

Canada 

EMPLOYMENT  
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 FORESTS  
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OFIA

# THE ONTARIO FORESTRY SECTOR

Bridging the Gap Between Ontario's  
Youth & the Provincial Forestry Sector

RESEARCH REPORT | OCTOBER 2022

**ENVIRONICS**  
RESEARCH



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**Industries across Canada are seeing a large portion of their workforce retire and lack the ability to replace workers. Forestry is no exception – the sector is faced with labour shortages across a variety of roles, and these are expected to increase over the next 5 to 10 years.**

This research investigates current forestry workers' career paths, training preferences and needs, satisfaction with the industry, and expected labour shortages. It also offers potential solutions to increase the sector's appeal and engagement to help address labour shortages.

# Research summary

## Growing labour shortage

**An aging workforce and subsequent labour shortage is a challenge faced by industries across Ontario and Canada.** To effectively compete with other industries, and attract and retain a workforce that can sustain a growing industry, the forestry sector will need to work on all aspects of the engagement funnel, starting with general awareness, then consideration, and finally engagement.

- 1. Awareness** | A lack of awareness of the industry and the potential jobs available is a significant barrier to interest. Solutions need to consider both the general population and youth entering the workforce. Without first increasing overall awareness, conversion to consideration among youth may be less successful.
- 2. Consideration** | The industry needs to feature early in the career/job considerations set among high school students while they're choosing their education paths. Solutions to increasing consideration involve both increasing awareness of training requirements and improving training pathways to those considering a job in forestry.
- 3. Engagement** | Among those already in the industry, the cyclical and seasonal nature of the work, the sector's instability, the high cost of entry, and compensation that is considered below market, can impact engagement and retention. Addressing the issues that create instability in the lives of workers will help retain employees and turn the industry into a more attractive career option.



# Research summary | Forestry career journey

Low awareness is a problem in the first three phases of the forestry career journey; awareness and perceptions of the industry itself, awareness of the jobs and careers available, and not being top-of-mind among teachers and family members (some of the main entry points to the industry). Once on the pathway, those working in forestry are passionate about it and believe the industry is aligned with their values.

Career journey	Awareness of forestry	Education/training pathways	Joining the sector	Working in the in the sector	Career/job advancement	Future industry outlook
Situation	Low awareness of the sector and the types of jobs available	Low awareness of education pathways, high cost of entry (for some positions)	Largely influenced by word of mouth (family in the sector, teachers' suggestions) or experience/interests	Workers are passionate about their jobs and have overall positive perceptions about the industry	Good opportunities to advance career in the industry	Shrinking workforce, unfavourable perceptions of forestry
	<p><b>29%</b> driven by <b>love of nature/passion</b> (reasons for pursuing career in forestry)</p> <p><b>20%</b> driven by <b>family influences</b></p>	<b>51%</b> say it's an <b>industry that I believe in/aligns</b> with my values (benefits of working in forestry)	<p><b>34%</b> felt <b>prepared</b> when first entering the industry</p> <p><b>34%</b> felt <b>unprepared</b></p>	<b>63%</b> <b>mentoring</b> is one of the top 3 preferred training options	<b>66%</b> <b>satisfied</b> with the opportunities to grow and advance their career	<b>74%</b> believe it will become <b>increasingly challenging</b> to recruit for <b>woodlands positions</b> (among business owners/top-level executives)

# Research summary | **Forestry career journey**

Increasing awareness about the sustainable practices of forestry and the use of technology by the industry can help potential workers find alignment between themselves and the industry, thus increasing appeal. For those already in the industry, finding ways to create stable employment, and training workers for multiple jobs, can help them stay in the industry, a strategy that is also supported by the literature review.

Career journey	Awareness of forestry	Education/training pathways	Joining the sector	Working in the in the sector	Career/job advancement	Future industry outlook
Challenges & barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of awareness and familiarity with sector as a career path</li> <li>Negative perceptions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High school students are not exposed to the sector</li> <li>Negative views of sector by teachers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mixed initial experiences (some felt prepared, others didn't)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low(er) wages</li> <li>Lack of diversity (and racism/sexism in the sector)</li> <li>Difficult work conditions and seasonality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Retirement among older workers</li> <li>Higher paying job opportunities for workers starting their careers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Woodlands and mill operations will have the most difficulty hiring</li> <li>Other industries facing the same challenge</li> </ul>
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reinforce values alignment, appeal to sustainability</li> <li>Leverage workers to be industry voices and champions (increase word of mouth)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Early exposure to nature</li> <li>Education about the range of positions and pathways during high school</li> <li>Educating teachers about the sector</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On-the-job training was valued and sought out</li> <li>Continued education can help current workers move to different jobs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creating opportunities for year-round work</li> <li>Increasing wages and creating better work conditions (to offset lower wages)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mentorships and opportunities to change careers and advance the sector as a whole</li> <li>Technology training for workers close to retirement (increasing their work life)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve perceptions of sustainability and technology</li> <li>Reduce the cost of entry to certain positions</li> <li>Increase automation to offset fewer workers</li> </ul>

# Forestry industry overview

Existing literature highlights the labour shortages faced by industries across Canada and proposes solutions that were used to guide our research.

# Existing research review

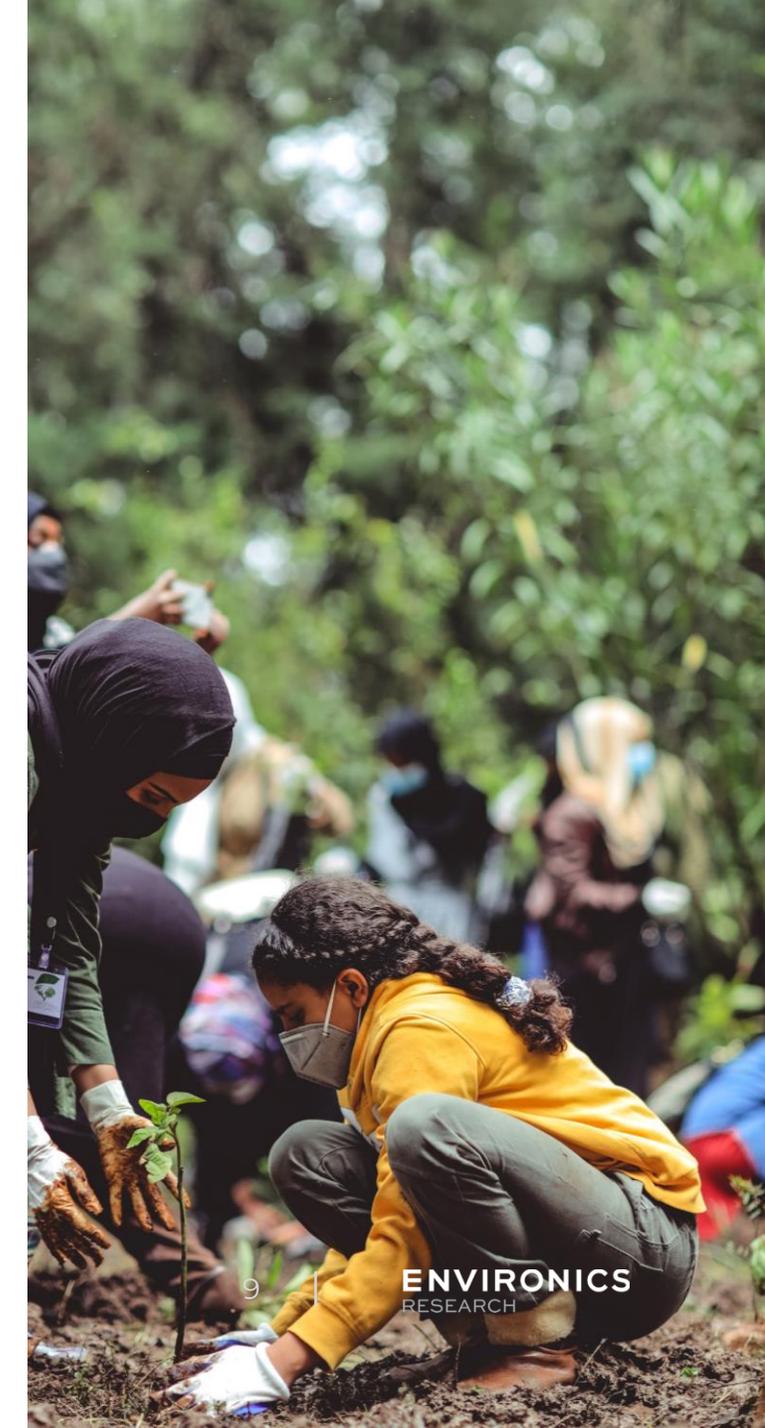
## **Illuminating hypotheses**

**Before commencing the primary research phase of this study, we conducted desk research to gain a better understanding of the forestry industry; identify existing gaps in the current research on the industry's labour shortage; and help narrow the themes to be explored in the subsequent research phases.**

Resources identified in the literature review helped inform the topic areas and lines of questioning for the quantitative and qualitative exercises of this study. The material we reviewed helped contextualize the forestry industry's current situation by providing an overview of the sector's profile; establishing the role the industry plays in Canada's economic, cultural and social well-being; and the importance of relationship-building with Indigenous communities.

Existing research also highlighted the current challenges the forestry industry is facing when it comes to hiring new talent, as well as the forecast on labour supply in coming years. This information helped identify the existing barriers to entry, and the challenges faced within the industry related to hiring and retaining workers, as well as some of the proposed solutions to these issues. Several hypotheses that were tested and validated throughout the various research phases originated from the literature review.

Resources were found online through various government entities, not-for-profit organizations and for-profit corporations that have published reports on themes relating to the forestry industry and labour shortages.



# Existing research review

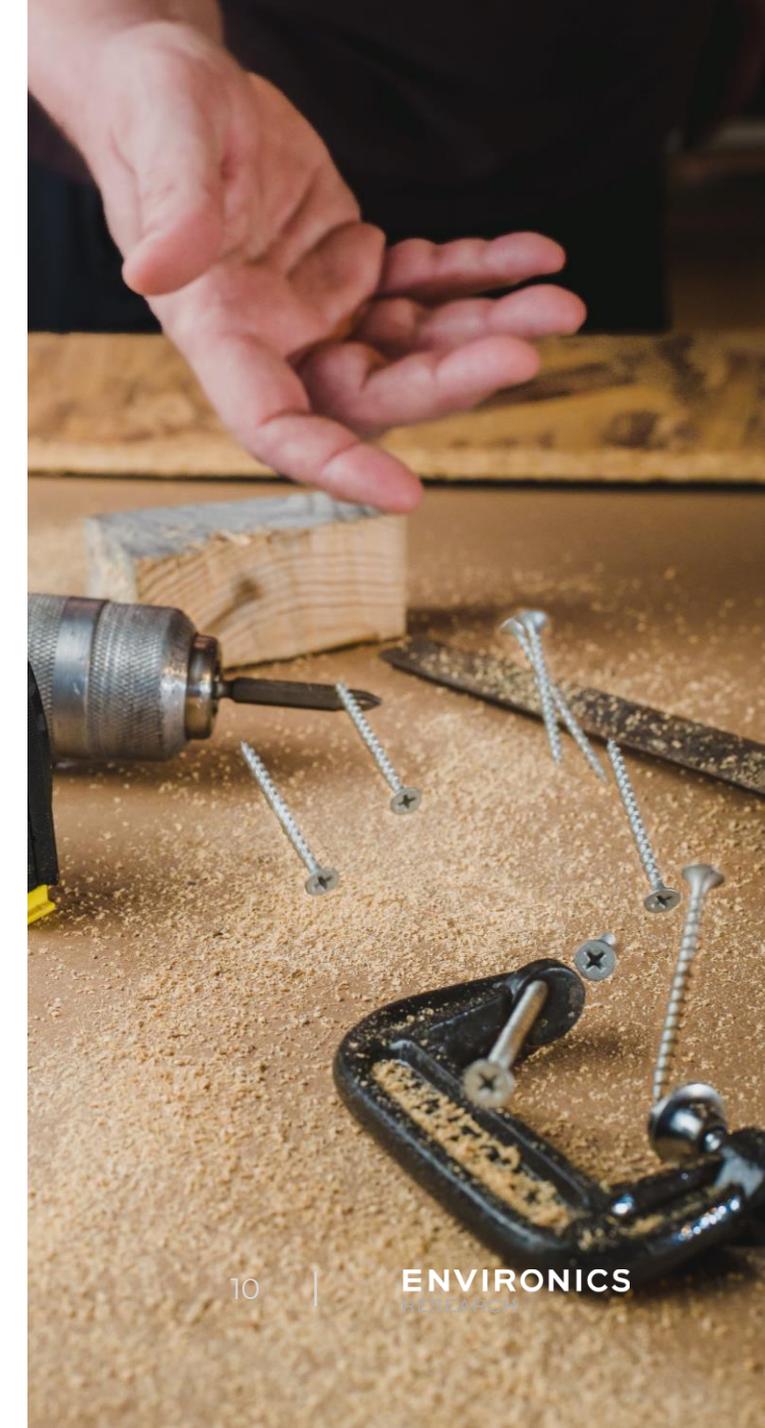
## Challenging existing perceptions

**The forestry industry is viewed by many as an unsustainable industry – one that is characterized by tree cutting, deforestation and contributing to climate change. There are mixed opinions on whether forests in Ontario are being managed properly, perceptions that are stronger in Northern and Central Ontario.**

Generally, there is very low awareness of the forestry industry. Among those who have heard anything about it, ideas mainly revolve around negative stories about the industry destroying forests, waste and pollution. However, the literature review indicates that the industry is undertaking various initiatives to support communities, the environment and the economy, and these should be highlighted.

The forestry sector in Canada has launched a series of projects to help spur economic activity while sustaining and growing jobs that can be used to help connect Ontarians with the sector. These initiatives include<sup>1,2</sup>:

1. Sustaining and creating jobs, particularly in rural, northern and Indigenous communities.
2. Reducing Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions.
3. Improving air and water quality.
4. Storing carbon in more wood building projects.
5. Increasing the sustainable utilization of forest fibre while simultaneously reducing forest fire risks to forested communities.



# Existing research review

## Creating a sustainable future

Following the COVID-19 crisis and its impact on forestry and the Canadian economy, a plan was created to develop and implement a strategy for achieving a sustainable and inclusive recovery plan that recognizes the importance of the industry to the country and the challenges faced by forestry in the past few years<sup>1,2</sup>. That means:

- Recognizing the role of Indigenous people in the forestry sector and building long-term capacity and economic development opportunities (the forestry sector is one of the largest Indigenous employers in the country and includes 1,400 Indigenous-owned business).
- Helping youth enter the sector (including [thegreenestworkforce.ca](http://thegreenestworkforce.ca), which matches employers and workers interested in forestry-related jobs).
- Helping increase female participation in the industry, especially in light of the increasing number of women graduating from programs such as agriculture, natural resources and conservation.

This research project ensured that the perspectives of all these groups were incorporated into the plan to bridge the gap between the forestry industry and the youth workforce. Ontarians generally recognize the importance of the industry to the economy and consider wood to be an environmentally friendly product. Most feel that managing forests properly is important to recreation, tourism, wildfire control, the economy and mitigating the impacts of climate change.

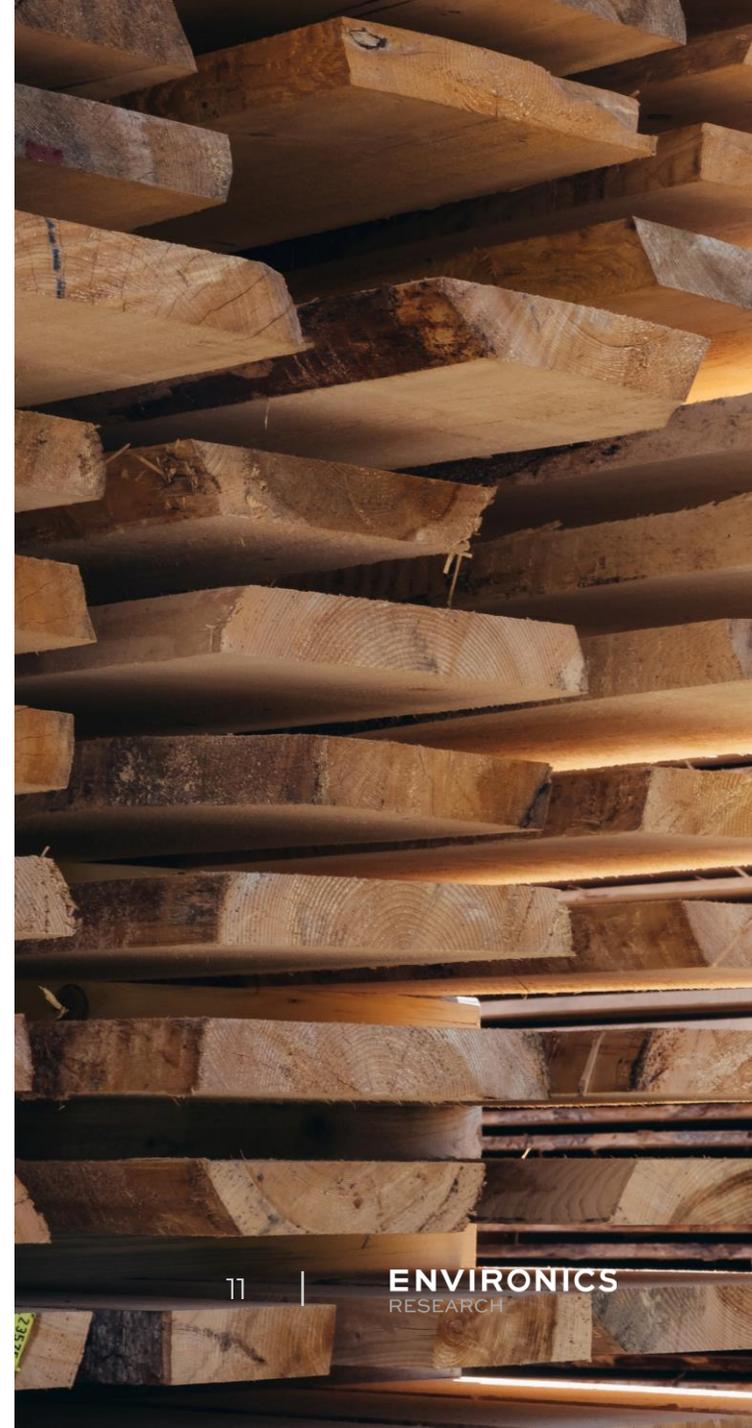
However, they believe that information about the benefits or facts about the forestry industry needs to come from environmental groups or the government to be considered trustworthy for most people. The resources consulted to understand existing public opinion around the forestry industry helped to guide the line of questioning for the labour and youth surveys of this study.

