

ALGOMA'S  
IN DEMAND

# SKILLED TRADES



**AWIC** **ALGOMA WORKFORCE  
INVESTMENT CORPORATION**

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# ALGOMA'S IN DEMAND SKILLED TRADES

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An aging workforce in the skill trades is resulting in an increased rate of retirements in the trades. When combined with the issue of fewer people choosing to enter the trades as a career, the result is that demand for trades people will continue to exceed the supply in the coming years. This is a trend that is already impacting employers and will only worsen.

The trades that will continue to be the most in demand in Algoma are:

- Industrial Mechanic Millwright
- Automotive Service Technician
- Electrician – Construction and Maintenance
- Industrial Electrician
- Heavy Equipment Operator
- Steamfitter
- General Carpenter
- Plumber
- Truck and Coach Technician
- Welder

At the same time advances in technology means the complexity of the systems and equipment that trades people work on and the tools that they work with continue to evolve. As this trend continues employers what to have access to the best and brightest students who can continue to learn throughout there career and be adept at problem solving as the trades continue to advance.

Solutions to the skill trade shortages are not going to be easy, inexpensive or immediate. Most employers commented that in order to increase the supply of apprentices and tradespeople, changes have to be made in education. Employers felt that there should be better access to trade related courses in high school and all students, regardless of academic ability, should be encouraged consider obtaining a trade. However, 'a build it and they will come' approach will not be effective without a shift in perspective about careers in skill trades amongst students, parents, teachers and school administration.

*"There seems to be lack of interest, or perhaps awareness, by youth to seek the trades as a path of education and ultimately a career. The short coming will not change without encouragement from the elementary level which has the ability to tweak the interest."*

## BACKGROUND

Both qualitative and quantitative methodologies were used to produce this report. Data was gathered through a combination of online survey, in-person interviews and round table discussions with trades employers around the region.

Registration data for journey persons and apprentices was sourced from the Ontario College of Trades (OCoT) in April 2016 and July 2019. A summary of the data is included in this report and the full report and analysis can be found in AWIC's Algoma Skilled Trades – Review of OCoT Data, Apprenticeships & Journeypersons Activity Report. (The report can be accessed online at [awic.ca/reports](http://awic.ca/reports))

In addition, data found in this report is derived from both primary and secondary sources of data including:

- Statistics Canada's 2016 Census data;
- AWIC's 2019 Survey of Commercial Construction employers;
- Labour Force Survey data;
- Vicinity Jobs tracking;

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview on Algoma's in-demand skilled trades and the trends that are having an impact. We hope that readers find the information relevant and applicable in the current context of our rapidly changing labour market. We are confident that this report will help students, parents, teachers, school administration, government and employers understand the importance of the skill trades and the issues that need to be addressed

As with any report of this nature, the data included in the report represents a snapshot in time. Since the labour market in Algoma is always evolving, please use this report as guide to the overall trends that are impacting Algoma and visit [awic.ca](http://awic.ca) for the most up-to-date labour market research.

## ABOUT AWIC

The Algoma Workforce Investment Corporation (AWIC) is Algoma's Workforce Planning Board. AWIC's goal is to provide access to easy-to-understand, quality assured Labour Market Information (LMI) for the Algoma region that allows individuals to make decisions about future careers, employers to plan and find talent and community stakeholders to inform policy and support local workforces.

Operating as part of the Local Boards Network of Ontario, AWIC is one of 25 Workforce Planning Boards that are funded by the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLTSD). We thank our sponsor for their support in publishing this report and our community partners for their generous participation in the research.

# OVERVIEW OF ALGOMA'S LABOUR MARKET

## Sectors/Industries

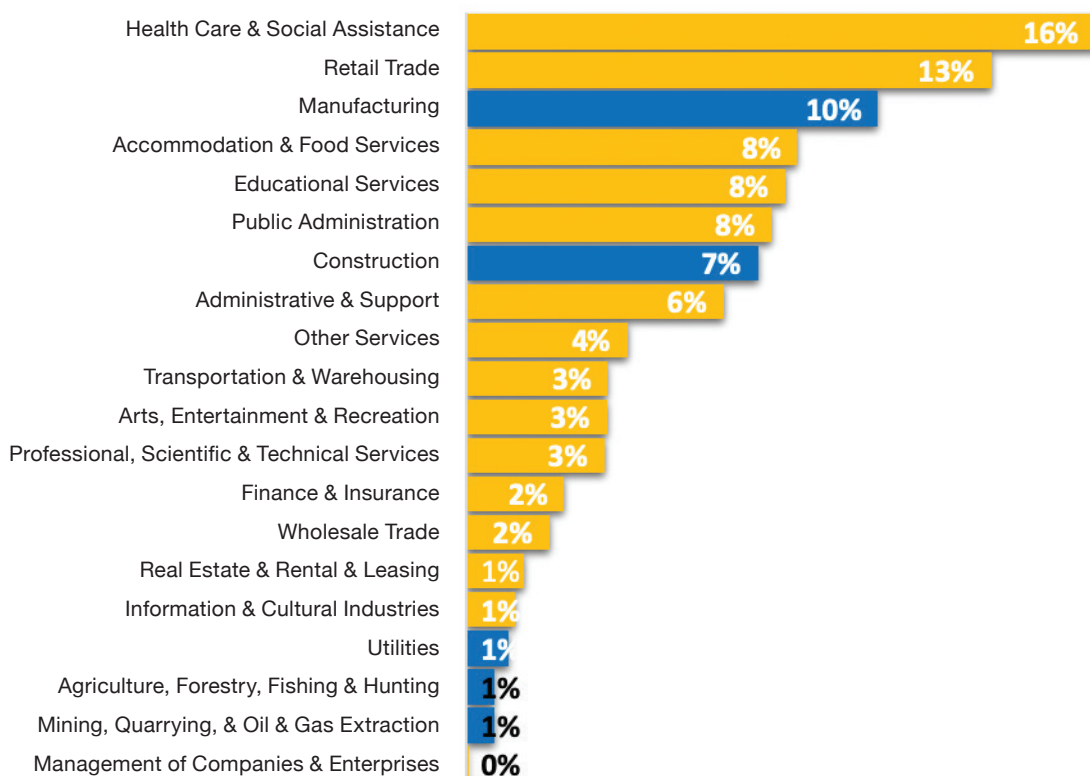
Employers are divided into broad types of sectors:

