

# Dartmouth Learning Network



Summary of Findings  
From The  
2013 Understanding Literacy in the Workplace Survey



200-260 Wyse Road  
Dartmouth, NS  
B3A 1N3

Tel: 902•463•9179  
Fax: 902•464•3052

## Findings from the 2013 Dartmouth Learning Network Survey on Understanding Literacy in the Workplace

Did you know that low adult literacy costs Canadian businesses over \$4 billion annually?

The 2005 study by Statistics Canada shows that 48% of Canadians do not have the literacy skills they need to keep pace with the escalating demands of our society and economy. This situation impacts the social and economic well-being of individuals, families, communities and our country.

Business environments are complex, in order to be innovative, remain competitive, stay up-to-date with the latest technology and increase productivity; workplaces are demanding higher levels of literacy from its employees. Literacy problems are inherited and children of parents with low literacy skills will almost certainly have problems themselves.

The first step in addressing workplace literacy is to understand what employers know about the topic and to gauge their willingness/opinions on an approach. Recently the Dartmouth Learning Network conducted a pan-Canadian survey to increase their understanding of how businesses in Canada viewed literacy in the workplace.

**Here is a brief snapshot of our findings, with the complete report attached for your review.**

- 146 responses - all provinces & territories
- Most from small business (2-10 employees)
- <2% cite literacy as the reason they can't find qualified employees
- >75% believe literacy is a major issue for the workforce but not for their company
- >50% believe literacy is not their responsibility
- >75% believe more government funding is required for essential skills
- >60% will not hire someone without HS diploma or GED
- ~75% do not understand the magnitude of low literacy in Canada

**For further information please contact:**

Lesley Dunn, Executive Director, Dartmouth Learning Network  
200-260 Wyse Road  
Dartmouth, NS B3A 1N3  
(902) 463-9179 [executivedirector@dartmouthlearning.net](mailto:executivedirector@dartmouthlearning.net)

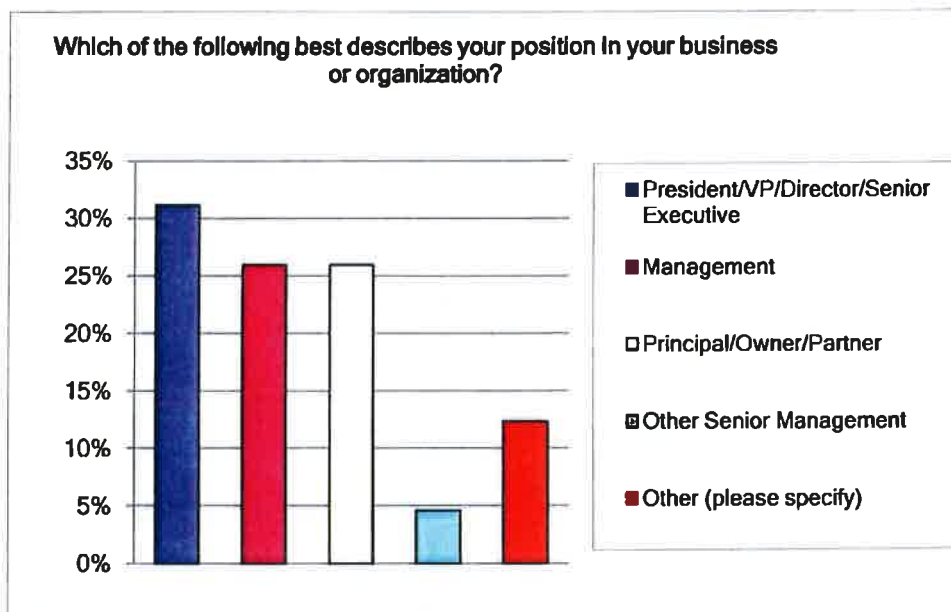
**Note: The Dartmouth Learning Network would like to extend our sincere thanks to ABC Life Literacy Canada for sharing the framework of the Workplace Literacy Study prepared by Rogers Connect Market Research Group Released May 2, 2012 for our follow up research.**



## Understanding Literacy in the Workplace

### 1. Which of the following best describes your position in your business or organization?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
President/VP/Director/Senior Executive Management	31.2%	48
Principal/Owner/Partner	26.0%	40
Other Senior Management	4.5%	7
Other (please specify)	12.3%	19
<b>Total</b>		<b>154</b>



- Number      Other (please specify)**
- 1      Sales manager
  - 2      Senior Sales person
  - 3      Realtor
  - 4      worker
  - 5      Administration / customer service
  - 6      Administrative Assistant
  - 7      Sales
  - 8      Human Resources Advisor
  - 9      I have just retired.
  - 10     Sales Executive



## Understanding Literacy in the Workplace

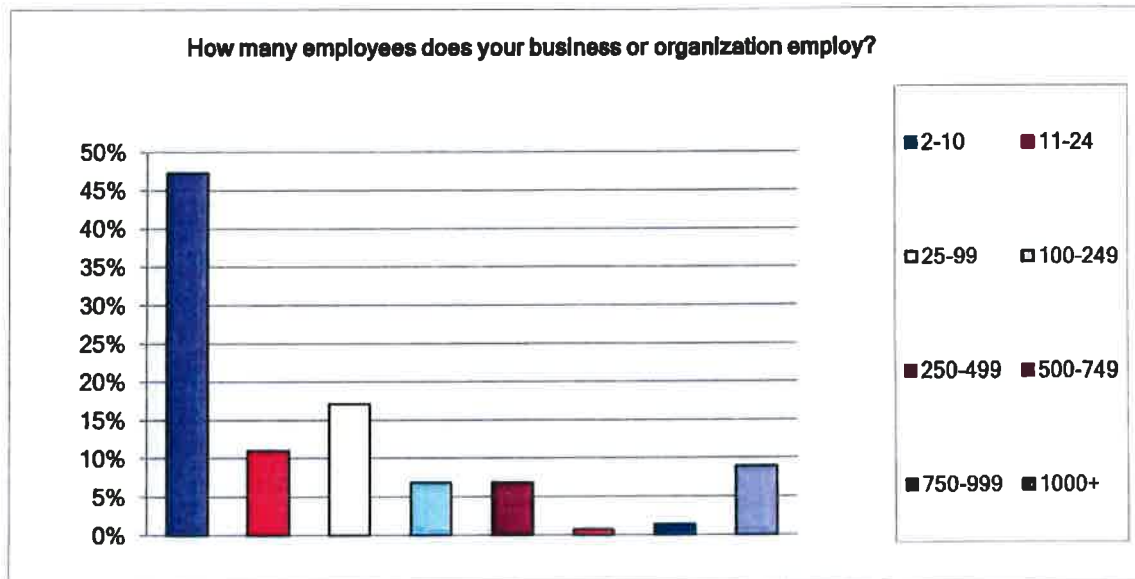
- 11** Associate
- 12** Library Director
- 13** Court Case Manager
- 14** Education Coordinator
- 15** Director of Adult Education
- 16** Corporate Manager of Training and Performance
- 17** RETIRED
- 18** Test data please delete
- 19** Executive Assistant



