



**The**  
**5-County Northwest Illinois Area**

**LABOR AVAILABILITY REPORT**

*July 2007*



**Compiled and Prepared by**  
**The Pathfinders ■ Dallas, Texas**

*Funded by the Northwest Illinois Workforce Investment Board, IL Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity, and the U.S. Department of Labor for the purpose of creating a competitive, skilled, and educated workforce to advance the economic vitality of our communities.”*

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## INTRODUCTION

The Pathfinders has employed its experience in workforce assessments for corporate site-selection clients and civilian workforce assessments for the Department of Defense in locations that faced military base closures to produce this evaluation of the 5-County Northwest Illinois area workforce. The information presented in this report has been developed independently of the client, and the client has not influenced the findings.

The Pathfinders functions as a site-selection consultant to many of America's largest corporations, including companies such as AT&T, DuPont, Celanese, 3M Corporation, IMC Global, Singapore Aerospace, AIG, UPS, and Lockheed Martin. The question that most often drives the search for a new business location is whether the candidate location has the workforce needed, and a workforce analysis has been a key component of the site searches conducted for these clients. Senior human resources executives from among corporate clients assisted in refining this methodology and report format. Companies making location decisions based upon these surveys have reported that when staffing actually began, the numbers reported by The Pathfinders proved to be accurate.

In a poll of its corporate clients, The Pathfinders found that those clients' experiences suggest that new hires for new operations typically do not come from the ranks of the unemployed. Instead, these clients and other companies staff a new operation principally with individuals who are working but who desire better jobs and who appear to possess the skills, education, and experience to qualify them for those better jobs. By that definition, those individuals can be considered "underemployed" and are identified as such in this report. The type of quality employer that the 5-County Northwest Illinois region is attempting to attract will typically hire people who come from this group. As a consequence, The Pathfinders was retained to quantify the extent to which underemployment exists in the area, as well as to document the cost, skills, experience, and education of that hidden workforce. This report represents the objective and professional view of The Pathfinders with regard to workforce availability, cost, skills, and quality that a new employer can expect in the 5-County Northwest Illinois region.



## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- The 5-County Northwest Illinois area, referred to in this report as the “labor shed”, has a household population of approximately 197,600 and a civilian labor force of approximately 106,200.
- The labor shed has a pool of approximately 4,900 unemployed persons who are actively seeking work.
- A new employer will be able to attract employees from an additional pool of about 7,900 workers. These individuals are currently employed and have indicated an interest in changing jobs.
- These potentially available workers are referred to in this report as the “underemployed” because they appear to possess the skills, experience, and education to qualify them for the pay rates at which they would take a new job.
- The desired pay rates of these underemployed workers are reasonable when compared to their existing pay rates. The median current pay rate of the underemployed workers is \$12.63 per hour, and the median desired pay rate of the underemployed workers is \$13.17 per hour.
- About 25% of the underemployed workers would take a new job for \$10.44 per hour or less. At the upper end, the 25% most qualified and experienced will command more than \$17.83 per hour.
- Roughly 1,100 people, neither employed nor seeking work, might re-enter the workforce for the proper job.
- In total, the 5-County Northwest Illinois area has 13,900 available workers for new or expanding businesses.



## METHODOLOGY

Published government statistics report wages and employment for the entire workforce of an area, even though most of that workforce has no interest in changing jobs. This report, prepared by The Pathfinders, includes data on those people in the area who desire to change jobs and who would be potential candidate workers for a new employer. As opposed to average wages, this report quantifies the number of those workers available for an employer in various wage ranges. Also included as potential workers are the unemployed who are actively seeking work and that segment of individuals who might consider re-entering the workforce for a good job.

The first step in assessing the workforce of the 5-County Northwest Illinois area was to determine the boundaries of the area to be assessed. To accomplish this task, The Pathfinders applied the same reasoning that would be used during a site search for a corporate client considering the area as a potential location. The 5-County Northwest Illinois survey area includes those locations from which workers might be drawn to a new employer and is referred to in this report as the “labor shed”. This labor shed consists of Carroll, Jo Daviess, Ogle, Stephenson and Whiteside Counties in Northwest Illinois.

Once the labor shed was identified, a random sample of telephone numbers of qualified respondents in the labor shed was obtained for use in the Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing or CATI system.

The Pathfinders then conducted telephone interviews with individuals throughout the 5-County Northwest Illinois region. Those individuals were proportionally stratified across age, household income, and zip codes. The purpose of these interviews was to ascertain availability for work with a new employer; determine desired pay rates; and, collect information on such factors as age, education, commuting patterns, experience, and skills. The data obtained as a result of those interviews enabled The Pathfinders to apply and employ a proprietary methodology that accurately determined the existence of underemployment as defined in the introduction.



The Pathfinders applied a proprietary process to the analysis of the data to correct for invalid responses. For example, those persons indicating they would take a new job but also indicating the desire for increased or decreased pay that is unreasonable are not counted in the results.

This process considers that to be counted as underemployed, an individual must be currently employed and willing to take another job at a pay rate commensurate with personal skills, education, and experience.

Current pay alone is not the qualifying factor for underemployment status in this study. Individuals, for example, making \$7.50 per hour, possessing no high school degree or skills, and being in the workforce for less than one year may consider themselves to be underemployed but are not considered to be so in this report. On the other hand, education, skills, and experience may qualify the person making \$22.00 per hour as truly underemployed.

Sufficient interviews were completed with qualified individuals to produce results for that entire population group which vary by no more than plus or minus 5 percentage points. If the survey were repeated 100 times, 95 times out of 100 the results would be the same as those resulting from a survey of every individual in the entire population.

Irrespective of the fact that the methodology employed is scientifically proven to produce such results, it is perhaps even more important to note that companies making location decisions based upon these surveys have reported that when staffing actually began, the numbers reported by The Pathfinders proved to be accurate.



## ASSESSMENT OF THE WORKFORCE

The 5-County Northwest Illinois area labor shed has a household population of approximately 197,600. The civilian labor force numbers approximately 106,200, and the labor shed contains approximately 4,900 unemployed people who are actively seeking work.

The results of this assessment determined that approximately 7,900 workers can be defined as underemployed: those individuals who are currently working but would take a better job if offered by a new or existing employer and who appear to possess the skills, education, and experience to qualify them to do so. Further, the results suggest that an additional 1,100 people who are not currently employed or actively seeking work would consider re-entering the workforce. In total, the 5-County Northwest Illinois area has approximately 13,900 available workers for new or existing employers.

### AVAILABLE WORKERS

Number of underemployed workers	7,900
Number of unemployed persons who are actively seeking work	4,900
Number of persons who are not working, but would consider re-entering the workforce	1,100
<b>Total Number of Workers Available for Employers</b>	<b>13,900</b>

The reader is cautioned that, while the number of underemployed workers identified in the region, as well as their skills, experience, education, and costs, is accurate, all of those individuals may not be acceptable candidates for an employer. Their previous work records, stability, integrity, intelligence, appearance, and other factors are not considered in this report.



These underemployed workers might also be termed “upgraders”. They desire to move into an upgraded job and appear to possess the skills, education, and experience to enable them to do so. The pay rates they expect to achieve range from under \$8.00 to over \$30.00 per hour.

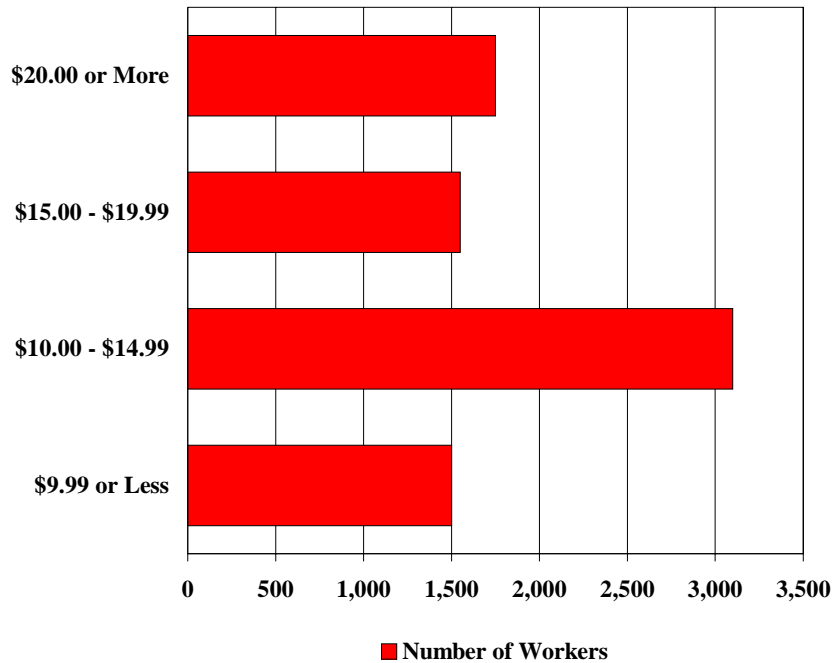
The following data represent the desired pay rates of the underemployed individuals in the labor shed. Many workers expressed their wage requirements in weekly, monthly, or annual terms, but all wage figures in this report are presented in hourly rates. Selected conversions may add perspective to the hourly rates. Figures presented below are rounded and based on a 40-hour workweek.

