

**THE  
BLUE RIDGE REGION  
OF SOUTH CAROLINA  
LABOR AVAILABILITY REPORT**

**February, 2006**

**Compiled and Prepared by  
THE PATHFINDERS**



**Dallas, Texas**

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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 Blue Ridge Region of South Carolina 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 less than 10% of the new hires for new operations 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 Blue Ridge 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 Blue Ridge Region.



## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- The Blue Ridge Region, referred to in this report as the “labor shed”, has a household population of approximately 759,600 and a civilian labor force of approximately 398,900.
- The labor shed has a pool of approximately 25,600 unemployed persons who are actively seeking work.
- A new employer will be able to attract employees from an additional pool of about 31,500 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 \$14.26 per hour, and the median desired pay rate of the underemployed workers is \$15.09 per hour.
- About 25% of the underemployed workers would take a new job for \$12.13 per hour or less. At the upper end, the 25% most qualified and experienced will command more than \$22.47 per hour.
- Roughly 6,100 people, neither employed nor seeking work, might re-enter the workforce for the proper job.
- In total, the Blue Ridge Region has 63,200 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 entering, or re-entering, the workforce for a good job.

The first step in assessing the workforce of the Blue Ridge Region 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 Blue Ridge Region 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 Anderson, Greenville, Oconee and Pickens Counties in South Carolina; portions of Transylvania and Jackson Counties in North Carolina; and, portions of Rabun, Stephens, Franklin and Hart Counties in Georgia.

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 Blue Ridge 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



which 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 Blue Ridge Region labor shed has a household population of approximately 759,600. The civilian labor force numbers approximately 398,900, and the labor shed contains approximately 25,600 unemployed people who are actively seeking work.

The results of this assessment determined that approximately 31,500 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. Of these 31,500 underemployed workers, approximately 4,400 of them are currently working part-time and desire to change jobs and go to work full-time. Further, the results suggest that an additional 6,100 people who are not currently employed or actively seeking work would consider re-entering the workforce. In total, the Blue Ridge Region has approximately 63,200 available workers for new or existing employers.

### AVAILABLE WORKERS

Number of underemployed workers	31,500
Number of unemployed persons who are actively seeking work	25,600
Number of persons who are not working, but would consider re-entering the workforce	6,100
<b>Total Number of Workers Available for Employers</b>	<b>63,200</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.

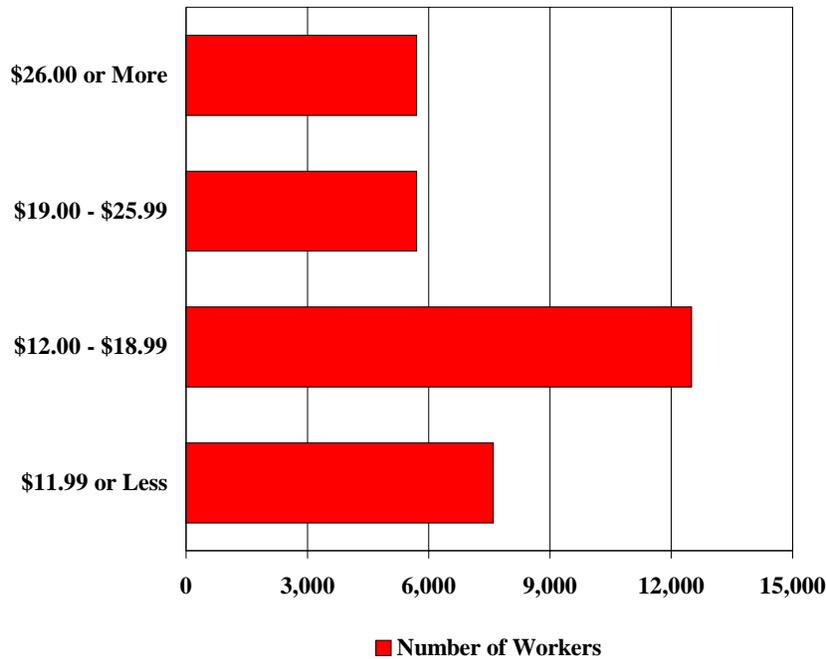
The following data represent the desired pay rates of the underemployed individuals in the labor shed. Many workers expressed their wage requirements in weekly, monthly, or annual terms, but all wage figures in this report are presented in hourly rates. Selected conversions may add perspective to the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

### CONVERSION CHART

Hourly	Weekly	Monthly	Annually
\$ 8.00	\$ 320.00	\$ 1,386.00	\$ 16,640.00
\$ 10.00	\$ 400.00	\$ 1,733.00	\$ 20,800.00
\$ 12.00	\$ 480.00	\$ 2,078.00	\$ 24,960.00
\$ 14.00	\$ 560.00	\$ 2,425.00	\$ 29,120.00
\$ 16.00	\$ 640.00	\$ 2,771.00	\$ 33,280.00
\$ 18.00	\$ 720.00	\$ 3,118.00	\$ 37,440.00
\$ 20.00	\$ 800.00	\$ 3,464.00	\$ 41,600.00
\$ 22.00	\$ 880.00	\$ 3,810.00	\$ 45,760.00
\$ 24.00	\$ 960.00	\$ 4,157.00	\$ 49,920.00
\$ 26.00	\$ 1,040.00	\$ 4,503.00	\$ 54,080.00
\$ 28.00	\$ 1,120.00	\$ 4,850.00	\$ 58,240.00
\$ 30.00	\$ 1,200.00	\$ 5,196.00	\$ 62,400.00



