

# Work Integrated Learning (WIL) in BC: Trends, Issues, and Business Perspectives

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**November 2020**

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Association for Co-operative Education and  
Work-integrated Learning BC/Yukon and  
BC Chamber of Commerce

Report by: Larose Research & Strategy



Larose Research & Strategy

Tourism. Land Use. Labour.



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## 1.0 Executive Summary

In September 2020 the BC Chamber of Commerce and the Association for Co-operative Education and Work Integrated Learning BC/Yukon (ACE-WIL) partnered to develop a first-ever survey of BC employers about their awareness, use, and other considerations related to Work Integrated Learning (WIL).

The survey was in the field from September 9 – 28 on the BC Chamber of Commerce MindReader™ platform.

The survey was distributed to BC MindReader™ members, and an open link was shared with local chambers across BC, publicly through social media, and provided to other stakeholders and partners of the Association for Co-operative Education and Work Integrated Learning BC/Yukon.

Initial questions in the survey had 331 responses while latter questions had 293 responses, resulting in a very respectable survey drop-off rate of 11%.

With 331 responses for initial questions and 293 for latter questions, the statistical confidence level is +/- 5.2 to +/- 5.5%, 19 times out of 20. This means the results can be considered reliable and representative of BC business community sentiment.

The key findings from the report were as follows:

**General Low Awareness of WIL** – there was an overall low level of awareness of WIL by employers, with only three types of WIL having more than 50% employer awareness: apprenticeships (65%), work experience related to the student’s field of study (57%), and internships (55%).

**Strategic Benefits of WIL** – in the context of COVID-19 recovery, employers see strategic advantages in harnessing student talent to foster innovation and competitiveness, with the most common objectives being strategic in nature not operational: “deploying new technology to boost innovation and competitiveness” was the most common objective (47% of respondents), followed by “developing new & innovative products / services / experiences (46%), and “identifying new / niche markets” (40%).

**Social Responsibility / Giving Back** – the most commonly cited benefit of working with post-secondary students was the employers’ desires to “contribute to a stronger future workforce and economy,” with 71% of employers saying this was extremely important or important.

**The Need for Individualized Support** – the most common needs to support employer engagement with WIL were centered around individualized support such as business-specific case studies and direct

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assistance from a WIL specialist to assist with understanding WIL options, benefits, and possible funding resources specific to the individual business.

**Unique Circumstances of Large vs Small Businesses** – different sized employers have unique perspectives and needs regarding WIL, with larger employers having a preference for in-person forums and workshops embedded in existing events to learn about WIL, whereas smaller employers prefer pre-recorded webinars to learn about WIL. Businesses of all sizes and in all industries require support in navigating the various programs and funding options available to them.

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## 2.0 Background and Purpose

### 2.1 Report Purpose

The purpose of this report is to identify B.C. employer perspectives regarding Work Integrated Learning (WIL) in B.C., including their awareness of the different types of WIL, experiences working with post-secondary students, and opportunities and challenges for enhancing the engagement of post-secondary students in B.C. businesses.

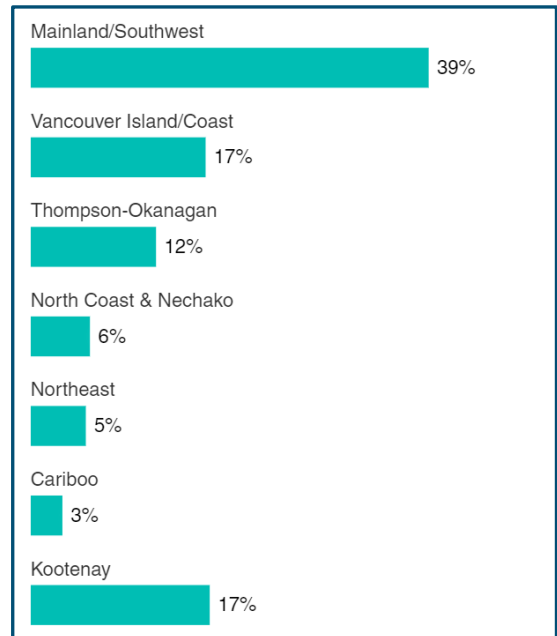
## 3.0 Summary of Findings

### 3.1 Respondent Demographics

#### Respondent Region

The survey was representative of all regions of the province, with the exception of the Kootenays which had a higher proportion of respondents relative to its population (17% of respondents with only 3% of the B.C. population). The other regions had response levels that were similar to their populations relative to other regions.

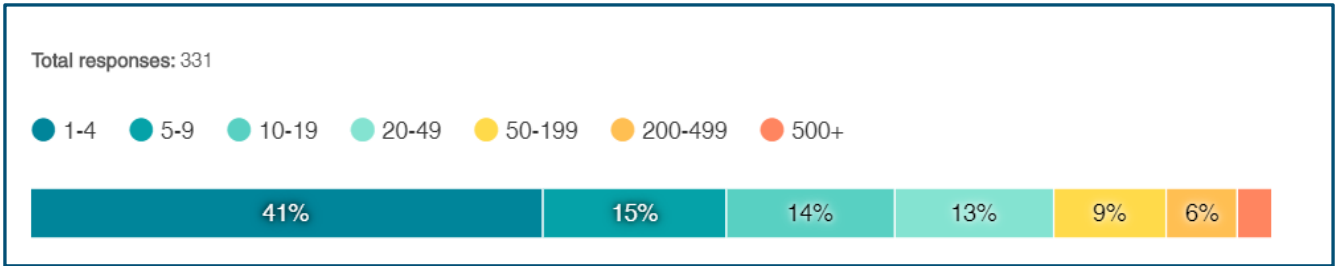
**Figure 1:** Respondent Region (n=310)



## Size of Business

More than half of the respondent businesses (56%) had fewer than ten (10) employees, while 17% of respondents were from businesses with 50 or more employees. See Figure 2, below.

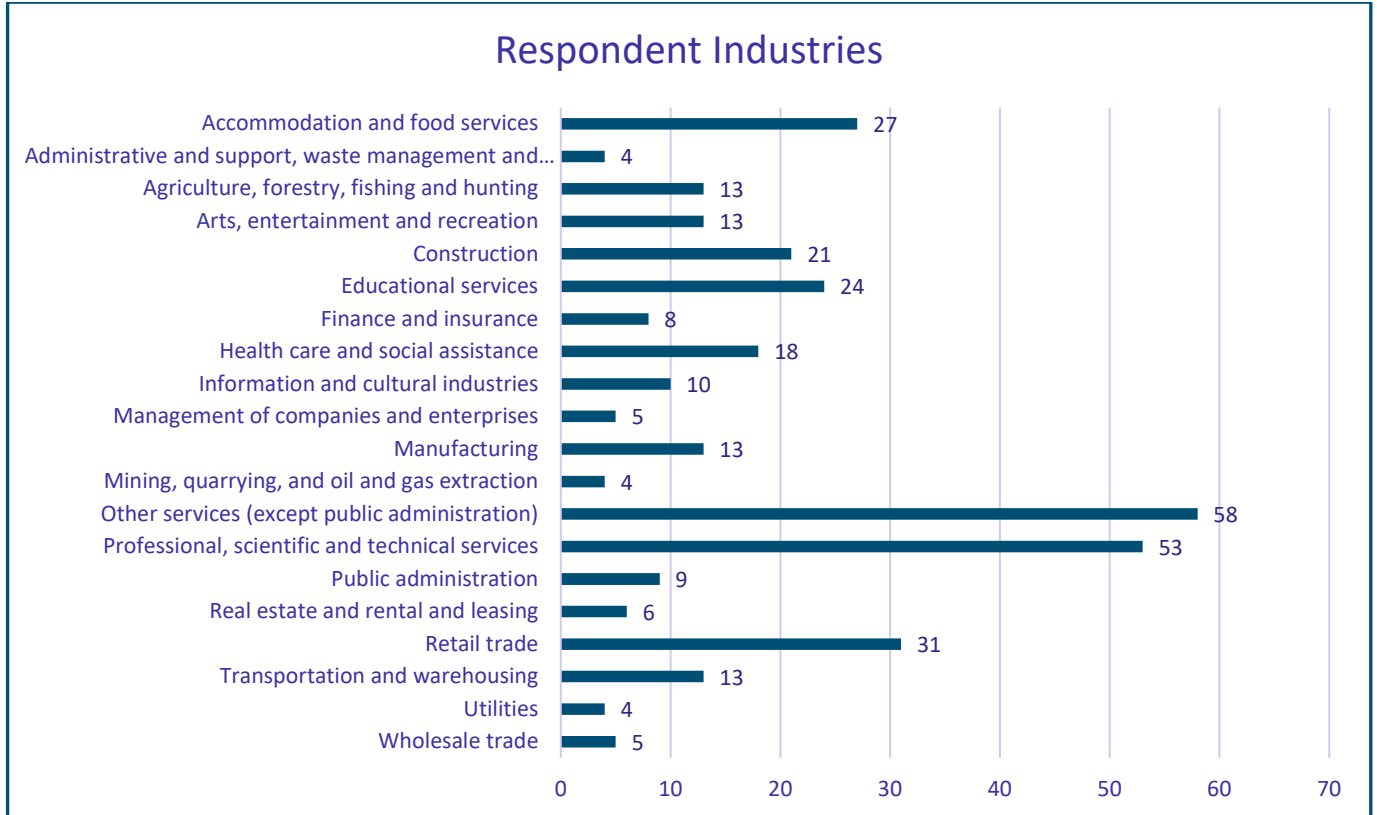
**Figure 2: Size of Business**



## Respondent Industries

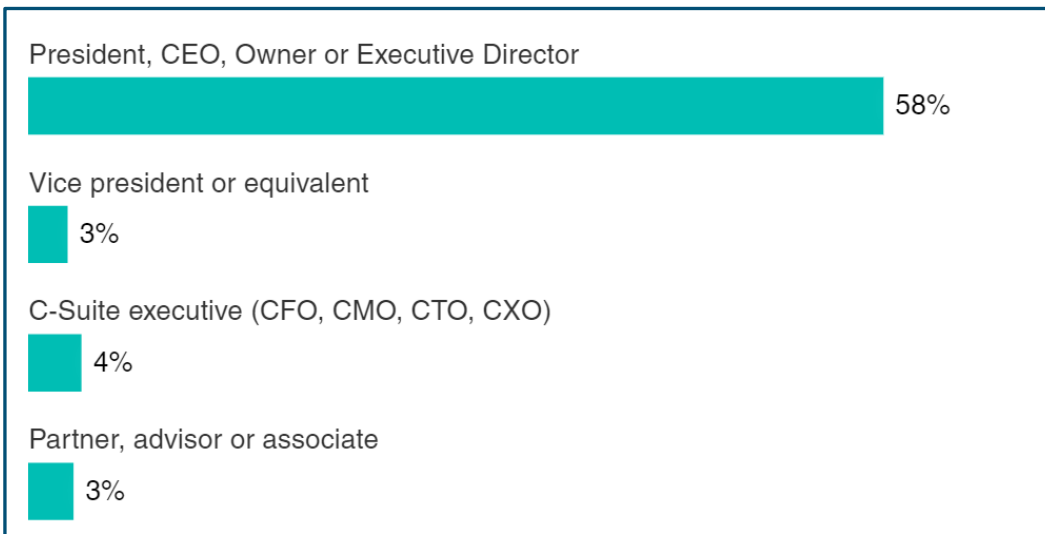
Respondents represented a wide range of industry groups from the primary, secondary, and service sectors. See Figure 3, below.

**Figure 3: Respondent Industries (n=331)**



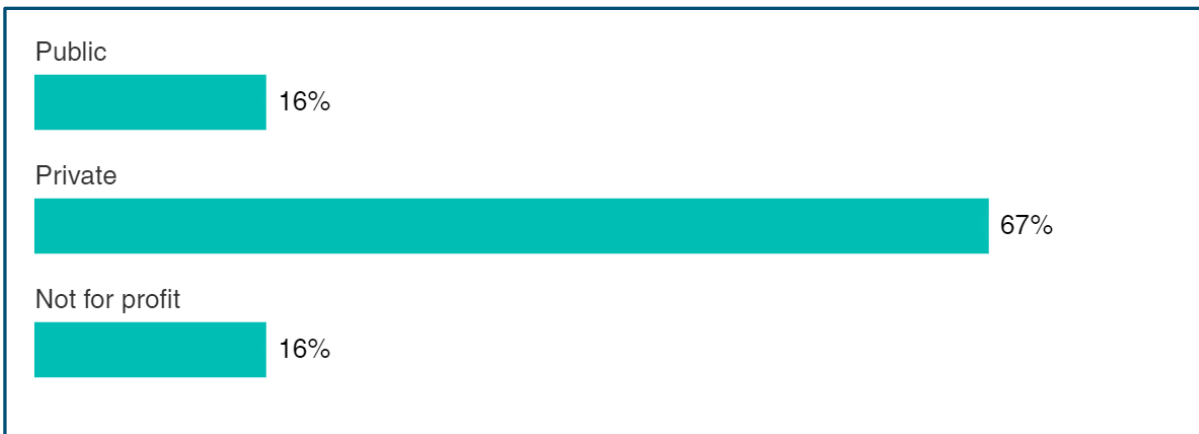
As Figure 3 (above) shows, the industries with the most respondents were service-oriented, such as other services (58), scientific/professional services (53), and retail trade (31).

**Figure 4: Respondent Titles**



More than half (58%) of respondents were the senior executive of the organization, whether a President, CEO, Owner, or Executive Director.

**Figure 5: Respondent Sector (316 responses)**

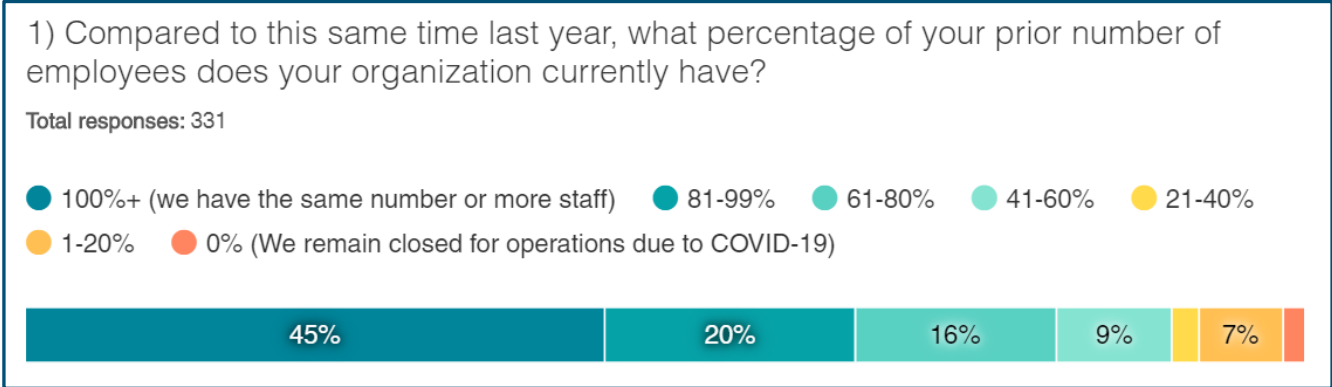


As Figure 5 (above) shows, two-thirds of respondents were in the private sector, while the remaining one-third were equally split between the public and not-for-profit sectors.

### 3.2 Workforce Hiring in B.C.

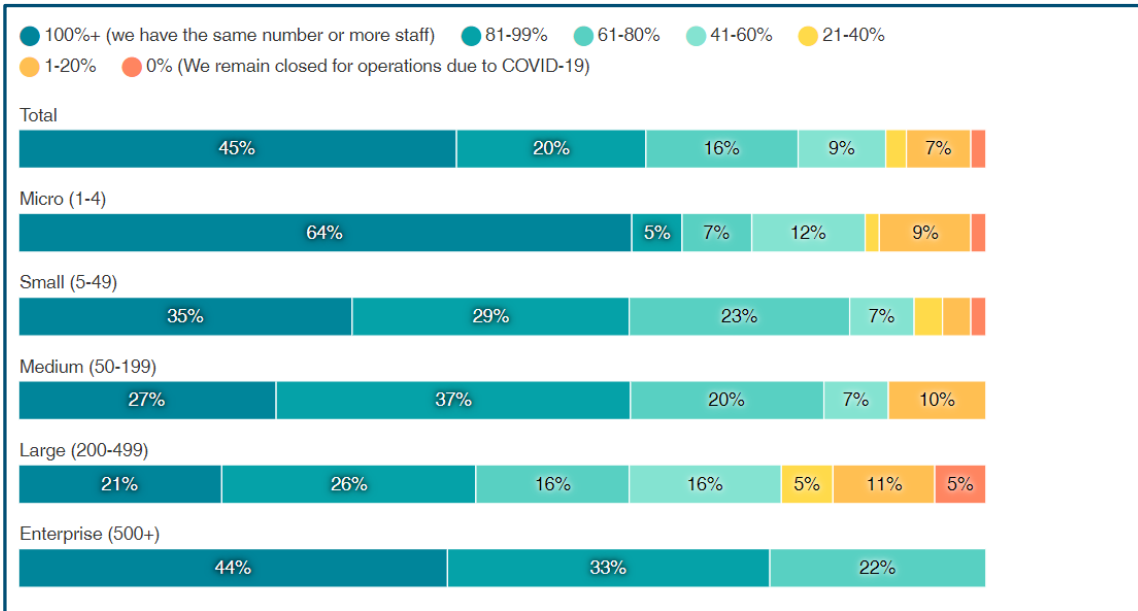
As Figure 6 (below) shows, fewer than half of employers (45%) indicated that they are operating with a full complement of staff compared with the same time last year (2019), while over one-third (35%) have less than 80% of their staff currently employed. In the context of WIL, this suggests that employers are reluctant to hire due to ongoing uncertainty in the economy, which reduces the availability of work for students. It also suggests the possibility of pent up demand for workers in the medium-to-long-term if the impacts of COVID-19 on the economy can be more thoroughly mitigated.

