



A job for every grad!

Jobs for Grads

CAREER PATH SURVEY

REPORT 2015



Jobs for Grads 2015 - A Career Path Survey

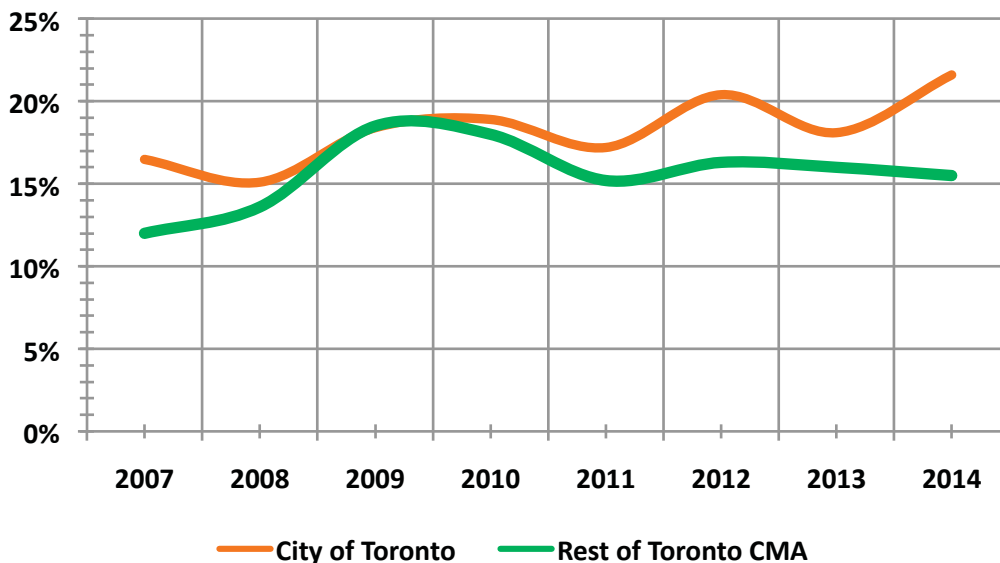
The need to understand the plight of youth entering the labour market in their chosen field

Youth unemployment is twice the rate of adult unemployment in York Region and increasing numbers of young adults graduating from post-secondary education are not able to find work in their field of study. Many employers are hiring and actively looking for workers, but still struggling to find the right people since some applicants may be lacking the necessary skill set, experience or right attitude that fits with their company culture. In a recent survey by the Canadian Council of Chief Executives, employers cited communication skills, people skills, analytical abilities and leadership skills as top qualities needed for new employees. They also put a high priority on practical experience through co-ops and other models of “work-integrated learning”.

The Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (Toronto CMA) is made up of the City of Toronto, York Region, Peel Region and parts of Durham and Halton Regions. For that part of the Toronto CMA excluding the City of Toronto, the unemployment rate for youth increased considerably during the recession and rose to that of youth in the City of Toronto. After declining somewhat over the last four years, the youth unemployment rate in the rest of the Toronto CMA has levelled off between 15% and 16%.

CHART 1

Unemployment rate, youth (15-24 years old), City of Toronto and the rest of the Toronto CMA, 2007-2014





York Region is Canada's fastest growing municipal census division as of 2011 and Ontario's largest business hub after the City of Toronto. York Region contains the most educated workforce among Canada's largest municipalities with 70% of the population age 25-64 having a post-secondary education. There are 50,369 businesses in York Region that employ 16 employees on average. Ninety of those businesses employ over 500 people each. In addition, there are 117,500 single entrepreneurs operating in the region. York Region's economy is robust, so why is youth unemployment stuck at 15%?

By gathering information from a target demographic of youth age 20 – 29 years, we can more clearly identify in what ways the labour market dynamic is not working. This information can be utilized to both develop programs that will aid recent graduates to find jobs as well as provide local labour market data to educational institutions such as high schools to help students make informed decisions about their post-secondary education pathway. This report also highlights the importance of post-secondary internships and co-op opportunities to help prepare youth for the labour market by providing work place experience.

Gathering their Views

During the summer of 2015, the Workforce Planning Board undertook a research project to gather information from youth (20-29 years of age) to analyse youth employment in York Region and Bradford West Gwillimbury. The goal was to identify the skill sets that youth are leaving post-secondary school with to enter the job market as well as gauge their use of Employment Ontario services during their job search.

A survey was developed that would gather data from youth about their education, current employment situation, career aspirations and interaction with Employment Ontario (EO) services. Interviews were conducted both in person and through online social media outlets. The information gathered from this study will be shared with EO service providers and educational institutions in order to better understand the issues facing youth in their search for relevant employment.

The target demographic was a challenge to reach as young adults were working or attending summer classes, making them difficult to find during weekdays. Considerable focus therefore was put on attending public events during weekends at community social gatherings to reach



this audience. To access the demographic attending summer classes, surveys were conducted at York University, Seneca College and Georgian College.

A total of 1503 surveys were collected. 80% of surveys were conducted through face-to-face interviews and 20% were collected via an electronic survey through a social media campaign developed specifically for this project.

The Job for Grads project team consisted of three 4th year university students from Queen's Mechanical Engineering, York University Finance and University of Toronto Interactive Digital Media. These three researchers were located using Employment Ontario services. The project team worked under the guidance of the Workforce Planning Board.

The Job for Grads Career Path Survey that was used in the project was developed in partnership with Seneca College's Ethics Board. This resulted in the creation of a 27-question survey that focused on the education, employment, career aspirations and interactions with Employment Ontario services of the target demographic.

- The education portion focused on what degrees and skill sets youth have acquired.
- The employment portion focused on what work experience they have already completed, as well as their current employment situation, perceived boundaries to acquiring employment in the current labour market, and career aspirations.
- The interactions with employment services portion aimed to acquire more data on what services youth have been using to find jobs as well as what kind of assistance they deem to be useful.
- Students also identified their desired post-secondary career aspirations.

Face to Face Surveys

Youth researchers conducted surveys from May 28th through August 8th, 2015. A community calendar was created at the start of the project that outlined the various events that were taking place throughout York Region. New events were also added to the calendar through: advertisements, word of mouth and an online resource called York Scene that outlined all community happenings in the York Region municipalities. It is important to note that a majority of festivals and community events took place during June and early July, 2015. A heavier focus was therefore placed on surveying at educational institutions in the later weeks of the project.



Researchers approached students as they walked to class or in between classes to provide an opportunity for a conversation about their career expectations and completion of the survey.

