



# RETENTION OF DIGITAL MARKETING AND TECH ROLES IN CANADA

FALL 2022

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## INTRODUCTION

With many experiencing a rise in their costs of living, long-lasting job dissatisfaction, and changing safety standards, many Canadians in digital roles are leaving their jobs for other opportunities. This period, beginning early in 2021, has been dubbed “The Great Resignation”. To learn more about how companies have been affected and how they are pivoting to increase employee retention in digital roles, The Digital Marketing Sector Council ran a survey, sponsored by Innovate BC, to obtain data from 2,000+ participants across Canada. They surveyed companies ranging from solopreneurs to large businesses with over 500 employees. With the recent onset of layoffs within large organizations, there may be more to learn about employee retention that has not been uncovered in this particular study.

## ABOUT THE DIGITAL MARKETING SECTOR COUNCIL

The Digital Marketing Sector Council is made up of over 2,100 stakeholders across Canada. These individuals are business owners, hiring managers and HR professionals, all with a vested interest in training and hiring qualified digital marketing professionals. On an annual basis, we survey these stakeholders to ensure we are listening to the industry when it comes to; skills gaps that exist, training expectations and availability for digital marketing job candidates, and retention practices for digital marketing professionals.



## **PURPOSE OF STUDY**

The objective of this study was to gather data surrounding the climate in which Canadian companies are currently facing and their actions around employee retention within digital roles, the reasoning behind their employee's decision to leave, what they are implementing to retain employees, and how they are attracting diverse hires and supporting them. Based on the data collected from the survey, the study provides valuable insights into how Canadian companies are being affected by the Great Resignation and what they are doing in order to overcome this downturn.

## **METHODS TO GATHER DATA**

To obtain the data, The Digital Marketing Sector Council surveyed over 2,000 participants in Canada's main industries including Agriculture, Advanced Materials & Advanced Manufacturing, Clean Tech, Consumer Retail, Digital Applications & ICT, Education, Financial Services, Food & Beverage, Forestry, Life Sciences & Advanced Health, Mining, Marketing, Software & Computer Systems, Tourism, Culture, Sports & Entertainment, and Transportation.

The survey focused on the retention of employees in digital roles, what companies are actively doing to hire for digital roles, which tactics are being implemented to retain employees in digital roles, the primary reasoning for these employee's departure, and how remote or hybrid options are affecting employee culture. The questions in the survey were designed to focus on the challenges in employee retention that Canadian companies are facing, how they are adapting, and what changes can be implemented to stifle any residual effects of mass employee departure.



## FINDINGS

- The majority of participants, 63.9%, are finding a downward trend in the average amount of time an employee spends with the company.
- 16.54% of participants responded that emphasizing company and workplace culture is a top priority, 35.94% responded that it's a priority, and 33.27% said it is somewhat of a priority.
- 75.71% of participants are not implementing any new practices to retain diverse hires.
- Within those who are implementing alternate measures to retain diverse hires, common themes included increasing salary and/or bonus amounts, more attractive benefit packages, improving the overall morale of the workplace, and providing additional, specialized training.
- The most common primary source of finding new employees from participants is through a recruiter, at 30.19%, next to LinkedIn; 23.9%, then Indeed; 21.96%, with career postings on the company website at 14.53%, and the remaining participants using internal postings.
- Out of the participants who are finding it difficult to retain new hires, 25.46% said that funding for HR resources would be the most beneficial for support, and 21.09% said that workforce reskilling and training would be the most beneficial.
- 30.43% of respondents say the average time an employee stays with the company is 1-2 years.
- When asked about the reasoning in which employees have left the company in the last two years, 21.94% cited it was for a different role within a similar industry. 21.33% cited increased pay or benefits at another company as the reasoning for departure. Other top reasons were employees starting their own company or venture, leaving for remote or flexible work options at another company, and leaving for higher level positions at another company.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. In order to combat the downward trend of employee retention in digital roles, employers should continue to focus on employee satisfaction by ensuring they remain competitive in key areas such as pay, benefits, time and location flexibility, individualized training, and overall morale.
2. Employers should prioritize funding for HR resources in order to provide employees in digital roles with ongoing educational tools to support them and ultimately prolong their employment.
3. More effort needs to be put in by leadership to implement Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) practices to employ and retain diverse employees in digital roles.

## REPORT LIMITATIONS

A limited number of hiring professionals were surveyed across Canada, as a result, the data and findings are not exhaustive due to limited sample size.