**DESIRED WAGE RATES PER HOUR BY RANGE**  
**31,500 Underemployed Workers**



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

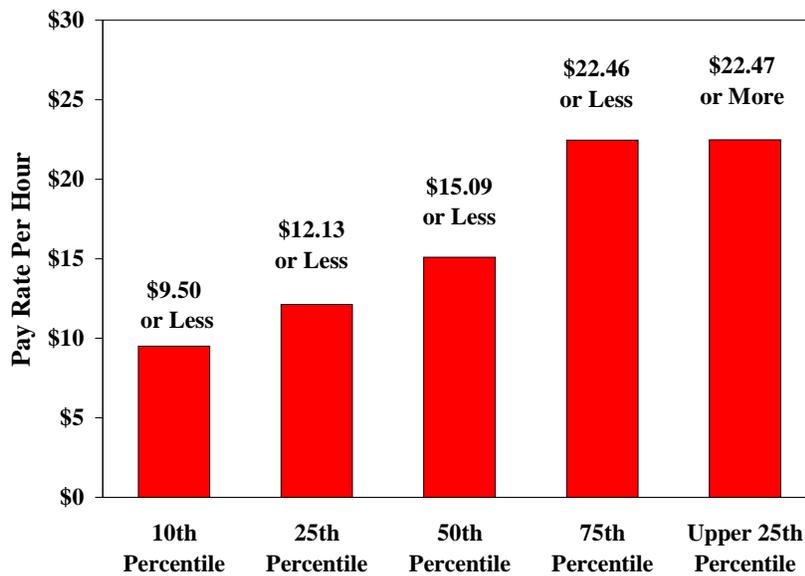
<u>\$7.99 or Less</u> <b>1,100</b>	<u>\$8.00 - \$8.99</u> <b>700</b>	<u>\$9.00 - \$9.99</u> <b>2,700</b>	<u>\$10.00 - \$10.99</u> <b>2,400</b>	<u>\$11.00 - \$11.99</u> <b>700</b>
<u>\$12.00 - \$12.99</u> <b>2,100</b>	<u>\$13.00 - \$13.99</u> <b>3,100</b>	<u>\$14.00 - \$14.99</u> <b>2,700</b>	<u>\$15.00 - \$15.99</u> <b>2,700</b>	<u>\$16.00 - \$16.99</u> <b>1,100</b>
<u>\$17.00 - \$17.99</u> <b>400</b>	<u>\$18.00 - \$18.99</u> <b>400</b>	<u>\$19.00 - \$19.99</u> <b>1,100</b>	<u>\$20.00 - \$20.99</u> <b>1,700</b>	<u>\$21.00 - \$21.99</u> <b>400</b>
<u>\$22.00 - \$22.99</u> <b>700</b>	<u>\$23.00 - \$23.99</u> <b>400</b>	<u>\$24.00 - \$24.99</u> <b>700</b>	<u>\$25.00 - \$25.99</u> <b>700</b>	<u>\$26.00 - \$26.99</u> <b>100</b>
<u>\$27.00 - \$27.99</u> <b>400</b>	<u>\$28.00 - \$28.99</u> <b>400</b>	<u>\$29.00 - \$29.99</u> <b>700</b>	<u>\$30.00 - \$ 30.99</u> <b>400</b>	<u>\$31.00 or More</u> <b>3,700</b>



Utilizing the desired wage information as illustrated in the preceding charts, the following conclusions can be drawn concerning the underemployed workers in the Blue Ridge Region:

- 10% of the underemployed workers will require \$9.50 per hour or less to change jobs.
- 25% of the underemployed workers will require \$12.13 per hour or less to change jobs.
- 50% of the underemployed workers will require \$15.09 per hour or less to change jobs.
- 75% of the underemployed workers will require \$22.46 per hour or less to change jobs.
- The upper 25% of the underemployed workers will require wages beginning at \$22.47 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 Blue Ridge Region Labor Shed**

Skills	Desired Pay
Office Operations	\$16.25
Warehouse/Materials Handling	\$14.38
Manufacturing/Assembly/Fabrication	\$14.50
Medical/Health Sciences	\$14.00
Maintenance/Installation/Repair	\$15.00
Technician/Quality Assurance	\$16.50
Information Technology/Telecommunications	\$17.50
Electronics/Engineering	\$15.50
Machining/Welding/Other Industrial Machines	\$15.33
Software Development/Programming	\$17.00