### CONVERSION CHART

Hourly	Weekly	Monthly	Annually
\$ 8.00	\$ 320.00	\$ 1,387.00	\$ 16,640.00
\$ 10.00	\$ 400.00	\$ 1,733.00	\$ 20,800.00
\$ 12.00	\$ 480.00	\$ 2,080.00	\$ 24,960.00
\$ 14.00	\$ 560.00	\$ 2,427.00	\$ 29,120.00
\$ 16.00	\$ 640.00	\$ 2,773.00	\$ 33,280.00
\$ 18.00	\$ 720.00	\$ 3,120.00	\$ 37,440.00
\$ 20.00	\$ 800.00	\$ 3,467.00	\$ 41,600.00
\$ 22.00	\$ 880.00	\$ 3,813.00	\$ 45,760.00
\$ 24.00	\$ 960.00	\$ 4,160.00	\$ 49,920.00
\$ 26.00	\$ 1,040.00	\$ 4,507.00	\$ 54,080.00
\$ 28.00	\$ 1,120.00	\$ 4,853.00	\$ 58,240.00
\$ 30.00	\$ 1,200.00	\$ 5,200.00	\$ 62,400.00
\$ 32.00	\$ 1,280.00	\$ 5,547.00	\$ 66,560.00
\$ 34.00	\$ 1,360.00	\$ 5,893.00	\$ 70,720.00



**DESIRED WAGE RATES PER HOUR BY RANGE**  
**7,900 Underemployed Workers**



**NUMBER OF UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS AVAILABLE**  
**AT SPECIFIC WAGE RATES PER HOUR (rounded)**

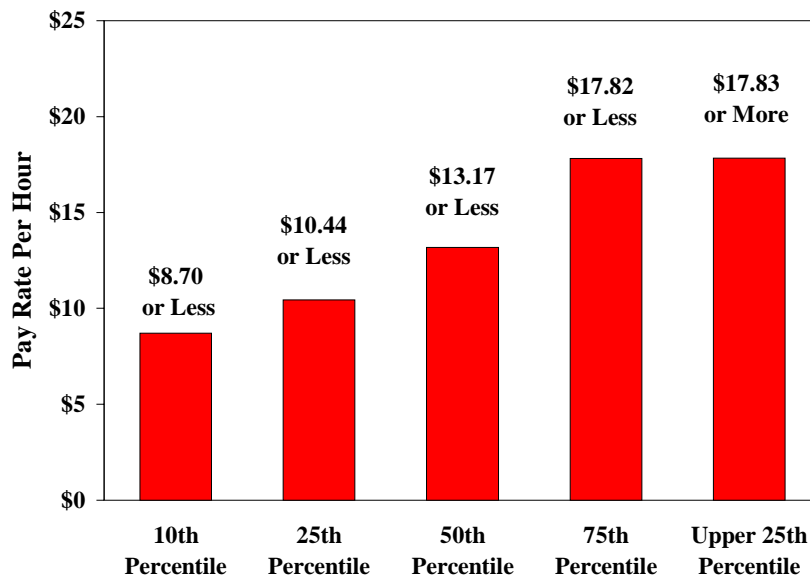
<u>\$7.99 or Less</u> <b>300</b>	<u>\$8.00 - \$8.99</u> <b>700</b>	<u>\$9.00 - \$9.99</u> <b>500</b>	<u>\$10.00 - \$10.99</u> <b>1,100</b>	<u>\$11.00 - \$11.99</u> <b>100</b>
<u>\$12.00 - \$12.99</u> <b>1,200</b>	<u>\$13.00 - \$13.99</u> <b>300</b>	<u>\$14.00 - \$14.99</u> <b>400</b>	<u>\$15.00 - \$15.99</u> <b>700</b>	<u>\$16.00 - \$16.99</u> <b>300</b>
<u>\$17.00 - \$17.99</u> <b>400</b>	<u>\$18.00 - \$18.99</u> <b>100</b>	<u>\$19.00 - \$19.99</u> <b>50</b>	<u>\$20.00 - \$20.99</u> <b>500</b>	<u>\$21.00 - \$21.99</u> <b>50</b>
<u>\$22.00 - \$22.99</u> <b>500</b>	<u>\$23.00 - \$23.99</u> <b>50</b>	<u>\$24.00 - \$24.99</u> <b>100</b>	<u>\$25.00 - \$25.99</u> <b>100</b>	<u>\$26.00 or More</u> <b>450</b>



Utilizing the desired wage information as illustrated in the preceding charts, the following conclusions can be drawn concerning the underemployed workers in the 5-County Northwest Illinois area:

- 10% of the underemployed workers will require \$8.70 per hour or less to change jobs.
- 25% of the underemployed workers will require \$10.44 per hour or less to change jobs.
- 50% of the underemployed workers will require \$13.17 per hour or less to change jobs.
- 75% of the underemployed workers will require \$17.82 per hour or less to change jobs.
- The upper 25% of the underemployed workers will require wages beginning at \$17.83 per hour and extending upward to over \$30.00 per hour. These are the most qualified and experienced workers.

**DESIRED WAGE RATES BY PERCENTILE**



**MEDIAN DESIRED PAY RATES BY SKILLS  
OF UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS  
The 5-County Northwest Illinois Area Labor Shed**

Skills	Desired Pay
Office Operations	\$12.84
Warehouse/Materials Handling	\$14.73
Manufacturing/Assembly/Fabrication	\$14.90
Medical/Health Sciences	\$12.40
Maintenance/Installation/Repair	\$17.15
Technician/Quality Assurance	\$17.90
Information Technology	\$12.90
Telecommunications	\$12.65
Electronics/Engineering	\$12.90
Software Development/Programming	\$22.40

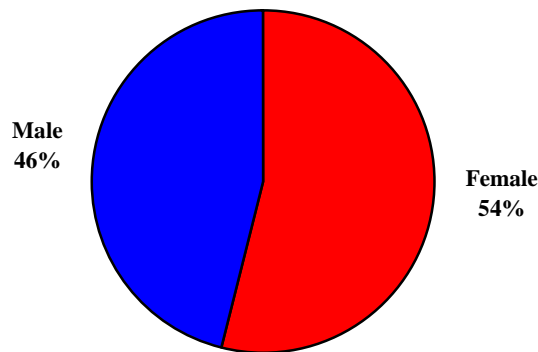


## CHARACTERISTICS OF UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS

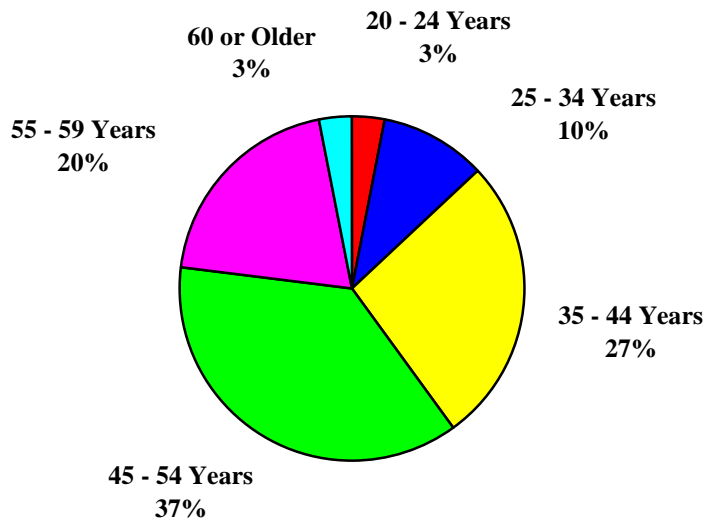
### The 5-County Northwest Illinois Area Labor Shed

The following charts provide information on various characteristics of the underemployed workers in the labor shed. As these data relate solely to those individuals in the labor shed who are underemployed, they will vary from data representative of the population as a whole.

#### UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS - GENDER

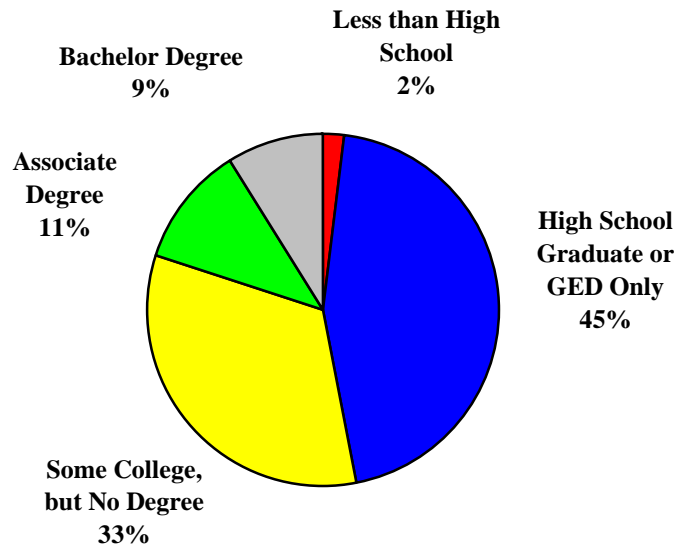


#### UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS - AGE



## CHARACTERISTICS OF UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS

### EDUCATION

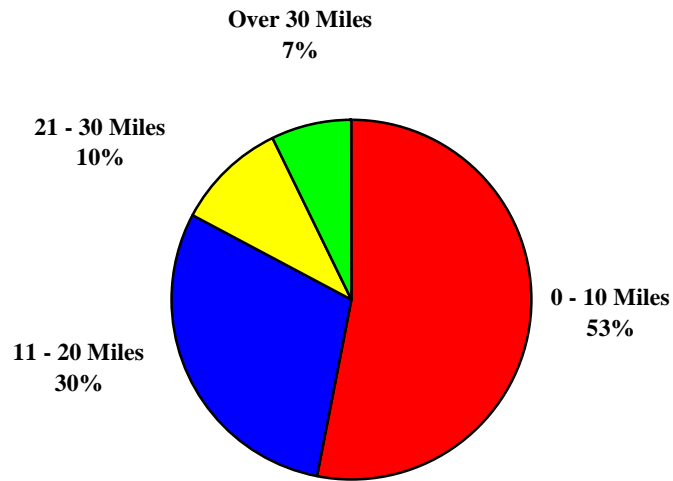


### LENGTH OF TIME IN CURRENT JOB

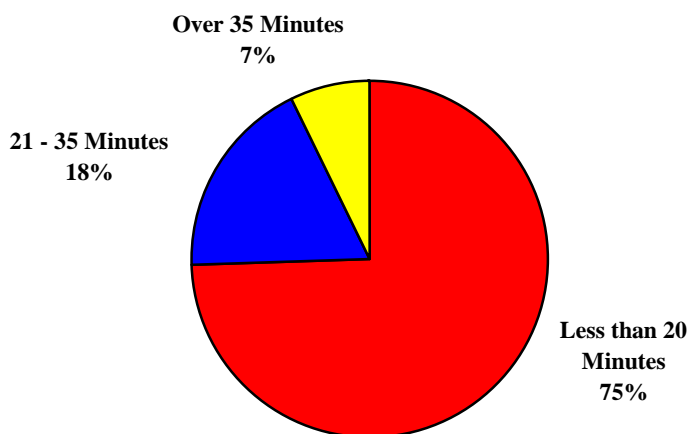


## CHARACTERISTICS OF UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS

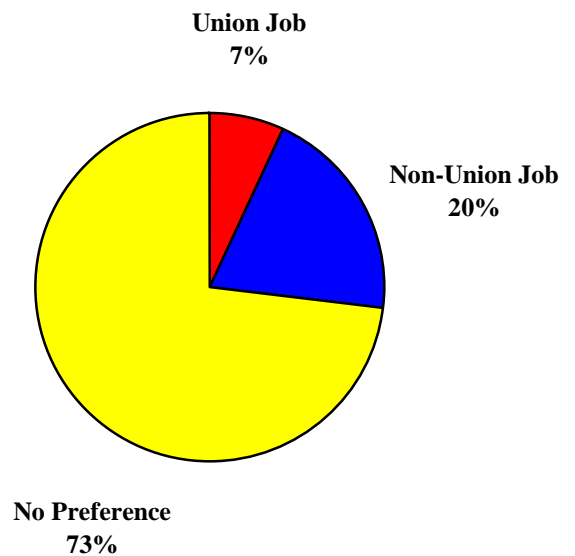
### CURRENT COMMUTE DISTANCE



### CURRENT COMMUTE TIME

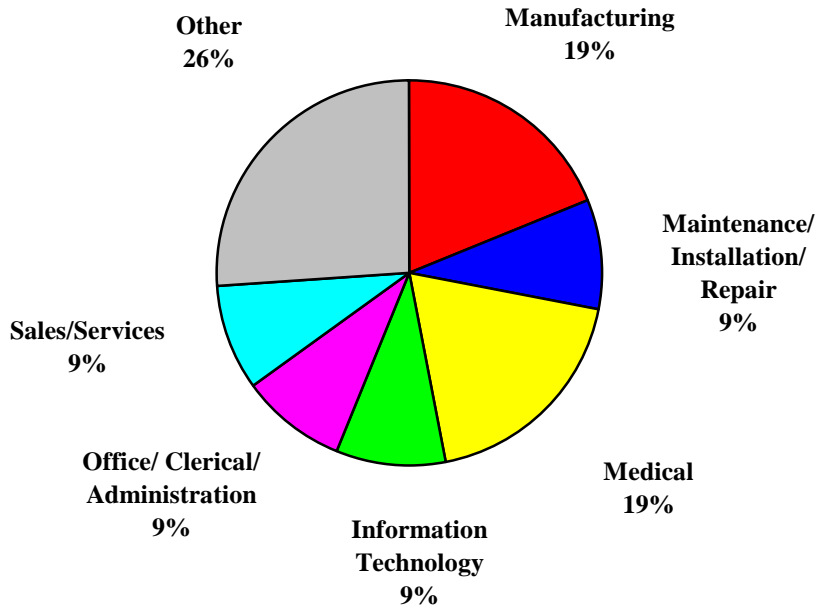


### UNION PREFERENCE



## CHARACTERISTICS OF UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS

### CURRENT SECTOR OF EMPLOYMENT



\* The “Other” category of current employment for the underemployed workers in the 5-County Northwest Illinois area includes those sectors with less than 9% representation. Those sectors are spread across a wide variety of categories, including, among others, construction and food service/hospitality.



## EXPERIENCE AND SKILLS – UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS

### The 5-County Northwest Illinois Area Labor Shed

The experience and skills categories used in this report are designed to provide accurate workforce data for employers which fall into one or more of the following four broad groups:

- manufacturing, assembly, fabrication or other industrial operations;
- back office, data processing, call centers, information technology, customer service or sales operations;
- distribution or transportation operations; and,
- biotechnology, pharmaceuticals or medical research operations.

The experience and skills categories are purposefully similar in order to present the most accurate worker availability for operations in one of those four groups.

An employee in the front office of a manufacturing operation will be considered to have “manufacturing” experience but may only have “office” skills. Someone with “manufacturing” experience may not have “manufacturing” skills, but could have “materials handling” skills if they work in shipping or receiving. “Sales and customer service” experience crosses many other experience and skills categories and ideally would be possessed by anyone with customer contact to any degree.

The similarities between the skills and experience categories are designed to ensure inclusiveness considering the multitude of tasks and job titles present in most business, government and institutional operations. Additionally, what may appear to some observers as redundancy is, in reality, a proven mechanism to cross-check the validity of responses and to identify the degree to which workplace and professional competencies are truly transferable to new positions and employers.



**EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE OF UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS****The 5-County Northwest Illinois Area Labor Shed****7,900 Underemployed Workers**

<b>Experience Category*</b>	<b>Total Number of Persons Experienced**</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Manufacturing/Assembly/Fabrication	4,700	59%
Customer Service	4,600	58%
Office Operations	4,000	51%
Warehouse/Distribution/Transportation	3,900	49%
Maintenance/Installation/Repair	2,800	36%
Medical/Health Sciences	2,400	31%
Sales	2,400	31%
Call Center	1,300	17%
Information Technology	1,100	14%
Electronics/Engineering	1,100	14%
Telecommunications	800	10%

\* Individuals polled may have experience in more than one job classification.