## IMPLEMENTATION

In order to retain employees in digital roles and attempt to reduce the effects of The Great Resignation, there needs to be greater resources available for employees to be able to continually progress their skills. Employers should also work to strengthen their methods of diverse employee hiring and retention, in order to promote a well-rounded workplace environment. By encouraging employees in digital roles to always be working toward a greater goal, employees are more likely to extend their time with an organization as they remain challenged and invested in their future.

The majority of respondents are seeing a downward trend in their employee retention, with 30 per cent seeing their employees leave within the 1-2 year mark. By encouraging investment and being strategic about the retention of employees in digital roles, employers will be able to save time and money as it relates to turnover and training costs, as well as improving workplace morale.

## CONCLUSION

The study provided data that clearly displays the downward trend companies are seeing in the retention of employees in digital roles. The study guided us to providing insightful recommendations in order to promote employee retention in digital roles. The data obtained from this study also highlights the shortcomings of small and large organizations when it comes to proactively hiring and retaining diverse employees in digital roles. These results can be used by management teams to inform strategies that contribute to an overall more attractive working experience for employees in digital roles.







**STUDY  
FINDINGS**

## **DEFINITIONS**

### **DEI PRACTICES**

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion practices are part of a strategic approach to creating a workplace environment that values equal opportunity.

### **TURNOVER**

The rate at which employees leave a workforce and are replaced.

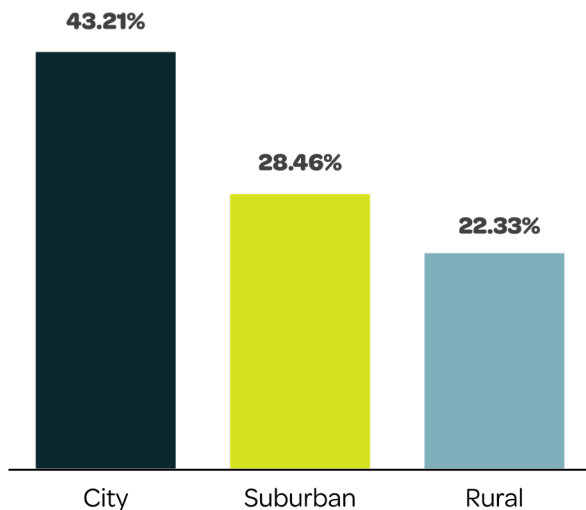
### **RETENTION**

In the context of employee retention is an organization's ability to prevent employee turnover.

## PARTICIPANTS BREAKDOWN

All survey respondents were located in Canada. 43.27% are located in suburban areas, 28.5% are located in rural areas, and 22.36% are located in cities. Those who were surveyed came from a wide range of industries across the country with no dominant industry. Industries include Agriculture (6.62%), Advanced Materials & Advanced Manufacturing (11.25%), Clean Tech (8.2%), Consumer Retail (9.89%), Digital Applications & ICT (13.22%), Education (9.85%), Financial Services (8.25%), Food & Beverage (6.19%), Forestry (4.31%), Life Sciences & Advanced Health (5.02%), Mining (4.36%), Marketing (2.02%), Software & Computer Systems (1.5%), Tourism (0.55%), Culture (0.84%), Sports & Entertainment (1.5%), and Transportation (0.61%).

### CHOOSE THE BEST OPTION THAT DESCRIBES YOUR GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION?



### WHAT SIZE IS YOUR COMPANY?



The respondents came from varying business sizes with 32.82% being small (25-99 employees), 22.32% micro (2-24 employees), 24.29% medium (100-499 employees), 18.57% large (500+ employees), and only 1.97% solopreneurs. The extensive range of the respondents allowed for a variety of results and showed similarities between industries for the same area of interest (retention of digital roles).

## THE CURRENT RETENTION LANDSCAPE

To get a better understanding of the respondents current retention of employees in digital roles, we asked if they were seeing a downward trend in the average time an employee works at their company. The majority of respondents, 63.9%, agreed that they were noticing a downward trend. When asked about the average time an employee stays with the company, 30.43% said 1-2 years, 25.32% said 3-4 years, and 16.93% said 2-3 years. Overall, the results displayed that the largest group of participants are only seeing a 1-2 year retention of employees, and that trend is currently on the decline.