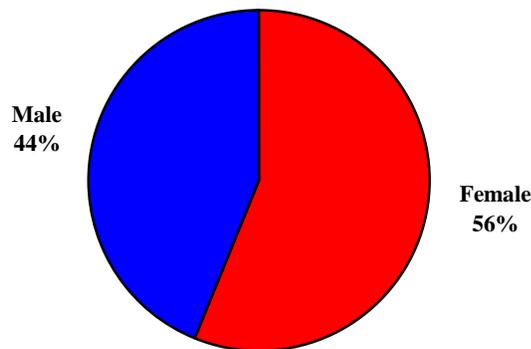


## CHARACTERISTICS OF UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS

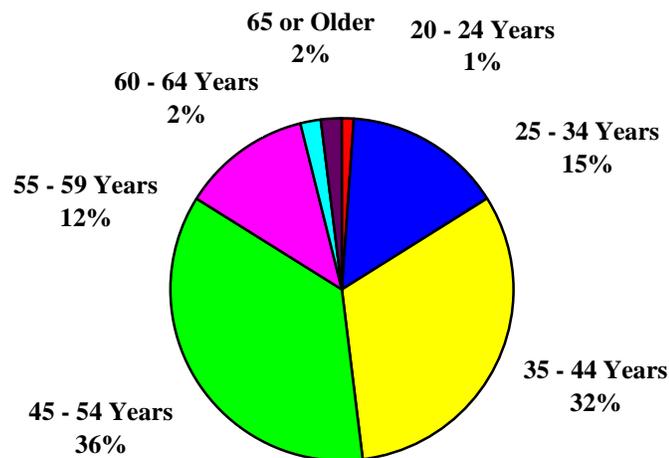
### The Blue Ridge Region Labor Shed

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

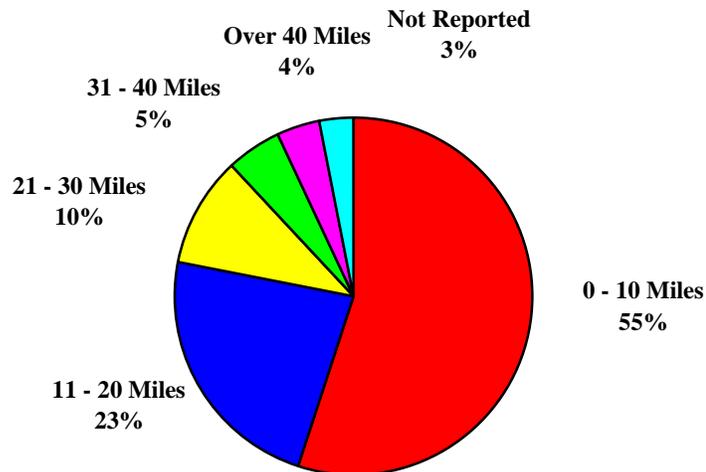


## CHARACTERISTICS OF UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS

### LENGTH OF TIME IN CURRENT JOB

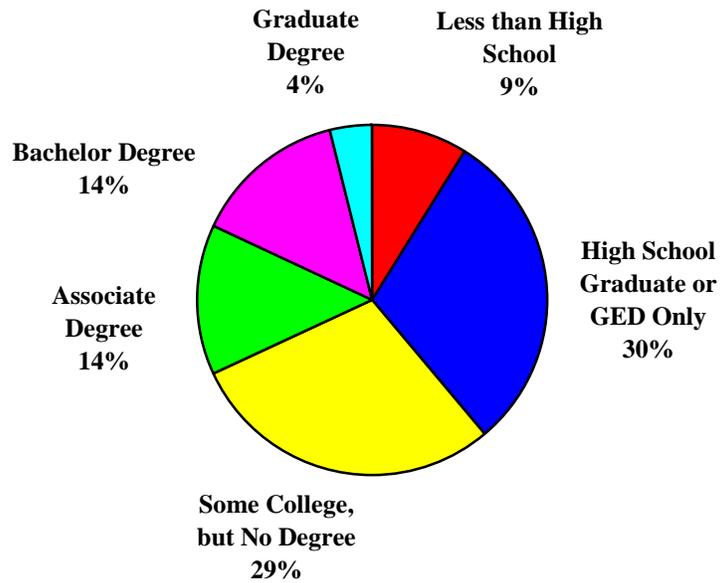


### COMMUTING DISTANCES

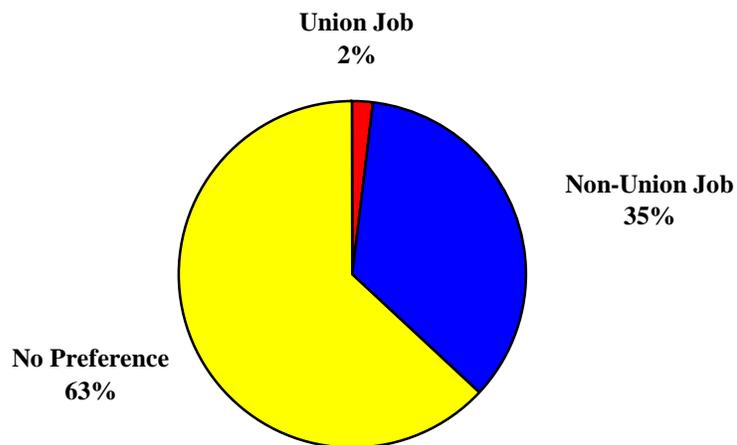


## CHARACTERISTICS OF UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS

### EDUCATION

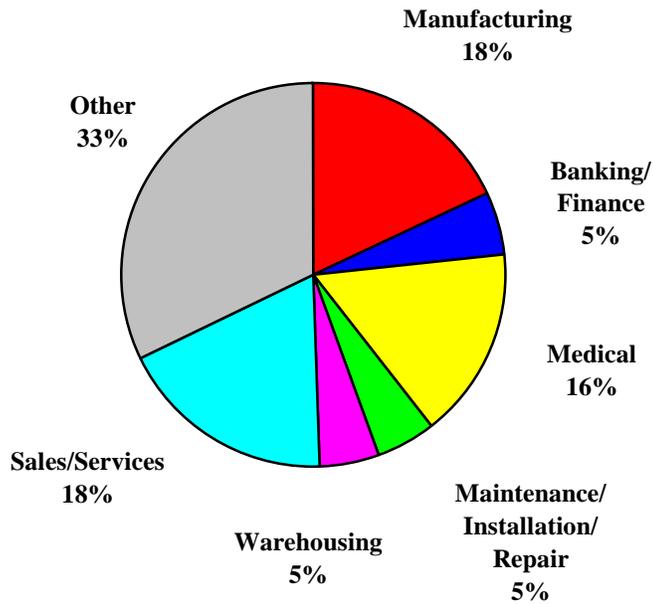


### UNION PREFERENCE



## CHARACTERISTICS OF UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS

### CURRENT SECTOR OF EMPLOYMENT



\* The “Other” category of current employment for the underemployed workers in the Blue Ridge Region includes those sectors with less than 5% representation. Those sectors are across a wide variety of categories, including, among others, construction and education.



## EXPERIENCE AND SKILLS – UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS

### The Blue Ridge Region 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 Blue Ridge Region Labor Shed****31,500 Underemployed Workers**

<b>Experience*</b>	<b>Number of Persons</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Office Operations	19,800	63%
Warehouse/Distribution/Transportation	18,000	57%
Manufacturing/Assembly/Fabrication	19,500	62%
Medical/Health Sciences	9,800	31%
Maintenance/Installation/Repair	11,000	35%
Call Center	5,400	17%
Information Technology/Telecommunications	10,700	34%
Sales/Customer Service	19,800	63%
Industrial Operations/Industrial Processing	10,400	33%
Electronics/Engineering	6,000	19%
Government/Education	8,800	28%
Computer Operations, including Computer-Controlled Machines	15,800	50%

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



**EMPLOYMENT SKILLS OF UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS****The Blue Ridge Region Labor Shed****31,500 Underemployed Workers**

<b>Skills*</b>	<b>Number of Persons</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Office Operations	19,500	62%
Warehouse/Materials Handling	17,600	56%
Manufacturing/Assembly/Fabrication	19,200	61%
Medical/Health Sciences	9,100	29%
Maintenance/Installation/Repair	12,600	40%
Technician/Quality Assurance	13,500	43%
Information Technology/Telecommunications	8,500	27%
Electronics/Engineering	5,400	17%
Machining/Welding/Other Industrial Machines	8,800	28%
Software Development/Programming	7,900	25%

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



## UNEMPLOYED WORKERS

### The Blue Ridge Region Labor Shed

This report documents two groups of unemployed individuals in the Blue Ridge Region labor shed who would be available workers for a new or expanding business. The groups are classified as:

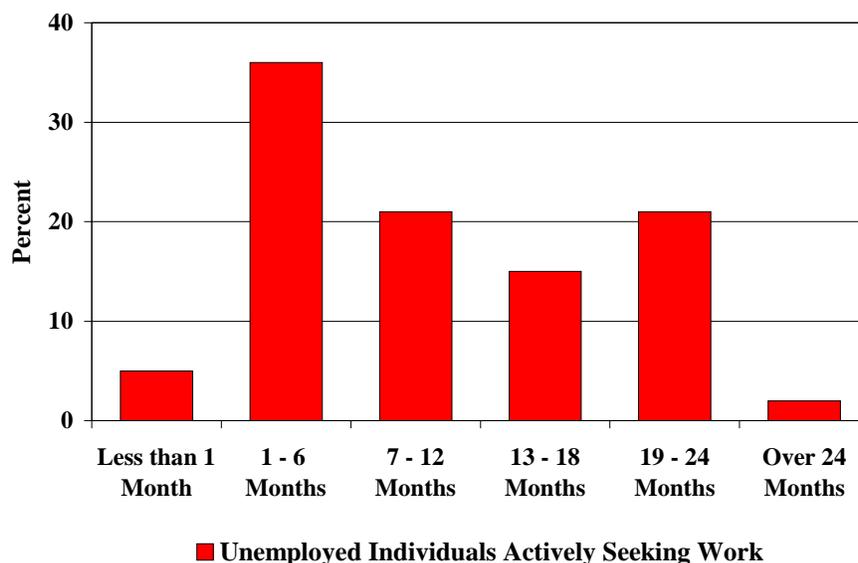
- Individuals who are actively seeking work
- Individuals who are considering re-entering the workforce

Published statistics document 25,600 unemployed workers in the labor shed who are actively seeking work. However, this number could possibly be higher since some of these potential workers may not be counted on the rolls of the state unemployment agencies.

According to the results of the household survey, the chart below shows the length of time the unemployed, actively seeking work individuals have been unemployed.

