



# Workforce Development Survey Report

**2015**  
SONOMA  
COUNTY

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# Foreword

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The *2015 Workforce Development Survey Report* was produced on behalf of the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors by the Sonoma County Economic Development Board (EDB) and the Sonoma County Workforce Investment Board (WIB) to assess current workforce realities and determine employer needs. The EDB provides information and referral services for local businesses; research and reports on local economic activities, trends and projections; and provides market analysis. The WIB works to ensure Sonoma County's residents have the skills, training, and education to achieve their career goals and local employers are able to hire, develop, and retain outstanding employees.

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# Executive Summary

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August 2015

Recognizing the importance of aligning employer needs with local education and training efforts, the Sonoma County Economic Development Board (EDB) in partnership with the Sonoma County Workforce Investment Board (WIB) surveyed local organizations to determine current workforce realities and employer needs. The 162 respondents represent a diverse range of industries, sizes, and years of operation.

## **Key Findings:**

- In the past 12 months, 87% of surveyed businesses reported hiring new employees.
- In the next year, the same number of respondents (87%) expect to hire new employees.
- Lack of qualified applicants (39%), affordability of Sonoma County for workers (37%), and increased labor costs (34%) were the largest workforce concerns.
- Craigslist (76%), word of mouth (65%), and internal referrals (54%) were the most utilized hiring resources.
- Employers are finding deficiencies in soft skills (63%), technical skills (56%), and job experience (52%) in prospective new hires from Sonoma County's talent pool.

The EDB & WIB encourages readers to utilize the information in this report to better understand the needs and demands of the workforce within Sonoma County. These survey results reveal the lack of training (industry specific, bilingual, business systems, etc.) and shortage of qualified talent at all levels. While the survey is not exhaustive, the findings in this report underscore pressing workforce and talent attraction issues.

The results of this survey will be used by the leadership of EDB and WIB to enhance workforce development programs. The surveyed employers stressed a growing need for talent attraction, training services, and youth and employee development services. The EDB offers business tools that include assistance in talent attraction; navigating the permit process; market research tools to identify growth potential; site selection assistance to help locate a site to meet business needs; customized demographic and psychographic information to help identify customers; and connections to additional resources to help local business grow and expand. Sonoma County Job Link, the one-stop career center administered by the WIB, offers job counseling; training; scholarships; hiring events and job fairs; and business referral services. Employers and job seekers are encouraged to take advantage of these resources.