\*\* Rounded



**EMPLOYMENT SKILLS OF UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS****The 5-County Northwest Illinois Area Labor Shed****7,900 Underemployed Workers**

<b>Skills*</b>	<b>Total Number of Persons Skilled**</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Office Operations	5,000	63%
Manufacturing/Assembly/Fabrication	4,600	58%
Warehouse/Materials Handling	4,200	53%
Maintenance/Installation/Repair	2,300	29%
Technician/Quality Assurance	2,100	27%
Medical/Health Sciences	1,900	24%
Information Technology	1,600	20%
Telecommunications	1,500	19%
Electronics/Engineering	800	10%
Software Development/Programming	400	5%

\* **Individuals polled may have skills in more than one job classification.**

\*\* **Rounded**



**FACTORS AFFECTING JOB DESIRABILITY**  
**THE 5-COUNTY NORTHWEST ILLINOIS AREA LABOR SHED**  
**7,900 UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS**

In an effort to identify those factors most important to the 5-County Northwest Illinois area's underemployed workers relative to consideration of an employer's desirability, the surveyed individuals were asked to rate the following job factors on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being "extremely important" and 1 being "not important". The table below presents the ratings for each factor.

<b>Factor</b>	<b>5 Extremely Important</b>	<b>4 Very Important</b>	<b>3 Important</b>	<b>2 Somewhat Important</b>	<b>1 Not Important</b>
Salary	39%	49%	10%	1%	1%
Location	32%	48%	15%	2%	3%
Insurance Benefits	56%	32%	8%	2%	2%
Retirement Benefits	61%	30%	5%	2%	2%
Physical Working Environment	30%	45%	21%	2%	2%
On-Site Child Care	6%	10%	15%	22%	47%
Paid Training Programs	31%	32%	27%	5%	5%
Flexible Work Schedule	27%	36%	22%	12%	3%
Opportunity for Advancement	43%	40%	15%	1%	1%
Financial Stability of the Company	70%	24%	4%	1%	1%
Reputation of the Company	51%	39%	8%	1%	1%
Size of the Company	6%	17%	31%	19%	27%



In the table below, the factors are presented in order by “extremely important”. Bear in mind that the scores should be viewed in relation to each other. In other words, respondents ranked opportunity for advancement as more “extremely important” as a job factor than paid training programs, although such a ranking does not mean that workers in the 5-County Northwest Illinois area consider paid training programs to be unimportant in their evaluation of new job opportunities.

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Extremely Important</b>
Financial Stability of the Company	70%
Retirement Benefits	61%
Insurance Benefits	56%
Reputation of the Company	51%
Opportunity for Advancement	43%
Salary	39%
Location	32%
Paid Training Programs	31%
Physical Working Environment	30%
Flexible Work Schedule	27%
On-Site Child Care	6%
Size of the Company	6%



**EMPLOYERS' VIEWS OF THE  
THE NORTHWEST ILLINOIS AREA  
TOTAL WORKFORCE**

In developing a profile of existing workers in the Northwest Illinois region, The Pathfinders considered such factors as labor availability, productivity, unionization, attitudes, costs, and education. The analysis was based upon interviews conducted with senior management and human resources professionals from companies located in the labor shed. Each of these companies operated in the industrial, commercial, or service sectors. The interview sampling was sufficiently large to make valid workforce judgments.

As determined from the employer interviews, the table below reflects various methods used to recruit workers in the Northwest Illinois region and the percent of employers utilizing that method. Many employers use more than one method.

<b>Recruiting Method</b>	<b>% of Employers</b>
Newspaper Ads	61%
Word of Mouth	54%
Referrals	32%
Internet	21%
State Agency	14%
Staffing Service	12%
Recruiters	11%
Walk-Ins	9%
Colleges	7%

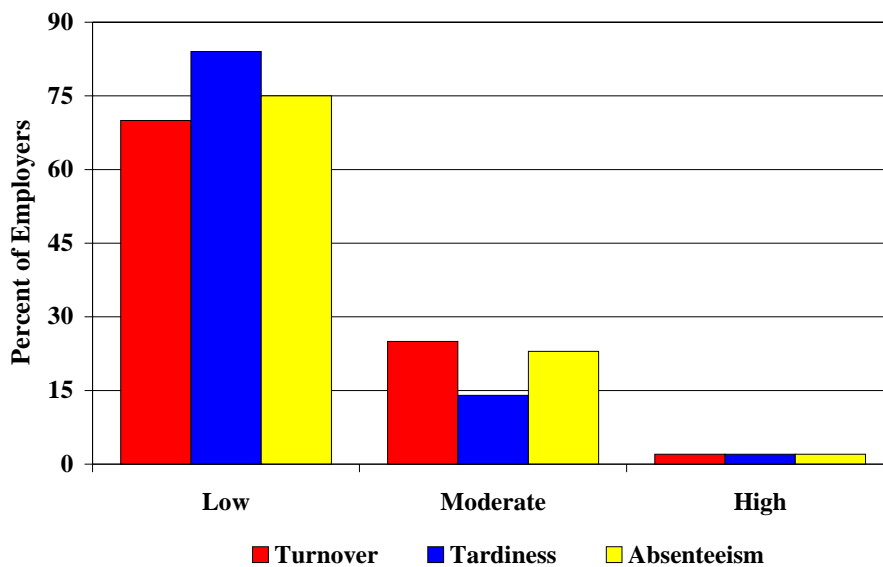
Other methods of recruiting workers, each with less than 7% representation, include job board, sign, union hall and radio/TV.



Employers with operations in other regions of the United States were asked to compare their experiences in those other areas with their experiences in the Northwest Illinois region. Of those employers who had operations elsewhere, 97% stated that their Northwest Illinois area operations were comparable to or better than the operations in other locations in terms of profitability and production. This is indicative not only of good management but also of a productive workforce.

Based upon the experience of The Pathfinders in evaluating labor forces in numerous locations, a definite correlation between productivity, absenteeism, tardiness, turnover, and substance abuse appears to exist. That correlation goes beyond the fact that an absent worker is obviously unproductive. Rather, those factors are indicative of an employee’s attitude toward the job. The chart below shows the percent of employers rating for turnover, tardiness and absenteeism in the Northwest Illinois region.

**PERCENT OF EMPLOYERS RATING  
THE NORTHWEST ILLINOIS AREA**



Additionally, in the Northwest Illinois region, 70% of the employers interviewed stated their companies tested for substance abuse, primarily pre-employment. Substance abuse within the individual companies’ workforces was reported as very low.



In consideration of all factors, 79% of the employers in the Northwest Illinois area rated the productivity of the workforce as “Good” to “Excellent”. Worker reliability received high marks from 83% of the employers.

### PERCENT OF EMPLOYERS RATING THE NORTHWEST ILLINOIS AREA

Category	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Worker Productivity	21%	58%	18%	3%
Worker Reliability	25%	58%	14%	3%
Worker Attitudes	13%	73%	14%	0%

The educational competencies of employees are additional factors used to evaluate an area’s labor force. In the Northwest Illinois area, 53% of the employers interviewed rated the local public schools as “Excellent” or “Good”, and 83% of the employers rated the local community colleges and technical schools as “Excellent” or “Good”. Employers gave the following ratings to their employees relative to competency in reading, writing, and calculations.

### PERCENT OF EMPLOYERS RATING THE NORTHWEST ILLINOIS AREA

Category	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Reading Competency	13%	69%	18%	0%
Writing Competency	4%	67%	29%	0%
Calculations Competency	7%	55%	35%	3%

A common employer complaint relates to the shortage of skilled and technical workers. The availability of these workers in the Northwest Illinois region must be viewed from the perspective of comparative availability when other areas of the state and nation are



considered. Skilled and technical workers are in great demand and difficult to find in the vast majority of locations. Of the companies in the labor shed interviewed, 45% considered skilled worker availability to be “Excellent” or “Good”, while 35% considered it to be “Fair”. The availability of technical workers in the labor shed was rated “Excellent” or “Good” by 30% of the interviewed companies and “Fair” by 58%.

The following table provides a composite portrait of employers’ experiences with and opinions of workers in the Northwest Illinois region. Taken in context with the data gathered and presented in the workforce survey, a balanced profile of the attributes of individuals available to fill the labor needs of new and expanding firms is provided.

### PERCENT OF EMPLOYERS RATING THE NORTHWEST ILLINOIS AREA

Category	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Availability of Skilled Workers	7%	38%	35%	20%
Availability of Unskilled Workers	17%	57%	17%	9%
Availability of Professional Workers	6%	25%	54%	15%
Availability of Technical Workers	8%	22%	58%	12%
Worker Productivity	21%	58%	18%	3%
Worker Reliability	25%	58%	14%	3%
Worker Attitudes	13%	73%	14%	0%
Reading Competency	13%	69%	18%	0%
Writing Competency	4%	67%	29%	0%
Calculations Competency	7%	55%	35%	3%
Teamwork Skills	18%	55%	27%	0%
Entry Level Skills	12%	52%	34%	2%

## COMPARISONS OF EMPLOYERS RATINGS

### TOTAL WORKFORCE

#### The Northwest Illinois Area Labor Shed /

#### Locations Previously Surveyed

In the course of workforce surveys, local employers are asked to rate their workers on a number of factors. Those factors include: worker productivity; worker reliability and attitudes; reading/writing/calculations competency; teamwork skills; entry level skills; availability of skilled workers; availability of unskilled workers; availability of technical workers; and, availability of professional workers. Local employers are asked to rate each factor either “Excellent”, “Good”, “Fair”, or “Poor”.