FORESTS ONTARIO & OFIA | ONTARIO FORESTRY SECTOR REPORT

INSIGHTS CREDIT: FPAC, FORESTS ONTARIO, ENVIRONICS RESEARCH. IMAGE CREDIT: UNSPLASH

<sup>1</sup> *Innovative, Sustainable, Resilient | Recommendations from Canada's forest sector to drive economic recovery and a net-zero carbon future.* Forest products association of Canada (FPAC)

<sup>2</sup> *Forests Ontario Survey Report.* 2016



# Existing research review

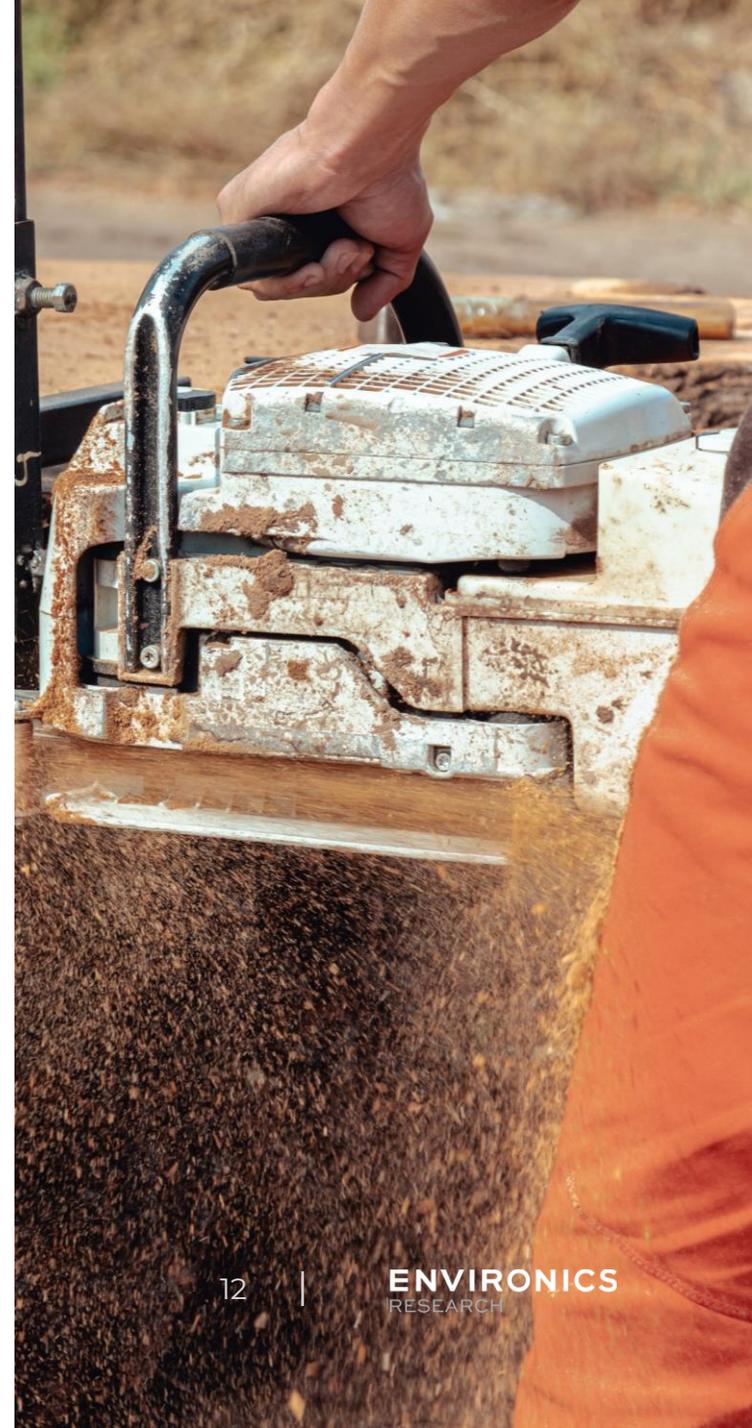
## Labour demand outlook

Several sources reviewed provided detailed information on the environmental sector's labour demand outlook<sup>1,2</sup>. An important theme that emerged pointed to a high proportion of the senior environmental workforce that is expected to retire, which will create an opportunity for emerging workers in various environmental jobs.

This mass retirement trend also poses organizational challenges as retirees take their knowledge, skills and experience with them. Eco Canada advises that knowledge transfer and workforce development programs will need to be implemented to maintain long-term sustainability.

Eco Canada believes that the labour shortage of environmental workers is mainly due to: (1) wider supply/demand gaps; (2) post-secondary education pre-requisites; and (3) environmental-specific competency requirements. In the forestry industry, critical labour shortages are expected in positions such as Forestry technologists and Technicians.

Recruiting new employees to the industry is not the only challenge; once hired, employers will need to keep these workers engaged. Several strategies are proposed to help employee retention within the industry, including keeping the workforce motivated with training and development – not only with job-specific training, but also training in soft skills. Networking events and work placement programs can be valuable for workers in making connections and gaining experience in the environmental sector, a view that is reflected in our survey results.



# Existing research review

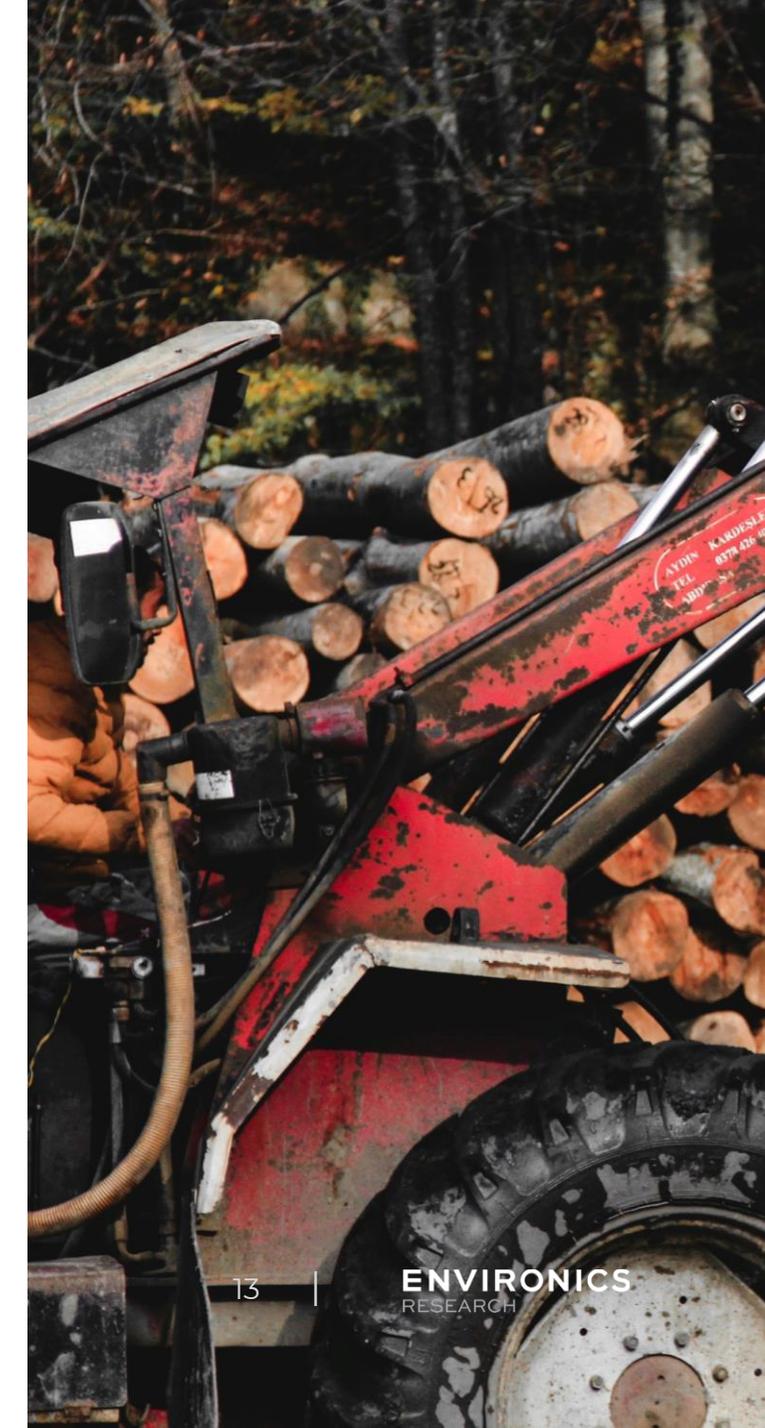
## Barriers to entry

**A hypothesis initially posed by the committee is that one of the main barriers to entering the environmental workforce and the forestry sector is the lack of resources or awareness among certain groups, such as immigrants or youth.**

A few challenges emerged in a survey conducted by Forests Ontario<sup>1, 2</sup> in 2020, which highlighted the challenges employers are facing within the industry when it comes to recruitment. Employers noted a general lack of knowledge of the various opportunities available within the forestry sector. They also identified incompatible lifestyle preferences among the emerging workforce regarding careers offered by the forestry sector. Perceptions of the industry (particularly among younger generations) also create challenges to hiring youth. These views are reflected in our survey results.

The Environmental Workforce Strategy Session conducted by Eco Canada in 2021<sup>3</sup> identified priority actions that can be taken to address key issues and barriers to entering the forestry industry. Barriers to entry include structural issues, such as lack of subsidized programs for child care (especially for single mothers), transportation and language training costs. Tuition or certification costs represent a barrier to education, upskilling and entry into the environmental sector for under-represented groups or transitioning workers.

Workplace barriers include the current work culture, which could be more supportive of a more inclusive environment. Shifts in behaviours, attitudes, traditions and interactions could improve the industry's appeal. Solutions noted in the report to combat these existing issues were used as hypotheses in our research, to assess how relevant they might be and how the forestry industry can prioritize them.



# Existing research review

## Proposed solutions to labour shortage

**Attracting segments of the population that tend have lower employment levels is one of the main proposed solutions in the existing literature, but there are challenges associated with retention.**

With several industries experiencing (or planning for) labour shortages, the Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) launched a study with entrepreneurs across Canada to assess the impact of labour shortages on Canadian businesses, and propose strategies to help industries make their businesses more attractive to new and existing staff<sup>1</sup>. Their report highlights opportunities for companies to attract new hires, which include developing an employee value proposition that encourages businesses to understand how their existing employees perceive their business; determine the key selling points of their business; and communicate the message to potential and existing employees. Creating a flexible work environment, and hiring immigrant workers and other underused segments of the labour force, are strategies that can be implemented to attract and retain labour.

During our stakeholder interviews, the most significant barrier identified for retaining immigrant workers was the desire of immigrants to be closer to their communities (which tend to be in larger cities). Creating a work environment where immigrants can create a community will be important for retention.



# Existing research review

## Proposed solutions to labour shortage

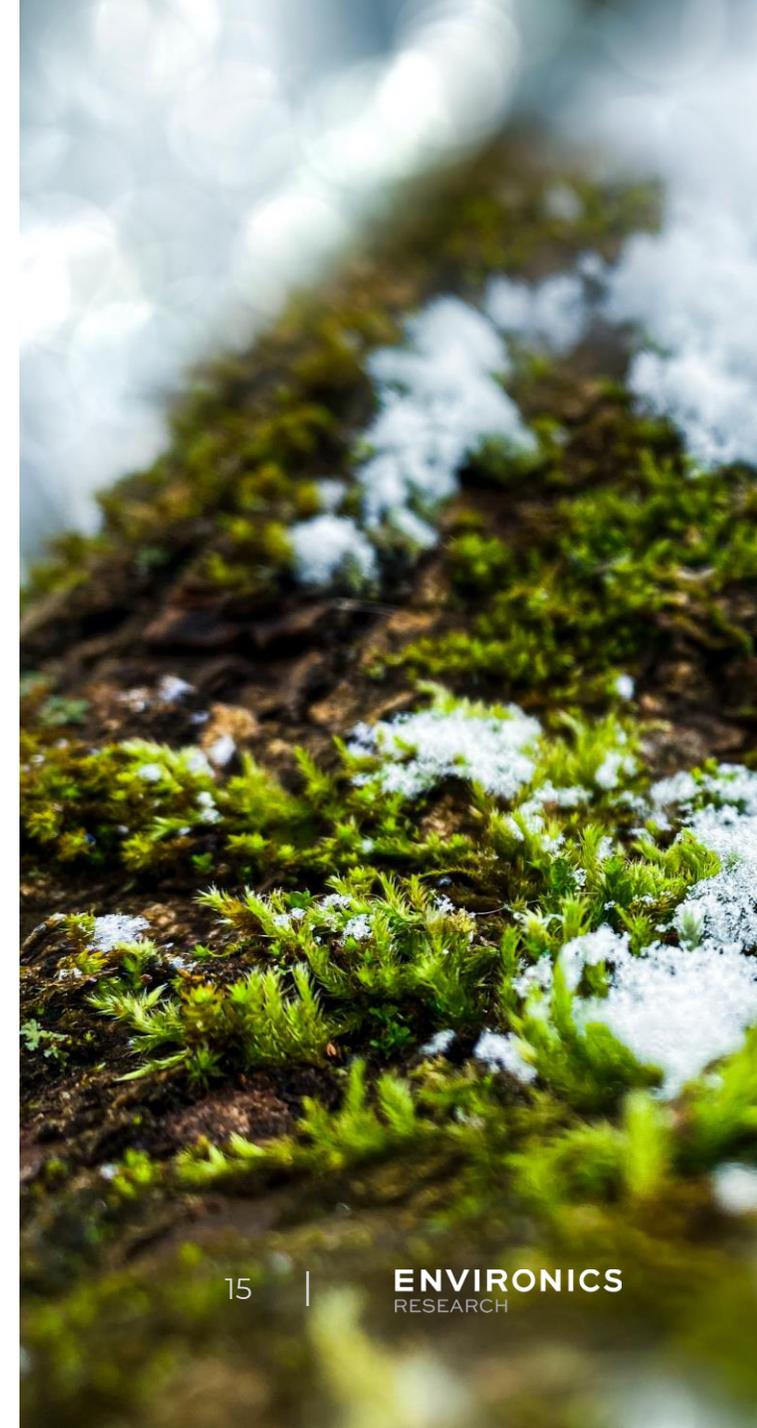
**There is a need for both short- and medium-term strategies to address immediate needs, and long-term education and training strategies that will address the long-term sustainability of the industry.**

Skills Canada identifies two types of labour skill shortages in the market: cyclical and structural. Cyclical labour and skill shortages can be alleviated by increasing wages, initiating recruitment campaigns and implementing innovative workplace practices<sup>1</sup>. However, structural labour and skills shortages can be difficult to solve in the short run due to a shortage of potential workers with the required quality of skills, driven by demographic and technological changes (Fang, 2009). This highlights the impact and importance of economic and immigration policies as part of the solution to solve the structural skill shortage.

The forestry sector in Ontario can also learn from the experiences of other provinces. A report by the Atlantic Revitalization Employer Consultations<sup>2</sup> provides recommendations from sector representatives and employers to solve the labour shortage issue from an immigration perspective. Some of the most notable solutions include developing a one-stop database and information platform to collect and provide information on the labour market, policies and services; working with the government to inform the immigration policy-making process (ensuring immigrants with the right qualifications, profile and interests can be brought to Canada); and collaborating with education institutions and immigrant settlement agencies.

<sup>1</sup> Skills Canada B.C., 2004

<sup>2</sup> Solving for Shortages in Newfoundland & Labrador: Employer Experiences and the Labour Market Across Atlantic Provinces Series | Atlantic Revitalization Employer Consultations. November 2020



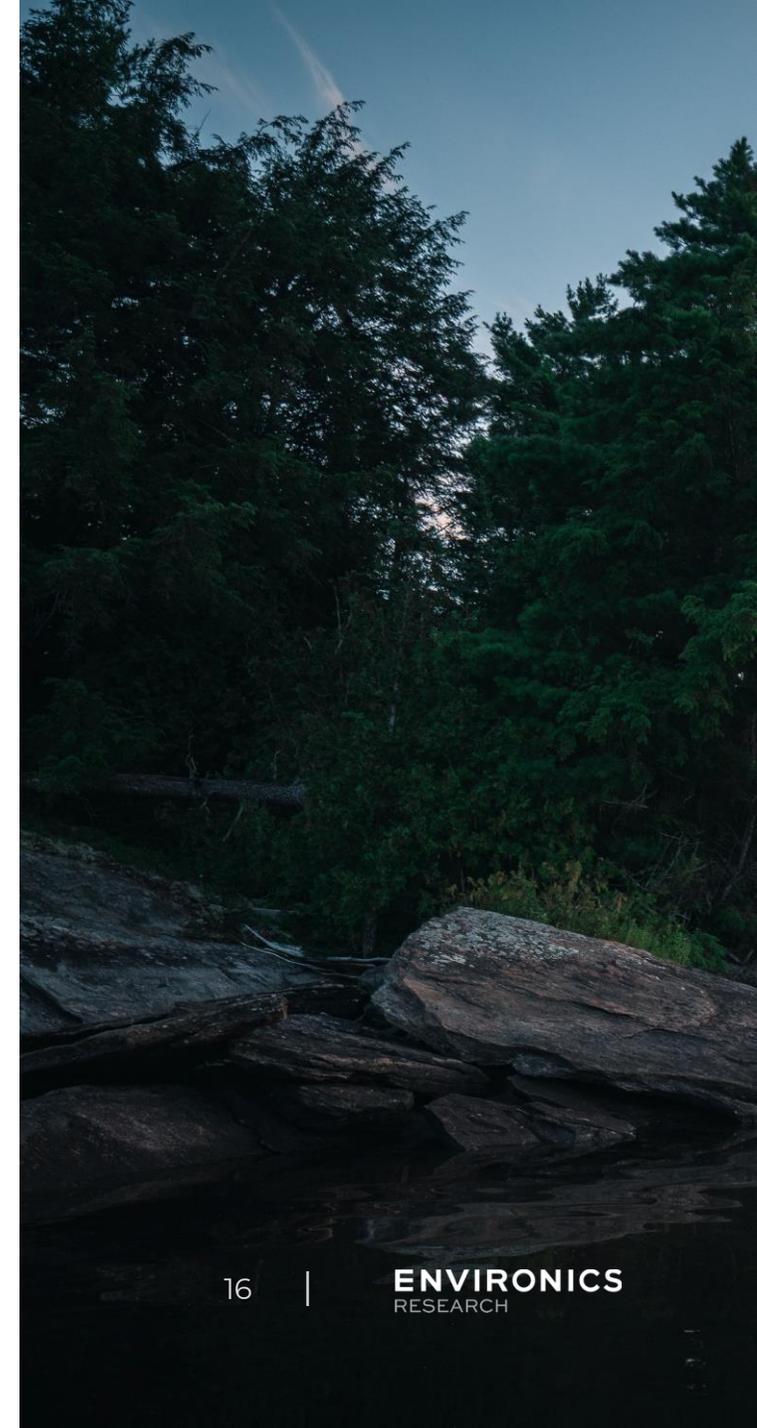
# Existing research review

## Proposed solutions to labour shortage

**While it is important to attract new talent, holistic recruiting strategies cannot overlook your current workforce and the growth opportunities available to them.**

The Manpower Group Employment Outlook Survey conducted in 2018<sup>1</sup> provided a global perspective on the increasing difficulty to hire in every sector across the globe and the recommended strategies to help hire workforce. Their recommended strategy is to build, buy, borrow and bridge – and this framework can be used as a way to view our own research results.