### LENGTH OF TIME UNEMPLOYED

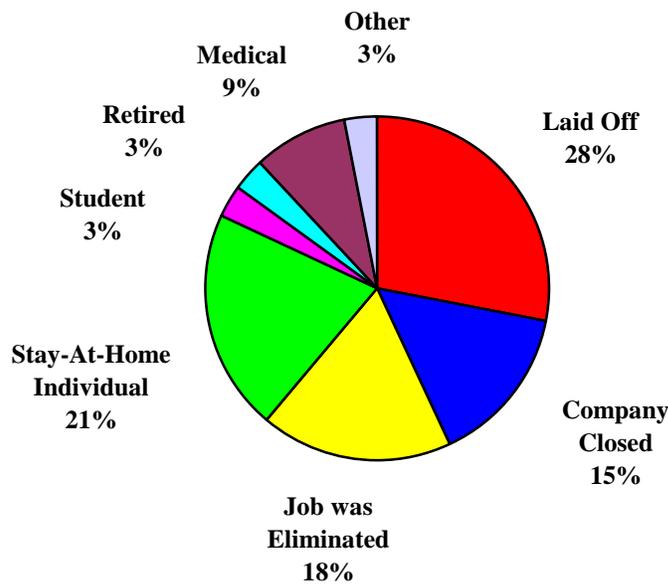
#### Individuals Actively Seeking Work



Survey results indicate that 28% of these available workers were laid off from their jobs and 33% are unemployed due to company closures, relocations or job eliminations. Survey findings also indicate that 21% of the unemployed individuals who are actively seeking work are stay-at-home individuals; 3% are students; and, 3% are retired. The remaining 12% are unemployed due to medical-related conditions or other reasons.

## REASONS FOR UNEMPLOYMENT

### Individuals Actively Seeking Work



This survey indicates that 36% of the unemployed, actively seeking work individuals are male and approximately 22% have two-year degrees or higher. The average age of this group is 43. These available workers possess a variety of experience and skills in multiple categories.

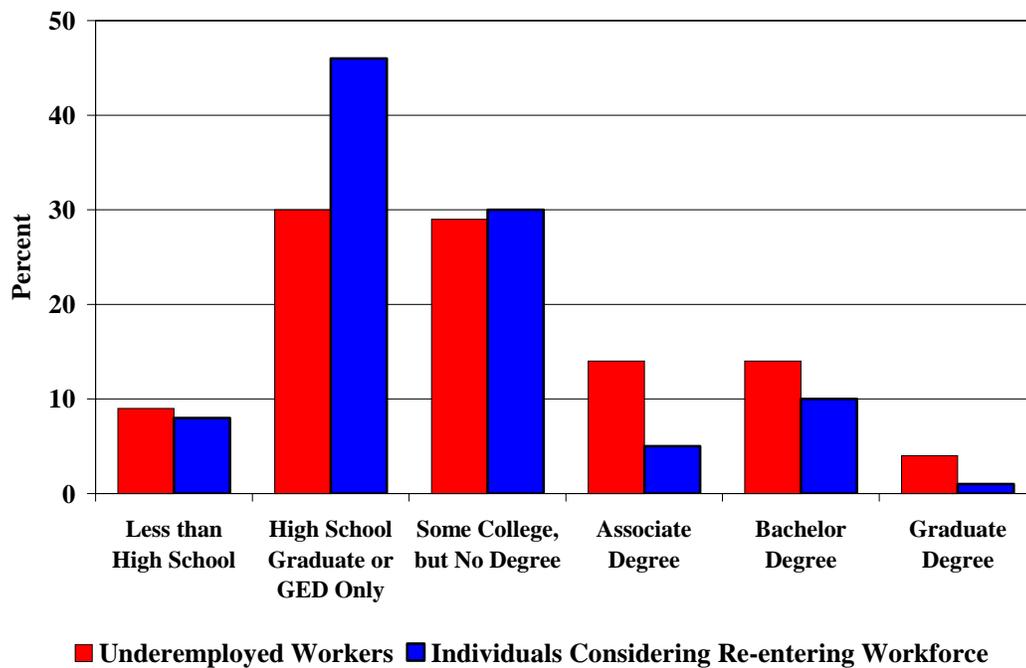
The largest sector of recent employment was manufacturing. The median most recent pay was \$12.00 per hour, and the median desired pay rate for these available workers is \$10.44 per hour.



Furthermore, the survey results suggest that an additional 6,100 people, who are not currently employed or actively seeking work, would consider re-entering the workforce. About 70% of these additional individuals are female, and the group is three years older on average than the underemployed. The education of this additional group roughly mirrors that of the underemployed members of the workforce, albeit with a somewhat higher concentration of “High School Graduate or GED Only”.

### EDUCATION LEVELS

#### Underemployed Workers / Individuals Considering Re-entering Workforce



This group of available workers exhibits competitive measures of experience and skills in the area of office operations. The wages required by this group to re-enter the workforce fall across a broad spectrum of pay rates, with \$12.83 per hour as the median. The lower quartile would take \$10.18 or less, and the upper quartile desires \$17.59 per hour or more.

The determinations for these two segments of the workforce have a larger statistical variance than that for the underemployed.

**FACTORS AFFECTING JOB DESIRABILITY**  
**THE BLUE RIDGE REGION LABOR SHED**  
**63,200 TOTAL AVAILABLE WORKERS**

In an effort to identify those factors most important to the Blue Ridge Region’s total available 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. Please note this table is reflective of the 63,200 total available workers in the Blue Ridge Region, which includes the underemployed, the unemployed actively seeking work and those considering re-entering the workforce.

Factor	5 Extremely Important	4 Very Important	3 Important	2 Somewhat Important	1 Not Important
Salary	46%	38%	13%	2%	1%
Location	36%	35%	21%	4%	4%
Insurance Benefits	70%	18%	8%	2%	2%
Retirement Benefits	63%	21%	9%	4%	3%
Paid Sick Leave & Holidays	51%	29%	14%	5%	1%
Physical Working Environment	40%	38%	17%	2%	3%
On-Site Child Care	13%	8%	12%	12%	55%
Paid Training Programs	28%	43%	23%	4%	2%
Flexible Work Schedule	36%	26%	26%	9%	3%
Opportunity for Advancement	51%	33%	13%	2%	1%
Financial Stability of the Company	73%	22%	3%	1%	1%
Reputation of the Company	53%	28%	14%	3%	2%
Size of the Company	10%	15%	37%	18%	20%



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 Blue Ridge Region consider paid training programs to be unimportant in their evaluation of new job opportunities.

