4%
No answer	1	0.1%
<b>Employment Type</b>		
Full-time	275	77.7%
Part-time	78	22.0%
No answer	1	0.3%
<b>Self-Employed</b>		
Self-employed	23	6.5%
Not self-employed	331	93.5%
<b>Is your employment permanent or temporary/seasonal?</b>		
Permanent	279	78.8%
Temporary/seasonal	74	20.9%
No answer	1	0.3%
<b>Are you worried that you may be laid off in the next few months?</b>		
Yes	101	28.5%
No	252	71.2%
No answer	1	0.3%

Employment Characteristics	N	%
Are you thinking about leaving your job in the next few months?		
Yes	121	34.2%
No	233	65.8%
Do you earn enough to meet your needs?		
Yes	183	51.7%
No	171	48.3%
Would you like to change professions/careers in the next year or two?		
Yes	306	43.6%
No	393	56.0%
No answer	3	0.4%
Are you actively learning new job skills?		
Yes	349	49.7%
No	349	49.7%
No answer	4	0.6%
Are you enrolled as a student?		
Yes, full-time student	29	4.1%
Yes, part-time student	24	3.4%
No	647	92.2%
No answer	2	0.3%

## Findings

This section presents the results of each survey question. This year, the visualizations focus on a year-over-year analysis of the survey questions, which allows for a further understanding of changes from the previous instances of the survey. Unless otherwise specified, visualizations include only 2022 responses from the WMW region.

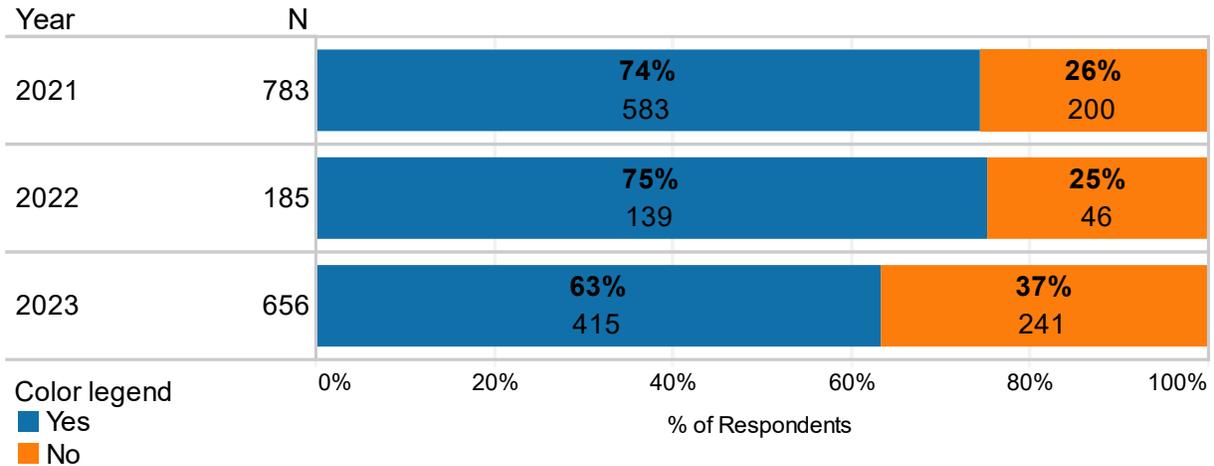
### Search for work

To better understand the current workforce landscape in West Michigan, this survey opened with several questions related to respondents' search for work. Nearly two-thirds of all survey respondents indicated they were actively looking for work at the time of taking the survey. As

**Figure 2** illustrates, the proportion of respondents who are actively looking for jobs is lower in 2023 than in previous years.

**Figure 2** Percent of respondents searching for work by survey year

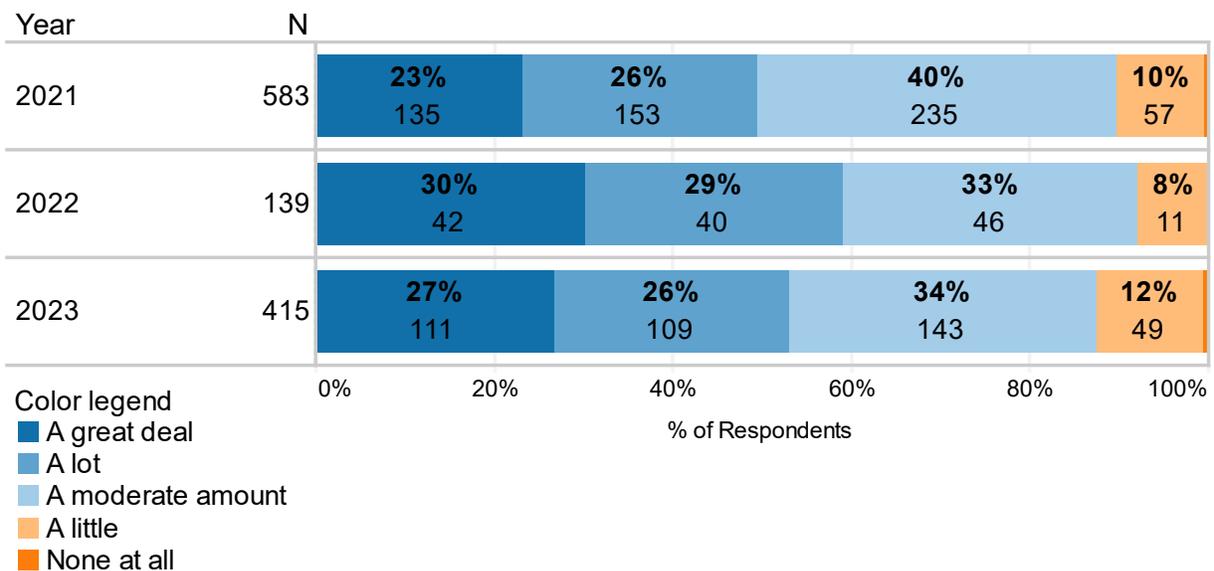
Are you actively looking for work? If you are currently employed, you may be looking for better or more secure employment.



Respondents reported the amount of effort they are dedicating toward finding work. About half said they are dedicating a great deal or a lot of effort toward their job search. As shown in **Figure 3**, a year-over-year analysis shows that there is little variance over the years when the survey was taken.

**Figure 3** Effort toward finding work by survey year

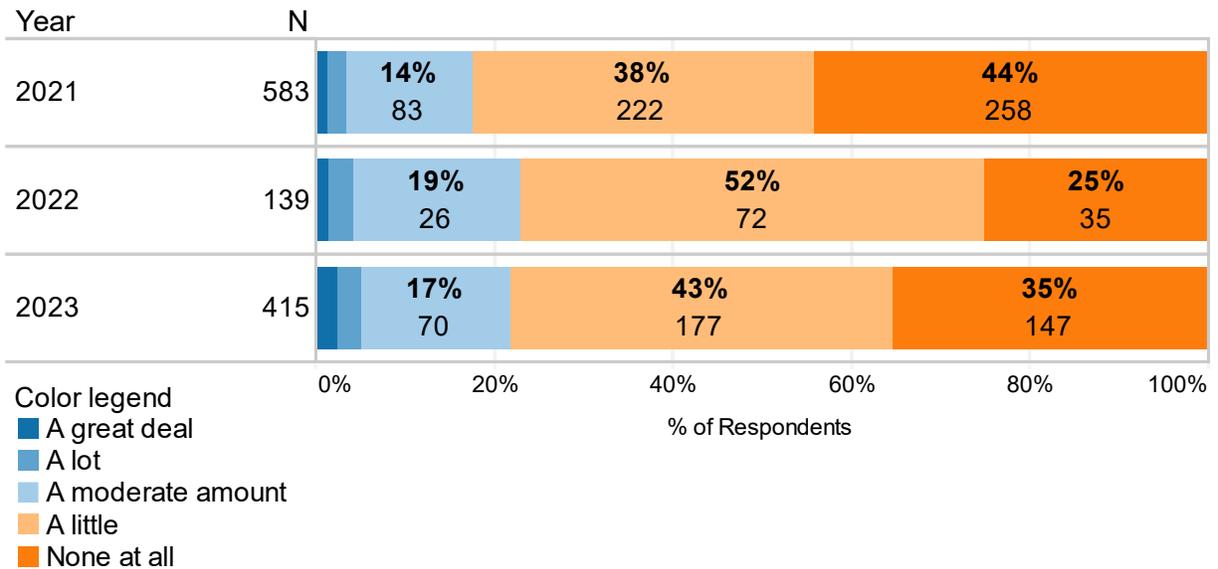
How much effort are you able to dedicate toward finding work?