Sincerely,



Ben Stone  
EDB Executive Director



Sherry Alderman  
WIB Director



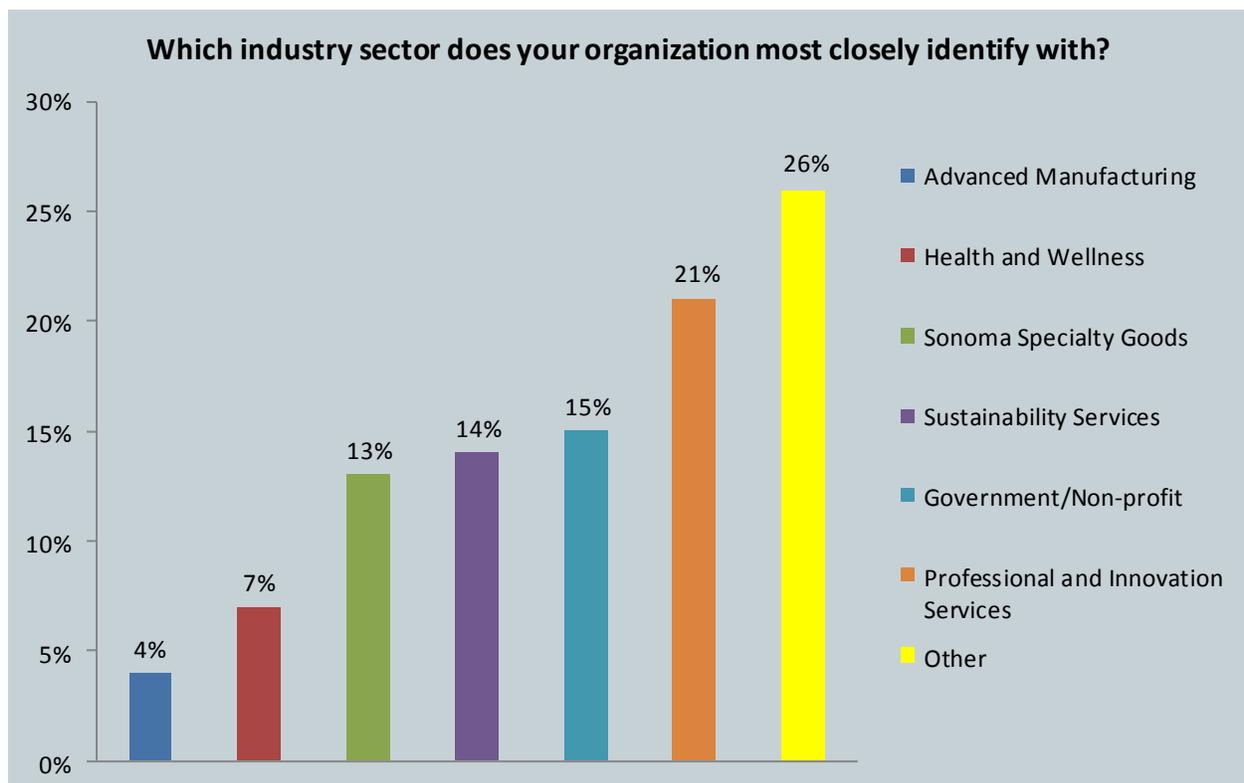
# Respondent Profiles

The 162 organizations surveyed represent a diverse range of industries, sizes, and years of operation.

## Industry Sectors

Survey respondents were asked to identify the industry sector they most closely identified with from the options below:

- **Advanced Manufacturing:** electronics manufacturing, tech equipment
- **Health and Wellness:** hospitals, home care, community care, wellness products & services
- **Sonoma Specialty Goods:** agriculture, tourism, food & beverage
- **Sustainability Services:** construction, energy & water, environment
- **Government/Non-profit**
- **Professional and Innovation Services:** legal, accounting, management, scientific, technological consulting, software & computer design
- **Other**



Nearly 26% of respondents chose “other” and indicated light manufacturing, finance, education, and media.

## Employees

Of the businesses surveyed, 35% had one to 15 employees, 30% had between 16 to 49 employees, 30% had 50 or more employees, and 4% had no employees.

## Operating Years in Sonoma County

The majority of the respondents (88%) have been located in Sonoma County for more than 10 years, while the remaining 12% have been operating in Sonoma County between four to nine years.

