

2025

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



# The Aging Workforce

Trends, Challenges, and the Path  
Forward

# REPORT

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The data in this report was compiled and the information authored by Sean Halliday, Regulated Canadian Immigration Consultant, intercultural competency specialist and immigration researcher, of Sean Halliday Consulting and Sean Halliday Immigration and Citizenship Consulting Inc.

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Information in this document is provided to facilitate a better understanding of Algoma's labour market landscape, based on the most current information available on the date of publication.



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### **FOR MORE INFORMATION REGARDING THIS REPORT:**

The Algoma Workforce Investment Corporation (AWIC)  
Sault Ste. Marie, ON P6A 2A4  
info@awic.ca

672 Queen Street East  
Phone 705.941.9341  
[www.awic.ca](http://www.awic.ca)

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## Key Findings

- Canada's workforce is aging and the number of people in the workforce nearing retirement has never been higher.<sup>1</sup>
- Since the year 2000, the number of mature workers in Canada (workers aged 55 years and older) has increased by 184%.<sup>2</sup>
- In the year 2000, the proportion of workers over the age of 55 was one in 9.5 workers. In 2023, it had increased to one in 4.6 workers.<sup>3</sup>
- Reliance on mature workers elevates the risk of labour and/or skills shortages as more workers retire.<sup>4</sup>
- In response, the labour market will need to adapt. Adaptations could include more emphasis on productivity growth, extended careers, immigration, and increasing labour force participation by all Canadians.<sup>5</sup>
- *The "sales and service occupations" are the largest sector of employment in Algoma District, accounting for 24.24% of all employment.*
- There are 2.71 employed younger workers (15 - 54 years) for every employed mature worker (aged 55 years plus) in the *"sales and service occupations" in Algoma District*. This ratio means that the largest employment sector in Algoma District is unduly reliant on mature workers and therefore vulnerable to labour and/or skills shortages.
- Over half (57.24%) of the employed labour force in Algoma District is vulnerable to labour and/or skills shortages, due to excessive reliance on mature workers. These vulnerabilities are found in the *"sales and service occupations", "the trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations"* and the *"business, finance and administration occupations"*.

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<sup>1</sup> Adkins-Hackett, L., & Fraikin, A. (2024).  
Labour Market Resilience in the Face of an Aging Population.  
Ottawa: Labour Market Information Council (LMIC)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

# Introduction

The Algoma District, located in northeastern Ontario, encompasses a diverse geographic region that includes Sault Ste. Marie—the largest city—and several smaller communities. The district is undergoing a significant demographic shift, driven primarily by an aging population. As of 2021, nearly one-quarter of the population is aged 65 and older, a proportion that is expected to grow in the coming years. This shift, combined with ongoing labour shortages and rising retirement rates, presents both challenges and opportunities for local businesses and the workforce.

This report examines the implications of these demographic trends, focusing on the aging workforce's impact on organizational stability, talent retention, and succession planning. As a baseline study, it establishes key metrics that will be tracked over time to assess workforce and demographic shifts in the region. Additionally, the report underscores the importance of investing in employee development strategies—such as training, mentoring, and cross-training, increasing the participation of under-represented groups—to help organizations and businesses adapt and thrive.

By analyzing labour force participation, employment trends, and aging statistics, this report provides valuable insights for businesses and policymakers striving to build a sustainable and resilient workforce in the Algoma District.

The census division of Algoma District is comprised of twenty-four census subdivisions (CSDs)<sup>6</sup>, as follows:

## Figure 1: The Subdivisions of Algoma Census Division.

- Algoma, Unorganized, North Part
- Algoma, Unorganized, South East Part
- Blind River
- Bruce Mines
- Dubreuilville
- Elliot Lake
- Hilton
- Hilton Beach
- Hornepayne
- Huron Shores
- Jocelyn
- Johnson
- Laird
- Macdonald, Meredith and Aberdeen Additional
- The North Shore
- Plummer Additional
- Prince
- Sault Ste. Marie
- Spanish
- St. Joseph
- Tarbutt and Tarbutt Additional
- Thessalon
- Wawa
- White River

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/92-195-x/2011001/geo/csd-sdr/def-eng.htm>

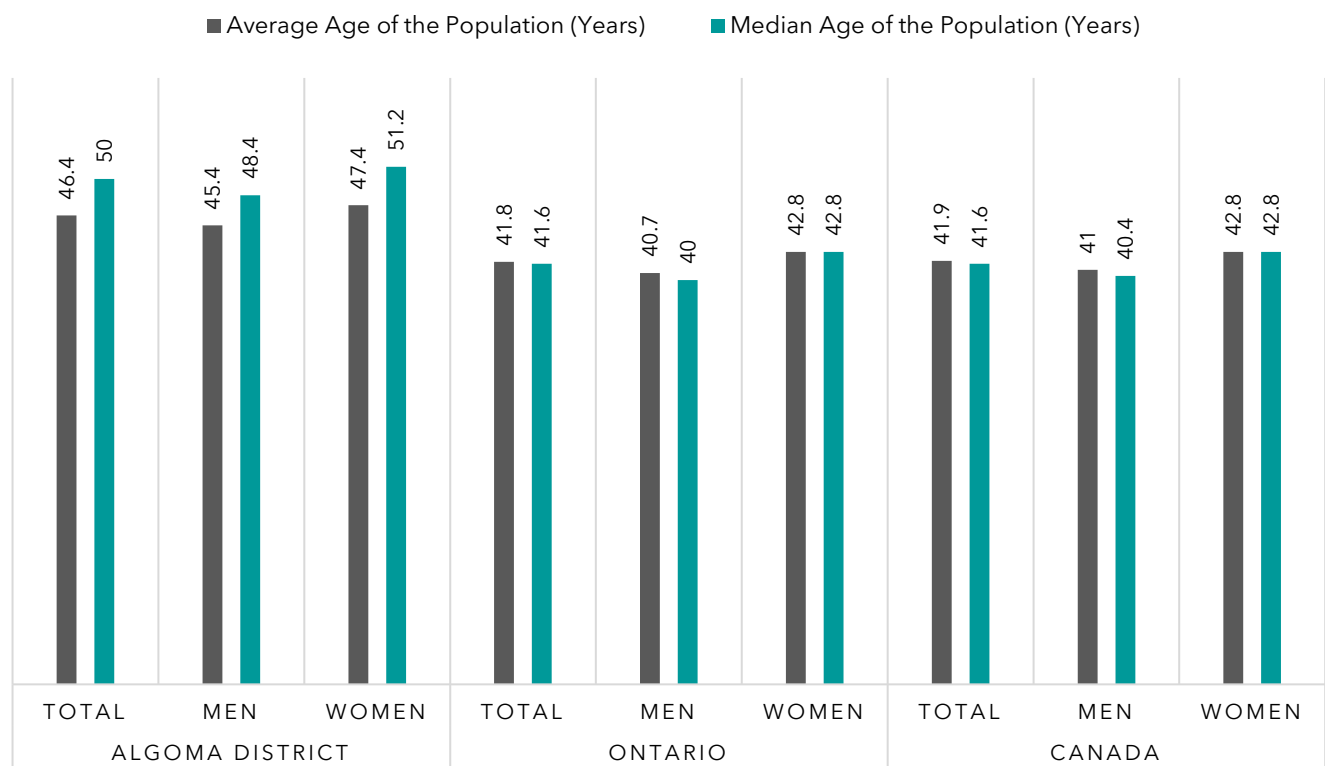
Like much of the Algoma District, Elliot Lake has an aging population and is often recognized as having one of the oldest demographics in Ontario. As of 2021, approximately 42% of its residents are aged 65 and older, one of the highest concentrations of older adults in Canada. This demographic shift has significant implications for local services, workforce needs, and community planning.

Following the decline of the uranium industry, Elliot Lake has worked to diversify its economy, focusing on sectors such as tourism, healthcare, and retirement living. The city has become a well-known retirement destination, attracting those seeking affordable housing, a quiet lifestyle, and access to outdoor recreation.

While this transition has created economic opportunities, it also presents workforce challenges. As many residents retire, there is a growing need to attract younger workers and develop skills for emerging industries. Additionally, the city is prioritizing investments in healthcare and senior services to meet the evolving needs of its aging population.

Algoma District, in comparison with both Ontario and Canada, has an older population. See Figure 2.

**Figure 2**



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&SearchText=canada&DGUIDlist=2021A00033557,2021A000235,2021A000011124&GENDERlist=1,2,3&STATISTIClist=1&HEADERlist=0>

As Figure 2 shows, the average age in the Algoma District is 46.4 years, compared to 41.8 years (Ontario) and 41.9 years (Canada). While the Canadian population has been aging at both the national and Ontario levels, it is more pronounced at the district level, with potentially negative implications for the workforce.

As of the 2021 Census, the Algoma District in Ontario has a median age of 50.0 years, with males at 48.4 years and females at 51.2 years.

Specific median ages for various communities within the district are as follows in Figure 3.

**Figure 3**

<b>Community</b>	<b>Median Age (Year)</b>
<b>Elliot Lake</b>	58.2
<b>Thessalon</b>	55.4
<b>Bruce Mines</b>	55.1
<b>Blind River</b>	53.8
<b>Chapleau</b>	47.5
<b>Wawa</b>	47.3
<b>Sault Ste. Marie</b>	46.8
<b>White River</b>	44.1
<b>Dubreuilville</b>	41.3

**Source:** Statistics Canada Census Profile 2021

The median age in Dubreuilville is 43.1 years, younger than the Algoma District’s 50.0 years and considerably lower than the median age in some of the more aging communities within the district.

Dubreuilville stands out with its larger share of youth and working-age adults<sup>8</sup> relative to other communities within Algoma, where an increasing proportion of the population is aged 65 and older. This younger demographic provides a potential advantage for Dubreuilville, positioning it to address some of the workforce challenges seen elsewhere in the district.

These figures highlight the aging demographic trend in many communities in the district, which underscore the importance of strategic planning in areas such as healthcare, workforce development, and community services to address the evolving needs of an aging population in the Algoma District.

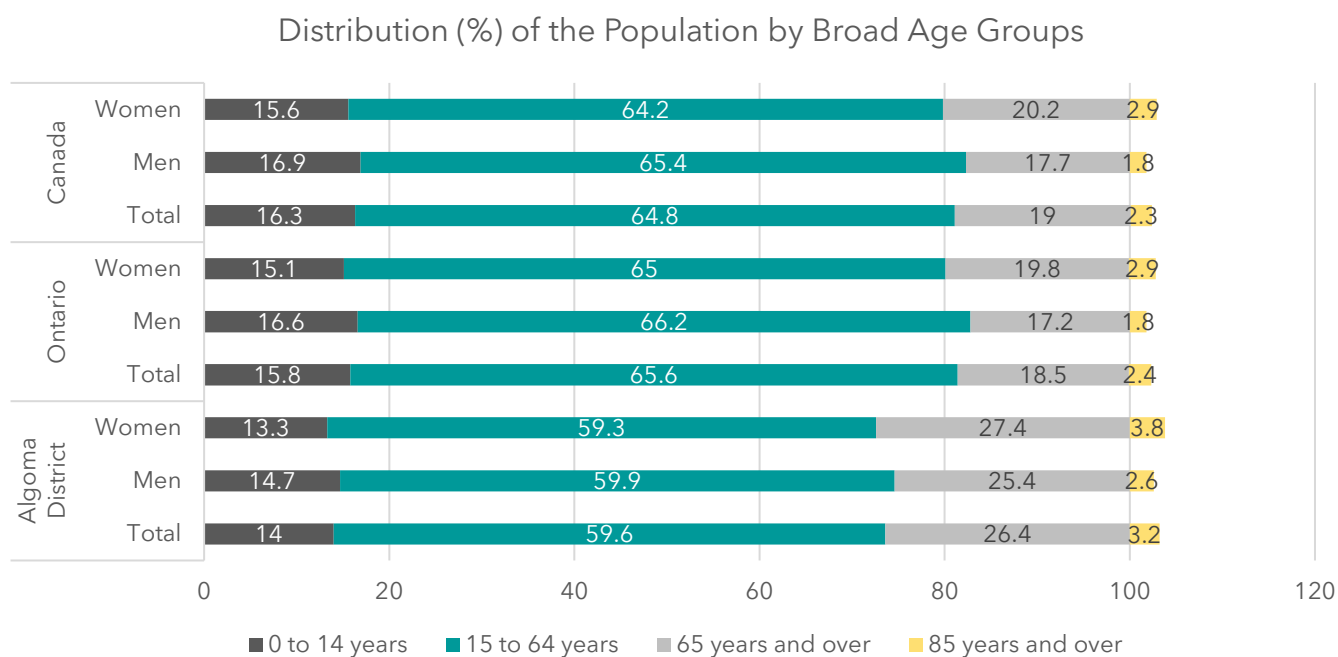
<sup>8</sup> 2021 Census Profile - Dubreuilville



Figure 4 shows the district population as being older than Ontario and the country differently, by comparing the population distribution percentages across the specified age brackets for the three geography levels.