Face to face surveys were conducted at the following events/ locations:

Municipal Events

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Unionville Festival | Newmarket Canada Day Festival |
| Mount Albert Sports Day | Vaughan Canada Day Festival |
| Aurora Chamber Street Festival | Bradford Ribfest |
| Richmond Hill Heritage Village Festival | Markham Global Fest |
| Oak Ridges Fair | Mount Albert Music Festival |
| Markham Village Music Festival | Markham Night It Up |
| Windfall Ecology Festival - Fairy Lake | Newmarket Jazz Festival |
| Pan Am Torch Relay - Taste of Asia Festival | Stouffville Ribfest |

Employment Ontario Employment Service Centres – Job Fairs

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Newmarket Seneca, Workforce Ready Job Fair | Thornhill Employment Hub Job Fair |
|--|-----------------------------------|

Educational Institutions

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| York University | Seneca College (3 campuses) |
| Georgian College | Seneca Helix - Entrepreneurship Conference |

To conduct the surveys, each researcher was provided with a Google Nexus 7 tablet with Quick Tap Survey installed to collect the data. Quick Tap survey was chosen over other survey software due to its offline data storage capability. Researchers also had paper copies of the survey available in the event of technical issues or larger groups.

Surveying at Municipal Events

A total of 16 unique municipal events throughout the region were attended by the research team. Surveying at municipal events yielded favourable results due to the variety of people encountered from across the region. In addition to collecting surveys from event participants, a considerable number of the surveys collected at events were from vendors / agencies working or volunteering at booths or tables. The target demographic working at the community events generally were more interested in the study and more willing to participate, perhaps because



they had a better understanding of the current local employment situation. The Pan Am games provided a great opportunity to reach our demographic, resulting in much of the data coming from the Markham area.

Surveying at Educational Institutions

The most consistent success came from surveying at educational institutions. Surveying was conducted at five campuses. Despite the lower attendance on campuses due to summer break, a lot of individuals matched the desired demographic in these locations with larger campuses yielding better results. At educational institutions, the study was well received and a lot of individuals approached were genuinely interested in the project and often showed concern over the current employment situation and their ability to find work in their desired career.

Surveying at Employment Ontario Employment Offices

There are 14 Employment Ontario (EO) offices in the York Region and Bradford West Gwillimbury (BWG) area. One mandate of the EO offices is to help those seeking employment secure jobs. Additionally, EO offices provide information about job leads, interview advice, resume critique and other employment services. Young adults are still having considerable trouble entering the workforce, despite the presence of several resources available to them.

Surveying at Employment Ontario offices was limited to two job fairs at Seneca College, Newmarket campus and Thornhill Employment Hub as well as two email blasts to youth clients by Seneca Workforce Skills Centre and Yorkworks. All 14 EO offices were contacted and visited by researchers and provided with promotional material, links to the online survey as well as paper copies of the survey for youth clients to complete. Upon completion of the project, the EO offices contacted, indicated that there was only three surveys completed.

It is also important to note that all face-to-face participants were offered an Employment Ontario bookmark that connected them with free employment services in York Region through Employment Ontario service providers. This was done to introduce and promote Employment Ontario services amongst the youth demographic.



Surveying Online

Through our partnership with Seneca College, they agreed to email 1,600 Seneca alumni to request completion of the survey; this resulted in the completion of 67 on-line surveys by Seneca alumni.

An online version of the survey that contained more information on the project itself as well as information and links to Employment Ontario services across the region was made available through the Workforce Planning Board website. To promote the project further and reach a larger audience, social media outlets such as Facebook, and Twitter were used. Other more elaborate social media was also utilized such as blogging and requests on the classified sections on various subreddits (a forum community that has a vast multitude of conversation topics) such as r/survey. Marketing in these more niche online communities was considered as a means of providing very relevant data from the target demographic that could have not been reached otherwise

In order to generate a larger audience on Facebook, the researchers created a regional Facebook group entitled “The York Region Employment Board”. Group members could advertise local job postings at the beginning of the project creating an audience of young adults and generating a following that would not otherwise be reached. The online survey could be promoted to the group. The purpose was to create a previously non-existent online community specifically for young adults seeking work in York Region that reached the target demographic, as well as created better communication within the community. In the later weeks, a promotional video entitled: [Jobs for Grads 2015](#) was created to better advertise the project.

Advertising on social media mainly entailed posts every few days on a variety of local pages found on Facebook, as well as posts on personal social media accounts to encourage participation.

Additional Outreach

Efforts were made to reach out to various community groups such as the Newmarket Chamber of Commerce, YSBEC and York Region newspapers. This resulted in multiple email blasts sent to contacts and members, as well as, more information regarding the project being published in local newspapers. With the help of York Region Media Group (YRMG), [an article](#) was published to draw attention to the project for readers in the York Region area:

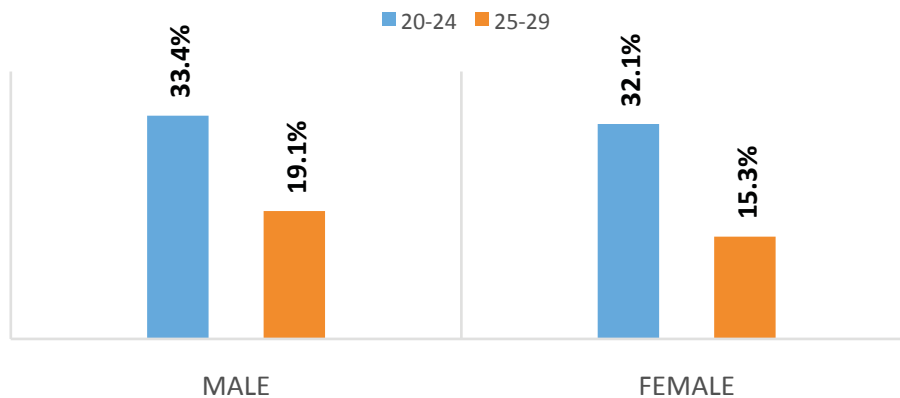


Who is the Graduating Workforce?

As noted earlier, the researchers collected 1,503 surveys. From the survey, researchers were able to collect basic demographic data, educational backgrounds, employment status, and experience with Employment Ontario offices.

