



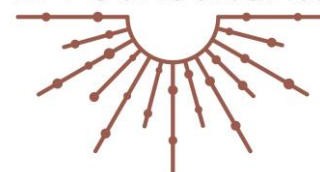
Shared Success Midpoint Evaluation Overview

March, 2025

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EA Consultants



**ECONOMIC
OPPORTUNITIES
PROGRAM**



Summary



- 213 respondents were surveyed combining online, phone, and in-person surveys over a period of 3.5 months. Of these, 189 were aware that they had received JQ support, primarily through courses and one-on-one advisory.
- Respondent businesses were primarily women-owned, and founders were mostly black or white with a low participation of Hispanic and Asian owners. 66% of businesses have W2 workers, with a median of 10 workers per business.
- 74% of respondent businesses reported making job quality improvements since the start of the Project. Half reported creating more supportive work environments and over a third increased worker skills and compensation.
- One third of businesses reported adding employee benefits since baseline. The main employee benefits offered at midline are PTO (69%), paid sick leave (56%), health insurance (54%), and professional development opportunities (50%). These have both financial and opportunity costs to firms.
- Owners cite increasing productivity, enhancing company reputation, and fostering a positive workplace culture as the drivers for interest in improving job quality.
- While businesses report that more productive and supportive workplaces are strong motivators to make job quality improvements, retention is a lesser factor, *perhaps* because many of the respondent businesses are in industries with typically high worker turnover rates and due to their size, limited possibility for promotion.
- Businesses report that cost is the primary constraint on investing in job quality improvements, suggesting that improvements in the business (increasing revenue and profit) could enable investments in better jobs. About 20% of businesses also cite the time required for making job quality changes as a barrier.
- Offering health insurance and retirement benefits are the job quality improvements business owners most commonly report wanting to make. Childcare benefits are consistently low on the list of benefits offered and planned.
- Additional qualitative interviews are underway to delve into contextual differences, decision-making processes, and links to business outcomes.

Shared Success Overview

The Shared Success Project aims to **advance job quality, equity, and small business prosperity in the United States**. Importantly, **job quality**, as defined within the scope of the project, **includes a broad ranging set of features that drive worker experience**.

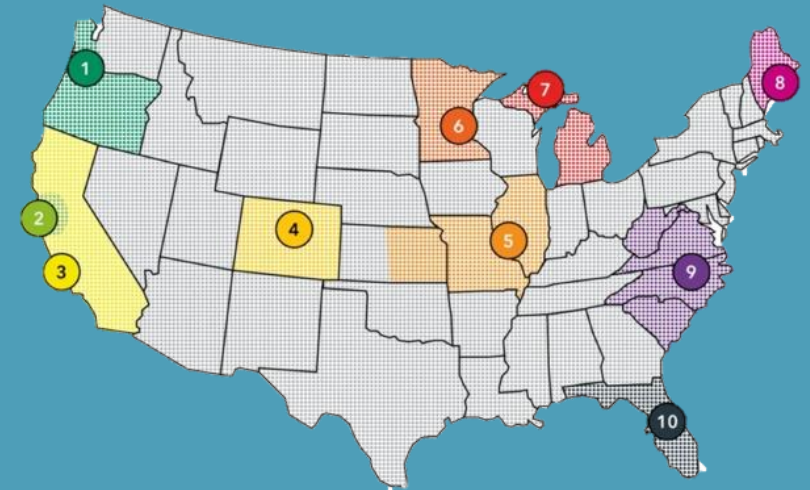
Improving job quality for low-wage, BIPOC workers **requires a focus on small businesses**:

- ~ 60% of low-wage workers are employed at businesses with fewer than 100 employees
- 35% of low-wage workers employed at micro-businesses with fewer than 10 employees

The 11 CDFIs participating in Shared Success integrate advisory services, messaging, and supports into their service model to encourage and assist business clients to improve dimensions of job quality and strengthen their businesses.

The Shared Success Demonstration is managed by the Aspen Institute's Economic Opportunities Program and supported by a four-year investment from the Gates Foundation. See as.pn/sharedsuccess to learn more. Views expressed here are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect positions or policies of the foundation.

A cohort of eleven community development financial institutions (CDFIs) across the country is supported by the Aspen Institute's Economic Opportunities Program (EOP).



Guide to the Presentation

The Aspen Institute selected Financial Access Initiative at NYU Wagner and EA Consultants to conduct the evaluation of the Shared Success demonstration.

These slides summarize the results of a survey the evaluation team conducted of the Shared Success CDFI clients* as part of their evaluation work. They are organized in the following sections:

* Please note that Four Bands joined the demonstration later than the other CDFIs, and the findings from their participating businesses are not included in this presentation.

1. **Response Rates and Descriptive Statistics:** key characteristics of the respondent entrepreneurs and their businesses
2. **Job Quality Improvements:** findings about the prevalence and types of job quality improvements made by respondents
3. **Relationships between Job Quality Elements:** observations on the relationships among job quality benefits, practices and policies
4. **Learning about Job Quality:** survey respondents reports of how they get information about job quality
5. **Motivators for Job Quality Improvements:** respondents report of what personal and business factors motivate their interest in job quality
6. **Constraints to Future Job Quality Improvements:** respondents plans, aspirations, and constraints regarding future job quality improvements
7. **COVID-19 Legacy:** assessment of how the lingering effects of the pandemic influenced respondents' business and approach to job quality. This area of inquiry will not be continued in this evaluation.



Response Rates and Descriptive Statistics

Response Rates



213 total surveys online, by phone and in person* allowed for generally high response rates (n=213)

CDFI	Expected responses	Actual responses	Response rate
African Development Center (ADC)*	40	28	70%
Black Business Investment Fund (BBIF)	9	5	56%
Colorado Enterprise Fund (CEF)	29	15	52%
Coastal Enterprises, Inc. (CEI)	40	14	35%
California FarmLink	18	13	72%
ICA	40	14	35%
Institute Capital (ICAP)	9	9	100%
Justine PETERSEN (JP)	77	49	64%
Micro Enterprise Services of Oregon (MESO)	28	30	100%
Northern Initiatives (NI)	68	36	53%
TOTAL	358	213	60%

* ADC Surveys were completed primarily in person

Response Rates



Out of 213 business owners surveyed, 177 responded that they had participated in a program related to JQ.

CDFI	Number of Businesses Participating in the Project	Survey Responding Businesses	Response rate %
ADC*	40	26	65%
BBIF	9	5	56%
CEF	29	13	45%
CEI*	40	13	33%
California FarmLink	18	13	72%
ICA*	40	12	30%
ICAP	9	9	100%
JP	77	37	48%
MESO	28	25	89%
NI	68	24	35%
TOTAL	358	177	49%

24 Unaware Respondents



Out of those surveyed, 24 were not aware that they are participating in a program related to job quality and did not complete the survey.