In the district, 26.4% of the population is aged 65 years or older, compared to 18.5% (Ontario) and 19% (Canada). For the 15 to 64-year-old population, which encompasses those in their working as well as their reproductive years, the district is the lowest at 59.6%, compared to Ontario (65.6%) and Canada (64.8%). In the youngest cohort, those aged between 0-14 years, the district again has the lowest proportion of the population at 14%, compared to 15.8% (Ontario) and 16.3% (Canada).

**Figure 4**



**Source:** Statistics Canada, 2021 Census<sup>9</sup>

### The Demographic Dependency Ratio

The "Demographic Dependency Ratio" is the ratio of the combined youth population (0 to 19 years) and the senior population (65 years or older) to the working-age population (20 to 64 years). It is expressed as the number of "dependents" for every one hundred "workers."

The Demographic Dependency Ratio measures the size of the "dependent" population concerning the "working age" population and theoretically provides social and economic support.

The importance of this indicator is reflected in the fact that a significant proportion of the youth and senior populations are likely to be socially and/or economically dependent on working-age Canadians, and they may also put additional demands on health services.

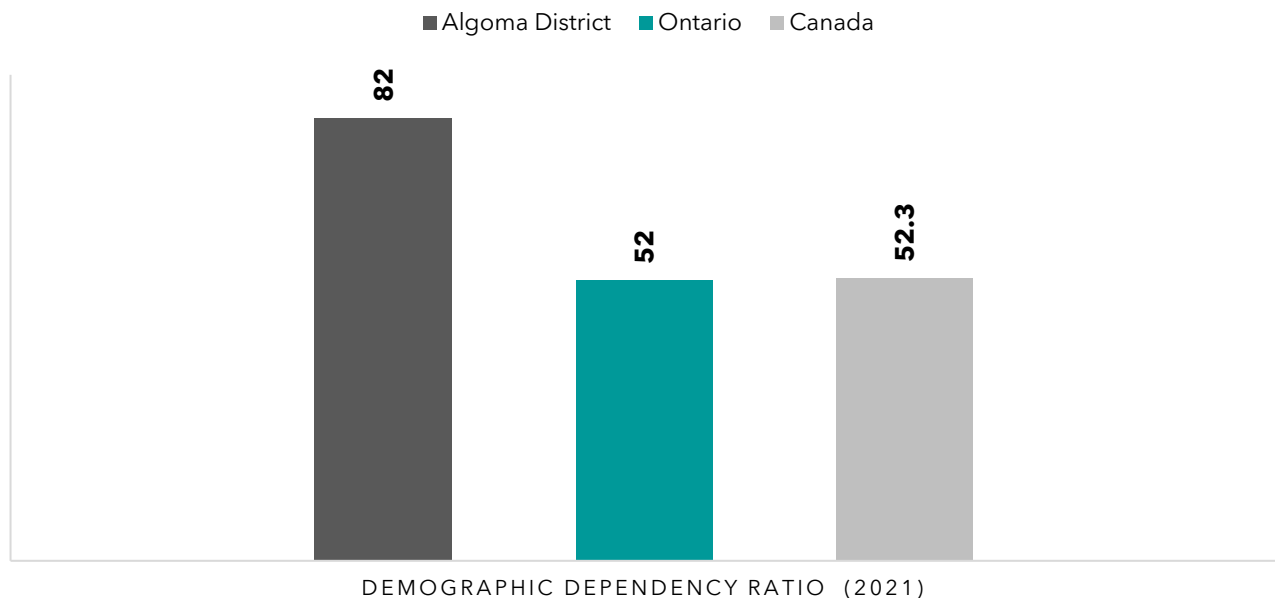
<sup>9</sup> Ibid

The shrinking percentage of young people means that in the future, the number of workers may be insufficient to finance the pensions of retirees<sup>10</sup>.

The increasing senior population relative to working-aged people has implications for the care of seniors. Moreover, substantial numbers of women, who historically have been the primary caregivers of children and seniors, have entered the labour force in recent decades. In addition, because many couples have children at older ages, a generation has emerged that is responsible for young children and elderly parents at the same time—known as the "sandwich generation"<sup>11</sup>.

Figure 5 illustrates the Demographic Dependency Ratios for the district, Ontario and Canada and shows that the district has a significantly higher ratio at 82 dependents per 100 working-age persons, compared to 52 per 100 (Ontario) and 52.3 per 100 (Canada). Considering the numbers shown in Figure 3 in this report, the main reason for this elevated figure for the district is the relative size of the senior population.

**Figure 5**



**Source:** Statistics Canada, 2021 Census<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Chawla RK. Dependency ratios: an international comparison. Perspectives on Labour and Income (Statistics Canada, Catalogue 75-001) 1990; Summer 2(2):50-57.

<sup>11</sup> Williams C. The sandwich generation. Canadian Social Trends (Statistics Canada Catalogue, 11-008) Summer 2005:16-21.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&SearchText=canada&DGUIDlist=2021A00033557,2021A000235,2021A000011124&GENDERlist=1,2,3&STATISTIClist=1&HEADERlist=0>

## Retirement Age Rates in Canada

This report works with the assumption that people who were aged 55 years and over at the time of the 2021 Census will retire between 2021-2031, as they reach the age of 65 years. This is the benchmark used to forecast the possible number of retirements. (*The age of retirement at 65 years is estimated based on the retirement age data in Figure 6*).

**Figure 6**

Geography: Canada (2021)		Total (All Genders)			Males			Females		
		Year								
	Class of worker	2022	2023	2024	2022	2023	2024	2022	2023	2024
Average Retirement Age (Years)	Total, all retirees	64.6	65.1	65.3	65.5	65.9	66.3	63.6	64.2	64.4
	Public sector employees	62.7	63.1	63.3	63.7	63.6	64.1	62	62.7	62.9
	Private sector employees	64.7	65.4	65.4	65	65.9	65.9	64.4	64.9	64.9
	Self-employed	68.4	68	68.9	68.9	68.6	69.5	67.3	66.9	67.8
Median Retirement Age (Years)	Total, all retirees	64.8	64.9	65.1	65.2	65.3	65.4	63.8	64.5	64.7
	Public sector employees	61.8	63	64.1	63.4	62.9	64.7	61.2	63	63.1
	Private sector employees	64.9	65.1	65.1	64.9	65.2	65.3	64.8	65.1	64.8
	Self-employed	67.8	67.8	66.7	68.7	68.1	66.8	66.2	65.4	66.3

**Source:** Statistics Canada. [Table 14-10-0060-01, Retirement age by class of worker, annual](#)

## Employment Patterns, Replacement Ratios and Risk Thresholds - Algoma District

At the time of the 2021 Canadian census, there were 43,855<sup>13</sup> people employed in the district. This number includes both the employed and the self-employed, and who were aged at least 15 years of age.

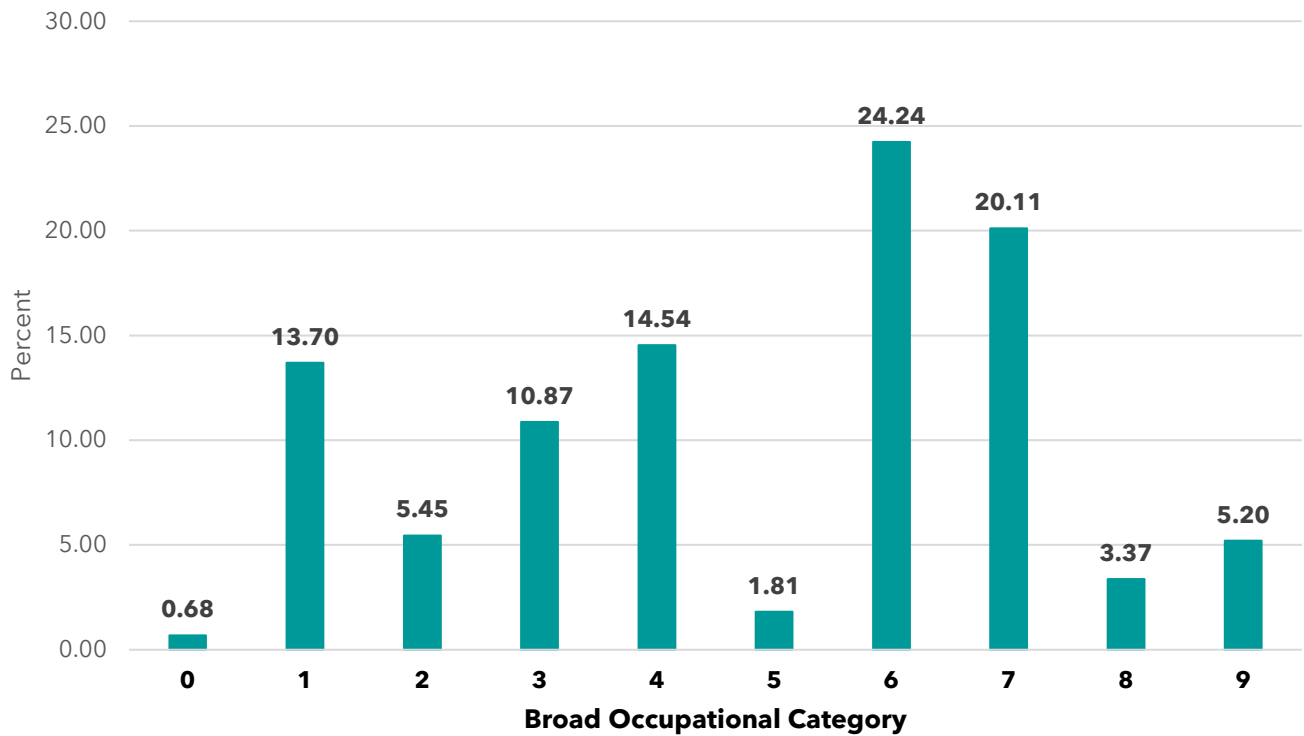
Using the ten "Broad Occupational Categories"<sup>14</sup> of the Canadian government's "National Occupational Classification (NOC) 2021"<sup>15</sup> nomenclature, the district's employment patterns are shown as follows in Figure 7, which outlines the percent of the Total Employment by Occupational Category in Algoma.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?LANG=E&GENDERlist=1,2,3&STATISTIClist=1,4&DGUIDlist=2021A00033557&HEADERlist=,42,44,40,43,41&SearchText=algoma>

<sup>14</sup> <https://noc.esdc.gc.ca/Structure/Hierarchy?objectId=%2Fd0IGA6qD8JPRfoj5UCjpg%3D%3D>

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

**Figure 7**



Source: Statistics Canada 2021 Census<sup>16</sup>

**Figure 7 - Legend**

Broad Occupational Categories (NOC Codes)			
Description	NOC Code	Description	NOC Code
Legislative and senior management occupations	0	Occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport	5
Business, finance and administration occupations	1	Sales and service occupations	6
Natural and applied sciences and related occupations	2	Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations	7
Health occupations	3	Natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations	8
Occupations in education, law and social, community and government services	4	Occupations in manufacturing and utilities	9

<sup>16</sup> <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&SearchText=algoma&GENDERlist=1,2,3&STATISTIClist=1,4&DGUIDlist=2021A00033557&HEADERlist=42,44,40,43,41>

Figure 7 shows “sales and service occupations” as the primary employment category, accounting for almost a quarter of employment at 24.24%. The second largest category is “trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations”, accounting for a little over a fifth of employment at 20.11%. The third largest category is “occupations in education, law and social, community and government services”, accounting for a little under a sixth of employment at 14.54%.