CHART 2

AGE AND GENDER OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

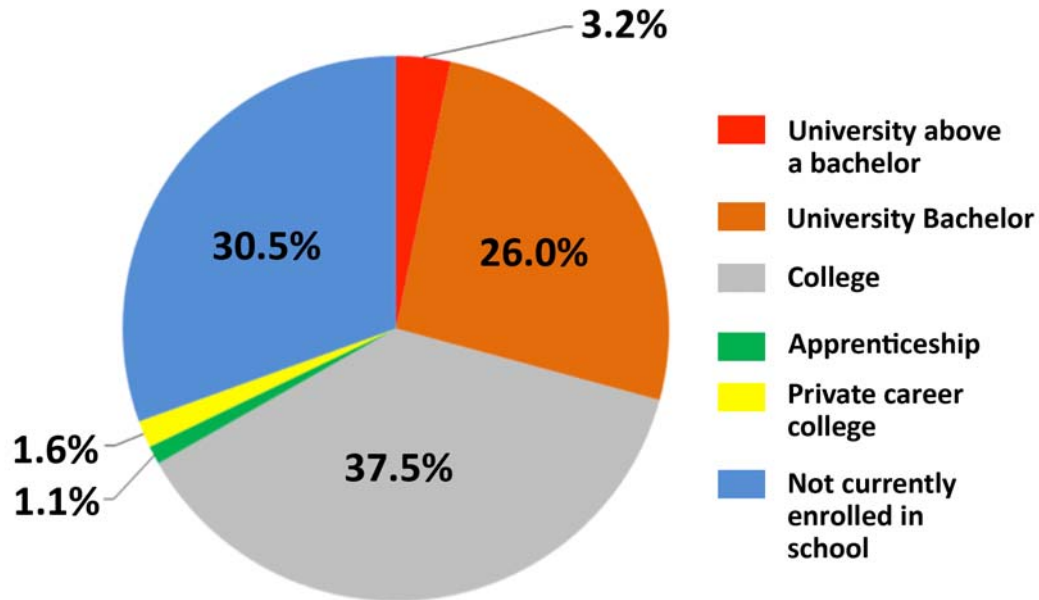


The above graph displays the distribution of the data sample that the researchers acquired. The majority (65.5%) of the participants were between the ages of 20-24. This may be a result of the heavy focus on approaching respondents at educational institutions. Due to the high number of people in their early 20s, the data is likely more representative of individuals who are currently completing or have just completed their first post-secondary degree.



CHART 3

CURRENT SCHOOL ATTENDANCE



As can be seen from Chart 3, the majority (roughly 70%) of the respondents were currently attending school, most of them enrolled in either college or university.

When conducting the surveys in person, a great number of people did not understand the apprenticeship pathway to employment. Questions regarding apprenticeships were mostly raised by respondents at the Seneca campuses, with about 10% of those participants having some sort of question concerning its definition.

Respondents were also asked what their educational attainment was. Excluding those still in high school, the proportions were distributed as follows:

Completed high school	56%
Completed college	14%
Completed university (Bachelor)	31%

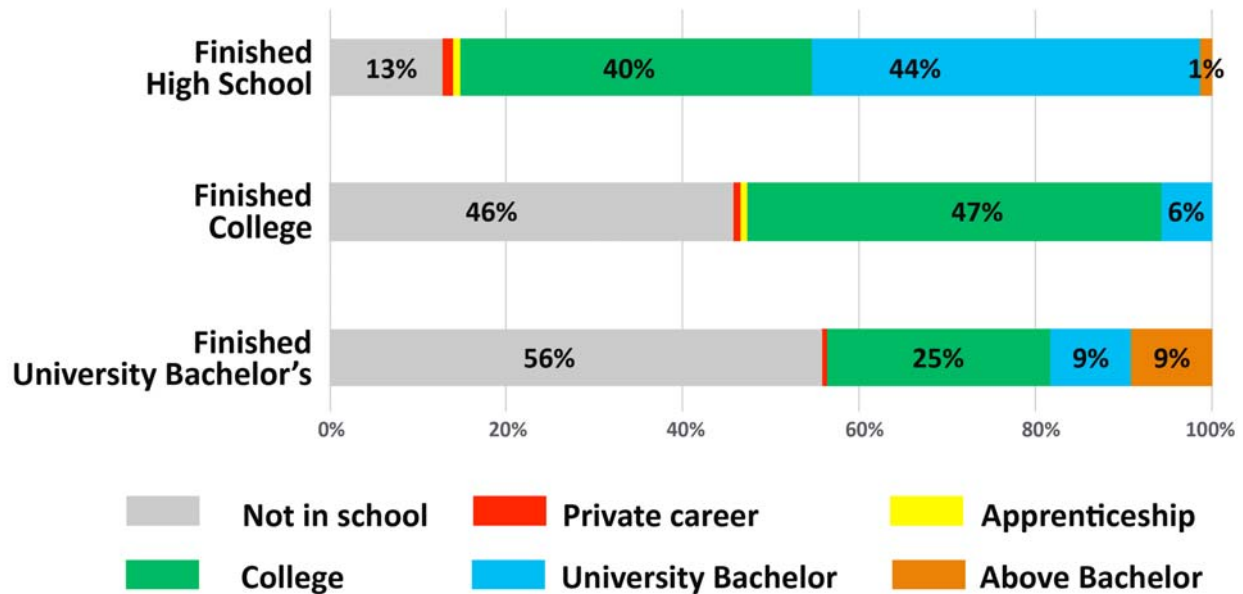
Figures do not add up to 100% because of rounding.



The present educational activities of these three groups vary. Chart 4 illustrates the activities of each of these groups (these include all those who were able to specify what they were currently doing).