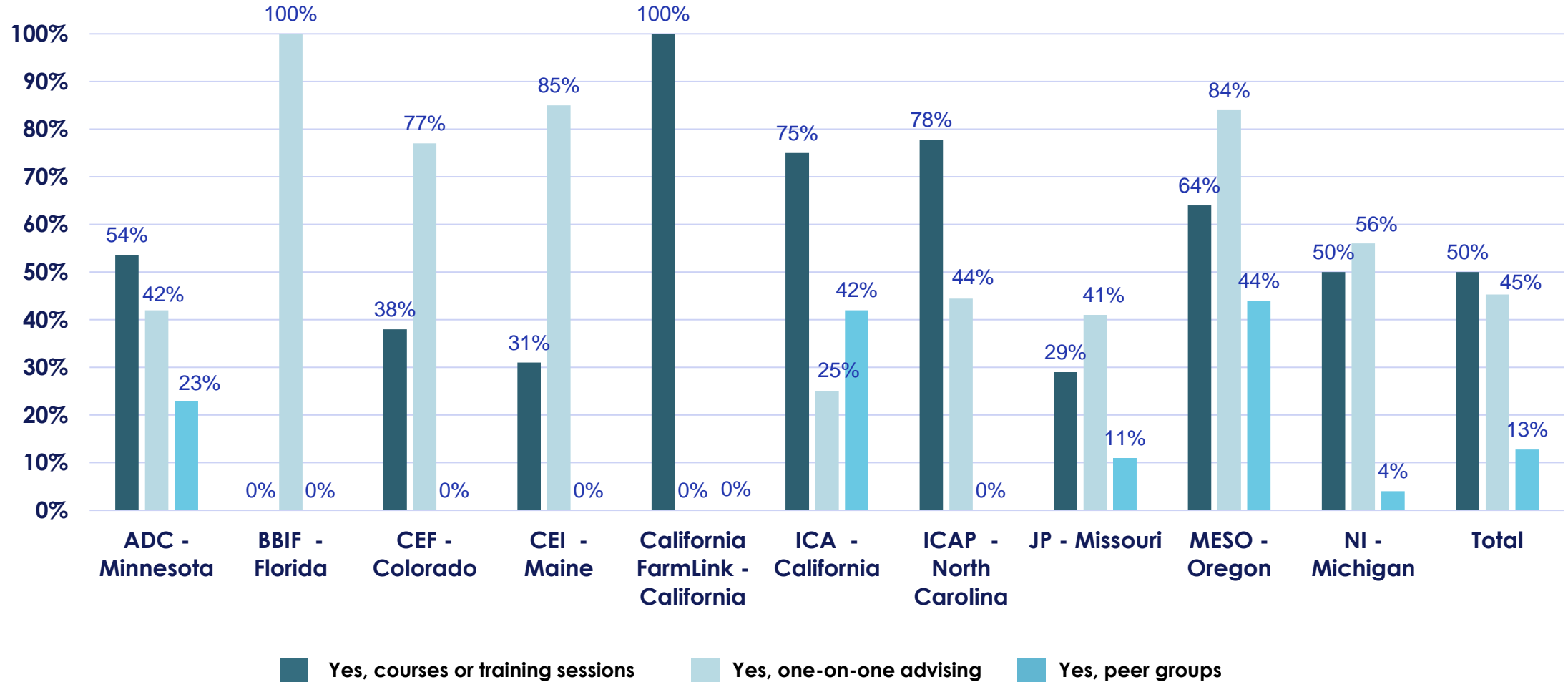
Unawareness of participation could be because job quality programming was embedded in other programs of the CDFI (e.g. Technical Advisory services).

CDFI	# of Respondents Unaware of Project Participation	Percent of Total Respondents
JP	8	33%
NI	7	29%
MESO	4	17%
CEF	2	9%
ADC	1	4%
CEI	1	4%
ICA	1	4%
Total	24	11%

Participant Understanding of CDFI JQ Interventions



*Businesses (n=177) report that they participated primarily in job quality courses or training sessions (50%) and one-on-one job quality advising (45%)**



**multiple responses allowed*

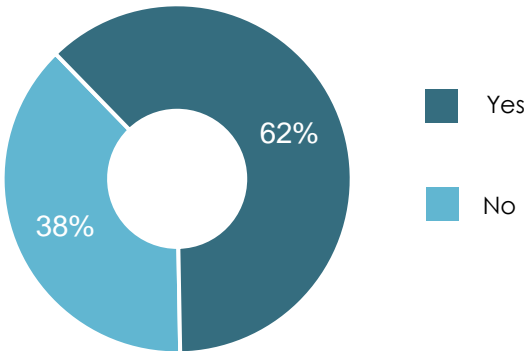
Demographic and Household Characteristics



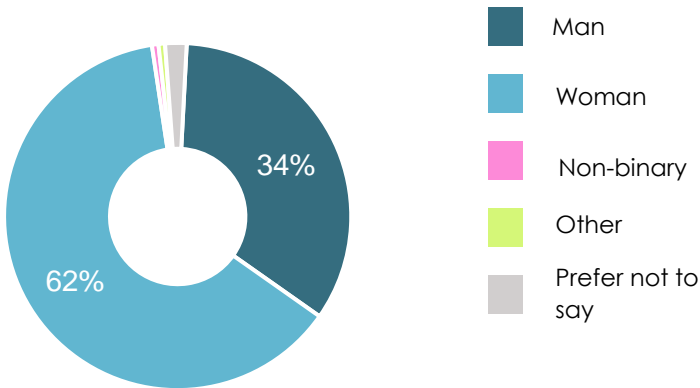
Self-reported demographic and household data (n=157)

- Black and white business owners represent the majority (67%) of respondents
- Women represent 62% of respondents
- The median reported age of the business owners is 46
- Most business owner households report making under \$200,000 in income and 17% report under \$50,000.
- The mean household size is 3.1

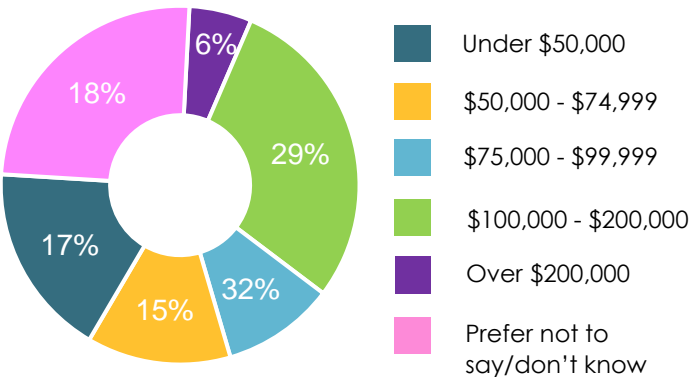
Is the business the primary source of income for your household?



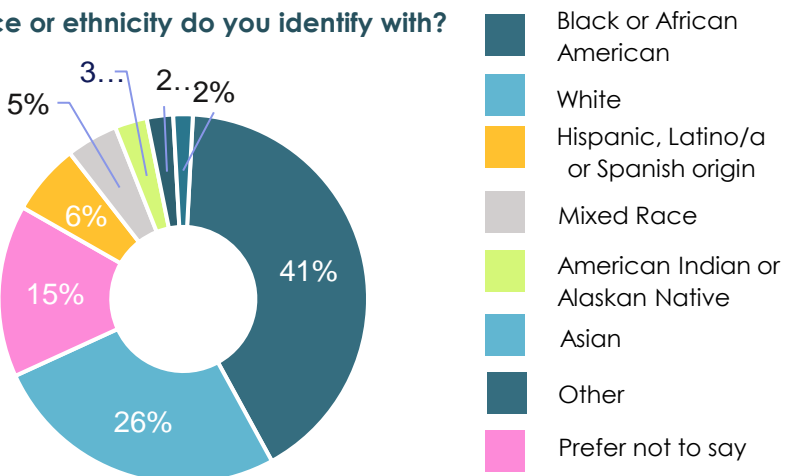
What gender do you identify as?



Approximately, what was your household's annual income in 2022?



Which race or ethnicity do you identify with?



Participating Business Profiles



Self-reported data from business owners



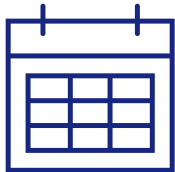
27% of businesses have more than one owner (n=177)



46% of the business owners receive a W2 at the end of the year (n=177)



66% of businesses have W2 workers with a median of 10 W2 workers (n=177)

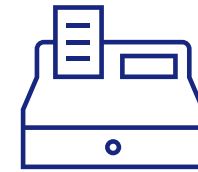


9 years is the median tenure of businesses (n=177)



The median of the minimum hourly wage is \$17.50 (n=106)

The median of the maximum hourly rate is \$27 (n=105)