- Goods-Producing Sector – organizations that make things
- Services-Producing Sector – organizations that provide services

80% of jobs in Algoma are in the Services-Producing Sector – which includes Healthcare, Retail, Education and all levels of Government.

20% of jobs in Algoma are in the Goods-Producing Sector – which includes Manufacturing, Utilities and Construction. Most trades related jobs are in the Manufacturing and Construction sectors. Motive Power trades such as Automotive Service Technicians are included in the Other services sector.

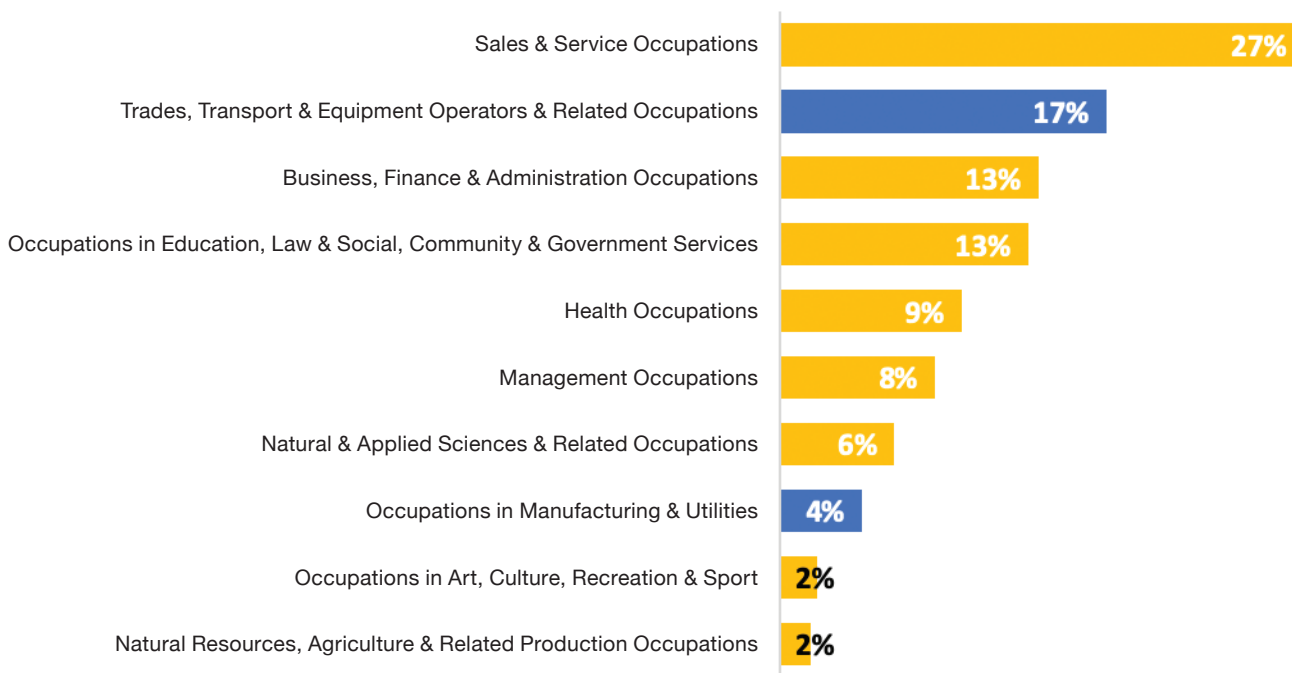
In the following charts the Goods-Producing sectors are shown in blue and the Services-Producing sectors are shown in yellow.