**Figure 6:** Current Workforce Size



When breaking down these results by the size of business, there were two clear trends: micro enterprises (1-4 employees) were much more likely to have retained a full or nearly-full complement of staff, whereas large enterprises (200-499 employees) were much less likely to have retained the full workforce levels that were experienced prior to COVID-19. See Figure 7, below.

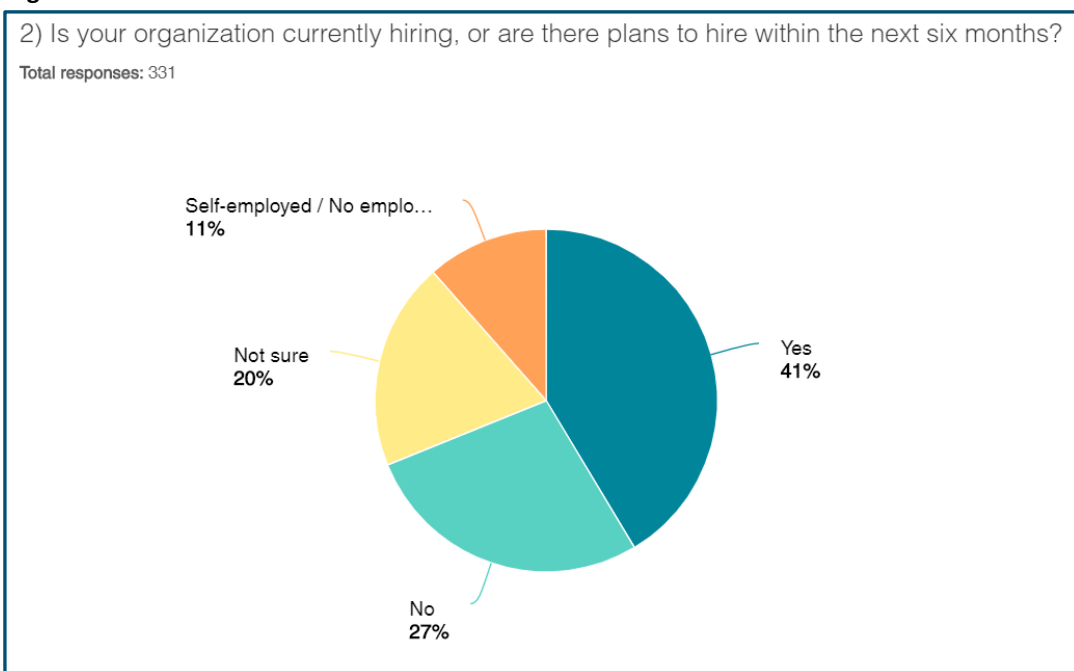
**Figure 7: Percentage of Workforce Retained by Size of Business**



### 3.3 Intentions to Hire

Supporting the above-mentioned possibility of pent-up demand for workers, more than two-fifths (41%) of respondents indicated that their organization is currently hiring or plans to hire in the next six months. Just over one-quarter of respondents (27%) indicated that they do not plan to hire. See Figure 8, below.

**Figure 8: Intentions to Hire**



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### 3.4 Awareness of Work-integrated Learning

One of the keys to successfully engaging the B.C. employer community in WIL is a robust level of awareness of the many types of WIL that can be offered by post-secondary institutions, from more commonly known types of WIL such as apprenticeships and co-operative education, to lesser known types of WIL such as community-based service learning and student-led entrepreneurship.

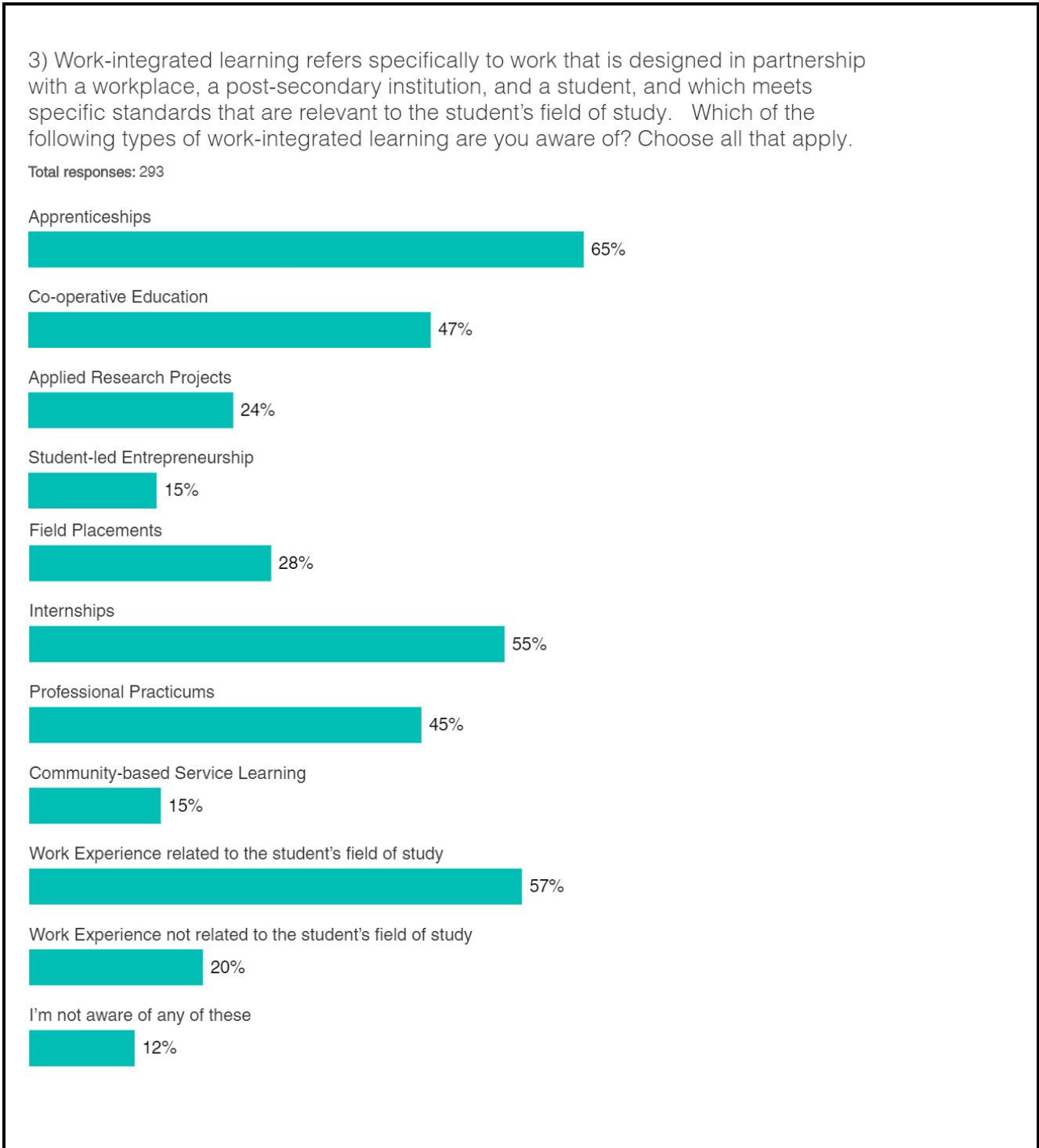
As Figure 9 (below) shows, the levels of awareness are modest for all types of WIL, with the possible exception of apprenticeships (65% employer awareness). Even more common types of WIL such as internships, co-operative education, professional practicums are around the 50% awareness level.

Half of the types of WIL scored below 30% awareness, including field placements (28%), applied research projects (24%), work experience not related to the student's field of study (20%), student-led entrepreneurship (15%), and community-based service learning (15%).

This generally low level of awareness can be considered an awareness-raising opportunity for all types of WIL, and in particular the lesser known types of WIL. However, these low levels of awareness also serve as a caution regarding the challenges with communicating these messages in a generally crowded marketing and public relations world dominated by digital messaging.

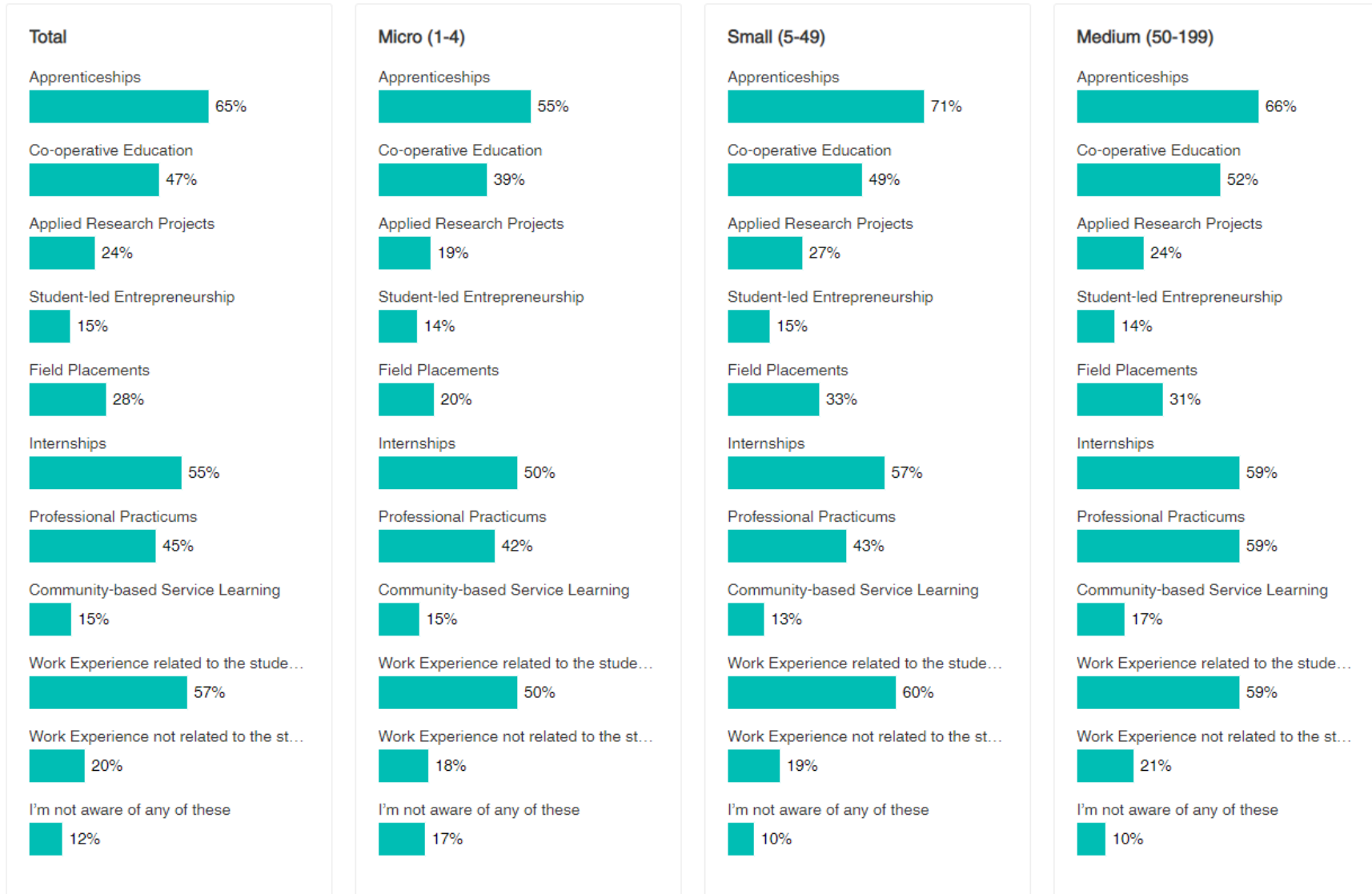
See Figure 9 (next page).

**Figure 9: Awareness of Different Types of WIL**

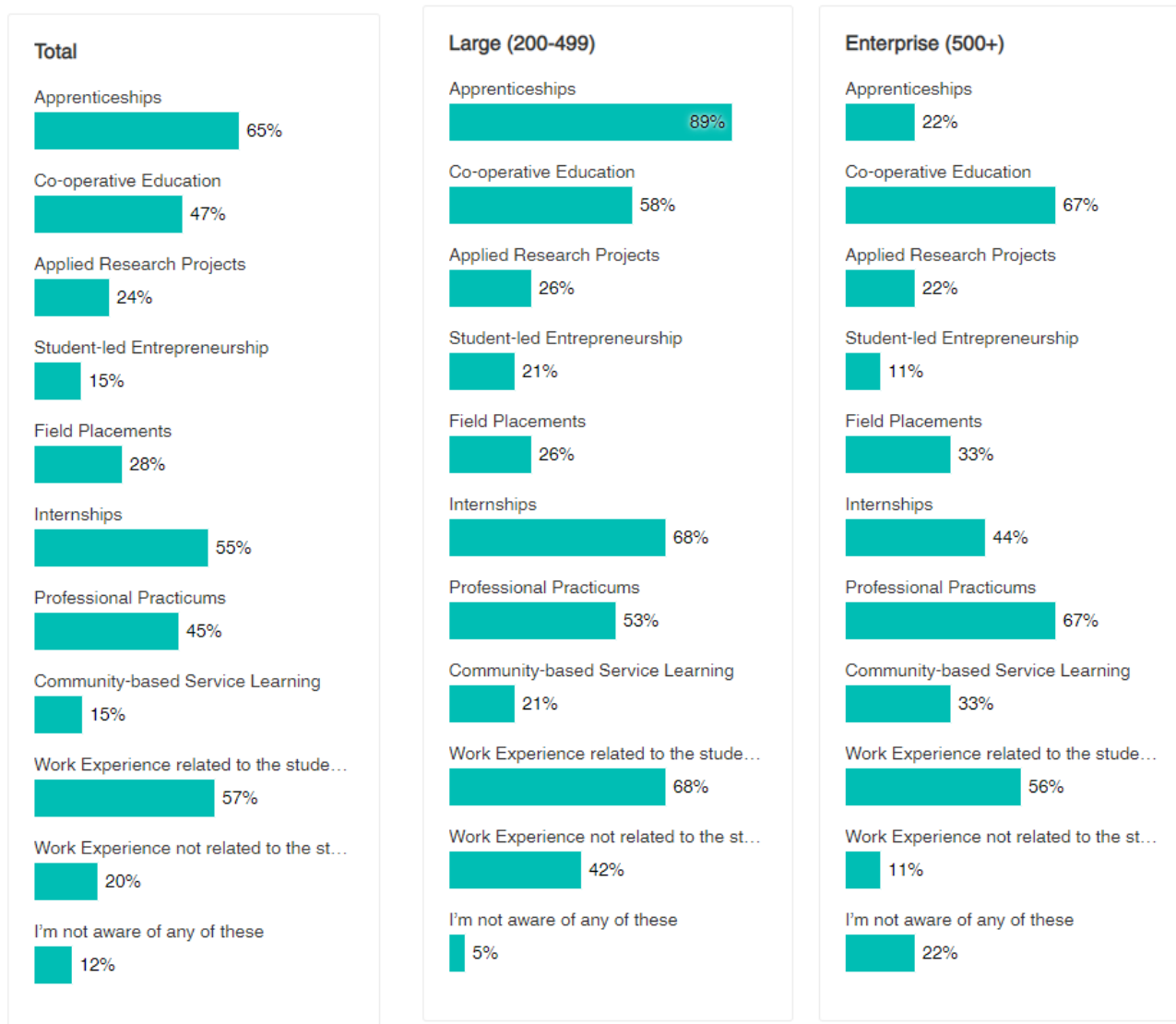


The awareness levels of different types of WIL varies considerably depending on the size of the business, with large businesses (200-499 staff) having the highest overall awareness levels. See Figures 10 and 11, below.

**Figure 10: Awareness of Types of WIL – by Size of Business (Micro to Medium Sized)**

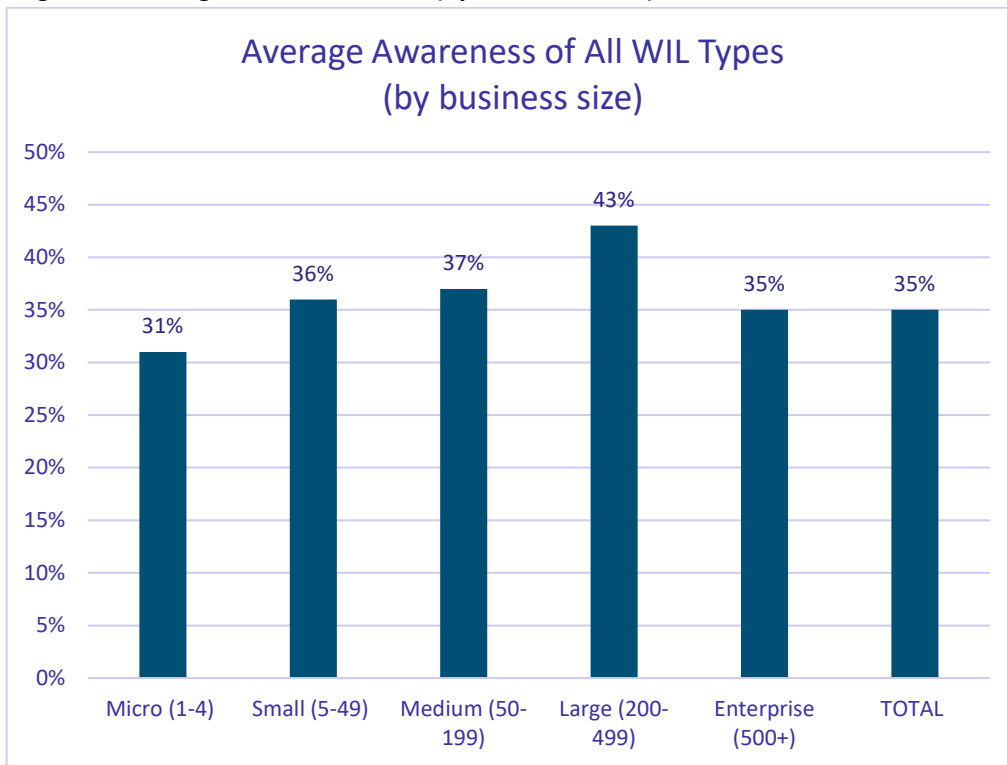


**Figure 11: Awareness of Types of WIL – by Size of Business (Large and Enterprise)**



The average level of awareness was relatively consistent across all sizes of business, with large businesses (200-499 staff) having a 43% average awareness across all types of WIL, and the lowest being micro-sized businesses (1-4 staff), with 31% average awareness for all types of WIL. Small (5-49), medium (50-199) and enterprise (500+) demonstrated no statistically significant difference in levels of awareness. See Figure 12, below.