Respondents who were looking for work went on to report the amount of success they were having with the job search. As shown in **Figure 4**, over 40% said they were having only a little success, and another 35% said they were having no success at all.

**Figure 4** Success in finding work by survey year

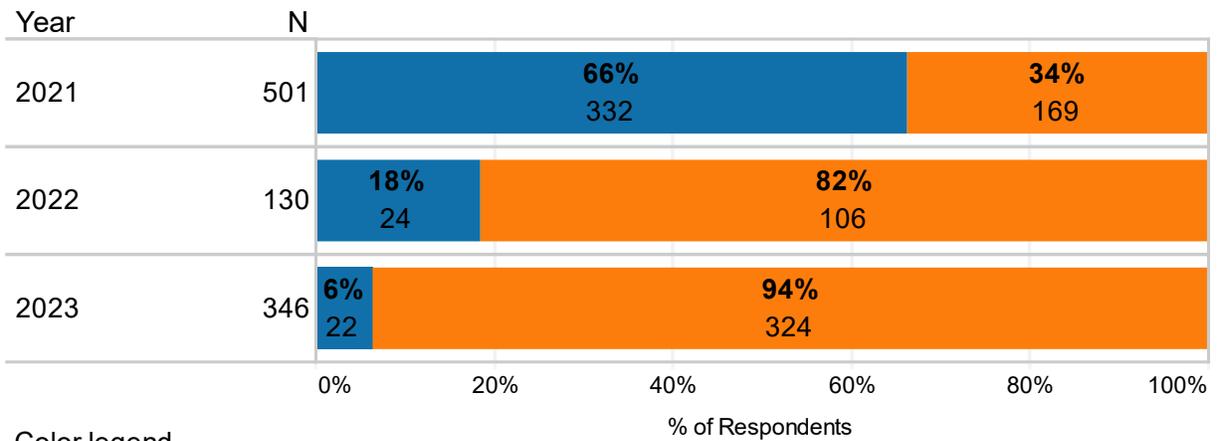
How much success are you having finding work?



Encouragingly, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on unemployment has reduced drastically, from 66% of unemployed respondents saying that their unemployment was related to the pandemic in 2021 to only 6% in 2023 (see **Figure 5**). The results for 2023 are expected as the effects of COVID-19 on the job market decreased over the past two years.

Figure 5 COVID-19 impact on unemployment by survey year

Is the reason for your unemployment related to the COVID-19 pandemic?



## Barriers to finding work

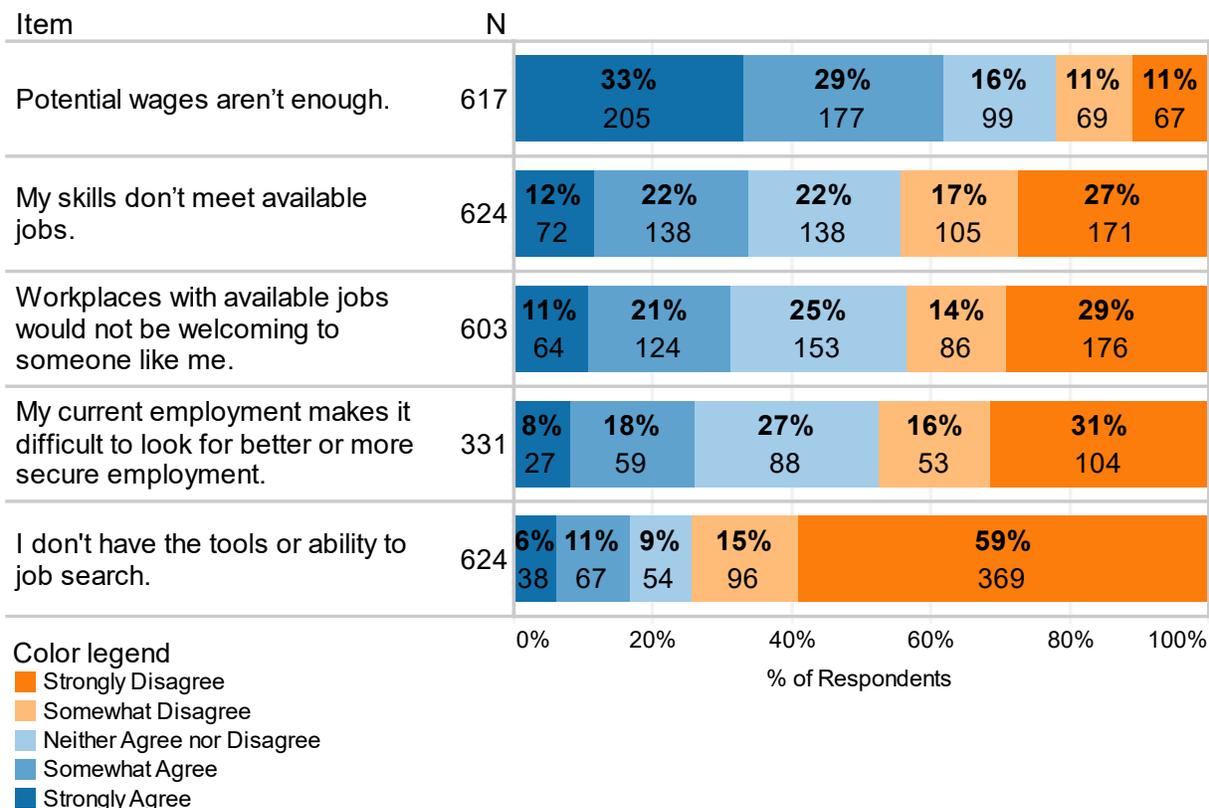
Respondents who were searching for work were asked to rate several potential barriers to finding work. Overall, 2023 responses were similar to the 2022 responses. The top three barriers were:

1. Potential wages aren't enough
2. Their job skills do not meet available jobs
3. Workplaces with available jobs would not be welcoming to someone like them

In 2023, not having the tools or ability to job search was least likely to be a barrier to finding work. **Figure 6** shows each of the potential barriers respondents rated, sorted from most strongly endorsed as a barrier to least strongly endorsed as a barrier.

**Figure 6 Barriers to finding work**

To what extent do you agree that each of the following is a barrier to finding work?



Like the 2021 and 2022 responses, potential wages not being enough was the biggest barrier to finding work in 2023. A respondent shared:

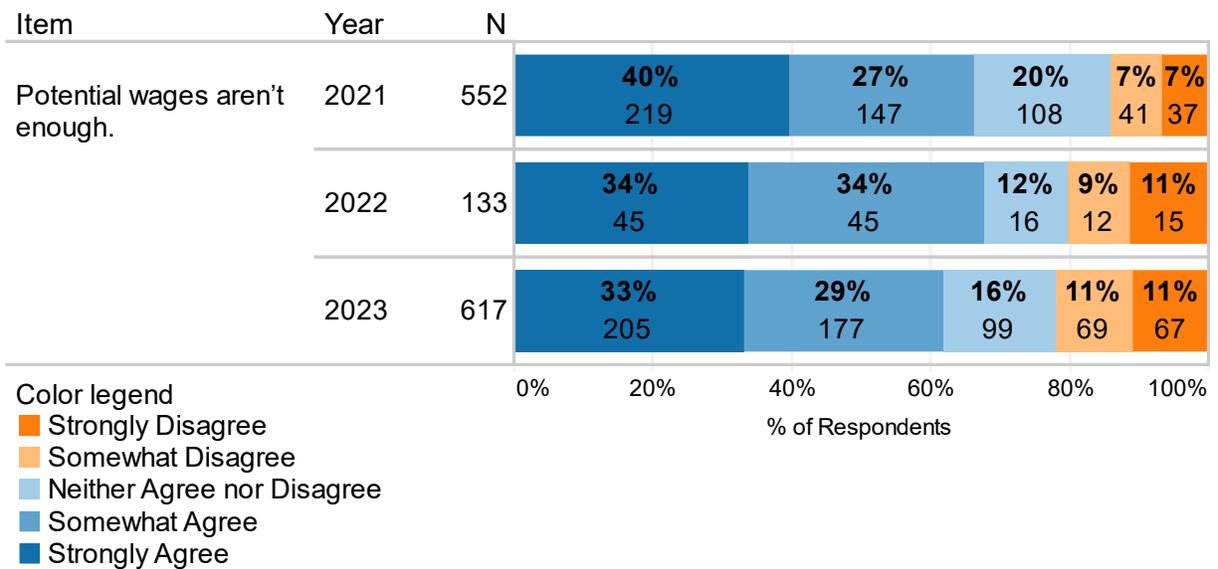
*At my age, mid 50's, and my experience, over 30 years, and 3 college degrees, it is difficult to get a job that pays well and offers a decent schedule for a quality of life with my husband. Every job I apply for is a step back, a heavier salary pay cut, or I am forced to work nights, weekends, and holidays again. It's becoming increasingly difficult and stressful to find work that pays me enough to live and save for my retirement.*

137 respondents listed another barrier that was not included on the list of potential barriers to finding work. The barriers that were mentioned most frequently included ageism, barriers related to health and disability, and challenges with the job application process.