Statistics Canada 2016 Census

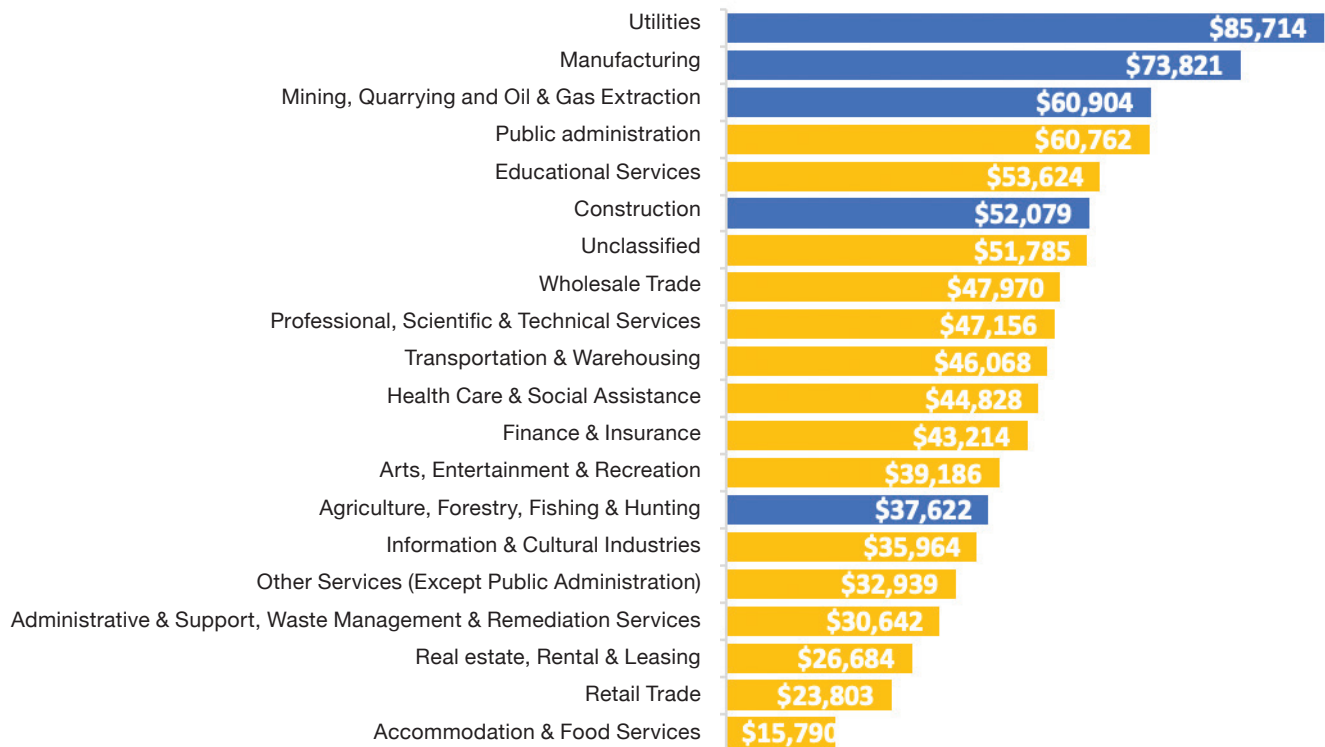
## Occupations

As you might expect, the ranking of Occupations (by job classification) follows the same trends as the Industry make up in Algoma. Most people work in Sales and Service occupations, which are also the top occupations in the Province. Trades, transport and equipment operators account for 17% of jobs in Algoma.



Statistics Canada 2016 Census

Comparing average wages within the various sectors, the highest paying sectors are consistently the Goods Producing Sectors. Once again, these are sectors employ skilled trades. The higher wages are a reflection of the specialized skills and training that are required and also a reflection of the demand for trades people.



Statistics Canada 2016 Census

## AN AGING POPULATION AND WORKFORCE

It is no secret that Algoma has an aging population, and this is having a significant impact on the entire workforce, including the skilled trades. The general population of Algoma is significantly older than the rest of the Province and is getting older every day.

Looking at the demographic trends in Algoma over the last 20 years, we can clearly see that the proportion those aged 15 years old and younger has decreased, while those 65 years of age and older has increased significantly.