# Workforce Shifts

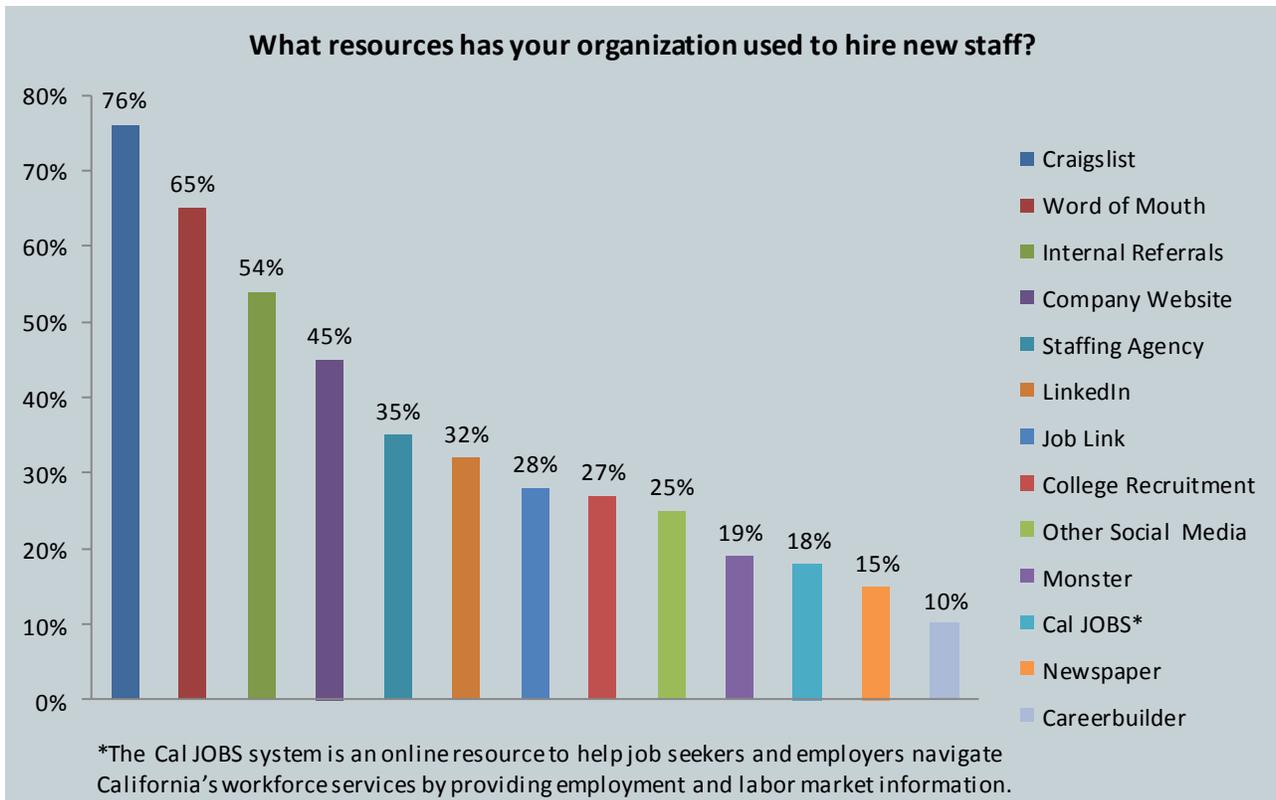
## Hiring

Nearly 87% of the businesses surveyed hired new employees in the past 12 months, down from 2014 (99%). Employers continue to be optimistic about the economic outlook, with 87% of the surveyed businesses planning on hiring in the next 12 months. More than half of the respondents (58%) expect to add between one and five employees in the next year; compared to 9% who plan to hire more than 31 employees.



## Recruitment Resources

Similar to 2014, Craigslist (76%), word of mouth (65%), and internal referrals (54%) are the most heavily utilized recruitment resources. While company websites (45%) and staffing agencies (35%) round out the top five recruitment resources, both are down from 2014's utilization at 59% and 45%, respectively.



LinkedIn has become a widely used recruitment tool with 32% of surveyed businesses using the professional social networking site to find talent. In contrast, Monster is down to 18% utilization, compared with 33% a year ago.