CHART 4

CURRENT EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

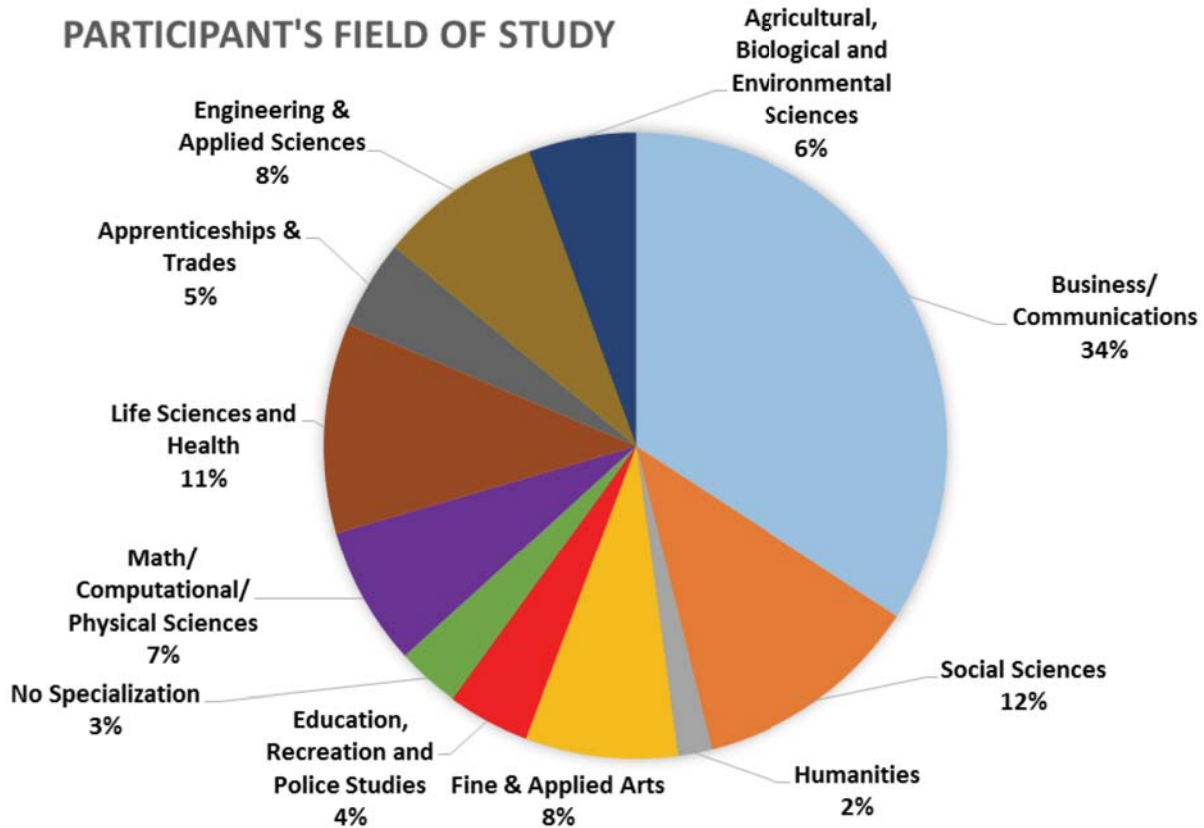


Only 13% of those who finished high school were not presently pursuing other education, primarily a university bachelor's or a community college diploma. Almost half of those who indicated that they had a college certificate said they were pursuing other college education. Among those with a university Bachelor's degree, slightly over half were not pursuing any further education, but among those that were, most were actually enrolled in a college program (that is, out of 43% who were continuing their studies, 25% were in college – another 9% were in a university Bachelor's program, and another 9% were seeking a degree higher than a Bachelor's).¹

¹ This analysis assumes that each respondent accurately answered each of the questions, namely, "Are you currently attending school?" and "What level of education have you received?" The high proportion of those who indicated that they had completed college, yet were still pursuing a college diploma, could raise some questions. On the other hand, the 54% of college graduates who are still pursuing further education is a proportion not that greater than the 43% of university Bachelor graduates who are also continuing their studies.



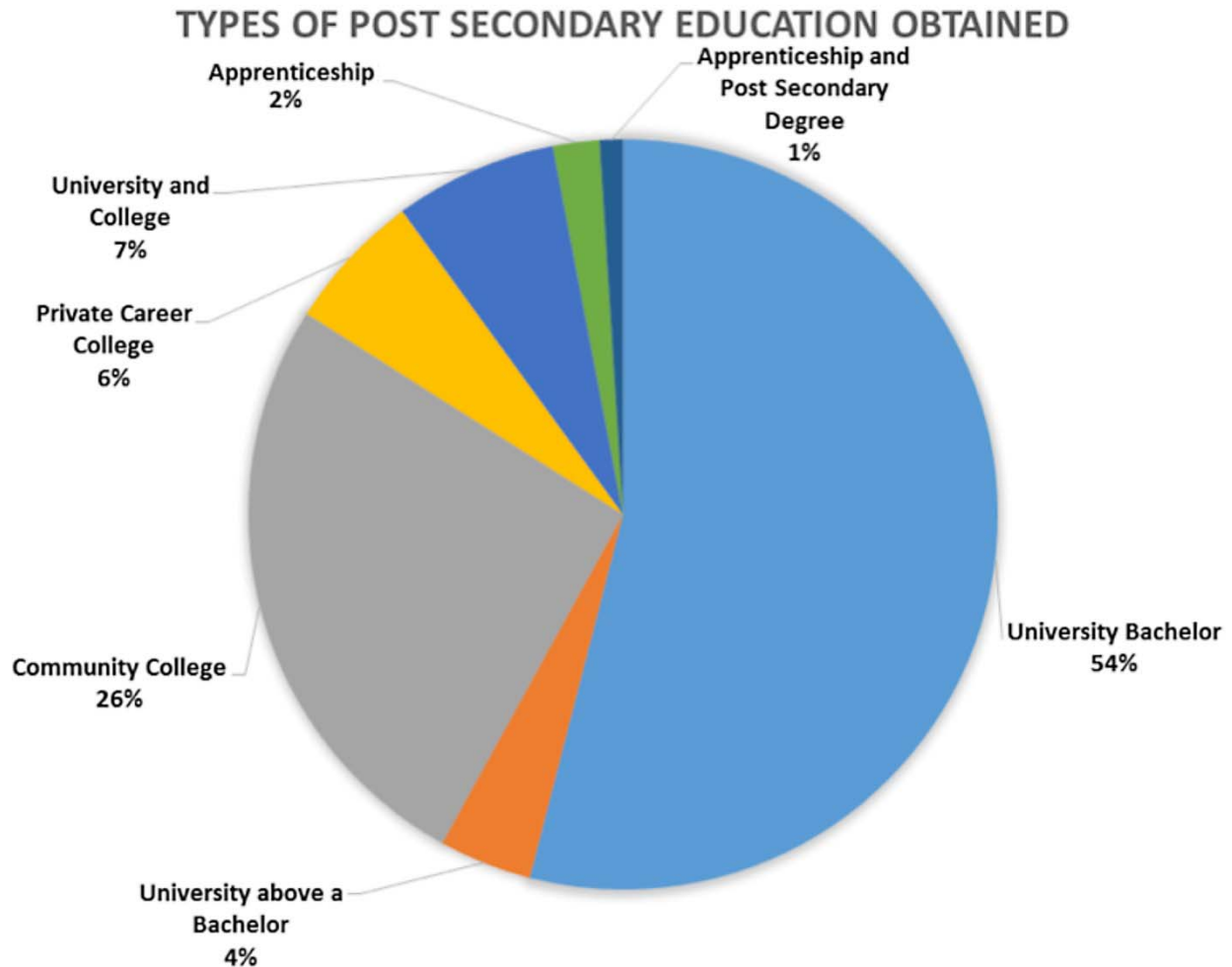
CHART 5



The information in chart 5 indicates that the majority of surveyed participants were specialized in a certain field of study; 34% of young adults were pursuing education in the business and communications field. There was a diverse representation of various fields of study. Also worth noting is that participants listed their most current field of study and the survey did not capture those with previous degrees, diplomas or certificates or those currently in a double major.