## Understanding Literacy in the Workplace

### 2. How many employees does your business or organization employ?

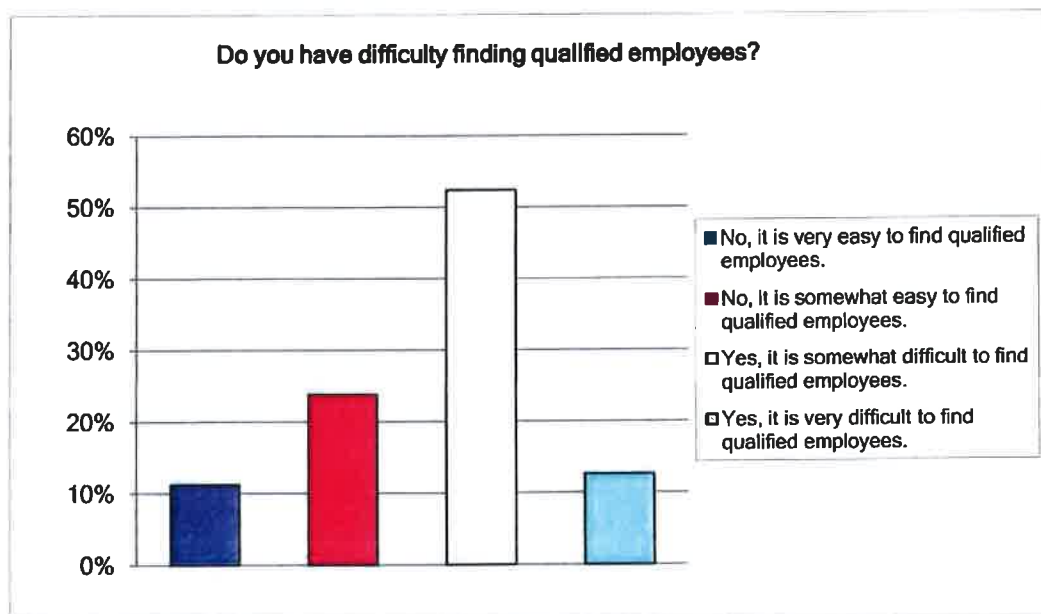
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
2-10	47.3%	69
11-24	11.0%	16
25-99	17.1%	25
100-249	6.8%	10
250-499	6.8%	10
500-749	0.7%	1
750-999	1.4%	2
1000+	8.9%	13
	<b>Total</b>	<b>146</b>



## Understanding Literacy in the Workplace

### 3. Do you have difficulty finding qualified employees?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
No, it is very easy to find qualified employees.	11.2%	16
No, it is somewhat easy to find qualified employees.	23.8%	34
Yes, it is somewhat difficult to find qualified employees.	52.4%	75
Yes, it is very difficult to find qualified employees.	12.6%	18
	<b>Total</b>	<b>143</b>

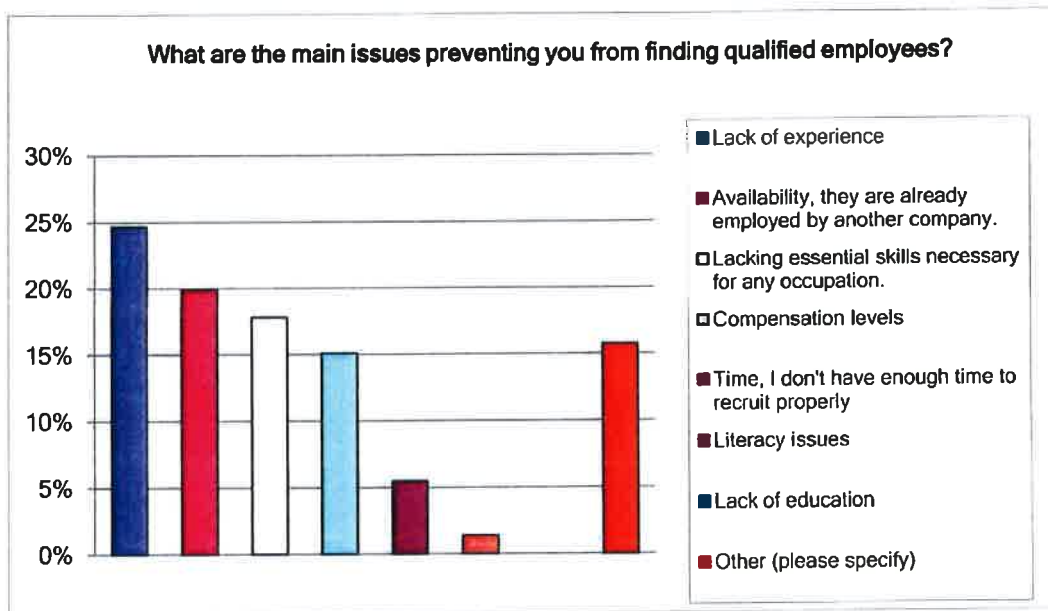




## Understanding Literacy in the Workplace

### 4. What are the main issues preventing you from finding qualified employees?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Lack of experience	24.7%	36
Availability, they are already employed by another company	19.9%	29
Lacking essential skills necessary for any occupation.	17.8%	26
Compensation levels	15.1%	22
Time, I don't have enough time to recruit properly	5.5%	8
Literacy issues	1.4%	2
Lack of education	0.0%	0
Other (please specify)	15.8%	23
<b>Total</b>		<b>146</b>



- Number Other (please specify)**
- 1 LACK OF SKILLS FOR OURSPECIFIC BUSINESS
  - 2 Lacking specific experience for our requirements
  - 3 N/A - Self-employed
  - 4 not looking
  - 5 I dont have employees
  - 6 Rural location means fewer candidates with related experience or training. Requires that as an employer I provide training rather than hiring skilled staff



## Understanding Literacy in the Workplace

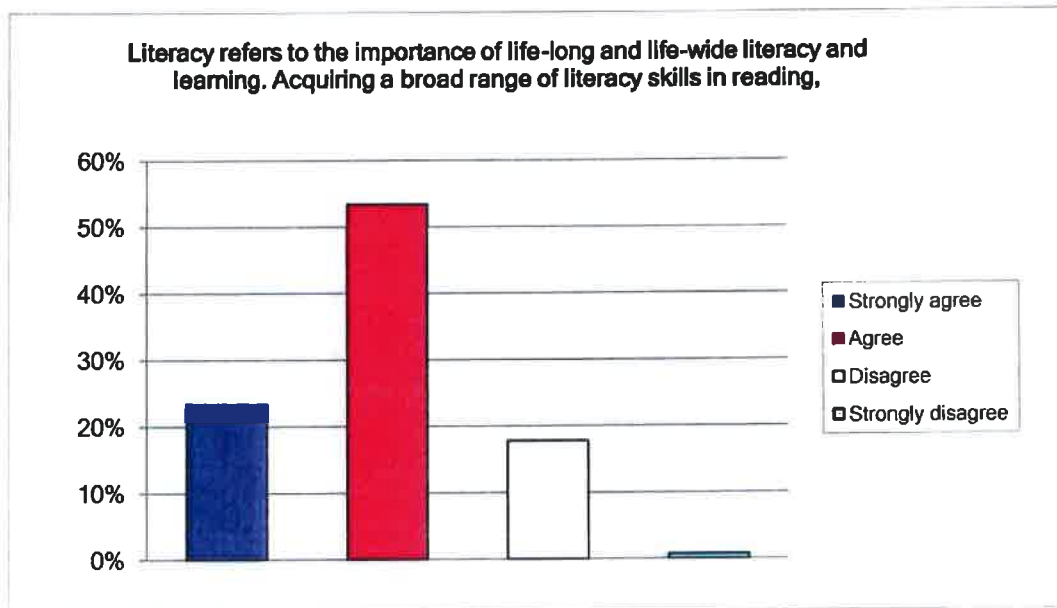
- 7 1st rule. show up for work. 2nd rule show up the second day
- 8 Learning curve is long
- 9 Basic skills are lacking even with various education degrees
- 10 Labor pool has become very small, most skills we can train to suit our needs
- 11 Changing digital requirements
- 12 We are in a small labour market, and we are in a specialized business.
- 13 Candidates often over qualified
- 14 Lack of Education & Experience
- 15 Shortage of Professional Nurses is ongoing good support staff can be hard to find as well..
- 16 Haven't looked in 4 years.
- 17 Difficult to find independent professionals with unique credentials and experience for our Internet niche business
- 18 Not applicable
- 19 Lack of young people returning to the community
- 20 Good attitude, people skills, communicative ability
- 21 Appropriate combination of workplace and teaching skills
- 22 lack of good work ethic
- 23 nation-wide shortage in the sector



