

Middle Tennessee Reconnect Survey

Tennessee Department of

Transportation

September 2016



MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Reconnect
COMMUNITY



Middle Tennessee Reconnect

The Middle Tennessee Reconnect Community is a regional organization dedicated to supporting every adult in the area who aspires to earn a college degree, and is an initiative of the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce. The initiative works to ensure each adult has access to resources and supports necessary in order to start and finish his or her college degree. This program is part of Drive to 55, a statewide effort to increase postsecondary attainment among adults in Tennessee. The Middle Tennessee Reconnect Community is supported through Tennessee Reconnect, the state's strategy to help adults enter higher education to gain new skills and advance in the workplace. Additionally, Middle Tennessee Reconnect Community is part of the cohort of the Lumina Community Partnership for Attainment, funding for which supported this study.

The Middle Tennessee Reconnect Community's advisors engage community organizations and employers to provide adults with advising, support, and a personalized path to and through college. This community is working to assess the needs of adults in the workforce in order to tailor higher education solutions appropriately. Along with three Workforce Development Boards across the region, the Middle Tennessee Reconnect Community is working with Reconnect Advisors to provide adults with advising and mentoring. These services create a path back to college for individuals who have completed some college, but did not earn a degree, as well as connecting adults who have never been to college, with the resources, information and tools to enter and complete a certificate or degree.

This report, based upon results from a Reconnect survey provided to 13 large Middle Tennessee organizations, stands as one component of a larger assessment of workforce needs in the Nashville area in relation to completion of higher education. The report is based on a survey process that provides a baseline measurement of attainment across the area and will inform and guide the Middle Tennessee Reconnect Community in how to best serve the Reconnectors as they pursue their education.

The Middle Tennessee Reconnect Community has created an Employer Toolkit, designed to support employers as they identify areas of opportunity to support employees who want to return to school to complete a degree or credential. In printed form, and housed online, the Employer Toolkit provides practical programming suggestions, sample policies for consideration and implementation, and helpful links to information and research related to workplace support of adults returning to school.

The results outlined in this report provide a synopsis of the educational attainment of the current workforce of the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT), of barriers to furthering educational attainment, and of approaches that will best engage and support employees in pursuing and completing a degree or certificate program. The report is intended to provide TDOT with key insights and information and guidance in its potential role to support employees as they advance their skill through additional education.

Methodology

This study relies on standard survey research design and methodology. The Research Center at the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce directed a survey process in collaboration with the Middle Tennessee Reconnect Community. In total, 13 major area employers participated in the survey.

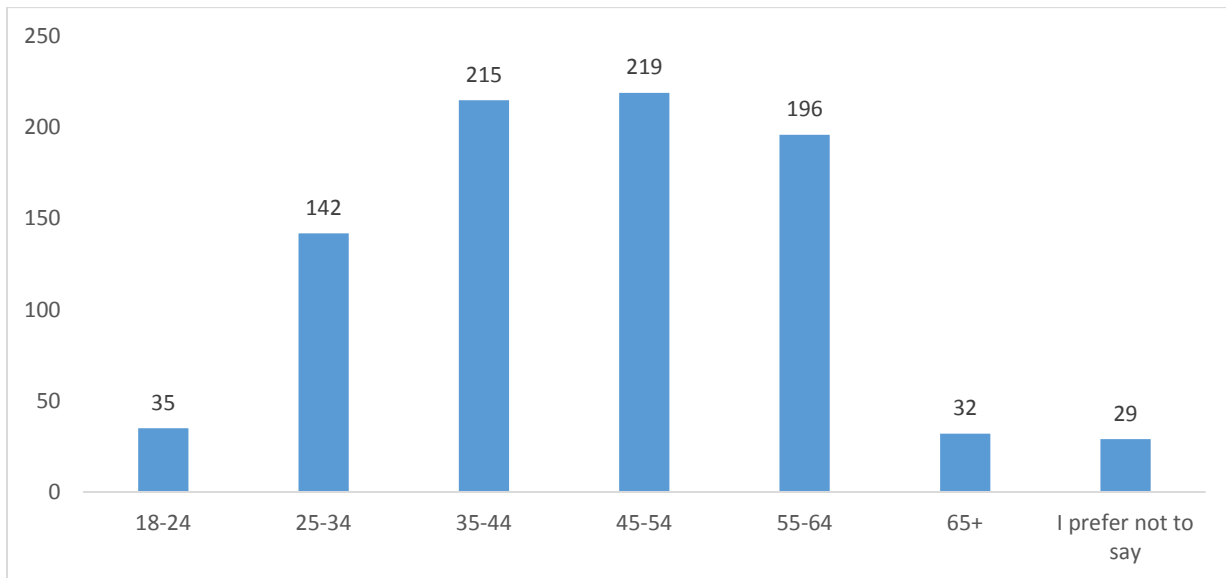
The survey instrument was tested and then distributed electronically to employees of each participating organization directly through those employers. Organizations requested that employees participate, without providing any incentives or disincentives for response or maintaining any records of response. Survey distribution at all but one of the 13 employers occurred through use of the Qualtrics survey tool, which generated an anonymous link embedded in an email message to each employee. One employer provided paper copies of the survey to their factory workers, with results then tabulated by the survey administrators.