When looking at potential wages as a barrier to finding work, results show a slight drop in the percent of respondents who strongly agreed that wages are not enough from 2021 to 2023. In 2021, 40% strongly agreed that potential wages were a barrier, compared to 33% in 2023 (see **Figure 7**).

Figure 7 Potential wages as a barrier by survey year

To what extent do you agree that each of the following is a barrier to finding work?



## Barriers to working

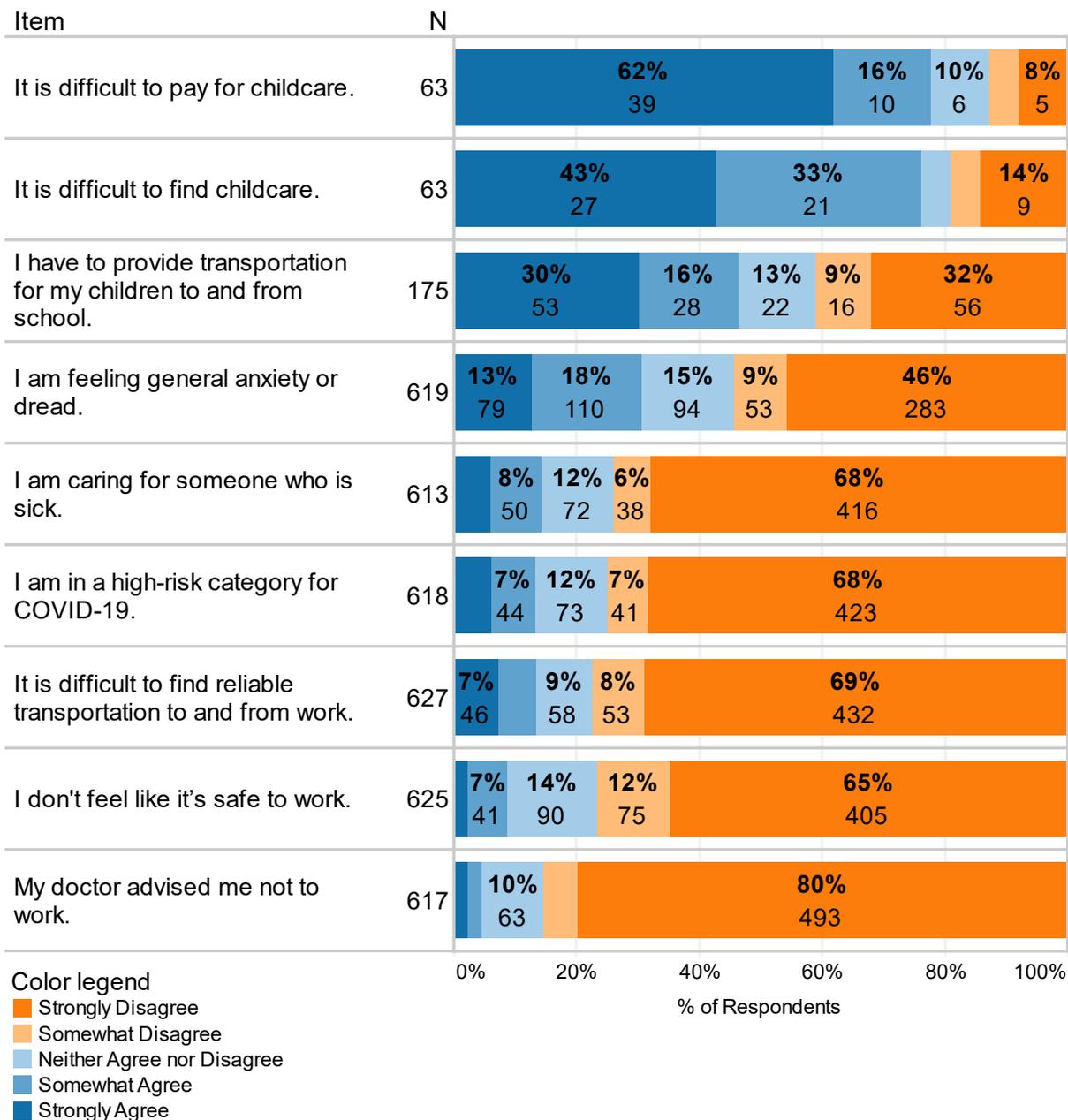
Next, respondents rated several potential barriers to working. Of the potential barriers rated by all respondents, the top three were:

1. Feeling general anxiety or dread
2. Caring for someone who is sick
3. Being in a high-risk category for COVID-19

For respondents with children, barriers related to childcare and schooling were even more pressing. As shown in **Figure 8**, of the 63 respondents with children who need childcare, 78% agreed or strongly agreed that paying for childcare is a barrier to working, and 76% agreed or strongly agreed that finding childcare is a barrier to working. Of the 175 respondents with school-aged children, 46% agreed or strongly agreed that having to provide transportation is a barrier to working.

Figure 8 Barriers to working

To what extent do you agree that each of the following is a barrier to working?

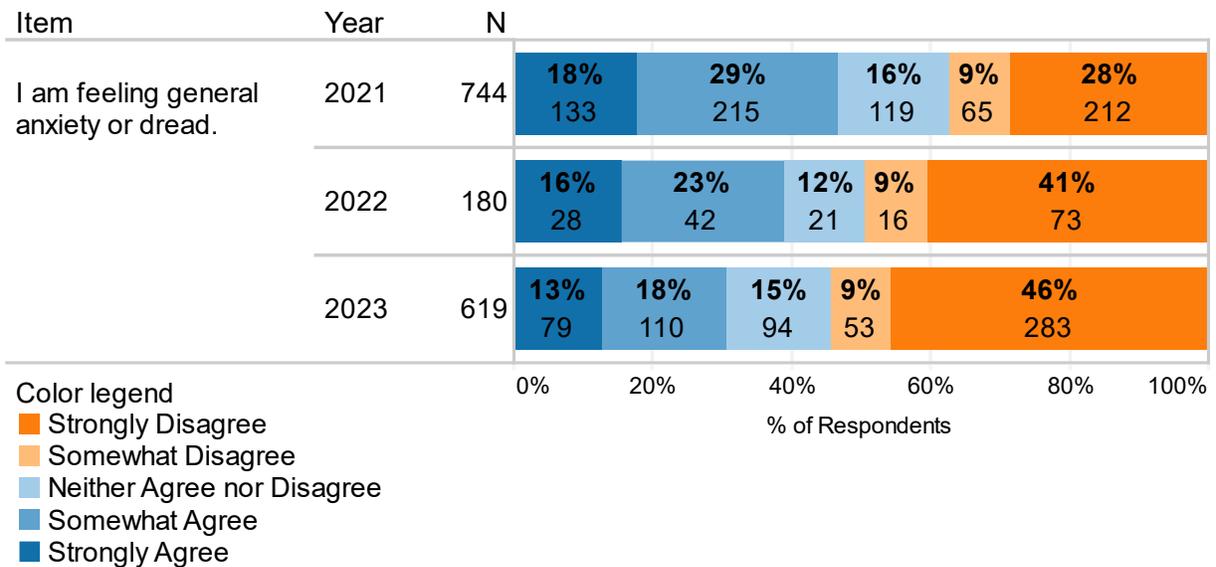


82 respondents listed another barrier that was not included on the list of potential barriers to working. The barriers that were mentioned most frequently fell into the same categories as those related to finding work. They included barriers related to health and disability, age, and the job application process.

As previously mentioned, the biggest barrier that was not related to caring for children was feeling general anxiety or dread. **Figure 9** shows that 31% of 2023 respondents agreed or strongly agreed that feeling general anxiety or dread is a barrier to working. A year-over-year analysis shows that the percentage has dropped since 2021, when 47% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed.