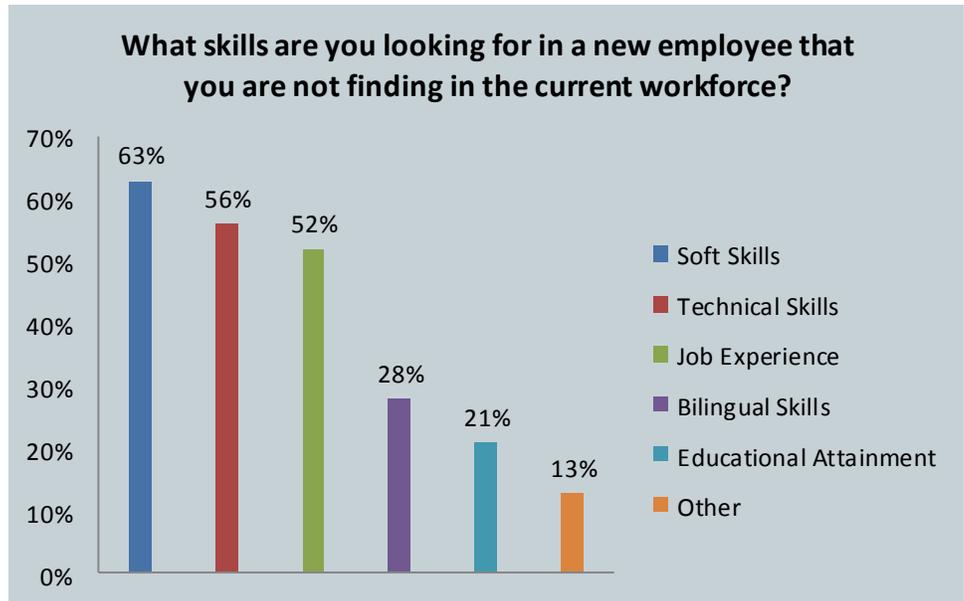
## Retirement

A majority of the employers surveyed (64%) expect less than one percent of their workforce to retire in the next two years. This is a slight increase over 2014.