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## HIRING AND RETENTION PRACTICES

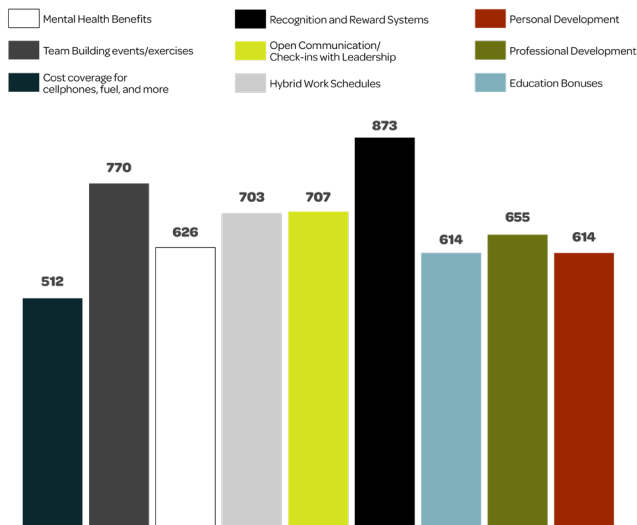
Participants were asked to select which digital roles they are having the most trouble hiring for. The largest group of participants, 16.4%, said Business Management, then HR roles at 15.66%, Operations at 14.2%, and Digital Marketing at 13.5%. Other highly selected roles were those in Administration, IT, Customer Service, and Product or Service Development. To gain more insight into the current landscape of effort being put into employee retention by Canadian businesses, participants were asked to select all of the tactics they are currently implementing to retain employees. The most popular tactic selected, selected 873 times by participants, was a Recognition and Rewards Systems, with the next most commonly chosen tactic, selected by 770 participants, being Team Building Events/Exercises.

Participants were then asked to select what would support their company retaining new hires in digital roles. 25.46% selected funding for HR resources (i.e. DEI tools, professional development, cost coverage for personal equipment, and team building events), 21.09% selected workforce reskilling and training, 19.13% selected funding or access to healthcare plans, and 17.96% noted working condition improvements.

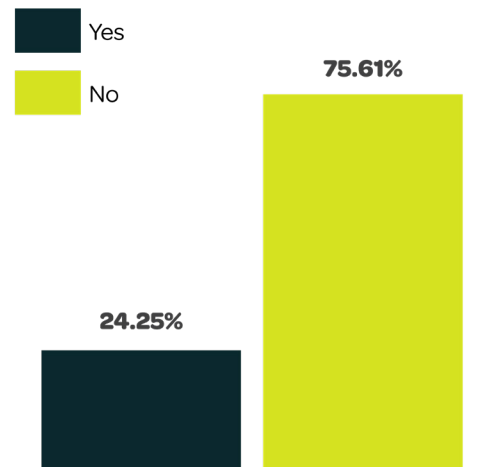
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**When asked if the participants had implemented anything different to retain diverse hires, 75.61% responded no.**

### WHAT ARE YOU IMPLEMENTING TO RETAIN HIRES? SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.



### ARE YOU IMPLEMENTING ANYTHING DIFFERENT TO RETAIN DIVERSE HIRES?



When asked if the participants had implemented anything different to retain diverse hires, 75.61% responded no. Of those that had implemented unique techniques to retain diverse hires, common themes included increases of bonuses and salary, specialized and individual training, stronger emphasis on a positive work environment, and motivational incentives to keep employees engaged for a prolonged period of time.



## CURRENT FOCUS ON WORKPLACE CULTURE, EMPLOYEE GROWTH AND EMPLOYEE INVESTMENT

With 16.32% of participants stating that a higher level position at another company was a primary reason for employee departures, further insight was required regarding the current growth opportunities within the participants' workplaces. When asked if their companies had employee growth opportunities in place 95.12% said yes.

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**To understand the current practices in place, participants were asked how much their businesses emphasize company and workplace culture. Nearly half of all participants, 46.42%, responded that workplace culture is either very little or just somewhat emphasized in their business.**

To understand the current practices in place, participants were asked how much their businesses emphasize company and workplace culture. Nearly half of all participants, 46.42%, responded that workplace culture is either very little or just somewhat emphasized in their business. Over half of participants, 54.48% cited that they have experienced difficulty in maintaining and building company culture due to hybrid and remote work models. When asked to select which tactic participants would be most likely to implement, 21.33% said they would consider implementing contests/polls/quizzes done virtually tied to company culture to increase overall morale. 16.69% said they would consider implementing frequent virtual team socials (i.e. Zoom meetings with games, general socializing, etc), and 16.22% said they would consider implementing frequent in-person team socials (game evenings, team building events, etc).

## IMPROVEMENTS TO BE MADE

We asked participants to which degree they would be willing to adjust their business model in order to combat the current state of resignations of those in Digital Marketing and Tech roles within their business. When asked how much they would be willing to adjust their business model when it came to the following areas: flexible work environments, clear guidelines for work/life balance, increased benefits or perks, and an emphasis on company culture and connection, the highest number of participants, 17.49%, were only willing to adjust their business model 10-15%. This indicates that there is room for improvement when it comes to the willingness some Canadian business owners have in making changes within their structure in order to be more accommodating to new digital focused hires.