1. Build → investing in learning and development (engaging your current workforce);
2. Buy → go to market to attract the talent that cannot be built in-house (attracting youth);
3. Borrow → cultivate communities of talent beyond your organization (working with other industries to ensure youth have access to basic training and education skills that can benefit all industries in the region); and
4. Bridge → help people move on or move up to new roles inside or outside the organization.



# Existing research review

## Conclusion

**The opportunities for environmental work, including forestry-related jobs, are growing in Canada.**

Despite disruptions in the environmental job market due to the COVID-19 pandemic, environmental jobs are expected to rebound ahead of others and continue to provide career opportunities, due in part to high levels of retirement and job creation in the industry. As a result, the forestry industry will be a need to attract and hire new employees, as well as retain those already within it.

When it comes to hiring, many of the challenges faced by the industry are related to current perceptions held by the public regarding the industry and the work related to it, and the existing structural barriers that many face to entering the industry's workforce.

Bridging the gap between youth and the forestry industry will require a better understanding of how youth in Ontario and Canada perceive the sector, and identifying the strategies that can be implemented to attract this new emerging talent over the next few years. Additionally, the industry will need to understand how youth who have recently joined the industry feel about it, in order to keep them engaged in the years to come.



# 2

## Forestry career paths

Word of mouth is the most important source of awareness about the industry, but the decision to pursue a career in forestry is driven by both personal interest and family influence. Alignment with personal values is the top benefit of working in forestry.

# The top reasons for pursuing a career in forestry

The decision to pursue a career in forestry is partially driven by love of nature/passion, and partially driven by family influences. Women were significantly more likely to say that joining the forestry industry 'just happened' (23%), or that was it recommended to them (18%) compared to men (3% vs. 0%).

**29%**

I've always loved nature and wanted to make a career out of it

**20%**

It's my passion

**20%**

My family has always worked in the forestry or forestry industry

**15%**

I am interested in environmental protection/sustainability

**10%**

It just happened/forestry was not on my radar

**10%**

Great experience as a summer student /Junior Ranger

# Career paths

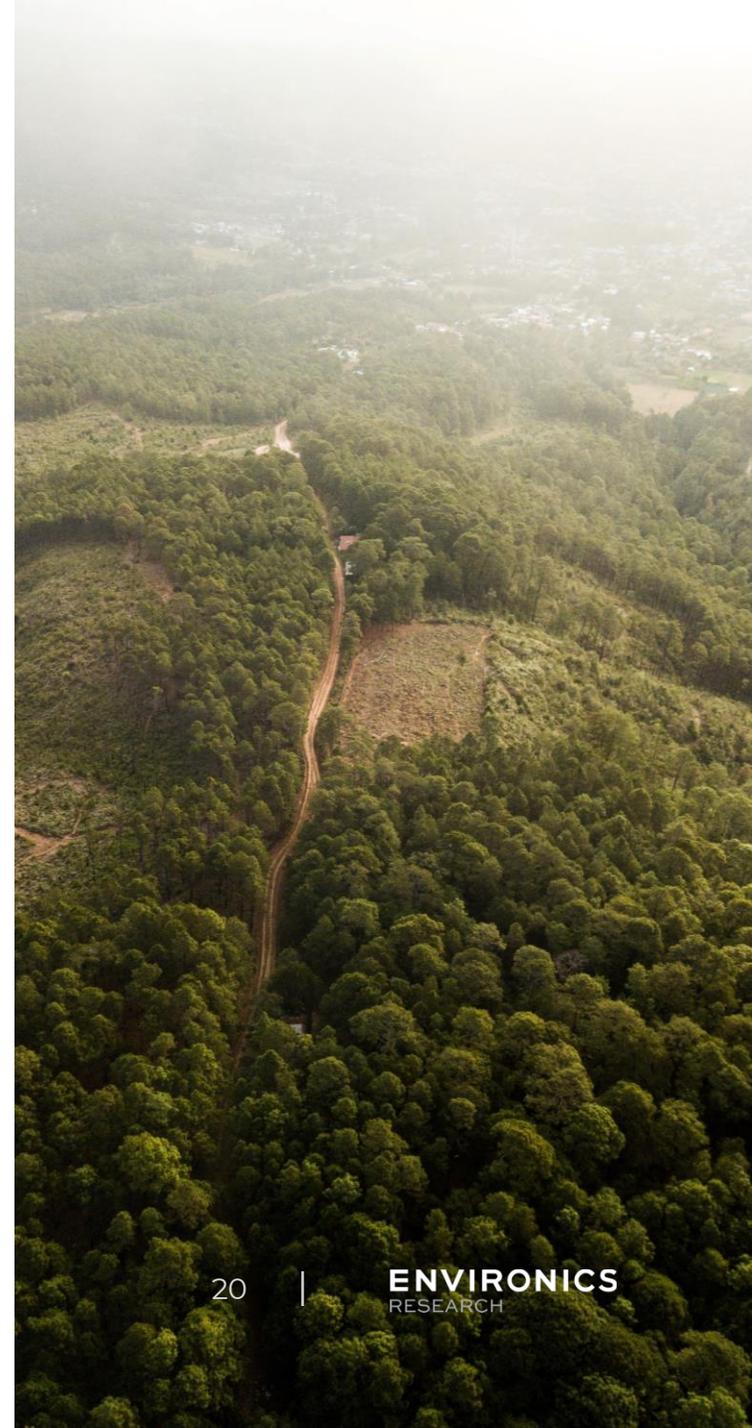
## Joining the industry via word of mouth

**Workers were most likely to first hear about the industry through word of mouth. Job websites and events are currently secondary sources of awareness, but tend to be more important sources among women.**

Survey results are aligned with the experience of recent industry workers, many of whom heard about the sector from family/friends, from school/teachers or became interested in the sector from spending time outdoors. Additionally, several recent workers became interested in the industry after working on a tree planting job, or after hearing from someone who did.

After they started considering the industry, job search websites and the MNR website were the main resources used by most participants. While finding some of the information they were looking for was a somewhat frustrating endeavour, the overall research and application process was generally easy and straightforward. Before applying for a job, participants also researched the organization's website and social media to understand more about the company, its values and culture (which is not always easy to find online). However, many wished they knew about the importance of career networking groups and opportunities within the sector at an earlier stage of their search process.

Forestry industry members believe communications and people skills are the most prevalent skills needed for their job (64%), followed by computer/math/technology knowledge (37%), forest operations/management/planning (36%), and management and operational skills (31%). The importance of these skills is likely related to the profile of the survey respondents, who tended to be in management positions. Among individual contributors, while communications and computer/technology skills are also viewed as important, so too are a range of other skills, such as time management, silviculture and organization.



# Career paths

## Values alignment is a benefit to working in forestry

**An undervalued and misunderstood industry that aligns with workers' values and their desire for sustainability and outdoor work.**

New forestry workers who have joined the industry in the past three years see the industry as layered and complex, not the just 'black and white' it's generally portrayed as in the media. They believe the industry is generally undervalued and misunderstood by the general public, and that there is much more to the industry than cutting down trees. In fact, it's an industry with a focus on sustainability, with several initiatives that demonstrate this position.

Alignment of the industry with personal values is the top benefit of working in forestry, followed by the type of work, and the impact on the environment. Alignment with personal values is particularly important to younger workers aged 18-34 (62%) and older workers aged 55+ (61%). Among middle-aged employees (35-54), while the top benefits are similar to the average, they are more likely to consider a wider range of benefits to working in forestry, such as lifestyle and salary. They are also more likely to consider the impact on the environment as a top benefit.

## Top benefits of working in forestry



# Love of outdoors, economic growth and sustainability

Recent forestry workers say the love of the outdoors is the most rewarding part of working in the forestry sector, in addition to the sector's contribution to society – most notably, Ontario's economic growth and environmental sustainability.

Personally, it's an industry that stimulates them both physically and intellectually, and allows them to make a difference/do meaningful work. Being proud of their work is something many participants talk about as something that drove them to forestry.

# 3

## Education and training in the industry

While a third of employees did not feel prepared when first entering the industry, most received on-the-job training to help them succeed.

Workers generally felt the need for more training after their initial onboarding and could benefit from regular training opportunities.

# Education and training

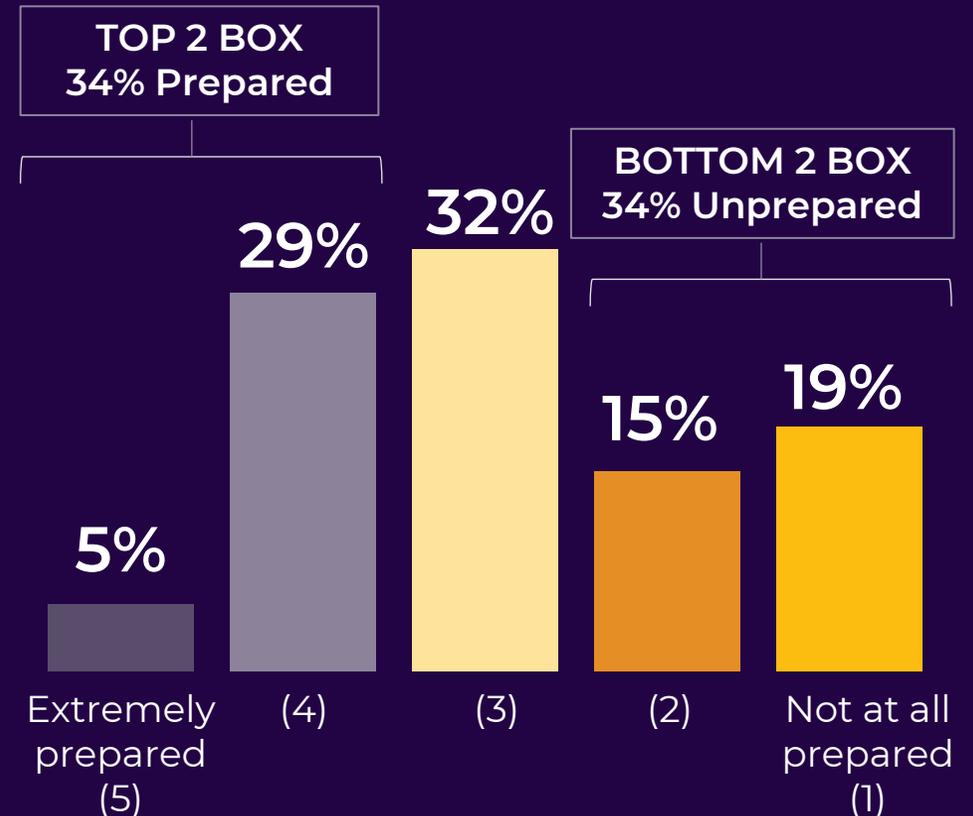
## Mixed initial experience

Overall, the level of preparedness when entering the industry varies widely, with those who have experience in the industry or specific education feeling the most prepared for their work. Most employers offer on-the-job training for new workers, but workers feel the need for further training.

When first entering the industry, respondents are divided about how prepared they felt. Men are more likely to say they felt prepared compared to women (38% vs. 27% T2B). Those who felt very or extremely prepared said their degrees, hands-on summer jobs/internships, past experience in the industry, and family experience were key to how they felt.

When first starting in their position, 85% of industry employees had on-the-job training, while 19% sought training on their own (not provided by employers). A similar proportion (85%) have since wanted more training or education. Women and younger employees aged 18-34 are significantly more likely to say they've wanted or needed more training since starting their jobs (95% and 100%, respectively).

### Feeling of preparedness when first entering the industry



# Education and training

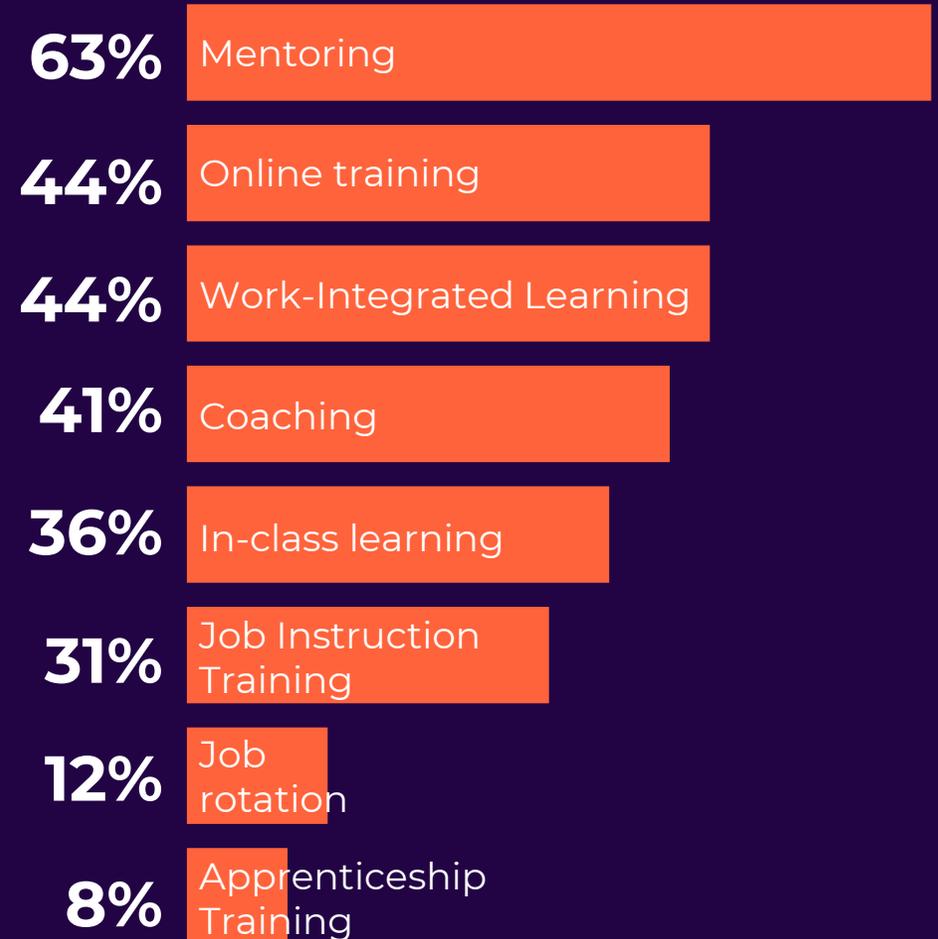
## Mentoring is preferred training method

The industry and workers in forestry are largely aligned when it comes to training methods – the most common training methods offered are similar to those preferred by employees. Work-integrated learning is one of the preferred options that is not one of the top three most frequently offered solutions.

The most common types of training types completed were online (71%), mentoring (66%), coaching (56%), job instruction training (49%) and work-integrated learning (49%). Mentoring and coaching were more likely to have been completed among employees working in woodlands and mill operations. Project management/supervisory training, the gradual accumulation of knowledge through various courses/seminars, negotiations/communication training are among the most helpful training programs or resources.

Mentoring (27%), online training (17%) and work-integrated learning (15%) were ranked by forestry workers as their top preferred method of training. Overall, training options ranked among the top three preferred methods are mentoring (63%), online training (44%) and work-integrated learning (44%). Work-integrated learning is particularly appealing to younger forestry workers aged 18-34 (62%).

### Preferred training options (% ranked in top 3)



# 4

## Perceptions of, and satisfaction with, forestry

Forestry workers have a generally positive perception of the industry, and are satisfied with their opportunities for advancement and growth. Economic and labour issues, workload, lack of diversity and low compensation are the top challenges faced by the industry.

# Perception of forestry

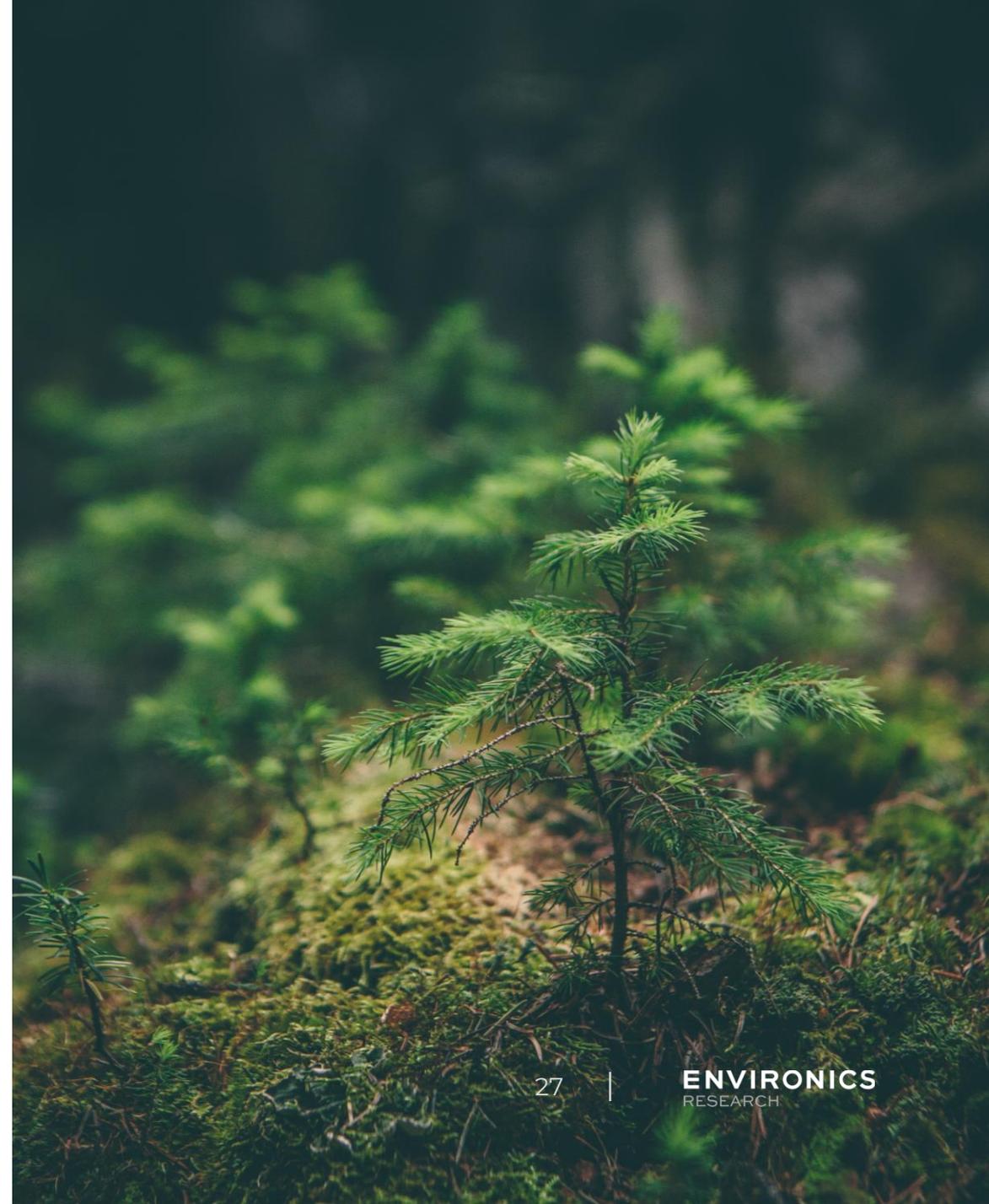
## **Positive industry perceptions**

**Most recent forestry workers believe the forestry sector is an important contributor to the Ontario economy, with many jobs available. Those working in the industry wish that the general public had more knowledge about the industry (vs. what's portrayed in the media).**

They believe it's a growing and thriving industry that is sustainable, inclusive and has the ability to have a net positive impact on our world. While the industry is misunderstood and undervalued by the public, workers believe it is a layered industry doing important work and heading in the right direction.