CHART 6

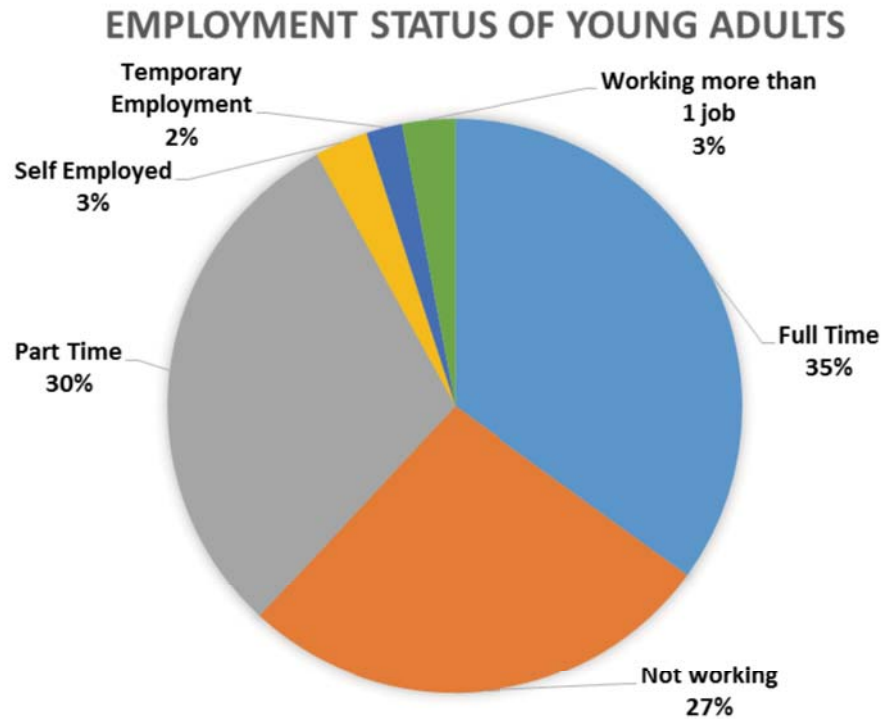


Delving deeper, chart 7 displays what type of post-secondary education youth have obtained. Of those who have pursued a post-secondary education, the majority have obtained a university degree. While surveying at the Seneca College campuses, it was discovered that multiple students were there to obtain a college degree after having trouble finding a job with their university degree. A large number of York University students have a college background and 35% of Seneca students surveyed had a previous post-secondary education.



Employment Status of Young Adults

CHART 7

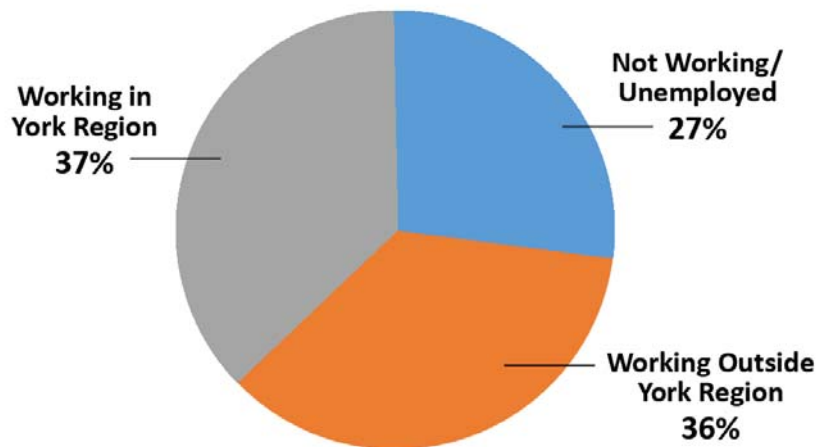


The survey question regarding current employment status identified that 27% of youth have no form of employment. This is understandable given that many young adults are currently in the process of completing their post-secondary education as a full-time student. This would also explain why a significant number of participants are working in part-time positions. Given the large proportion of respondents still attending school, the proportion of those employed full-time is encouraging (although that work may not be in their field of study).



CHART 8

WHERE ARE YOUNG ADULTS WORKING?



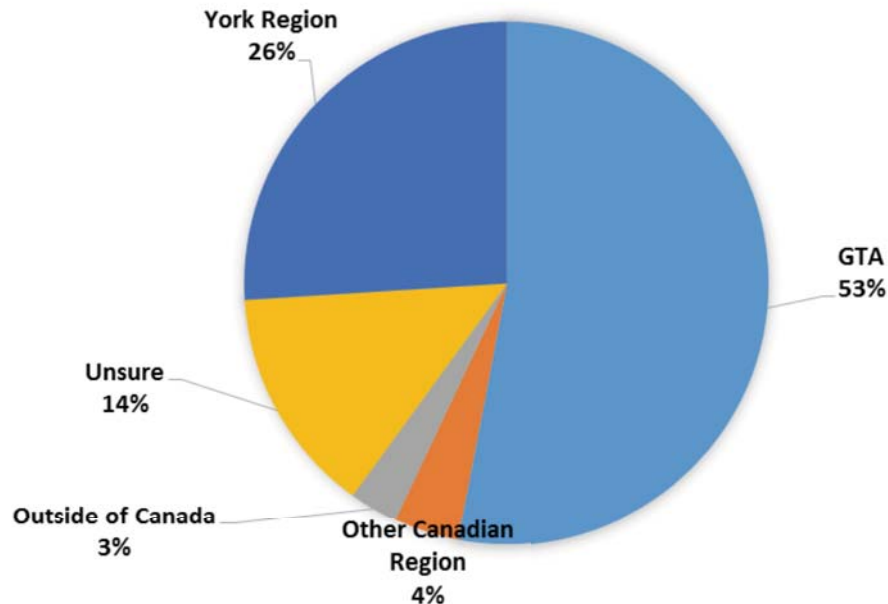
Thirty-six percent of participants living in York Region are working outside of the area, predominantly in the GTA (City of Toronto). This may be due to youth either not wanting to work in their local area or having more promising job opportunities outside the region.

The study indicates (Chart 9) that many young adults would ideally wish to be employed in the GTA (City of Toronto) after completing their post-secondary education and participants seem to believe that most of the job opportunities are found in the southern area of the GTA.



CHART 9

IDEAL REGION OF EMPLOYMENT



After conversing with survey participants, it appeared that the majority were willing to commute or relocate to areas with a higher concentration of jobs. International students (12% of Seneca and York surveyed students) comprised a significant number of those who wanted to work outside of the country, returning to their home country to secure permanent employment.