MEDIAN AGE	
Ontario	41 years
Algoma	49 years

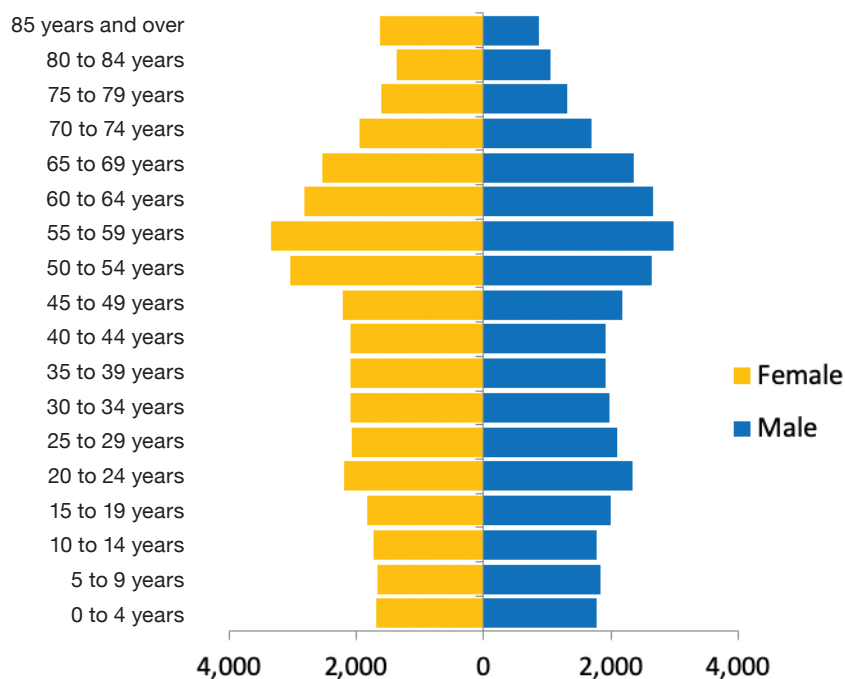
Statistics Canada 2016 Census

## ALGOMA REGION CENSUS TRENDS

	1996	2006	2016
<b>Total population count</b>	<b>125,455</b>	<b>117,460</b>	<b>114,095</b>
<b>% of the population aged 0 to 14 years</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>14%</b>
<b>% of the population aged 15 to 64 years</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>62%</b>
<b>% of the population aged 65 years &amp; over</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>24%</b>
<b>Median age</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Ratio of age groups 0 to 14 years to 65 years &amp; over</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>0.6</b>

Statistics Canada 1996, 2006 and 2016 Census

Where once we would describe the profiles of populations as ‘population pyramids’, Algoma’s current population profile more closely resembles a fire hydrant. Given that half the population is over the age of 49 and that life expectancy in Algoma is 76 years old for men and 82 years old for women, one can clearly see the significant proportion of the population moving towards those age ranges. Conversely, one can also see that the population has thinned out in years younger than 49.



Statistics Canada 2016 Census

## **The Impact of Aging Algoma's Labour Market**

In 2016, almost half of the working-age population in Algoma was 55 or over.

In 2016, people in Algoma age 55 and over accounted for 48% of the working age population (aged 15 and over), up from 43% in 2011 and noticeably higher than 20 years ago in 1996 when 30% of the working age population was over 55. By contrast, people aged 55 and over in Ontario accounted for 36% of the working age population in 2016.

Given the median age of Algoma's population is 49 years old, this proportion of the working age population will continue to grow. The increases among this group are mostly due to the first wave of baby boomers who began to turn 55 in 2001. In 2016, this cohort was between the ages of 51 and 70. By 2021, the baby boom cohort will have fully transitioned past the age of 55.

People 25 to 54 years of age are considered to be of core working-age because of their strong attachment to the labour market. Their population share in Algoma fell from 53% in 1996 to 46% in 2006 and to 40% in 2016. The share of the population aged 15 to 24 also declined from 1996 to 2016, from 17% to 12%.

## **Fewer are Entering than Exiting Algoma's Labour Market**

In 2016, there were 12,100 youths aged 15 to 24 in the Algoma and 19,700 aged 55 to 64, meaning there is a widening gap between the number of younger people entering the labour force and the number of people preparing to exit the labour market.

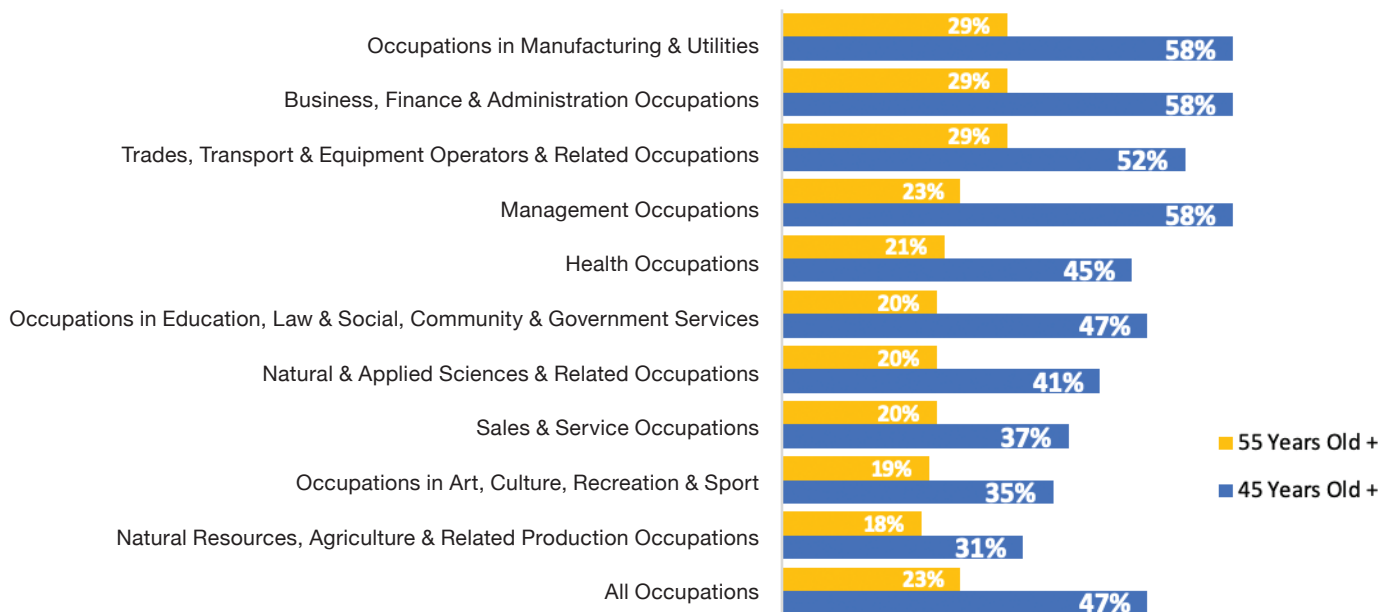
The ratio of youths to people 55 to 64 years old was 0.6 in 2016. This is below the replacement rate of 1. For comparison, 20 years ago in 1996, youth outnumbered the older demographic by ratio of 1.3.