## CONCLUSION

Results gathered from this survey clearly indicate that the majority of Canadian companies who participated in this survey, are currently experiencing a downward trend in employee retention for those in digital-focused marketing and tech roles. While a high percentage of participants cited workplace morale and culture as a reasoning for employee departure, nearly half of respondents admitted that they do not emphasize this within their businesses. When given the selection of tactics participants would be most willing to implement in their business, the top rated response was funding for HR resources to aid in DEI tools, professional development, cost coverage for personal equipment, and team building events. To address this, companies should be planning and allocating additional funding allotted to these areas in order to better foster and grow employees while encouraging longer term employment.



**While a high percentage of participants cited workplace morale and culture as a reasoning for employee departure, nearly half of respondents admitted that they do not emphasize this within their businesses.**

As increased work flexibility, including hybrid and remote working conditions, are highlighted within the survey results as being valuable to new and future hires, Canadian businesses are continuing to shift from previous practices in order to adapt to the current landscape for employees in digital roles. By promoting flexible and remote work schedules, businesses are able to remain more competitive in the hiring space and improve their overall employee satisfaction.

Participants cited increased pay and/or benefits, remote or flexible work options, and opportunities for growth as top reasons they have seen employees leave for another company within the past two years. The study provided valuable information to business owners and professionals in regards to what employees are prioritizing in the workplace and how businesses can adapt to retain long-term employees.

Overall, this study found insightful results regarding the retention of marketing and tech roles within Canadian businesses. The shifting expectations of working conditions, compensation, and company morale are key points of emphasis. When it comes to employee retention and hiring practices, stakeholders should allocate funding to the key areas that contribute to employee satisfaction as outlined in the results of this survey. The study's results clearly indicate that many of Canada's businesses are seeing a downward trend in retention of employees in digital focused roles, and there are tangible actions that businesses can take to better ensure the lifecycle of these employees going forward.



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## **ABOUT INNOVATE BC**

Innovate BC helps foster innovation in B.C. so that British Columbians in all regions of the province can benefit from a thriving, sustainable and inclusive innovation economy. A Crown Agency of British Columbia, Innovate BC funds and delivers programs that support the growth of the B.C. economy by helping companies start and scale, train talent that meets labour market needs, and encourage technology development, commercialization and adoption.

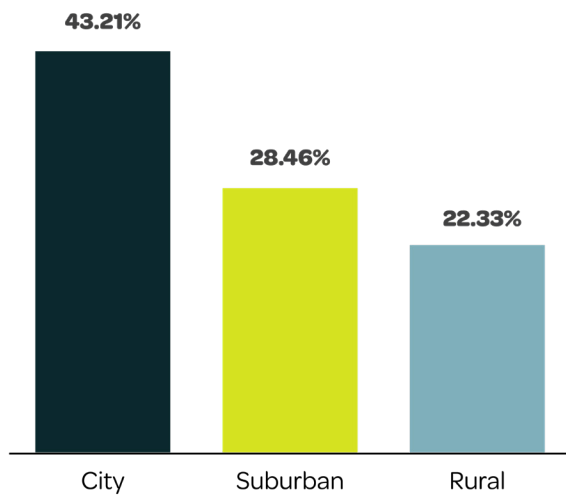
Learn more about Innovate BC at [www.innovatebc.ca](http://www.innovatebc.ca)