## Understanding Literacy in the Workplace

5. Literacy refers to the importance of life-long and life-wide literacy and learning. Acquiring a broad range of literacy skills in reading, writing, and math can result in a more productive and more successful life experience. Low levels of literacy can affect life in the workplace, family and community. Please rate the following statement - Literacy is a major issue among Canada's workforce.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	23.3%	34
Agree	53.4%	78
Disagree	17.8%	26
Strongly disagree	0.7%	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>139</b>

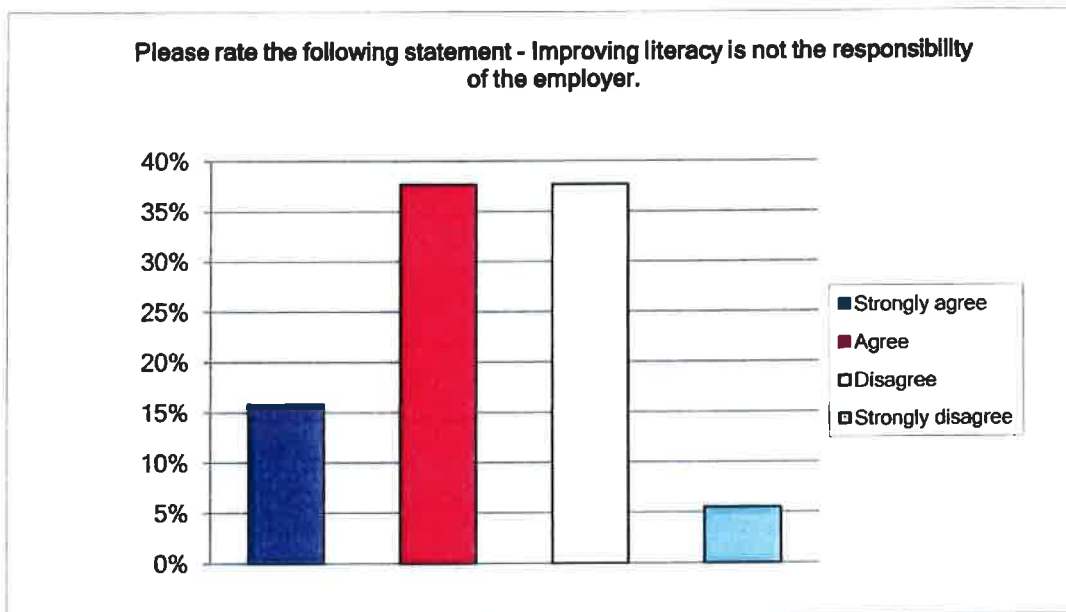




## Understanding Literacy in the Workplace

6. Please rate the following statement - Improving literacy is not the responsibility of the employer.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	15.8%	23
Agree	37.7%	55
Disagree	37.7%	55
Strongly disagree	5.5%	8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>141</b>

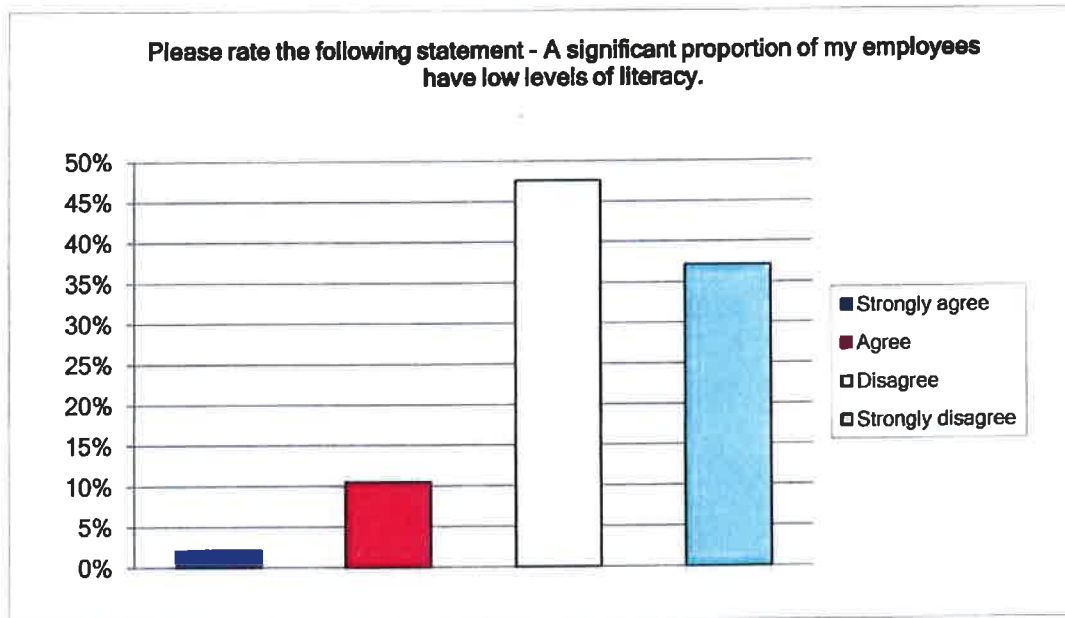




## Understanding Literacy in the Workplace

7. Please rate the following statement - A significant proportion of my employees have low levels of literacy.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	2.1%	3
Agree	10.5%	15
Disagree	47.6%	68
Strongly disagree	37.1%	53
	<b>Total</b>	<b>139</b>

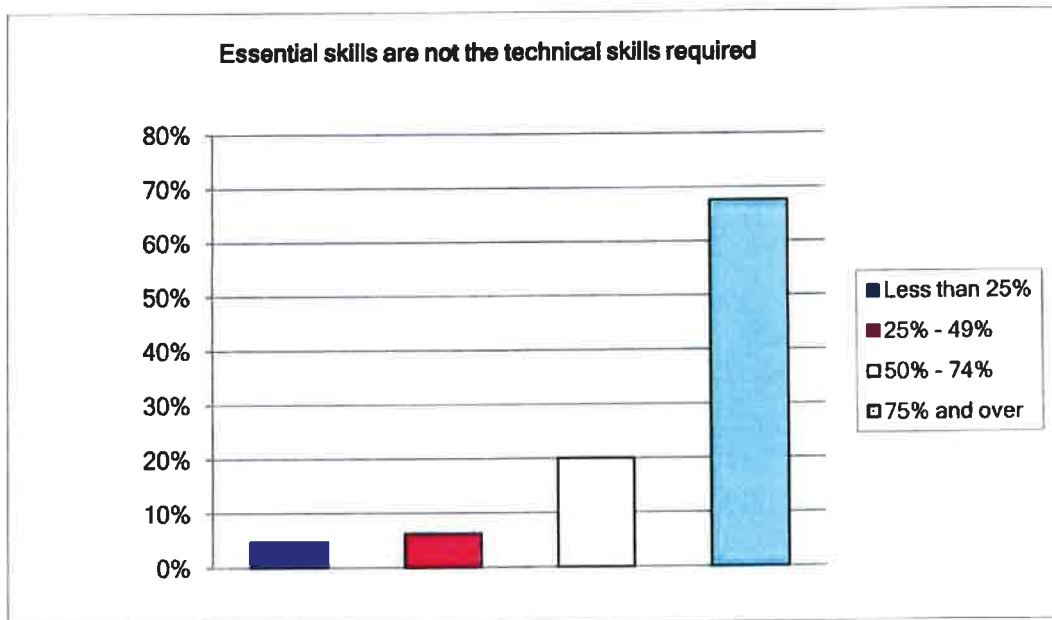




## Understanding Literacy in the Workplace

8. Essential skills are not the technical skills required by particular occupations but rather the skills applied in all occupations, such as the ability to adapt, learn new skills and perform the task required by their occupation or in their daily life. The Government of Canada identifies essential workplace skills as: reading, working with others, document use, numeracy, computer skills, writing, continuous learning, oral communication and thinking skills. What percentage of employees in your organization do you think adequately possess these essential skills?