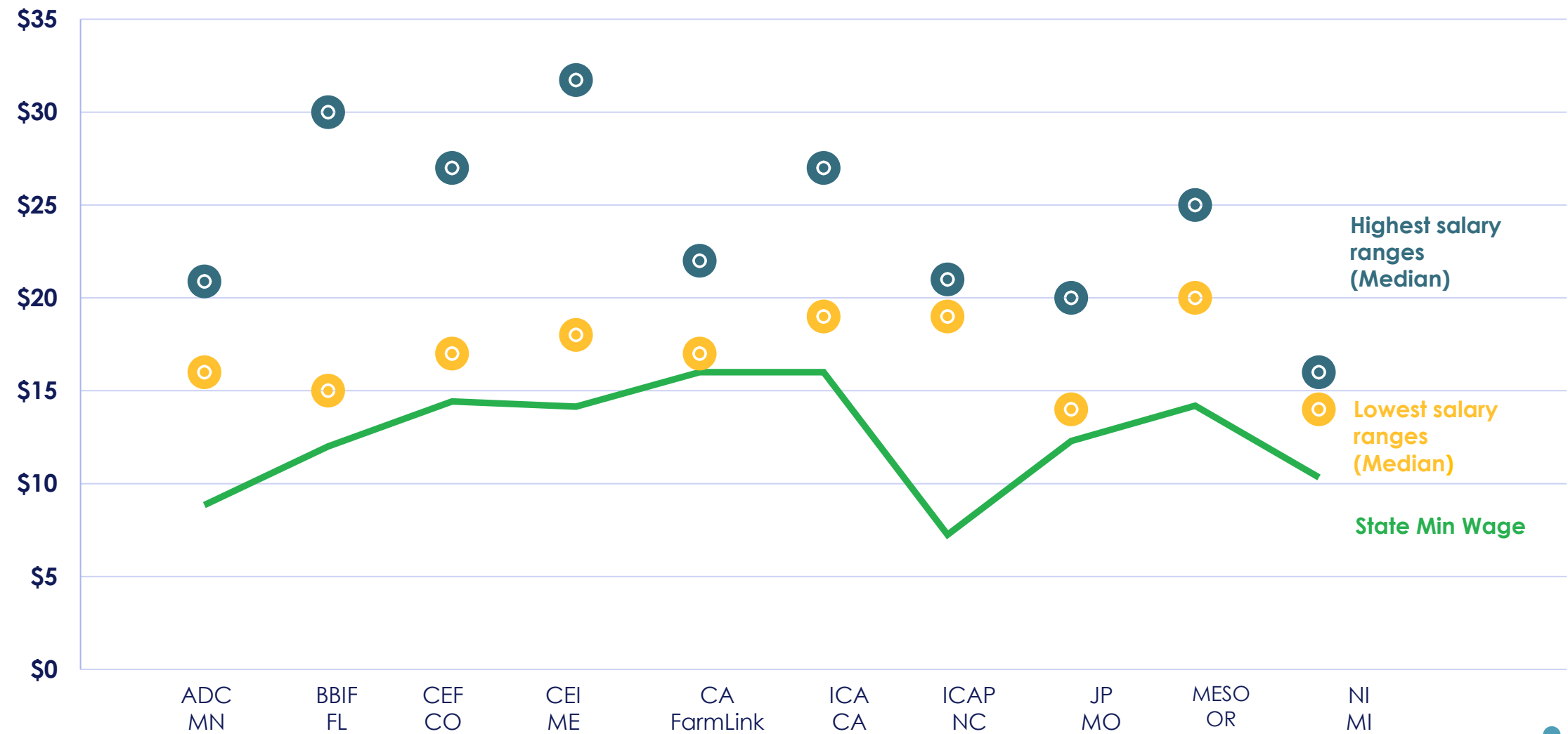


\$465,085 is the median annual revenue of businesses (n=113)

Hourly Wage Ranges vs. State Minimum Wage



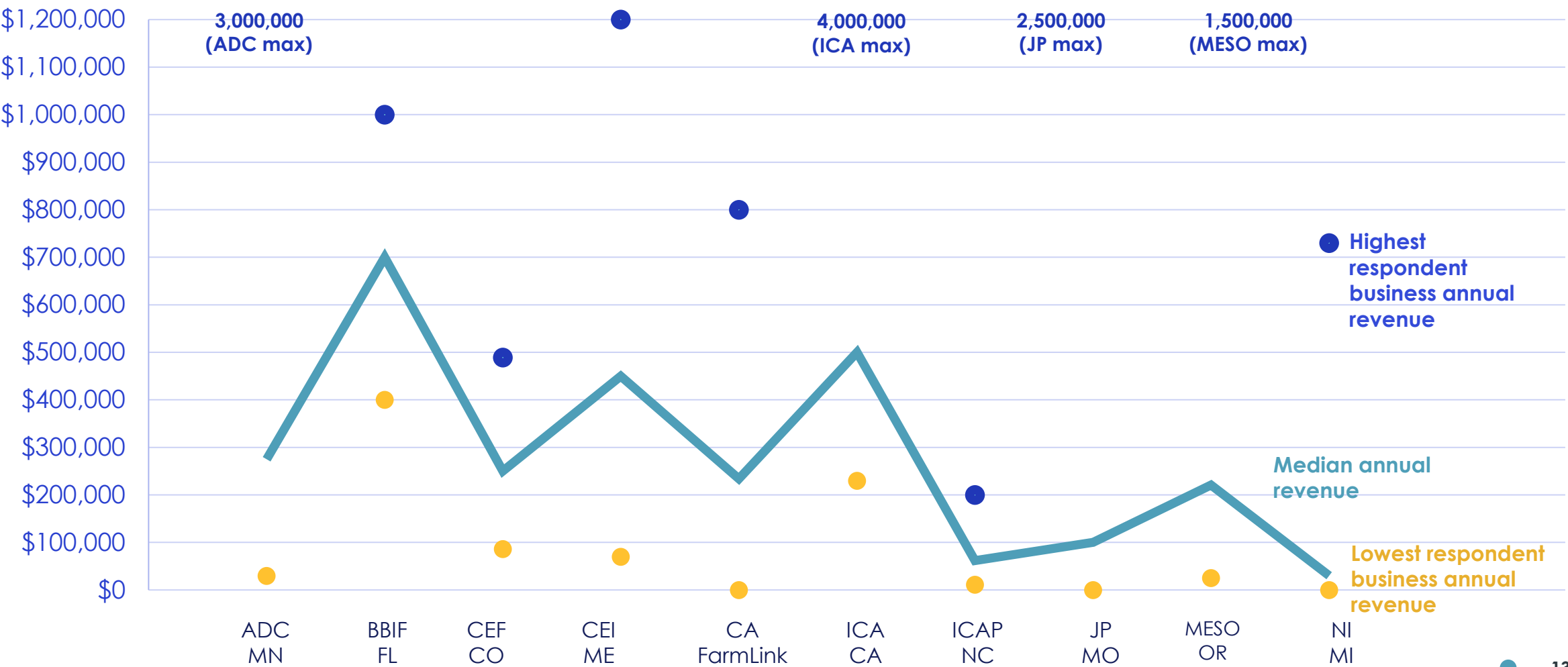
CDFIs operate in different states with different minimum wage levels. Businesses report paying hourly wages above state minimum wage levels, even for their lowest paid workers (n=105).



Businesses Revenue Ranges



Most participating businesses (77.8%) report annual revenues below \$500,000 per year in 2022 (n=117). Median revenues range by CDFI with a low of \$30,000 for businesses served by NI in Michigan and a high of \$700,000 for businesses served by BBIF in Florida