The purpose of these interviews and ratings is not only to determine how local employers rate their workers but also to provide a means for comparing local ratings to those of all locations surveyed during the past eighteen months. Such comparison will enable you to assess your employers’ ratings of their workers in contrast to the body of thousands of employer ratings recorded in that period.

The following charts present the comparative results for each factor. They compare the percentages of the Northwest Illinois area employers who rated their workers “Excellent”, “Good”, “Fair”, or “Poor” on each factor with the “Highest” rating of that factor in all areas surveyed in the last eighteen months and the “Median” rating for that factor in all areas surveyed during that time. As a result, the “Highest” and “Median” ratings do not add to 100%.

For example, 21% of the Northwest Illinois area employers rated “Worker Productivity” as “Excellent”. Of all the locations surveyed during the last eighteen months, the “Median” for that rating is 21%, and the “Highest” rating recorded in the “Excellent” category is 46%. The same comparison applies for each of the other factors. In these charts, the Northwest Illinois area is shown as “Labor Shed”.



**WORKER PRODUCTIVITY**

Excellent		Good		Fair		Poor	
Highest	46%	Highest	76%	Highest	33%	Highest	11%
<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>3%</b>
Median	21%	Median	57%	Median	16%	Median	3%

**WORKER RELIABILITY**

Excellent		Good		Fair		Poor	
Highest	43%	Highest	76%	Highest	44%	Highest	14%
<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>3%</b>
Median	15%	Median	52%	Median	21%	Median	6%

**WORKER ATTITUDES**

Excellent		Good		Fair		Poor	
Highest	30%	Highest	77%	Highest	40%	Highest	19%
<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>0%</b>
Median	14%	Median	61%	Median	20%	Median	4%

**WORKER READING COMPETENCY**

Excellent		Good		Fair		Poor	
Highest	24%	Highest	76%	Highest	55%	Highest	27%
<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>0%</b>
Median	8%	Median	50%	Median	37%	Median	7%



**WORKER WRITING COMPETENCY**

Excellent		Good		Fair		Poor	
Highest	16%	Highest	74%	Highest	60%	Highest	30%
<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>0%</b>
Median	6%	Median	52%	Median	34%	Median	8%

**WORKER CALCULATIONS COMPETENCY**

Excellent		Good		Fair		Poor	
Highest	24%	Highest	69%	Highest	62%	Highest	43%
<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>3%</b>
Median	7%	Median	43%	Median	42%	Median	14%

**WORKER TEAMWORK SKILLS**

Excellent		Good		Fair		Poor	
Highest	36%	Highest	86%	Highest	33%	Highest	7%
<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>0%</b>
Median	11%	Median	64%	Median	20%	Median	5%

**WORKER ENTRY LEVEL SKILLS**

Excellent		Good		Fair		Poor	
Highest	18%	Highest	80%	Highest	57%	Highest	31%
<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>2%</b>
Median	5%	Median	51%	Median	34%	Median	9%



**AVAILABILITY OF SKILLED WORKERS**

Excellent		Good		Fair		Poor	
Highest	24%	Highest	60%	Highest	71%	Highest	47%
<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>20%</b>
Median	6%	Median	36%	Median	41%	Median	18%

**AVAILABILITY OF UNSKILLED WORKERS**

Excellent		Good		Fair		Poor	
Highest	53%	Highest	75%	Highest	50%	Highest	17%
<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>9%</b>
Median	27%	Median	49%	Median	20%	Median	5%

**AVAILABILITY OF PROFESSIONAL WORKERS**

Excellent		Good		Fair		Poor	
Highest	19%	Highest	64%	Highest	63%	Highest	54%
<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>15%</b>
Median	6%	Median	33%	Median	38%	Median	23%

**AVAILABILITY OF TECHNICAL WORKERS**

Excellent		Good		Fair		Poor	
Highest	18%	Highest	58%	Highest	60%	Highest	54%
<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>12%</b>
Median	4%	Median	34%	Median	42%	Median	20%



**EMPLOYER OPINIONS ON TRAINING ISSUES**  
**THE NORTHWEST ILLINOIS AREA**  
**TOTAL WORKFORCE**

After surveying local employers as to their ratings of “Excellent”, “Good”, “Fair” or “Poor” for local public schools, community colleges and technical school, follow-up questions were posed with the intent to solicit comments concerning training gaps or other issues that relate to these educational providers. As shown below and previously stated in this report, 53% of the employers rated local public schools as “Excellent” or “Good” and 83% rated local community colleges and technical schools as “Excellent” or “Good”.

**PERCENT OF EMPLOYERS RATING**

<b>Educational Provider</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Poor</b>
Local Public Schools	13%	40%	40%	7%
Local Community Colleges / Technical Schools	25%	58%	17%	0%

Comments concerning the local public schools tended to revolve around needs relating to basic skills (reading, writing, arithmetic) and life skills including responsibility, attitudes and teamwork. A lack of vocational training programs in the public high schools was noted by many of the surveyed employers, a factor that affects local employers in industry clusters such as manufacturing. The area community colleges and technical schools earned positive remarks from the employers, although the need for more classes and more hands-on training was mentioned by some during the interview process.



Further, the employers were asked to identify training needs in their particular operations. Technical skills, including welding, mechanics, maintenance, and machining, were cited most frequently. Other training needs reported by many of the employers related to computer skills and soft skills such as communications, problem-solving and work ethics. The training needs as reported by the surveyed employers are listed in the table below. Many employers reported more than one category.

**EMPLOYERS' OPINIONS - TRAINING NEEDS  
THE NORTHWEST ILLINOIS AREA LABOR SHED**

Training Need	Percentage
Technical	54%
Soft Skills	33%
Computer Skills	16%
Customer Service	12%
Basic Skills (reading, math)	11%
Professional / Management / Leadership	11%
Safety	5%
Medical	4%

When asked how their training needs might change in the future, the employers surveyed emphasized technical and computer training.



## NATIONAL COMPARATIVE OBSERVATIONS

As a matter of course in site-selection projects, The Pathfinders evaluates published government workforce statistics. Those statistics, however, depict the entire workforce while only a minority segment of those workers will be considered for or have an interest in new jobs with a company. The characteristics of the select, underemployed workforce group represented in this report may vary significantly from the workforce as a whole as reported in published government data.

Accordingly, the information presented in the workforce report for the 5-County Northwest Illinois region covers those members of the workforce who are, by virtue of their underemployment, potential candidates for new jobs. Existing employers, or new employers recruited to the 5-County Northwest Illinois region, typically will not depend heavily on the unemployed to staff a new operation or to fill vacancies in existing operations caused by turnover or expansions. Companies look to the ranks of people who are already employed but are seeking to better themselves. Those individuals in that category who appear to possess the education, skills, and experience to merit a better job are classified as underemployed.

The workforce report issued by The Pathfinders documents the availability of underemployed workers as well as the skills, experience, education, and costs of individuals in that hidden workforce in the 5-County Northwest Illinois region. This section of the report provides a comparison of the characteristics of the labor shed's underemployed workforce with the underemployed workforces in other communities previously surveyed throughout the nation. A prospect company considering the 5-County Northwest Illinois region as a location will judge its workforce on a comparative basis. This section of the report will allow local economic development professionals to view the region's workforce in relation to others across the country. The comparative data for other locations used in the following charts and tables reflect information accumulated over the past eighteen months. The Pathfinders maintains a continuing database of over 600 surveyed counties and communities and more than 30 million workers.