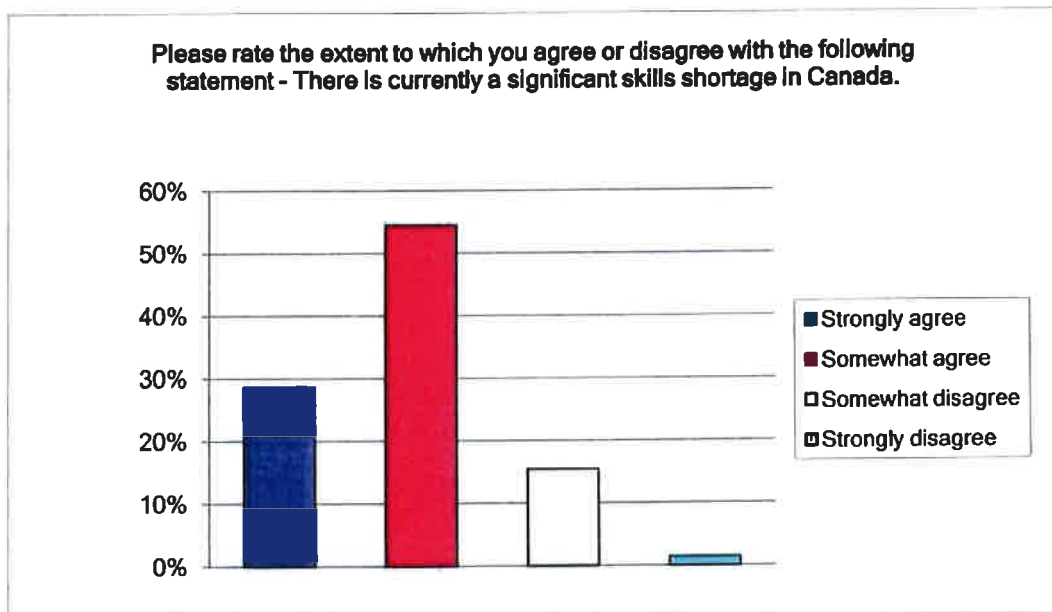
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than 25%	4.8%	7
25% - 49%	6.2%	9
50% - 74%	20.0%	29
75% and over	67.6%	98
	<b>Total</b>	<b>143</b>



## Understanding Literacy in the Workplace

9. Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement - There is currently a significant skills shortage in Canada.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	28.7%	41
Somewhat agree	54.5%	78
Somewhat disagree	15.4%	22
Strongly disagree	1.4%	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>143</b>

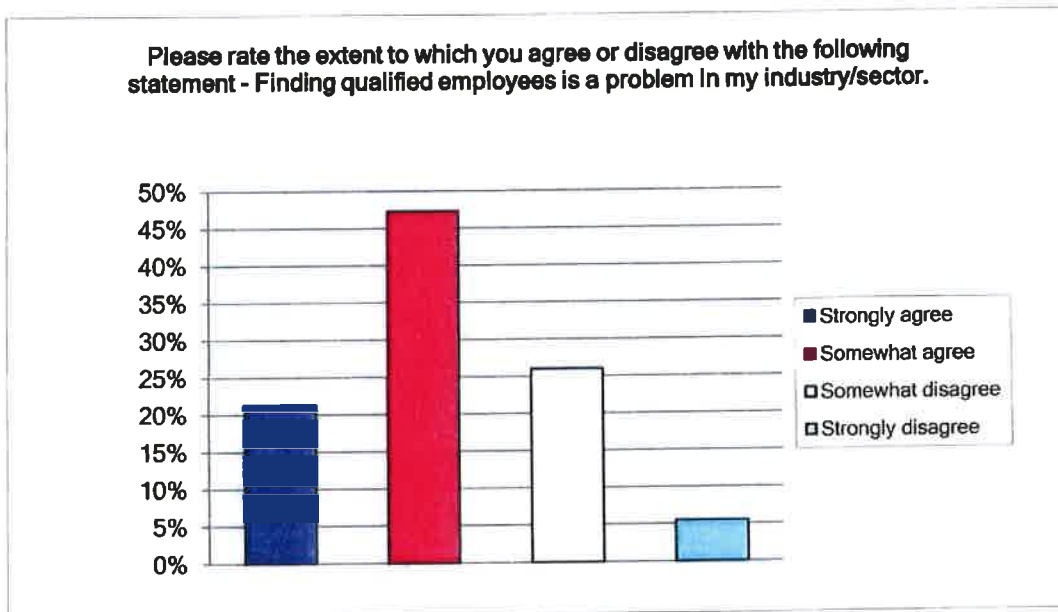




## Understanding Literacy in the Workplace

10. Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement - Finding qualified employees is a problem in my industry/sector.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	21.2%	31
Somewhat agree	47.3%	69
Somewhat disagree	26.0%	38
Strongly disagree	5.5%	8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>146</b>

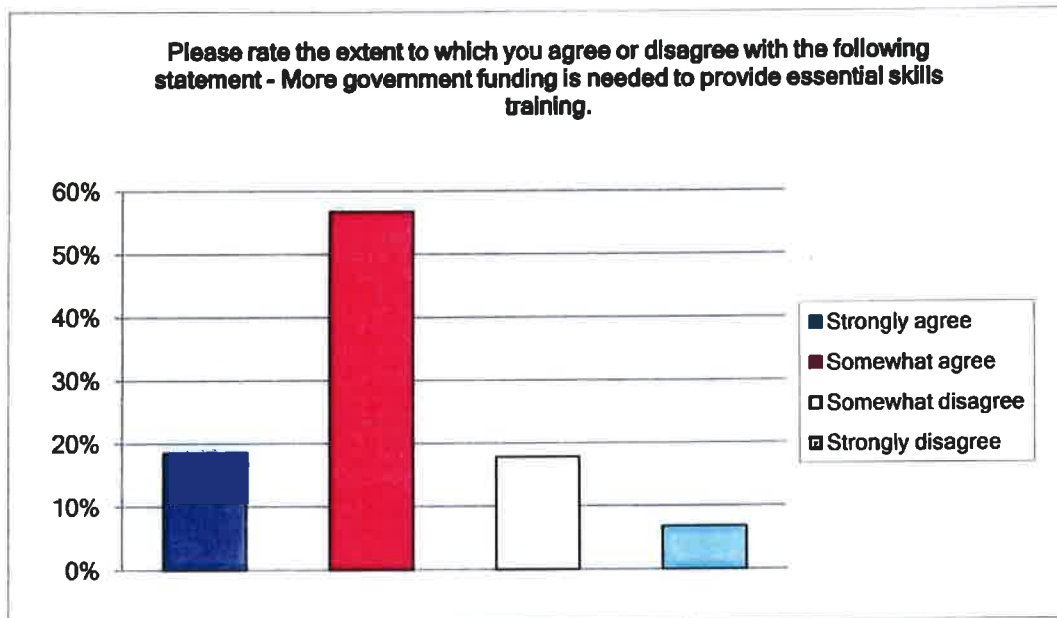




## Understanding Literacy in the Workplace

11. Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement - More government funding is needed to provide essential skills training.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	18.5%	27
Somewhat agree	56.8%	83
Somewhat disagree	17.8%	26
Strongly disagree	6.8%	10
	<b>Total</b>	<b>146</b>