Factor	Extremely Important
Financial Stability of the Company	73%
Insurance Benefits	70%
Retirement Benefits	63%
Reputation of the Company	53%
Paid Sick Leave & Holidays	51%
Opportunity for Advancement	51%
Salary	46%
Physical Working Environment	40%
Location	36%
Flexible Work Schedule	36%
Paid Training Programs	28%
On-Site Child Care	13%
Size of the Company	10%



## EMPLOYERS' VIEWS OF THE THE BLUE RIDGE REGION TOTAL WORKFORCE

In developing a profile of existing workers in the Blue Ridge 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 following table reflects the various methods used to recruit workers in the Blue Ridge Region and the percent of employers utilizing that method. Many use more than one method, therefore, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

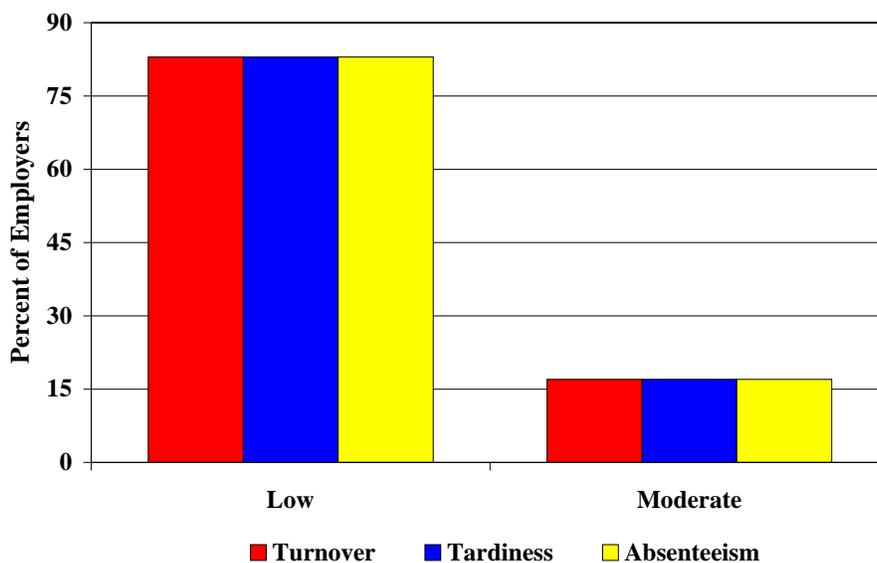
Recruiting Method	% of Employers
Newspaper	59%
Word of Mouth	59%
Staffing Service	41%
State Agency	29%
Internet	24%
Recruiters	24%

Various other recruitment methods, each with less than 12% representation, were reported by the employers. These include, among others, walk-ins and referrals.

Employers interviewed were asked to provide subjective views of their workers, in addition to objective and quantitative measurements of labor productivity, availability, attitudes, and costs. Additionally, 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 Blue Ridge Region. Of those employers who had operations elsewhere, 94% stated that their Blue Ridge Region 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, and turnover 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 Blue Ridge Region.

**PERCENT OF EMPLOYERS RATING  
THE BLUE RIDGE REGION TOTAL WORKFORCE**



Also included in this correlation is the degree of substance abuse found in the workplace. In the Blue Ridge Region, 94% 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, 100% of the employers in the Blue Ridge Region rated the productivity of the workforce as "Good" to "Excellent". Worker reliability and attitudes received high marks from 94% of the employers.

**PERCENT OF EMPLOYERS RATING  
THE BLUE RIDGE REGION TOTAL WORKFORCE**

Category	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Worker Productivity	35%	65%	0%	0%
Worker Reliability and Attitudes	41%	53%	6%	0%

The educational competencies of employees are additional factors used to evaluate an area's labor force. In general, the Blue Ridge Region employers rated the local educational providers as "Good" and gave the following ratings to their employees relative to competency in reading, writing, and calculations.

**PERCENT OF EMPLOYERS RATING  
THE BLUE RIDGE REGION TOTAL WORKFORCE**

Category	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Reading/Writing Competency	0%	71%	29%	0%
Calculations Competency	0%	69%	31%	0%



A common employer complaint relates to the shortage of skilled and technical workers. The availability of these workers in the Blue Ridge 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, 71% considered skilled worker availability to be “Excellent” or “Good”, while 29% considered it to be “Fair”. The availability of technical workers in the labor shed was rated “Excellent” or “Good” by 71% of the interviewed companies and “Fair” by 23%.

The following table provides a composite portrait of employers’ experiences with and opinions of workers in the Blue Ridge 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 BLUE RIDGE REGION TOTAL WORKFORCE**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Poor</b>
Availability of Skilled Workers	24%	47%	29%	0%
Availability of Unskilled Workers	31%	56%	13%	0%
Availability of Professional Workers	19%	50%	25%	6%
Availability of Technical Workers	18%	53%	23%	6%
Worker Productivity	35%	65%	0%	0%
Worker Reliability and Attitudes	41%	53%	6%	0%
Reading/Writing Competency	0%	71%	29%	0%
Calculations Competency	0%	69%	31%	0%
Entry Level Skills	6%	65%	29%	0%



## COMPARISONS OF EMPLOYERS RATINGS

### TOTAL WORKFORCE

#### The Blue Ridge Region 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 competency; calculations competency; 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 Blue Ridge Region 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, 35% of the Blue Ridge Region employers rated “Worker Productivity” as “Excellent”. Of all the locations surveyed during the last eighteen months, the “Median” for that rating is 33%, and the “Highest” rating recorded in the “Excellent” category is 54%. The same comparison applies for each of the other factors. In these charts, the Blue Ridge Region is shown as “Labor Shed”.



**WORKER PRODUCTIVITY**

Excellent		Good		Fair		Poor	
Highest	54%	Highest	76%	Highest	22%	Highest	10%
<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>0%</b>
Median	33%	Median	57%	Median	10%	Median	2%

**WORKER RELIABILITY AND ATTITUDES**

Excellent		Good		Fair		Poor	
Highest	50%	Highest	71%	Highest	34%	Highest	11%
<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>0%</b>
Median	24%	Median	54%	Median	19%	Median	4%

**READING/WRITING COMPETENCY**

Excellent		Good		Fair		Poor	
Highest	40%	Highest	80%	Highest	56%	Highest	13%
<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>0%</b>
Median	12%	Median	59%	Median	22%	Median	7%



### CALCULATIONS COMPETENCY

Excellent		Good		Fair		Poor	
Highest	33%	Highest	86%	Highest	64%	Highest	15%
<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>0%</b>
Median	10%	Median	57%	Median	25%	Median	9%

### ENTRY LEVEL SKILLS

Excellent		Good		Fair		Poor	
Highest	26%	Highest	81%	Highest	45%	Highest	13%
<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>0%</b>
Median	10%	Median	56%	Median	30%	Median	7%

### AVAILABILITY OF SKILLED WORKERS

Excellent		Good		Fair		Poor	
Highest	19%	Highest	66%	Highest	51%	Highest	53%
<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>0%</b>
Median	5%	Median	44%	Median	33%	Median	15%



**AVAILABILITY OF UNSKILLED WORKERS**

Excellent		Good		Fair		Poor	
Highest	44%	Highest	81%	Highest	38%	Highest	16%
<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>0%</b>
Median	26%	Median	50%	Median	22%	Median	6%

**AVAILABILITY OF PROFESSIONAL WORKERS**

Excellent		Good		Fair		Poor	
Highest	26%	Highest	60%	Highest	58%	Highest	44%
<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>6%</b>
Median	6%	Median	32%	Median	39%	Median	17%

**AVAILABILITY OF TECHNICAL WORKERS**

Excellent		Good		Fair		Poor	
Highest	30%	Highest	65%	Highest	76%	Highest	54%
<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>Labor Shed</b>	<b>6%</b>
Median	6%	Median	34%	Median	39%	Median	15%



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



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 \$12.13 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 \$9.16 per hour or less, the median \$10.72 or less, and the highest desired pay rate was \$12.96 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>
\$12.13 or Less	\$9.16 or Less	\$10.72 or Less	\$12.96 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 \$22.47 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 \$16.91 or more, the median \$20.37 or more, and the highest was \$25.54 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>
\$22.47 or More	\$16.91 or More	\$20.37 or More	\$25.54 or More



The following charts compare the percentages of underemployed workers in the Blue Ridge 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 Blue Ridge Region is referred to as “labor shed”.