A few workers also view it as a male-dominated sector that can be too focused on timber production, but the industry is also viewed as a good sector in which to establish a career.

Participants wish that people knew more about the forestry industry, including the positive contributions made by the sector; its importance to the economy, the environment and the health of our ecosystems; its potential in reducing waste products by using forest products as alternatives for construction; and the amount of effort and care put into sustainable management.



# Satisfaction with forestry

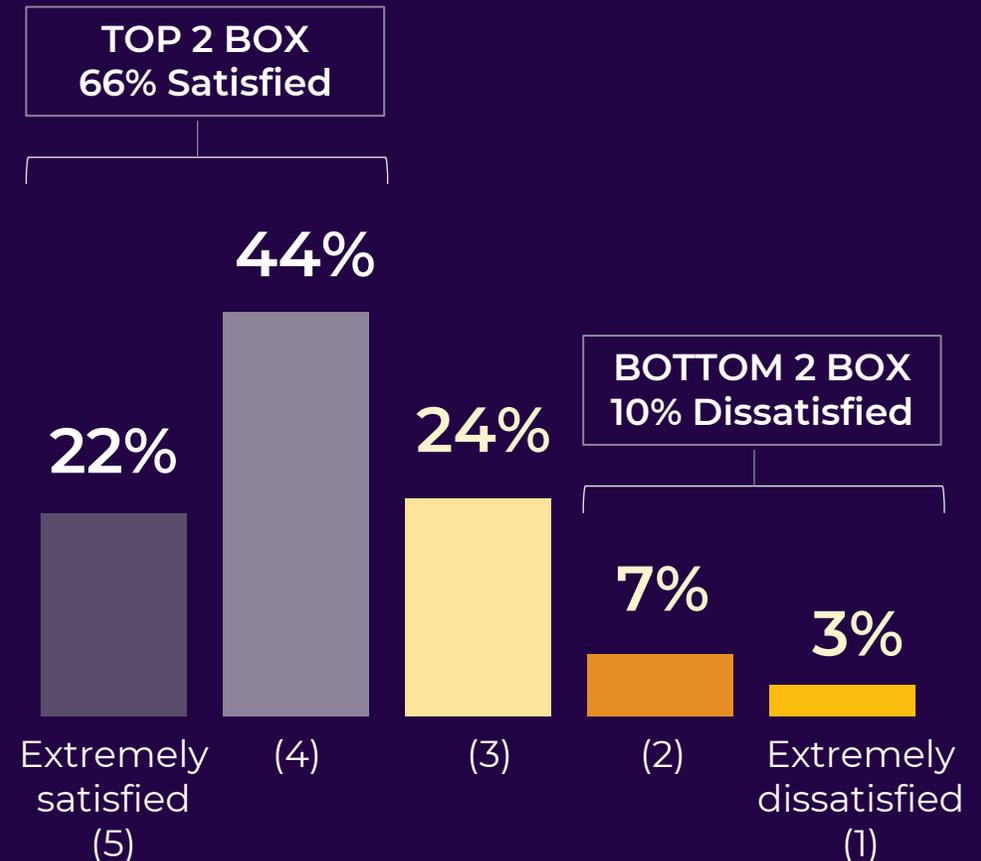
## High satisfaction among workers

New forestry workers generally found that the reality of their work matched their original expectations when they first joined the industry – some even felt that the reality exceeded their expectations, largely due to their initial biases around the industry.

Most participants love their jobs and the work they do, which can be challenging and frustrating, but also extremely rewarding. They are looking to continue to grow and learn more about the sector, and the potential jobs available to them in the future.

Forestry workers are generally satisfied with the opportunities available to advance their careers (66% are extremely or very satisfied). Satisfaction is higher among mill operations employees (80%), and lower among individual and entry-level contributors (42%). Employees with less formal education (HS or less) tend to be less satisfied with the opportunities available to them (43%) compared to those with higher levels of formal education (70% satisfaction among those with post-secondary education and 67% among those with college/trades). Men tend to be more satisfied with their opportunities (70%) compared to women in the industry (59%).

## Satisfaction with opportunities to grow and advance their career



# Satisfaction with forestry

## Success in career



“Success in my career from my perspective – because there are so many different positions, jobs and pathways you can take within forestry. I feel as though success is when you are in a position where you are enjoying what you are doing, BUT you are still growing, learning and moving forward. Every challenge is met and conquered, whether you stick with the job or finish and move onto something else that better suits your passions.”

**VERBATIM SOURCE:** RECENT INDUSTRY WORKER



# Perceptions of forestry

## Mixed perceptions



This is also a part of the forestry sector: regrowth and sustainability. This represents my feelings on the forestry sector, which includes the regrowth, and my responsibility to help ensure that the future of the forests are healthy and we are still able to provide a healthy ecosystem while being able to use its resources.”

**VERBATIM SOURCE:** RECENT INDUSTRY WORKER



“The forest sector is all about balancing conflicting values. Public outreach and education is an important tool to informing all stakeholders and finding resolutions. Adaptive management is needed in all jobs to ensure all forestry activities are sustainable.”

**VERBATIM SOURCE:** RECENT INDUSTRY WORKER



“Despite the current climate crisis and demand for sustainable practice, I feel as though the industry as a general entity has an increasing ability to harvest ample timber in order to grow their mills and profits. Of course, this is necessary for the industry to thrive and for the Ontario/Canadian economy, but I feel there needs to be more value put into climate change action and the long-term goals of sustainable practice, as opposed to short-term profits and gains.”

**VERBATIM SOURCE:** RECENT INDUSTRY WORKER

# Satisfaction with forestry

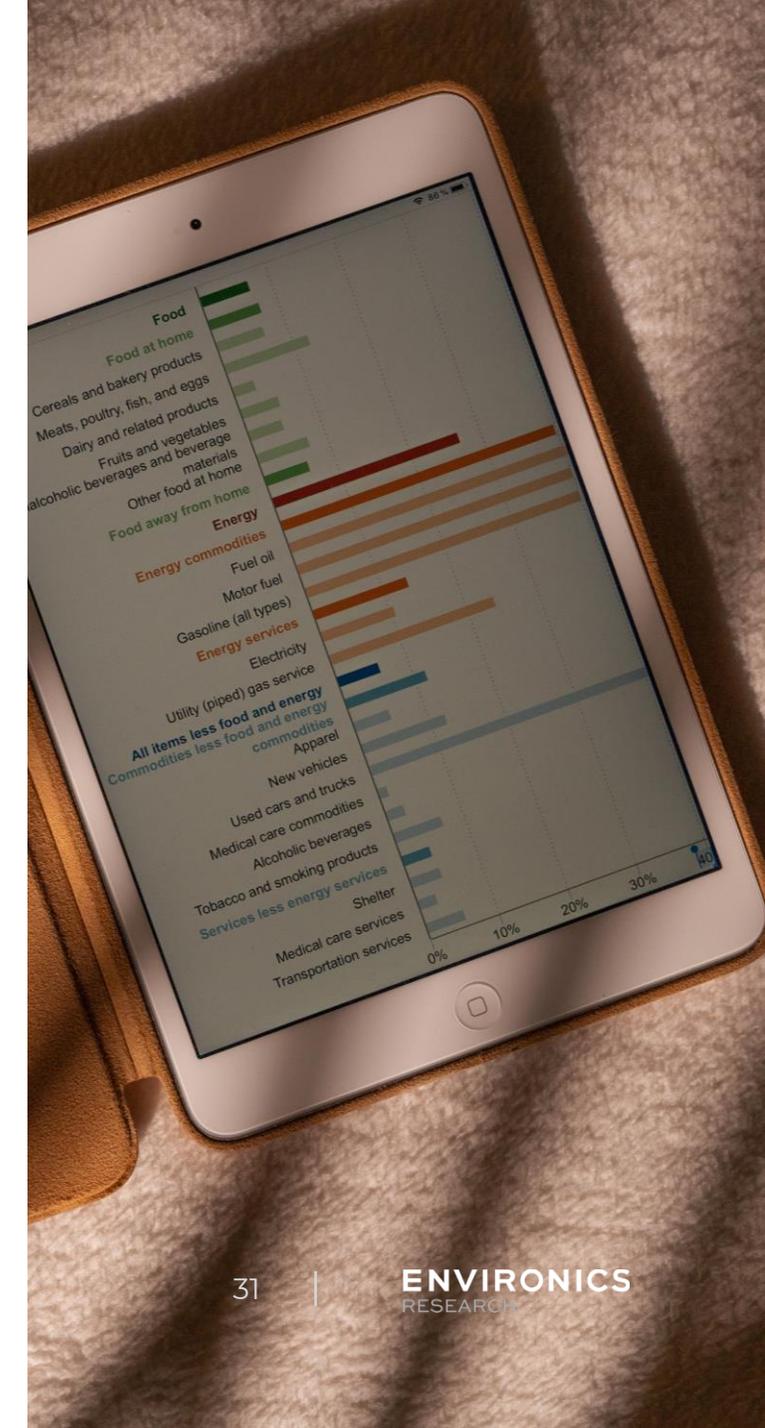
## Income is considered below market

**Survey respondents, who skew toward management and higher-level positions, are generally satisfied with their income. Among employees with entry-level/non-management positions, income is considered below market for their qualifications and responsibilities – below average income is a top-of-mind issue, given the rising costs of living.**

Income among survey respondents skews higher, likely due to the survey representation, which over-represents management and senior leadership positions. Individual and entry-level contributors have a lower average income. Satisfaction with income is moderately high (59% are extremely or very satisfied); satisfaction is lower among individual and entry-level contributors (42%), who have lower income. While men have higher average income than women, satisfaction with compensation is higher among women (68%) compared to men (54%).

Satisfaction levels align with findings from interviews with stakeholders – some long-term industry workers (not in management positions) consider their salaries below market standards for other professionals working at similar levels in other industries, and mentioned that as one of the most important sources of dissatisfaction in their chosen profession.

New forestry workers also mentioned better salaries as the one thing to improve about the industry. Most said they believed they are underpaid for the work they do, and the education required for their position, and want to see salary increases, especially considering the increasing costs of living. These workers value what they do and want to keep working in forestry, but the cost of living may not be something they can ignore. Additionally, some wish they had the ability to work remotely when doing desk work (e.g., updating maps, writing reports, etc.).



# Satisfaction with forestry

## Income perceptions



“I would personally prefer to do work that is interesting AND pays well; and, if it were financially feasible, I would choose interesting work that does not pay very well. Unfortunately, that is not an option in this economy. Jobs that ‘pay very well’ right now are actually just paying enough to not be paycheque to paycheque. Interesting work would always be my choice, but not if it cannot keep a roof over my head.”

**VERBATIM SOURCE:** RECENT INDUSTRY WORKER



“This is a particularly tough question to answer because, ideally, I would like to have a job that pays well and, for the most part, is exciting. I can take the bad with the good. In today’s world with the economy, having a job that pays well is a necessity, even if it is not particularly interesting. Ideally, if I didn't need money, having a job that I enjoy but doesn't pay super well would be my go-to because I want to enjoy what I do and not question my life choices every day.”

**VERBATIM SOURCE:** RECENT INDUSTRY WORKER

# Labour and economic issues are the top challenges

Additionally, concerns of workload, lack of diversity, income and training are pressing challenges. Only 11% of respondents say they haven't faced challenges in the industry. Survey respondents believe better quality training (24%), more government support/funding for the industry (16%), career mentorship/coaching (13%) and more effective communication (11%) can help mitigate those challenges.

## Top challenges faced by workers in forestry



# Satisfaction with forestry

## Challenges faced depend on position

**While labour and economic issues tend to be top-of-mind among owners and upper management, individual and entry-level contributors consider the lack of diversity, sexism/racism and workload to be the most pressing issues they face.**

Consequently, better quality training, government support/funding and lower costs of fuel/raw materials/maintenance are the top resources sought out by business owners. Among individual and entry-level contributors, more effective communication, better quality training and career mentorship/coaching are the most important resources needed.

Recent forestry workers interviewed, especially those from ethnical/racial minority groups, wish to see more diversity in the industry, which is still seen as largely male-dominated.

When thinking about things they wished they knew about the industry before joining, many said they wish they knew about the different certifications that could benefit them before joining, such as becoming a Registered Professional Forester. Another significant concern they wish they knew about was the difficulty in securing a permanent position in forestry, despite it being advertised as a growing field with many positions available.



# Satisfaction with forestry

## Retirement is the main reason for leaving industry

**Most survey respondents are likely to stay in the industry – and those likely to leave are generally planning to retire or looking for higher paying jobs. Those staying are passionate about their work and believe they can grow in the industry.**

When thinking about the next five to 10 years, 67% of survey respondents say they're likely to stay in the industry (percentage who said very likely or likely on a 5-point scale). Likelihood of staying in the industry is higher among mill operations employees (81%) than among woodlands employees (66%) or admin employees (60%). Those with post-secondary education are also more likely to say they'll stay in the industry (74%), as are women (75%) and younger employees aged 18-34 (92%).

The main reasons for staying in forestry are the passion for the work (36%), the people/work environment in the industry (28%), the ability to grow (21%) and the sustainability focus of the industry (21%). Women and younger employees are more likely to value their ability to grow in the industry (39% and 50%, respectively).

The most common reason for not likely being in forestry in the next five to 10 years is retirement (81%). Among those considering leaving the industry, 19% say they're looking for a higher paying job. Other reasons for leaving the industry include being unsure of business viability, the difficulty in hiring and training employees with the diminishing profit margins, lack of financial return for the work being performed and the lack of opportunities for growth.



# 5

## Industry and labour outlook

Respondents predict that a wide range of jobs in forestry will become harder to fill (and many are already difficult). Jobs in woodlands and mill operations are expected to face the most challenges.

# Positions predicted to be the most challenging to recruit in woodlands and mill operations



**63%**

Logging Truck Driver



**53%**

Forestry/Logging Labourer



**16%**

Logging Machinery Operator



**63%**

Heavy Equipment Operator



**53%**

Heavy Equipment Mechanic



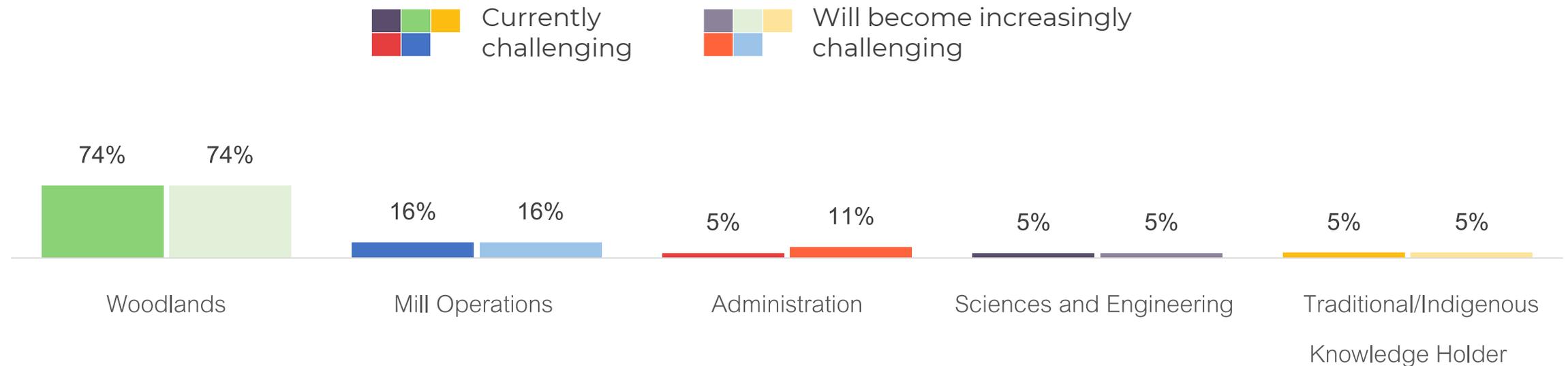
**16%**

Maintenance Manager

# Looking forward, the main challenge the forestry sector faces is finding qualified workers to fill available positions

Some areas in the industry are facing increasing pressure, particularly woodlands positions. Business owners and upper management respondents predict positions in administration will become increasingly harder to fill compared to now.

*\*Low sample size (n=19 business owners and top-level administrators)*



# Labour outlook

## Several challenging positions in woodlands

**Logging Truck Drivers, Heavy Equipment Operators and Forestry/Logging Labourer positions are already presenting challenges and are predicted to continue to be difficult to fill.**

Heavy Equipment Mechanics are already difficult to find and are predicted to become even more challenging in the future. Other positions that respondents predicted will become more challenging to fill in the next five to 10 years include Forestry Professionals, Forestry Technicians and Silviculturists/Reforestation Labourers.

These positions involve hard and repetitive work, and long hours in isolation – the industry should promote the benefits that come with that type of work to make the positions more attractive (i.e., working outdoors/with nature, good lifestyle, ability to work independently, etc.).

*\*Low sample size (n=19 business owners and top-level administrators)*

## Challenging positions in woodlands\*

	Currently challenging	Will become increasingly challenging
<b>Woodlands</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>74%</b>
Logging Truck Driver	63%	63%
Heavy Equipment Operator	58%	63%
Forestry/Logging Labourer	53%	53%
Heavy Equipment Mechanic	47%	53%
Supervisor, Logging & Forestry	32%	53%
Harvesting Labourer	47%	37%
Forestry Professional	16%	21%
Forestry Technician	5%	21%
Woodlands Manager	26%	21%
Silviculturist/Reforestation Labourer	11%	16%
Woodlands Assembler	11%	11%
Geomatic Technician	5%	5%
Other	5%	11%
Shipper and Receiver	-	5%
Supervisor, Supply Chain	-	5%
Other	5%	11%

# Positions in mill operations will become more challenging to fill

While mill operations are seeing some challenges in recruiting, leaders expect a wide range of positions to become more challenging to fill.