The survey was available to employees of TDOT from July 13 through August 26, 2016. A total of 1,008 TDOT employees completed the survey. TDOT employs 3,400, for a response rate of 29.6 percent.

Respondent Profile

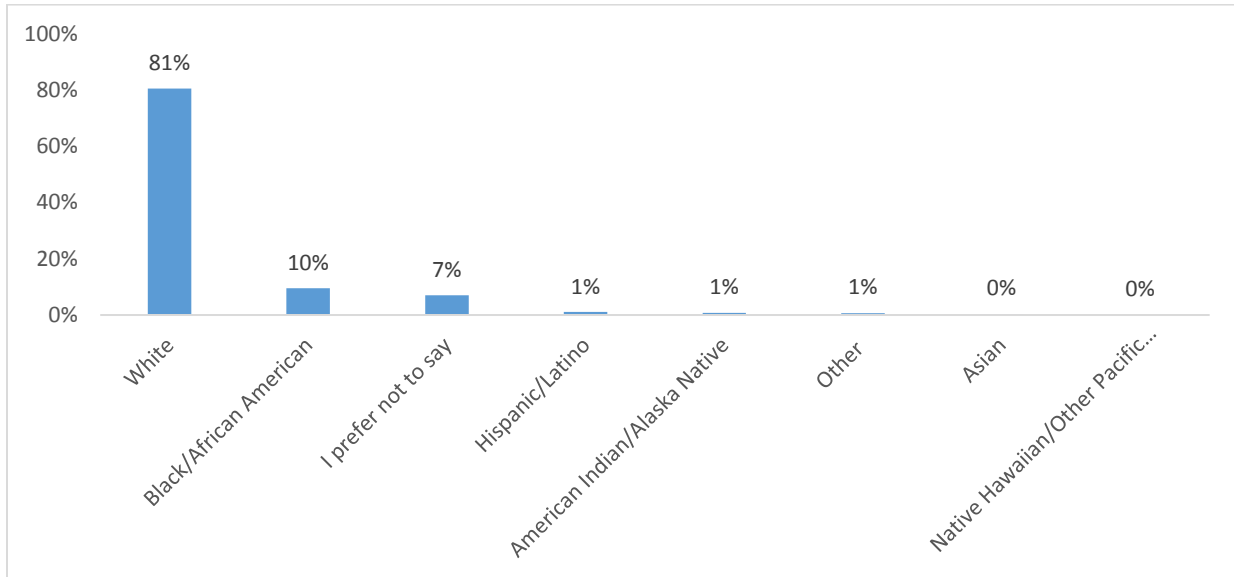
The respondent pool for the employer displayed a useful representation of employees and a strong cross-section of its workforce for research results. There were significantly more male respondents than female, with 61.0 percent male and 35.6 percent female. Respondents tended to be under 55 years of age, although 22.6 percent of individuals are pre-retirement ages 55-64. Including individuals over 65 years of age, more than one of every four respondents is nearing, at or past the traditional retirement age of 65.

Figure 1. Respondents' age



A majority of respondents identified as white at 80.5 percent, with 9.5 percent of respondents identifying as black or African American. A set of 7.1 percent opted not to identify a race or ethnicity.