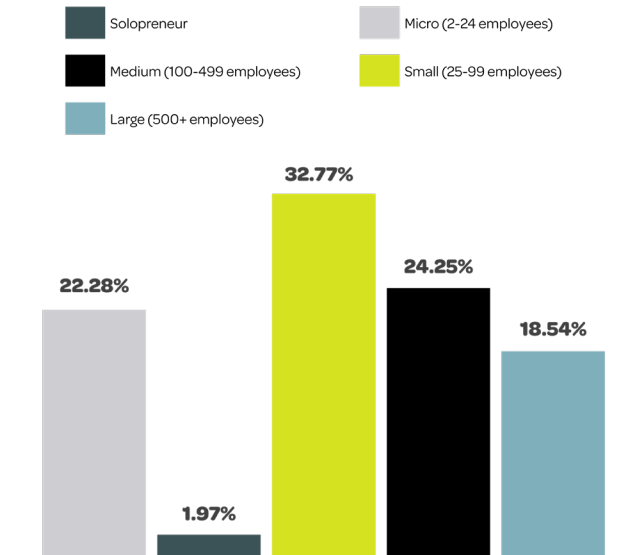


## APPENDIX A - SURVEY DATA INFOGRAPHICS

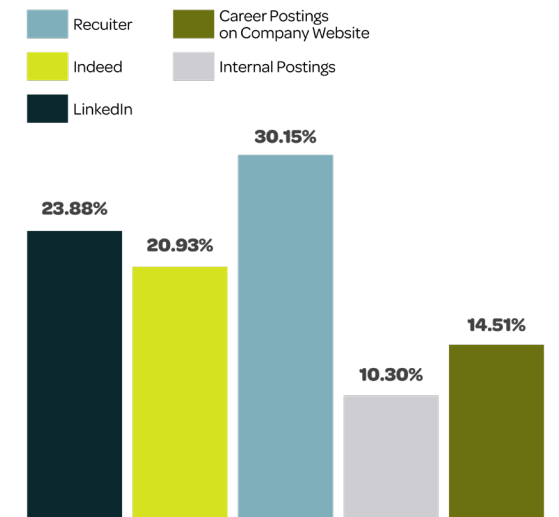
## CHOOSE THE BEST OPTION THAT DESCRIBES YOUR GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION?



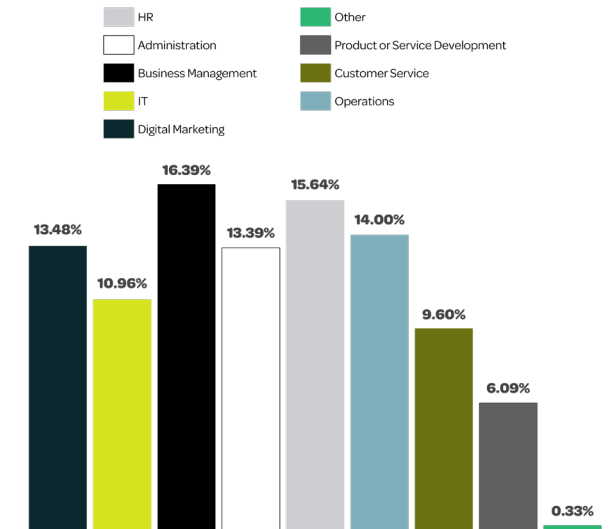
## WHAT SIZE IS YOUR COMPANY?



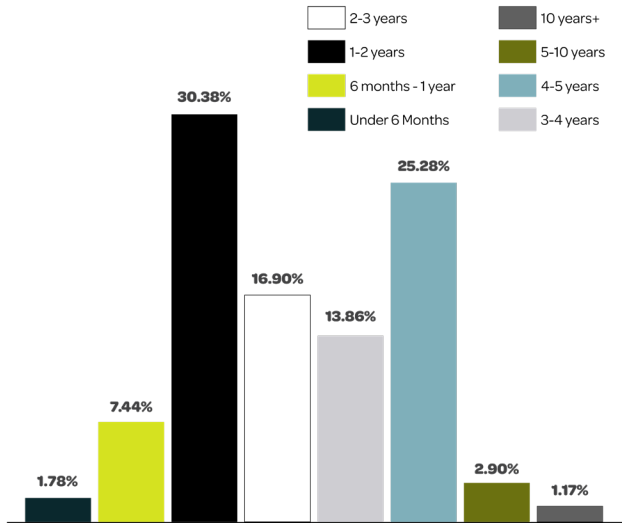
## WHICH METHOD DO YOU PRIMARILY USE TO FIND NEW EMPLOYEES TO HIRE?



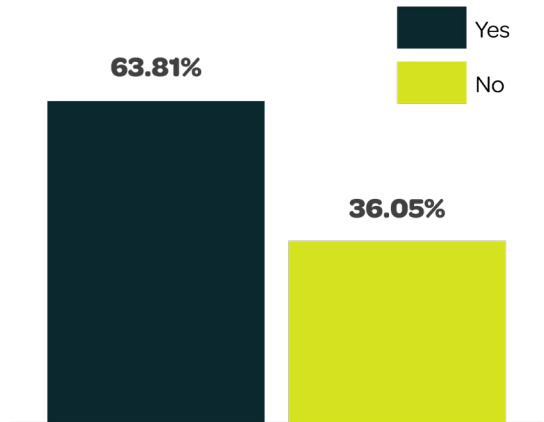
## WHAT ROLES DO YOU HAVE THE MOST TROUBLE FILLING?