	Currently challenging	Will become increasingly challenging
<b>Mill Operations</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>16%</b>
Logging Machinery Operator	11%	16%
Maintenance Manager	11%	16%
Maintenance Planner	5%	16%
Manufacturing Manager	11%	16%
Operation Manager	11%	16%
Production Co-ordinator	11%	16%
Supervisor, Forest Prod. Processing	11%	16%
Labourer in wood products, lumber, pulp and paper processing	16%	11%
Light Duty Cleaner	5%	11%
Log Trader	5%	11%
Lumber Grader	5%	11%

	Currently challenging	Will become increasingly challenging
Machining Tool Operator	5%	11%
Manufacturing Technician	16%	11%
Material Handler	5%	11%
Quality Control	5%	11%
Sawmill Machine Operator	16%	11%
Wood Processing Machine Operator	16%	11%
Crane Operator	-	5%
Health & Safety Coordinator	-	5%
Occupational Health Nurse	-	5%
Paper Converting Machine Operator	-	5%
Pulping, Papermaking & Coating Control Operator	-	5%
Security Officer	-	5%
Other	-	5%

*\*Low sample size (n=19 business owners and top-level administrators)*

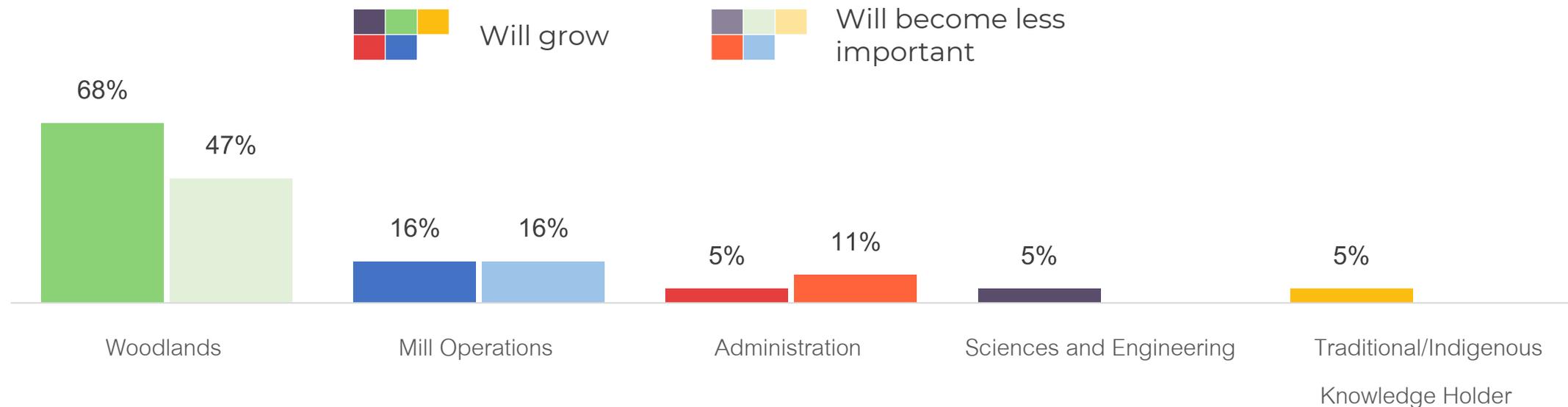
# Positions in administration are not currently hard to fill, but are expected to be in the future

	Currently challenging	Will become increasingly challenging
<b>Administration</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>11%</b>
Account Representative	-	5%
Accounting Clerk	-	5%
Administrative Manager/Officer	-	5%
Business Consultant	-	5%
Cleaner/Janitor	-	5%
Communications Specialist	-	5%
Credit Manager	-	5%
Database Analyst	-	5%
Economist and Risk Analyst	-	5%
Executive	-	5%
Executive Assistant	-	5%
General Office Support Worker	-	5%
Health and Safety Inspector	-	5%

	Currently challenging	Will become increasingly challenging
<b>Administration</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>11%</b>
Human Resource Professional	-	5%
Information Systems Consultant	-	5%
IT Specialist	-	5%
Marketing Agent	-	5%
Project Manager	-	5%
Purchasing Agent	-	5%
Sales Representative	-	5%
Shipper and Receiver	-	5%
Supervisor, Supply Chain	-	5%
Other	5%	11%
<b>Sciences and Engineering</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>5%</b>
Environmental Supervisor	5%	5%
Other	11%	11%

\*Low sample size (n=19 business owners and top-level administrators)

# Business owners and upper management believe that some careers will grow and should be the focus of recruitment efforts



*\*Low sample size (n=19 business owners and top-level administrators)*

# Mixed views on whether certain positions will grow or become less important

	Will grow	Will become less important
<b>Woodlands</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>47%</b>
Heavy Equipment Operator	58%	-
Logging Truck Driver	53%	-
Heavy Equipment Mechanic	47%	-
Silviculturist/Reforestation Labourer	42%	5%
Forestry Professional	37%	-
Forestry Technician	37%	-
Supervisor, Logging and Forestry	37%	5%
Forestry/Logging Labourer	32%	26%
Harvesting Labourer	32%	21%
Geomatic Technician	21%	-
Woodlands Manager	21%	11%
Woodlands Assembler	11%	5%
Other	5%	11%

	Will grow	Will become less important
<b>Mill Operations</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>16%</b>
Maintenance Manager	16%	-
Manufacturing Manager	16%	-
Light Duty Cleaner	11%	-
Logging Machinery Operator	11%	-
Maintenance Planner	11%	-
Health & Safety Coordinator	5%	-
Labourer in wood products, lumber, pulp and paper processing	5%	5%
Log Trader	5%	-
Lumber Grader	5%	11%
Machining Tool Operator	5%	-
Manufacturing Technician	5%	-
Material Handler	5%	-
Occupational Health Nurse	5%	-
Operation Manager	5%	-
Paper Converting Machine Operator	5%	-
Production Co-ordinator	5%	-
Pulping, Papermaking & Coating Control Operator	5%	-
Quality Control	5%	-
Sawmill Machine Operator	5%	-
Security Officer	5%	-
Supervisor, Forest Products Processing	5%	-
Wood Processing Machine Operator	5%	-
Crane Operator		5%
Other		5%

The tables above show the proportion of business owners/administrators who believe which professions will grow or become less important

*\*Low sample size (n=19 business owners and top-level administrators)*

# A wide range of administration jobs are expected to become less important, with jobs in sciences and engineering becoming more important

	Will grow	Will become less important
<b>Administration</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>11%</b>
Accounting Clerk	5%	5%
Marketing Agent	-	11%
Account Representative	-	5%
Administrative Manager/Officer	-	5%
Business Consultant	-	5%
Cleaner/Janitor	-	5%
Communications Specialist	-	5%
Credit Manager	-	5%
Database Analyst	-	5%
Economist and Risk Analyst	-	5%
Executive	-	5%
Executive Assistant	-	5%
General Office Support Worker	-	5%
Health and Safety Inspector	-	5%
Human Resource Professional	-	5%
Information Systems Consultant	-	5%

	Will grow	Will become less important
IT Specialist	-	5%
Project Manager	-	5%
Purchasing Agent	-	5%
Sales Representative	-	5%
Shipper and Receiver	-	5%
Supervisor, Supply Chain	-	5%
Other	-	5%
<b>Sciences and Engineering</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>-</b>
Biologist	5%	-
Chemical Engineer	5%	-
Civil Engineer	5%	-
Electrical Engineer	5%	-
Engineering Manager	5%	-
Environmental Supervisor	5%	-
Industrial Engineer	5%	-
Manager, Energy & Environment	5%	-
Mechanical Engineer	5%	-

The tables above show the proportion of business owners/administrators who believe which professions will grow or become less important

*\*Low sample size (n=19 business owners and top-level administrators)*

# 6

## Potential solutions and challenges to recruiting

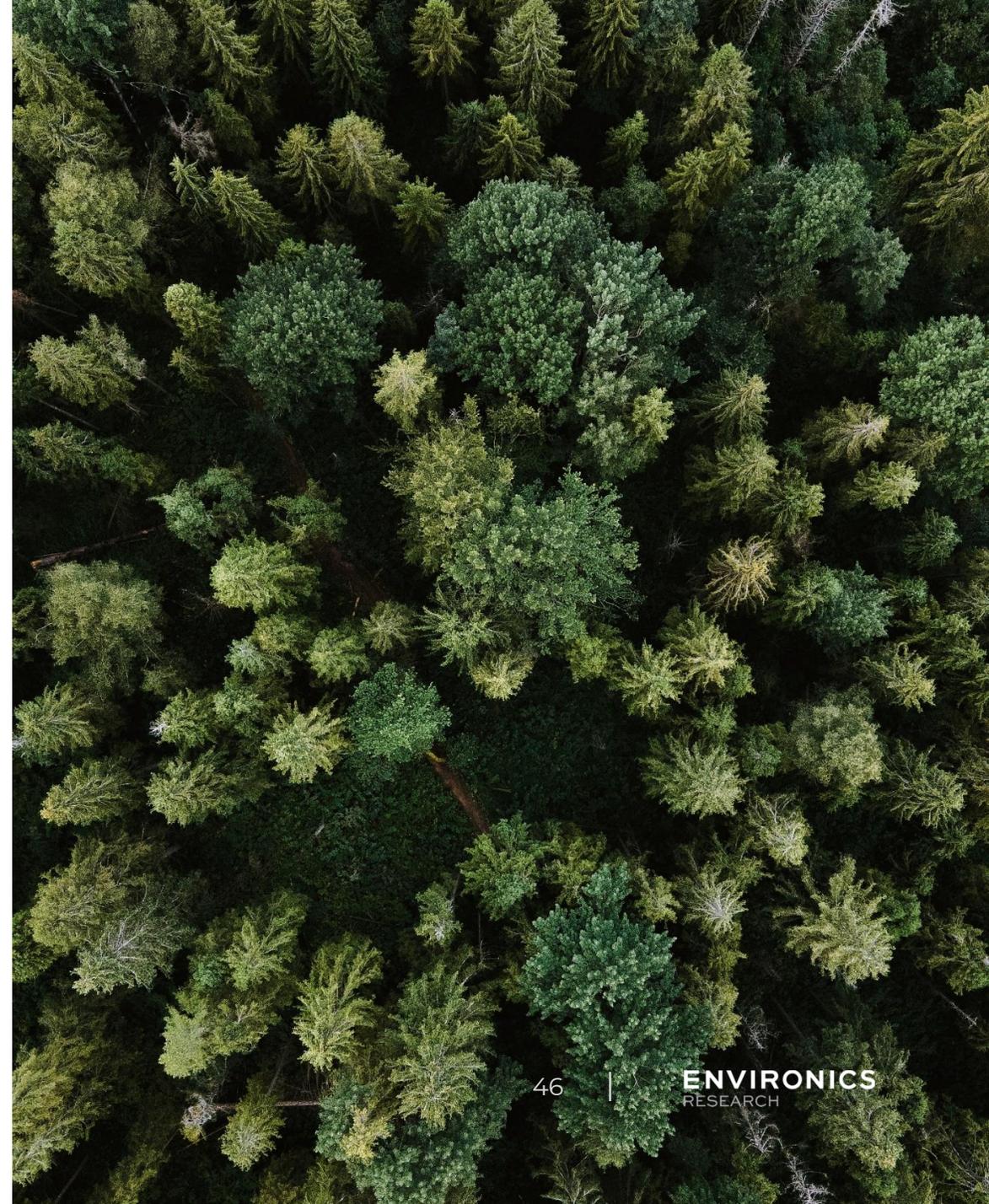
There are many solutions that can help recruiting efforts among youth; however, without increased awareness and improved perceptions of the industry among the general population, efforts to recruit students will continue to fall short.

# Potential solutions

## Overall barriers to recruiting are three-fold

While the labour shortage itself is a problem, the barriers to recruiting and retaining employees are three-fold:

- 1 Awareness of the industry**  
Awareness of the industry and the potential jobs (range and type) available is a significant barrier to interest and consideration.
- 2 Training and education**  
Training and education to become qualified can be a challenge for certain positions and among certain populations.
- 3 Cost of entry and nature of the work**  
The cost of entry and the type/nature of work itself is an important barrier to creating interest in the industry and retaining skilled workers.



# 1 | Potential solutions

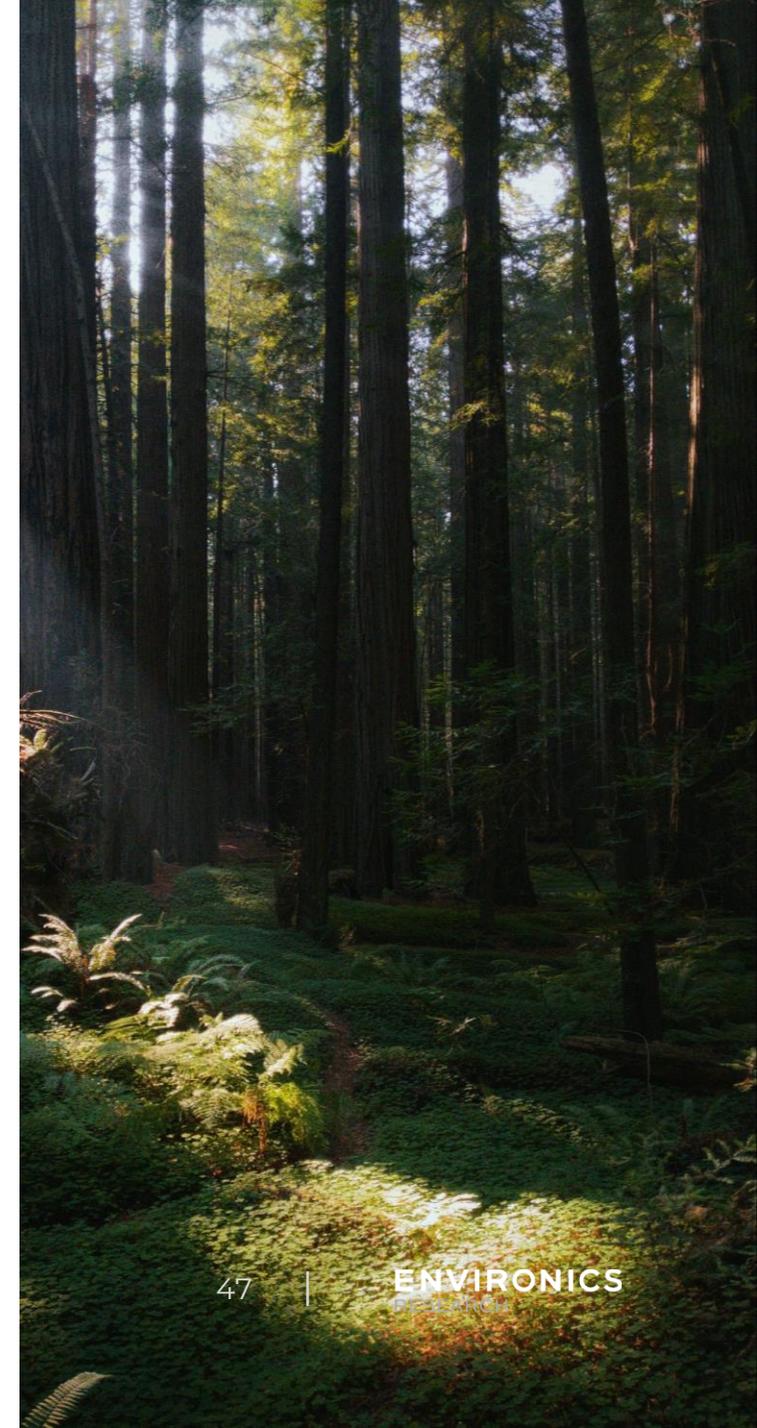
## Awareness of the industry

**Awareness of the industry and the potential jobs available is a significant barrier to interest. Potential solutions to increasing awareness and interest in the industry are centred around both the general population and youth entering the workforce.**

When thinking about attracting new employees, it's important to consider the engagement funnel, starting with general awareness, then consideration, and finally engagement. Without first increasing general awareness, conversion to consideration will not be successful in attracting significant numbers or creating meaningful turnaround.

### Poor industry perceptions increase the challenges of attracting new employees

Stakeholders across the industry emphasize the need to improve perceptions of the forestry industry among the general public. Many young people joining the workforce are not attracted to the industry because they don't want to be viewed as working for a 'bad' industry, especially those whose values and preferences are aligned with nature and working with nature-based industries. They want to be part of an industry that is positively contributing to the forests – and don't see forestry as a potential career option. Improving perceptions about the industry should be a joint effort between industry stakeholders and government, to build trust in the community and in Canadian society (e.g., buying local campaigns).



# 1 | Potential solutions

## Awareness of the industry

### Increasing awareness in schools needs an organized effort

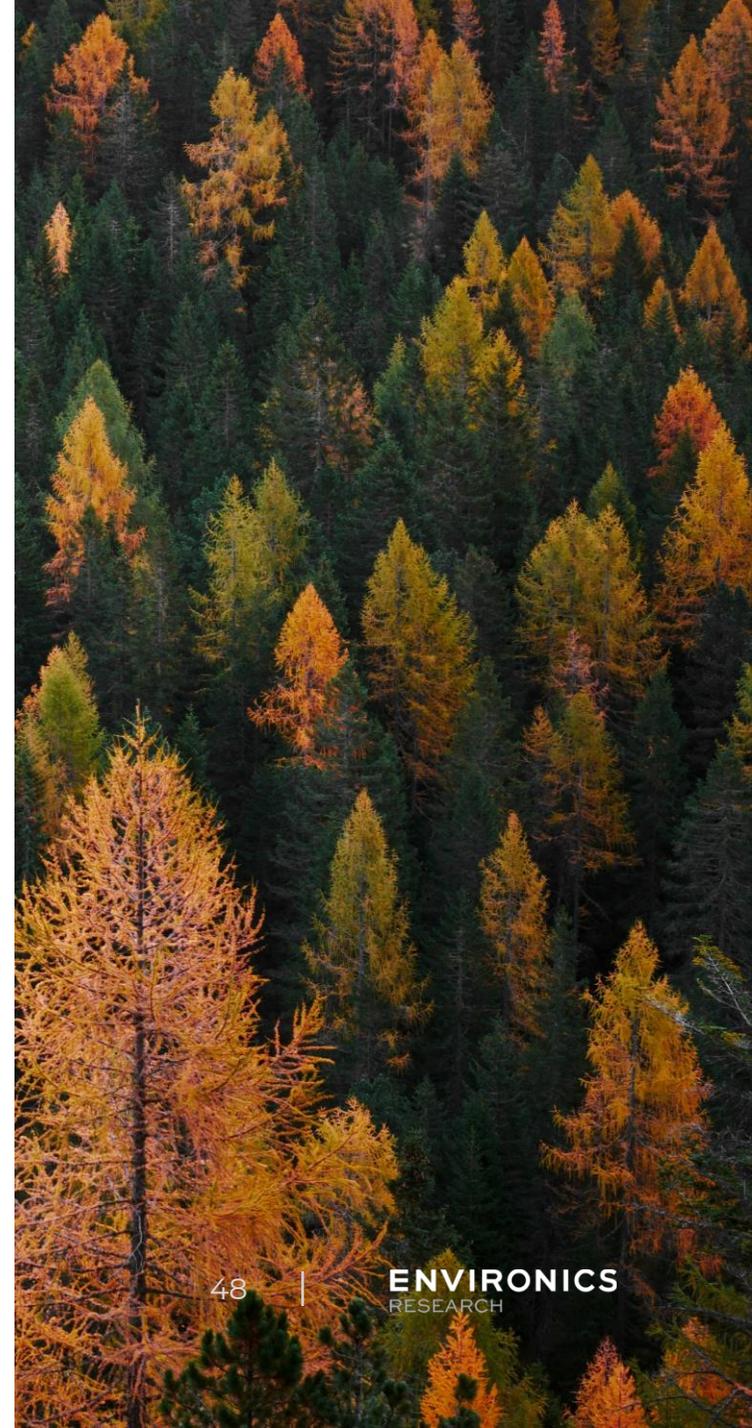
All stakeholders agree on the importance of capturing students at a young age, and many have tried creating that bridge with the schools and students around them. However, many also shared the challenges of meeting teachers who are willing to bring them into classrooms, as well as the difficulty of competing with other industries trying to do the same. They expressed the need for an organized effort between government, schools and industry to ensure the forestry industry has a place in the schools (along with other industries). Regular contact with teachers will help keep forestry top-of-mind in discussions about career options and pathways.