## Tighter Labour Market

There is no question that Algoma employers are having difficulty filling job openings as indicated by low participation rates and low unemployment rates.

In the 2016 census, Algoma's participation rate was 55%, substantially less than then Ontario's overall participation rate of 65%. This means that Algoma has a larger proportion of its population that is not participating in the labour market (either by working or actively looking for work). Having an older population means that there are more people who have left the labour market all together through retirement.

The challenges Algoma employers are facing today are really just the tip of the demographic iceberg. Employers are filling the labour gaps with overtime and delayed retirements, but as the population and workforce continues to age, this will no longer be possible. Almost a quarter of Algoma's workforce is over the age of 55 years old and almost half is over the age of 45 years old. As the group 55 years and older retire in the coming years, employers in the district will be looking to replace as many as 11,000 workers.



The effects of the aging workforce on Algoma's labour market is compounded by the fact that some of the largest sectors of employment in the region have among the oldest workforces. Recent AWIC surveys of employers in manufacturing and construction sectors showed that over 80% of employers in these sectors have hired in the past year and most had difficulty filling positions.

SECTOR	HIRING	JOBS IN DEMAND	OUTLOOK
Manufacturing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 80% had hired in the previous year</li> <li>• 60% had difficulty filling positions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Millwrights &amp; Industrial Mechanics</li> <li>• Welders</li> <li>• Machine Operators</li> <li>• Industrial Electricians</li> <li>• Labourers in Metal Fabrication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 29% of the manufacturing workforce is over 55 years old</li> <li>• 58% is over the age of 45 years old</li> <li>• Manufacturing workforce is over 55 years old</li> <li>• 58% is over the age of 45 years old</li> <li>• Manufacturing workforce is over 55 years old</li> <li>• 58% is over the age of 45 years old</li> </ul>
Construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 90% had hired in the previous year</li> <li>• 47% of respondents had issues finding and hiring people</li> <li>• 93% of respondents plan on hiring in the upcoming year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General Labour</li> <li>• Carpenters</li> <li>• Heavy equipment operators</li> <li>• Electricians</li> <li>• Truck drivers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 29% of the trades &amp; equipment operator workforce is over 55 years old</li> <li>• 52% is over the age of 45 years old</li> </ul>

AWIC Surveys of Manufacturing and Construction Employers.  
Results available at [awic.ca](http://awic.ca)

# OVERVIEW OF TRADES IN ALGOMA

The data in this section of the report was collected from the Ontario College of Trades (OCoT) in April 2016 and July 2019. The full report and analysis of this data can be found in AWIC's Algoma Skilled Trades – Review of OCoT Data, Apprenticeships & Journeypersons Activity Report. (The report can be accessed online at [awic.ca/reports](http://awic.ca/reports))

- In July 2019, the District of Algoma has 2,463 journeypersons and 769 apprentices.
- Sectors representing the highest level of trade activity are:
  - Motive Power  
(1,057 journeypersons; 195 apprentices)
  - Construction  
(921 journeypersons; 276 apprentices)
  - Industrial trades showed dramatic increases in both journeypersons and apprentices from 2016 to 2019.
- Ontario has 156 trades. The number of trades represented by journeypersons and apprentices in the District of Algoma changed very little from 2016:
  - Trades with journeypersons in 2019 (53)
  - Trades with apprentices in 2019 (54)
- From 2016 to 2019, the overall average age of tradespersons in the District of Algoma increased 1.1 years for journeypersons and 0.5 years for apprentices.
  - Journeypersons average age in 2019 is 44.9 years
  - Apprentices average age in 2019 is 32.7 years
- The average age of journeypersons and apprentices in the top 10 and top 5 District of Algoma trades presents a “truer” picture of the trade population. This sub-set represents 86.5% of all journeypersons and 63.5% of all apprentices.
  - Journeypersons average age increases to 50.7 years
  - Apprentices average age decreases to 29.5 years
- The District of Algoma trades remain oriented to males. More females are in the trades in 2019 but their activity remains clustered in the service and construction sectors.

## Journeyperson Trades Activity April 2016 & July 2019

SECTOR	APPRENTICES 2016 (N)	APPRENTICES 2019 (N)
Construction	911	921
Industrial	72	111
Motive Power	1,058	1,057
Service	346	374
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,387</b>	<b>2,463</b>

## Apprentice Trades Activity April 2016 & July 2019

SECTOR	APPRENTICES 2016 (N)	APPRENTICES 2019 (N)
Construction	319	276
Industrial	115	183
Motive Power	216	195
Service	133	115
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>783</b>	<b>769</b>