**Figure 12: Average Awareness of WIL (by size of business)**

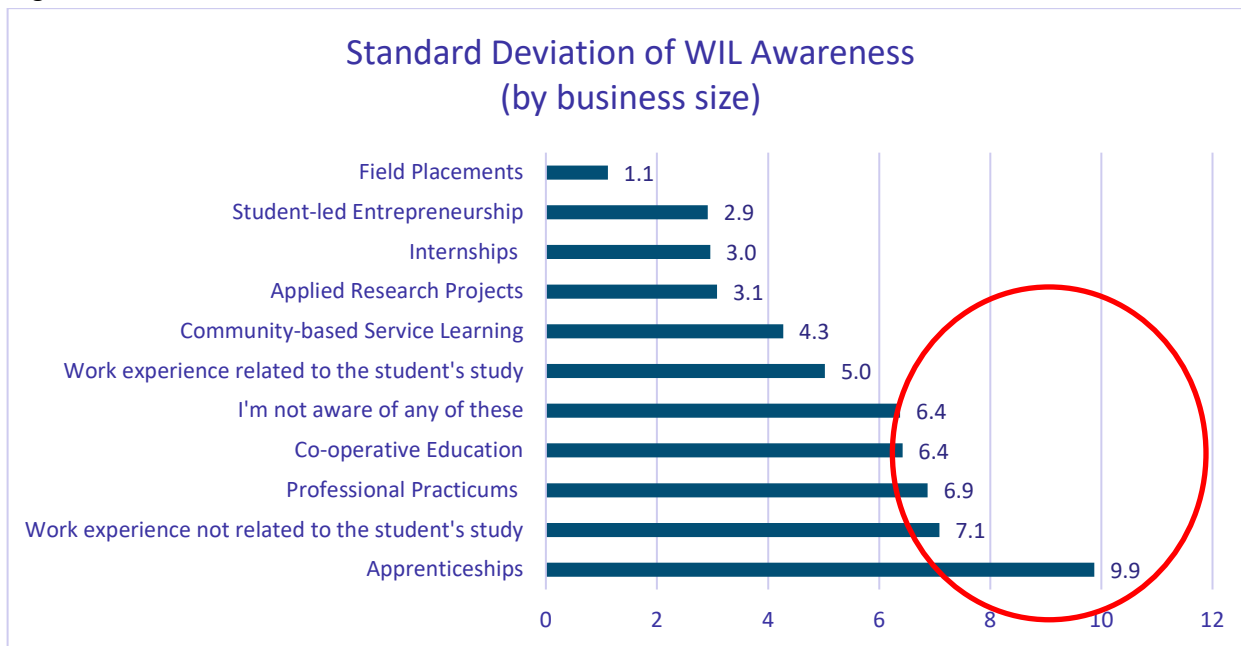


### Variation in Awareness

Five response categories had statistically higher levels of standard deviation than the others, which essentially means there is more variation in awareness between different sizes of business for each type of WIL. These include apprenticeships (standard deviation of 9.9), work experience not related to the student’s field of study (7.1), professional practicums (6.9), co-operative education (6.4), and “I’m not aware of any of these” (6.4) had the highest variance in awareness levels by different business sizes.

By way of example, only 55% of micro-sized businesses (1-4 employees) were aware of how apprenticeships function, whereas 89% of large businesses (200-499 employees) were aware. (Note: data for “enterprise” businesses (500+ staff) should be treated with extreme caution, as there were only nine respondents from this category). See Figure 13, below.

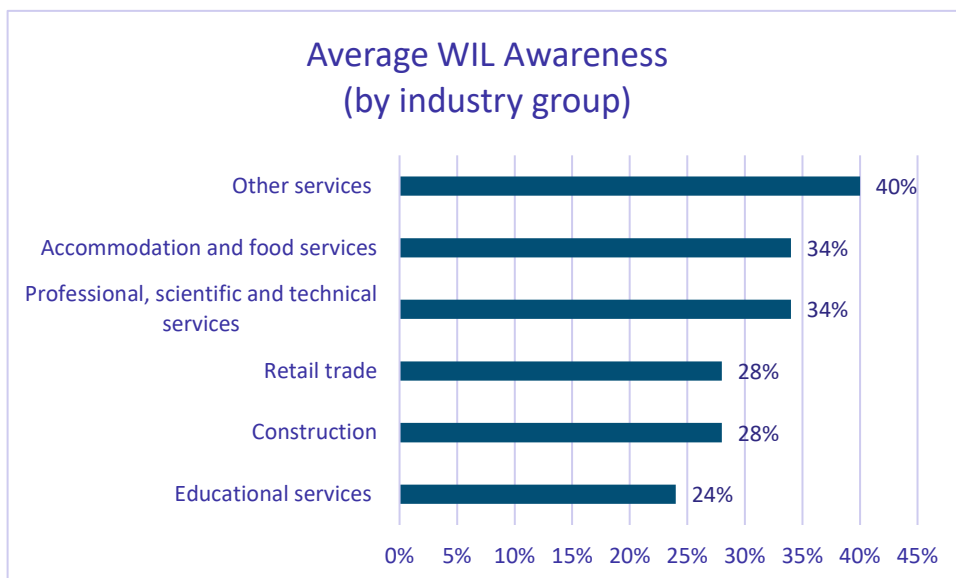
**Figure 13: Standard Deviation of WIL Awareness**



### WIL Awareness by Industry

There is a difference in WIL awareness levels by industry. The industry with the highest average level of awareness of all WIL types is “Other Services” with an average 40% awareness for all WIL types. The lowest was for “Educational Services” with 24% average awareness for all types of WIL. See Figure 14, below. (Note: only industry groups with more than 30 responses were included).

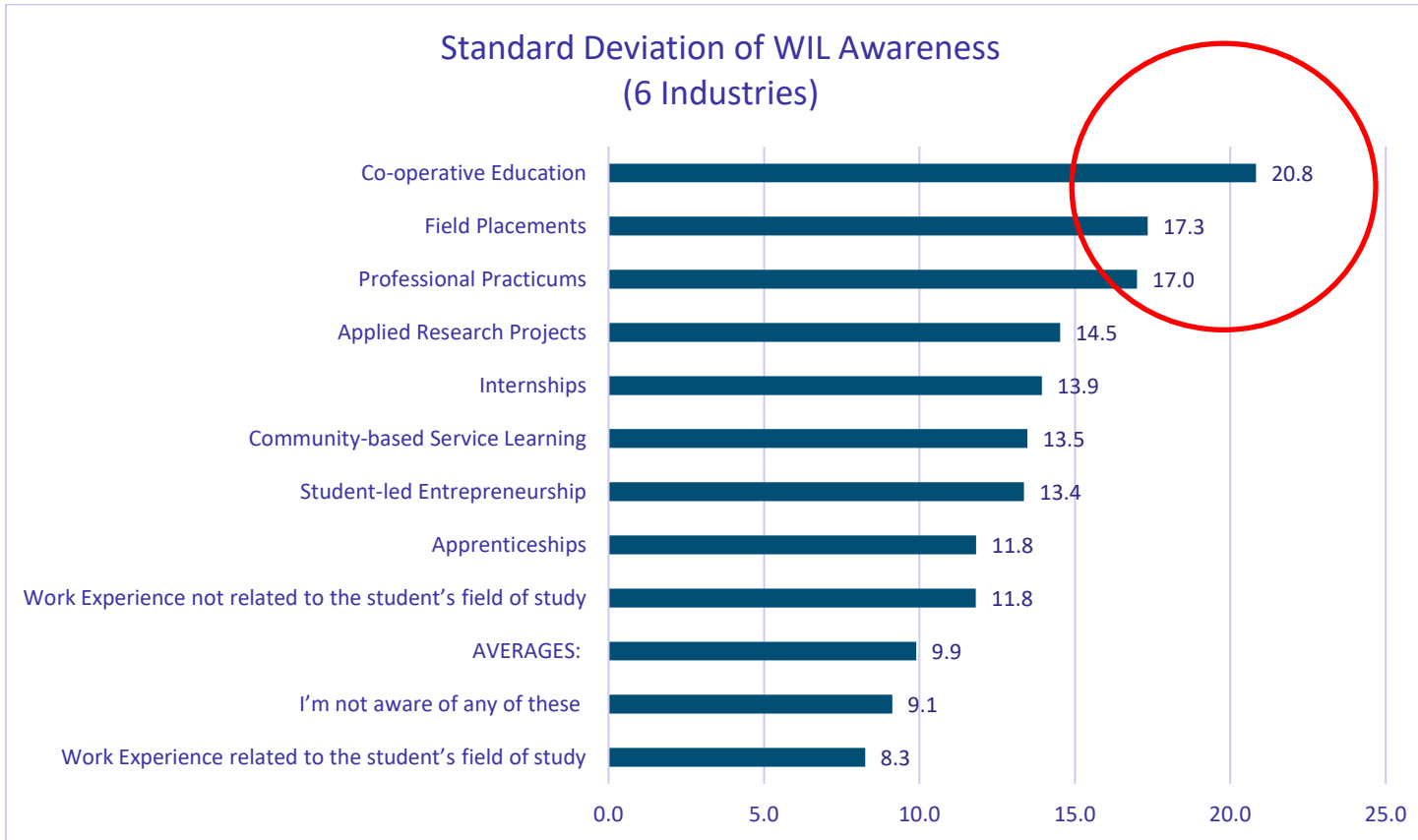
**Figure 14: Average WIL Awareness by Industry**



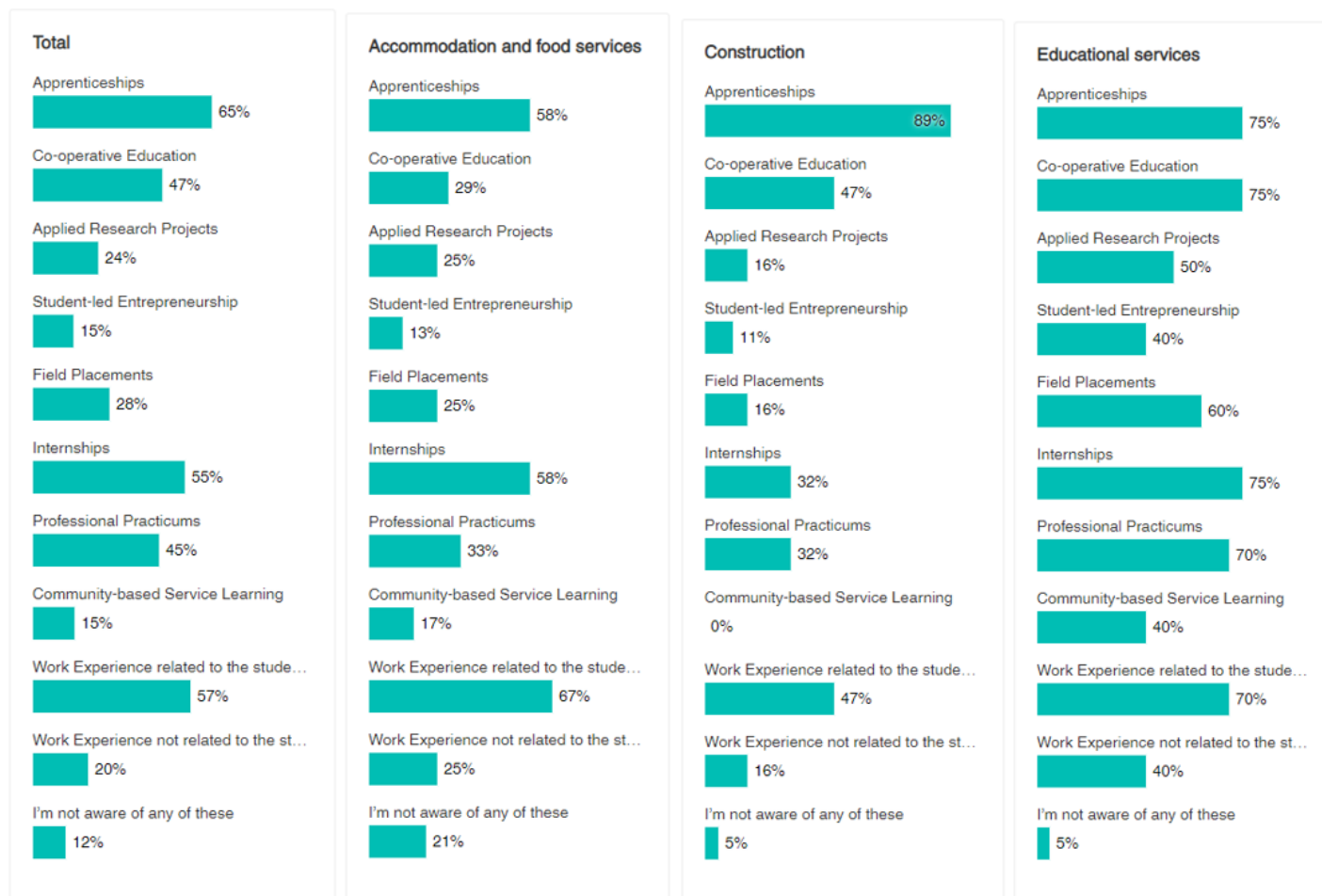
## WIL Awareness by Industry Group

While there is moderate difference between industries in their awareness of WIL overall (per Figure 14, above), there are significant differences in awareness for individual types of WIL by different industries. For the six industries identified in Figure 14, there were very significant differences in awareness for Co-operative education, field placements, and professional practicums. See Figure 15, below.

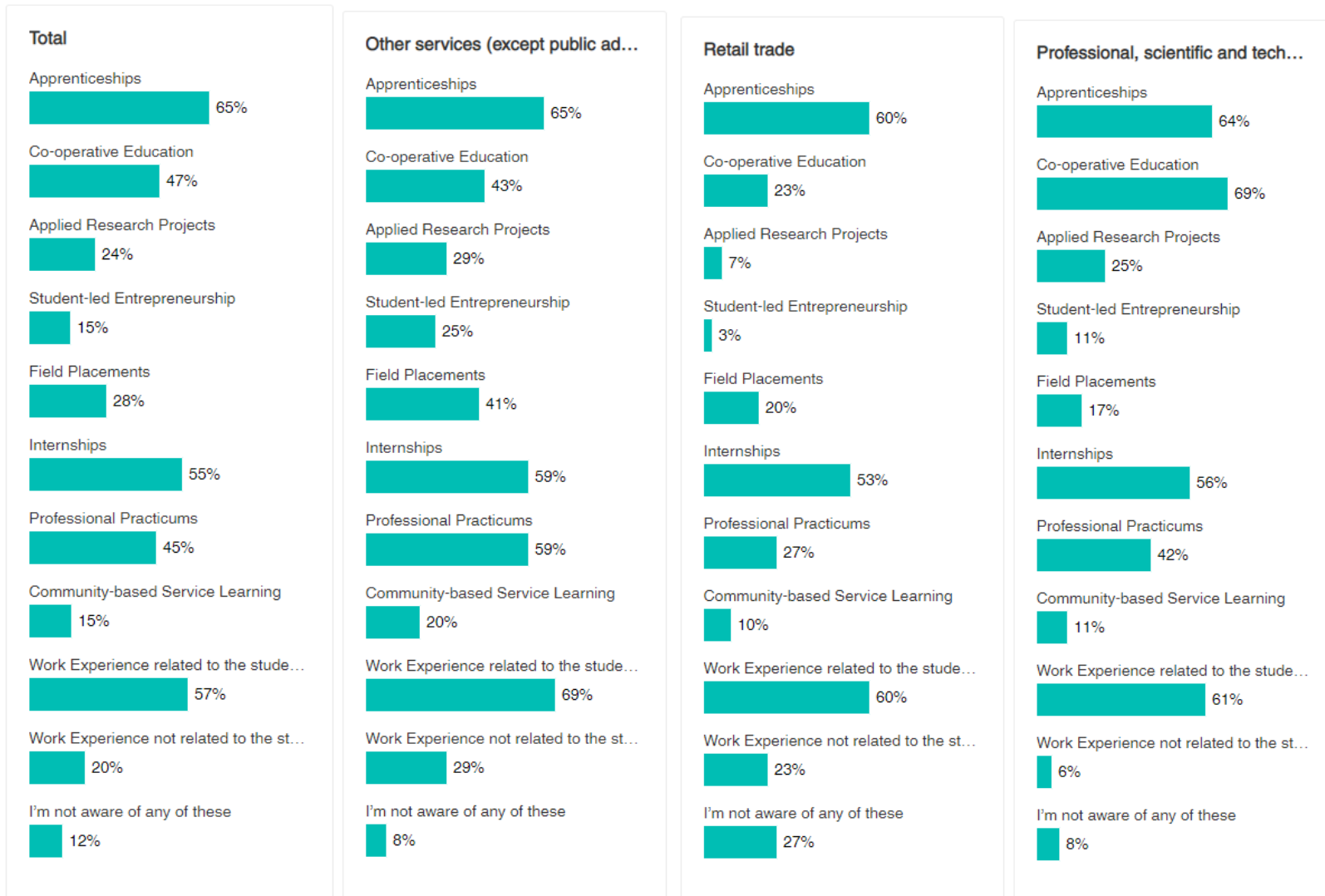
**Figure 15: Standard Deviation of WIL Awareness**