## Locations Used In Comparative Analysis

In the various charts which follow this page, this labor shed is compared with others for the purpose of making the data meaningful. In the charts, figures for this labor shed are shown alongside the “lowest”, “median” and “highest” figures from other workforce surveys conducted by The Pathfinders. The comparisons are with communities and counties representing both larger and smaller and those similar in size to this labor shed. They are also scattered throughout the nation, and a partial listing of locations from which the “low”, “median” and “high” data reported are derived includes:

Albany, NY	Cullman County, AL	Lake Havasu, AZ	Rutherford County, TN
Albuquerque, NM	Culpeper County, VA	Laramie, WY	Salem, IL
Allegany County, MD	Danville, IL	LaSalle, IL	San Marcus, TX
Amarillo, TX	Daytona Beach, FL	Lea County, NM	Scranton, PA
Anderson, IN	Decatur, AL	Lebanon, KY	Sequin, TX
Ardmore, OK	Eastern Shore, MD	Lee’s Summit, MO	Seneca County, NY
Ashland, KY	Elizabethtown, KY	Lexington, KY	Shasta County, CA
Atascadero, CA	Evansville, IN	Long Island, NY	Shelby County, AL
Atlanta, GA	Fairfield County, OH	Longview, TX	Shreveport, LA
Auburn, AL	Fargo, ND	Louisville, KY	Sikeston, MO
Baldwin County, AL	Fauquier County, VA	Madison, SD	Silver City, NM
Bay County, FL	Fulton County, KY	McDowell County, NC	Spartanburg, SC
Bedford, TX	Grant County, NM	Moberly, MO	Spokane, WA
Beeville, TX	Grant County, WA	Mobile, AL	Springfield, IL
Binghamton, NY	Grays Harbor, WA	Mohawk Valley, NY	Sullivan County, NY
Birmingham, AL	Greene County, NY	Monroe County, NY	Sumter County, SC
Boone County, IN	Grenada, MS	Montgomery, AL	Syracuse, NY
Bowie, TX	Harrison County, IN	Moorhead, MN	Tallahassee, FL
Bryan/College Station, TX	Hazleton, PA	Muncie, IN	Taylor, TX
Buffalo, NY	Henderson, KY	New Braunfels, TX	Terre Haute, IN
Bullitt County, KY	Hendricks County, IN	New York City, NY	Tioga County, NY
Cambridge, MD	Hernando County, FL	Obion County, TN	Tipton County, IN
Campbellsville, KY	Hillsdale County, MI	Ontario County, NY	Tomball, TX
Cape Girardeau, MO	Hudson Valley, NY	Oswego County, NY	Tupelo, MS
Casper, WY	Huntsville, AL	Owsley County, KY	Tuscaloosa, AL
Centralia, IL	Hurst, TX	Pampa, TX	Ulster County, NY
Champaign County, IL	Hutto, TX	Panama City, FL	Vermillion County, IN
Chattanooga, TN	Independence, MO	Pensacola, FL	Vineland, NJ
Cheyenne, WY	Indianapolis, IN	Polk County, NC	Warren County, VA
Cleveland County, NC	Jackson, MS	Ponca City, OK	Watertown, SD
Clinton, SC	Jackson County, MO	Prescott Valley, AZ	Wilkes-Barre, PA
Conroe, TX	Jay County, IN	Reno, NV	Williamsport, PA
Corpus Christi, TX	Kalamazoo, MI	Rutherford County, NC	Yankton, SD



The workforce report documented the number of underemployed workers in the labor shed who would be available for an employer at various pay rates ranging from \$8.00 per hour or below to \$30.00 per hour or above and who appear to have the skills, experience, and education to justify the desired pay rates. The table below shows that 25% (lower quartile) of the underemployed workers in the labor shed would take a new job for \$10.44 per hour or less. In locations surveyed over the past eighteen months, the lowest desired pay rate in the lower quartile of underemployed workers was \$8.98 per hour or less, the median \$11.43 or less, and the highest desired pay rate was \$18.73 per hour or less.

**DESIRED WAGES (per hour) – LOWER QUARTILE  
UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS**

<b>Desired Wage Labor Shed</b>	<b>Lowest Desired Wage Locations Surveyed Past 18 Months</b>	<b>Median Desired Wage Locations Surveyed Past 18 Months</b>	<b>Highest Desired Wage Locations Surveyed Past 18 Months</b>
\$10.44 or Less	\$8.98 or Less	\$11.43 or Less	\$18.73 or Less

Those underemployed workers in the upper quartile have more education, better skills, and greater experience. Yet based on current pay rates, they are considered to be underemployed. In the labor shed, the underemployed individuals in the upper 25% desire \$17.83 per hour or more. In locations surveyed over the past eighteen months, the lowest desired pay rate in the upper quartile of underemployed workers was \$15.87 or more, the median \$21.36 or more, and the highest was \$39.06 per hour or more.

**DESIRED WAGES (per hour) – UPPER QUARTILE  
UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS**

<b>Desired Wage Labor Shed</b>	<b>Lowest Desired Wage Locations Surveyed Past 18 Months</b>	<b>Median Desired Wage Locations Surveyed Past 18 Months</b>	<b>Highest Desired Wage Locations Surveyed Past 18 Months</b>
\$17.83 or More	\$15.87 or More	\$21.36 or More	\$39.06 or More



The following charts compare the percentages of underemployed workers in the 5-County Northwest Illinois region who have experience in various fields of employment with the percentages of underemployed workers in locations surveyed over the past eighteen months who have the same type of experience. In the charts, the 5-County Northwest Illinois region is referred to as “labor shed”.

The experience charts are followed by skills charts, which compare the percentages of underemployed workers in the 5-County Northwest Illinois region who possess various types of employment skills with the percentages of underemployed workers in locations surveyed over the past eighteen months who possess the same skills. In the charts, the 5-County Northwest Illinois region is referred to as “labor shed”.



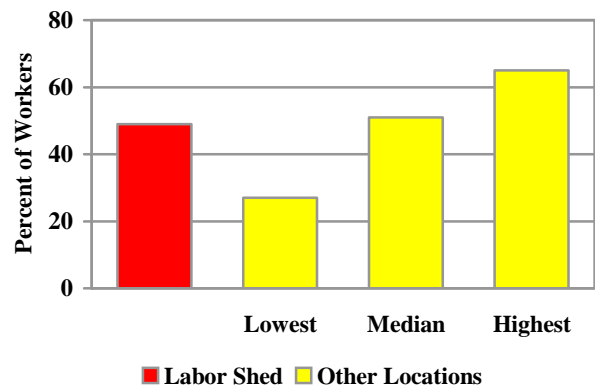
**COMPARISON OF EXPERIENCE  
UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS**

**The 5-County Northwest Illinois Area /  
Locations Surveyed Over the Past 18 Months**

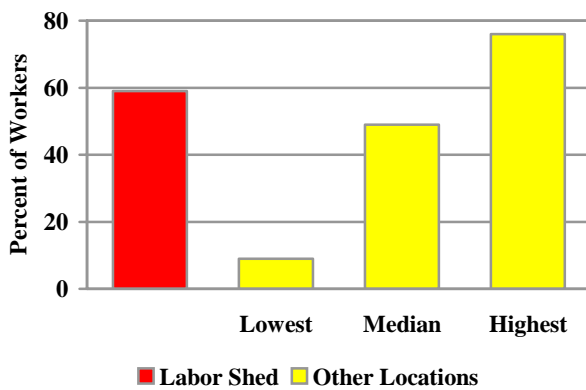
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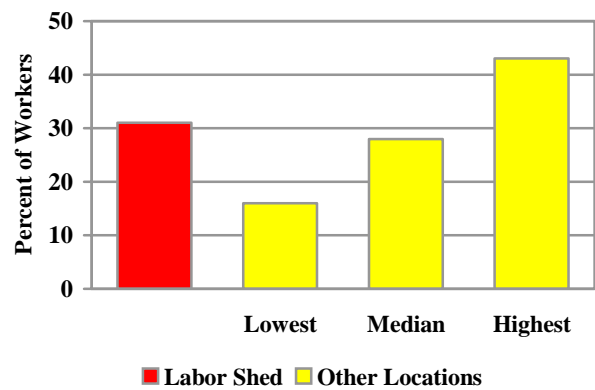
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**MANUFACTURING / ASSEMBLY /  
FABRICATION**



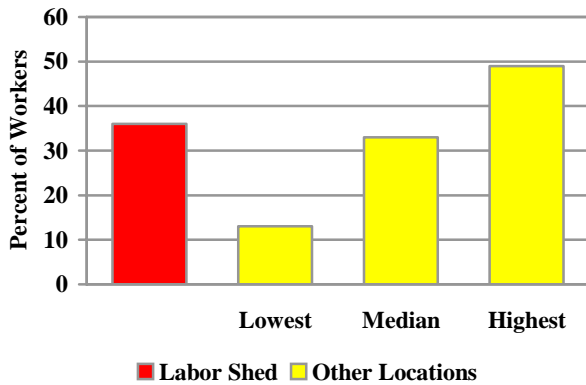
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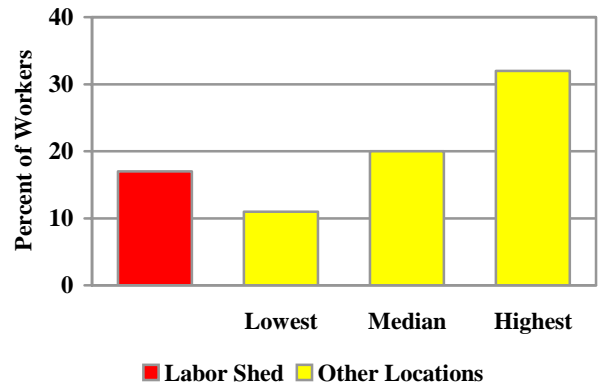
**COMPARISON OF EXPERIENCE  
UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS**