**Figure 9** Feeling general anxiety or dread as a barrier by survey year

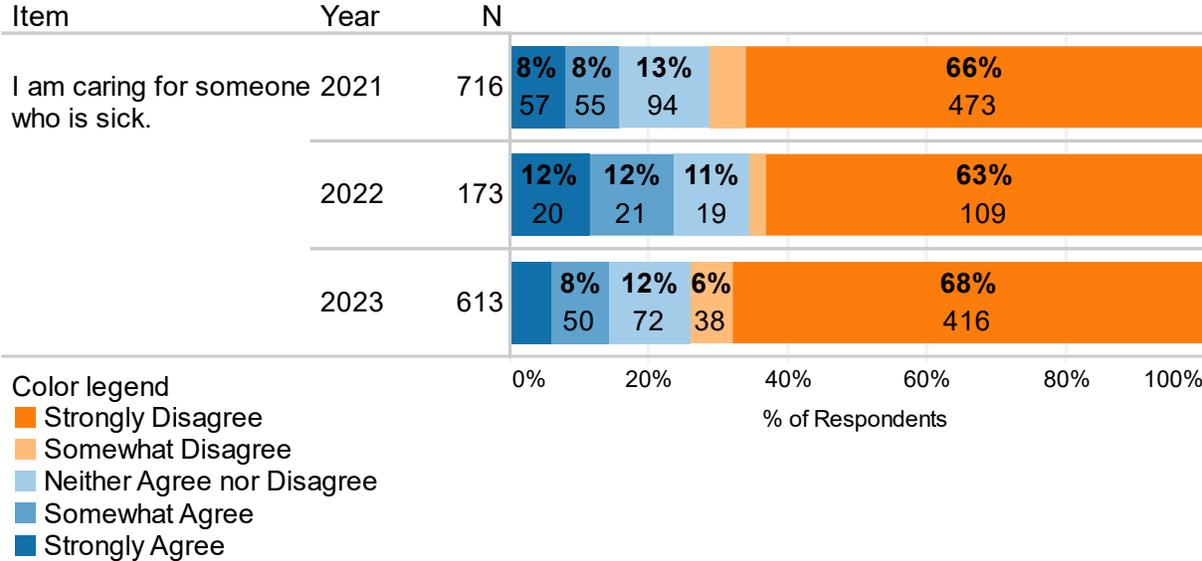
To what extent do you agree that each of the following is a barrier to working?



The next biggest barrier to working was caring for someone who is sick. Although one might have expected this barrier to decrease over the three survey waves as fewer people are dealing with moderate or severe Covid, **Figure 10** shows that this barrier has remained quite steady over time. This finding suggests that about 15% of people’s ability to work is impacted by caring for others who are sick at any given time. Further, the people who require care are sick from a variety of illnesses and conditions, not just Covid.

Figure 10 Caring for someone who is sick as a barrier by survey year

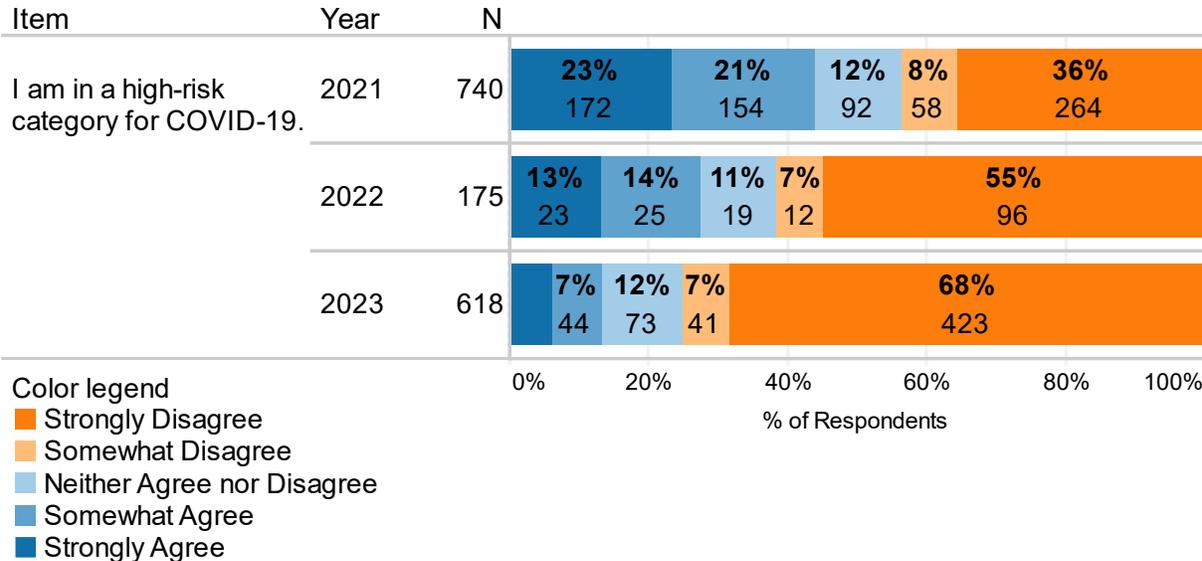
To what extent do you agree that each of the following is a barrier to working?



The third biggest barrier to working in 2023 was being in a high-risk category for COVID-19. However, this barrier has decreased drastically since 2021. As seen in Figure 11, 44% of respondents in 2021 agreed or strongly agreed that being high-risk was a barrier. Among 2023 respondents, this figure dropped to 13%.

Figure 11 High-risk category for COVID-19 as a barrier by survey year

To what extent do you agree that each of the following is a barrier to working?



## Potential resources

The next section of the survey asked respondents how likely they would be to use potential resources to address the barriers they experience. Just as the biggest barriers depended on whether or not respondents had children requiring childcare, the most helpful resources also depended on having children who need childcare. Among the 9% of respondents with children who need childcare, the majority said they would be extremely or somewhat likely to use financial assistance for childcare and on-site childcare at their place of employment if those resources were available.

As shown in **Figure 12**, among all respondents, the three resources that they would be most likely to use were:

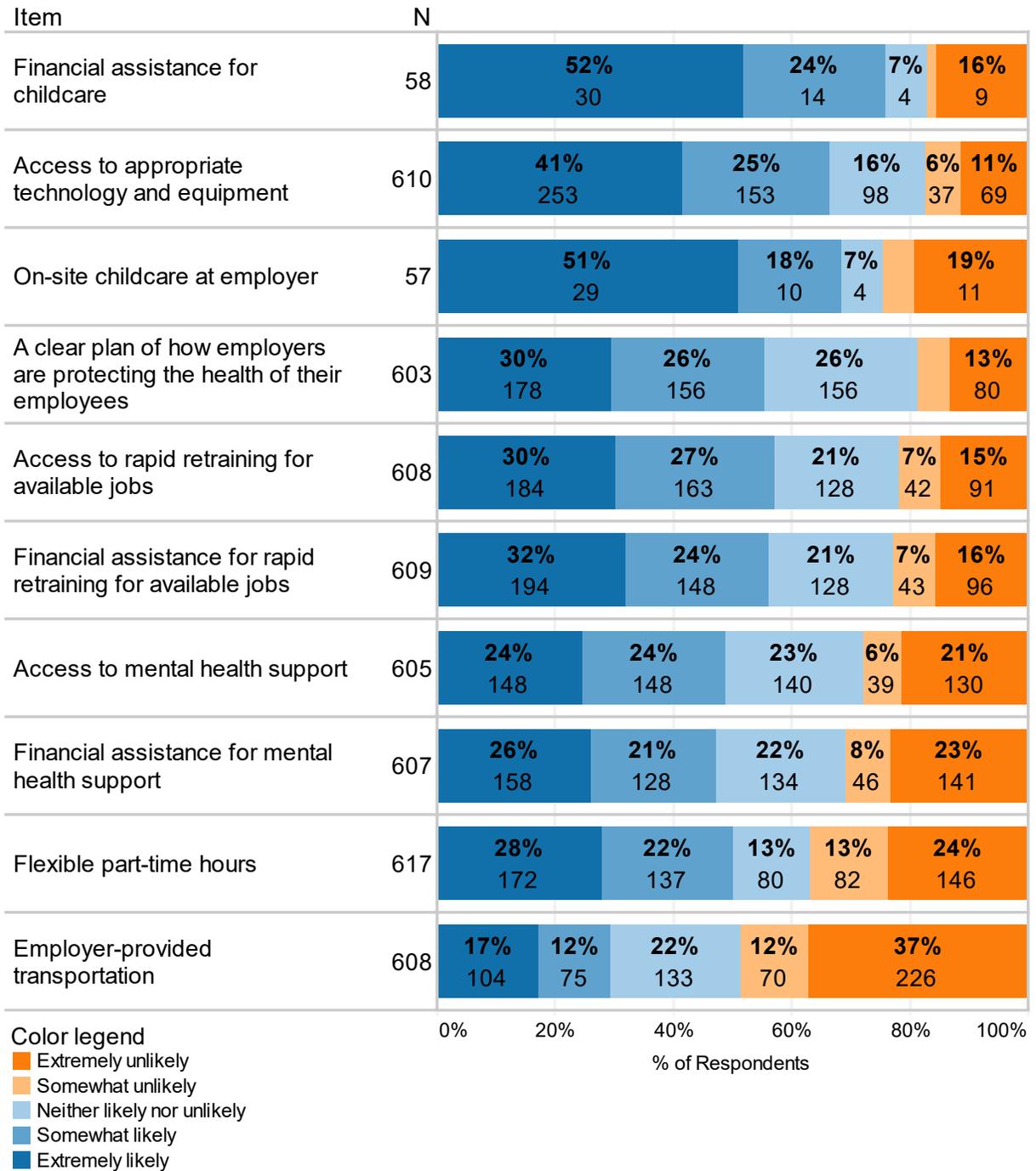
1. Access to appropriate technology and equipment
2. A clear plan of how employers are protecting the health of their employees
3. Access to rapid retraining for available jobs