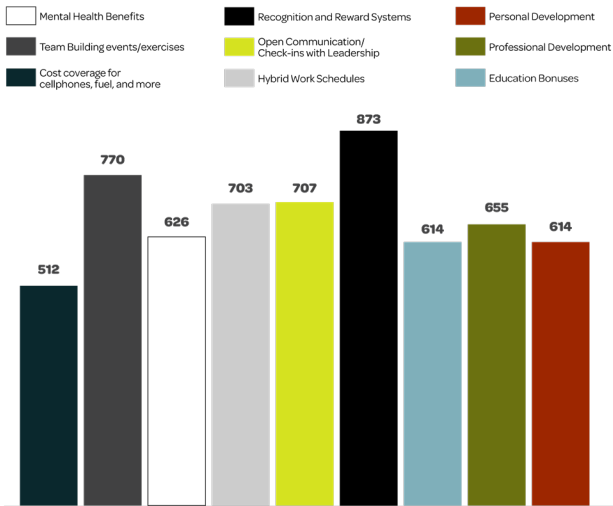
### WHAT IS THE AVERAGE TIME AN EMPLOYEE WORKS AT YOUR COMPANY?



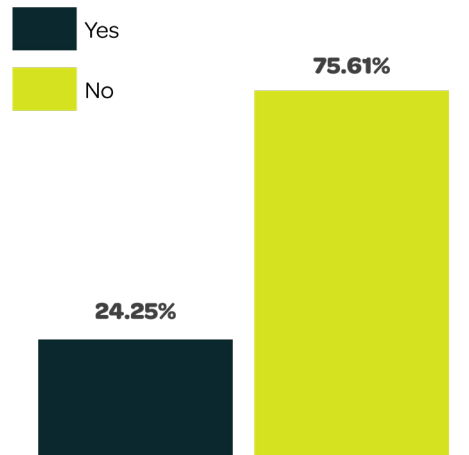
### ARE YOU NOTICING A DOWNWARD TREND IN THE AVERAGE TIME AN EMPLOYEE WORKS AT YOUR COMPANY, BASED ON THE CURRENT CONDITIONS?



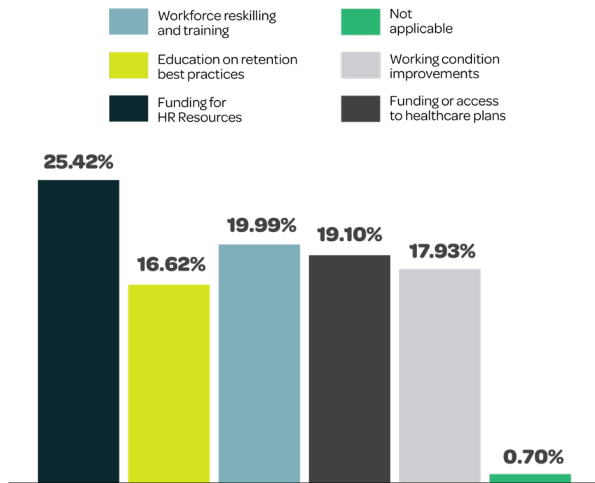
### WHAT ARE YOU IMPLEMENTING TO RETAIN HIRES? SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.



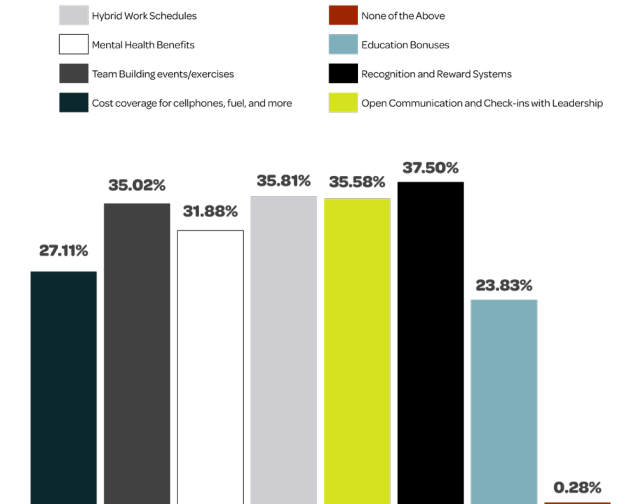
### ARE YOU IMPLEMENTING ANYTHING DIFFERENT TO RETAIN DIVERSE HIRES?



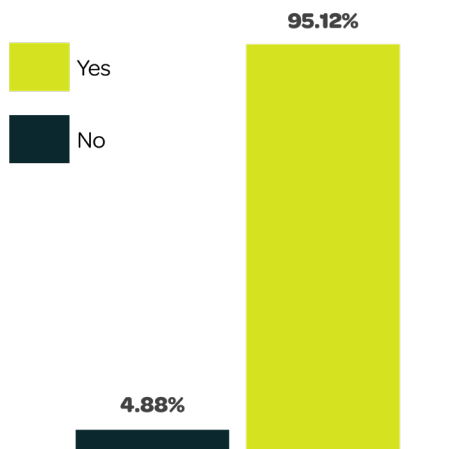
**IF YOU'RE HAVING DIFFICULTY RETAINING NEW HIRES, WHAT WOULD SUPPORT YOUR COMPANY IN THAT PROCESS?**