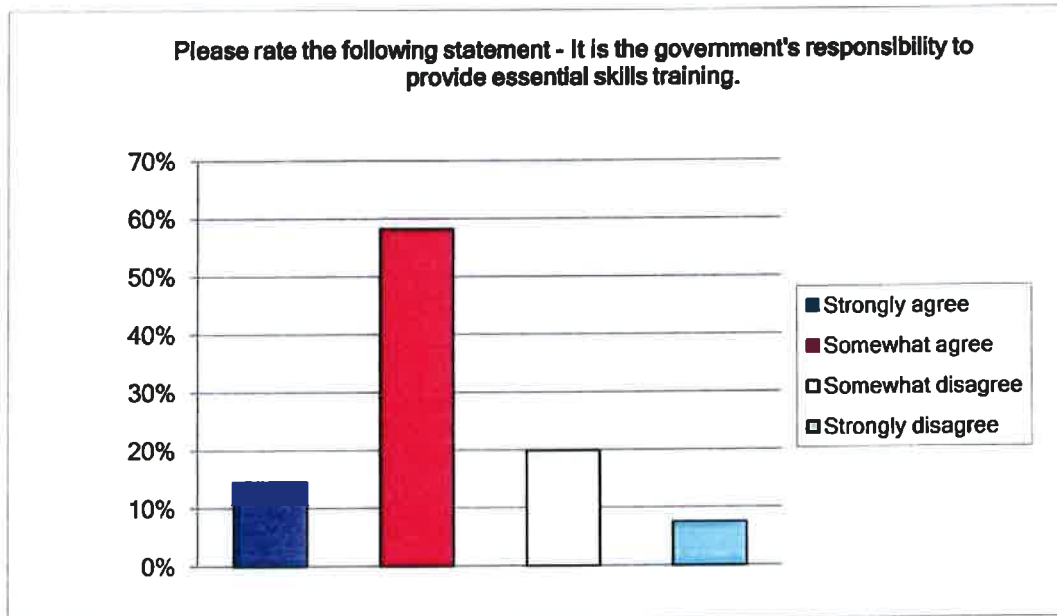




## Understanding Literacy in the Workplace

12. Please rate the following statement - It is the government's responsibility to provide essential skills training.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	14.4%	21
Somewhat agree	58.2%	85
Somewhat disagree	19.9%	29
Strongly disagree	7.5%	11
	<b>Total</b>	<b>146</b>



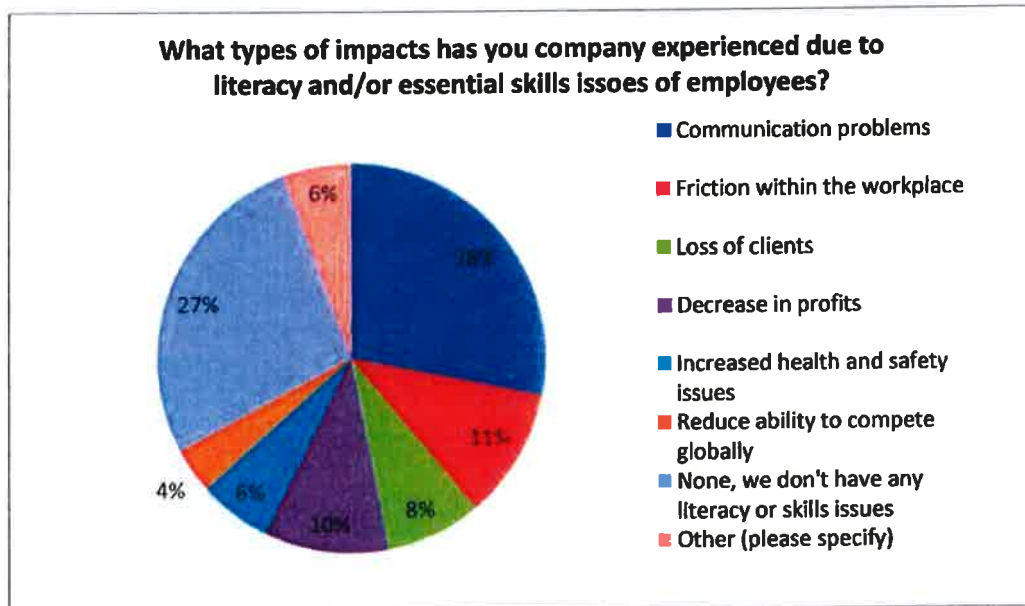




## Understanding Literacy in the Workplace

13. What types of impacts has your company experienced due to literacy and/or essential skills issues of employees?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Communication problems	28.2%	60
Friction within the workplace	10.8%	23
Loss of clients	8.0%	17
Decrease in profits	10.3%	22
Increased health and safety issues	6.1%	13
Reduce ability to compete globally	3.8%	8
None, we don't have any literacy or skills issues	27.2%	58
Other (please specify)	5.6%	12
	<b>Total</b>	<b>213</b>



- Number**                      **Other (please specify)**
- 1 N/A - Self-employed
  - 2 Just the normal costs involved in trg and recruitment
  - 3 We hire for attitude and ability then train our staff
  - 4 i will hire mexicans
  - 5 We hire exclusively from university & community colleges. Literacy isn't the issue as much as weak basic reading and mathematics skills which should have been provided through the P-6 education system.