Please refer to the link in footnote 15 for further information regarding the NOC codes' nomenclature.

### **Calculating The Replacement Ratio and Why is it Important?**

Developing indicators to identify specific and measurable aging labour force-related risks by geography and by industry is important to first understand the risk and then to develop mitigation strategies accordingly.

One such indicator is the “Replacement Ratio” (RR). To assess the risk of shortages resulting from a significant wave of retirements among mature workers, the RR can be utilized. This ratio “helps evaluate the extent to which the labour market relies on mature workers within specific occupations and assesses the overall resilience of the workforce.”<sup>17</sup> A greater reliance on mature workers indicates an inadequate inflow of young or new workers into a particular occupation. “It also indicates low availability of workers to fill vacancies as the older cohort retires.”<sup>18</sup>

The RR formula compares the number of workers aged 15 to 54 years to the number of mature workers (55 years and older).

$$\text{Replacement Ratio} = \frac{\text{Employed workers aged 15 to 54 years}}{\text{Employed workers aged 55+ years}}$$

The RR indicates the dependency on mature workers. For example, “when the ratio is 4, it means that mature workers make up 20% of the workforce, with four workers under the age of 55 for every mature worker.”<sup>19</sup>

**“A lower replacement ratio indicates higher dependence on mature workers and a greater risk of labour and/or skills shortages.”<sup>20</sup>**

Together with the RR, the size of the occupation needs to be considered. Risk in a larger occupation indicates a correspondingly greater concern.

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<sup>17</sup> Adkins-Hackett, L., & Fraikin, A. (2024). Labour Market Resilience in the Face of an Aging Population. Ottawa: Labour Market Information Council (LMIC)

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

## When the Risk Threshold is Met

At the Canadian level, the risk threshold is met when **both** of the following conditions occur:

- An occupation's Replacement Ratio is below the national average Replacement Ratio of 3.6.
- The occupation accounts for at least 10% of total employment in Canada.

At a regional level, the risk threshold is met when **all three** of the following conditions occur:

- An occupation's Replacement Ratio is below the average for the region.
- The Replacement Ratio is below the occupation's national average.
- The occupation accounts for at least 10% of total employment in the region.

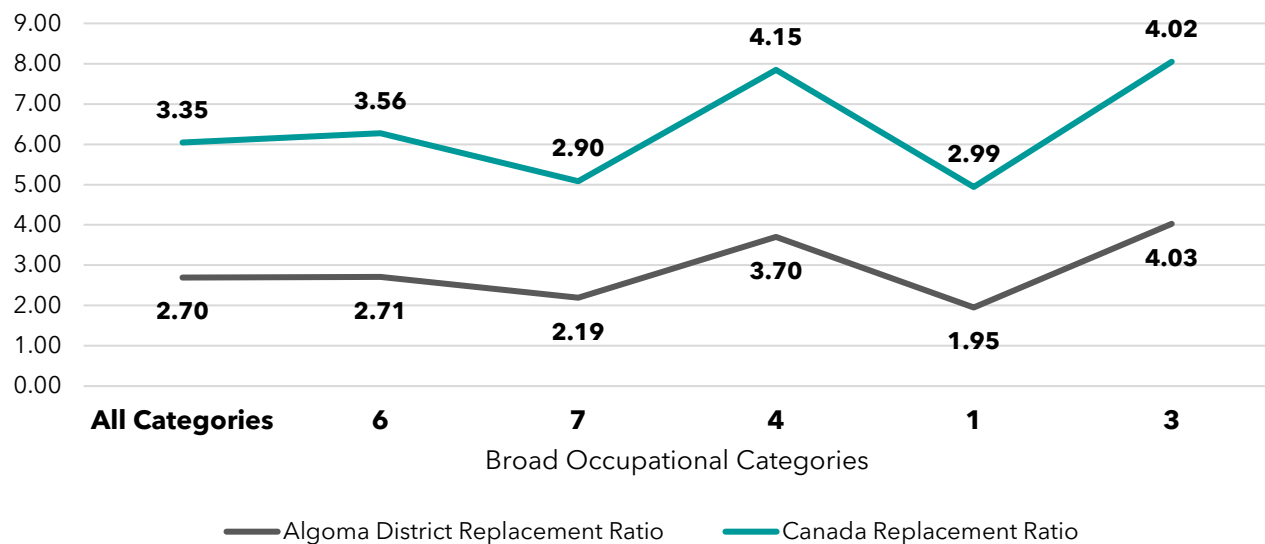
## Measuring the Risk Threshold - Algoma District

As Figure 8 illustrates, the replacement ratio of 5 *Broad Occupational Categories* in the district that meet this third and final condition of accounting for at least 10% of the total employment in the district, as follows from the largest to the smallest percentage:

- sales and service occupations (24.24%)*
- trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations (20.11%)*
- occupations in education, law and social, community and government services (14.54%)*
- business, finance and administration occupations (13.7%)*
- health occupations (10.87%)*

In total, these five occupational groupings represent 83.5% of the total employment in the district.

**Figure 8**



**Figure 8 - Legend**

Broad Occupational Categories (NOC Codes)			
Description	NOC Code	Description	NOC Code
Business, finance and administration occupations	<b>1</b>	Health occupations	<b>3</b>
Occupations in education, law and social, community and government services	<b>4</b>	Sales and service occupations	<b>6</b>
Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations	<b>7</b>		

Figure 8 shows that two of the five occupational categories that account for at least 10% of the total employment in the district meet the remaining two conditions to meet the risk threshold. Those occupational categories are the *trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations* and the *business, finance and administration occupations*. These two categories combined account for 33% of the total employment in the district. A third occupational category, *sales and service occupations*, only just exceeds the Algoma District RR and is likely a statistically insignificant difference between the occupational and the district RRs and therefore should be considered as having met the risk threshold. This third category adds a further 24.24% contribution to total employment in the district. The total contribution of these three occupational categories to employment in the district is 57.24%. We can conclude therefore that over half of the labour force in the district is at risk of labour and/or skills shortages, due to an excessive reliance on mature workers.

Labour market and demographic concerns regarding an aging and declining population, while a nationwide trend but also more pronounced in rural or remote areas like Algoma District, are borne out by the data shown in Figure 8. Examining the *“health occupations”* specifically, it is important to highlight that aging population trends lead to a higher demand for health care services. That is to say that the relatively high RR for *“health occupations”* in the district is not a reason for complacency. Well documented local media stories in the district of general practitioner and specialized health care staff shortages as well as hospital emergency rooms being unable to open for periods due to staff shortages, highlight the demand/supply mismatch in the healthcare system and the urgent need to identify and implement mitigation strategies to address this mismatch.

## Algoma District - The Replacement Ratio by NOC Major Group

Drilling down the *NOC hierarchy*<sup>21</sup> brings us to the “Major Group” level. At this level, we can analyze the labour force age structure at a more precise occupational category level. Figure 9 shows the top ten occupations at the Major Group level by Replacement Ratio (those with the highest younger worker to mature worker ratios) in the Algoma District.

**Figure 9**

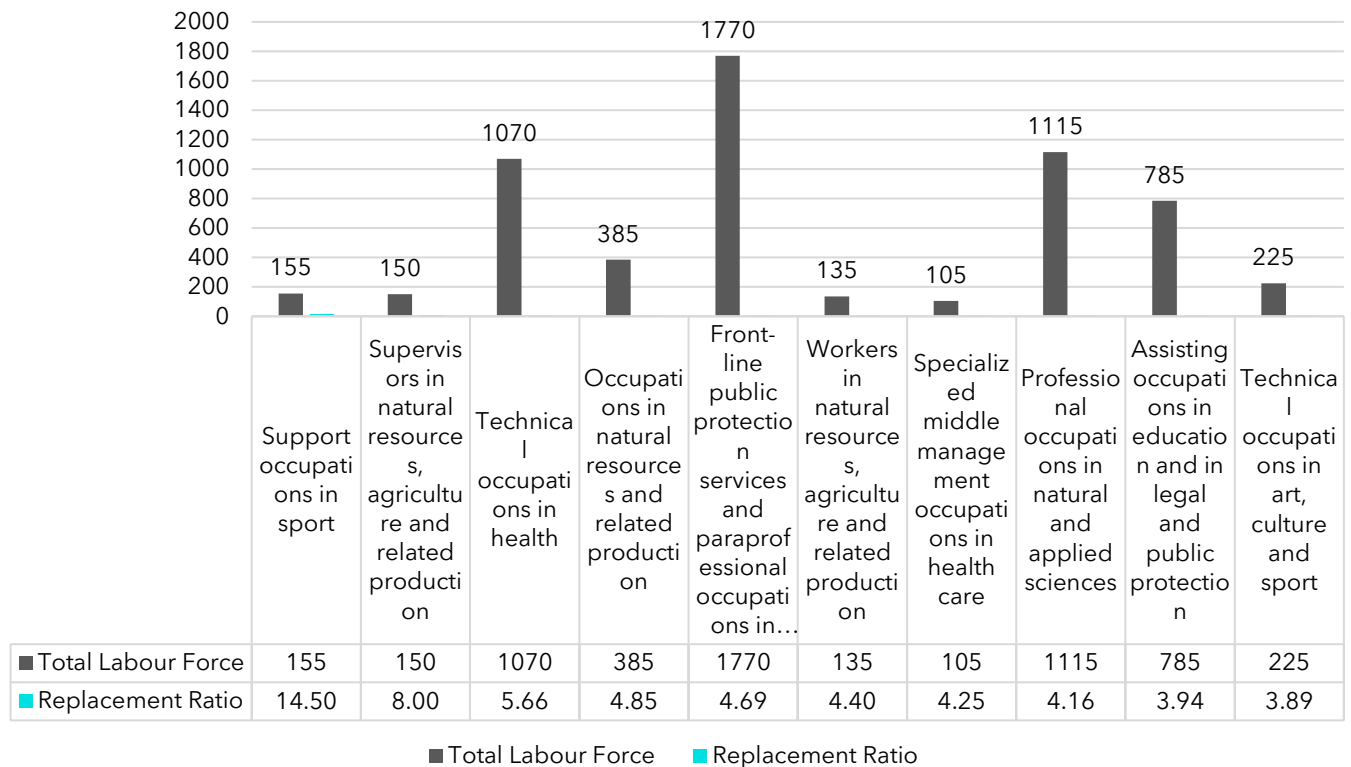


Figure 9 shows that “*support occupations in sport*” has the youngest workforce on average in the district, but with only 155 people employed in this sector, this has a minimal effect on mitigating the overall aging of the employed district labour force. “*Front-line public protection services and paraprofessional occupations in legal, social, community, education services*” represent the largest proportion of the district labour force in the top ten of Occupational Major Groupings by Replacement Ratio, with 1,770 persons employed and with a Replacement Ratio of 4.69, a level that does not meet the previously discussed *risk threshold*.