**The 5-County Northwest Illinois Area /  
Locations Surveyed Over the Past 18 Months**

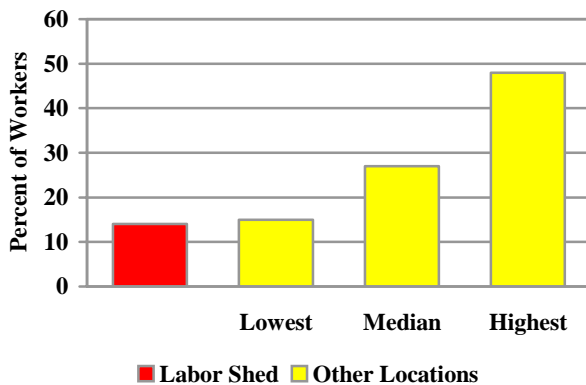
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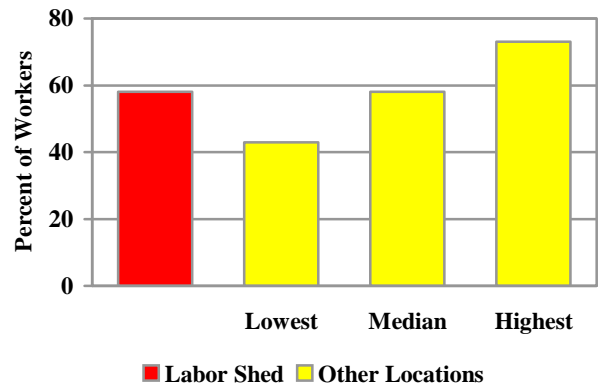
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**INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

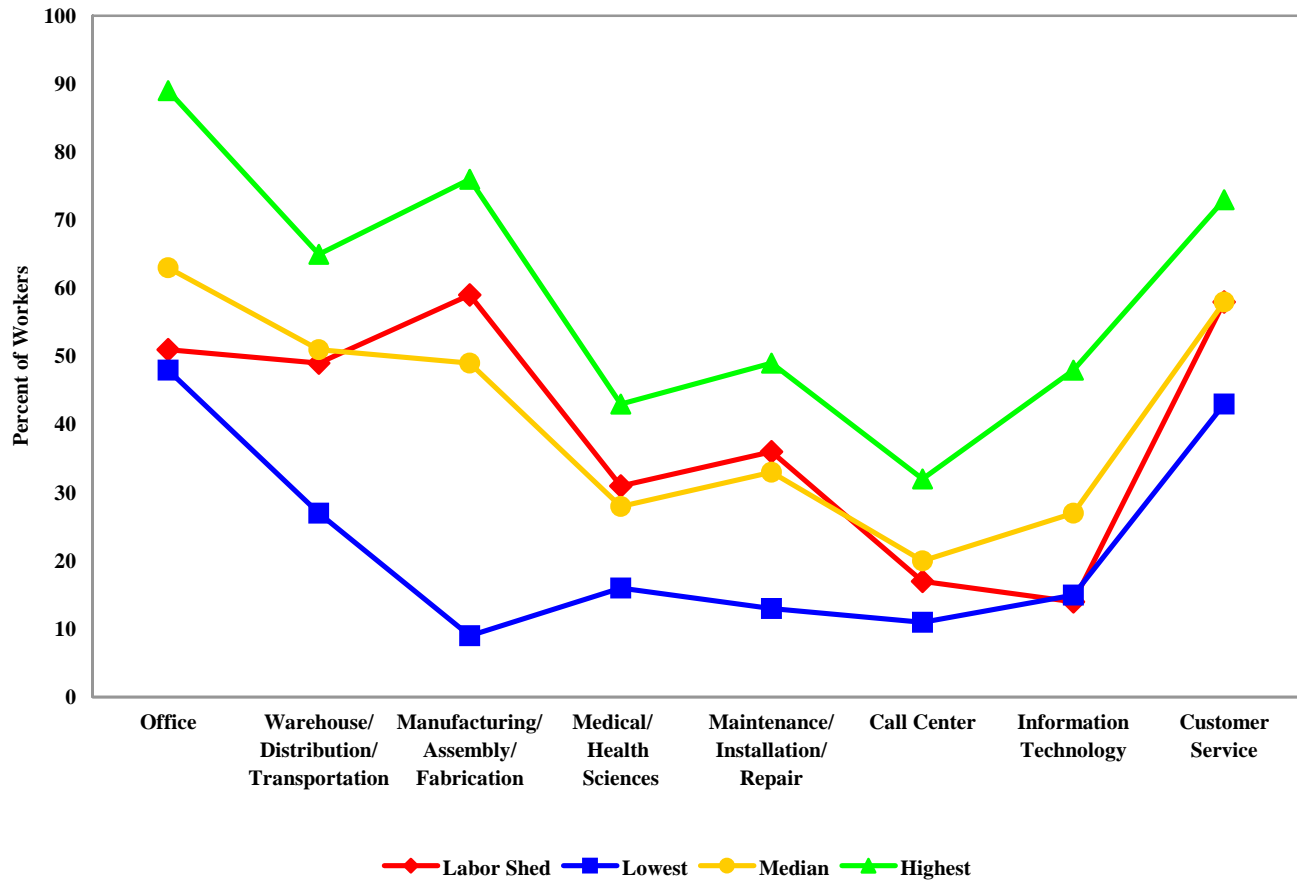


**CUSTOMER SERVICE**



**SUMMARY COMPARISON OF EXPERIENCE  
UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS**

**The 5-County Northwest Illinois Area /  
Locations Surveyed Over the Past 18 Months**



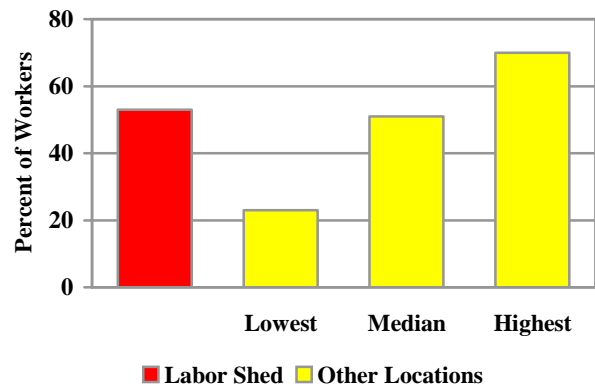
**COMPARISON OF SKILLS  
UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS**

**The 5-County Northwest Illinois Area /  
Locations Surveyed Over the Past 18 Months**

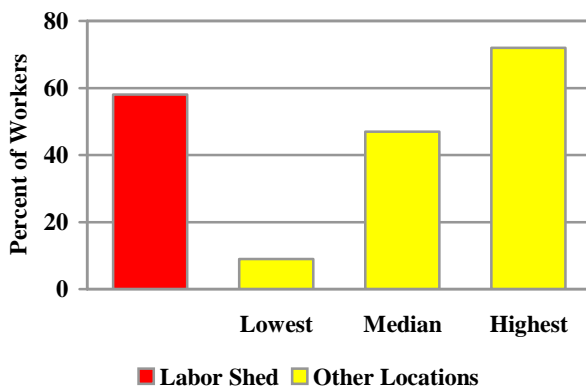
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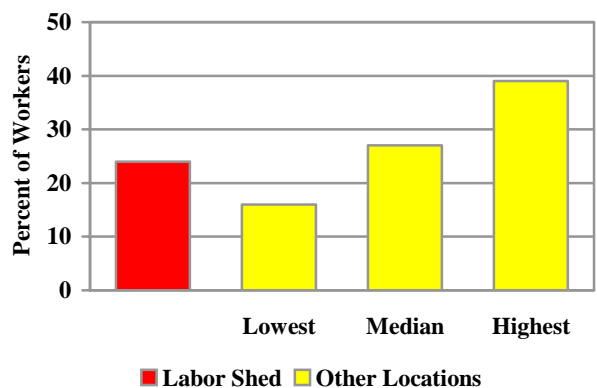
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**MANUFACTURING / ASSEMBLY /  
FABRICATION**