Several respondents who were older commented on how technology was a barrier to finding jobs and how access to technology and technology-related training would help. For example, one respondent shared:

*The job market is still not stable. As an older worker I feel at a disadvantage in technology, social media, and current trends. Many companies have passed me over because they don't think I can keep up or catch on.*

Figure 12 Likelihood of using potential resources

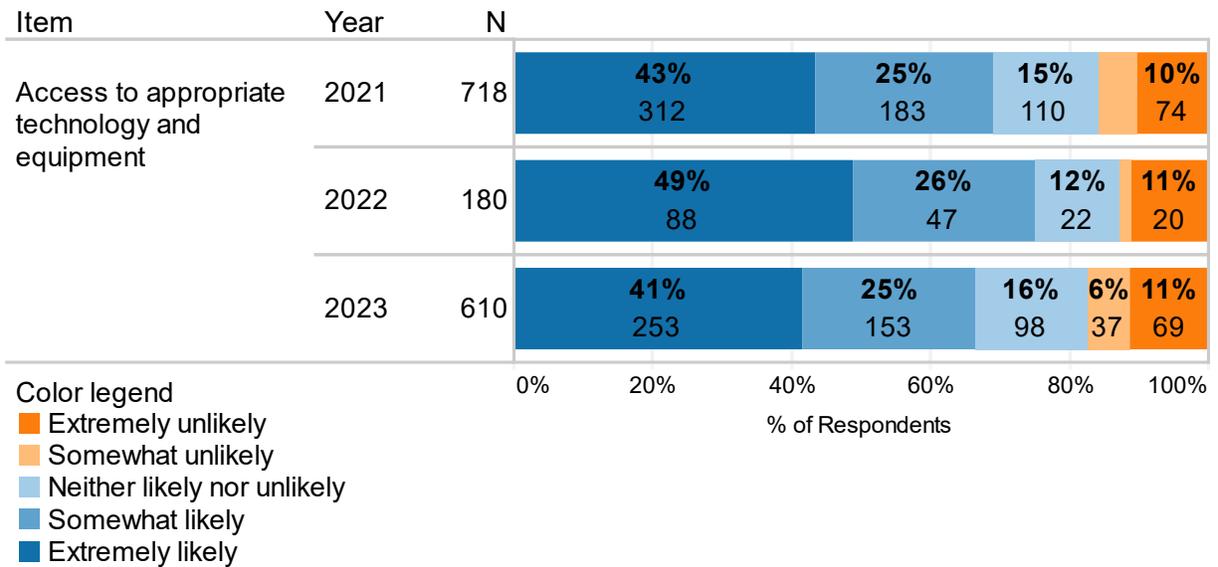
How likely would you be to use each of these resources?



Interest in resources related to technology and equipment has remained high since 2021. In all three survey years, about two-thirds of respondents said they would be extremely or somewhat likely to use technology and equipment if it were available (see Figure 13).

Figure 13 Access to appropriate technology and equipment by survey year

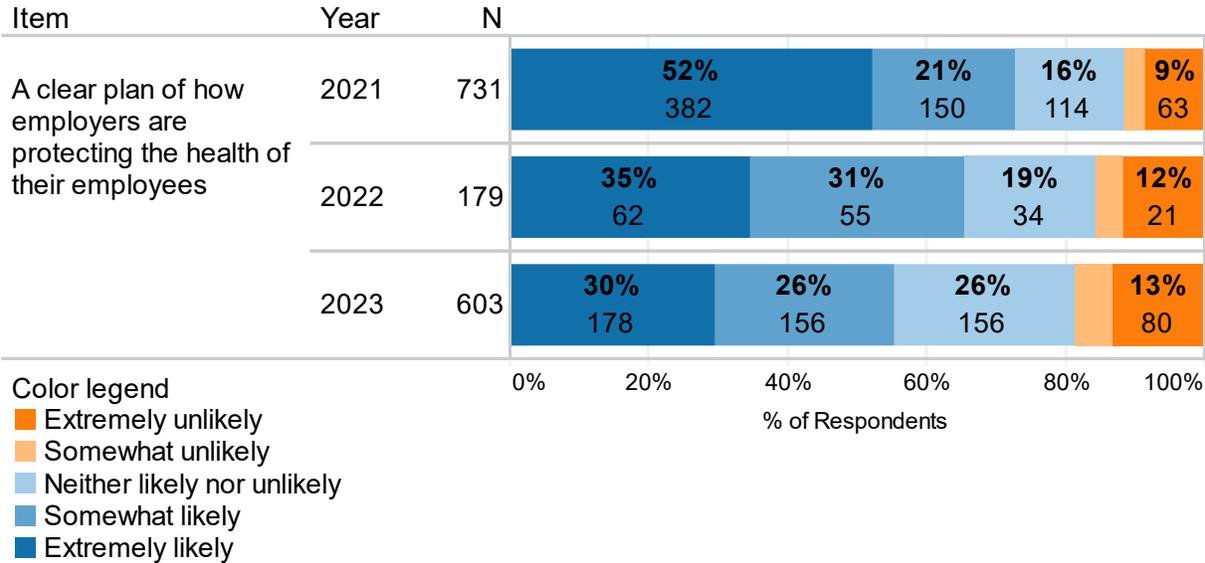
How likely would you be to use each of these resources?



In 2023, over half of respondents said they would be extremely or somewhat likely to use a clear plan of how employers are protecting the health of their employees. As illustrated in **Figure 14**, this figure has decreased over time. Yet, a health-protection plan remains the second highest resource of resources that are not related to childcare. This suggests that people may have a broad view of what a health-protection plan could look like. A plan would not necessarily be focused on or limited to Covid-related concerns, as may have been assumed in 2021. Instead, it could encompass both physical health and mental health more broadly.

Figure 14 A clear plan of how employers are protecting health by survey year

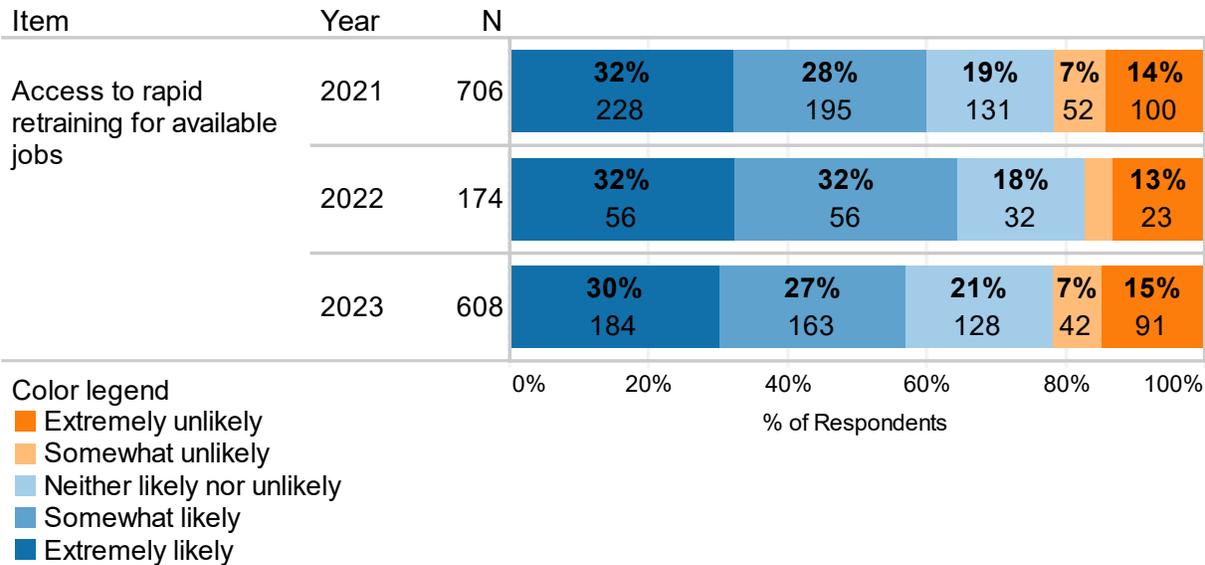
How likely would you be to use each of these resources?