## Understanding Literacy in the Workplace

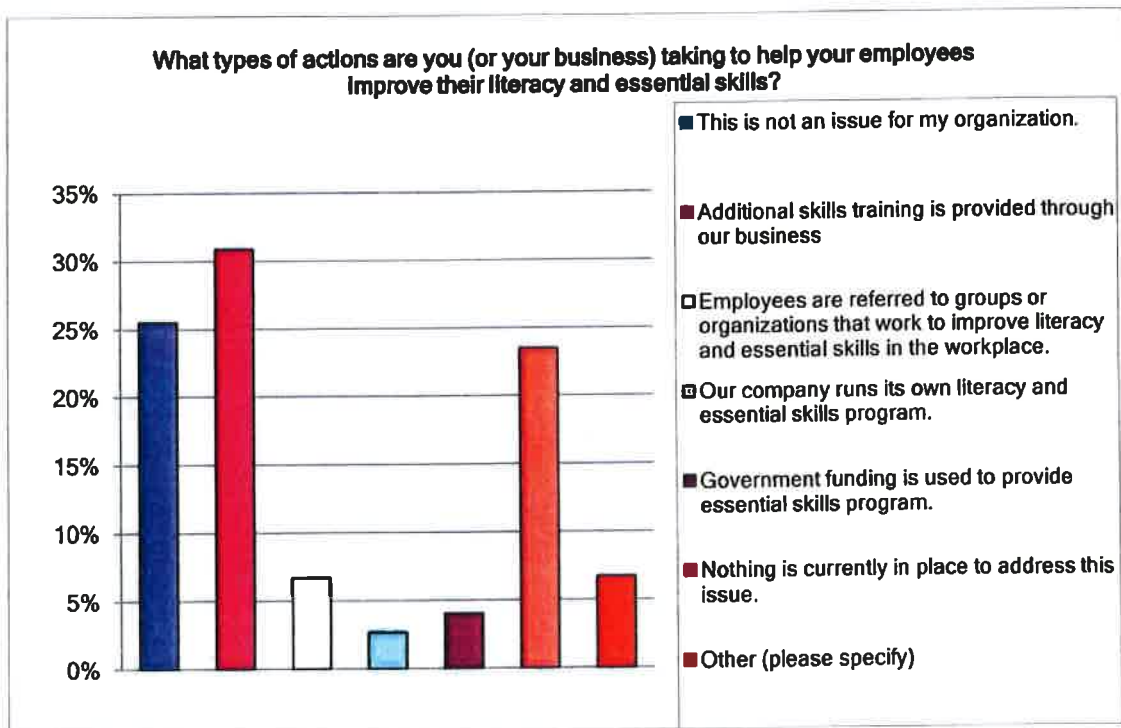
- 6 experienced staff work around new staff with low literacy levels rather than integrating them. We are a professional accounting firm and we are finding it very hard to hire personnel with basic financial literacy. For example we recently hired a foreign trained accountant that had never seen a loan amortization before. It is bit comic how low the general graduate level has declined to.
- 7 Our industry is not a high paying industry. Primarily physical jobs often go to those with weaker literacy skills
- 8 Being in Healthcare, Impact on Patient Care and safety
- 9 Written communications from supports staff can be a challenge.
- 10 I have only 1 employee - who is great
- 11 we provide literacy and essential skills in the community
- 12 Minor instances, but mediating consumes time



## Understanding Literacy in the Workplace

14. What types of actions are you (or your business) taking to help your employees improve their literacy and essential skills?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
This is not an issue for my organization.	25.5%	38
Additional skills training is provided through our business	30.9%	46
Employees are referred to groups or organizations that work to improve literacy and essential skills in the workplace.	6.7%	10
Our company runs its own literacy and essential skills program.	2.7%	4
Government funding is used to provide essential skills program.	4.0%	6
Nothing is currently in place to address this issue.	23.5%	35
Other (please specify)	6.7%	10
	<b>Total</b>	<b>149</b>



- Number Other (please specify)**
- 1 Informal training through group skill building exercises
  - 2 N/A - Self-employed
  - 3 Pay Trg costs on approved courses once it is completed successfully
  - 4 you failed to provide space for a more reasoned answer



## Understanding Literacy in the Workplace

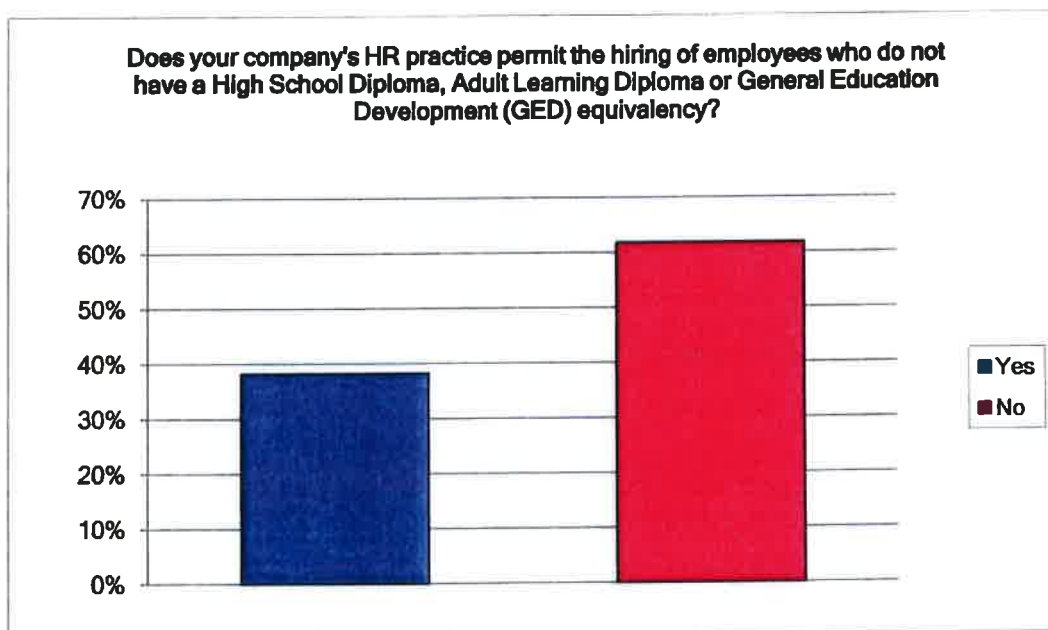
- 5 employees encouraged to take courses at business expense with minimal retention commitment
- 6 We provide opportunities for employees to improve their skills through actual work experience
- 7 Our industry assoc has skill programs
- 8 I personally have run an rotary project for more then ten years to give a dictionary to every grade four student in my school district. It will take years before my company benefits but I had to start somewhere
- 9 WE are ar Minsityrb of Health funded Health facility with no funds priveded for literacy or numeracy training.
- 10 I believe that if a person does not have literacy skills by the time they get out of high school, it is too late



## Understanding Literacy in the Workplace

15. Does your company's HR practice permit the hiring of employees who do not have a High School Diploma, Adult Learning Diploma or General Education Development (GED) equivalency?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	38.2%	55
No	61.8%	89
	<b>Total</b>	<b>144</b>

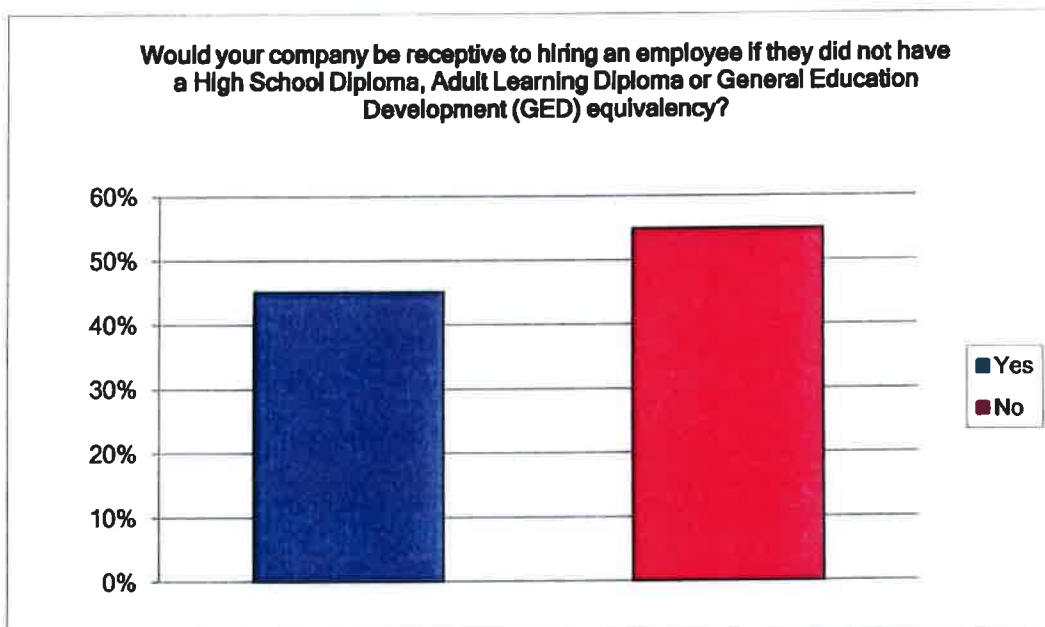




## Understanding Literacy in the Workplace

16. Would your company be receptive to hiring an employee if they did not have a High School Diploma, Adult Learning Diploma or General Education Development (GED) equivalency?