**Figure 16a: WIL Awareness by Industry**



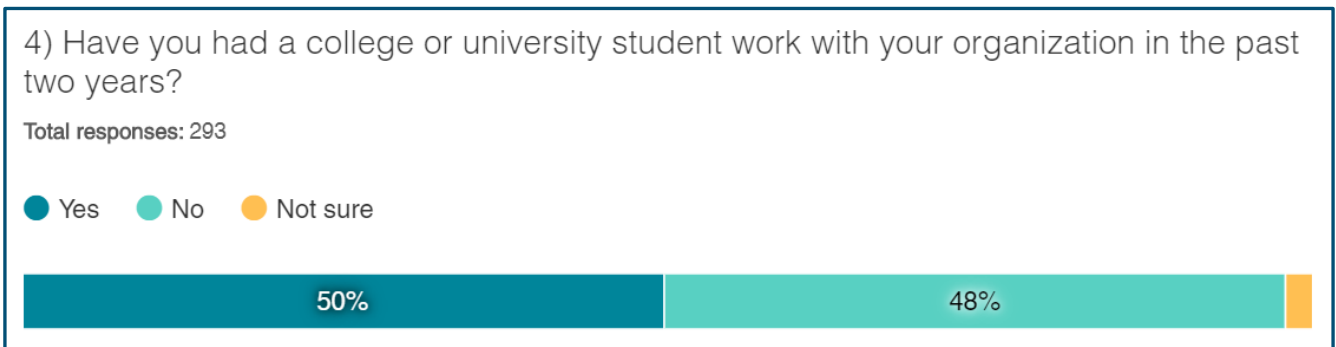
**Figure 16b (WIL Awareness by Industry)**



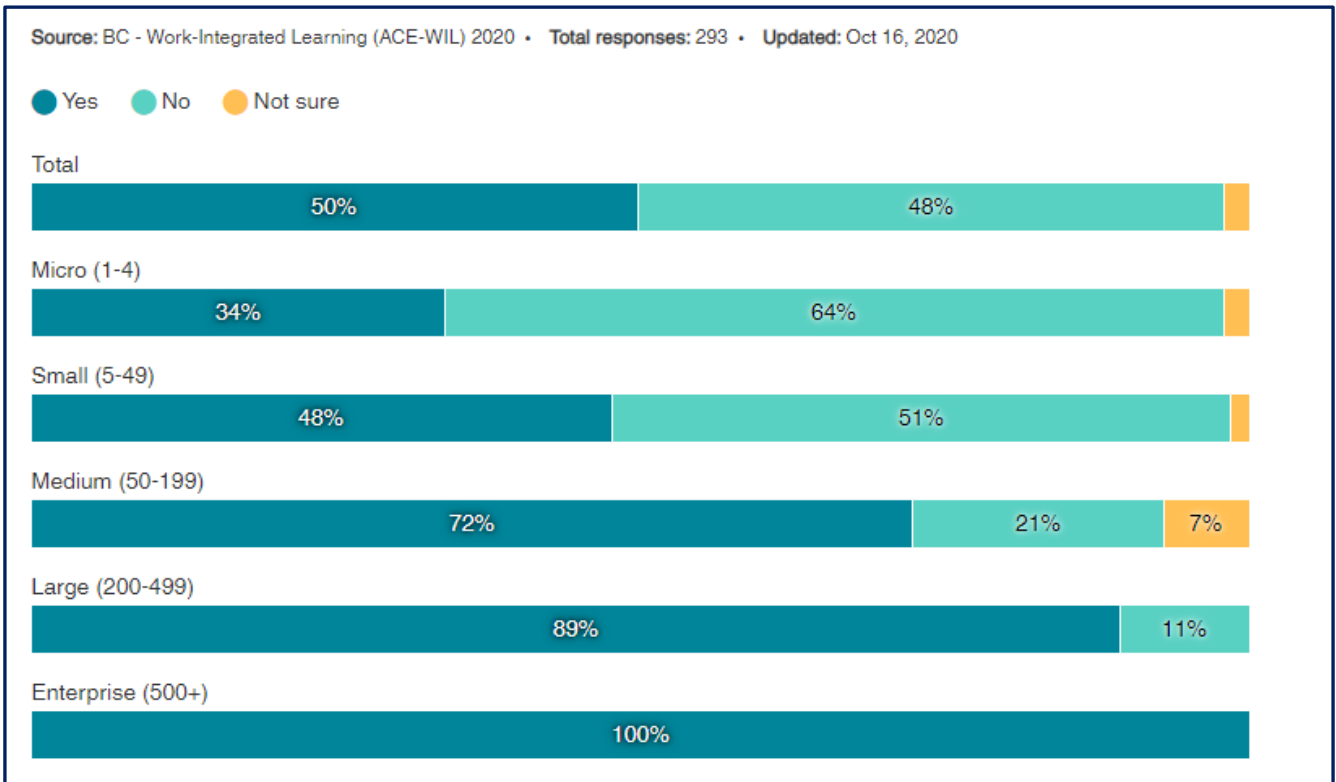
### 3.5 Experience with Work-integrated Learning (WIL)

As Figure 17 (below) shows, exactly half of the respondents have hired a college or university student in the past two years. There is however, a significant variation between businesses of different sizes, with micro sized businesses (34%) and small businesses (48%) having considerably lower experience engaging students than medium (72%) and large (89%) businesses. See Figure 18, below. (Note: while 100% of Enterprises have engaged a university student in the past two years, there were only nine respondents in this category and the results should therefore be treated with caution).

**Figure 17:** Employer Experience Working with WIL



**Figure 18:** Employer Experience Working with WIL (by size of business)



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## **Types of WIL Engagements**

For the 50% of employers who have engaged a student in the past two years, the most common type of WIL was for work experience related to the field of study (40%) or not related to the field of study (32%). This was followed by co-operative education (23%) and internships (15%).

It should be noted that some types of WIL, such as apprenticeships, are not possible within a number of industries, and particularly in many service sector industries, including the retail industry group.

See Figure 19 (next page).

**Figure 19: Types of WIL Undertaken by Employers**

5) You indicated that you have brought college or university students to work with your organization. How would you classify their engagement with you? Choose all that apply.

Total responses: 146

Apprenticeships



Co-operative Education



Applied Research Projects



Student-led Entrepreneurship



Field Placements



Internships



Professional Practicums



Community-based Service Learning



Work Experience related to the student's field of study



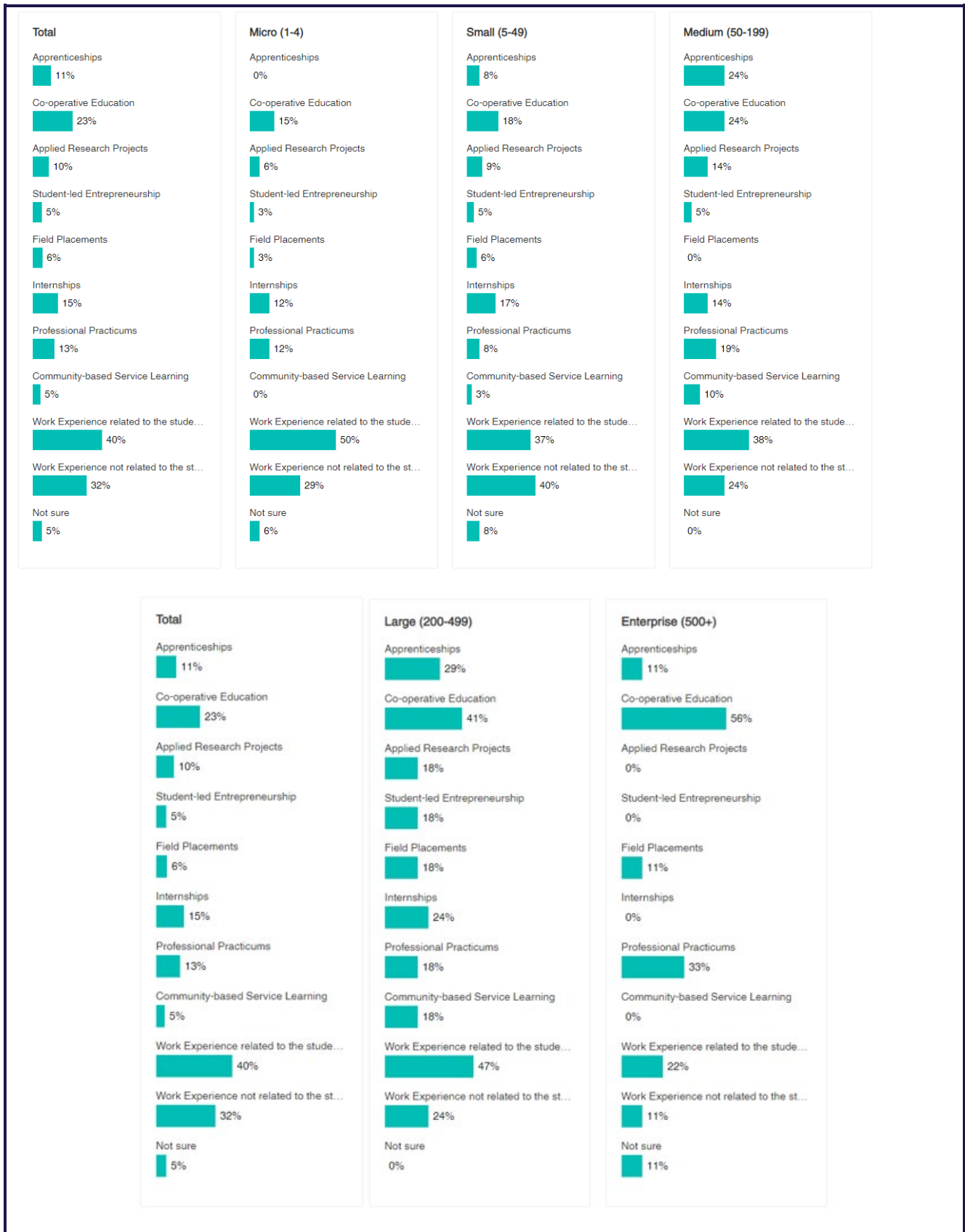
Work Experience not related to the student's field of study



Not sure



**Figure 20: WIL Engagement by Size of Business**



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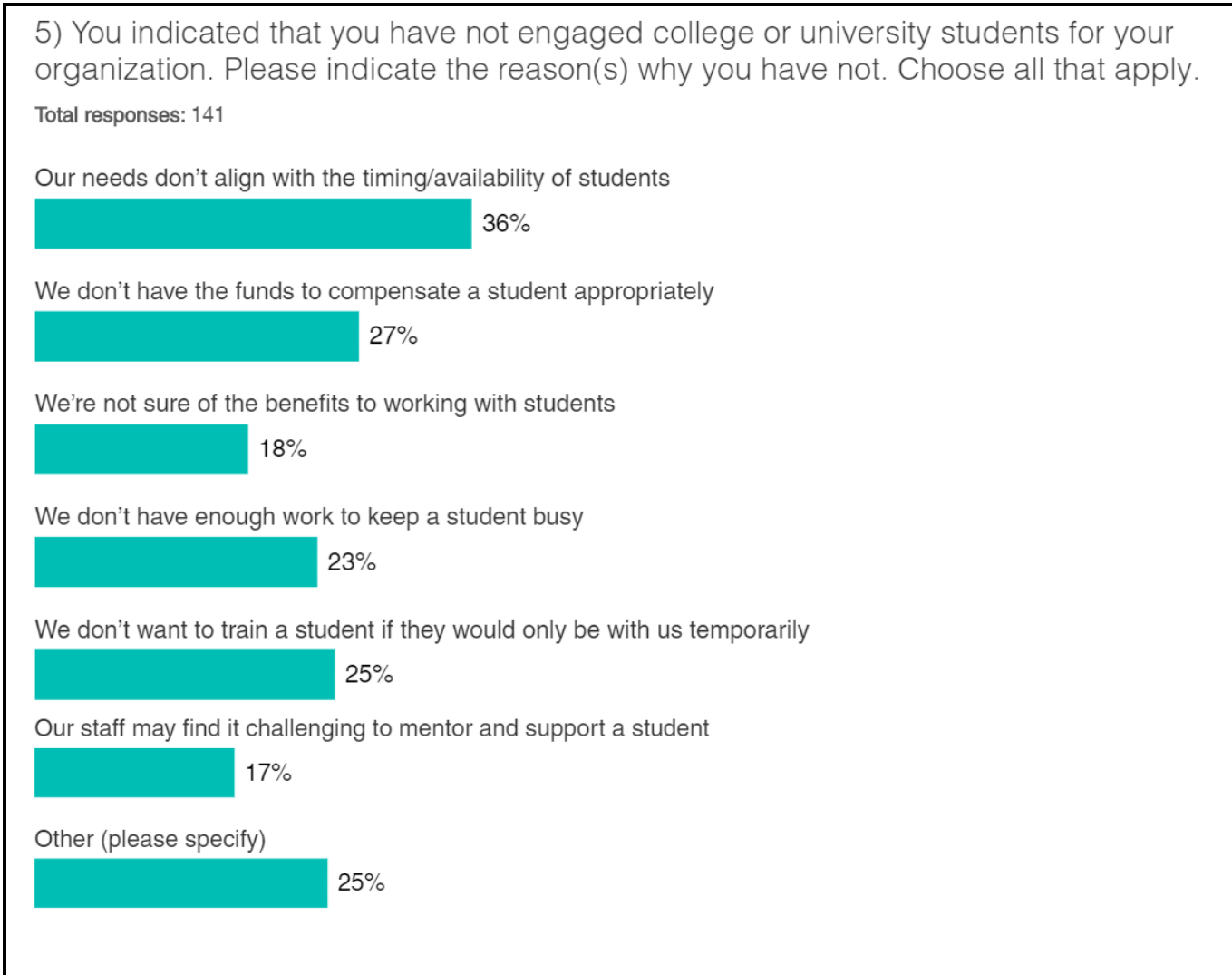
As Figure 20 (above) shows, there is a significant difference between businesses of different sizes with regard to experiences with WIL. Micro and small businesses have almost no experience with the more common types of WIL such as apprenticeships and co-operative education, whereas larger businesses show much higher levels of engagement, such as 41% of large businesses (200 – 499 employees) having experience with co-operative education.

### 3.6 Reasons for not Engaging in WIL

For the remaining half of employers who have not engaged a student in the past two years, a variety of reasons were identified. The most common response, with slightly over one-third of respondents (36%) was that the employers' needs do not align with the timing/availability of students. For example, many industries in the service sector have peak seasons aligning with the tourism season, which typically drops off rapidly in October, whereas students return to school in September amidst the peak season.

Many primary industries such as forestry and agriculture also have seasonally-dependent operations, and the timing of these seasons and the associated labour market demand do not always align with the practicalities of the typical Fall and Winter semester schedule of colleges and universities. See Figure 21, below.