Figure 2. Respondents' race or ethnicity

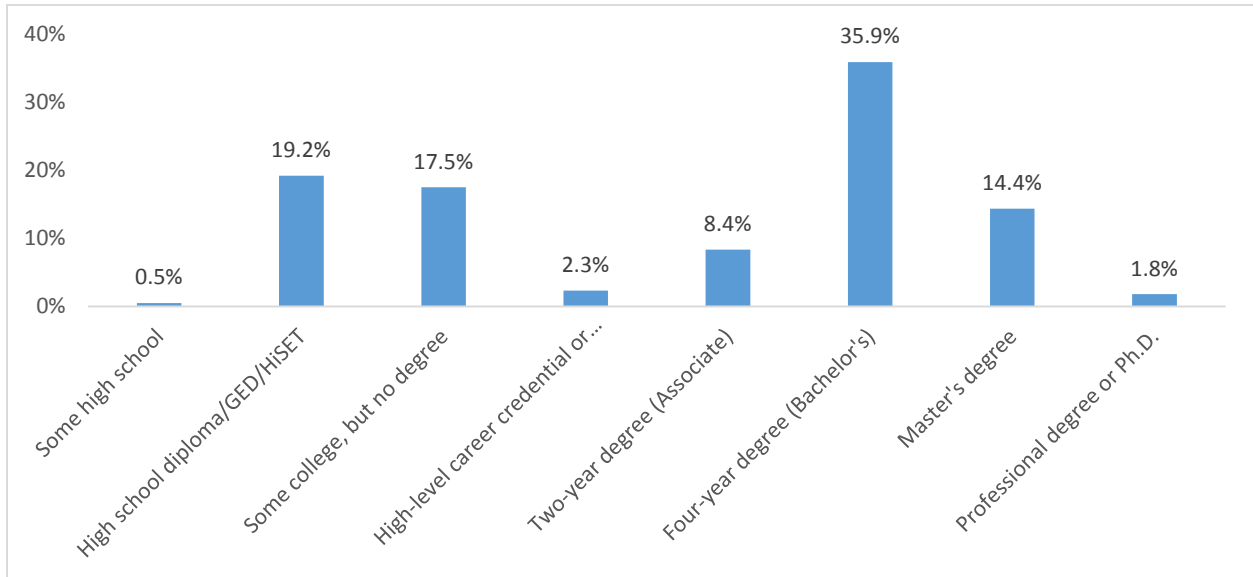


Among the 1,008 TDOT employee respondents:

- 19.2 percent, or 191 individuals, reported a high school diploma, GED or HiSET as their highest level of education.
- 17.5 percent, or 174 individuals, reported completion of some college but no degree.
- Of those with some college but no degree, 53.6 percent have completed between 3 and 30 credit hours of college, while 9.5 percent have completed more than 90 credit hours.
- 11 percent of individuals who earned a degree did so while employed with TDOT.
- Some 94 respondents, or 10.8 percent of the total, are currently enrolled in a program leading to a career credential or an undergraduate or graduate program.
- Only 54.1 percent report they know what they need to do to further their education.

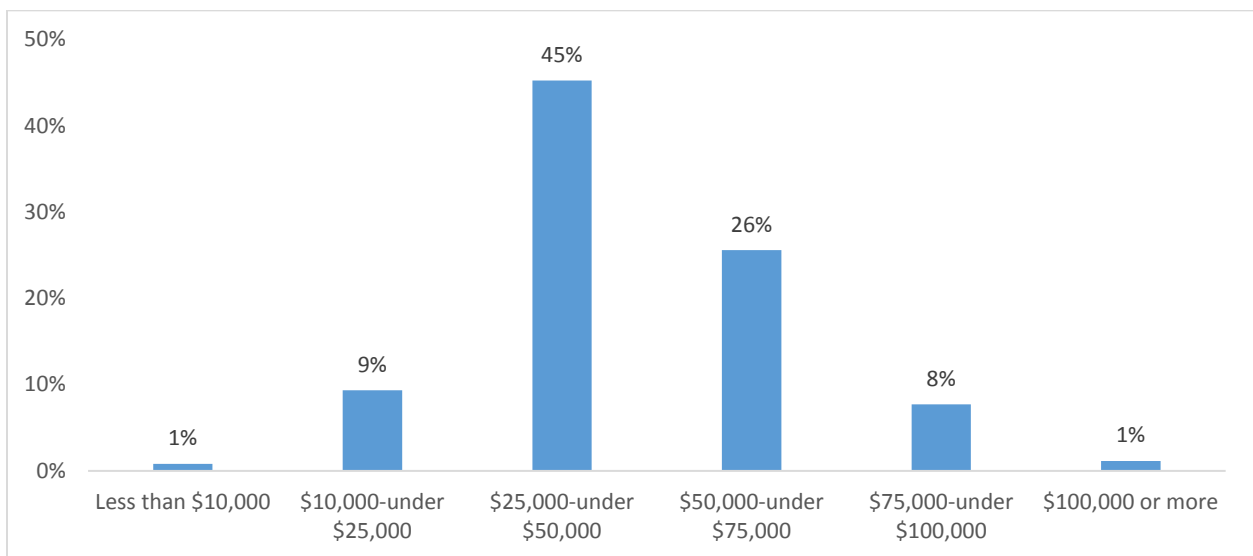
Many of the individuals described above have real opportunity to advance in their careers through completing additional education. In particular, individuals with some college but no degree and individuals with a high school diploma or equivalency as their highest level of education have the opportunity to take advantage of new support through the Governor's Drive to 55 initiative in order to upgrade skills. These individuals are primary candidates for Tennessee Reconnect. Completing a career credential or two-year degree could help them bring new skills to their work at TDOT and possibly further their careers.