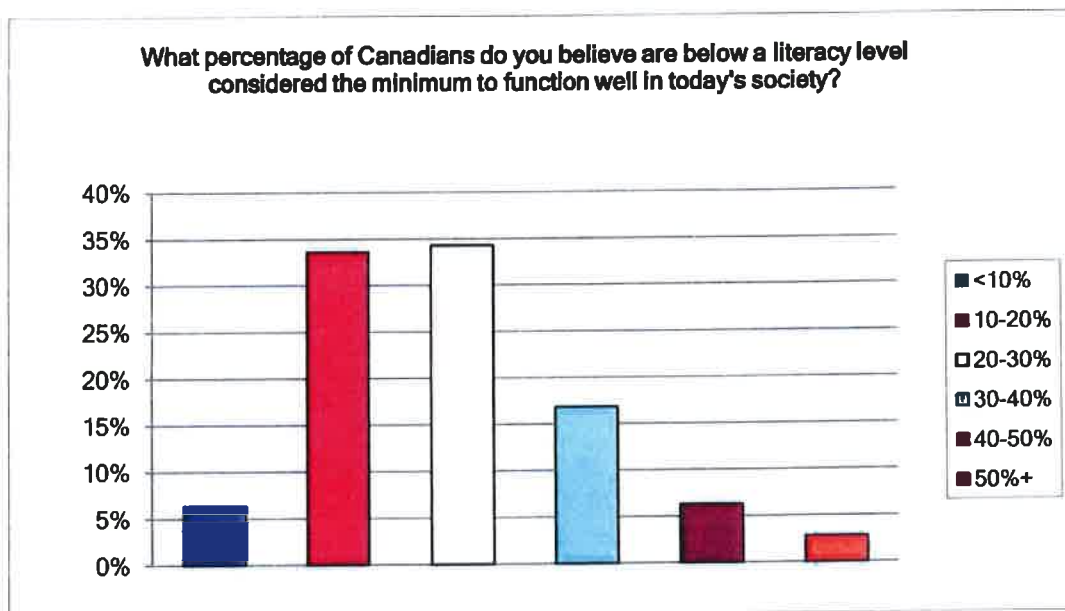
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	45.1%	65
No	54.9%	79
	<b>Total</b>	<b>144</b>



## Understanding Literacy in the Workplace

17. What percentage of Canadians do you believe are below a literacy level considered the minimum to function well in today's society?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
<10%	6.3%	9
10-20%	33.6%	48
20-30%	34.3%	49
30-40%	16.8%	24
40-50%	6.3%	9
50%+	2.8%	4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>143</b>

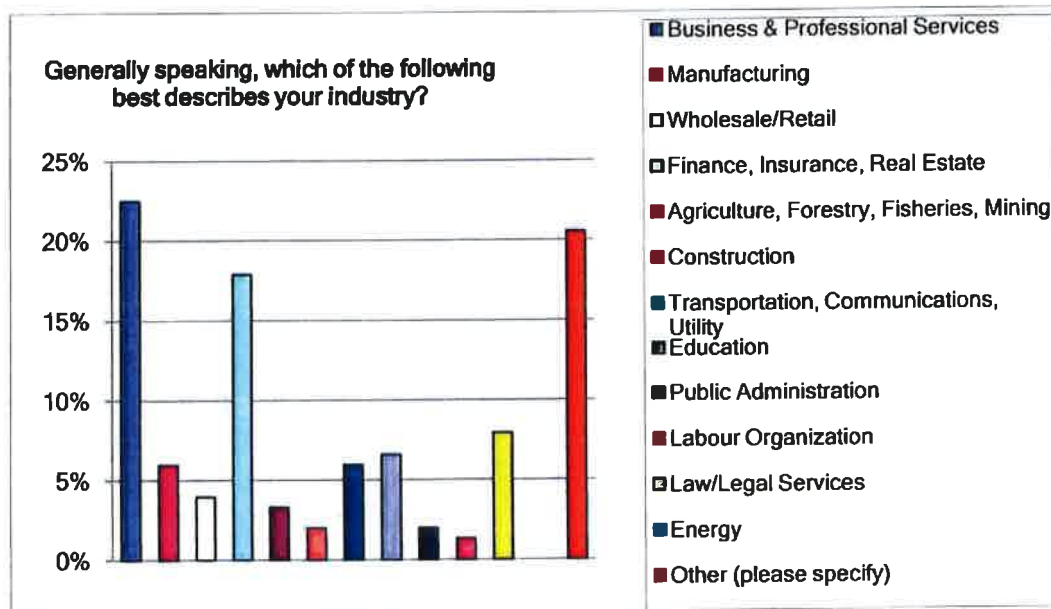




## Understanding Literacy in the Workplace

### 18. Generally speaking, which of the following best describes your industry?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Business & Professional Services	22.5%	34
Manufacturing	6.0%	9
Wholesale/Retail	4.0%	6
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	17.9%	27
Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, Mining	3.3%	5
Construction	2.0%	3
Transportation, Communications, Utility	6.0%	9
Education	6.6%	10
Public Administration	2.0%	3
Labour Organization	1.3%	2
Law/Legal Services	7.9%	12
Energy	0.0%	0
Other (please specify)	20.5%	31
	<b>Total</b>	<b>151</b>



- Number**                      **Other (please specify)**
- 1    Arts and Culture
  - 2    Industrial tires warehousing and sales





## Understanding Literacy in the Workplace

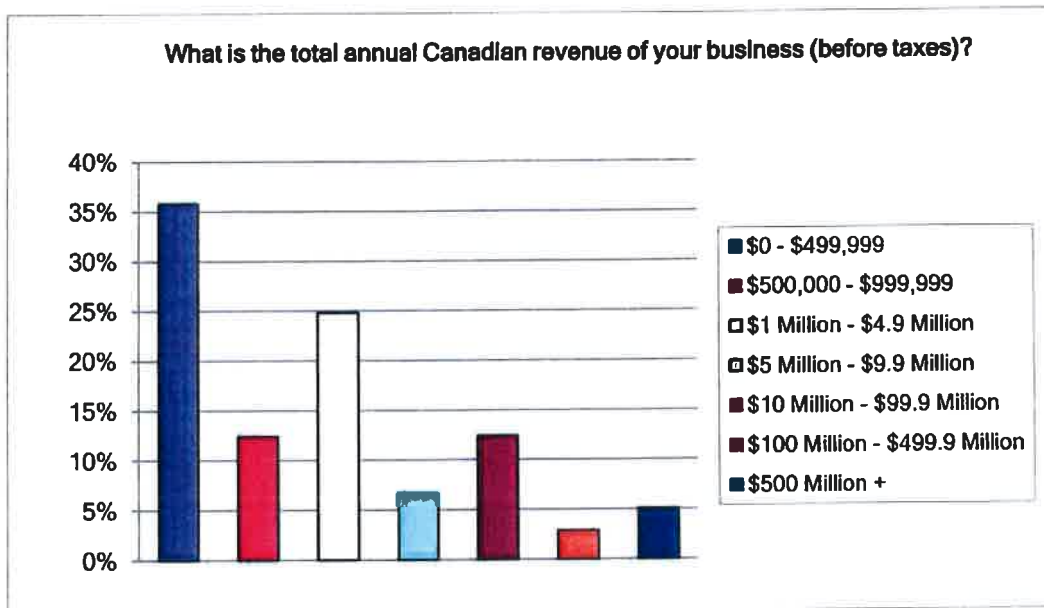
- 3 Health Care
- 4 this is a bogus survey
- 5 NON-PROFIT SERVICE
- 6 Social Services
- 7 Rotary Club
- 8 Hospitality
- 9 not for profit
- 10 Marketing Agency
- 11 Health & Wellness
- 12 Hospitality
- 13 Hospitality
- 14 Tourism
- 15 Phammacy
- 16 Healthcare Consulting
- 17 Hotel industry
- 18 Healthcare
- 19 Healthcare - Long Term Care Facility
- 20 health services
- 21 Public Library
- 22 healthcare
- 23 aircraft engine maintenance
- 24 rental and sales
- 25 TOURISM BUREAU
- 26 Not For Profit
- 27 Not-For-Profit
- 28 Health
- 29 television broadcaster, news and sales
- 30 Specialty Advertizing
- 31 brewery, product, and selling.