Job Quality Improvements

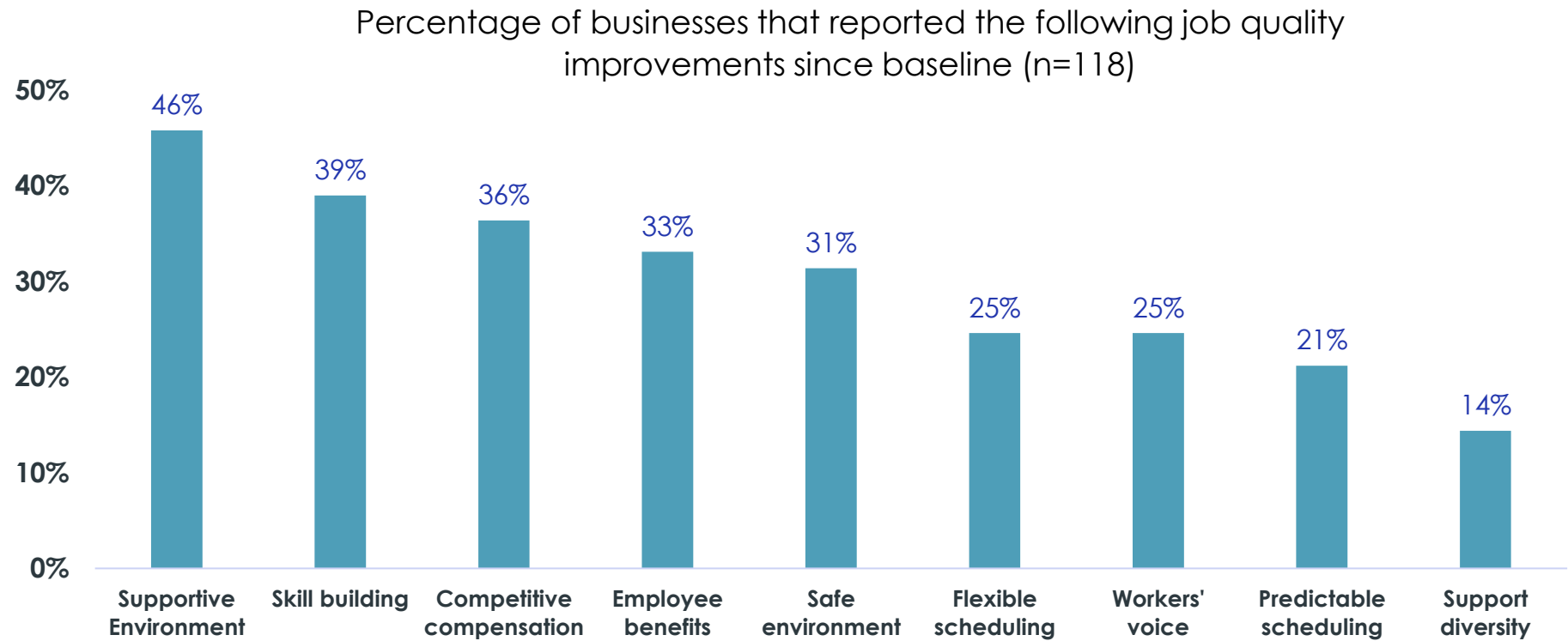
Job Quality Improvements since Baseline



- 74% of businesses report making job quality improvements from baseline, defined as one year prior to the survey
- Half of these reported creating more supportive work environments
- Over a third offered opportunities to build skills and advance, competitive compensation, and safer working conditions
- One third of businesses reported improving employee benefits

74%

of businesses reported making job quality improvements since baseline (n=159)



Specific Job Quality *Benefits* Offered at Midline



At mid-line, businesses most commonly report offering the following benefits: **PTO, paid sick leave, health insurance and professional development opportunities.**

These have both financial and opportunity costs to firms.

Benefit	% of businesses that offer this benefit (n = 68)
Paid time off (PTO) for vacations or personal days	72%
Paid sick leave (specific only to illness)	57%
Health insurance coverage (partial or full), and/or access to health insurance	56%
Professional development opportunities outside the workplace	51%
Unpaid family, medical, or personal leave	50%
Retirement plans (with employee and/or company contributions)	44%
Access to supplementary insurance such as life, dental, or vision insurance	39%
Transportation, food, and other allowances	24%
Childcare benefits	24%
Wellness programs, including reimbursements	22%
Employee Assistance Program (EAP), such as support with financial, mental health, or substance abuse	8%
Housing for seasonal workers	7%

Job Quality Elements Businesses are Most Proud of



Responses from an open-ended survey question, **“If you would like to, please describe in your own words any of these employee benefits or policies that you are particularly proud of”** suggest that businesses have diverse motivations and strategies for job quality improvements (n=34)

“We were very excited to implement the "On-time" bonus. An additional \$1.00 bonus, per hour worked, distributed quarterly to employees who were on time for 95% or more of their scheduled shifts during that quarter.”

“We are proud to use food manufacturing as a platform for workforce development for people with unique needs such as brain injury, autism, cerebral palsy etc...We are proud of our company's diversity!”

“Treating my employees with respect and professionalism , I empower my employees to be autonomous by training them and supporting them to work efficiently within our values, philosophy and mission.”

“Access to high quality food, scheduling flexibility to accommodate the lives of employees”

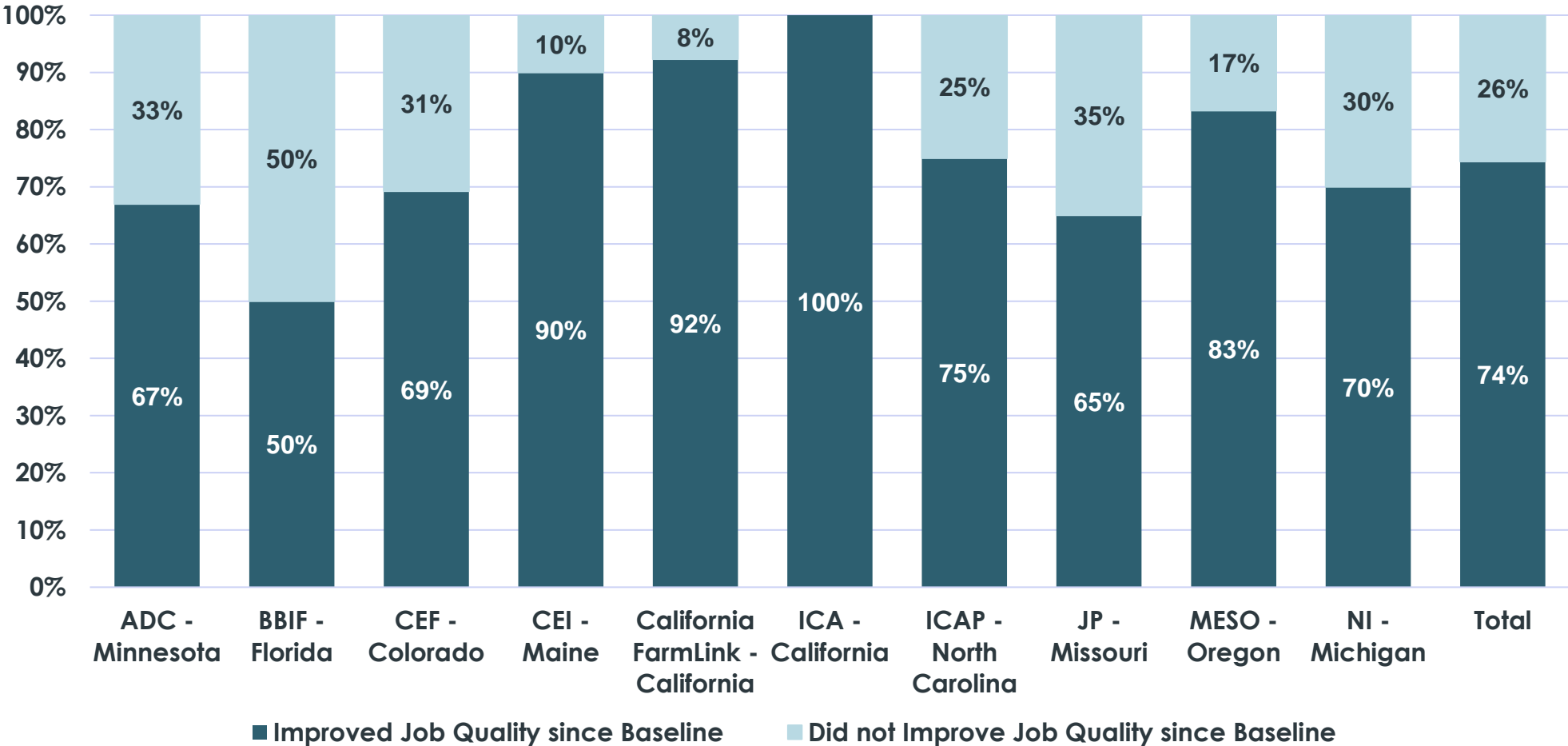
“Employee educational stipend that lets the team learn about anything that they desire.”

“The health and wellness package I just put together. Promoting exercising and self-care regularly.”