**Figure 21:** Reasons for not Engaging Students in WIL

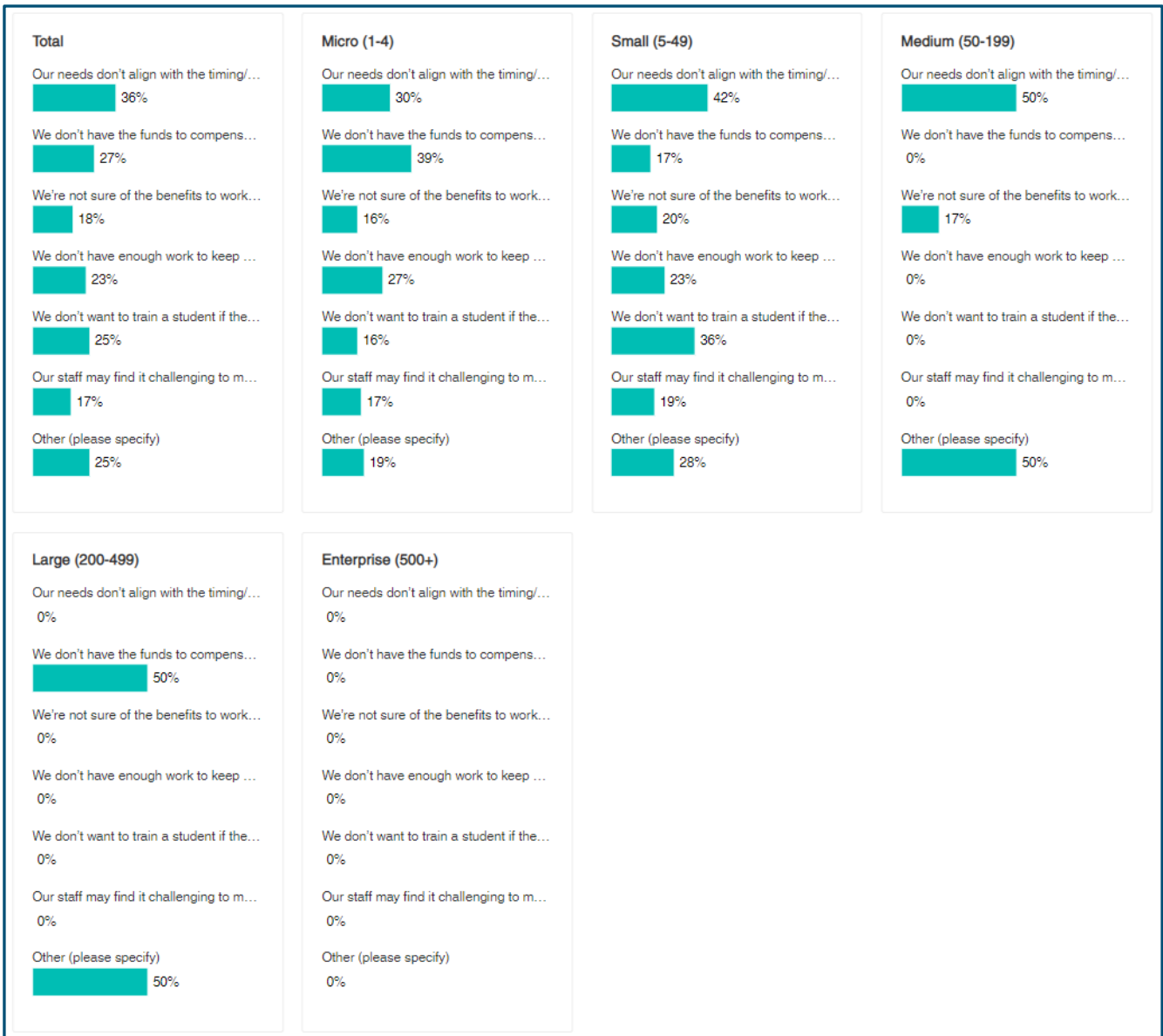


Other common reasons for not engaging students included lack of funds to compensate students (27%), concerns about investing in student training if the student is only working for a short period of time (25%), and insufficient work to keep a student sufficiently productive (23%).

### Reasons for Not Engaging in WIL - by Business Size

As Figure 22, below shows, smaller employers have a wide variety of reasons for not engaging in WIL, whereas larger employers are mostly challenged by the timing of student availability, uncertain benefits of WIL, and lack of funds to support hiring a student.

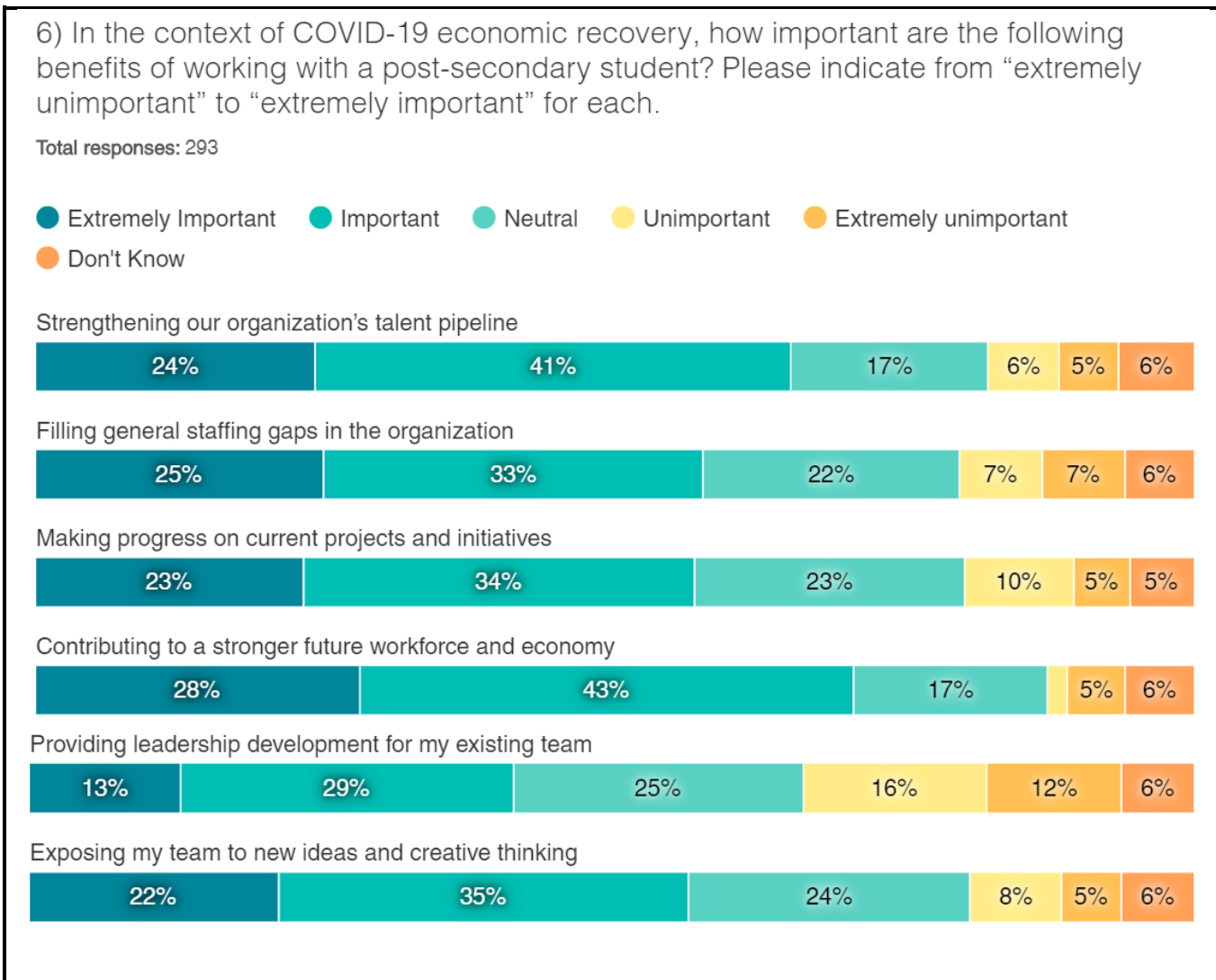
**Figure 22: Reasons for Not Engaging WIL students – by business size**



### 3.6 Motivations for Engaging in Work Integrated Learning

Perhaps surprisingly, the most common reasons employers engage in WIL is partly benevolent or ethically-grounded: to “contribute to a stronger future workforce and economy.” Nearly two-thirds (71%) of respondents said this was a primary motivation for engaging in WIL. See Figure 23 (below).

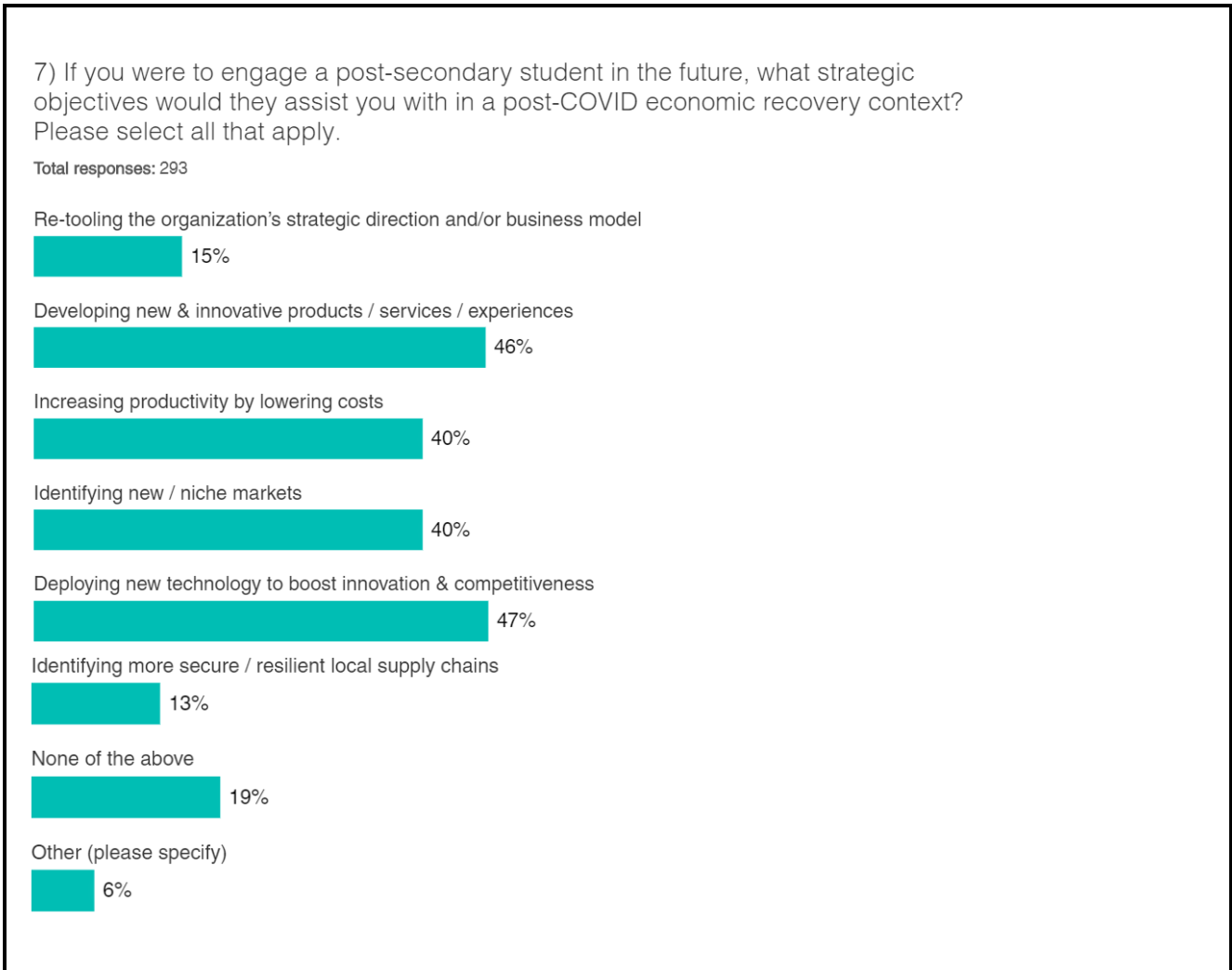
**Figure 23: Employer Motivations for Engaging in WIL**



Other common responses included “strengthening our organization’s talent pipeline” with 65% saying this was “extremely important” or “important,” followed by “filling general staffing gaps in the organization” (58%) and “exposing my team to new ideas and creative thinking” (57%). This latter response merits special consideration for marketing and promotions of WIL with employers, with well over half of employers believing that students can help drive innovation and growth within organizations by leveraging the state-of-the-art learnings and knowledge that students can acquire in academic environments.

Related to the above theme, employers were then asked about the strategic benefits they hoped to receive by hiring students. The most common responses were related to driving change through innovation: deploying new technologies to boost innovation and competitiveness (47%) and developing new & innovative products / services / (46%). See Figure 24 (below).

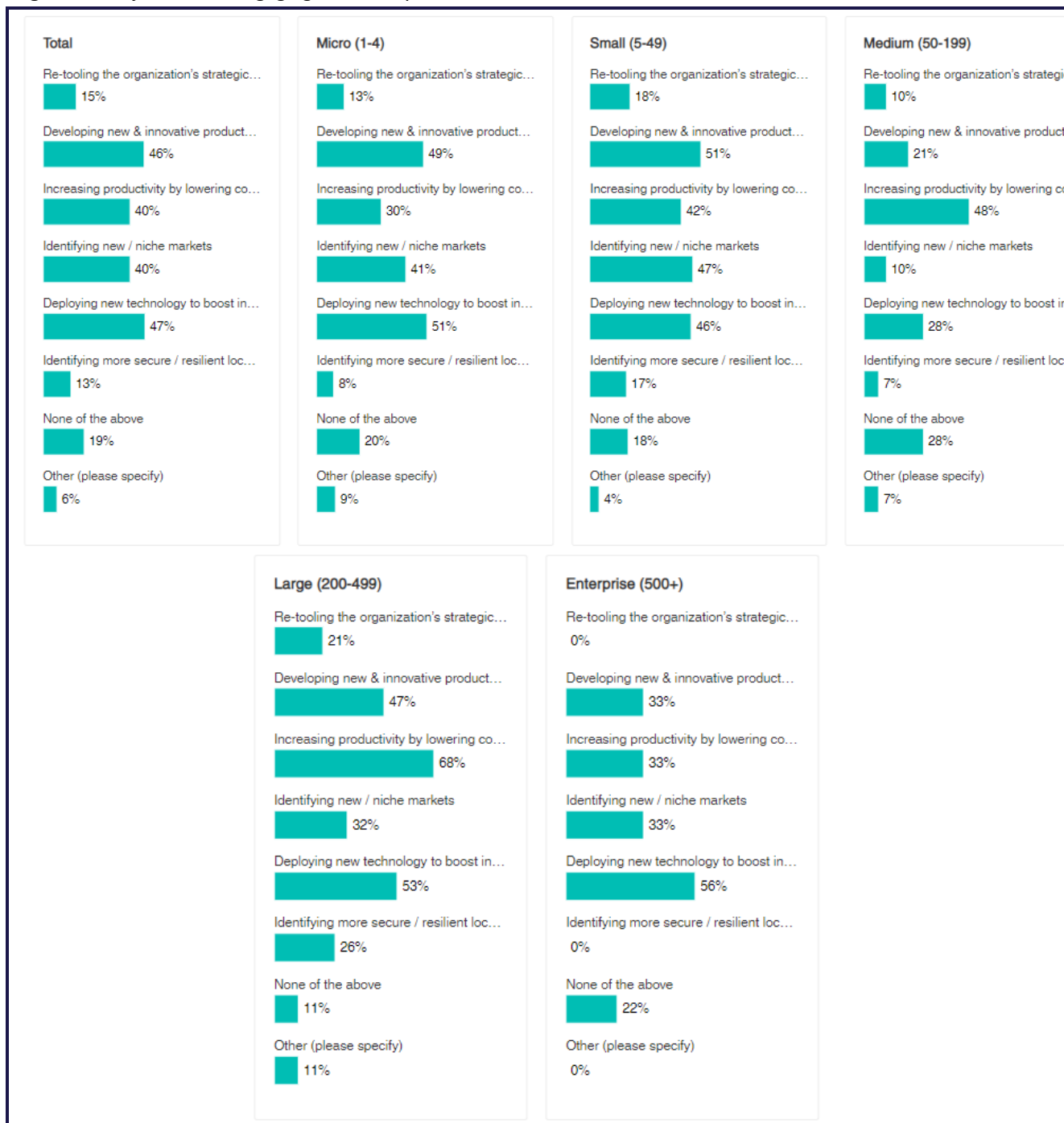
**Figure 24: Objectives for Engaging WIL students to assist with Economic Recovery**



### Objectives for Engaging in WIL – by business size

There is little overall difference in the objectives of businesses of different sizes when it comes to engaging in WIL, as Figure 25, below shows. One slight trend is that relatively larger businesses are more focused on increasing productivity than smaller businesses.

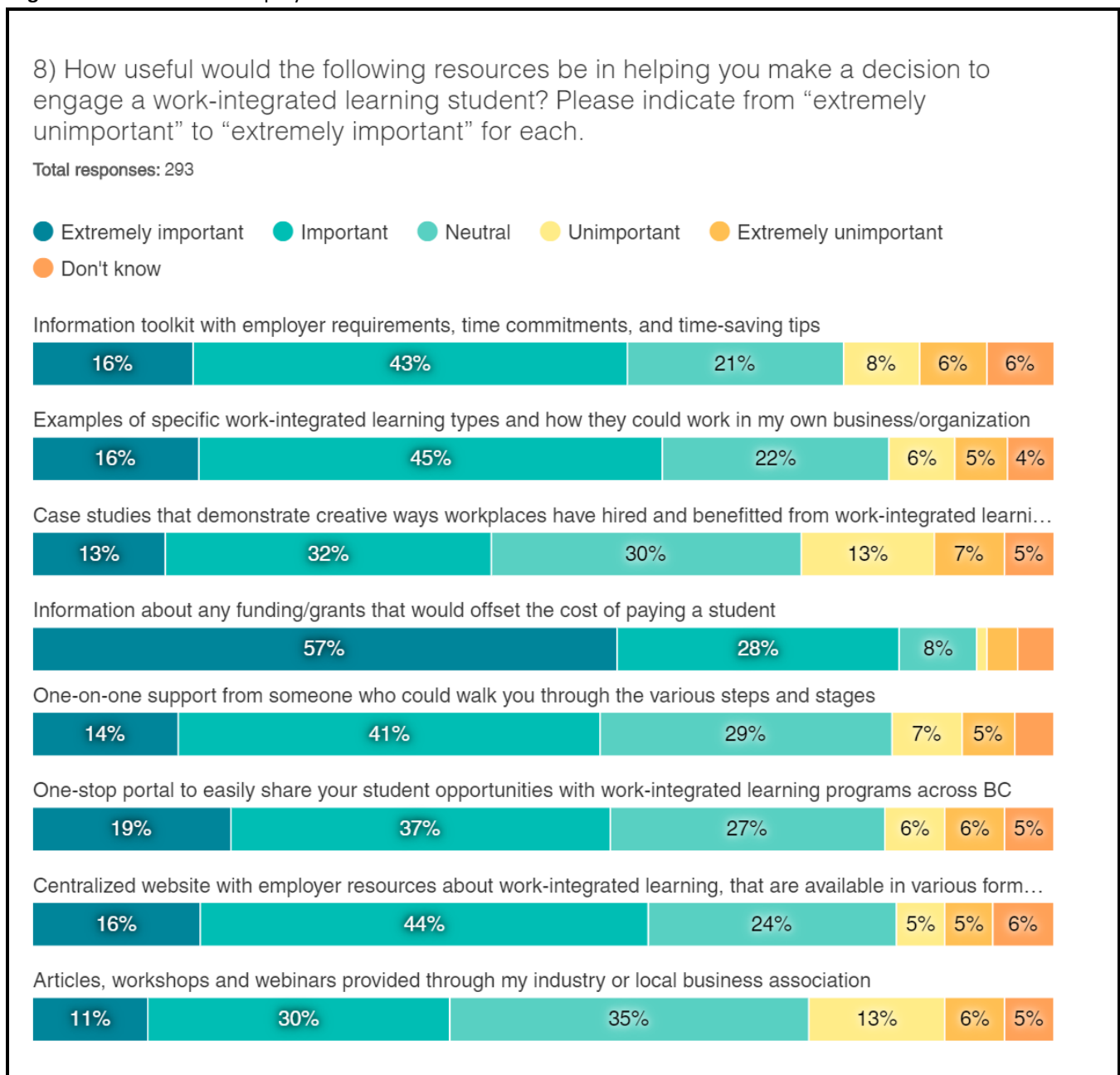
**Figure 25: Objectives for Engaging in WIL – by business size**



## 4.0 Employer Needs to Support Engagement with WIL

The most common response (85%) from employers about resources to better engage WIL students was “Information about any funding/grants that would offset the costs of paying a student.” Employers often find it challenging to remain current on such a seemingly endless variety of post-secondary related funding programs, and types – from grants, bursaries, partially-repayable loans, and other funding opportunities. This is clear in the results, with 85% of employers saying these would be important resources to have.