### Increasing exposure to nature at a young age can help create engagement

While lack of theoretical knowledge is an issue, there is also a lack of practical knowledge about forests in Canada that comes from a lack of exposure to nature and being outside. Youth nowadays are less exposed to outdoor experiences, and this impacts their preferences and choices later in life. For some industry members, interest in the industry started when they were young (e.g., tree planting programs, camp, etc.) and had a lasting impact on their lives/interests.

### Misguided perceptions of the types of work available can also hamper interest

There is a general perception that the type of labour in forestry jobs is demanding, 'dirty', 'cutting down trees with a saw' type of work, regardless of the position. These perceptions are making it increasingly challenging to attract new employees who are not already familiar with the industry and the types of positions it offers. Increasing awareness of the range of skills needed for different types of forestry work will help businesses across the industry generate interest in the positions for which they are hiring. Focusing on the technology (working with drones, GIS mapping, heavy equipment machinery, etc.) can also help increase the attractiveness of the types of jobs available in the industry.



## 2 | Potential solutions

# Training and education

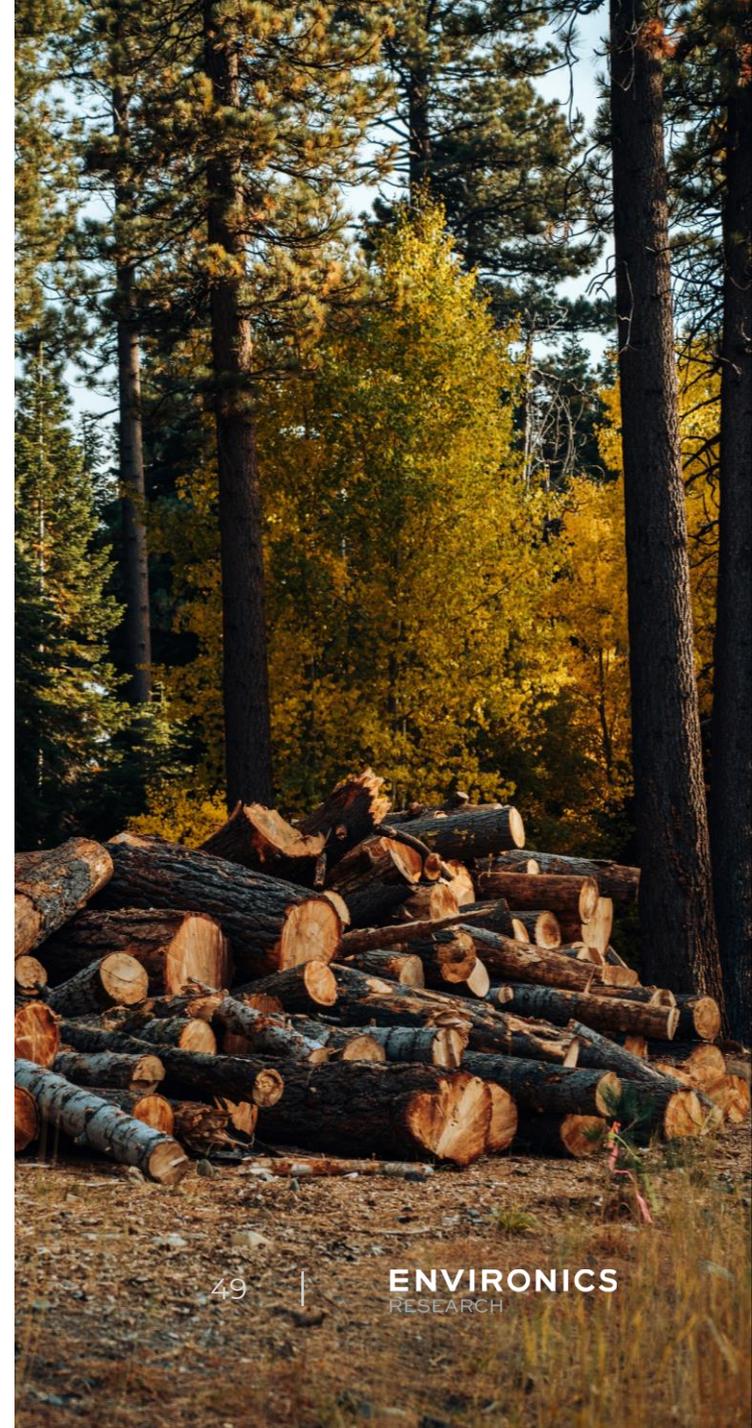
Training and education to become qualified can be a challenge for certain positions and among certain populations. Solutions involve both increasing awareness of training requirements and improving training pathways. A better-known and recognized pathway will improve the experience of those considering the industry.

### **Increasing awareness of the requirements for certain positions before youth start on their education path is needed**

While awareness and perceptions of the industry itself are challenges identified by all stakeholders, specific positions come with additional challenges. Youth applying for certain positions within the forestry industry (e.g., Forester) can be surprised that they don't have the necessary education and qualification requirements. Knowing these requirements earlier in their journey will mitigate attrition and increase opportunities.

### **There is a need to control/have input on the information about careers in forestry to ensure accurate information**

Some stakeholders say that certain job (and even government) websites promoting jobs in forestry have inaccurate information about the requirements to join the profession, which can create attrition. Ensuring that the information about job requirements – available across different job platforms, education institutions and government websites – is accurate and up-to-date will help achieve better education pathways.



## 2 | Potential solutions

# Training and education

### Ongoing promotion efforts are needed to create a sustainable workforce

Some stakeholders say that the number of graduates from forestry-related programs fluctuates greatly with time. Promotional material/articles create awareness about the industry and increase the number of enrolled students, but those increases are followed by periods of decline, which leads to an inconsistent number of graduates over time.

### Need for industry training/better education programs and pathways

Some stakeholders believe the industry needs different paths to certain professions. Some say it's getting increasingly difficult to hire people for forestry positions. In addition to few applicants, those who do apply have minimal experience and need extensive training before they can start working. Some stakeholders believe there's a disconnect between the education received and the work required. While many workers used to come from the Forester undergraduate program, the industry now receives graduates from programs such as Environmental Studies, which are not adequately preparing students for the work.

Regulated professions, as well as positions that require specific certificates and qualifications, need to promote the potential education pathways at high schools and universities. Consideration becomes significantly more challenging as students commit to certain education paths that do not provide the necessary qualifications to these regulated careers. Additionally, bridge training programs may also need to be revised to provide expedited pathways for those interested in joining the industry (coming from different undergraduate programs or immigrants). Potential workers are being lost due to the cost and duration of this process.



# 3 | Potential solutions

## Cost of entry and nature of the work

**The cost of entry and the type/nature of work itself is an important barrier to generating interest in the industry and retaining skilled workers.**

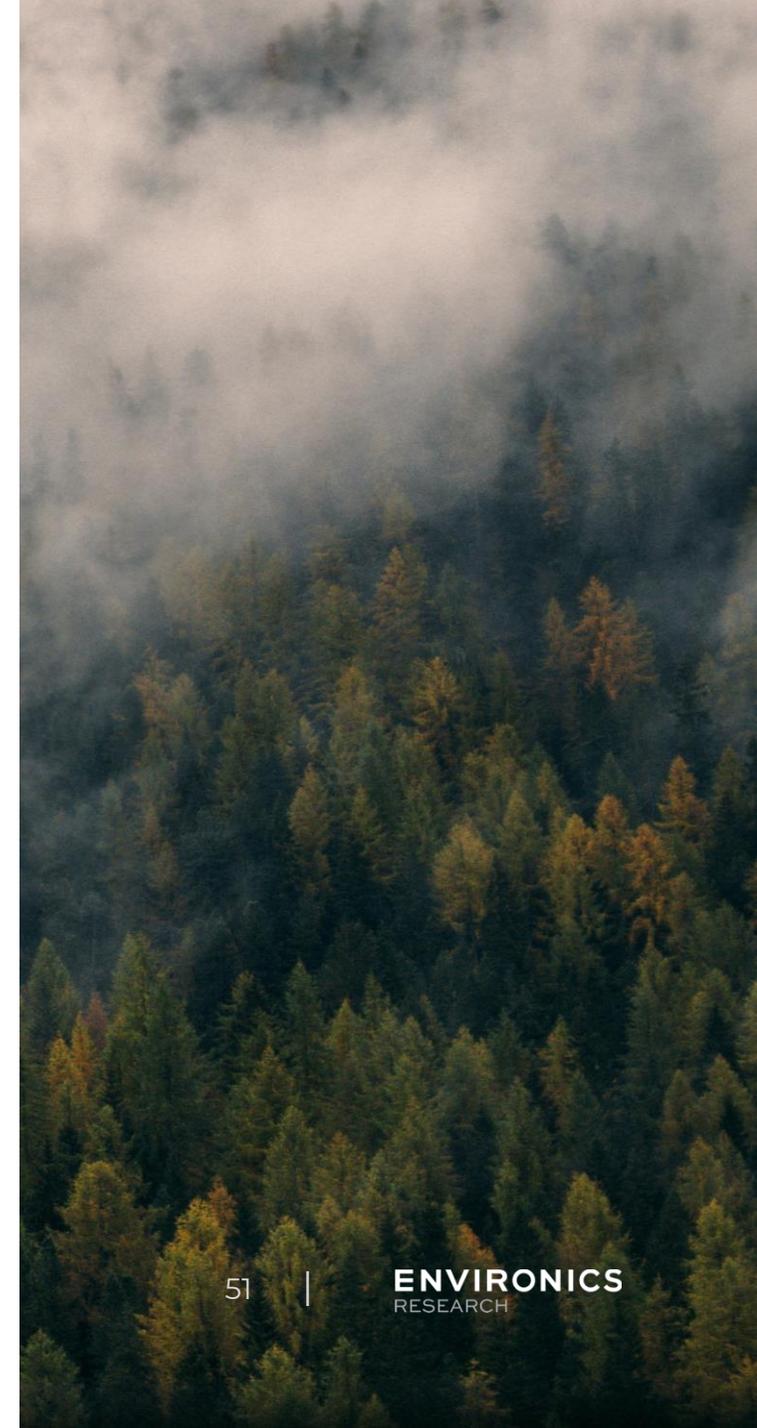
### **Technological training can increase the work life of those already in the industry**

While older workers may want to keep working, they're becoming limited by the type of work they can do. Much of the 'lighter' work involves technological knowledge and ends up being performed by younger workers, while older workers tend to do harder physical work. Providing training on the new technologies and equipment being used to those already in the industry can help keep current workers within the industry longer and allow them to pass on knowledge to new professionals entering the industry.

### **Income/compensation is considered below market standards**

Several stakeholders and industry workers say they consider the wages paid by the industry to be below the level they should be for the type of work performed (especially compared to other industries in the same areas). Some stakeholders say that the industry lost employees to other extraction companies in the region that pay better wages. Others say they consider their income to be significantly below that of other jobs requiring similar qualifications. Lack of raises over time was also mentioned as a reason for low levels of motivation within the industry.

While compensation is an issue to some, other stakeholders believe there are further structural issues that are preventing them from finding qualified workers. They believe there's a large portion of the working age population that is not actively seeking employment – and that this trend is getting worse (especially during COVID-19).



# 3 | Potential solutions

## Cost of entry and nature of the work

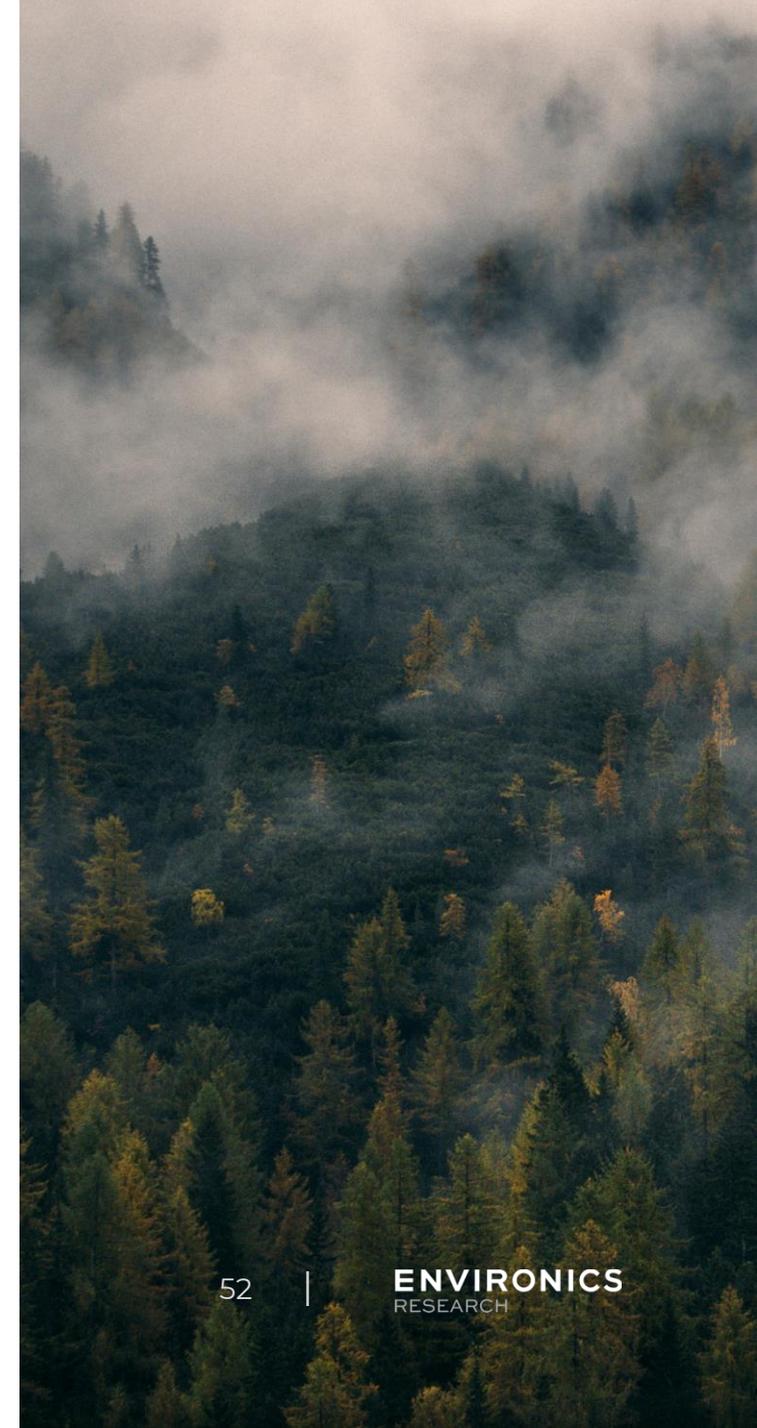
### **Changes to the way some jobs are structured or regulated are needed in order to replace the current workforce**

The cost and barriers to enter certain jobs create an environment in which finding new workers becomes extremely challenging. Loggers, for example, are owner/operator contractors and need to own their own equipment, which is expensive and requires knowledge/experience to maintain. This creates an environment in which youth with no prior experience or contacts in the business cannot join the industry. Without support for training and capital (loans), it is extremely difficult for new people to enter the workforce. Without systemic change to the industry model itself, the industry may not be able to replace some of its currently aging workforce.

Similarly, stakeholders say Logging Truck Drivers have significant barriers to entry. In addition to the qualifying licences, Logging Truck Drivers need three years of experience to qualify for insurance. This requirement creates an environment in which it becomes impossible for the industry to hire new drivers (or for new hires to acquire experience). Without government or industry-led insurance, it will become increasingly challenging to replace the current workforce.

### **Seasonality harms retention year-over-year**

While some workers enjoy the ability to work outdoors and in nature, the seasonality of the work itself can be a challenge to retaining qualified workers in certain positions (i.e., Tree Marking). Contractors who don't work year-round will look for employment in other industries in the off-season and don't always come back for the next season if they find permanent work. Unless the industry can provide alternatives for off-season work (e.g., short-term contracts in different areas of the industry), it will become increasingly challenging to retain contract workers.



### 3 | Potential solutions

## Cost of entry and nature of the work

#### **The cyclical nature of the extraction industry is a challenge for long-term recruitment and retention**

Economic cycles and the regular ups and downs of the industry create an environment in which the industry receives irregular attention from the government and other institutions. A steady, long-term effort for recruitment and training is needed for the sustainability of the industry.

#### **Positions requiring hard physical labour need additional resources for renewal**

Several positions in the forestry industry involve hard physical labour and operating heavy equipment. These positions are currently being performed by workers in their early 70s who can no longer maintain the same level of productivity, and who are not being replaced by younger workers. In addition to finding younger workers who are interested in physical labour, training the new generation will have a cost that industry members say they cannot afford within their current operating margins. Older contract workers would need to be paid to teach new workers the trade.



# 7

## Indigenous participation in the industry

Indigenous leaders recognize the alignment between the forestry industry and their communities, and see the opportunities to create jobs in their communities. However, the industry will need to create social supports and training resources for Indigenous youth to succeed.

# Indigenous participation

## Support among Indigenous peoples is strong

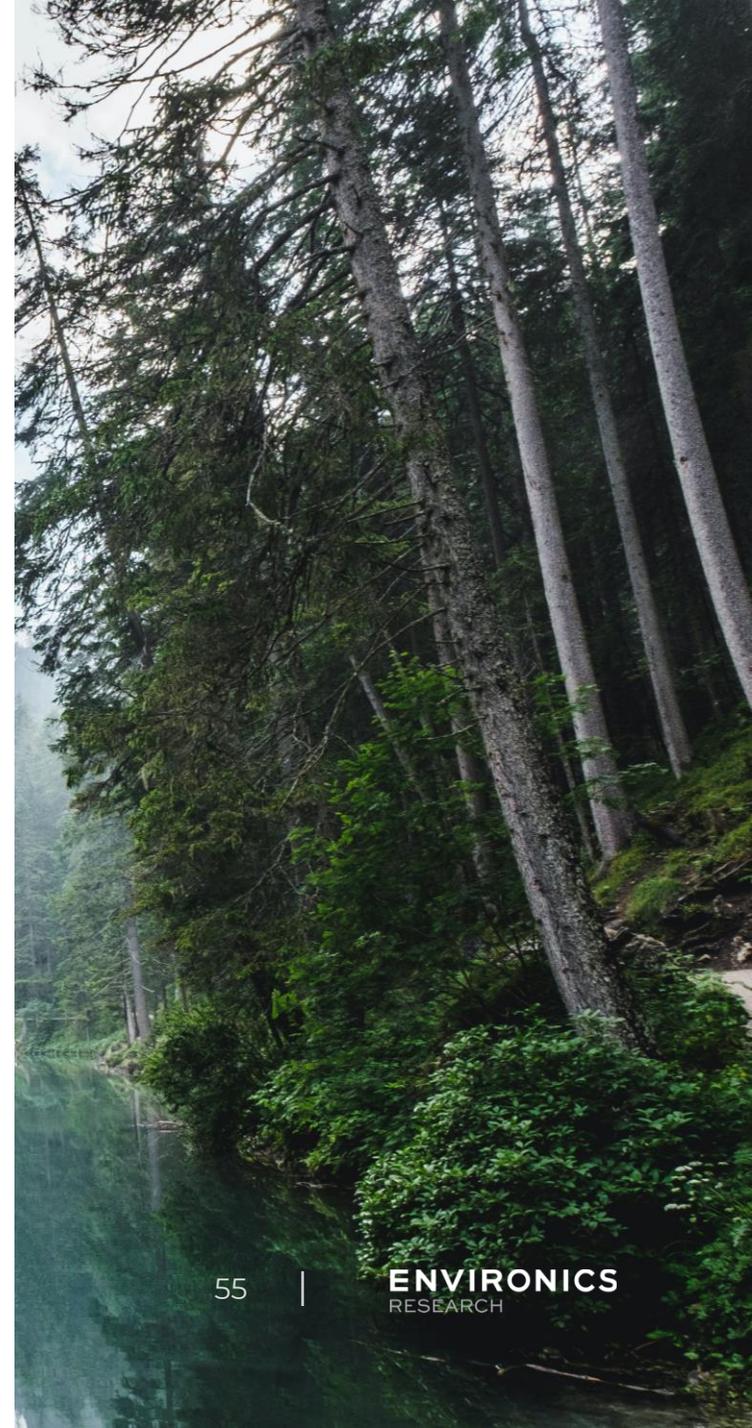
**Indigenous communities in Ontario were identified as one of the key stakeholders in this research. They have a long history of managing forest resources and, with communities located in forest areas across the province, the forestry sector is an important industry supporting business, jobs and communities.**

Additionally, Indigenous populations are growing at a faster rate than non-Indigenous populations in Canada<sup>1</sup>. With a growing youth population and a stronger connection to the land, the forestry industry believes there is great potential in partnering with Indigenous leaders to promote jobs in forestry among Indigenous communities in Ontario.