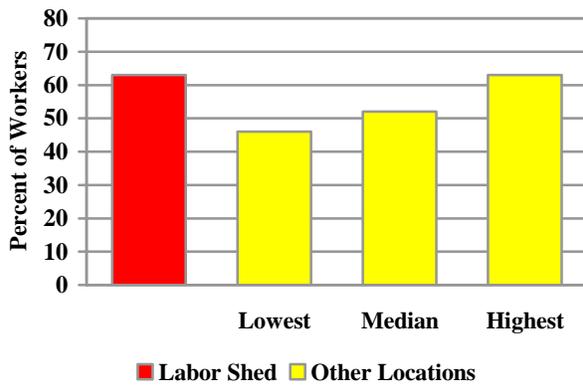
The experience charts are followed by skills charts, which compare the percentages of underemployed workers in the Blue Ridge Region who possess various types of employment skills with the percentages of underemployed workers in locations surveyed over the past eighteen months who possess the same skills.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



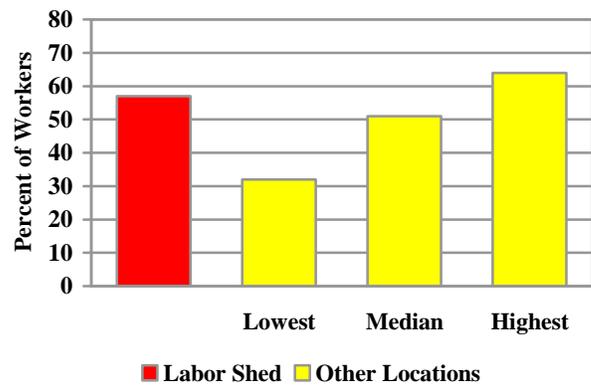
## COMPARISON OF EXPERIENCE UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS

**The Blue Ridge Region /  
Locations Surveyed Over the Past 18 Months**

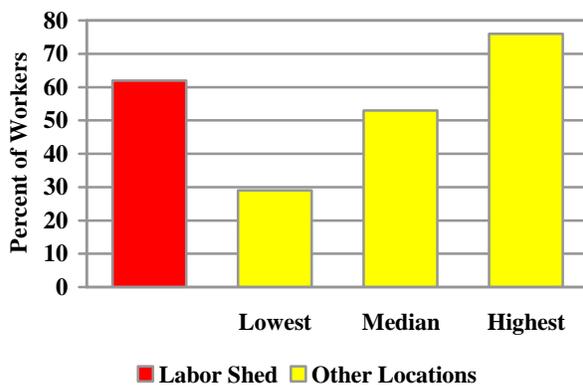
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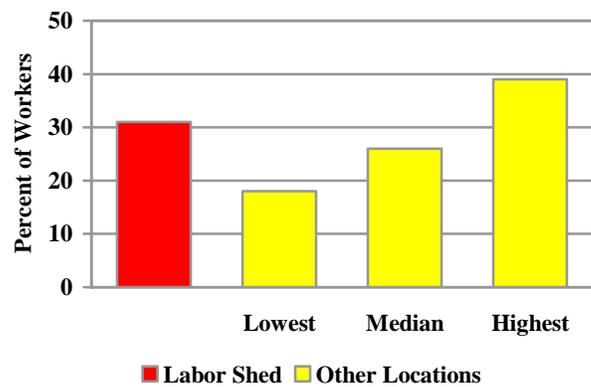
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TRANSPORTATION**



**MANUFACTURING / ASSEMBLY /  
FABRICATION**



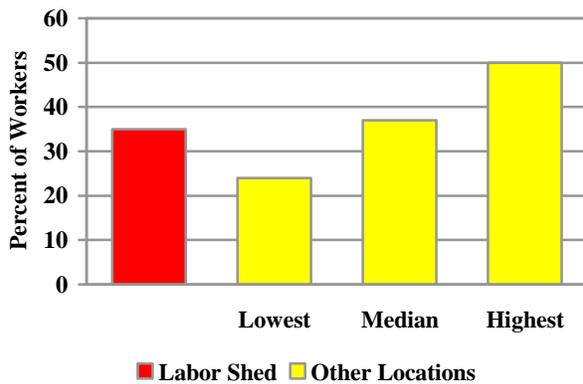
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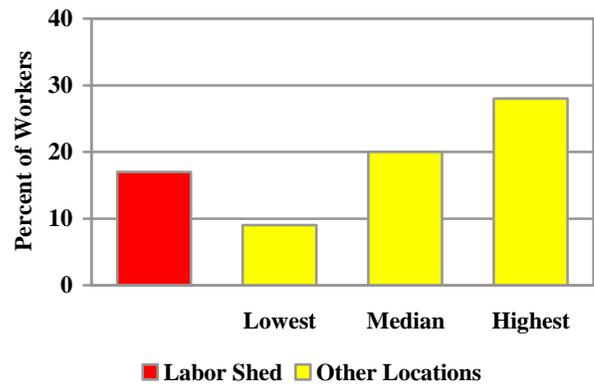
**COMPARISON OF EXPERIENCE  
UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS**