# Local Talent

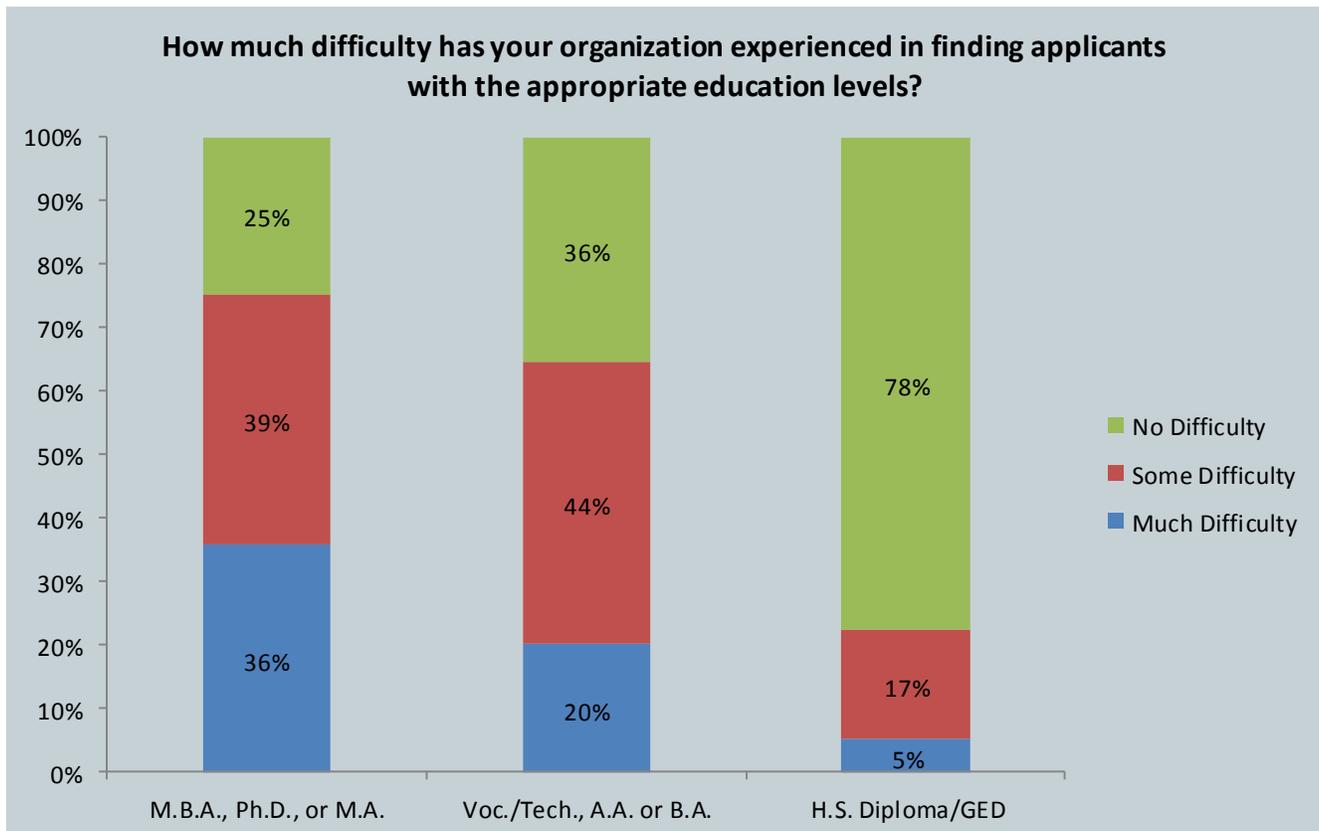
## Skill Deficiencies

63% of respondents identified the most prevalent skill deficiency as soft skills (attitude, communication, enthusiasm, conflict resolution, critical thinking, etc.) Other talent deficiencies identified by surveyed businesses include technical skills (56%), job experience (52%), bilingual skills (28%), and educational attainment (21%).



## Education Level

36% of respondents reported much difficulty in finding applicants with professional degrees (M.B.A., Ph.D., or M.A.) while 39% also experienced some difficulty. 44% of respondents experienced some difficulty in finding applicants with post-secondary education (vocational/technical, A.A., or B.A.). In contrast, 78% of respondents had no difficulty finding applicants with secondary education (high school diploma/GED).



# Occupational Training

## Training Providers

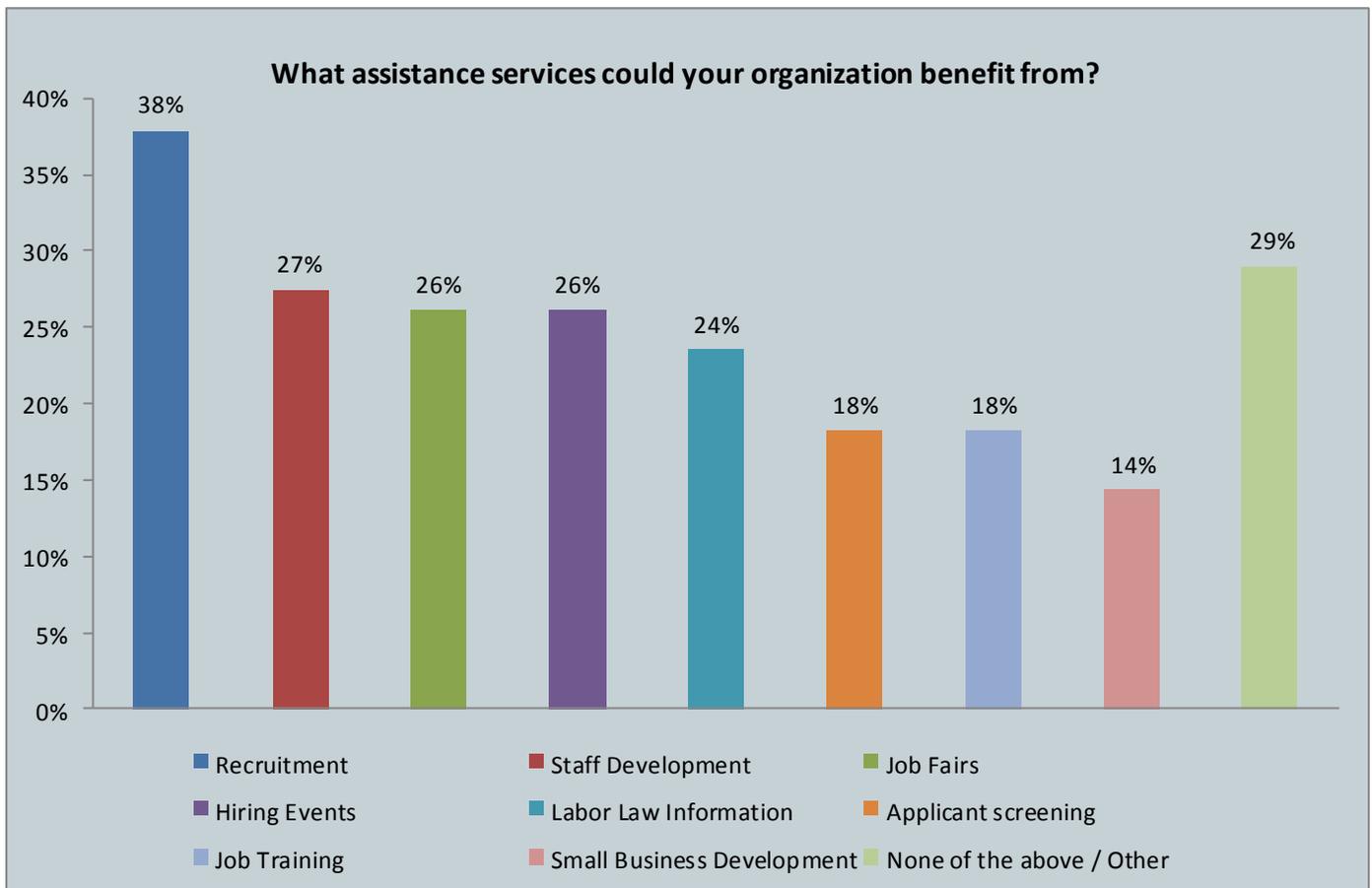
The majority (73%) of surveyed businesses provide training internally to their employees, but many employers also rely on external resources, such as consultants (40%), internet resources (35%), and Santa Rosa Junior College (32%).