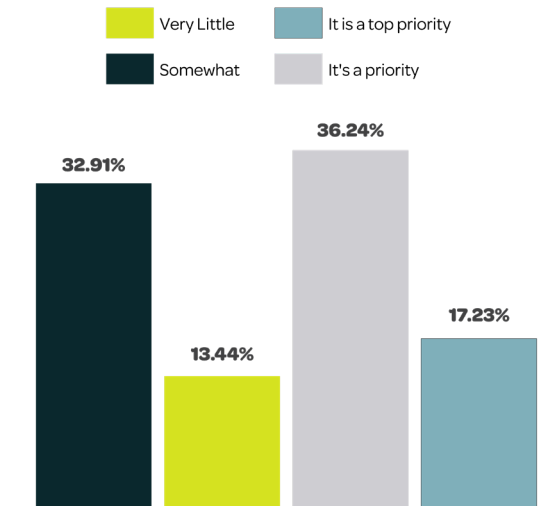
**WOULD YOU CONSIDER IMPLEMENTING ANY OF THE FOLLOWING PRACTICES TO RETAIN EMPLOYEES? SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.**



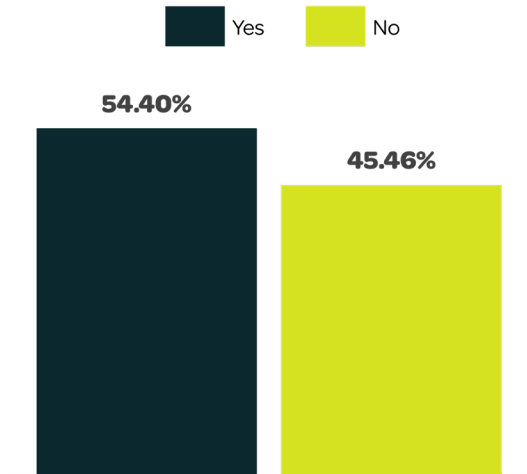
**DOES YOUR COMPANY HAVE EMPLOYEE GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES IN PLACE?**



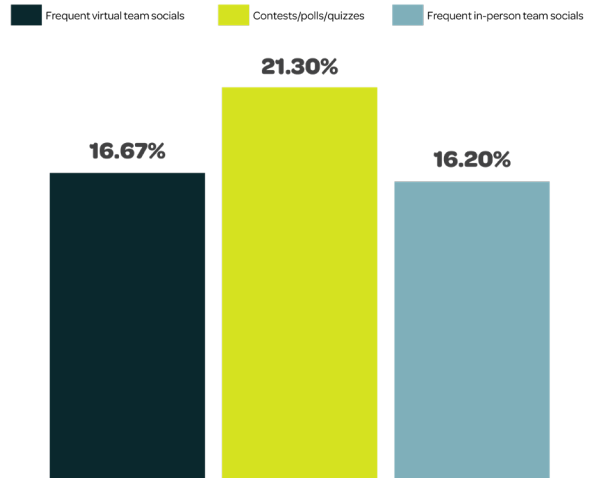
**HOW MUCH DOES YOUR BUSINESS EMPHASIZE COMPANY AND WORKPLACE CULTURE?**



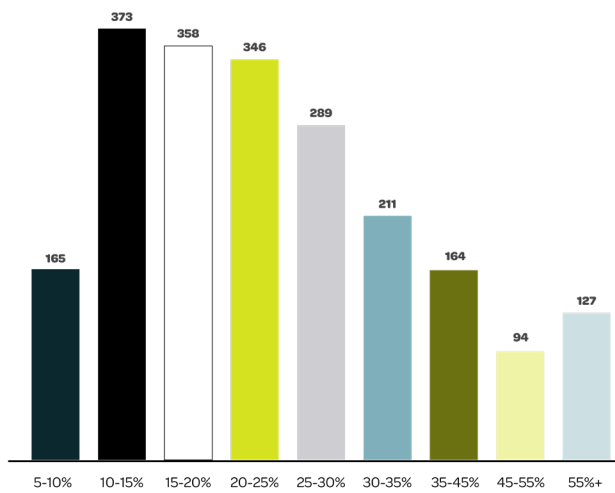
**HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED DIFFICULTY IN MAINTAINING AND BUILDING COMPANY CULTURE DUE TO HYBRID AND REMOTE WORK MODELS?**