## Understanding Literacy in the Workplace

19. What is the total annual Canadian revenue of your business (before taxes)?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
\$0 - \$499,999	35.8%	49
\$500,000 - \$999,999	12.4%	17
\$1 Million - \$4.9 Million	24.8%	34
\$5 Million - \$9.9 Million	6.6%	9
\$10 Million - \$99.9 Million	12.4%	17
- \$499.9     \$100 Million - \$499.9 Million	2.9%	4
+             \$500 Million +	5.1%	7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>137</b>

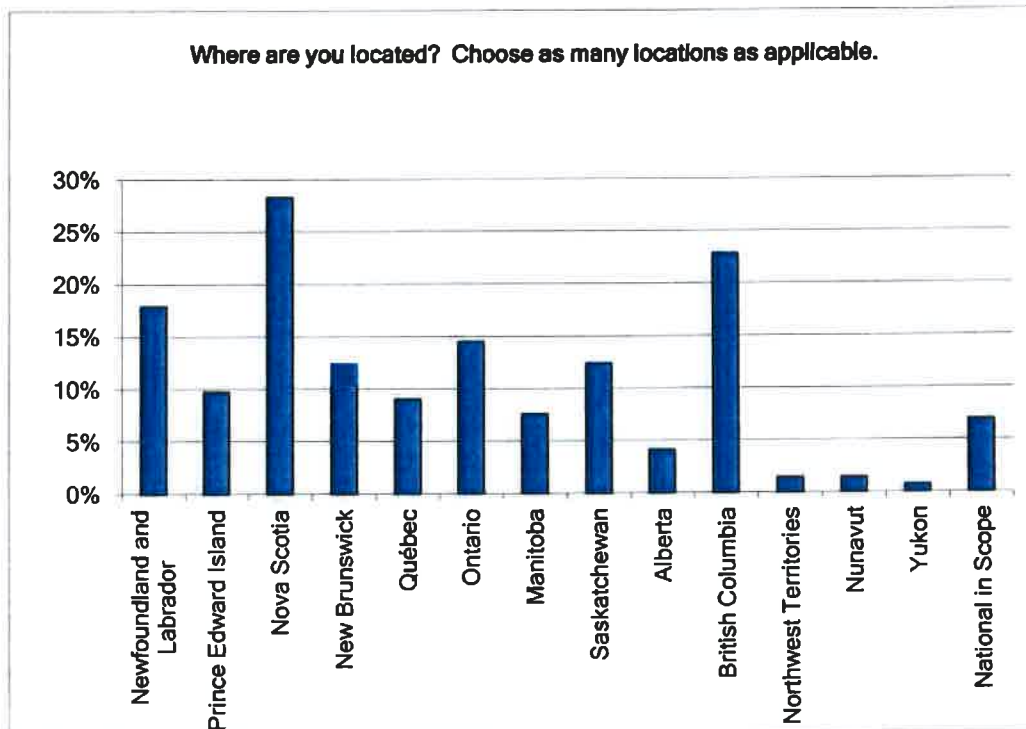




## Understanding Literacy in the Workplace

20. Where are you located? Choose as many locations as applicable.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Newfoundland and Labrador	17.9%	26
Prince Edward Island	9.7%	14
Nova Scotia	28.3%	41
New Brunswick	12.4%	18
Québec	9.0%	13
Ontario	14.5%	21
Manitoba	7.6%	11
Saskatchewan	12.4%	18
Alberta	4.1%	6
British Columbia	22.8%	33
Northwest Territories	1.4%	2
Nunavut	1.4%	2
Yukon	0.7%	1
National in Scope	6.9%	10
<b>Total</b>		<b>216</b>

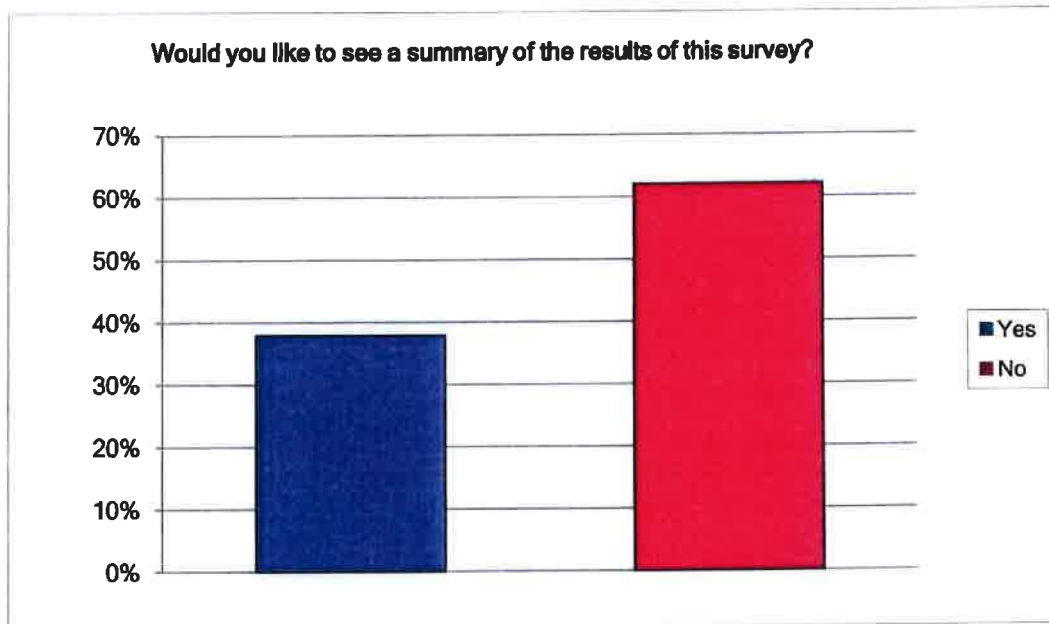




## Understanding Literacy in the Workplace

21. Would you like to see a summary of the results of this survey?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	37.9%	55
No	62.1%	90
If yes, please provide your contact information.		40
	<b>Total</b>	<b>145</b>



**Number** If yes, please provide your contact information.

- 1 ray.lewis@aem-corp.com
- 2 gscott313@hotmail.com
- 3 vjn@shaw.ca
- 4 helmja@shaw.ca
- 5 terry@terryprice.com
- 6 bogus survey
- 7 bmullett@accesswave.ca
- 8 islandbusinessnews@gmail.com
- 9 craig@craigsolutions.ca
- 10 Bruce@claytonhospitality.com
- 11 jt0000@telus.net