A year-over-year analysis shows that likelihood of using rapid retraining for available jobs has been consistent over time (see Figure 15). Each year, about one-third say they would be extremely likely to use rapid retraining, and another third say they would be somewhat likely to use rapid retraining.

Figure 15 Access to rapid training for available jobs by survey year

How likely would you be to use each of these resources?

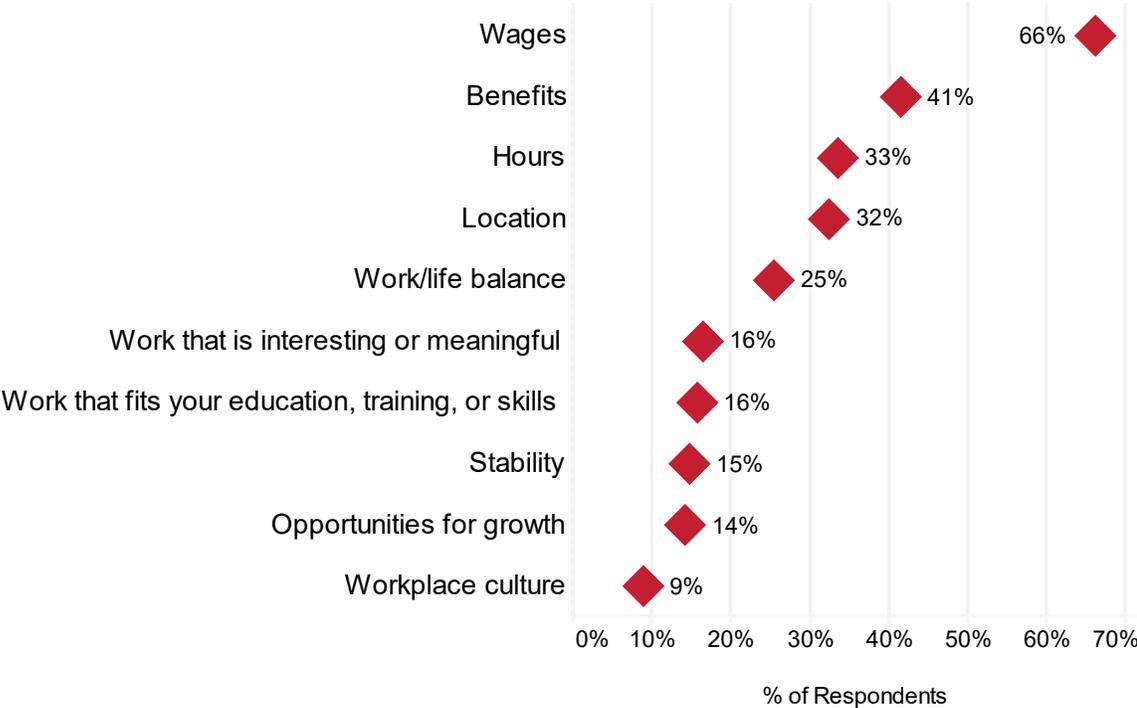


# Most important factors when considering employment

A new question was added to the survey in 2023. It asked respondents to imagine that they were deciding between two job offers. Respondents selected up to three of the most important factors they would consider. As shown in **Figure 16**, wages were the most important factor, with two-thirds of respondents selecting it as one of the top three. Benefits were selected by 41% of respondents, and both hours and location were selected by about one-third of respondents. Respondents were relatively unlikely to select what may be considered less practical factors, such as meaningful work, opportunities for growth, and workplace culture.

Figure 16 Most important factors when considering employment

Imagine that you were deciding between two job offers. What factors would be most important to you? Select the top 3 factors.



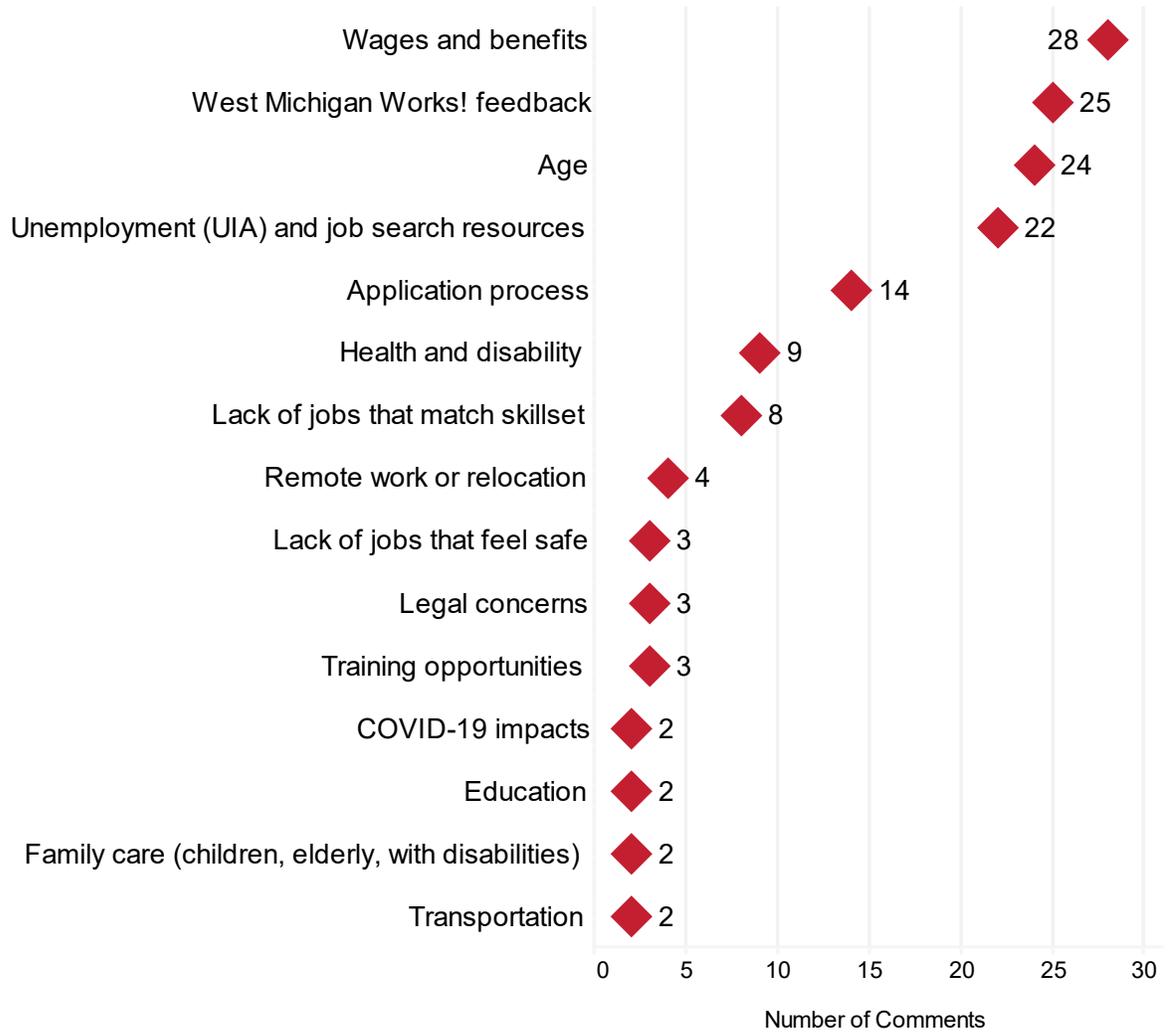
17 respondents mentioned a factor that was not listed on the survey. Several respondents said that they were looking for 100% remote employment. Others mentioned considerations related to travel, physical health, legal assistance, transparency, and compatibility with the employer’s values and business philosophy.