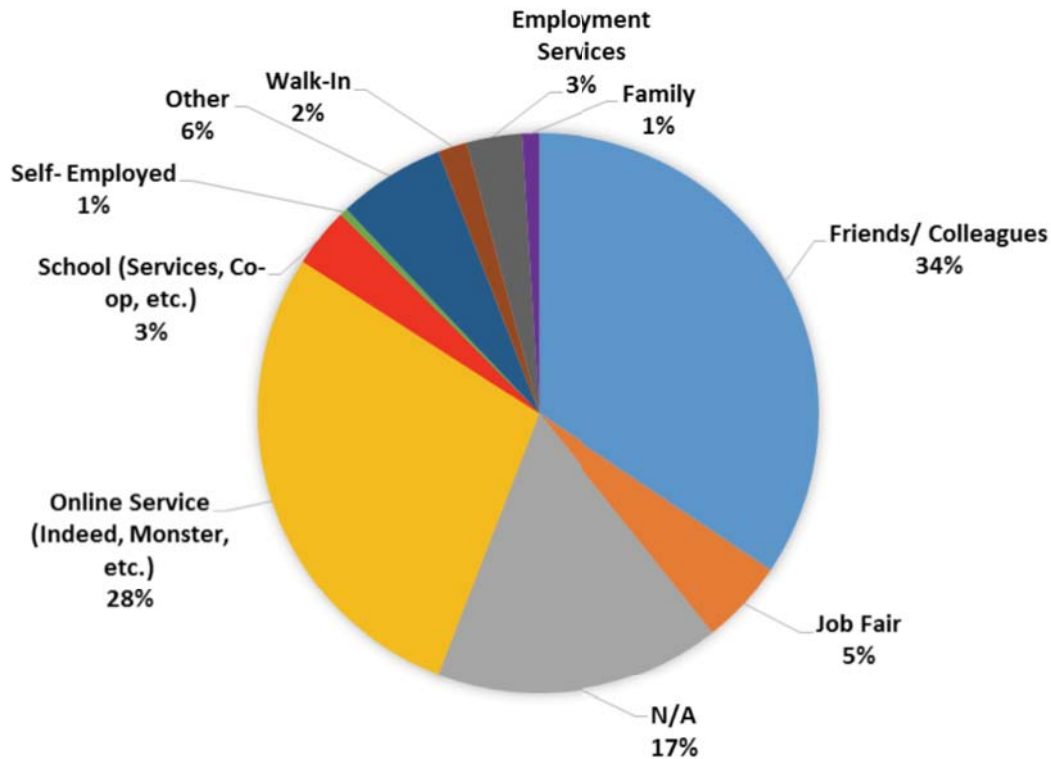
Over 50% of the York Region participants would ideally like to be employed in the GTA (City of Toronto), despite their residence being north of the area. There may be a greater desire to work in the GTA due to a variety of factors:

- the individual's lack of ability to find work in their desired career where they currently reside
- the GTA is a more attractive place to work for youth because of the city life and bigger corporations located there
- perceived higher income from working with a large downtown company



CHART 10

ACQUISITION OF CURRENT JOB

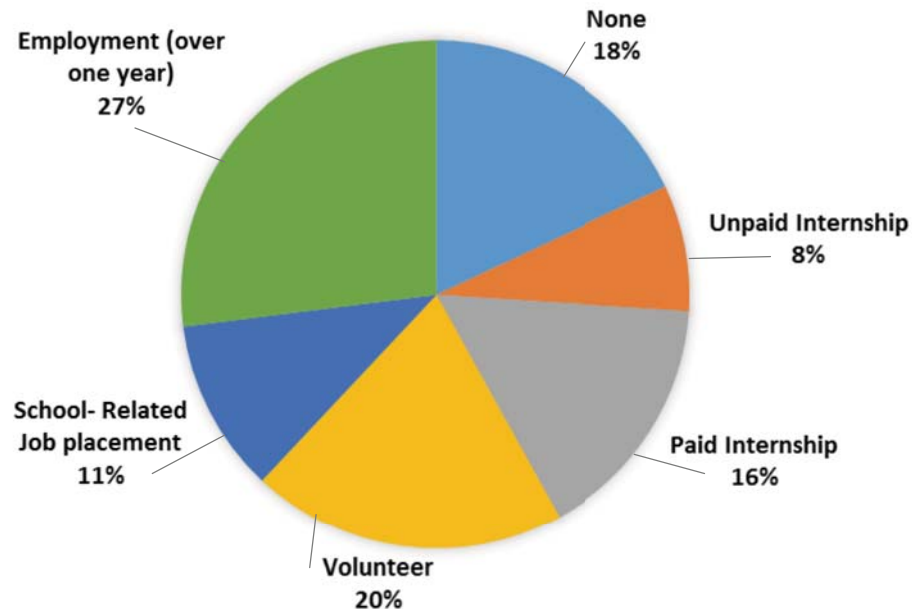


Based on the results of Chart 10, it is understandable why young adults value networking events since it is clear that friends/colleagues play a key role in acquiring employment. Nearly one third of employed persons have attributed their contacts as the means of acquiring their position. In addition, a number of employed youth have obtained their position through online services, which coincides with the extensive use of online job postings as a means of employment assistance. On multiple occasions it was stated that the easiest way to gain access to a company is to have friends or family inside. Many of the youth surveyed expressed frustration that they were not able to enter their field while those less qualified have been successful due to their company connections.



CHART 11

WORK EXPERIENCE IN FIELD OF STUDY



A substantial number of participants have not found paid work in their field of study. A total of 46% of young adults have either not secured a position, or have undertaken an unpaid internship/volunteer work in their field of study. This means that nearly half of young adults are not receiving compensation in their field of study. However, 27% of those surveyed stated that they have been working in their field of study for over one year.

A number of young adults stated that there is a growing number of unpaid internships in the job market and students are willing to take these opportunities to gain some form of relevant work experience on their resume. Participants remarked that no one wanted to hire them unless they had adequate work experience in the field. At college campuses, a fair amount of participants stated that they opted to get a college certificate as opposed to a/or another university degree, as college certificates usually provide workplace experience along with the education. On a positive note, “paid internships” were cited twice as often as “unpaid internships.”