In a poll commissioned by the Indigenous Resource Network, Environics Research found that there is strong support among Indigenous peoples for forestry activities across Canada, with twice as many respondents saying they support (62%) rather than oppose (33%) the activity. Moreover, “respondents were optimistic about their community’s capacity to benefit from forestry. Seven in ten (70%) agreed their community had adequate knowledge, skills, policies and planning in place to take advantage of forestry activities”<sup>2</sup>.

With this potential in mind, Creative Fire interviewed 20 stakeholders from across Canada, including Indigenous business owners, Indigenous leaders, decision-makers in Indigenous organizations managing land/forests, and stakeholders in education institutions working with Indigenous youth, to uncover initiatives that have been successful to attracting and retaining Indigenous youth workers across the country. These interviews investigated opportunities and barriers to increasing Indigenous peoples’ participation in the industry.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/211006/dq211006a-eng.htm>  
<sup>2</sup> <https://www.woodbusiness.ca/canadian-poll-shows-strong-indigenous-support-for-forestry/>



# Indigenous participation

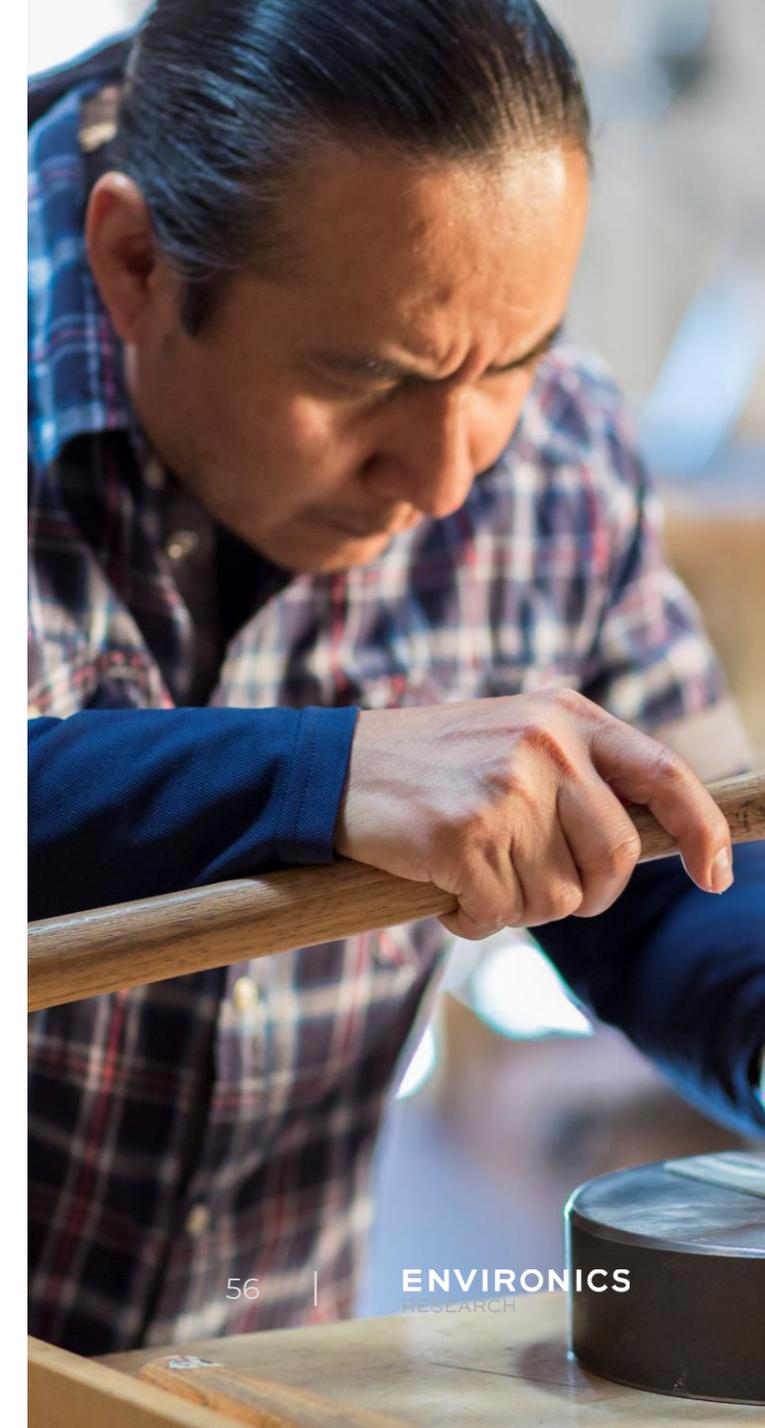
## **Leaders recognize the opportunity to play a role in the industry**

**Study results indicate that there is a strong opportunity, and interest in growing opportunities, for employment and participation in the forestry industry among Indigenous communities in Ontario.**

Business owners overwhelmingly recognize the labour shortage the industry is currently experiencing, but see many cultural and structural barriers that need to be addressed to successfully engage and retain youth.

As with non-Indigenous youth, there is a general lack of awareness among Indigenous youth about the industry, and the different job and career options available. Additionally, many have negative perceptions associated with the industry, including unsustainable tree cutting (harming the land), the taking and destruction of traditional land, and the lack of participation of Indigenous communities in the decisions affecting their land.

Indigenous leaders and business owners believe they have an important role to play in changing the narrative about the industry and the perceptions of the lack of sustainability surrounding it. Many Indigenous leaders see the importance of forestry in rebuilding their communities and reclaiming their lands – it's recognized as an industry that can bring employment opportunities and empower their communities.



# Indigenous participation

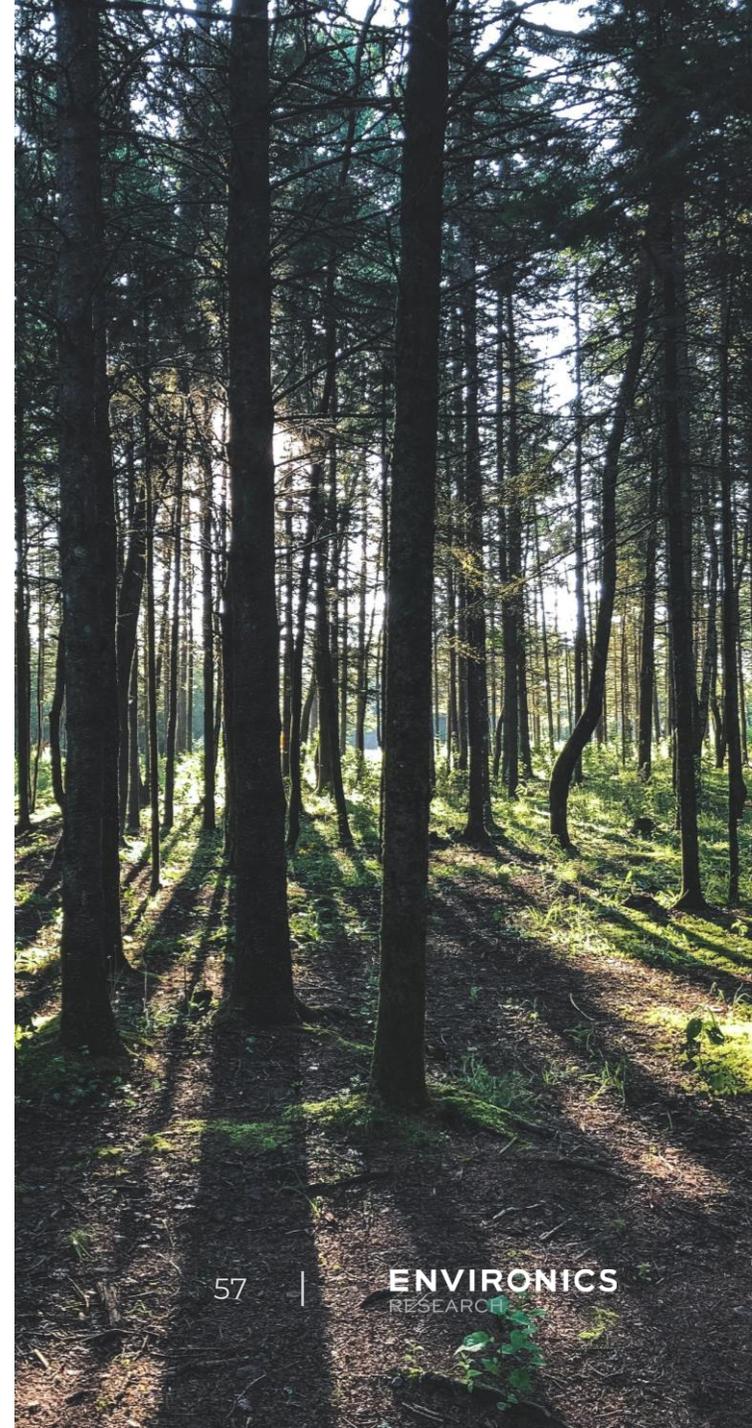
## **Low awareness of forestry and low income are barriers to engagement**

**Including their voices in the conversations and messages around forestry and the potential for employment opportunities is essential for a successful outcome.**

The lack of participation in the decisions affecting them can be viewed as in conflict with the true spirit of reconciliation. Working on increasing awareness and knowledge about the industry is the first step in attracting Indigenous youth in an inclusive way.

Forestry is generally understood to be a lower paying industry compared to the other extraction industries available in the same regions – and trying to attract the same pool of workers. Stakeholders emphasize that, because the industry cannot rely on higher paying jobs to attract youth, it needs to promote other benefits to working in the industry, both for the individual and their communities.

Indigenous youth are leaving their communities for jobs that are either impactful within their communities (e.g., doctors, nurses, social workers, midwives), or that are well-regarded and bring status to their communities. Technologically-inclined jobs tend to be better regarded compared to manually-intensive jobs. Additionally, having family in the industry is a way to pave the path to Indigenous youth and gives them a chance to hear about the industry from a trusted voice. Promoting advocates in the industry is a way to introduce Indigenous role models and show examples of success stories from people with whom they identify.



# Indigenous participation **Education and cultural gaps need to be addressed to increase participation**

**While there are many unemployed Indigenous youth in Ontario, especially in reserve areas where there is a lack of employment opportunities, attracting and retaining Indigenous youth involves two key issues: education gaps and cultural barriers.**

On the education front, there are two critical gaps identified: the first is the lack of high school and post-secondary education training; and the second is the lack of basic certification training.

While the industry can develop partnerships with government and educational organizations to increase access to basic certification training, the federal government needs to lead initiatives aimed at improving access to, and the quality of, education in Indigenous communities.

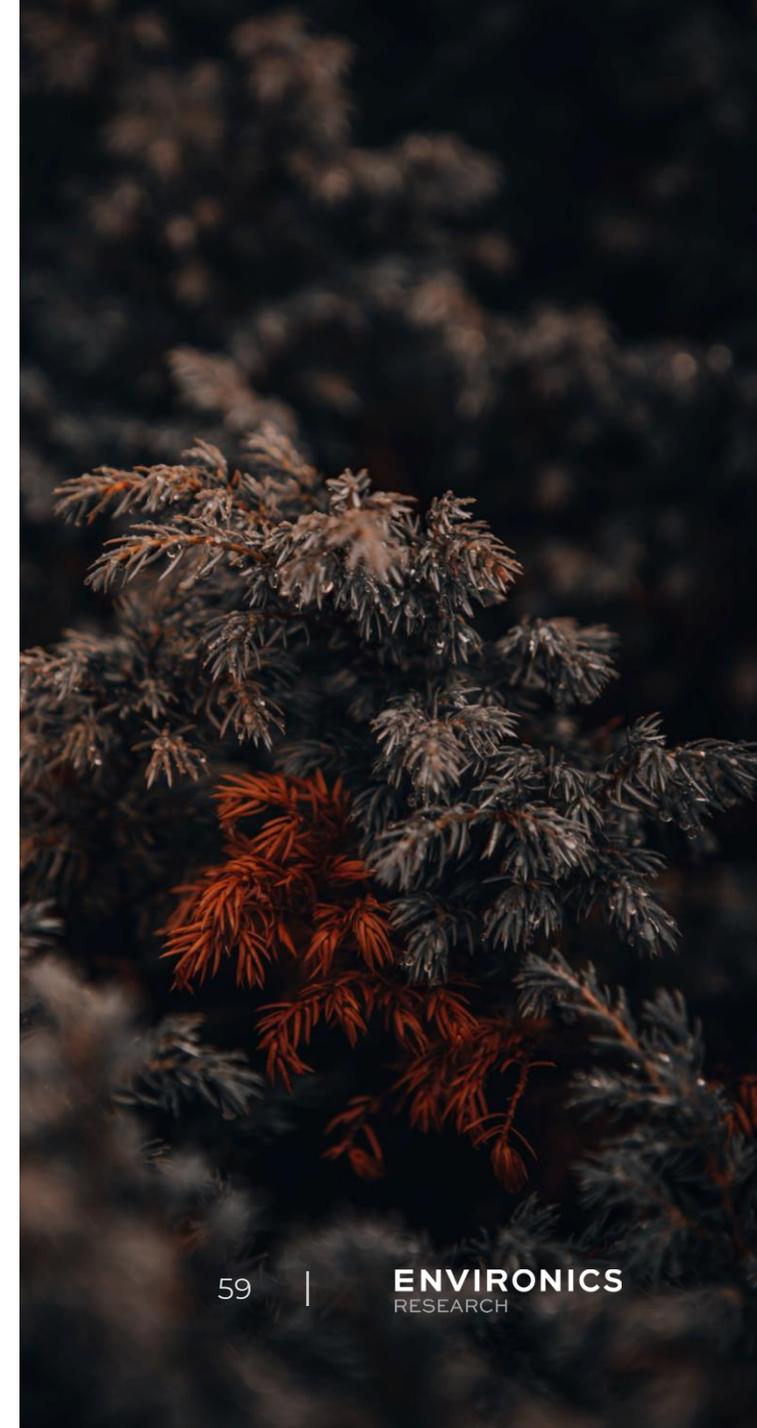


# Indigenous participation

## Communication efforts are needed on multiple levels

Stakeholders suggest several initiatives to increase Indigenous participation in the industry, with different degrees of implementation difficulty. **Short-term initiatives** that can be operationalized at the business and industry level include:

- 1 Communication efforts should be focused on having input into building the narrative**  
The current narrative about the forestry industry is entirely constructed by external voices with no input from the industry. The story being told by teachers, environmental groups and the media is largely negative. Indigenous stakeholders see the potential role that Indigenous inclusiveness can have in building that narrative if they are part of the conversation and decisions – a narrative that brings a different perspective regarding sustainability and resource use than the current, traditional view.
- 2 Building personal confidence beyond simply teaching the job is essential for long-term engagement and success**  
There is a need to understand that communication styles can impact how the message will be received – many Indigenous youth have experienced failure and have had the message of unsuccessful outcomes reinforced over time. Hearing negative feedback can often reinforce that feeling and be interpreted as a personal failure. It's important for employers and managers to understand how their language and communication style can be perceived by those who had a different upbringing.



# Indigenous participation

## **Low compensation in forestry makes it hard to compete with other extraction industries**

### **3 An uncompetitive pay scale, especially compared to other extraction industries available in the area (i.e., mining, gas), creates a challenge when competing for Indigenous youth**

Additionally, many youths (who are attracted to nature and outdoor work, and are likely to consider these industries) do not have the resources to leave their communities and get unpaid training. There is a strong preference for on-the-job training or apprenticeships, which would enable them to get paid while being trained and doing the work. This is also generally considered the only effective way to train workers for 'on the bush' jobs.



# Indigenous participation

## Stronger support systems for those leaving their communities is needed

**Medium-term initiatives**, which will likely need to include building partnerships with community stakeholders, businesses, high schools and community leaders, and require more effort and time commitment to be successfully implemented.

### 1 **There is a need to create incentives and social supports for youth to consider leaving their families and communities**

Many Indigenous youth in northern communities have close family ties and are hesitant to leave their families and communities. Many are leaving their community for the first time and feel isolated, lacking the social support structure they're used to, and this can lead to them to return to their communities. Others are bringing their families and may need help relocating.

To attract and retain Indigenous youth, companies may need to create support networks among Indigenous workers (e.g., Indigenous engagement staff) aimed at creating an environment where they are not alone, and can talk with others who have been through the same experience and who can help them overcome the cultural shock that many experience when leaving their communities. Peer-to-peer Indigenous support, Elder support, mentoring and job shadowing are identified as ideal resources.



# Indigenous participation

## High school is the best time to reach youth

### 2 Increase inclusivity in the industry

Similar to some of the challenges identified in the survey, racism was mentioned by Indigenous stakeholders as one of the main issues that needs to be addressed for long-term engagement. While there are some instances of overt racism, there are also other barriers toward inclusivity. Within northern areas, there are many parts of the workforce that are largely francophone. To many Indigenous workers, English is their second language, so they end up joining a workforce that doesn't speak their language and become isolated. Hiring several Indigenous workers, having cultural liaisons, or Indigenous competency programs and training, can help youth feel included and part of the workforce in different ways.

### 3 As with non-Indigenous youth, Indigenous stakeholders believe high school is the key time to reach youth

and to have a positive impact on their perceptions of the industry (and to help dispel negative perceptions often propagated by teachers). It is also the best time to reach out to youth, as they're in the process of making decisions about education and jobs. On-site day trips or field trips can provide a new perspective about the types of jobs available to them and help dispel negative/incorrect perceptions about the industry. Indigenous youth living on-reserve are the most likely to have land-based learning and comfort 'on the bush', and will be the most likely to be interested in jobs performed largely outdoors.