**Top 10 Trades by Active Journeypersons,  
Average Age and Gender  
April 2016 & July 2019**

TOP 10 TRADES BY JOURNEYPERSONS 2016					TOP 10 TRADES BY JOURNEYPERSONS 2019				
	JP	AGE	M	F		JP	AGE	M	F
Automotive Service Technician	522	51.1	520	2	Automotive Service Technician	508	52.0	506	2
Truck & Coach Technician	414	52.9	414	0	Truck & Coach Technician	420	52.6	420	0
Electrician - Construction & Maintenance	395	50.0	393	2	Electrician - Construction & Maintenance	407	49.6	403	4
Hairstylist	316	48.4	85	231	Hairstylist	330	50.3	84	246
Plumber	141	48.0	140	1	Plumber	143	47.2	141	2
Steamfitter	108	55.0	108	0	Steamfitter	92	55.7	92	0
Hoisting Engineer - Mobile Crane Operator 1	80	55.2	80	0	Hoisting Engineer - Mobile Crane Operator 1	75	55.3	75	0
Auto Body & Collision Damage Repairer	62	52.7	61	1	Auto Body & Collision Damage Repairer	55	55.0	55	0
Refrigeration & Air Conditioning Systems Mechanic	48	47.7	48	0	Industrial Electrician	52	40.2	52	0
Sheet Metal Worker	47	48.7	47	0	Refrigeration & Air Conditioning Systems Mechanic	49	49.0	49	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,133</b>		<b>1,896</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,131</b>		<b>1,877</b>	<b>254</b>

Top 10 Trades as a % of all District of Algoma Journeypersons 89.4%  
Average Age Journeypersons 51.0

Top 10 Trades as a % of all District of Algoma Journeypersons 86.5%  
Average Age Journeypersons 50.7

# THE IMPACTS OF CHANGING TECHNOLOGY ON THE TRADES

In a study released in 2016 by the Brookfield Institute, it was estimated that 42% of the Canadian labour force is at a high risk of being affected by automation.

This is not a new phenomenon as technology and automation have allowed sectors such as manufacturing to become more productive with smaller work forces. In general, automation has provided manufacturers with a more efficient method of doing routine tasks in their processes. History has recorded the use of technology to generate similar or greater output while using fewer, higher skilled workers.

In the trades, rather than job loss, changes in technology has meant the introduction of increasingly high-tech equipment and machinery that will require skilled tradespeople to have competencies beyond hands-on, mechanical skills.

In Algoma, respondents to AWIC's In-demand Skilled Trades survey have always adapted to technology, but the rate of change continues to accelerate.

Advanced diagnostics means that trades such as Millwrights are monitoring equipment to prevent breakdowns as opposed fixing machinery after a breakdown. Therefore, the trades person needs to know not only how to fix and maintain the machinery, but also how to interpret data to predict failures.

New technology with emphasis on robotics and more complicated equipment means that trades need to adapt. For example, Industrial Electricians should have a greater focus on robotics, as well as the mechanical aspects of them. A new trade that combines Electrical/Mechanical may be warranted in the future.

*"Our processes are evolving to include new technology with emphasis on robotics and more complicated equipment. Industrial Electricians should have a greater focus on robotics, as well as the mechanical aspects of them. A new trade that combines Electrical/Mechanical may be warranted in the future."*

In Motive Power trades, the vehicles that are being worked on continue to evolve and specialize at a rapid pace. This means that skills and training have to be continually developed and upgraded. Technicians need stronger computer skills and electrical diagnostic skills because of vehicles (especially transport trucks) becoming more autonomous.

*"Technicians need stronger computer skills and electrical diagnostic skills because of vehicles becoming more autonomous. It is no longer only about 'nuts and bolts'."*

The Construction trades will continue to grow as all advances in technology require new or upgraded infrastructures. Increased connectivity requires new network infrastructure in buildings and communities, greener energy means massive changes to the existing power grids and changes in transportation requires better roads. All of these advances will be built and maintained by the skilled trades.

*"Network infrastructure and cabling in new buildings matches the amount and complexity of the electrical systems."*

The bottom line is that technology is not going to stop changing and our tradespeople will need to continuous learning and upgrade their skills. So many tradespeople learn what's going on currently and then, in 5 years or less, that information is outdated. All of this training comes at a cost which is borne by the individual or the employer.

Technological change also means that employers want to be able to choose from the best and brightest students to become apprentices and journey persons. Trades need to be a first-choice career and field of study across the entire student body in Algoma.

# WHAT IS DRIVING THE DEMAND FOR SKILLED TRADES

Demand in the skilled trades is primarily being driven by the aging workforce.

- 55% of the people in Skill Trade occupations are over the age of 45
- 30% are over the age of 55

Simply put this means that over the next 5 to 10 years, 30% of the Skill Trade workforce in Algoma will be retiring.

Since there is also a shortage of younger people entering the trades creating an overall replacement shortfall of 35% when you compare older cohorts to younger ones in each trade.

From an economic perspective, Manufacturing in the region has recovered from a global slowdown in the steel industry which has meant that the area's largest employer, Algoma Steel, has been once again actively hiring and contracting out work to machine shops and commercial construction businesses.

It is also worth mentioning that there are a number of large potential construction projects in Northern Ontario mainly related to the Ring of Fire development. This would include the construction of the mine infrastructure and related facilities such as the Noront Smelter. If these projects move forward, it will put significant strain on the Construction trades in Algoma as they tend to be more mobile and are more likely to move out of the area for better paying opportunities.