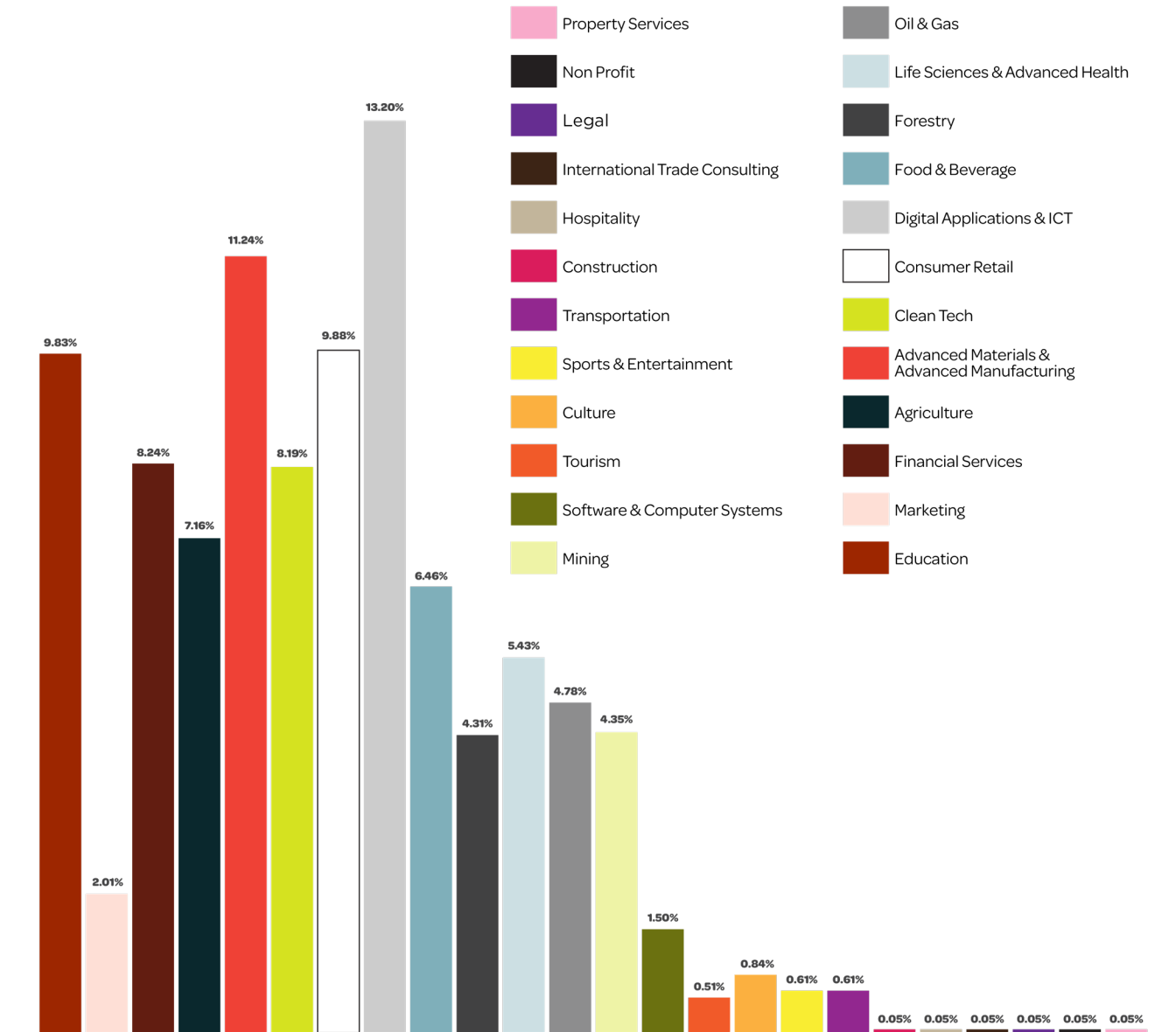
**IF YES TO THE PREVIOUS QUESTION, WHAT THINGS WOULD YOU CONSIDER IMPLEMENTING TO MAINTAIN AND BUILD COMPANY CULTURE?**



**IF YOU'VE EXPERIENCED A LARGE NUMBER OF EMPLOYEE RESIGNATIONS, TO WHAT DEGREE WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO ADJUST YOUR BUSINESS MODEL? CHANGES INCLUDE: FLEXIBLE WORK ENVIRONMENTS, CLEAR GUIDELINES FOR WORK/LIFE BALANCE, INCREASED BENEFITS OR PERKS, AND AN EMPHASIS ON COMPANY CULTURE & CONNECTION.**



# WHAT INDUSTRY IS YOUR BUSINESS IN?





## WHICH PROVINCE OR TERRITORY DO YOU HAVE THE MOST DIFFICULTY HIRING FROM?