**Figure 26:** Resources for Employers



The second most common response from employers about resources to better engage WIL students was “Examples of specific work integrated learning types and how they could work in my own business/organization.” More than three-fifths (61%) of employers stated these would be “very important” or “important” resources for improving employer readiness to leverage the opportunities for engaging WIL students.

There are two components to this:

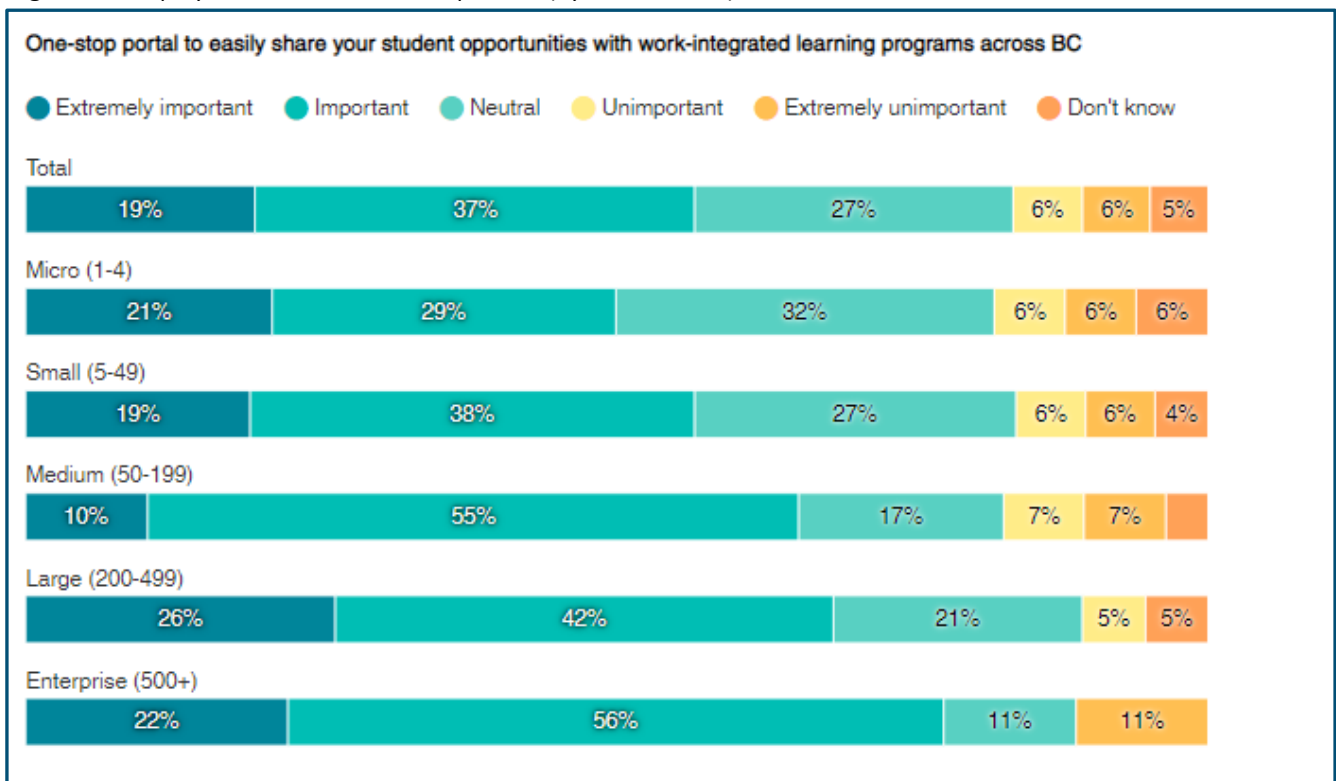
- i) Specific examples, and
- ii) Relevance to the employer’s specific workplace.

Related to this, the next highest priority was “one-on-one support” to assist with navigating such a diverse and complex area, particularly from a business manager’s perspective. This shows the importance of having business-specific resources and assistance rather than generic supports.

### Employer Resources by Size of Business

When analyzing the data by size of business, the trends for different types of resources follows the overall trend for all respondents, with relatively smaller employers generally desiring a higher level of support resources than larger employers. The only deviation from this trend is for a “one stop portal” which is desired more by large and enterprise sized businesses than for smaller businesses. See Figure 27, below.

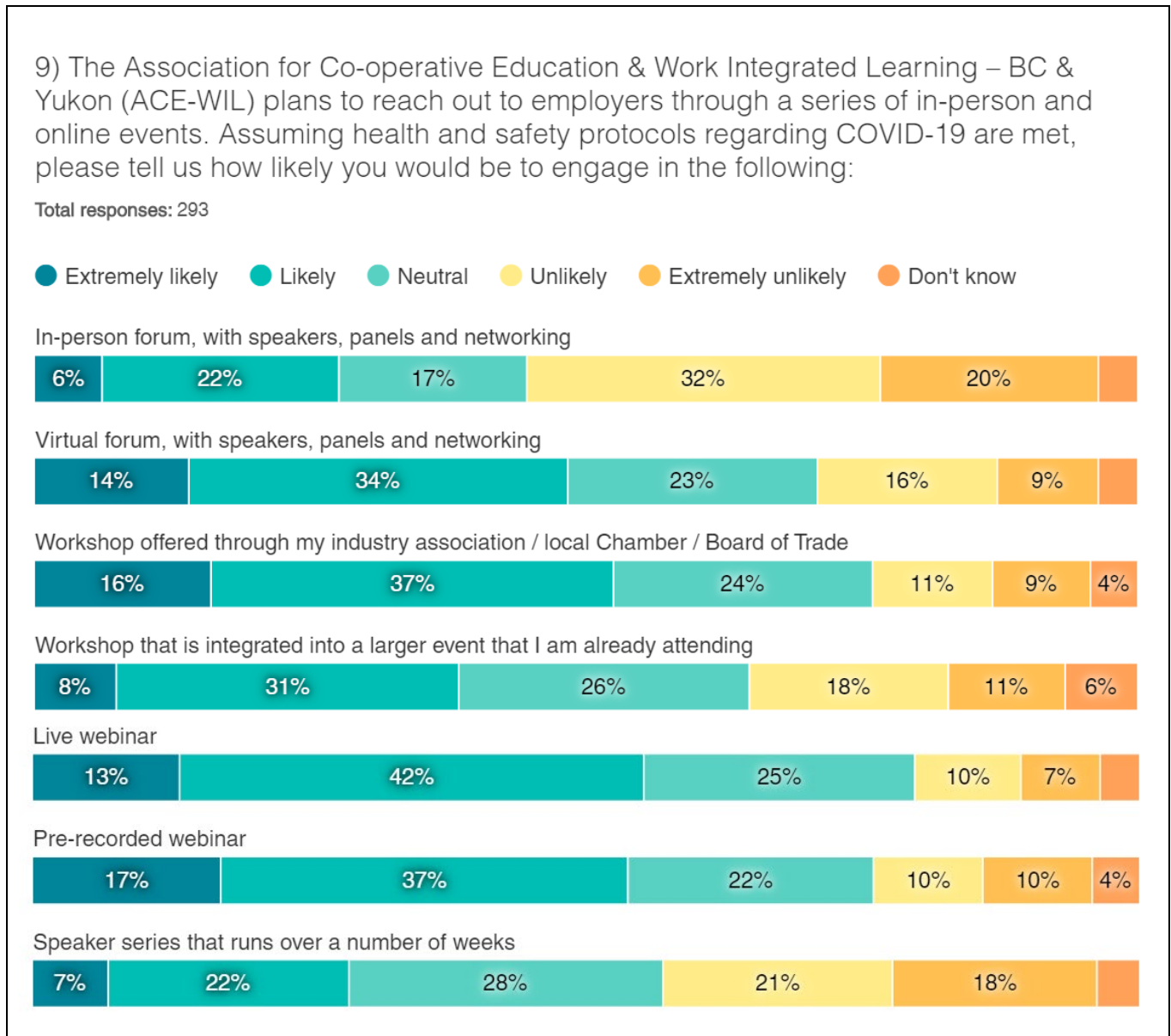
**Figure 27:** Employer Resources – One Stop Portal (by business size)



## 5.0 Marketing and Communications for WIL

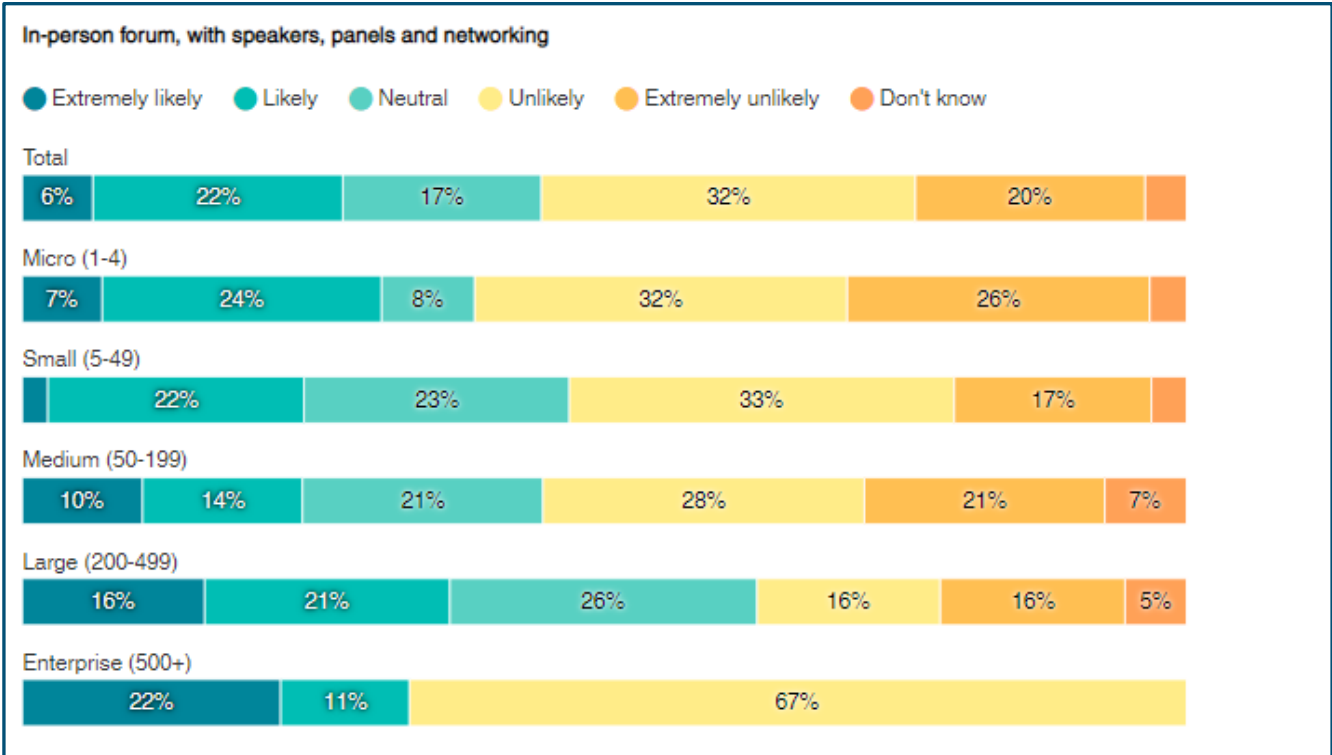
Employers were most likely to engage in live webinars and pre-recorded webinars, equally. The next most likely engagement opportunities were “workshops offered through industry associations / Chambers” and then “Virtual Forums.” See Figure 28, below.

**Figure 28:** Employer Engagement Preferences

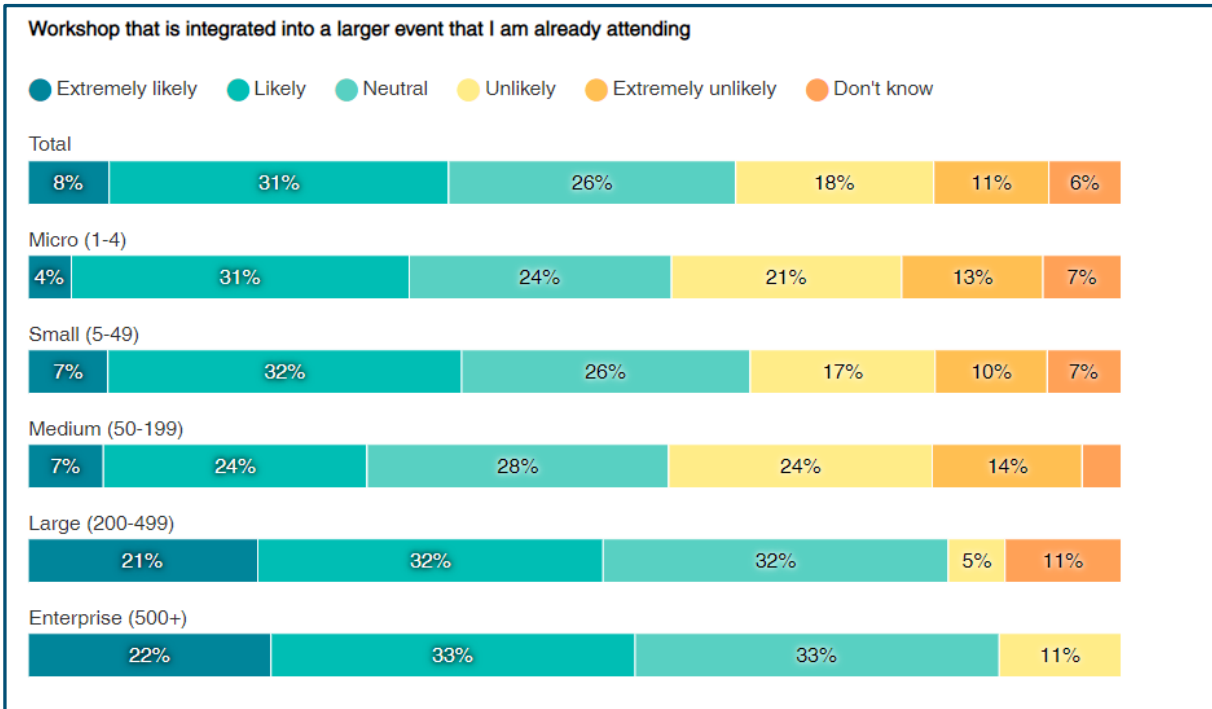


Different sizes of businesses displayed similar levels of interest for most types of engagement, however, there were some slight trends for three types of engagement. Larger employers had two-to-three-times the level of interest for in-person forums as smaller businesses, (see Figure 29, below), as well as for workshops that are integrated into larger events (see Figure 30, next page). On the other hand, smaller employers had a significantly higher preference for pre-recorded webinars compared with larger employers (see Figure 31, next page).