CHART 12

OBSTACLES TO EMPLOYMENT

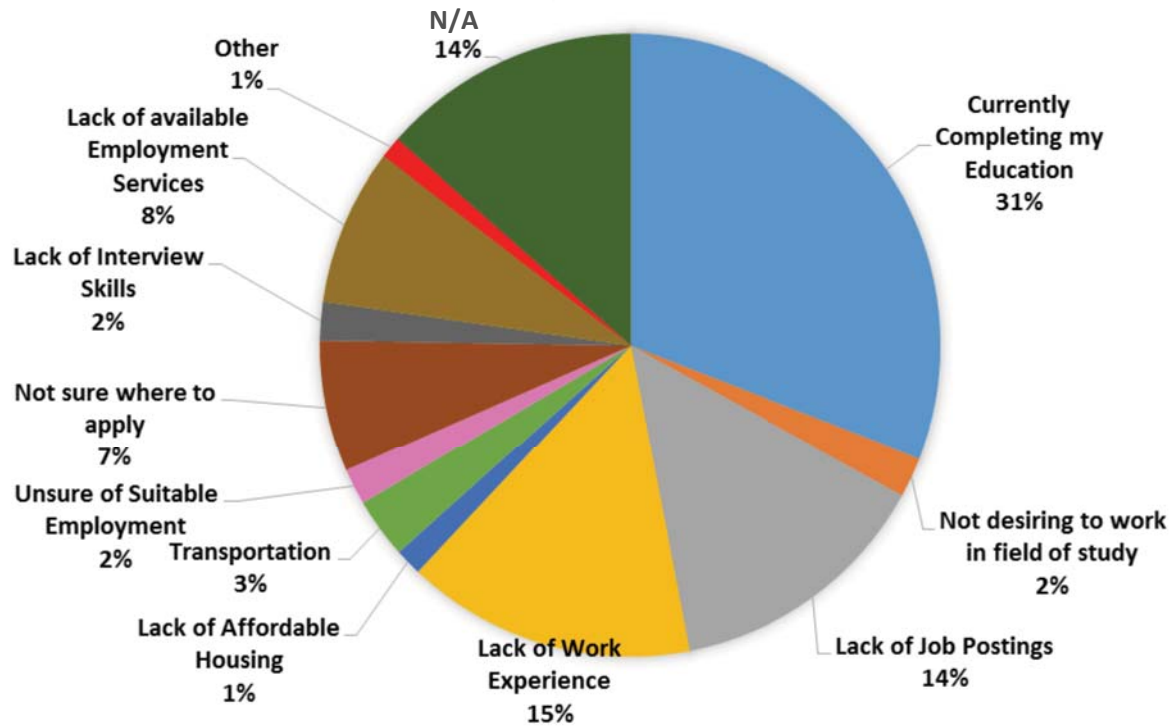
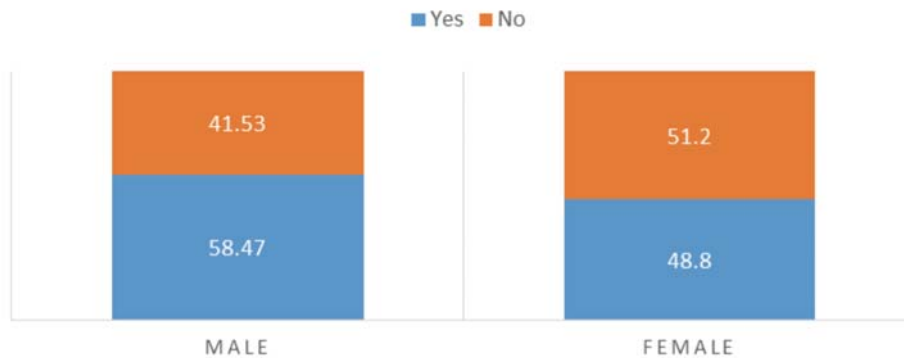


Chart 12 illustrates the multiple obstacles that participants identified as standing in the way of their ability to obtain employment. It is not surprising to see that a large percentage of participants identified that education is one of the most challenging employment obstacles for young adults given that many of the participants were still attending a post-secondary institution. As predicted, the greatest barrier to employment was lack of work experience. It was mentioned that many entry level jobs asked for two years of experience in the field which is not feasible for most recent graduates searching for employment. 14% of participants identified that this question was not applicable as they are either working in their field of study or not currently seeking employment.



CHART 13

PERCENTAGE OF INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE EXPRESSED INTEREST IN BEING SELF-EMPLOYED



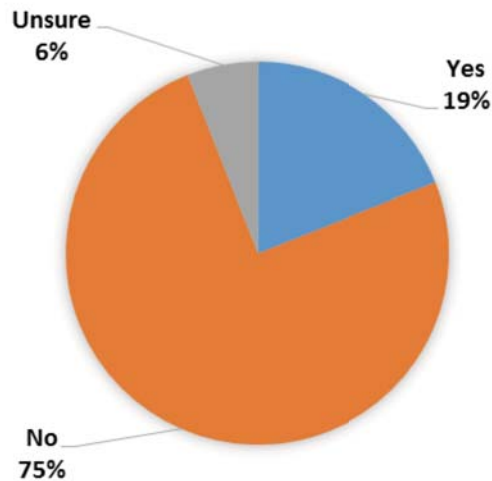
A surprising number of participants have stated that they are interested in becoming self-employed. This was especially reflected at the highly attend Helix's Young Entrepreneurs Conference (May 28th, 2015) at Seneca College. Several young adults stated that they are very satisfied with government run programs to support young entrepreneurs.



Young Adults Experience with Employment Ontario Services

CHART 14

USE OF EMPLOYMENT ONTARIO SERVICES BY YOUTH



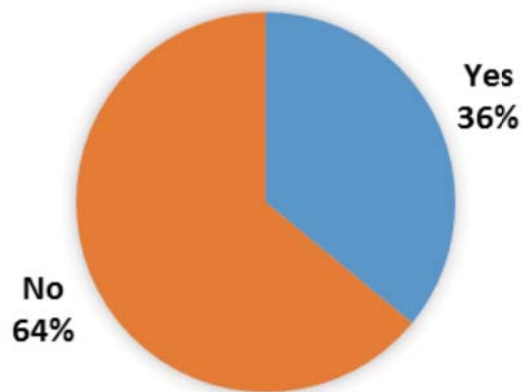
Many young adults identified that preferred the ease of applying and finding jobs online rather than actually visiting an Employment Ontario Service Centre or using the Career Centres while attending their educational institution. A considerable number of participants were not familiar with Employment Ontario or the services offered by these locations. These participants were surprised and intrigued when informed that these government services are provided for them at no cost.

When the researchers visited the job fairs in Thornhill and Newmarket, the majority of the people were above the age 30. The low attendance of youth using EO offices is not correlated to the service that may be provided, but the lack of knowledge that such services exist. Many participants were given more information (bookmarks) on EO services in their area and they expressed interest in visiting a location.



CHART 15

PERCENTAGE OF JOBS FOUND THROUGH EMPLOYMENT ONTARIO (OF THOSE USING THE SERVICE)

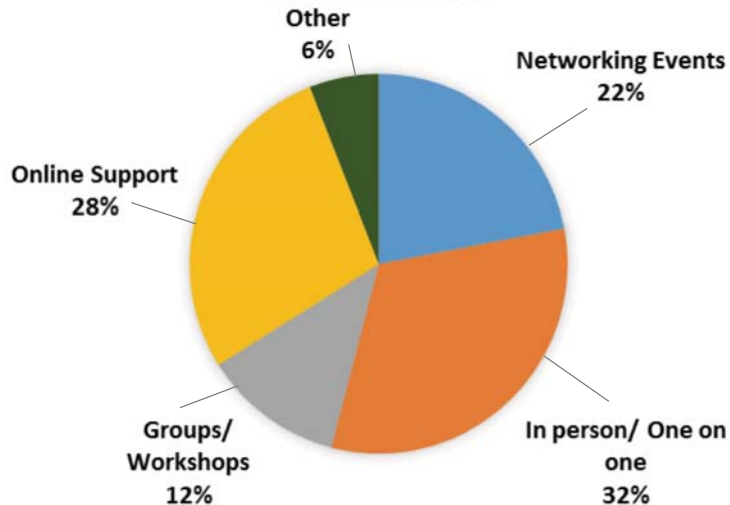


Of the 19% of participants who had stated that they used EO services (chart 14), 36% of them managed to acquire a job after using Employment Ontario but not necessarily in their field of study. It is clear that Employment Ontario services can play a pivotal role in helping young adults secure employment. Increased usage of these services may help reduce unemployment rates in the future.