Please refer to Appendix 8 for a full table of *Occupational Major Groupings*, ranked by *Replacement Ratio* and Appendix 9 for those *Occupational Major Groupings* that employ at least a 1000 people, ranked by *Labour Force Size* and indicate the corresponding *Replacement Ratio*.

<sup>21</sup> <https://noc.esdc.gc.ca/Structure/Hierarchy?objectid=%2Fd0IGA6qD8JPRfoj5UCjpg%3D%3D>



**Figure 10**

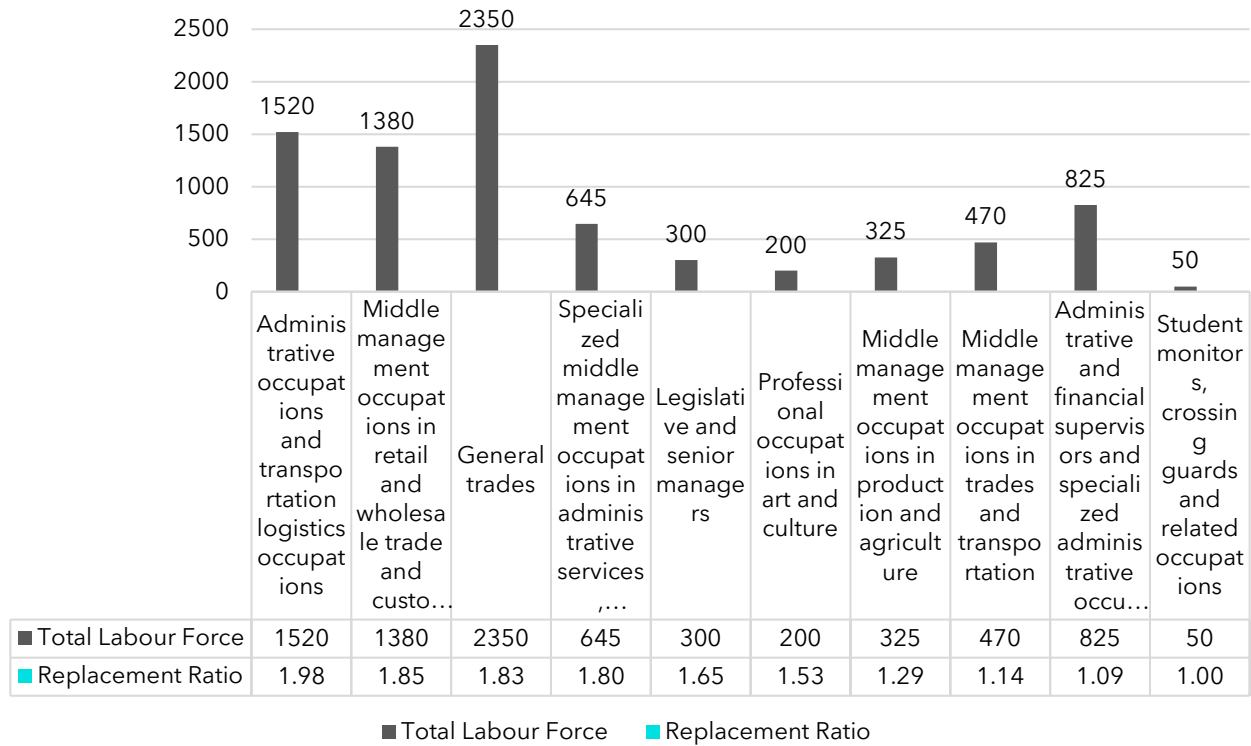


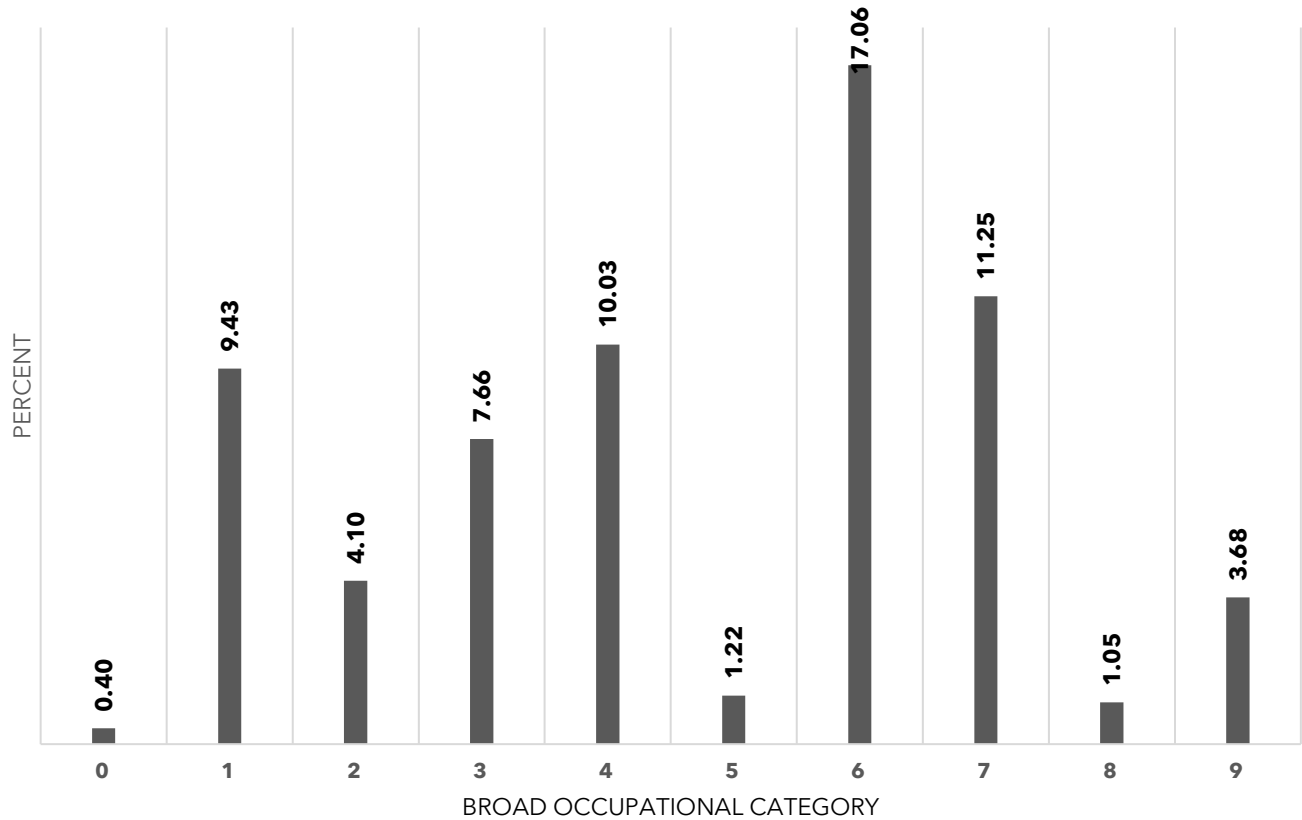
Figure 10 shows the ten occupational major groupings with the lowest replacement ratios. The lowest of these is “*Student monitors, crossing guards and related occupations*” with a Replacement Ratio of 1, meaning there is only one younger worker for every mature worker. Fortunately, this sector represents a very small proportion of the labour force in the district at only 50 people. The “*general trades*” represent the largest labour force in this bottom ten, with 2350 persons employed in the district. With the eighth lowest Replacement Ratio in the District at only 1.83, this represents an area of priority to address as there are not even two younger workers for every mature worker at present.

Please refer to Appendix 8 for a full table of *Occupational Major Groupings*, ranked by *Replacement Ratio* and Appendix 9 for those *Occupational Major Groupings* that employ at least 1000 people, ranked by *Labour Force Size* and indicate the corresponding *Replacement Ratio*.

## Employment Patterns, Replacement Ratios and Risk Thresholds - Sault Ste. Marie

Figure 11 shows the employment percentages, as expressed as a percentage of the total Algoma District employment, for employment in the census subdivision (CSD) of Sault Ste. Marie *by Broad Occupational Category*.

**Figure 11**



**Source:** Statistics Canada 2021 Census<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?LANG=E&GENDERlist=1,2,3&STATISTIClist=1,4&DGUIDlist=2021A00053557061&HEADERlist=,42,44,40,43,41&SearchText=sault%20ste.%20marie>

**Figure 11 - Legend**

Broad Occupational Categories (NOC Code)			
Description	NOC Code	Description	NOC Code
Legislative and senior management occupations	<b>0</b>	Occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport	<b>5</b>
Business, finance and administration occupations	<b>1</b>	Sales and service occupations	<b>6</b>
Natural and applied sciences and related occupations	<b>2</b>	Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations	<b>7</b>
Health occupations	<b>3</b>	Natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations	<b>8</b>
Occupations in education, law and social, community and government services	<b>4</b>	Occupations in manufacturing and utilities	<b>9</b>

Employment in the *sales and service occupations* is the largest employment category in Sault Ste. Marie, representing 17.06% of the total Algoma District employment and 25.89%<sup>23</sup> of all employment in the CSD of Sault Ste. Marie. Employment in the *trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations* is the second largest employment category in Sault Ste. Marie, representing 11.25% of the total Algoma District employment and 17.08%<sup>24</sup> of all employment in the CSD of Sault Ste. Marie. Employment in the *occupations in education, law and social, community and government services* are the third largest employment category in Sault Ste. Marie, representing 10.03% of the total Algoma District employment and 15.23%<sup>25</sup> of all employment in the CSD of Sault Ste. Marie.

Figure 11 shows that there are three *Broad Occupational Categories* that account for at least 10% of the total Algoma District employment in Sault Ste. Marie. These three are, as follows from the largest to the smallest percentage:

- i. *sales and service occupations* (17.06%)
- ii. *trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations* (11.25%)
- iii. *occupations in education, law and social, community and government services* (10.03%)

In total, these three occupational categories represent 38.34% of the total employment in the district and 58.2% of the total employment in the CSD of Sault Ste. Marie.