Reported Job Quality Improvements from Baseline



- All Shared Success participant CDFIs served business clients that reported improvements in job quality from baseline, defined as one year prior to the survey (n=177)
- We find no identifiable relationship between the type of job quality support offered by CDFIs and job quality improvements made by businesses





Relationships between Job Quality Elements: Benefits & Policies

Relationship between Job Quality **Benefits** Offered



PTO is the most common benefit (72%) offered by business respondents, but is usually accompanied by other benefits

EAPs are rarely offered (8%)

Most businesses who report offering childcare benefits are childcare businesses

Benefit	% of businesses that offer this (n=68)	% that offer PTO that offer this (n=50)
Paid time off (PTO) for vacations or personal days	72%	100%
Paid sick leave (specific only to illness)	57%	67%
Health insurance coverage (partial or full), and/or access to health insurance	56%	57%
Professional development opportunities outside the workplace	51%	61%
Unpaid family, medical, or personal leave	50%	59%
Retirement plans (with employee and/or company contributions)	44%	53%
Access to supplementary insurance such as life, dental, or vision insurance	39%	43%
Transportation, food, and other allowances	24%	22%
Childcare benefits	24%	33%
Wellness programs, including reimbursements	22%	22%
Employee Assistance Program (EAP), such as support with financial, mental health, or substance abuse	8%	12%
Housing for seasonal workers	7%	8%

Most Common Job Quality **Benefit Cluster**

93%

Of businesses offering any
benefits offer more than one
benefit (n = 68)

Businesses most commonly report offering a benefit cluster
that combines paid and unpaid benefits.

This cluster has both a financial cost and an opportunity cost
to the employer.

Most common benefit cluster

1. PTO
2. Paid sick leave
3. Professional development
4. Unpaid leave

Relationship between Job Quality *Practices and Policies* Offered



79%

offer more than one policy, with a median of 4 policies (out of 6)

Businesses report that on-the-job worker coaching, mentoring and support (policies) are most common job quality policies and practices implemented.

79% of businesses report offering clusters of job quality practices and policies rather than only one (n=63).

Job quality practices/policies	% of businesses that offer this policy (n=63)	% that offer on-the-job coaching / mentoring (n=44) that also offer this policy
On-the-job worker coaching, mentoring and support (policies)	61%	100%
Predictable scheduling policies	58%	73%
Bonuses and incentives (policies)	57%	66%
Flexible work arrangements (remote work/flextime)	47%	59%
Worker safety programs and accommodation	44%	61%
Policies and practices to improve diversity	42%	55%
Other	3%	2%



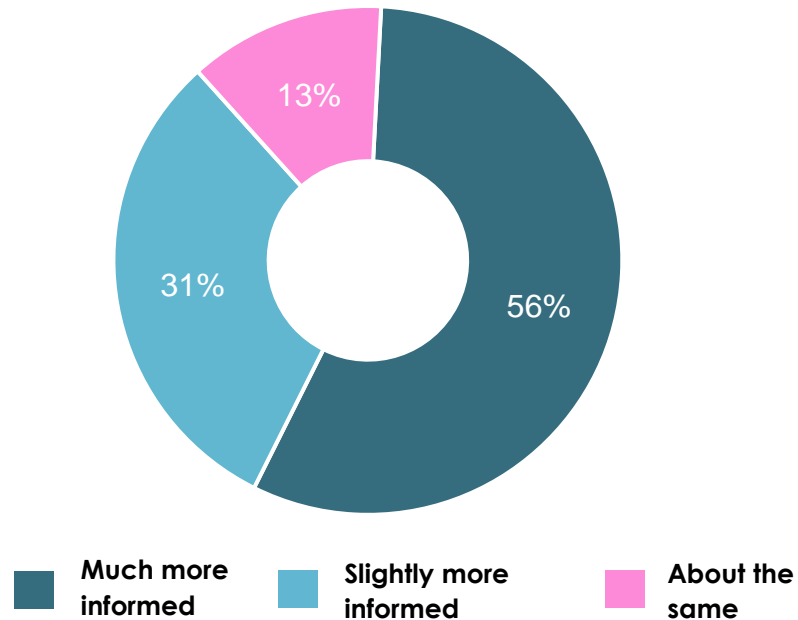
Learning about Job Quality

Job Quality Knowledge

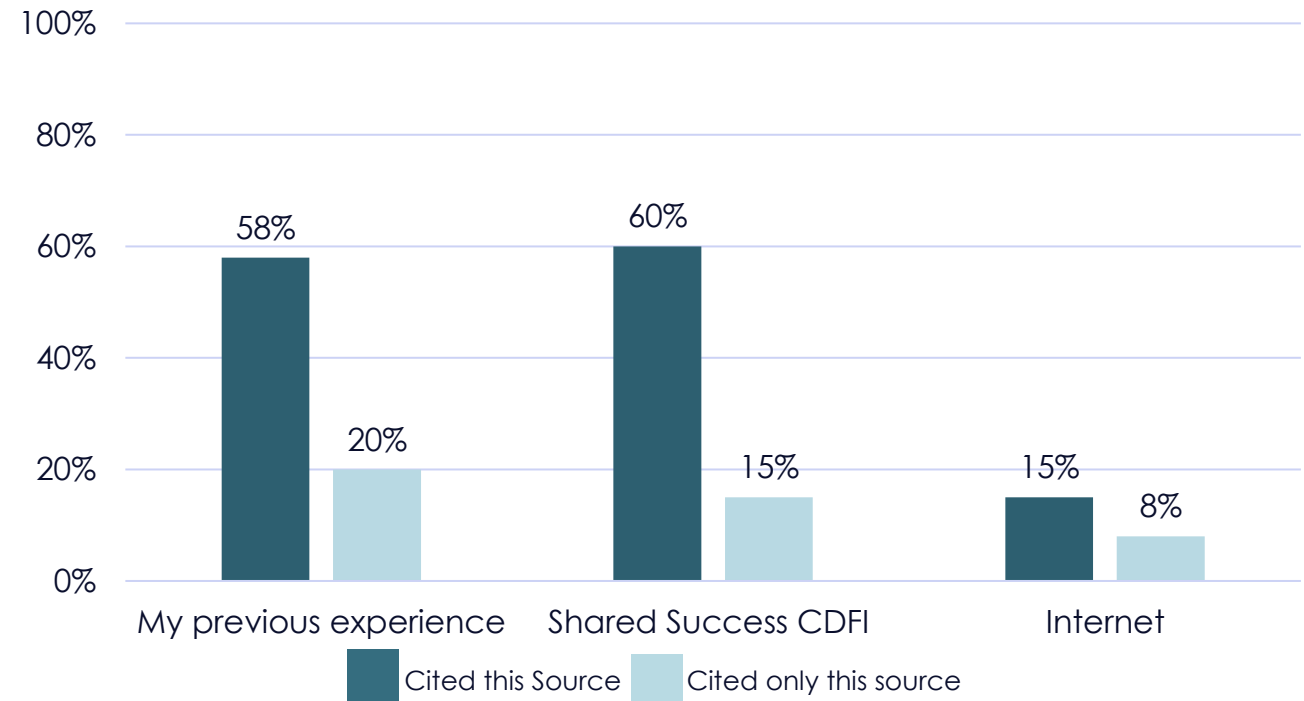


- 87% of businesses reported that they are more informed about job quality improvements compared to two years prior to midline and before the Shared Success Project began
- 60% of businesses report learning about job quality from CDFIs
- Businesses report using multiple resources, including their own experience to inform themselves about job quality

Do you feel that you are more informed now about how to improve the quality of the jobs in your business than two years ago? (n=159)



What are the sources you use to inform yourself about job quality?
Select all that apply (n=154)





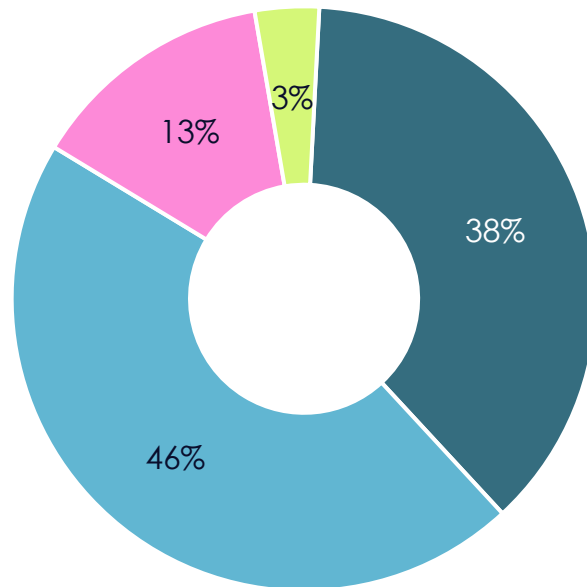
Motivators for Job Quality Improvements

Rationale for Job Quality Improvements



84% of businesses believe job quality is very important for their business or have a clear strategy for job quality

Which of these best describes how your business thinks about job quality? (n=160)



- My business has a clear idea of what job quality is and has a strategy to use our resources to improve job quality
- Job quality is important to my business, and we are taking steps toward improving job quality
- Job quality is not currently an area of focus in my business, but we are interested in learning more
- We are not interested in working on job quality issues at this time

Rationale for Job Quality Improvements



Businesses report productivity as a more important factor driving job quality improvements than regulation—they are not just meeting minimum standards. Business rank attracting and retaining talent relatively lowly compared to a positive work environment.