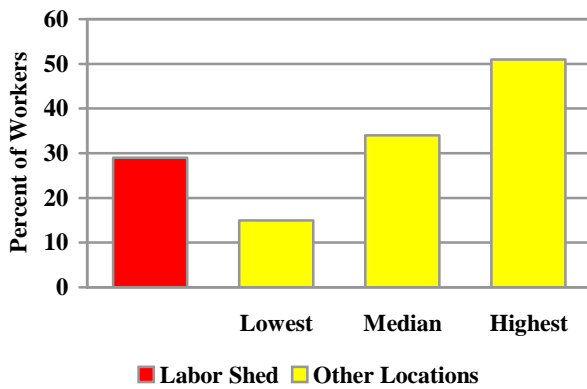
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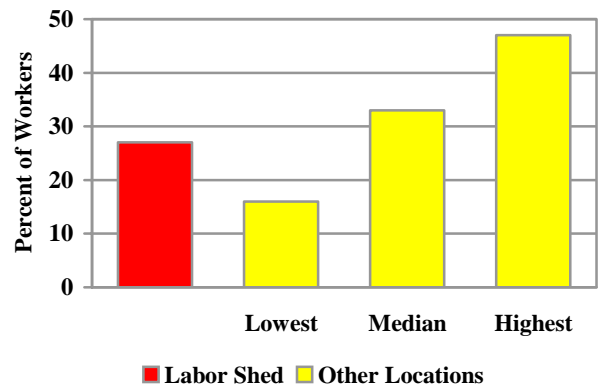
## COMPARISON OF SKILLS UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS

**The 5-County Northwest Illinois Area /  
Locations Surveyed Over the Past 18 Months**

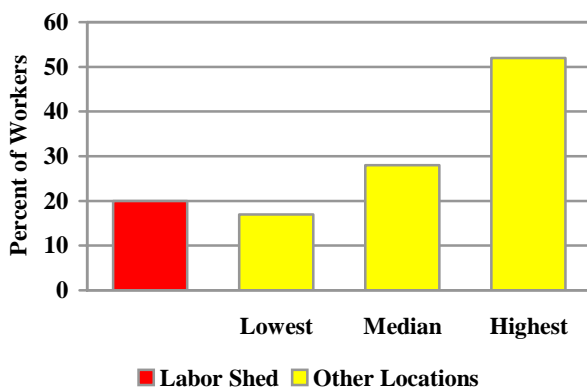
**MAINTENANCE /  
INSTALLATION / REPAIR**



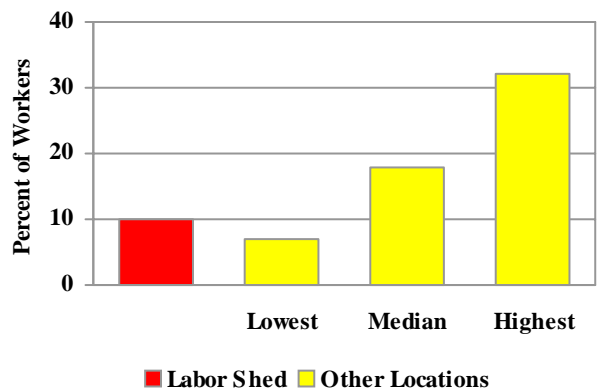
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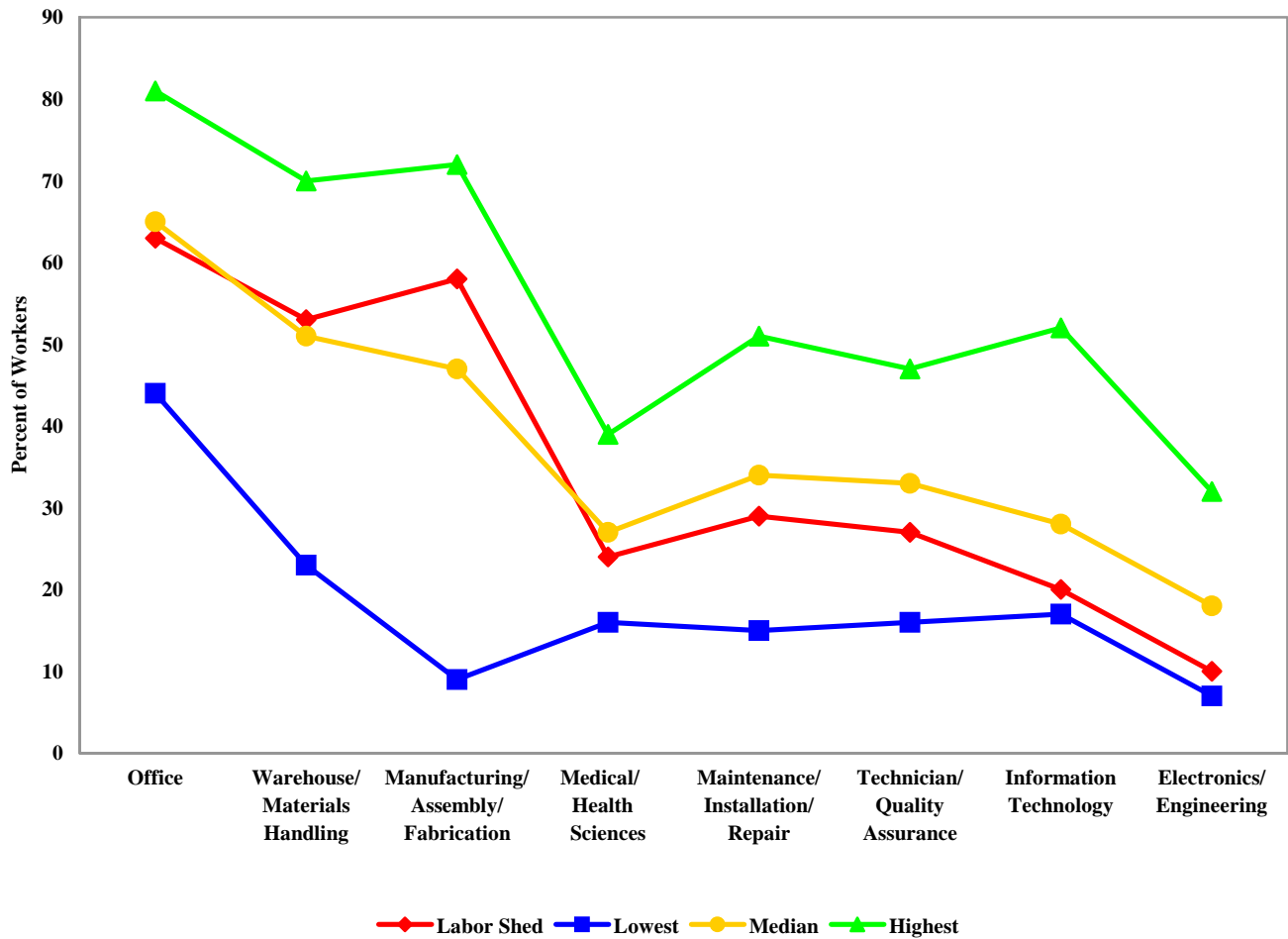
**INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**



**ELECTRONICS / ENGINEERING**



**SUMMARY COMPARISON OF SKILLS  
UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS  
The 5-County Northwest Illinois Area /  
Locations Surveyed Over the Past 18 Months**



## CLOSING REMARKS

The foregoing report represents an assessment of the underemployment that exists in the 5-County Northwest Illinois region. It includes a set of important interlocking measurements of the number of underemployed workers, their cost, skills, experience, education, reliability, productivity, and other related factors. The information allows the economic development professional and the site-selection team to view the area in comparison to other locations.

Attention should be given to the “Employers’ Views of the Northwest Illinois Area Total Workforce” section of this report in which local employers’ views of the characteristics of local workers are compared with employers’ views in other locations where the identical questions have been asked in identical fashion.

Similarly, attention should be given to the final section of this report, “National Comparative Observations”, which compares, employing an identical methodology, the costs, experience, and skills of local underemployed workers with those underemployed workers in locations surveyed by The Pathfinders over the past eighteen months.

While the number of underemployed workers in the 5-County Northwest Illinois region, including their cost, skills, and experience, is the focus of this report, the data should be interpreted in a comparative perspective just as the corporate site selector will in deciding among competing locations.

**For Informational Purposes:**

<b>The 5-County Northwest Illinois Area Civilian Workforce.....</b>	<b>106,200</b>
<b>Largest Workforce Surveyed by The Pathfinders .....</b>	<b>3,452,000</b>
<b>Median Workforce Surveyed by The Pathfinders .....</b>	<b>138,400</b>
<b>Smallest Workforce Surveyed by The Pathfinders.....</b>	<b>3,350</b>
<b>Number of Locations Surveyed by The Pathfinders.....</b>	<b>312</b>





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