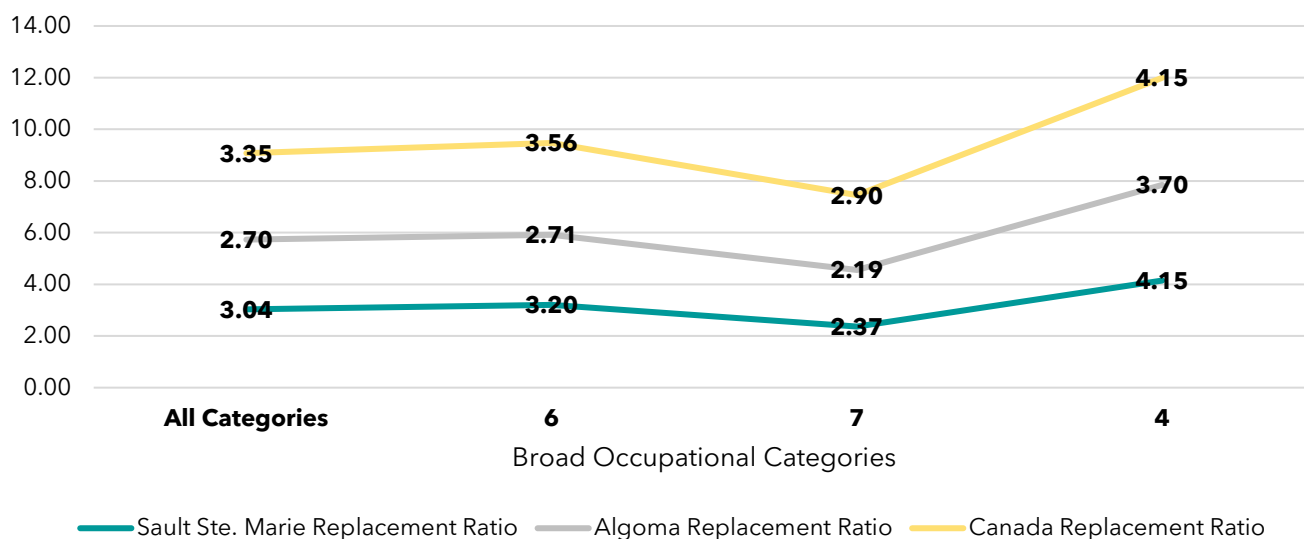
<sup>23</sup>See Appendix 5 for further information

<sup>24</sup>Ibid

<sup>25</sup>Ibid

## Measuring the Risk Threshold - Sault Ste. Marie Census Subdivision

**Figure 12**



**Figure 12 - Legend**

Broad Occupational Categories (NOC Code)			
Description	NOC Code	Description	NOC Code
Occupations in education, law and social, community and government services	<b>4</b>	Sales and service occupations	<b>6</b>
Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations	<b>7</b>		

Figure 12, Replacement Ratio by Broad Occupational Classification, shows that none of the three occupational categories that account for at least 10% of the total employment in the district meet the remaining two conditions to meet the risk threshold. This can likely be partially explained by the fact that the population in the Sault Ste. Marie CSD is younger on average and has a lower median age than the district<sup>26</sup>. In comparison to the overall RR for the Sault Ste. Marie CSD, *trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations* were the only occupational categories to have a lower RR (2.37 versus 3.04) and therefore this occupational category should be considered as having met the risk threshold.

<sup>26</sup> <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?LANG=E&GENDERlist=1,2,3&STATISTIClist=1,4&DGUIDlist=2021A00053557061,2021A00033557&HEADERlist=2&SearchText=algoma>

# Recommendations for Aging Labour Force Mitigation Strategies

The data shown and discussed in this report points to significant labour market challenges, now and in the future, because of the twin demographic challenges of an aging and declining population. The “baby boomer” generation, the largest cohort in history, is living longer than previous generations, contributing to the aging characteristic of the population. At the same time, the birth rates in Ontario have been below the “Cohort Replacement Level” (CRL) of 2.1 children per couple<sup>27</sup> since 1972<sup>28</sup>, with Algoma District consistently having a CRL that is lower than the province<sup>29</sup>. The birth rate trends have contributed to both the aging and declining characteristics of the population.

What now follows are some suggestions for aging labour force mitigation strategies.

## **Birth Rates and Enhance Women's Workforce Participation**

In addition to the wide availability of contraception, declining birth rates can be attributed to two main factors. The first is increasing education and employment opportunities for women. As these opportunities have become more available to more women, the opportunity cost of childbirth and motherhood has increased for some women. As a result, many women, particularly the more educated, are either delaying childbirth into later years or choosing not to have children at all. Changing societal attitudes which view female emancipation and gender equality more favourably have provided more women with increasing opportunities that are not restricted to the role of a “stay-at-home mom”, and this reality is unlikely to change any time in the foreseeable future. Not least from the perspective of women’s agency and equality of opportunity between the sexes, this can only be seen as a positive development.

The second factor is related to the rising financial costs associated with child rearing. Increasing numbers of people view having a family as undertaking a financial commitment that they cannot afford. These financial costs can manifest themselves in several ways, including rising housing costs and other basics of life, such as food and energy prices. Inadequate remuneration, particularly wages that do not keep up with the cost of living, is also a factor, as is the cost of childcare. In addition, “family friendly” policies at both a government and an employer level are seen by many as not being sufficiently supportive to having a family. At a government level, “family friendly” policies may include universal health care, including drugs, dental, optometrist services, mental health, parent education, developmental and screening services and supports. The government can also encourage people to have more children through tax credits or tax breaks in the tax system, subsidizing childcare, introducing “living wage”, affordable housing or paid maternity/paternity leave legislation, funding effective and affordable public transportation and urban planning the takes into consideration the needs and preferences of families with children. At an employer level, these policies can include paid maternity and paternity leave, flexible work arrangements, paid sick and vacation leave, onsite daycare, as well as paying a “living wage,” including adequate health and pension benefits<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/91f0015m/91f0015m2024001-eng.htm>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.ontario.ca/document/ontarios-long-term-report-economy-2024/chapter-1-demographic-trends-and-projections-2024>

<sup>29</sup> [www.publichealthontario.ca/en/Data-and-Analysis/Reproductive-and-Child-Health/Reproductive-Health](http://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/Data-and-Analysis/Reproductive-and-Child-Health/Reproductive-Health)

<sup>30</sup> <https://earlylearning.ubc.ca/app/uploads/2022/06/15by15-full-report.pdf>

## **Encourage Immigration and Attract Newcomers**

AWIC's "Global Talent, Local Solutions" report<sup>31</sup> of 2024 discussed in considerable depth the recent permanent and temporary immigration patterns and trends in the district as well as immigration aspects at a federal government level. The report also discussed the concept of a "welcoming community" including the "19 characteristics" of such a community. It is highly recommended that the reader also reviews this report for more details on "immigration". In summary, the federal government has increasingly turned to immigration as a mitigation strategy to counter aging and declining population trends, which have also impacted the workforce as well as to address specific skills shortages and labour market gaps. In October 2024, the Honourable Marc Miller, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, announced the 2025-2027 Immigration Levels Plan, which includes a reduction in immigration targets. The plan aims to pause population growth in the short term to achieve well-managed, sustainable growth in the long term. For the first time, the levels plan includes controlled targets for temporary residents, specifically international students and foreign workers, as well as for permanent residents.<sup>32</sup>

On January 30, 2025, the Government of Canada announced two new immigration pilot programs aimed at attracting and retaining skilled workers in rural and Francophone minority communities.<sup>33</sup> *Rural Community Immigration Pilot (RCIP)* focuses on assisting rural communities in addressing labour shortages by connecting local businesses with skilled newcomers. Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, is among the 14 communities selected to participate in the RCIP. *Francophone Community Immigration Pilot (FCIP)* aims to increase the number of French-speaking newcomers settling in Francophone minority communities outside of Quebec, thereby supporting the economic development and cultural vitality of these regions. The Superior East Region in Ontario is one of the six communities chosen for the FCIP. These pilots offer pathways to permanent residence for skilled workers who wish to live and work in our community and region.

As more workers retire, fewer younger individuals are entering the workforce to replace them, intensifying the gap in critical skills. The aging population also means that a larger portion of the workforce will soon be exiting, further stressing the importance of attracting and retaining younger workers and newcomers, such as international students. In this context, aligning international student recruitment with local labour market needs can be a crucial strategy for addressing these demographic shifts. By ensuring that international students are educated and trained in areas facing shortages and providing pathways for them to transition into the workforce, communities can alleviate some of the pressures caused by an aging workforce and help maintain long-term economic stability.

While attracting international talent is important, it is equally vital to support their retention in the community. Providing settlement services, language training, and helping newcomers integrate into local culture can improve job satisfaction and long-term retention. Additionally, offering pathways to permanent residency or citizenship for workers can incentivize them to remain in the region.

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<sup>31</sup> <https://awic.ca/research-reports/>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2024/10/government-of-canada-reduces-immigration.html?utm>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2025/01/canada-launches-rural-and-francophone-community-immigration-pilots.html?utm>

## **Increasing the Labour Force Participation Rate**

The “*participation rate*” is defined by Statistics Canada as “the number of labour force participants expressed as a percentage of the population 15 years of age and over.”<sup>34</sup> The OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) defines the “*participation rate*” as “the ratio between the total labour force divided by the total working-age population. The working age population refers to people aged 15 to 64.”<sup>35</sup>

In terms of mature workers, many struggle when trying to stay in the labour market or re-enter the workforce because they face challenges, including:

- ageism.
- lack of education and access to training.
- difficulty in finding and applying for jobs.
- health issues, work-life balance issues and lack of workplace accommodations; and
- disincentives or lack of incentives to work in the retirement income system.<sup>36</sup>

The “big picture” answer to increasing the labour force participation rate for the mature and historically underrepresented populations lies in applying an equity and inclusion lens to understand the barriers<sup>37</sup> to labour force participation for individuals in these cohorts. Once the barriers are understood, then the necessary changes and interventions can be made (anti-bias training to combat ageism for example). In terms of the “women” cohort, some of these equity and inclusion-related solutions can be found in suggestion 1 “*Birth Rates and Enhance Women's Workforce Participation*” above. The previously mentioned “*Global Talent, Local Solutions*” report in suggestion 2, “*Encourage Immigration and Attract Newcomers*” provides many equity and inclusion-related solutions in the discussion of what makes a “welcoming community”. Successful mitigation strategies will require sufficient intentionality and a coordinated cross-community effort, including the involvement of all three levels of government.

To address workforce gaps caused by the migration of younger populations, regions can develop programs that encourage youth to stay or return. Encouraging youth to pursue careers in sectors facing labour shortages is critical for addressing workforce gaps. This can be achieved through targeted education initiatives that promote awareness of high-demand fields, such as healthcare, technology, business, manufacturing, and skilled trades. Increasing awareness and participation of apprenticeship programs, internships, and co-op placements helps young people gain hands-on experience and build connections with local employers. Additionally, increasing career guidance into secondary education can better prepare students for entering the workforce, ensuring they have the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in in-demand local industries. Strengthening Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) partnerships between schools, post-secondary institutions, and employers can create a more seamless transition from education to employment for young people.

In addition to retaining and attracting younger workers, encouraging seniors to remain in the workforce longer is important for addressing labour shortages. Offering phased retirements, part-time or flexible work options can help seniors continue contributing to the workforce without the

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<sup>34</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410032702>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/en/data/indicators/labour-force-participation-rate.html>

<sup>36</sup> Promoting The Labour Force Participation Of Older Canadians, Economic and Social Development Canada, May 2018, pg. 1

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/portfolio/labour/programs/employment-equity/reports/act-review-barriers-employment-equity-groups-annex-2.html>

pressures of full-time employment. Providing retraining and upskilling opportunities ensures that older workers can transition into new roles or adapt to changing industry demands and technology. Policies that promote phased retirement or gradual transition into retirement allow seniors to remain engaged in meaningful work while preparing for their eventual retirement. Additionally, creating a work environment that values the experience and expertise of older workers can increase their job satisfaction and participation in the workforce.

Increasing Indigenous participation in the workforce in the Algoma region is crucial for addressing labour shortages and supporting economic growth. In 2021, Indigenous peoples made up 14.2% of Algoma's total population<sup>38</sup>, highlighting the importance of tailored strategies to engage this demographic in the workforce. Key approaches to boosting participation include providing access to education and skills training in high-demand sectors like healthcare, business, technology, and trades, while fostering cultural inclusivity in workplaces. Developing specialized employment programs, supporting Indigenous entrepreneurship, and creating clear career advancement pathways can help Indigenous individuals transition into stable, long-term careers.

Additionally, overcoming barriers such as systemic racism, transportation challenges, and limited childcare options is essential to ensuring Indigenous individuals can fully participate in the workforce. In Algoma, strong partnerships between Indigenous communities, local businesses, and government organizations and educational institutions will be vital in creating opportunities for employment, mentorship, and training. These efforts, coupled with initiatives focused on career development and business ownership, will not only help address regional labour shortages but also promote economic empowerment and reconciliation within Indigenous communities.