## Career Training Opportunities

Over 60% of surveyed employers provide or pay for internal mentoring programs and outsourced workshops or seminars for their employees. Internships and tuition reimbursement programs were the least likely to be provided to employees.

## Assistance Services

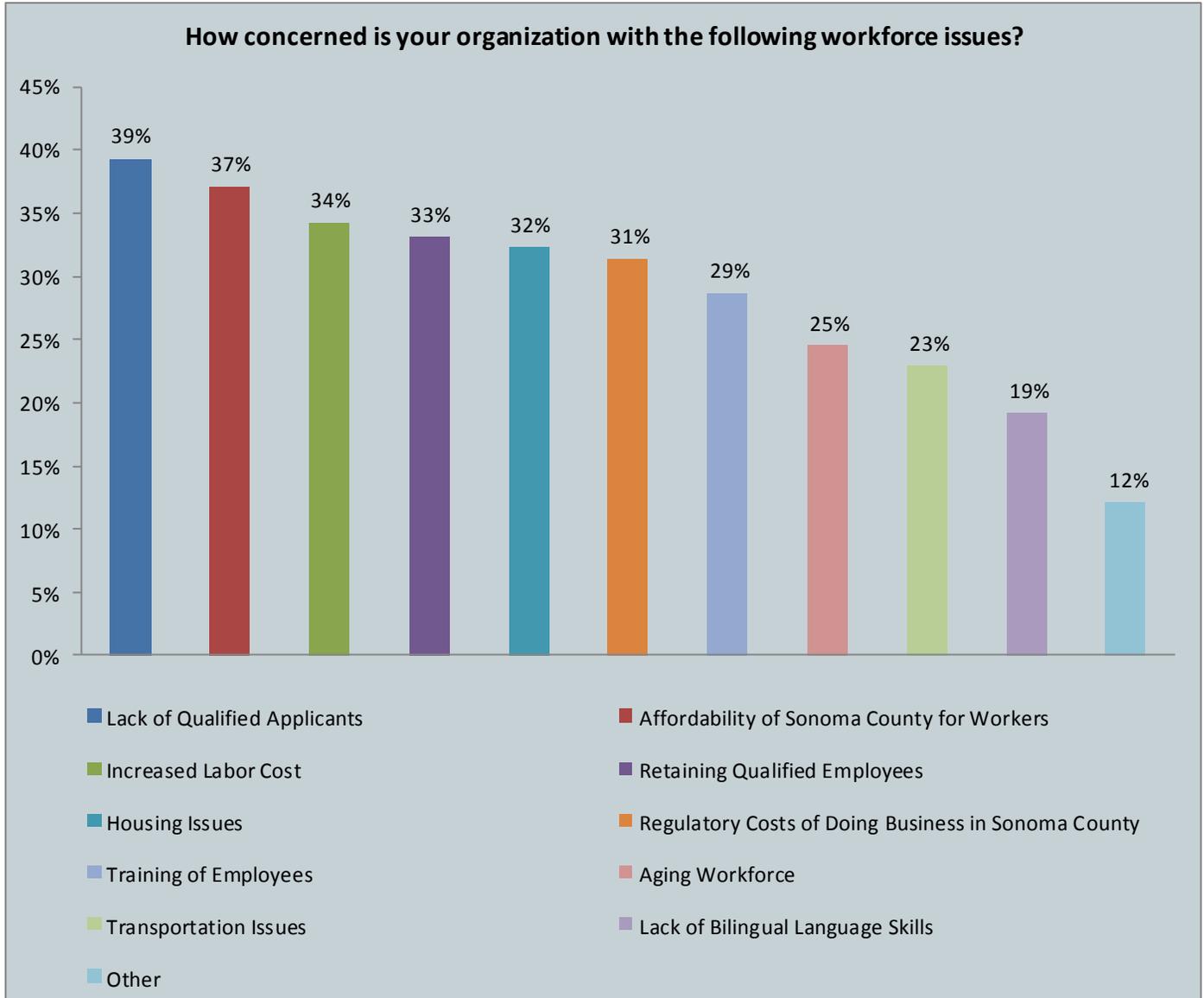
When asked to indicate what assistance services, if any, they would find beneficial, most respondents indicated recruitment (38%). Other popular choices were staff development (28%), job fairs (26%) and hiring events (26%).