## Open-ended comments

At the conclusion of the survey, respondents were invited to provide additional comments. 196 respondents provided a response. These responses were reviewed by DataWise staff, who

identified 15 themes that were mentioned by multiple respondents. Themes are listed in **Figure 17**, from most frequently mentioned to least frequently mentioned. The largest number of comments were about wages/benefits, feedback for WMW, age, and unemployment/job search resources.

**Figure 17** Themes from open-ended responses



Illustrative quotations related to several of the top themes are listed below. Many comments are related to multiple themes, such as wages and age, or disability and jobs that fit one’s skillset.

## *Wages and benefits*

*I feel that there are jobs available, but employers don't want to pay good wages. Employers say that no one wants to work, but that is not the case. Employers want to give low wages then give OT to make up for the low wages. OT is not to live off of. OT is extra money for things like vacation, vehicle maintenance to get to work, etc..... Employers have their headquarters give phone interviews, but hardly give feedback if the positions are filled. Employers are interested in training employees that will work for low wages.*

*I am doing fine currently, but entry level positions are scarce. And the ones that are there have horrible pay and/or management. My friends are all having trouble finding jobs with consistent hours and good wages.*

## *West Michigan Works!*

*Jennifer and Kim and all the others at West Michigan Works in Ionia, Michigan are doing a Superb job at their desk and with their help. I have attended the offices before the move, they extended help, advice, and even a generic counseling, as sometimes it was rough. I thank ALL the staff and members of Michigan Works, from Big Rapids to Grand Rapids, from Greenville to Ionia. My gratitude is immense.*

*It would be amazing if Michigan Works had programs for felons to attain employment other than just factory work so people like myself who can't do that type of work would have the opportunity to get a job we're actually able to do long term.*

*The MI Works programs and job search website seemed tailored to individuals who are not well-educated with extensive experience. In order to receive unemployment, I was required to physically go to a MI Works office. This was a waste of time and money for the employees there and for me. A silly bureaucratic requirement that felt demeaning and patronizing - added insult to injury. Please consider changing this requirement for college-educated individuals who've never applied for unemployment previously.*

## Age

*At my age, mid 50's, and my experience, over 30 years, and 3 college degrees, it is difficult to get a job that pays well and offers a decent schedule for a quality of life with my husband. Every job I apply for is a step back, a heavier salary pay cut, or I am forced to work nights, weekends and holidays again. It's becoming increasingly difficult and stressful to find work that pays me enough to live and save for my retirement.*

*Discrimination is alive and well. Younger workers with fresh educational experiences get job offers. Michigan will help individuals get a bachelor's degree, but they won't help older workers advance/update their skills. At 50+ years, the last thing I need is student loan debt to refresh skills. Having been downsized out of the business sector and working a job at half the income I was making in 2010 is difficult. Costs increased but income has not. It's a struggle to save. A new job making more money would help. A degree that is 25+ years old doesn't help much and having been in a dead-end job for the last 6 years doesn't either. I'm trying but am not super hopeful.*

## Unemployment (UIA) and job search resources

*I've never encountered anything so cumbersome as the various programming provided and required by the State of Michigan. Information is not provided in a logical or timely manner. The job search is challenging at best. It takes forever to find a job code that MAY be [accurate] or there may be 5+ codes that seem the same, and you still may not pull all relevant job postings.*

*Unemployment does not pay enough, plus the state employees feel like the money that the unemployed qualify for is the state employees. I haven't been on unemployment in years.*

*I was under the impression unemployment was created for all of the seasonal workers such as teachers, construction workers, etc. The rules and the work searches around unemployment have meant that many people are shying away from my line of work which is really sad. There should be something put in place so the people that unemployment was created for could just collect for the winter without looking for another job. Sadly for my former employer, I found a job that was way better because I had to apply. It caused many hurt feelings and I don't think it's fair to the employees or employees who are on a seasonal layoff.*

### *Job application process*

*Employers don't follow up with you during the interview process in a reasonable amount of time. Regardless if you were hired for the position or not. They say they will be in contact, but you never hear from the gain.*

*Employers not listing actual pay rates and benefits on job postings is a waste of job seeker's time. I, like many people, don't have time to go to several interviews just to be offered a job that doesn't come close to meeting my financial needs.*

*I've applied to about 250-300 jobs in the past 6 months, and I've only received 7 interviews with various companies. Only 2 of those I have made it to the second round of interviews. Also, none of them seem willing to give me feedback on how I can improve... It has been mentally debilitating trying to keep applying to new jobs every week with how difficult the market is right now.*

### *Health and disability*

*I wanted to become a certified teacher. However, all alternative paths to this require more education, testing, etc. that I cannot afford to pay on top of the preexisting pile. I have a disability of RA, which limits mobility, etc. At times work is not possible, so I barely afford my current care costs, let alone previously accumulated health care costs. My husband's income makes me ineligible for any programs of help. Anxious doesn't begin to cover it. ADHD doesn't help.*

*I would love to work, but neurologist told me after my last stroke, that I would have extreme fatigue. Then I caught Covid. Three months later I was hospitalized for four days with a bleeding ulcer. I had always planned to work until age 70, but that has not worked out.*

### *Lack of Jobs that match skillset*

*Where I live in my ZIP code there is only really skilled jobs in construction or factory positions, with the matching unskilled jobs being available only via staffing agencies. Most employment is either retail or warehouse with a lack of other businesses due to it being a smaller town. Any small concierge or banking institutions are not hiring. There's not much of a variety elsewhere.*

*I worked at one company for 34+ years in the utility industry. I am not sure how to show my transferable skills and get people to look at my resume and cover letter in this new AI world. Also, since companies are going back to hybrid, I am limited to the jobs available*

*as my ADA requires at-home work, and if in the office I have to have a walled/quiet office to retreat to and perform most of my duties.*

## Summary & Conclusion

702 individuals who had been involved with WMW in the past year invested their time to take this survey and share their experiences. Most respondents were in a state of flux regarding their employment. 63% were actively looking for new employment opportunities (**Figure 2**) and more than 40% were considering changing professions or careers (**Table 2**). Of the respondents who were employed, one-third were thinking about leaving their current position and 29% were worried about getting laid off (**Table 2**).

Among the respondents who were actively looking for work, there was a clear mismatch between the effort they were putting into their job search and the success they reported. Over half of respondents said they were spending a lot or a great deal of effort toward finding work (**Figure 3**). Yet, only 5% said they were experiencing a lot or a great deal of success (**Figure 4**). This gap suggests that several concerns need to be addressed to better help job seekers find work that suits their skills and supports their needs.

1. **Once again, wages are the top concern.**

Wages have been a priority in past surveys, and wages are the clear top concern among 2023 survey respondents. 62% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that insufficient wages were a barrier to finding work (**Figure 6**). Of those who were employed, just over half (52%) said that they earned enough to meet their needs (**Table 2**). Two-thirds of respondents selected wages among the top three factors when considering employment options (**Figure 16**). Wages and benefits were the most frequently mentioned topic in open-ended comments (**Figure 17**). Especially amid inflation, rising interest rates, and the end to pandemic-related financial supports such as deferment of student loan payments, many job seekers find that jobs simply don't pay enough.

2. **Certain groups of people experience additional barriers.**

While nearly all respondents indicated that they experience some barriers to finding work and working, some groups tend to face more barriers and larger barriers than others. Older respondents often mentioned age discrimination and believed that their age worked against them when looking for work (**Figure 17**). Similarly, people who worked for a single employer for decades may find it hard to get a position with a new employer. People with a criminal record may find it especially hard to gain employment, especially outside certain sectors such as manufacturing. The 28% of respondents with school-aged children and the 9% of respondents with children requiring childcare

reported major barriers related to finding and paying for childcare transporting their children to school (**Figure 6** and **Figure 8**). Resources designed for certain groups, and promoting awareness of existing programs that serve these groups, could help alleviate the challenges that they face.

3. **Job seekers are frustrated with the application process.**

In open-ended comments, several respondents shared about the large number of positions they have applied for compared to the very small number of interviews they have had. Much of the time, job seekers feel like they are sending their application into a black hole and never hear anything at all. Even after an interview, respondents shared that it is not uncommon to hear nothing more from a potential employer. These experiences unnecessarily add to the anxiety that often accompanies a job search (**Figure 17**). In addition, job seekers lose trust with employers because these experiences cause them to wonder whether advertised positions actually exist or whether employers already know whom they will hire. Employers should communicate with all applicants in a timely manner, even if that communication is a form email to let the applicant know that they are not being considered for the position.