### **Upskill and Reskill the Existing Workforce**

Upskilling and reskilling the existing workforce are essential strategies for addressing labour shortages, improving productivity, and ensuring workers can adapt to evolving industries now and for the future.

Upskilling the workforce involves providing employees with access to industry-recognized certifications and advanced training that help them stay competitive and relevant in their fields. For example, in sectors like healthcare, certifications in emerging technologies or specialized care techniques ensure that employees remain at the forefront of advancements, directly benefiting organizational growth. Additionally, developing leadership, communication, and critical thinking skills prepares employees for higher responsibility roles and fosters a culture of innovation and collaboration within organizations. Equipping workers with essential digital skills, such as the use of new software, automation systems, and cybersecurity knowledge, is increasingly important as technology plays a central role in modern business. Furthermore, cross-training employees in multiple roles increases workforce flexibility, reduces labour gaps, and helps organizations quickly adapt to changing demands, ultimately improving retention and job satisfaction. These strategies collectively contribute to a more adaptable, skilled, and engaged workforce.

Reskilling involves retraining employees for entirely new roles or fields to meet evolving industry demands, especially in sectors undergoing technological changes or economic disruptions, such as the transition from traditional manufacturing to automation or modernization. Reskilling efforts typically include targeted training programs that help workers move into in-demand fields like software development, data science, renewable energy, or artificial intelligence. Partnerships with

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<sup>38</sup> [https://npi.communityaccounts.ca/profiles.asp?\\_vb7En4WVgYaSpHVpVWmR&utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://npi.communityaccounts.ca/profiles.asp?_vb7En4WVgYaSpHVpVWmR&utm_source=chatgpt.com)



educational institutions or online learning platforms can offer flexible, accessible learning opportunities. In industries like steel or mining, where automation or economic shifts may lead to job displacement, sector-specific transition support is crucial. Reskilling initiatives in these sectors can guide workers into growing industries such as construction or renewable energy, addressing skills gaps and ensuring smooth transitions. Collaboration between governments, employers, and training providers can further enhance reskilling by offering incentives, wage subsidies, or financial support for retraining programs.

The benefits of reskilling are significant. It helps improve employee retention by demonstrating a commitment to career development, thereby reducing turnover costs. Reskilled workforces are more adaptable to changing market conditions, boosting organizational flexibility, productivity, and innovation. Furthermore, employees who feel their skills are being developed are more likely to remain engaged and satisfied, which positively impacts overall organizational performance. Companies that offer reskilling opportunities are also more attractive to top talent, ensuring they remain competitive in the labour market.

## **Conclusion**

The district faces numerous challenges as its population size, age structure, and diversity shift, with significant impacts on the labour force. The author of this report hopes that the data analysis presented will help community leaders and decision-makers better understand the key concerns and priorities within the labour force. The report also aims to offer mitigation strategies and ideas, alongside insights from the *"Global Talent, Local Solutions"* report, to support leaders in responding more effectively to demographic changes.

While challenges related to an aging and declining population are significant, these demographic shifts should also be seen as an opportunity. By reengineering places, programs, policies, and processes through an equity and inclusion lens, there is potential to create more just and equitable communities. This approach can have positive effects on issues such as poverty, crime, and mental health. Furthermore, applying equity and inclusion principles to decision-making can promote greater diversity, participation, and democracy in the workforce and surrounding communities. Research shows that greater diversity, supported by inclusive and equitable practices, leads to higher productivity, increased innovation, improved staff satisfaction, reduced turnover and absenteeism, lower overhead costs, and increased revenue generation.

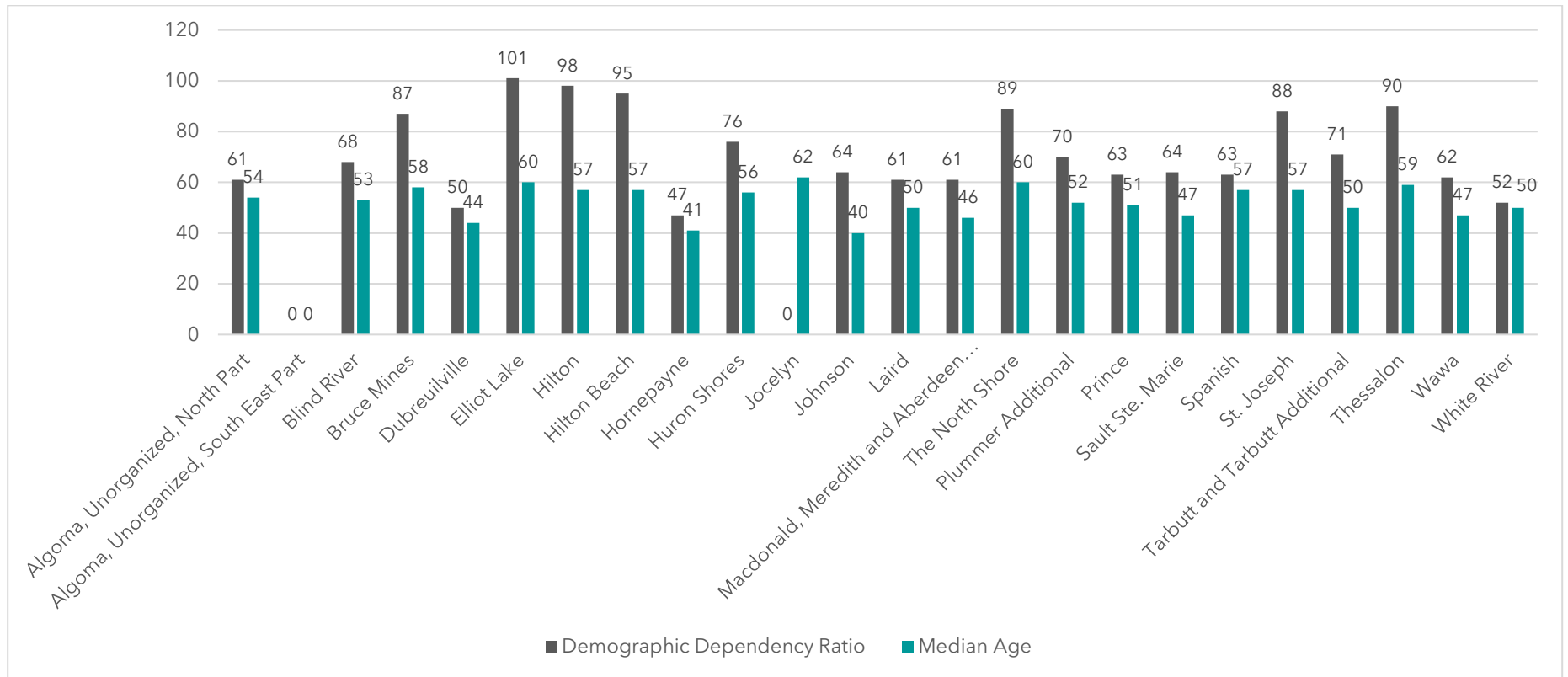
The future of Algoma District and its labour force, including both mature workers and others, holds great promise. As Captain Jean-Luc Picard from Star Trek famously said, we only need to "make it so."

# Appendices

Please note all data used in the following appendices is taken from the 2021 Statistics Canada Census

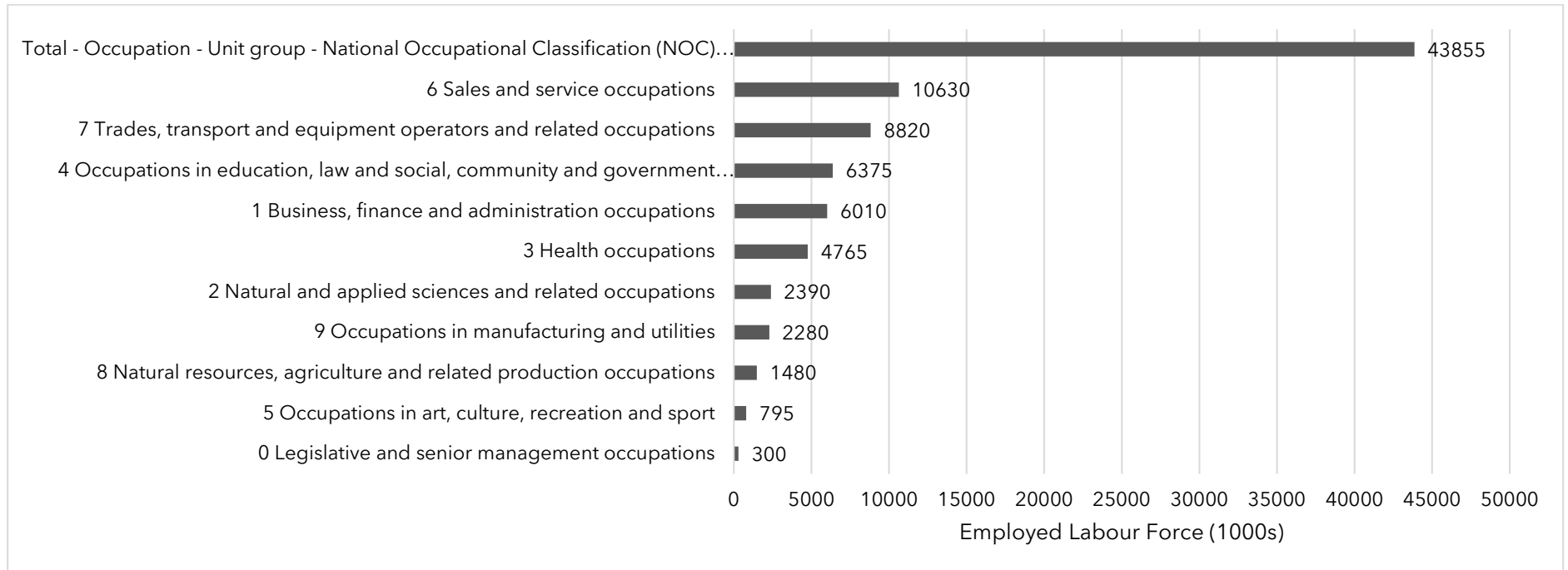
## Appendix 1

Demographic Dependency Ratios and Median Age by Census Subdivisions (Algoma Census Division 2021)