# Workforce Issues

## Workforce Concerns

When asked about the following workforce issues, respondents were mostly concerned with the lack of qualified applicants (39%), affordability of Sonoma County for workers (37%), and increased labor costs (34%). The results reflect similar concerns in 2014. Housing issues (32%) was added as an additional workforce issue this year and ranked in the top five along with retaining qualified employees (33%).



# Methodology, Sources, and Notes

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## ***Note on Data Sources***

The *2015 Workforce Development Survey Report* provides a detailed overview of the workforce needs of Sonoma County employers. Data utilized in the report was obtained through the creation and distribution of an online survey to a diverse sample of Sonoma County businesses, non-profits, and public agencies.

The *2015 Workforce Development Survey Report* is not intended to provide a complete analysis of the needs of Sonoma County employers. The EDB and WIB believe that the information contained within this report is accurate and reflective of the most current data available, but this does not guarantee accuracy or completeness. Use of data from an outside source does not represent an endorsement of any product or service by the EDB, WIB, or any of their members or affiliates.

Interested readers are encouraged to contact data resource agencies for further research or to visit the EDB website, [www.sonomaedb.org](http://www.sonomaedb.org) for more information. Readers are also encouraged to direct all inquiries or suggestions for information to include in proximate reports to the EDB by calling (707) 656-7170 or emailing [edb@sonoma-county.org](mailto:edb@sonoma-county.org).

## ***Sources***

2015 Workforce Development Survey

## ***Survey Methodology***

Invitations to complete the 2015 Workforce Development Survey were emailed to businesses identified by the EDB and WIB. The 18 question survey was administered using SurveyMonkey, and 162 responses were received.

## ***Acknowledgements***

Leland Holcomb, Workforce and Youth Project Coordinator, was responsible for the development of this report including the preparation and distribution of the survey, the collection and analysis of the survey results, and the initial development of the *2015 Workforce Development Survey Report*.

Angela Beran, Administrative Aide to the Workforce Investment Board, was responsible for final edits and publication of the *2015 Workforce Development Survey Report*.

Cristin Tuidier, Program Planning and Evaluation Analyst with the Sonoma County Human Services Department, oversaw the analysis and development of the *2015 Workforce Development Survey Report*.

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