4. **Workers want, and many need, flexibility and support from their employers.**

While wages were most important, they certainly are not the only important thing to job seekers. When rating the top three factors they would consider, benefits, hours, location, and work/life balance were selected by a substantial portion of respondents (**Figure 16**). About 15% of respondents find it hard to work because they care for someone who is ill (**Figure 10**)—and this is on top of the large number of people who have children to care for. Several respondents commented about the importance of flexible hours to drive their children to or from school or to care for an aging parent. Others mentioned that remote work is a necessity for them. In addition, a surprisingly large percent of respondents continue to say they would use a clear plan of how employers are protecting the health of their employees (**Figure 14**)—even though concerns related to COVID-19 have decreased (**Figure 11**). This suggests that job seekers have a more holistic in what physical and mental health supports they are looking for from an employer.

Continuing to address each of these areas has the potential to improve the job search experience and working conditions in a fluctuating economic environment. A substantial portion of job seekers continue to experience some amount of anxiety or dread, particularly related to unemployment and searching for work. By continuing the hard work of addressing these challenges, workforce development agencies and employers could alleviate much of the anxiety that job seekers are feeling while matching more job seekers with employment.

# Appendix: Survey Questionnaire

**Welcome!**

## **What is this survey about?**

The purpose of this research is to help West Michigan Works! learn how to better match people who are looking for work with jobs that are available. This survey is not affiliated with the Michigan Unemployment Insurance Agency. Your responses to this survey are confidential and will not affect your unemployment benefits status.

## **What will I be asked to do?**

You are invited to take this survey. The survey takes most people 10-15 minutes to complete. The survey will ask questions about your employment status, your search for work, barriers to working, and yourself.

## **Do I have to participate?**

No, you do not have to participate. There will be no negative consequences if you choose not to participate. You may choose to skip questions.

## **How will my identity be protected?**

All information is for the sole purpose of this research study and is anonymous. Your responses cannot be linked to you.

## **What are the risks?**

You may experience some emotional distress because the survey contains questions about unemployment.

## **What are the benefits?**

You will receive no personal benefit for your participation. More generally, researchers hope your response will help Michigan Works! assess current needs and guide future efforts to support job seekers.

## **Whom can I contact with questions?**

You can send questions about this research project to Dr. Laura Luchies, Principal Consultant at DataWise Consulting, by emailing [laura.luchies@wearedatawise.com](mailto:laura.luchies@wearedatawise.com). You can send questions about your rights as a research subject or report any research misconduct or negative impact to you as a result of your participation by emailing [irb@calvin.edu](mailto:irb@calvin.edu). This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at Calvin University.

**By clicking "NEXT," you are indicating that you are at least 18 years old and you are consenting to participate in this survey.**

### Employment status

Your answers to the following questions will help determine which questions you see throughout the rest of the survey.

Are you currently employed?

- Yes, I am currently employed.
- No, I am **not** currently employed.

Is your employment full-time or part-time?

- Full-time employment (30 hours or more per week)
- Part-time employment (fewer than 30 hours per week)

Are you self-employed?

- Yes
- No

Do you earn enough to meet your needs?

- Yes
- No

Is your employment permanent or temporary/seasonal?

- Permanent
- Temporary/seasonal

Are you worried that you may be laid off in the next few months?

- Yes
- No

Are you thinking about leaving your job in the next few months?

Yes

No

Is the reason for your unemployment related to the COVID-19 pandemic?

Yes, my unemployment is related to COVID-19.

No, my unemployment is **not** related to COVID-19.

Which of the following best describes the reason for your unemployment?

I was laid off from my last job.

I was placed on a temporary furlough from my last job.

I needed to care for my children or other family members.

I left my last job voluntarily.

Would you like to change professions or careers in the next year or two?

Yes

No

Are you actively learning new job skills?

Yes

No

Are you enrolled as a student?

- Yes, I am a full-time student
- Yes, I am a part-time student
- No

Which of the following best describes the reason for your unemployment?

- I was laid off from my previous job.
- I was placed on a temporary furlough from my previous job.
- I left my previous job voluntarily.
- I am self-employed or own a business, and I cannot be open due to COVID-19 restrictions.
- I completed a temporary or seasonal position.
- I am retired from the workforce.
- I am unable to work due to a disability.
- I am unable to work due to a disability related to COVID-19.
- Other, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

**About your search for work**

Are you actively looking for work?

*If you are currently employed, you may be looking for better or more secure employment.*

- Yes
- No

How much effort are you able to dedicate toward finding work?

- None at all
- A little
- A moderate amount
- A lot
- A great deal

How much success are you having finding work?

- None at all
- A little
- A moderate amount
- A lot
- A great deal

**Barriers to work and potential new supports**

Your answers to the following questions will help determine which questions you see throughout this section.

Do you have any children in your household?

- Yes
- No

Are any of your children in school?

- Yes
- No

Do any of your children need childcare?

- Yes
- No

To what extent do you agree that each of the following is a barrier to **working**?

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	<i>Don't know/Can't say</i>
It is difficult to <b>find</b> childcare.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is difficult to <b>pay</b> for childcare.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have to provide transportation for my children to and from school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I don't feel like it's safe to work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am caring for someone who is sick.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is difficult to find reliable transportation to and from work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am in a high-risk category for COVID-19.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My doctor advised me not to work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am feeling general anxiety or dread.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other, please describe:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

To what extent do you agree that each of the following is a barrier to **finding work**?

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	<i>Don't know/Can't say</i>
I don't have the tools or ability to job search.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Potential wages aren't enough.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My skills don't meet available jobs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Workplaces with available jobs would not be welcoming to someone like me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My current employment makes it difficult to look for better or more secure employment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other, please describe:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q18 How likely would you be to use each of these resources?

	Extremely unlikely	Somewhat unlikely	Neither likely nor unlikely	Somewhat likely	Extremely likely	<i>Don't know/Can't say</i>
On-site childcare at employer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Financial assistance for childcare	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Flexible part-time hours	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A clear plan of how employers are protecting the health of their employees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Employer-provided transportation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Access to mental health support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Financial assistance for mental health support	<input type="radio"/>					
Access to rapid retraining for available jobs	<input type="radio"/>					
Financial assistance for rapid retraining for available jobs	<input type="radio"/>					
Access to appropriate technology and equipment	<input type="radio"/>					

Imagine that you were deciding between two job offers. What factors would be most important to you?  
*Select the top 3 factors.*

- Benefits
- Hours
- Location
- Opportunities for growth
- Stability
- Wages
- Work that fits your education, training, or skills
- Work that is interesting or meaningful
- Work/life balance
- Workplace culture
- Something else:

**About you**

What is your age?

- 18 - 24

- 25 - 34
- 35 - 44
- 45 - 54
- 55 - 64
- 65 - 74
- 75 - 84
- 85 or older
- Prefer not to answer*

Which of the following best describes your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
- Prefer to self-describe: \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to answer*

Are you transgender?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer*

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- Less than high school
- High school graduate

- Some college
- 2-year degree
- 4-year degree
- Professional degree
- Doctorate
- Prefer not to answer*

Q24 Which of the following best describes your marital status?

- Married
- Widowed
- Divorced
- Separated
- Never married
- Prefer not to answer*

Q25 Including yourself, how many people currently live in your household?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7 or more people
- Prefer not to answer*

Which of the following best describes your race and ethnicity?

*Check all that apply.*

- Native American or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native Hawaiian
- Other Pacific Islander
- White
- Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to answer

As of **January 1, 2021**, what was your annual household income?

- Less than \$10,000
- \$10,000 - \$19,999
- \$20,000 - \$29,999
- \$30,000 - \$39,999
- \$40,000 - \$49,999
- \$50,000 - \$59,999
- \$60,000 - \$69,999
- \$70,000 - \$79,999
- \$80,000 - \$89,999
- \$90,000 - \$99,999
- \$100,000 - \$149,999
- More than \$150,000
- Prefer not to answer*

Q28 As of **today**, what is your annual household income?

- Less than \$10,000
- \$10,000 - \$19,999
- \$20,000 - \$29,999
- \$30,000 - \$39,999
- \$40,000 - \$49,999
- \$50,000 - \$59,999

- \$60,000 - \$69,999
- \$70,000 - \$79,999
- \$80,000 - \$89,999
- \$90,000 - \$99,999
- \$100,000 - \$149,999
- More than \$150,000
- Prefer not to answer*

In which ZIP code do you reside?

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**Closing comments**

Please use the box below to provide any additional comments.

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**Almost done!**

If you would like to go back and change any of your answers, please do so now. If you are ready to submit your survey, click the "SUBMIT" button.