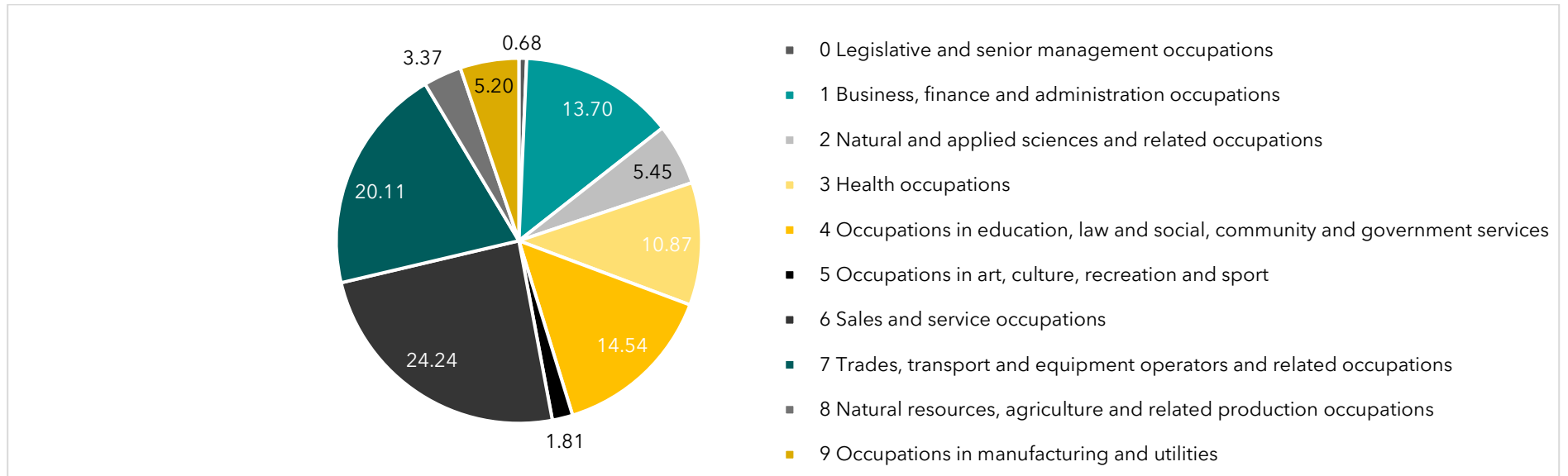
## Appendix 2

### Algoma Census Division - Size of Employed Labour Force by Broad Occupational Category



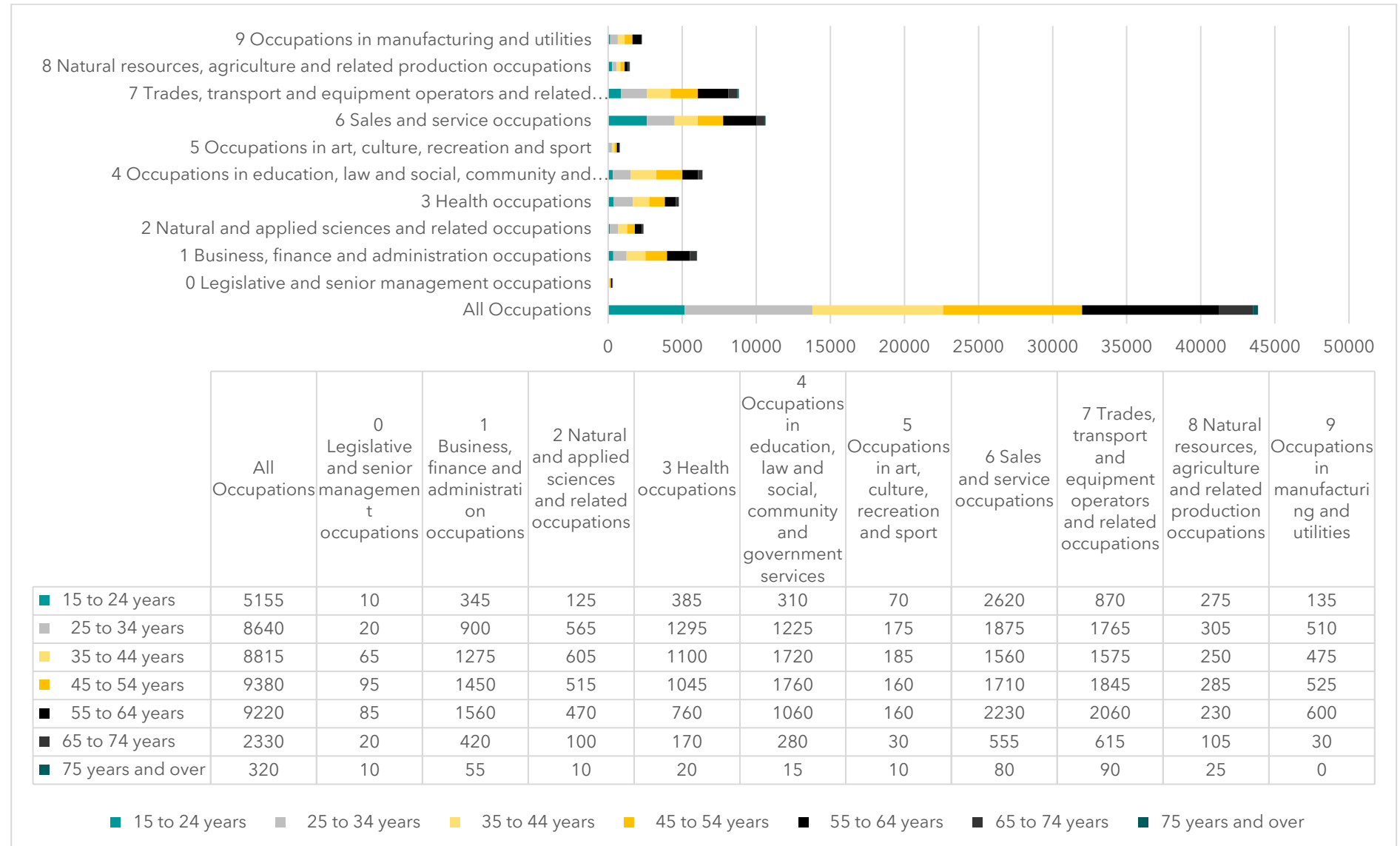
### Appendix 3

Algoma District Employed Labour Force by % of Total Algoma District Employment and Broad Occupational Category