**The Blue Ridge Region /  
Locations Surveyed Over the Past 18 Months**

**MAINTENANCE /  
INSTALLATION / REPAIR**



**CALL CENTER**



**INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY /  
TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

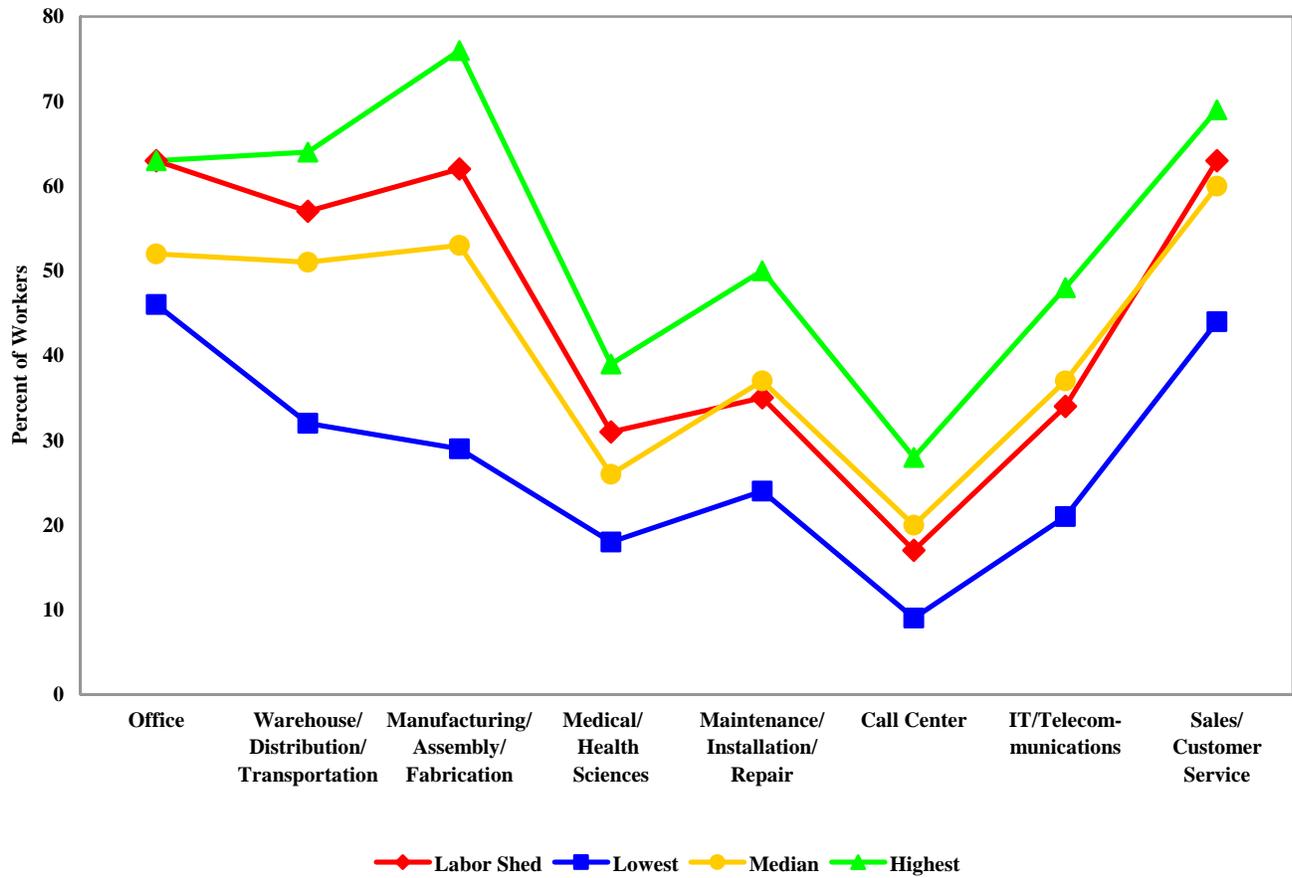


**SALES /  
CUSTOMER SERVICE**



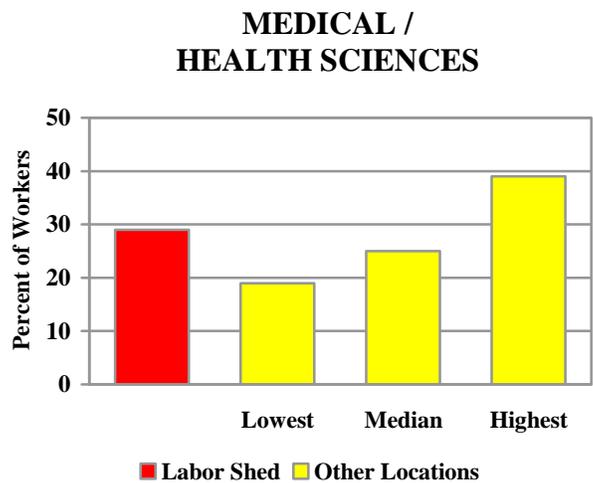
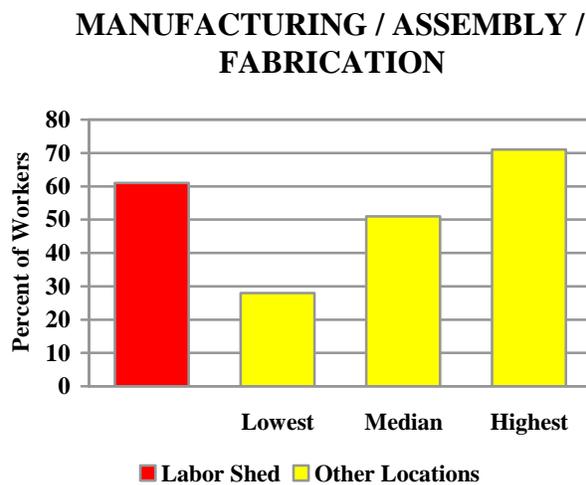
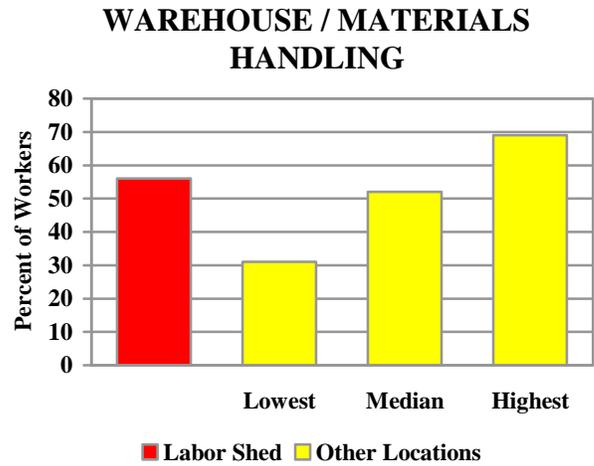
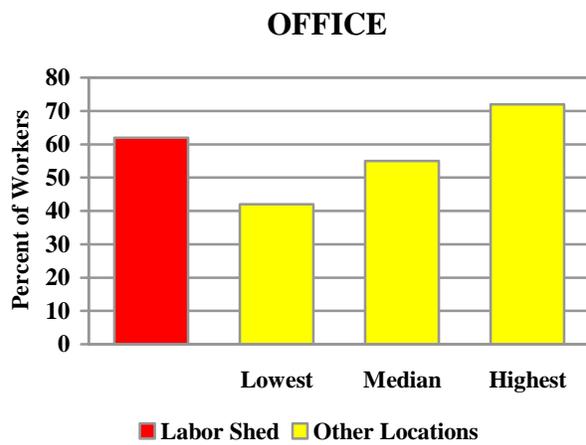
**SUMMARY COMPARISON OF EXPERIENCE  
UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS**