# Indigenous participation

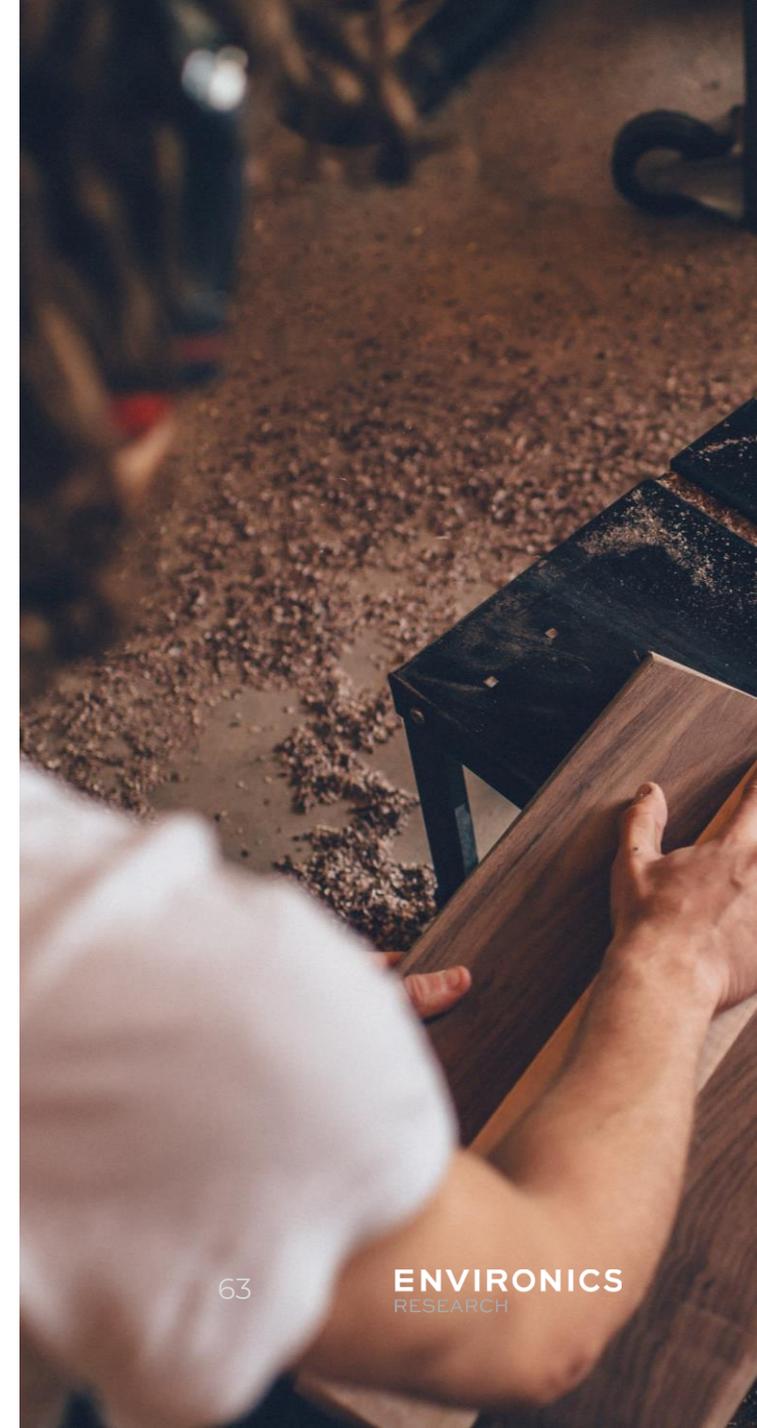
## Short certification and hands-on training are likely to increase participation

### 4 Stakeholders generally believe that hands-on training/shorter certifications will have the most impact on increasing employment among Indigenous youth

The remoteness and access challenges faced by Indigenous communities in Northern Ontario lead to a lack of opportunities for basic certifications that can be key to applying for jobs. Many youths don't have a driver's licence, First Aid/CPR certification or other basic training such as Bear Aware or chainsaw training. Lack of a driver's licence means they can't commute to jobs and reduces their opportunities. Working with the government and youth organizations such as the Ontario Youth Employment Program (OYEP), that have a successful experience and history with many communities, is necessary to ensure Indigenous youth can take immediate advantage of employment opportunities available (vs. long-term training/education).

### 5 A formal partnership between Indigenous business owners/companies and non-Indigenous business can be advantageous for both sides if there is collaboration

One Indigenous business owner said they're successful at attracting and training Indigenous youth workers. However, once trained, these workers are often poached by larger companies that can pay higher salaries. Creating a formal relationship between companies can ensure that smaller companies are compensated for the work and time they've invested in training Indigenous youth workers, and that larger companies can benefit from the ability to hire qualified workers.



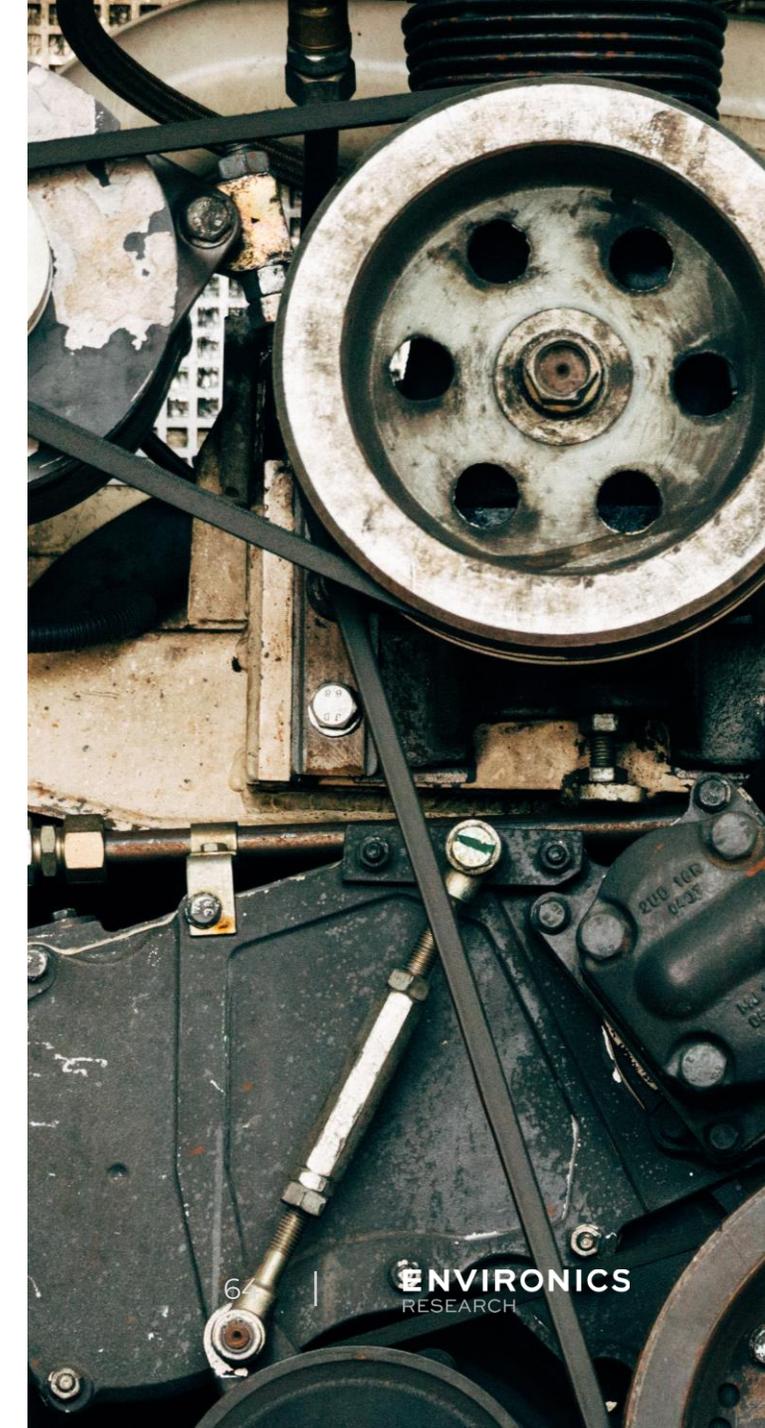
# Indigenous participation

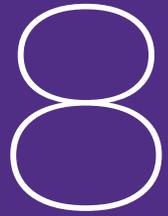
## Indigenous youth may need extra technical/technology training

Finally, there is a need for a few **long-term initiatives** that address structural issues, and that will likely need to be led by government. The forestry industry can partner with other industry and stakeholders in the region that are also facing labour shortages to work with the government to address them.

### 1 To be able to compete for many jobs, Indigenous youth may need extra training and education, compared to non-Indigenous youth

The forestry industry is becoming increasingly technical and technologically-based. There is a requirement for knowledge of, and comfort with, digital skills for many jobs (e.g., tablets and digital interfaces, GIS mapping, drones, Excel spreadsheets, etc.). However, First Nations schools suffer from well-documented chronic underfunding, which means their students don't necessarily have access to many of these resources. While new workers can be trained on an individual level, increasing access to technology (including the Internet) among Indigenous youth will create a workforce that is better prepared to apply for a wider variety of jobs.





# Conclusion

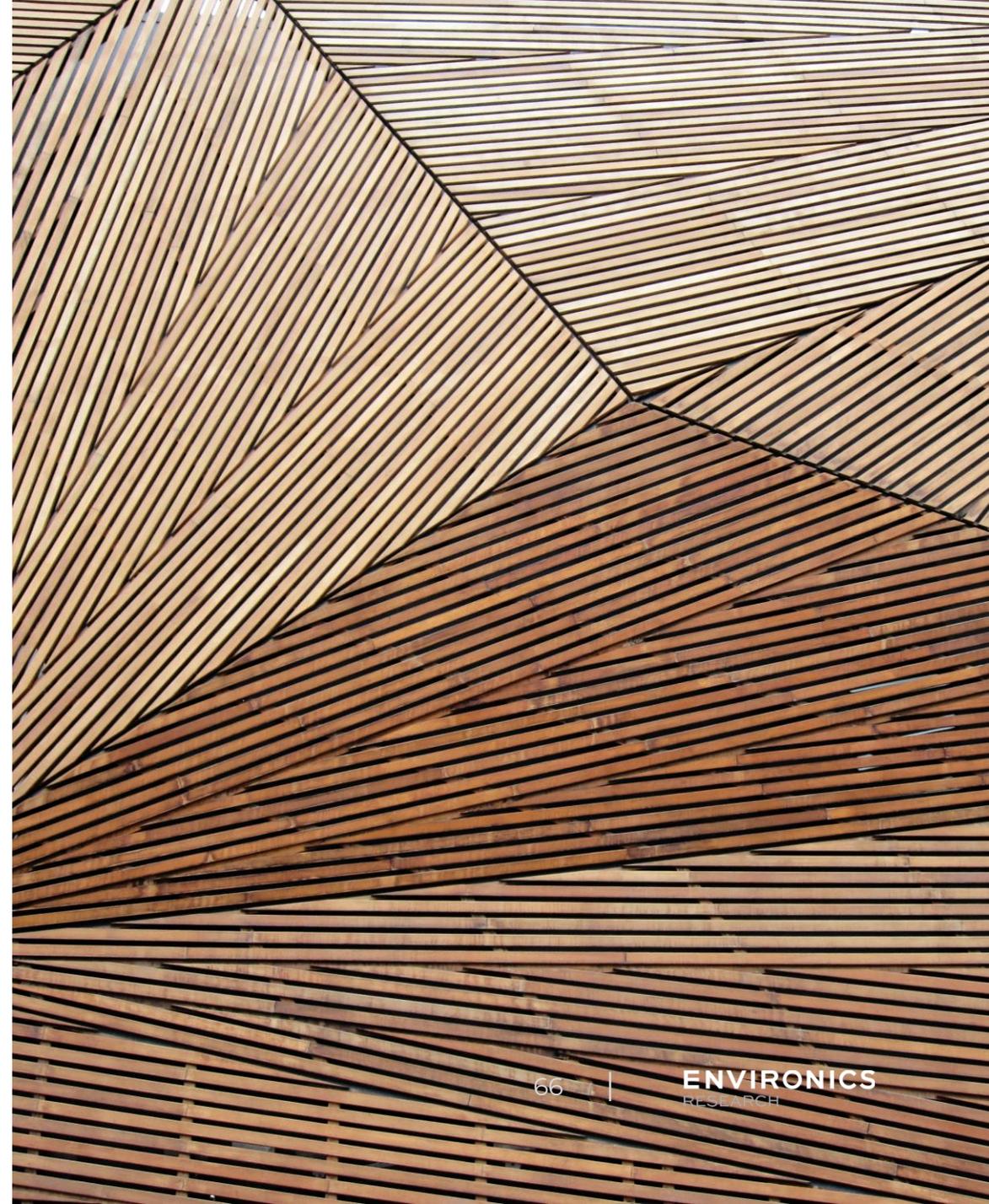
Efforts to increase awareness among the general population, and recruitment efforts among youth, may need to be aligned with investments in automation within the industry for the long-term sustainability of the industry.

# Conclusion

## Potential solutions

There are several initiatives the industry can undertake to increase awareness of forestry and the potential jobs available, improve perceptions of the industry, and improve retention and engagement among those currently employed within the industry. However, it's important to note that an aging workforce and subsequent labour shortage is a challenge faced by industries across Ontario and Canada (and most notably among industries that required trades-trained workers and involve manual labour).

These industries are competing for the same available workforce, and improving awareness and perceptions of forestry, while helpful, will not fix the issue. There is a belief among many stakeholders that the ultimate solution for the labour shortage issue will be for the industry to ultimately become more technologically-oriented. This is a view also shared by the workers, who believe that automation is a benefit to the industry. Investing in automating some of the manual labour required for much of the extraction work is likely one of the best ways to ensuring the longevity of the industry in the long term.



# APPENDIX METHODOLOGY

# Methodology

## Overall research phases

The **Bridging the Gap** project involves a series of research initiatives that can be summarized in three phases:

- 1. Quantitative and qualitative research with industry members and stakeholders** to understand the current situation faced by the industry, including current and anticipated job vacancies, as well as the associated training and educational requirements to fill these openings.
- 2. Quantitative and qualitative research with youth (and parents of youth)** in Ontario to understand their education and career path, and decision-making process, as well as their perceptions of the forestry industry and the careers associated with it.
- 3. Desk research** to investigate the education and training programs and pathways available, to identify notable education gaps that are barriers to filling labour shortages.

**This report details the results of phase 1 of the research with industry members and stakeholders.** *Please refer to reports 2 and 3 for detailed results on phases 2 and 3.*



# Methodology | **Detailed methodology**

Results for this phase of the project will allow the Ontario forestry sector to create a detailed road map of education/training opportunities and career paths that can be used to fill the industry's labour gaps. Ultimately, the various components of the project will allow the forestry sector, in partnership with the government and educational organizations/institutions, to reduce anticipated labour shortages over the next five years.



## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Review of available literature to use learnings to guide following phases of the research



## **LABOUR SHORTAGE SURVEY**

- 16-minute online survey (median)
- n=70 industry members
- Industry members were recruited by forestry industry committee members and received no incentive for their participation
- Fieldwork: October 27 – December 21, 2021
- Survey was available in English and French



## **INTERVIEWS WITH INDUSTRY STAKEHOLDERS**

- 40-minute interviews
- n=6 industry stakeholders
- Fieldwork: December 2021



## **ONLINE BOARDS WITH INDUSTRY MEMBERS**

- 2-day online discussion board
- n=15 industry employees who had joined forestry in the past three years
- Fieldwork: July 11 – 13
- Respondents received a cash incentive for their participation
- Boards were available in English and French



## **INTERVIEWS WITH INDIGENOUS STAKEHOLDERS**

- 1-hour interviews
- N=20 Indigenous stakeholders, including Indigenous leaders, industry leaders, education stakeholders and business owners
- Fieldwork: October – November 2021
- Fieldwork conducted by Creative Fire®

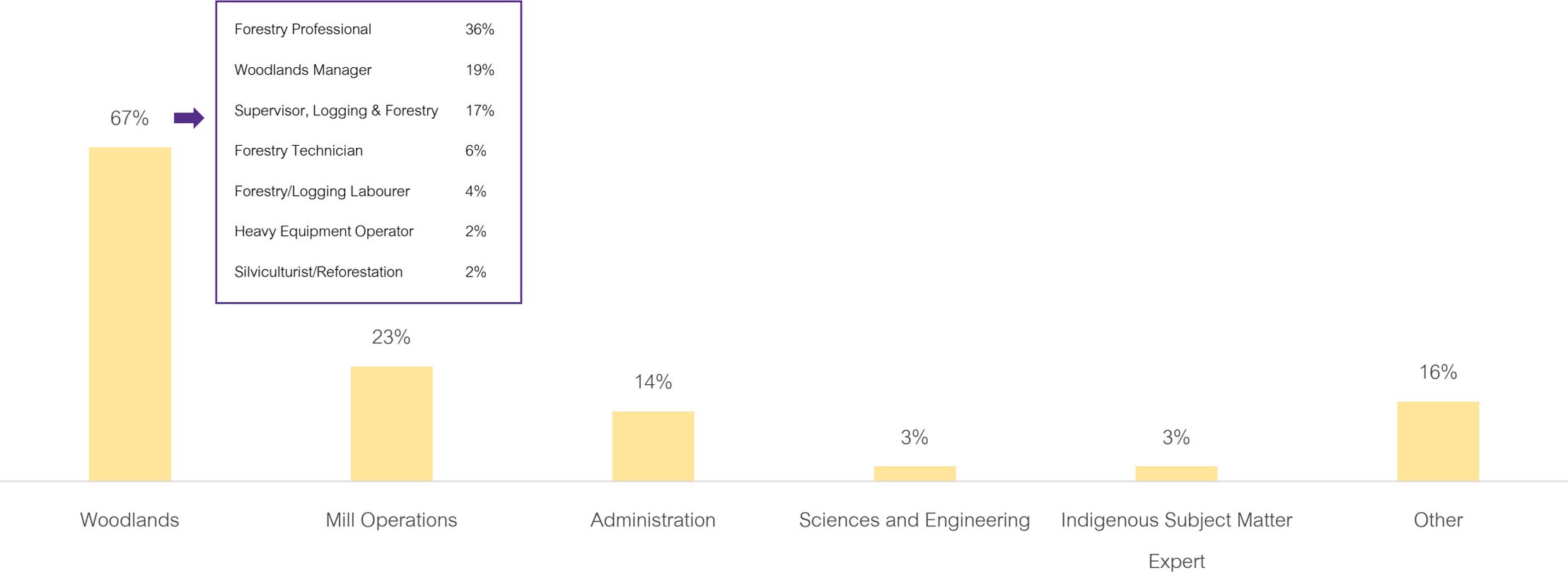
# APPENDIX

# **SURVEY RESPONDENT**

# **PROFILE**

# Industry Sector | **Most respondents work in woodlands**

Forestry Professionals, Woodlands Manager, and Supervisor In Logging & Forestry, are the most common positions **found** among survey respondents.



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# Thank you.

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