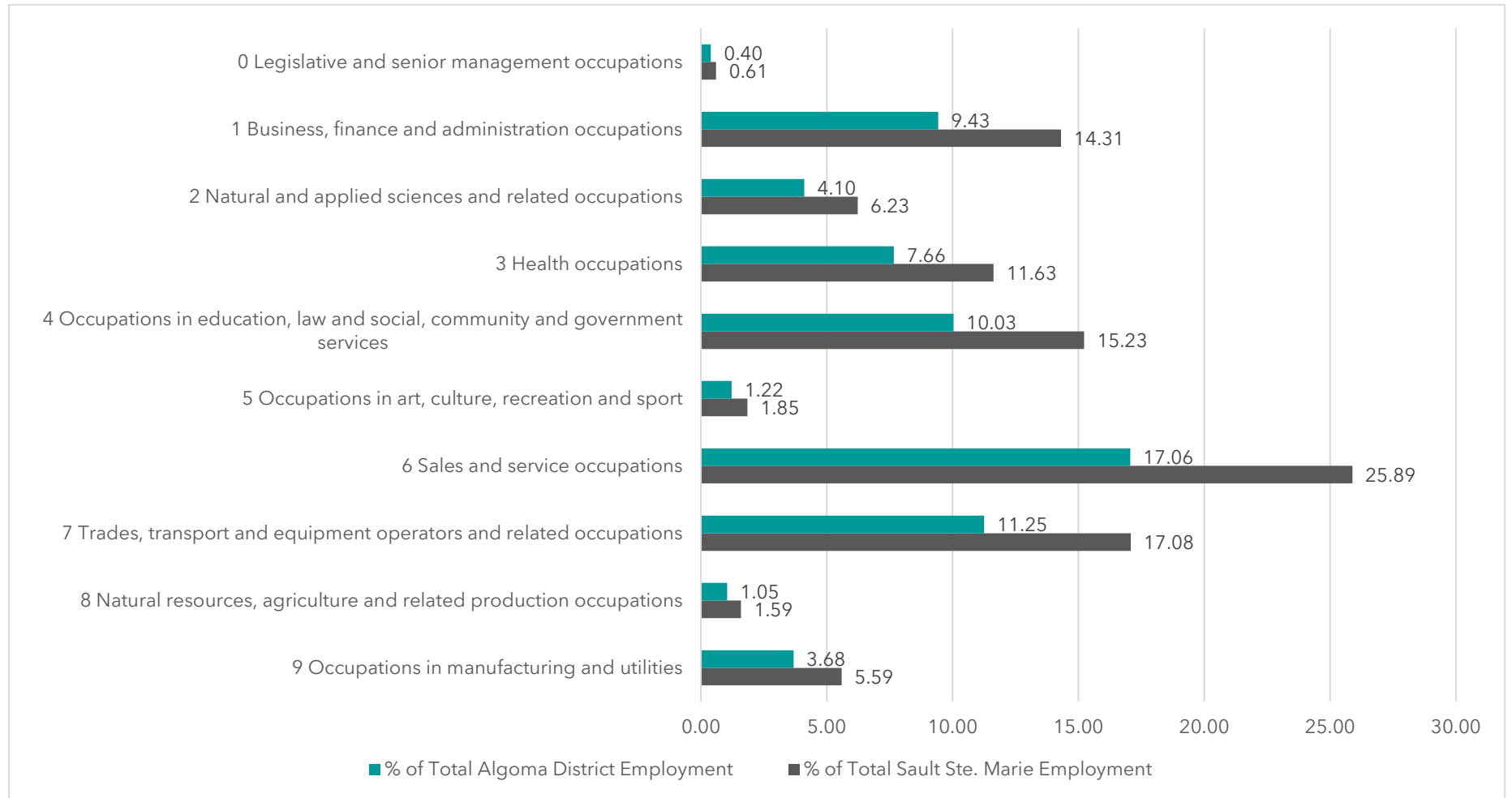
## Appendix 4

### Algoma Census Division - Employed Labour Force by Age Groupings and Broad Occupational Categories



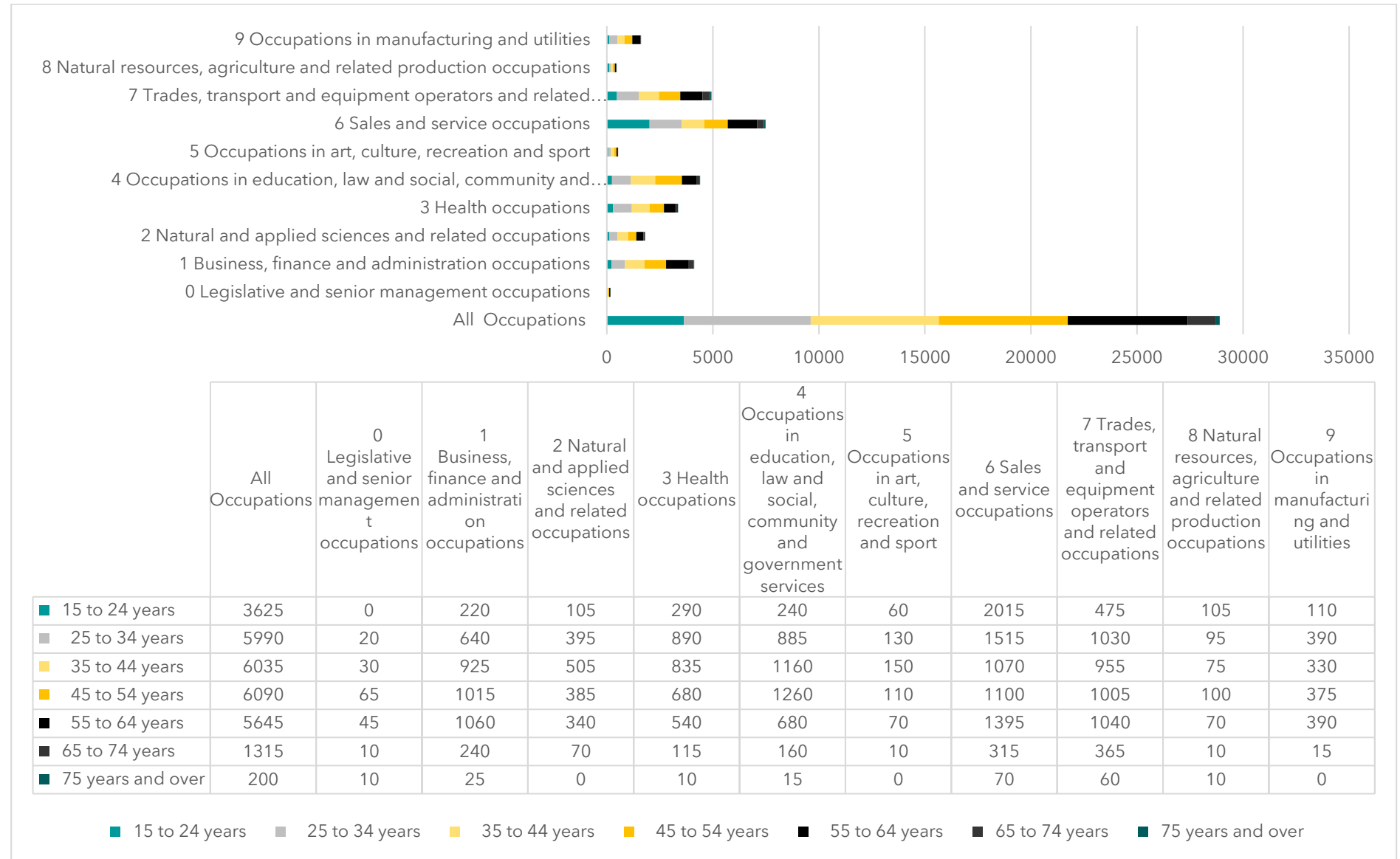
## Appendix 5

### Sault Ste. Marie Census Subdivision by Broad Occupational Category



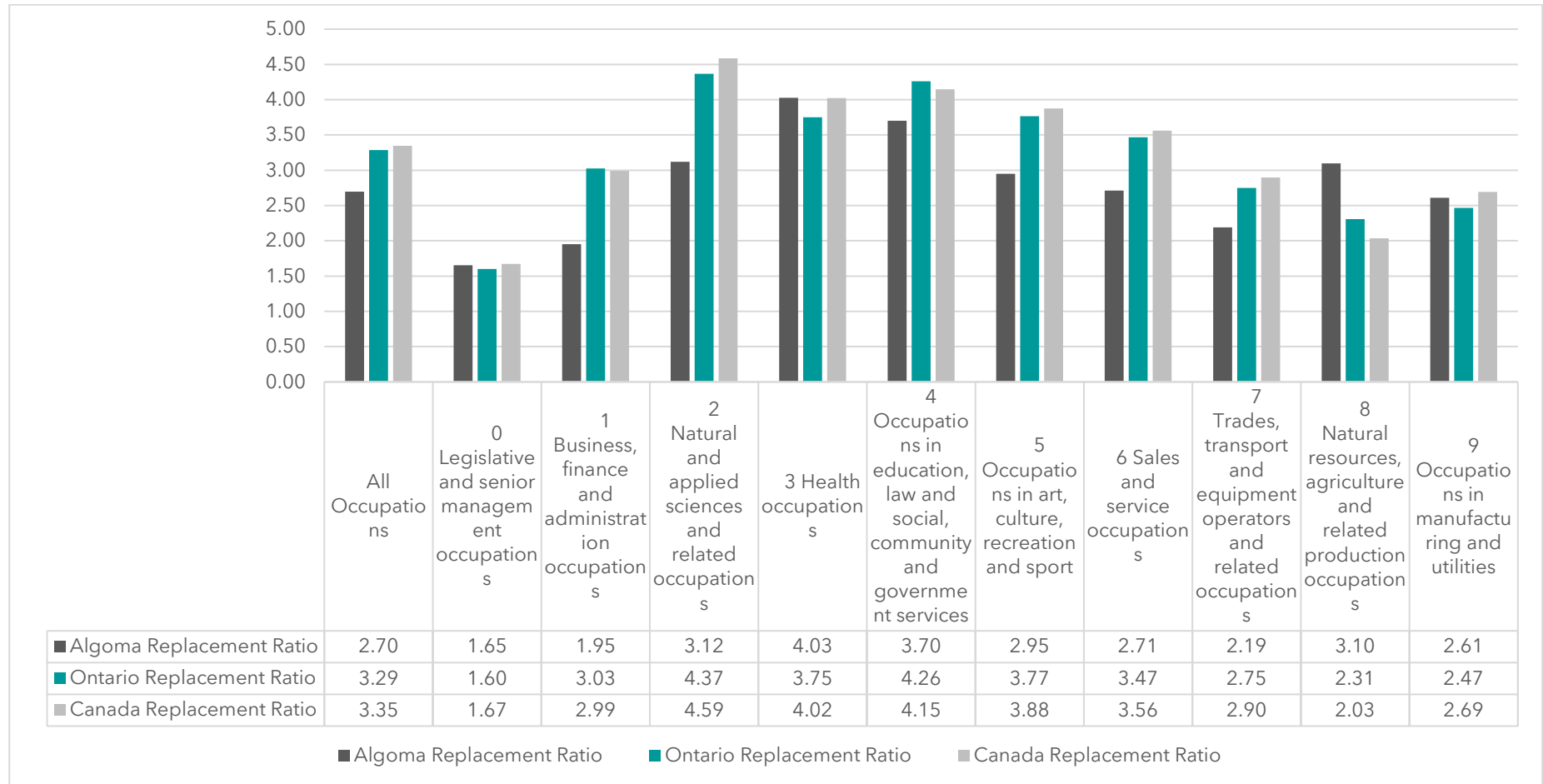
## Appendix 6

### Sault Ste. Marie Census Subdivision - Employed Labour Force by Age Groupings and Broad Occupational Categories



## Appendix 7

Broad Occupational Categories by Replacement Ratio (Algoma, Ontario, Canada)





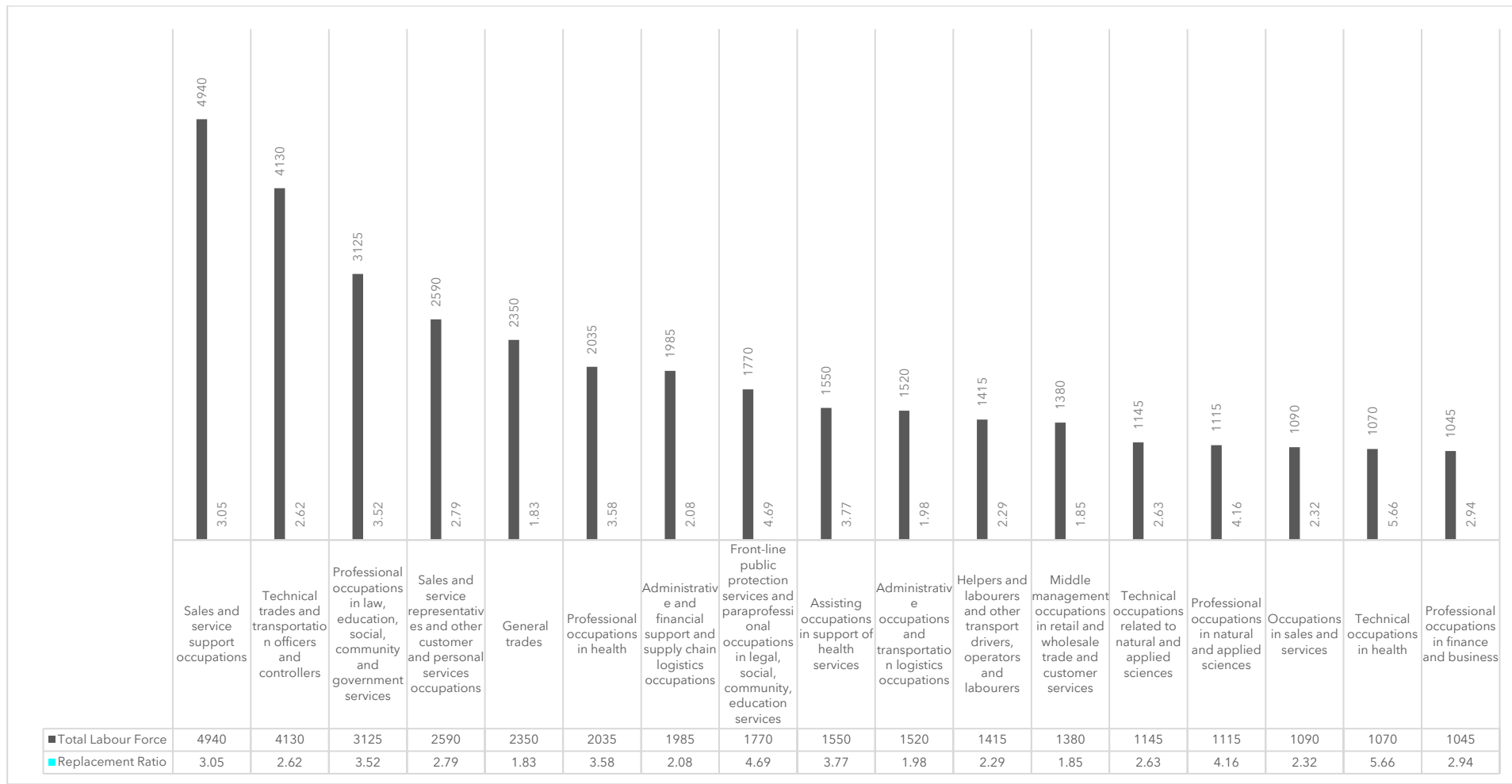
## Appendix 8

<b>Algoma Census Division (Replacement Ratio High to Low)</b>		
<b>Occupation (NOC Major Group)</b>	<b>Total Labour Force</b>	<b>Replacement Ratio</b>
Support occupations in sport	155	14.50
Supervisors in natural resources, agriculture and related production	150	8.00
Technical occupations in health	1070	5.66
Occupations in natural resources and related production	385	4.85
Front-line public protection services and paraprofessional occupations in legal, social, community, education services	1770	4.69
Workers in natural resources, agriculture and related production	135	4.40
Specialized middle management occupations in health care	105	4.25
Professional occupations in natural and applied sciences	1115	4.16
Assisting occupations in education and in legal and public protection	785	3.94
Technical occupations in art, culture and sport	225	3.89
Assisting occupations in support of health services	1550	3.77
Harvesting, landscaping and natural resources labourers	445	3.63
Professional occupations in health	2035	3.58
Professional occupations in law, education, social, community and government services	3125	3.52
Retail sales and service supervisors and specialized occupations in sales and services	625	3.34
Processing, manufacturing and utilities supervisors and utilities operators and controllers	510	3.17
Sales and service support occupations	4940	3.05
Professional occupations in finance and business	1045	2.94
Care providers and legal and public protection support occupations	195	2.90
Specialized middle management occupations in engineering, architecture, science and information systems	135	2.86
Central control and process operators and aircraft assembly assemblers and inspectors	135	2.86
Labourers in processing, manufacturing and utilities	755	2.85
Managers in public administration, in education and social and community services and in public protection services	460	2.79
Sales and service representatives and other customer and personal services occupations	2590	2.79
Specialized middle management occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport	55	2.67
Technical occupations related to natural and applied sciences	1145	2.63
Technical trades and transportation officers and controllers	4130	2.62
Middle management occupations in manufacturing and utilities	180	2.60
Occupations in art, culture and sport	165	2.33
Occupations in sales and services	1090	2.32
Helpers and labourers and other transport drivers, operators and labourers	1415	2.29
Mail and message distribution, other transport equipment operators and related maintenance workers	460	2.14
Machine operators, assemblers and inspectors in processing, manufacturing and printing	700	2.11
Administrative and financial support and supply chain logistics occupations	1985	2.08
Administrative occupations and transportation logistics occupations	1520	1.98
Middle management occupations in retail and wholesale trade and customer services	1380	1.85
General trades	2350	1.83
Specialized middle management occupations in administrative services, financial and business services and communication (except broadcasting)	645	1.80
Legislative and senior managers	300	1.65
Professional occupations in art and culture	200	1.53

Middle management occupations in production and agriculture	325	1.29
Middle management occupations in trades and transportation	470	1.14
Administrative and financial supervisors and specialized administrative occupations	825	1.09
Student monitors, crossing guards and related occupations	50	1.00

## Appendix 9

### Algoma Census Division - Ranked Occupational Major Groupings (Labour Force 1000+) and Replacement Ratio







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