# WHAT TRADES ARE IN DEMAND?

## Journeypersons

As the result of AWIC's In-Demand Skill Trade Survey, the following trades represent the top 10 in terms of local employers' anticipated hires over the next 5 years:

- Industrial Mechanic Millwright
- Automotive Service Technician
- Electrician – Construction and Maintenance
- Industrial Electrician
- Heavy Equipment Operator
- Steamfitter
- General Carpenter
- Plumber
- Truck and Coach Technician
- Welder

As mentioned previously, the age of the workforce in the Skilled Trades is aging. Looking at the most recent Census Data for the top trades in demand in Algoma, the percentage of people over the age of 55 ranges from a quarter of the workforce to almost half. Considering that those 55 and above are likely to retire in the next 5 to 10 years, this represents over 1,100 people leaving the workforce in these top in-demand trades alone.

## 2016 Census Data

TRADE	NUMBER	% 45+	% 55+	# 55+
Industrial Mechanic Millwright	580	75%	49%	284
Automotive Service Technician	580	50%	26%	151
Electrician – Construction & Maintenance	235	33%	22%	52
Industrial Electrician	195	50%	37%	72
Heavy Equipment Operator	620	61%	35%	217
Steamfitter	45	50%	25%	11
General Carpenter	440	52%	27%	119
Plumber	135	39%	8%	11
Truck & Coach Technician	580	50%	26%	151
Welder	335	53%	32%	107

Statistics Canada 2016 Census

With a large number of retirements imminent, the question becomes – are there enough people in the occupations to replace those retiring. Census data can be used to determine potential shortfalls in each occupation by using 10-year age cohorts to comparing the cohort aged 45 and above to the cohort aged 25 to 44. Once again, those in the older cohort are expected to retire in the next 10 to 15 years and the younger cohort represent the people already in the trade who can replace them.

Across all trades related occupations, there is a projected 35% shortfall of people. The following represents the trades with the highest potential shortfalls in Algoma:

TRADE	SHORTFALL
Industrial Mechanic Millwright	70%
Tractor Trailer Commercial Driver	66%
Heavy Duty Equipment Technician	47%
Heavy Equipment Operator	44%
Hoisting Engineer – Mobile Crane Operator 1	36%
Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Mechanic	36%
Machinist	31%

## Apprentices

The demand for apprentices mirrors the demand for journey persons and potential shortfalls in numbers.

Industrial Mechanic Millwright

Automotive Service Technician

- Industrial Electrician
- Electrician – Construction and Maintenance
- General Carpenter
- Truck and Coach Technician
- General Machinist
- Heavy Duty Equipment Technician
- Plumber
- Welder

That being said Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Systems Mechanic (HVAC) and Machinist apprentices were highlighted as being challenging to find.

Fewer people entering the labour market in general compared to the number of people exiting the labour market (retiring), combined with fewer people choosing a trade as career is creating the shortages and unmet demand.

Aside from the lack of apprentices in general, the most commonly cited challenges employers experienced with apprenticeships were:

- Finding motivated people as apprentices
- Apprentices leaving the employer once they have trained and are certified
- Lack of maturity of new entrants

*“People apply for a job here and have no idea what the company does. A little research goes a long way in making a positive impression.”*

# HIRING PRACTICES

When asked what methods employers used to fill positions, most cited online job postings, on corporate websites and job sites such as Indeed, as the most common way of promoting job openings for both journey persons and apprentices. This was followed by word of mouth recommendations from current employees. Many also cited that they hired through Union Halls to fill their skill trade needs.

Employers were also active in job and career fairs for students to garner interest in the trades and identify potential candidates for apprentices.

A few employers have also found trades people through immigration and the temporary foreign worker program. In a recent AWIC survey of commercial construction employers, 22% of respondents indicated that newcomer's have already become an increasingly import source of new hires for their organization.

## Online Job Postings

AWIC uses a tool called Vicinity Jobs to track online job posting in Algoma. The following is information about only job postings related to the skilled trades for the period of January 1st to December 31st, 2019.

### Highlights:

- In 2019. There was a total of 5,760 postings in all 1-digit occupations. There was a total of 763 total online job posting in NOC 7 and 87 postings in NOC 9 for the District of Algoma.
- Combined job postings of 850 postings or 15% of total job postings in 1-digit NOC.
- Transport truck drivers is the most posted occupation at 118 (16%) postings in NOC 7 followed by 60% of the postings in NOC 9 of Other labourers in processing, manufacturing and utilities.
- Job posting were most likely posted using Service Canada a Jobbank (17%) and Employer Corporate websites (17%) followed by Indeed (12%).
- 19% of the posting were located in East Algoma, 7% of the posted were located in Superior East and 72% were posted in Sault Ste. Marie.

## Job Postings by 1 Digit Occupation

Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations is the second largest 1-digit occupation with 13% of the postings in 2018. Sales and Services occupations was the highest with 27% of the postings. Occupations in manufacturing and utilities was 2% of the total job postings.