Ranking of strategic business factors that influence job quality initiatives (n=170)

1st choice

Increasing workplace productivity

2nd choice

Meeting regulatory requirements

3rd choice

Strengthening community relations

4th choice

Improving company reputation

5th choice

Adapting to industry trends

Ranking of employee-related factors that influence job quality initiatives (n=170)

1st choice

Fostering a positive workplace culture

2nd choice

Addressing employee well-being

3rd choice

Improving employee satisfaction

4th choice

Enhancing employee retention

5th choice

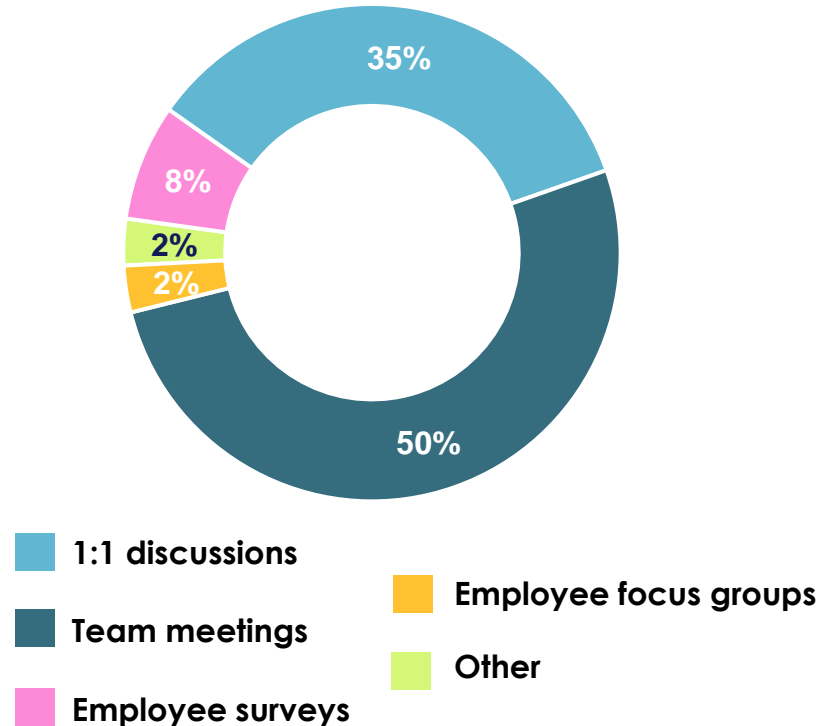
Attracting top talent

Perceptions of Workers' Priorities

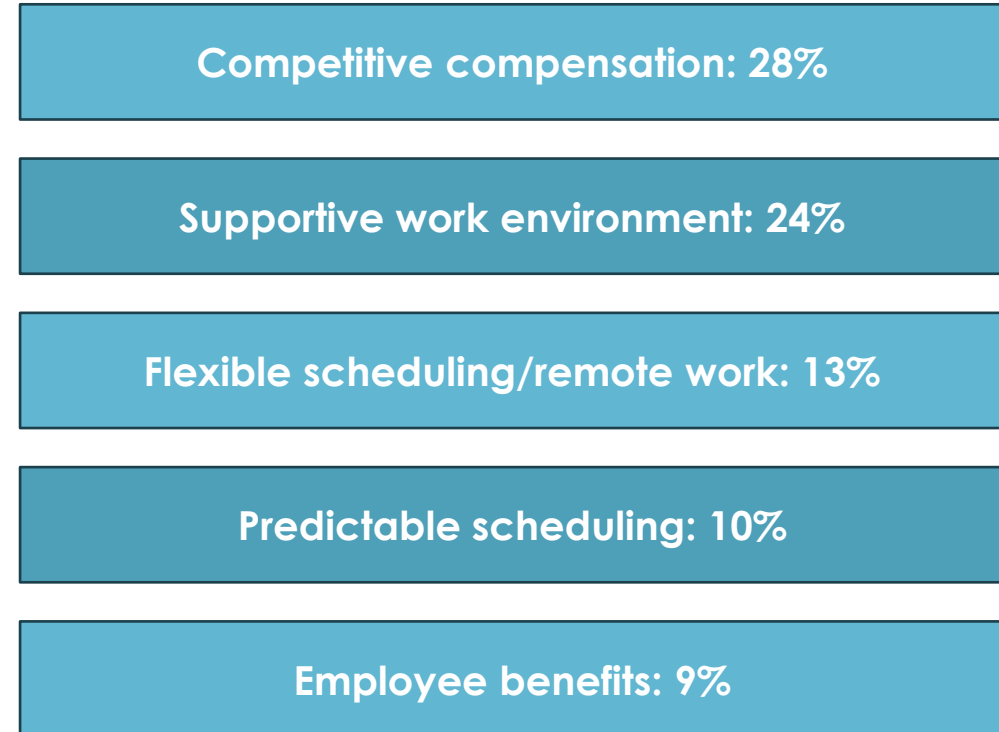


Business owners believe workers highly value a supportive work environment, nearly as much as competitive wages. Team meetings and one-on-one discussions are the most common way they report soliciting worker input.

Do you ask your employees for input
about their jobs?
(n=66)



Which of these issues is most important for
your employees?
Please choose one (n=68)