CHART 16

DESIRED METHOD OF DELIVERY OF EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE

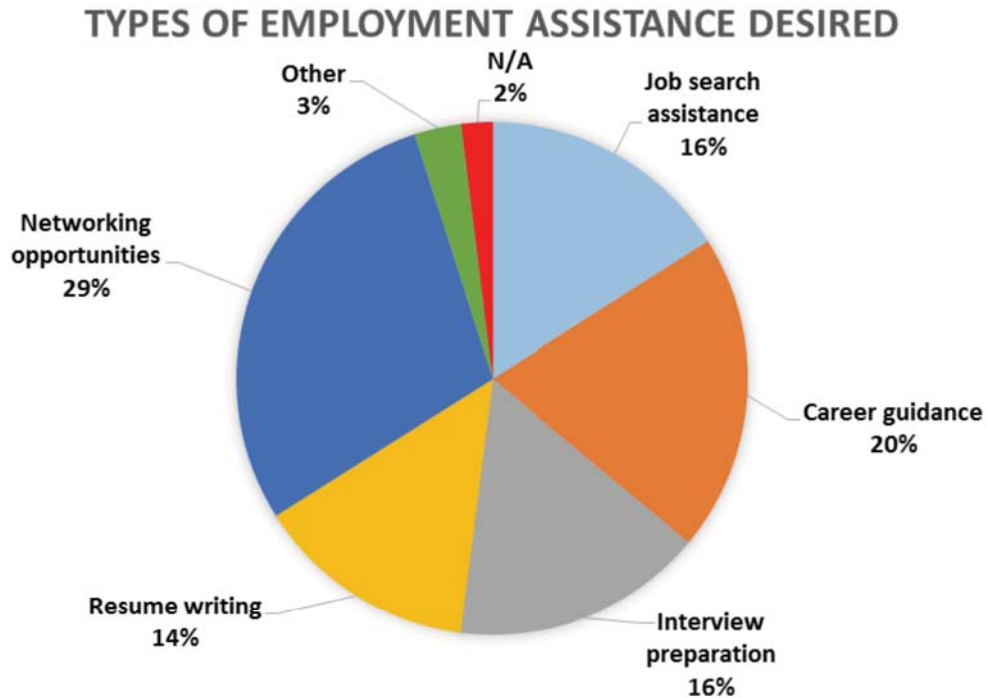


What is most interesting about Chart 16 is the high demand for in-person employment assistance. A lot of people want a more personal approach and stated that online job hunting has not been as fruitful as they had hoped. The high demand for one-on-one assistance may also be correlated to the low number of people who are familiar with Employment Ontario services.

When EO services were mentioned, young adults were surprised by what these services were able to offer and have expressed interest in learning more about them. Increased usage of Employment Ontario services and the one-on-one service will compliment participant`s on-line job search.



CHART 17



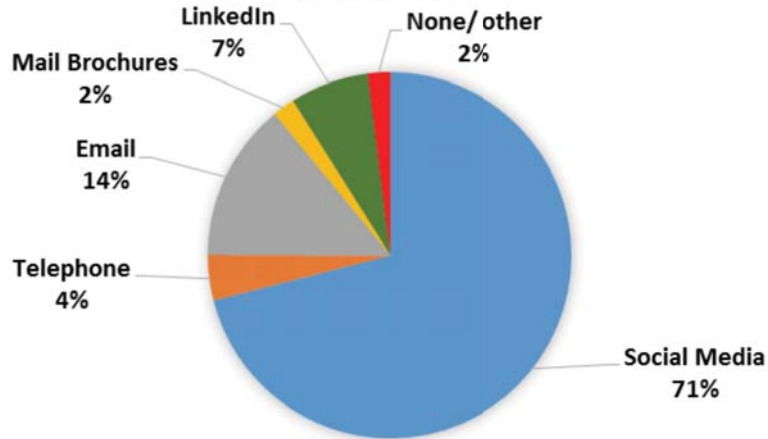
When young adults were asked what type of employment assistance they deemed would be most helpful, the four most requested types of assistance were networking opportunities, career guidance, interview preparation and job search assistance.

During conversations with participants, it has been stated that they regret not fully utilizing guidance counsellors and school career centres while they still had the chance. There was a lot of interest in networking events, with a number of participants stating that 'nowadays, it's not what you know, but who you know'.



CHART 18

WHAT WOULD BE THE BEST METHOD TO RECEIVE INFORMATION ABOUT EMPLOYMENT ONTARIO SERVICES?



It is evident that virtual methods (Email/Social Media/LinkedIn) are the most effective/desired means of communication to provide young adults with information about Employment Ontario services. This coincides with the fact that online job posting sites are the most popular form of employment service. Young adults ideally want to receive information and employment services electronically. This could be a more effective medium for outreach to young adults. Email through school alumni lists might be a very effective method of increasing awareness of Employment Ontario offices for young adults.



In summary, we learned that...

- 53% of participants would like to work in Toronto due to the perceived higher income from working with a 'downtown' company.
- 27% of those surveyed identified that they had been successfully working in their field of study for over a year.
- 36% living in York Region found employment outside the Region.
- Over 50% of those surveyed expressed an interest in self-employment.
- 75% of those surveyed have not utilized and/or are not aware of services provided by Employment Ontario.
- 32% of youth prefer one-on-one in person employment assistant.
- The apprenticeship pathway to employment is not well understood.
- Many value networking opportunities as “it is not what you know but who you know” that will get you in the company door.
- Many youth regret not utilizing their school career centres while they had the opportunity.
- Those with two post-secondary degrees/certificates returned to school in some situations in unrelated fields to increase their employability.
- Youth identified that taking programs with an internship or co-op component was of great benefit when job searching for work after completing their education.
- Youth would benefit from greater collaboration between employers and post-secondary institutions to increase workplace internships and co-op opportunities.

One of the greatest issues today is the fact that young adults are not familiar with effective techniques and services to secure employment after they leave school. A greater emphasis needs to be placed on increasing the awareness of various employment services as well as increased career guidance in order to seek the best form of post-secondary education enabling them to pursue their careers. Although this data includes those continuing their education, it must be recognized that there are numerous existing barriers to employment creating the need to a further enhancement of skills.