## Top Online Job Postings In NOC 7 (4 Digit) Across Algoma

NOC CODES & OCCUPATIONS	# OF POSTINGS IN 2019	% OF POSTINGS
7511 - Transport Truck Drivers	118	16%
7452 - Material Handlers	79	10%
7514 - Delivery & Courier Service Drivers	73	10%
7311 - Construction Millwrights & Industrial Mechanics	66	9%
7321 - Automotive Service Technicians, Truck & Bus Mechanics	39	5%
7271 - Carpenters	29	4%
7611 - Construction Trades Helpers & Labourers	29	4%
7237 - Welders & Related Machine Operators	24	3%
7313 - Refrigeration & Air Conditioning Mechanics	23	3%
7441 - Residential & Commercial Installers & Servicers	21	3%
7231 - Machinists & Machining & Tooling Inspectors	20	3%
7315 - Aircraft Mechanics & Aircraft Inspectors	11	1%
7291 - Roofers & Shinglers	10	1%
7512 - Bus Drivers, Subway Operators & Other Transit Operators	9	1%
7241 - Electricians (Except Industrial & Power System)	8	1%

Source – Vicinity Jobs

# SOLUTIONS TO ADDRESSING ISSUES

Solutions to the skill trade shortages are not going to be easy, inexpensive or immediate. Most employers commented that in order to increase the supply of apprentices and tradespeople, changes have to be made in education. Employers felt that there should be better access to trade related courses in high school and all students, regardless of academic ability, should be encouraged consider obtaining a trade. However, 'a build it and they will come' approach will not be effective without a shift in perspective about careers in skill trades among students, parents, teachers and school administration.

The survey asked employers to share their thoughts on what employers, government and education could do to increase the number of apprentices and journey persons in Algoma.

## Employers

Employers are faced with a highly competitive market when it comes to skill trades, so most have strategies in place to attract, retain and develop the best talent. From that perspective employers need to:

- Continue to hire and register new apprentices
- Offer strong internal training opportunities that focus on a wide variety of work.
- Have a training culture that allows apprentices more time working with Journeyperson.
- Review remuneration practices to be more competitive.

Employers also recognized that they need to play an active role in developing the next wave of apprentices and journey persons by:

- Being more active in promoting trades as a career
- Participating in high school co-op programs

*"Employers need to develop a culture of 'train here/stay here'."*

## Government

When asked to comment on what the Government can do to help increase the numbers of people entering the trades in Algoma, the comments fell into 3 categories:

- Employers would like to see more promotion of careers in the skilled trades.
- Increase the amount of incentives to employers and individuals participating in apprenticeships.
- Increase the amount of local training for trades in Algoma – both at the high school and post-secondary/apprenticeship level.

Unpacking the employer feedback on incentives, employers felt that the government could be doing more to address the costs associate with training apprentices such as:

- Return tax incentive from \$5,000 back to the \$10,000 level.
- Offer incentives to employers to hire and train apprentices as well as apprentices particularly females.
- Offer apprentices a grant for tools and standard equipment.
- Offer local training so that apprentices would not have to leave the community for training.
- Increase E.I. for apprentices during block training and pay for PT apprenticeship block training (1 day a week).
- Provide incentives to small businesses to develop an environment conducive to continued learning for apprentices and tradespeople.
- Provide more money to high schools for students to learn a trade.
- Develop a return of service contract that would incentivise individuals to complete their apprenticeship and stay with an employer and in Algoma.

With all these incentives to both the apprentice and the employer, I don't know how we can make it better unless the apprentice is employed by the government of Ontario and offered a 6- or 12-month contract at various businesses in their area. Any business who wants to train an apprentice can sign up and they become part of a group of training facilities and an apprentice gets rotated to offer better, more rounded, hands on training

## Education

Education was the most mentioned topic in the surveys and discussion, both as a source of some of the biggest issues being faced in the skill trades and also the area with the most impactful potential solutions.

The main issues in education can be summarized as the lack of trades related programs in high-schools and the lack of encouragement for students to consider study trades. For those in apprenticeship programs, employers biggest concern with education, was the lack of locally available training for the trades they require. Not offering the required courses locally increases the costs for employers and individuals as well increasing the possibility that the apprentice might drop out of the training or leave the community and not return.

*"There seems to be lack of interest, or perhaps awareness, by youth to seek the trades as a path of education and ultimately a career. The short coming will not change without encouragement from the elementary level which has the ability to tweak the interest."*

Employers suggestions for improving access to trades training in high school included the following:

- Promote trades as a first-choice career, not a career to fall back on.
- Studying a trade should be promoted and considered by all students along with paths to College and University.
- Guidance should provide more information trades related careers.
- Put trade classes back in the high schools.
- Provide more opportunities for students of all abilities to try trades in school.
- Provide exposure to trades at an earlier level in school (elementary programs).
- Have inter-school trades related competitions.

*"Students at all levels should be able to take or try trades courses in high school."*

In terms of apprenticeship training, the issue most cited was availability of localized training. Therefore, most of the suggested solutions around education at the apprenticeship level focused on this issue.

- Better alignment of College programs to meet the needs of local employers.
- More promotion of locally available apprenticeship training opportunities (for example, Machinists)
- In order to provide more local training in Algoma, open up Training Delivery Agent (TDA) opportunities to qualified providers.
- Rotate programs amongst colleges in an effort to increase locally available training. Being offered training on a given trade every other year is better than not having it available locally at all.
- Increase the amount of part time training to allow more apprentices to attend and relieve some of the burden on employers to cover for them at work.

## CONCLUSION

A career in the skill trades can be very rewarding and lucrative. Trades people are in demand as the industries that rely on them continue to grow and as the existing workforce ages and retires. In Algoma, more needs to be done to:

- Promote trades as a career path to students
- Provide local training opportunities for apprentices to learn a trade
- Offset the financial costs to employers who train apprentices.

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