Constraints to Future Job Quality Improvements

Future Plans for Job Quality Improvements

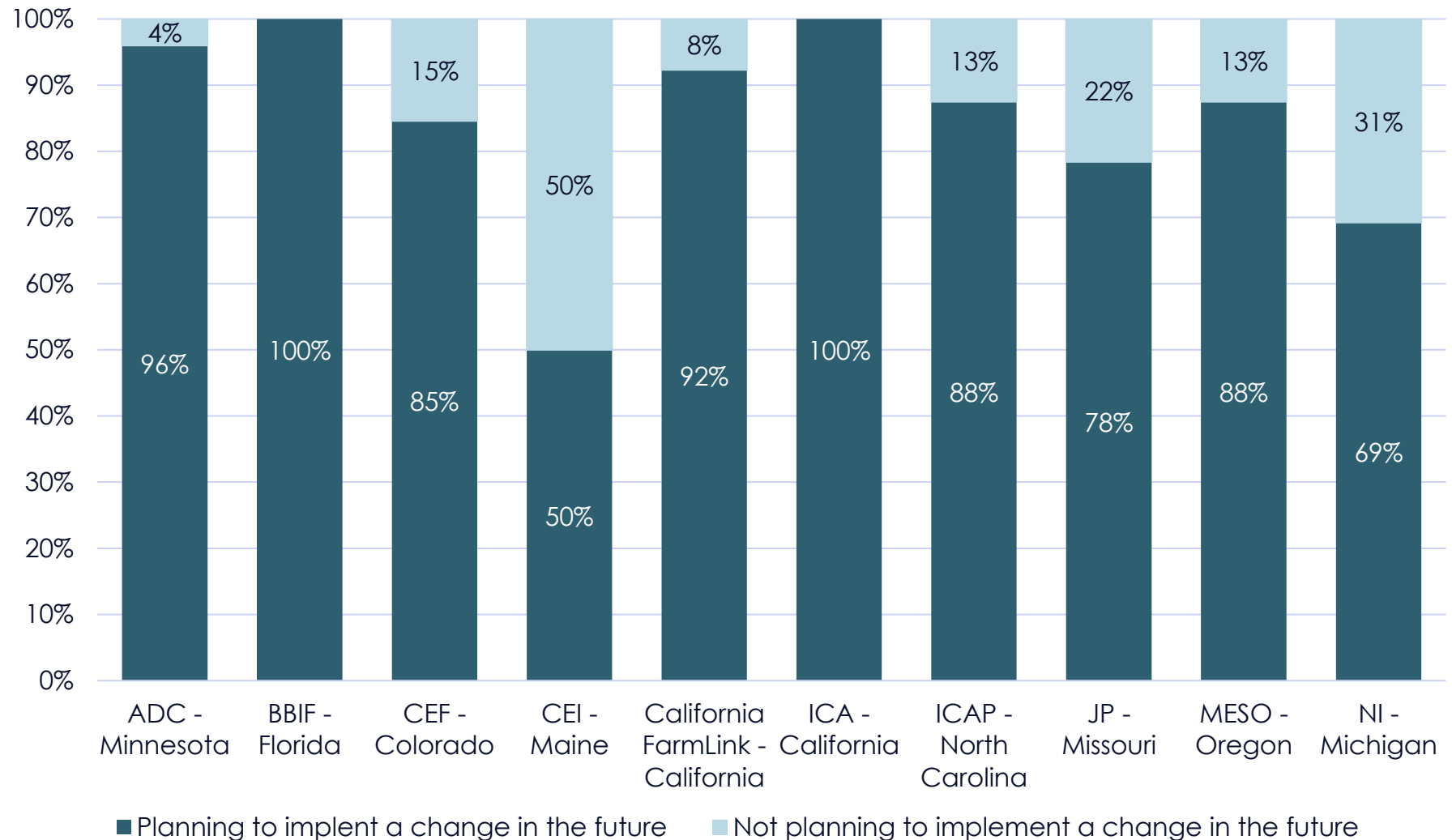


83%

are planning to implement
job quality improvements in
the near or medium future
(n = 158)

**83% of businesses report
plans to make further
investments in job quality
in the future**

**This figure is consistently
high across CDFI business
cohorts**

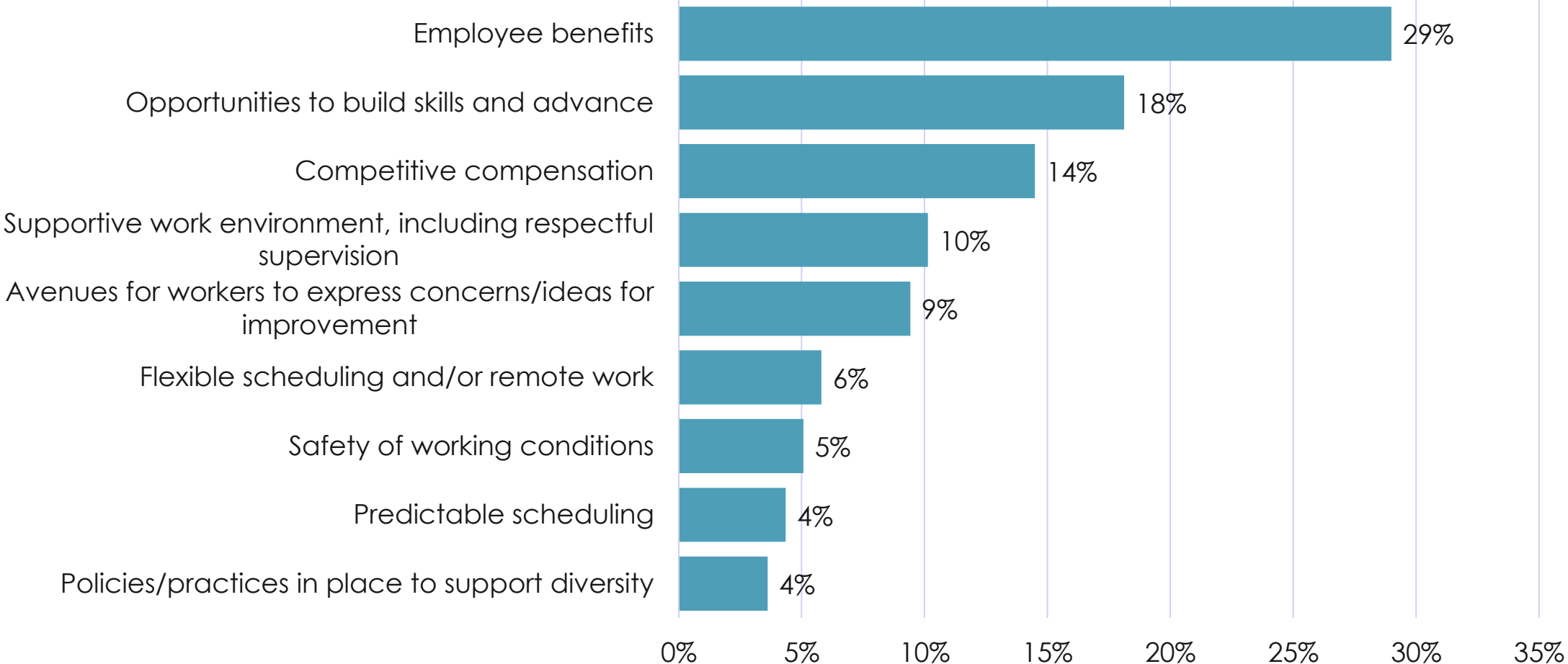


Prioritization of Job Quality Improvements



Businesses report plans to make quality improvements that prioritize worker benefits and professional growth

What are you planning to implement first? (n=138)



Constraints to Job Quality Improvements



Businesses report that financial constraints are the main barrier to investing in job quality

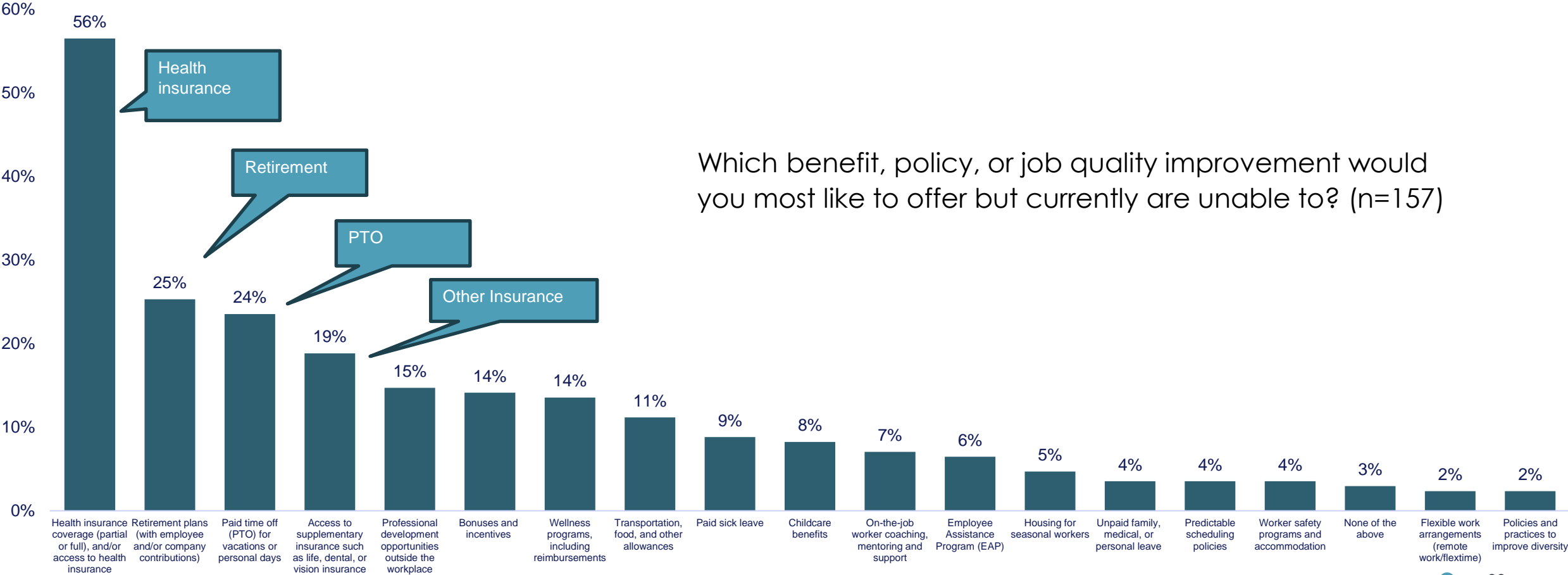
What are the main constraints you currently face, or you might face in the next 12 months, when hiring employees and trying to improve job quality? Please select up to three significant constraints (n=170)