**The Blue Ridge Region /  
Locations Surveyed Over the Past 18 Months**



## COMPARISON OF SKILLS UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS

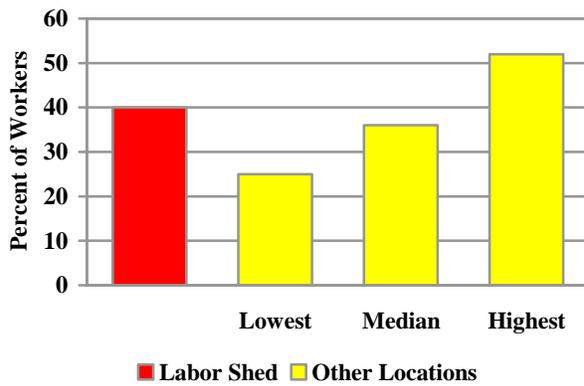
**The Blue Ridge Region /  
Locations Surveyed Over the Past 18 Months**



## COMPARISON OF SKILLS UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS

**The Blue Ridge Region /  
Locations Surveyed Over the Past 18 Months**

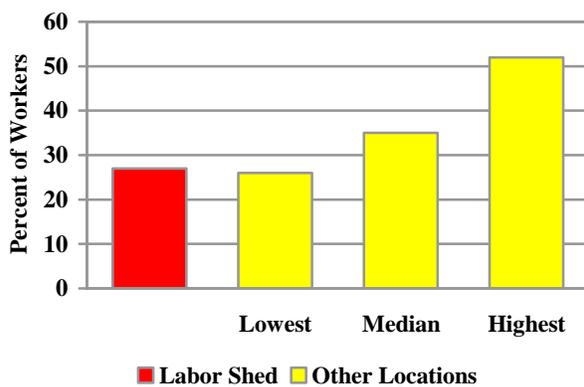
**MAINTENANCE /  
INSTALLATION / REPAIR**



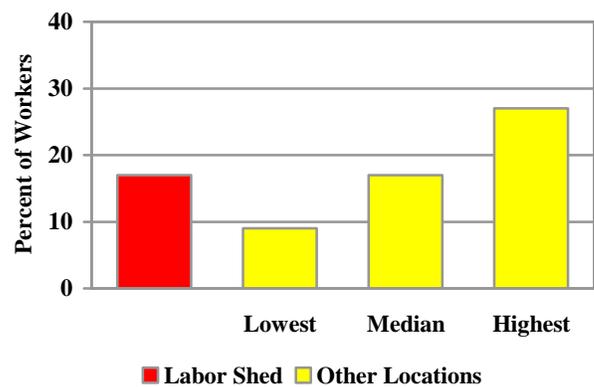
**TECHNICIAN / QUALITY  
ASSURANCE**



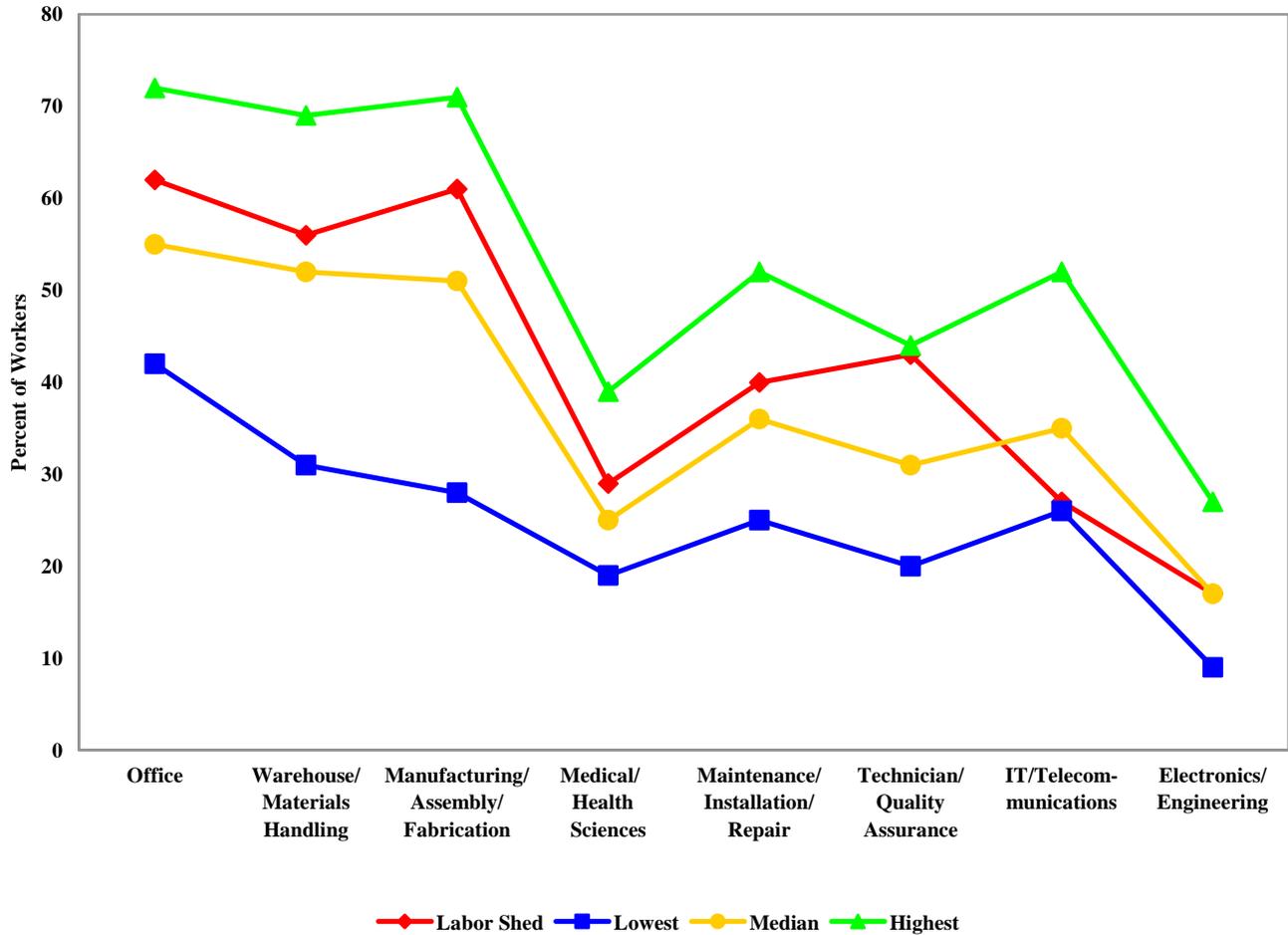
**INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY /  
TELECOMMUNICATIONS**



**ELECTRONICS / ENGINEERING**



**SUMMARY COMPARISON OF SKILLS  
UNDEREMPLOYED WORKERS**  
**The Blue Ridge Region /  
Locations Surveyed Over the Past 18 Months**



## CLOSING REMARKS

The foregoing report represents an assessment of the underemployment that exists in the Blue Ridge 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 Blue Ridge Region 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 Blue Ridge 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 Blue Ridge Region Civilian Workforce .....</b>	<b>398,900</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>298</b>





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