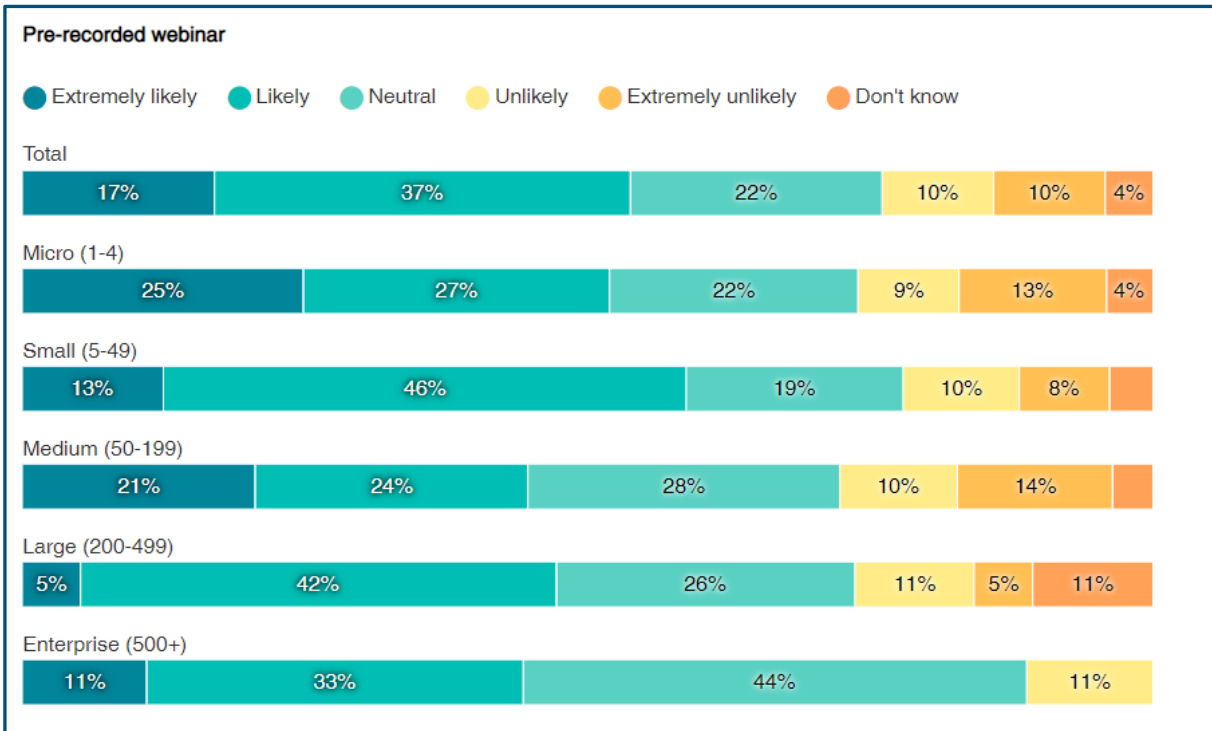
**Figure 29:** Preferences for in-person forums (by size of business)



**Figure 30:** Preferences for workshops integrated into larger events (by size of business)



**Figure 31:** Preferences for pre-recorded webinars (by size of business)



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## 6.0 Conclusions

This first-ever comprehensive survey of B.C. employers regarding Work Integrated Learning has produced a number of compelling insights that will assist support agencies such as ACE-WIL, business organizations such as the BC Chamber of Commerce, governments, and individual businesses / sectors to better harness the opportunities associated with WIL.

In the context of the most significant shock to the B.C. economy in recent history, stemming from the rapid onset of COVID-19, employers are seeing significant strategic advantages in harnessing the talent, energy, and creativity of students who are emerging from their post-secondary studies armed with the most current tools and insights needed to drive innovation and competitiveness.



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# Appendix A: Work Integrated Learning in BC – Current Context

## Literature Review Research Questions:

1. What are key trends and issues related to employer awareness, utilization, and obstacles to using WIL for recruitment, retention, and skills development?
2. What are the obstacles of businesses – particularly SMEs - hiring students / engaging in WIL?
3. What are the considerations related to ACE-WIL in the current B.C. labour market context post-COVID?
4. What were the experiences of employers with recruiting, retaining, and training staff prior to COVID, and in particular for recruiting entry level workers?
5. What does the research indicate in terms of structuring marketing and communications related to WIL?

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## Report 1: MindReader Report #4: Entry Level Workers in the B.C. Workforce

### Purpose:

To assess employer use and satisfaction with various recruitment channels for entry level workers.

### Survey Responses:

- 329 survey responses
- Median completion time: 9 min

### Key Findings:

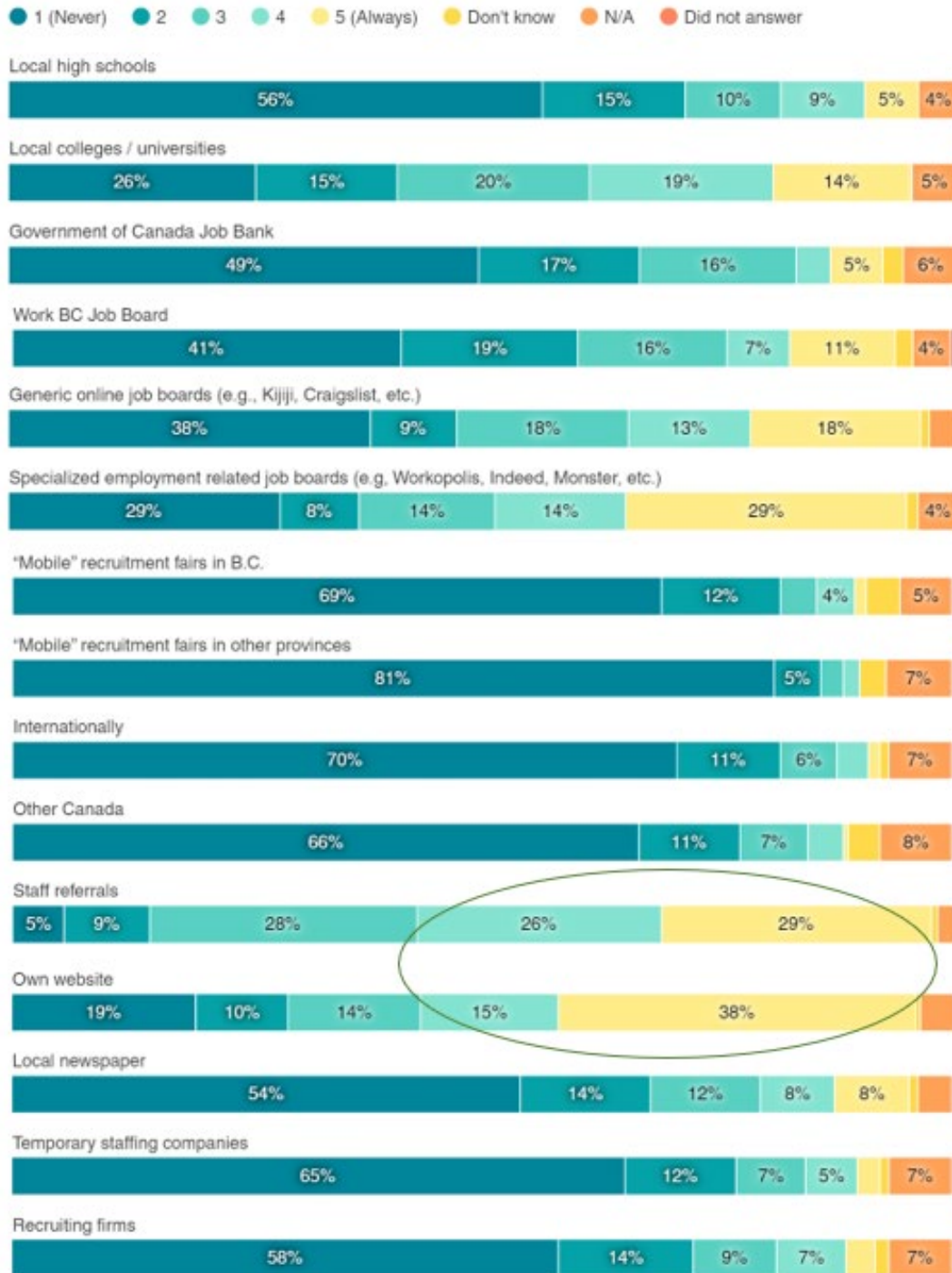
1. The most common recruitment channels used employers for recruiting entry level workers are i) staff referrals; ii) the company's own website; and, iii) specialized employment job boards (e.g., Indeed, Workopolis, etc.).  
Traditional recruitment channels such as the local newspaper, temporary staffing companies, recruiting firms, and recruitment fairs have relatively lower levels of utilization.
2. Satisfaction levels with recruitment channels were similar to utilization rates, with staff referrals, the company's own website, and local colleges/universities having the highest satisfaction levels. The lowest satisfaction channels were mobile recruitment fairs in other provinces, temporary staffing companies, and international recruitment (general).
3. Recruitment channels such as online job boards (generic and specialized) tend to be over-utilized relative to their performance. Recruitment channels such as the Work BC Job Board, mobile recruitment fairs in B.C., and international recruitment are under-utilized relative to their effectiveness.
4. Employers are generally satisfied with the characteristics of new hires.
5. The most common employer needs related to the recruitment of entry level workers are as follows:
  - Housing (affordable local supply, rental stock)
  - Labour supply (general lack of eligible candidates within local region, or anywhere)
  - Human Resources support (ability to navigate complex online posting options, benefits, etc.)
  - Skilled workers (challenges accessing applicants with specific required "hard" and "soft" skills)
  - Expectation management (misalignment between expectations of entry level workers and job duties / wages / working conditions)

- 
6. The most common employer needs related to the training of entry level workers are as follows:
    - Training grants, subsidies, tax breaks
    - None (all training needs currently met internally and/or via external programs)
    - Online training suitable for organization needs
    - More effective alignment of training programs with job market requirements
    - Soft skills / attitudinal training (work ethic, general approach to work, mobile device usage, etc.)
  7. More than half (52%) of businesses indicated that at least 51% of their entry level workers remained with the business after one year. After five years, more than one-third (35%) of businesses responded that at least half of their entry level workers remained with the business.

## Top-Four Figures from Report:

### **Figure 1: Sources of Recruitment (Frequency of Use of Following Recruitment Channels)**

Relevance: The most common sources of recruitment for entry level workers are staff referrals and the company's own website. PSIs have moderate use, with one-third (33%) of employers regularly (always or frequently) using PSIs to recruit entry level workers.



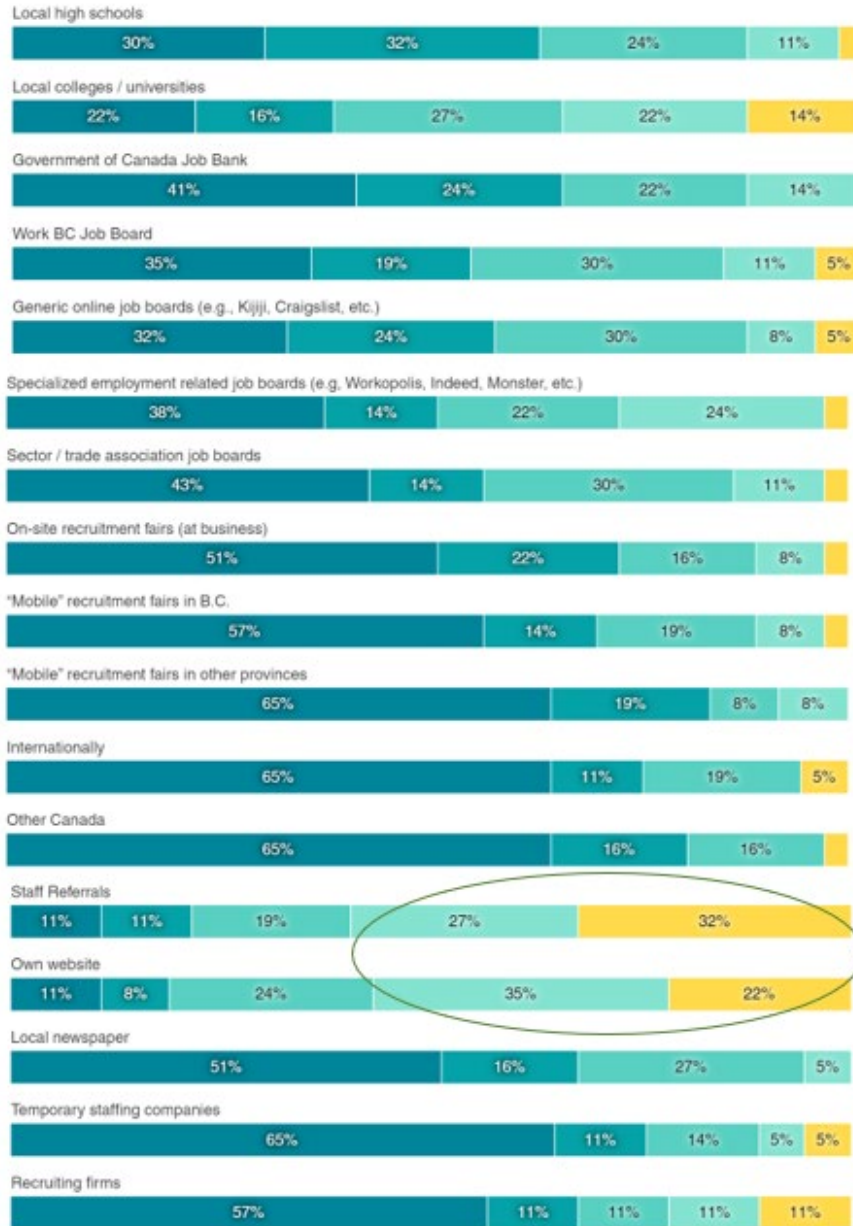
**Figure 2: Satisfaction with Recruitment Channels**

Relevance: Employers are most satisfied with their recruitment results from staff referrals and their own website, with local PSIs having a moderate level of satisfaction (equal number of combined satisfied and dissatisfied responses).

2) On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being "extremely dissatisfied" and 5 being "extremely satisfied" what is your overall satisfaction level with the following recruitment channels for filling entry level vacancies?

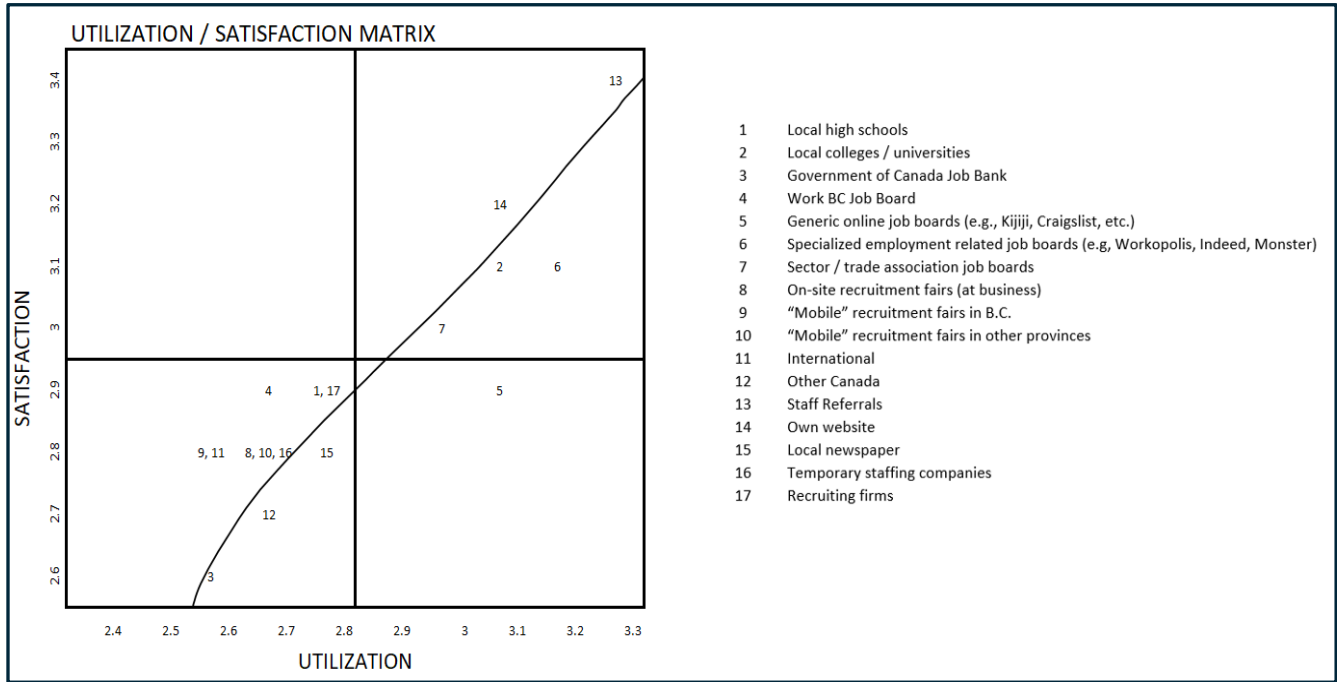
Total participants: 37

● 1 (Extremely Dissatisfied) ● 2 ● 3 ● 4 ● 5 (Extremely Satisfied) ● Don't know ● N/A



**Figure 3: Utilization – Satisfaction Matrix for Recruiting Entry Level Workers**

Relevance: Utilization and satisfaction are generally correlated, with employers generally utilizing recruitment channels that they are more satisfied with. PSIs (Point 2 in Figure) have overall high utilization and high satisfaction relative to other recruitment channels.