Constraints	Percentage of Respondents
We have had financial constraints (budget limitations)	67%
We don't have enough time to organize and implement job quality improvements	22%
My business has begun to make job quality improvements and has not run into any constraints at all	15%
Regulatory or compliance concerns	11%
Our staff does not have the operational or technical expertise to implement changes	11%
My business has not thought about making job quality improvements yet	8%
Our management and staff are unfamiliar with the different options that can make jobs better	6%
None of the above	2%
There is a lack of consensus among management	1%
We face resistance from supervisors of our employees	1%

Aspirations for Job Quality Improvements



- *Offering health insurance coverage is the dominant job quality aspiration reported by business owners*
- *Retirement options, PTO and other insurance such as dental, vision and life are also improvements that businesses report interest in offering*



Business Performance and Job Quality Improvements ●●●●●

Businesses report financial constraints as the main barrier to job quality improvements, regardless of business performance. Time is another important constraint.

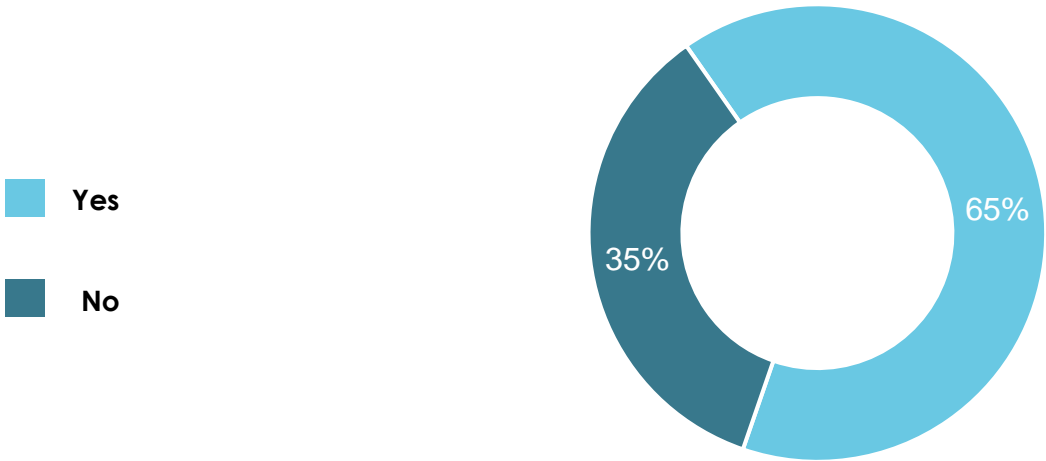
Constraints to Job Quality Improvements Reported	% of businesses with “somewhat weaker” or “significantly weaker” performance in the past year (n=34)	% of businesses with “somewhat stronger” or “significantly stronger” performance in the past year (n=67)
We have had financial constraints (budget limitations)	88%	72%
We don't have enough time to organize and implement job quality improvements	29%	30%
My business has not thought about making job quality improvements yet	20%	5%
My business has begun to make job quality improvements and has not run into any constraints at all	15%	16%
Regulatory or compliance concerns	15%	15%
Our staff does not have the operational or technical expertise to implement changes	15%	9%
Other	12%	11%
Our management and staff are unfamiliar with the different options that can make jobs better	3%	7%
There is a lack of consensus among management	3%	2%
None of these	3%	0%

Business Performance and Job Quality Improvements ●●●●●

Businesses reporting weak past performance represented only about a third of all businesses surveyed. These were less likely to report job quality improvements in the past year at midline, though samples are small

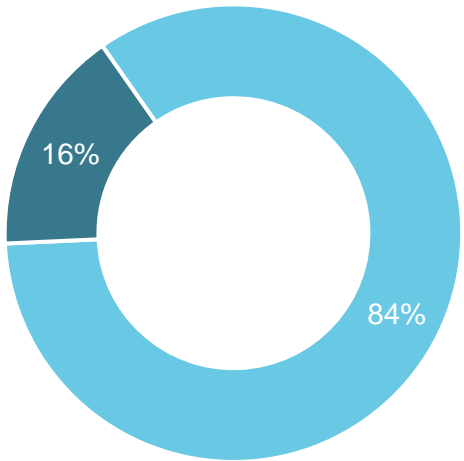
Businesses with “somewhat weaker” or “significantly weaker” performance in the past year

Have you made any changes to improve the quality of your business's jobs in the past year?
(n=34)



Businesses with “somewhat stronger” or “significantly stronger” performance in the past year

Have you made any changes to improve the quality of your business's jobs in the past year?
(n=67)





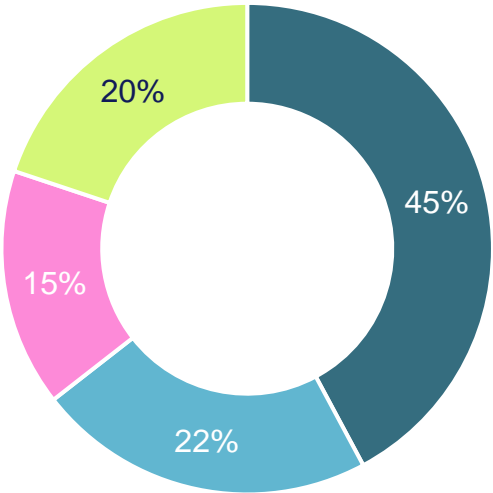
COVID-19 Legacy

Recovering from the COVID-19 Pandemic



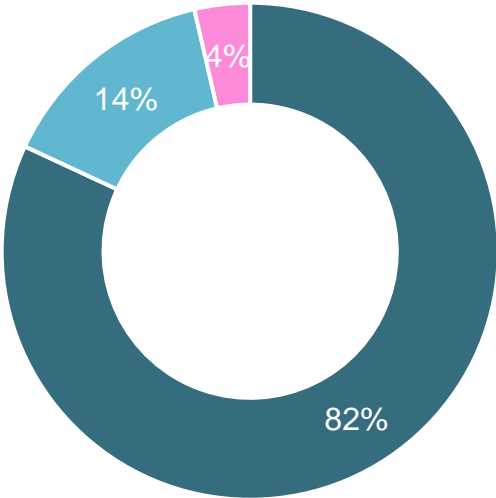
Most businesses report being the same or in better shape than before the pandemic and are optimistic about the future. Most also say the pandemic influenced their job quality work.

How would you characterize the financial health of your business today compared to the pre-pandemic period?
(n=158)



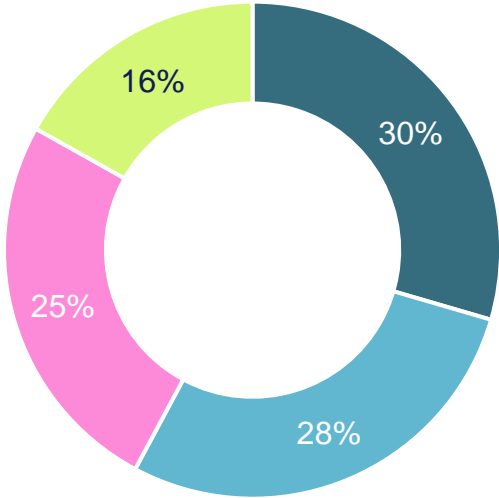
- Significantly stronger + somewhat stronger
- Significantly weaker + somewhat weaker
- About the same
- Opened after the pandemic

Looking ahead, how optimistic are you about the future income and financial stability of your business?
(n=158)



- Very optimistic + optimistic
- Neutral
- Very pessimistic + pessimistic

To what extent has your choice to focus on job quality been affected by the conditions in the labor market resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and other factors?
(n=158)



- Affected significantly
- Slightly affected
- Moderately affected
- Not affected at all

Thank You

Evaluation Team:

- Timothy Ogden, Financial Access Initiative, NYU
- Barbara Magnoni, EA Consultants
- Cooper Desmond, EA Consultants