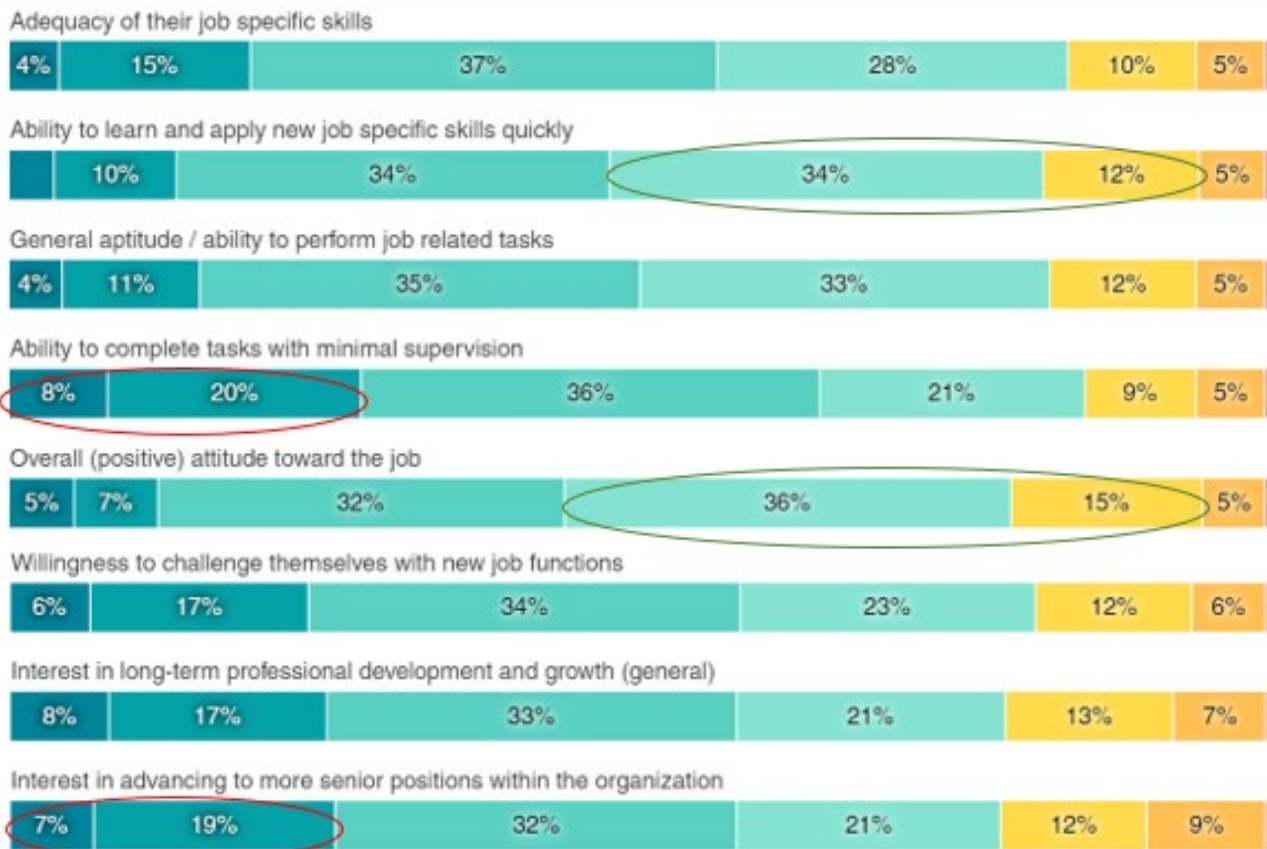


**Figure 4: Satisfaction with New Hires**

4) On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "completely dissatisfied" and 5 being "completely satisfied", how satisfied are you with the characteristics of your new hires for entry level positions?

Total participants: 329

● 1 (Extremely Dissatisfied) ● 2 ● 3 ● 4 ● 5 (Extremely Satisfied) ● N/A ● Did not answer



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**Report 2:** Elisha Connell, “Supporting Increased Participation and Equity in Work-Integrated Learning in BC: Strategies to Support Small and Medium Sized Enterprises, Students with Disabilities, and Indigenous Students.” November 2018.

### Primary Research Focus:

Despite the apparent widespread benefits of WIL – to the economy, employers, and students: why does employer uptake continue to lag behind expectations?”

### Key Findings (direct report quotations):

- Benefits of WIL are widespread: i) For students it improves readiness and the ability to translate theoretical knowledge into practical implementation; ii) For employers it provides enthusiastic and innovative talent to employers at a reasonable cost, and an opportunity to evaluate potential long-term employees; iii) For post-secondary institutions it provides institutions with a continuous cycle of knowledge transfer between students, institutions and employers, helping to better align curricula with changing priorities; iv) For the economy it is an important tool in regional economic development.
- SMEs in particular are faced with hiring challenges and find the cost of WIL hiring restrictive.
- SMEs lack financial resources to attract experienced and skilled employees, often hiring under-qualified workers that may require on-the-job training.
- In B.C., business groups are calling for more WIL opportunities, and creative approaches that enable different types of placements across disciplines, and strategies that address barriers faced by employers (Jothen, 2017).
- In a New Brunswick study of 85 employers, the most frequently cited reason for WIL participation was i) to identify qualified future candidates, and that ii) filling labour shortages was a primary motivation for WIL participation (CCL, 2007).
- An Ontario study of WIL employers were motivated by: i) Prescreening potential candidates; ii) developing workforce skills; iii) A sense of corporate social responsibility.
- Other benefits employers derived from participating in WIL included i) Improved workplace climate resulting from the presence of highly motivated and creative students; ii) Enhanced employee morale; and iii) Increased capacity among staff responsible for student supervision.
- Often, employers may be reluctant to participate in WIL programs due to the perceived costs involved. These costs may include both providing fair compensation to the student, as well as the level of time and effort required to effectively supervise and mentor students
- [Small employers’] limited payrolls makes it challenging to provide a work placement, but to also offer permanent employment once a WIL placement ends
- Industry plays a critical role in work-integrated learning, and determining what support is needed by industry and how it can be provided coherently in a way that works for employers is important for strengthening industry engagement in the WIL experience.
- In Australia (2014) studies identified challenges and barriers faced by employers in their involvement in WIL, including i) Associated cost; ii) Insufficient resources and support; iii) Staff capacity to mentor

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and supervise students; iv) Complexity of partnering with universities; and v) Limited information about WIL.

- Through a literature analysis and survey of industry partners, it was identified that industry considered resources on the following topics to be most useful: i) Monitoring student progress and providing feedback to students; ii) Industry-focused student assessment; iii) Clarifying the role of industry partners; iv) Negotiating partnerships with post-secondary institutions; v) Discipline specific resources.
- The researchers also conducted an environmental scan of existing WIL resources to determine which resources were available. Although a considerable amount of resources were found, the following key gaps and issues were identified: i) Resources resided in many different locations making them difficult to locate; ii) There was limited information available for industry partners on student supervision and assessment, and partnerships with post-secondary institutions; iii) The majority of resources were large documents, in report or guide format, in which information was immersed in content and challenging to source; iv) There was a lack of case studies and examples of innovative models of WIL.
- The study's authors determined that host organizations for WIL students need support i) To provide meaningful feedback to students; ii) To design appropriate assessment tasks; and iii) To implement supervision approaches that reflect their discipline and industry expertise.

### Implications / Considerations for ACE-WIL Survey:

- The importance of clear, easy to follow information such as the Australia web portal for WIL. (Does this not exist on the current ACE-WIL website? What are current information gaps? Or is the need / gap primarily marketing current information?)
- The importance of one-on-one assistance to identify the required supporting resources for SMEs, to support student recruitment and supervision.
- The importance of front-end funding (grants, vouchers) versus back-end / reimbursables (e.g. tax credits) – is this an obstacle for SME engagement in WIL?
- The need to validate whether B.C. SMEs have lower awareness and utilization of WIL.

## Report 3: Kitchener-Waterloo Experiential Learning Survey (2018)

### Primary Research Focus:

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This short, intuitive survey has a small number of questions (10) with few response options and limited use of open-ended questions. The survey likely requires approximately five (5) minutes to complete.

The survey questions focus on the following:

- Business information to stratify/analyze results (industry group, size, duration of operations).
- Awareness of WIL (brief, simple definitions and examples).
- Barriers to engaging with WIL / hiring students.
- Preferred channels to learn about accessing students.
- An option to receive more information about WIL at end of survey.

### Implications / Considerations for ACE-WIL Survey:

- The importance of aligning questions to the extent possible, for comparison purposes.
- Consider fewer response options than currently exist in Version 1 of survey to simplify responses.
- Consider a two-stream survey, one for current MindReader registrants without business characteristics information (data will already be gathered via system), and one “open-link” for non-MindReader registrants.

## Report 4: Meeting Notes (Allison Mitchell and Jennie Nilsson)

July 2, 2020

### Primary Focus:

Summary of the new Ontario Government “Access Student Talent Program” (May 2018) to assist SMEs with engaging in WIL, and lessons to be learned for British Columbia’s system.

### Key Findings:

- Members didn’t know they could hire a student.
- They weren’t sure what work or projects were appropriate to give a student.
- Overwhelming to figure out how to connect or who to connect with at local schools.
- Only know about co-op, aren’t familiar with how to engage students outside the co-op model.
- No idea about other forms of work-integrated learning.
- A primary result of the survey was to develop a Communications Plan with a strong “translation” component to assist SMEs with understanding the world (and words) of WIL.
- Perceived benefits of WIL varied greatly between larger and smaller employers, with SMEs having multiple barriers to engaging in WIL (time, resources, awareness, understanding of benefits)
- Significant benefits of directly engaging with SMEs via a dedicated resource who understands WIL and business planning / HR.

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- The COVID recovery has drastically changed the WIL landscape and we need to understand specifically what benefits students can bring to workplaces in a context of high unemployment and business uncertainty.

### Considerations / Implications for BC ACE-WIL Survey:

- The importance of having a “point person” to engage directly with SMEs, who can direct SMEs to specific contacts at PSIs rather than sharing generic information / web links etc. that risk losing the connection with the SME for i) webinars and ii) in-person events.
- The need to inquire about preferred modes of engagement (person-to-person, web-based tutorials, toolkits, webinars, in-person events, other).
- The need to validate the differences in experiences (especially challenges) between SMEs and larger employers for engaging in WIL.

### Report 5: MindReader Report #1: Labour Market Issues in British Columbia (May 2018)

#### Focus:

- Current experiences of BC Chamber members with recruitment, retention and training.
- 375 survey responses, median response time of 5 min 22 sec

#### Key Findings:

1. Labour shortages are prevalent in BC, and acute in *many* regions, with episodic severe shortages resulting in unprecedented compensation increases and other employer responses;
2. There are generalized skills mismatches amidst escalating retirements of more experienced workers, and a reduced number of (mostly young) workforce entrants.
3. Despite widely prevalent labour shortages and skills mismatches, employers continue to rely heavily on local area recruitment, and train internally for workers who have little direct occupational experience.

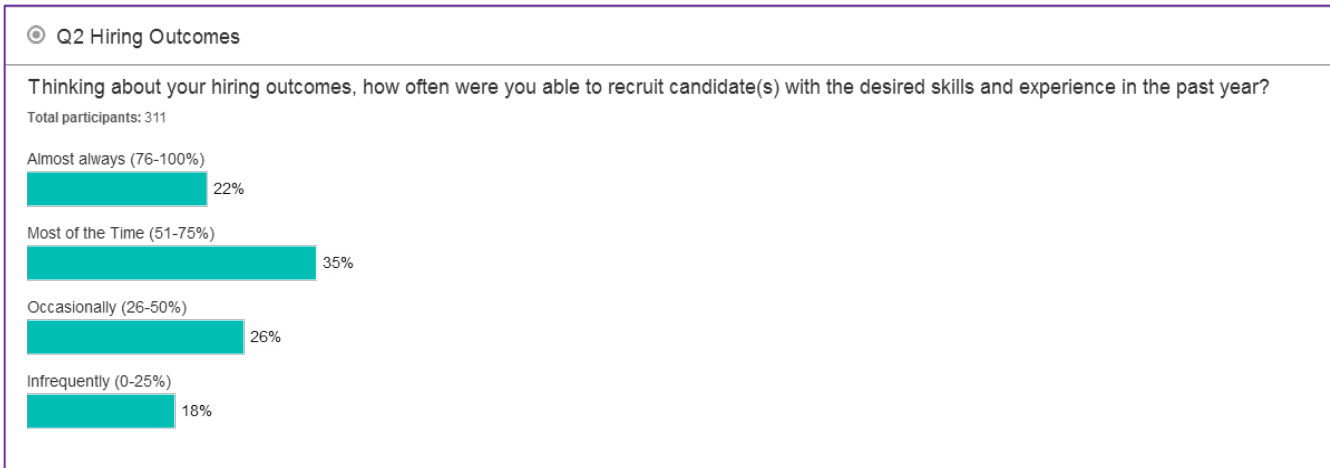
#### Primary Conclusion:

*There is currently a clear need for business support and assistance related to labour market development generally, and to address current acute labour shortages specifically. These could be through policy, programs, and/or partnerships – in the public, private, and non-profit sectors.*

#### Top-Three Figures from Report:

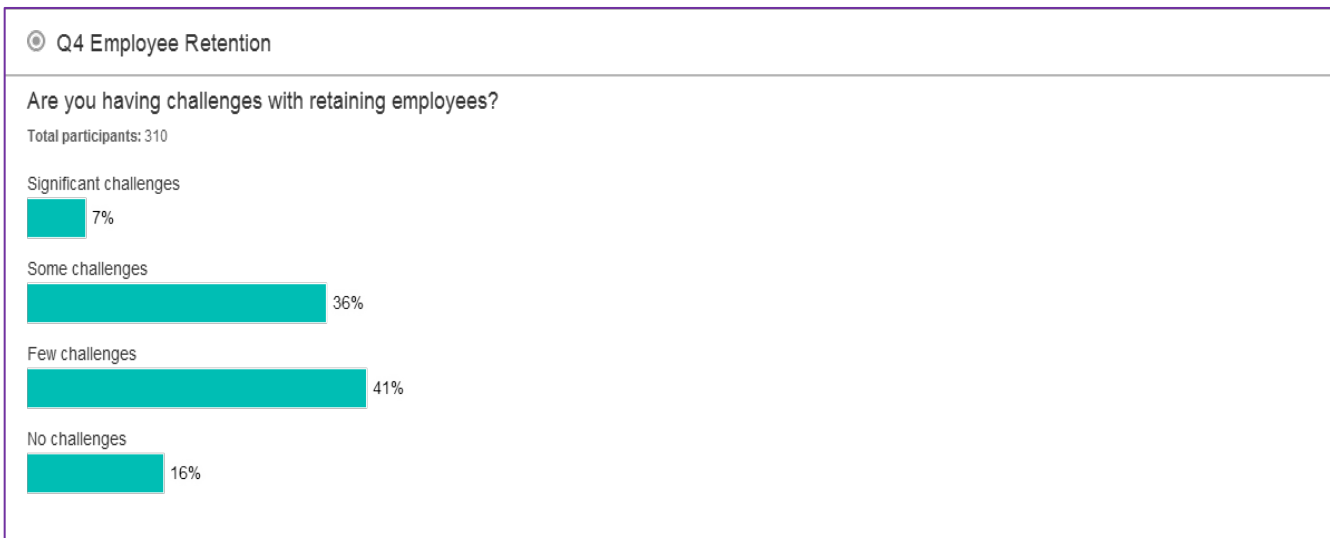
#### Figure 1: Hiring Outcomes (Ability to Acquire Skills Needed)

**Relevance:** The majority of employers were not able to recruit candidates with the desired skills, most or all of the time, due to the tight labour market conditions at the time (<5% unemployment in BC).



**Figure 2: Retention Outcomes (Ability to Retain desired Employees)**

**Relevance:** A high proportion of employers (43%) had challenges retaining employees, resulting in significant voluntary turnover and therefore more job openings for students / opportunities for WIL in the tight labour market context.



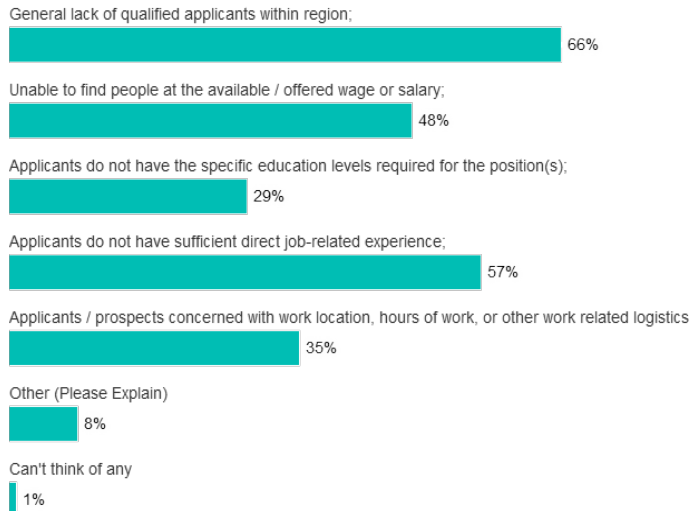
**Figure 3: Skills Mismatches**

**Relevance:** Significant skills mismatches existed in 2018, particularly due to i) lack of qualified candidates within region, and ii) applicants lacking direct job-related experience.

Q10 Challenges when Finding Skilled Employees

Subject Two: Skills Matching Earlier you indicated that you are having challenges finding employees with the required skills, please select all types of challenges from the list below

Total participants: 207



## OVERALL CONCLUSIONS / CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACE-WIL SURVEY

Note: The first draft survey instrument (Carmen Wright, July 23) has identified nearly all of the required objectives identified below and has detailed research questions stemming from these objectives. Few modifications will be required from this first draft survey, stemming from this literature review. Gaps in questions / considerations are primarily for labour market contextual information to assess the overall expectations and needs of employers with respect to filling labour and skills gaps, with a focus on WIL.

### Modified Survey Objectives (as of August 11, 2020)

#### Original Objectives

- Identify key benefits to highlight in advertising based on prior (positive) WIL experiences of employers
- Understand employer barriers to engaging in WIL
- Understand needs and expectations of workplaces in order to develop appropriate support materials
- Get a baseline of workplaces' general awareness of WIL and understanding of the types of WIL
- Test business perceptions around the value post-secondary students can bring to a workplace
- Narrow-down about potential event formats
- Flag respondents willing to take part in focus groups

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**Additional Objectives:**

- Identify current employment prospects / demand for WIL in the post-COVID labour market context
- Understand specific business needs in the post-COVID environment and how students can assist (enhancing shift from filling general / lower skilled labour market gaps to more targeted skills acquisition?)