Figure 3. Respondents' highest level of education completed



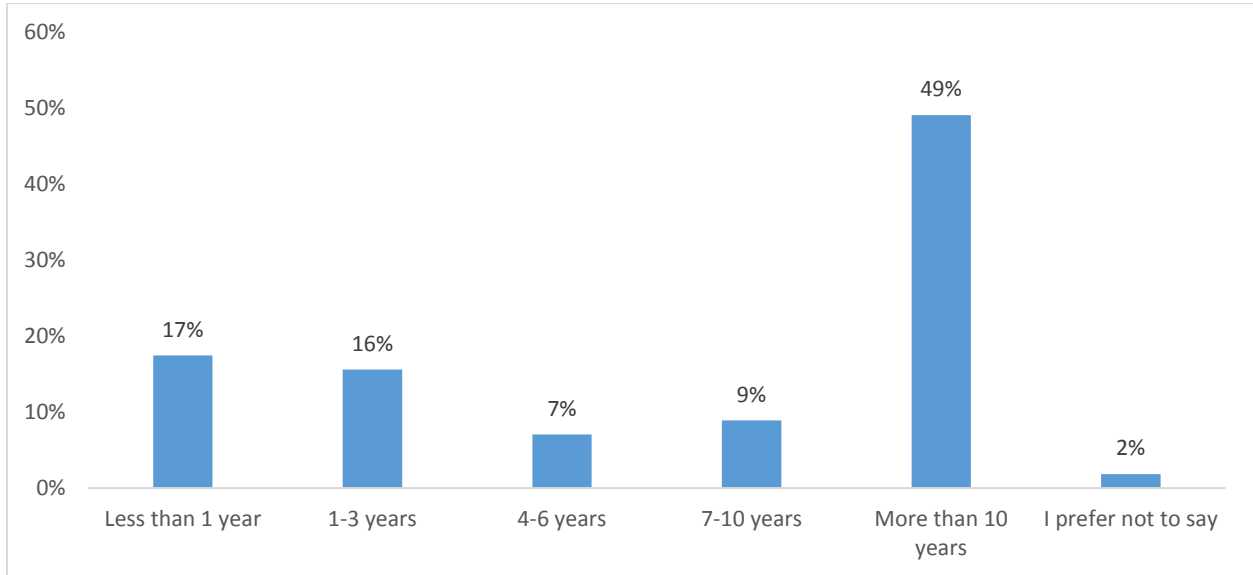
In total, of the 1,008 respondents from TDOT, only five individuals reported having completed less than a high school diploma. One hundred and ninety-one have received a high school diploma or equivalency, and 174 have completed some college, but no degree. These 370 individuals are of particular note because of the relative lower cost to obtaining the next credential, as well as the opportunities currently available through Tennessee Reconnect. Only 11 percent of individuals have earned a degree or credential while working at TDOT.

Figure 4. Respondents' income



Almost half of respondents have worked for TDOT for more than 10 years. More than half of respondents (55.4 percent) earn less than \$50,000 per year and about one-fourth (25.6 percent) earn between \$50,000 and \$75,000.

Figure 5. Respondents' time employed with TDOT



Because TDOT is a statewide agency, about half of respondents fall outside of the Middle Tennessee Reconnect region. While these respondents are still eligible for Tennessee Reconnect, the larger comprehensive report will only include respondents who live in the areas of interest. However, this report will include all TDOT employee respondents.

Figure 6. Respondents' county of residence

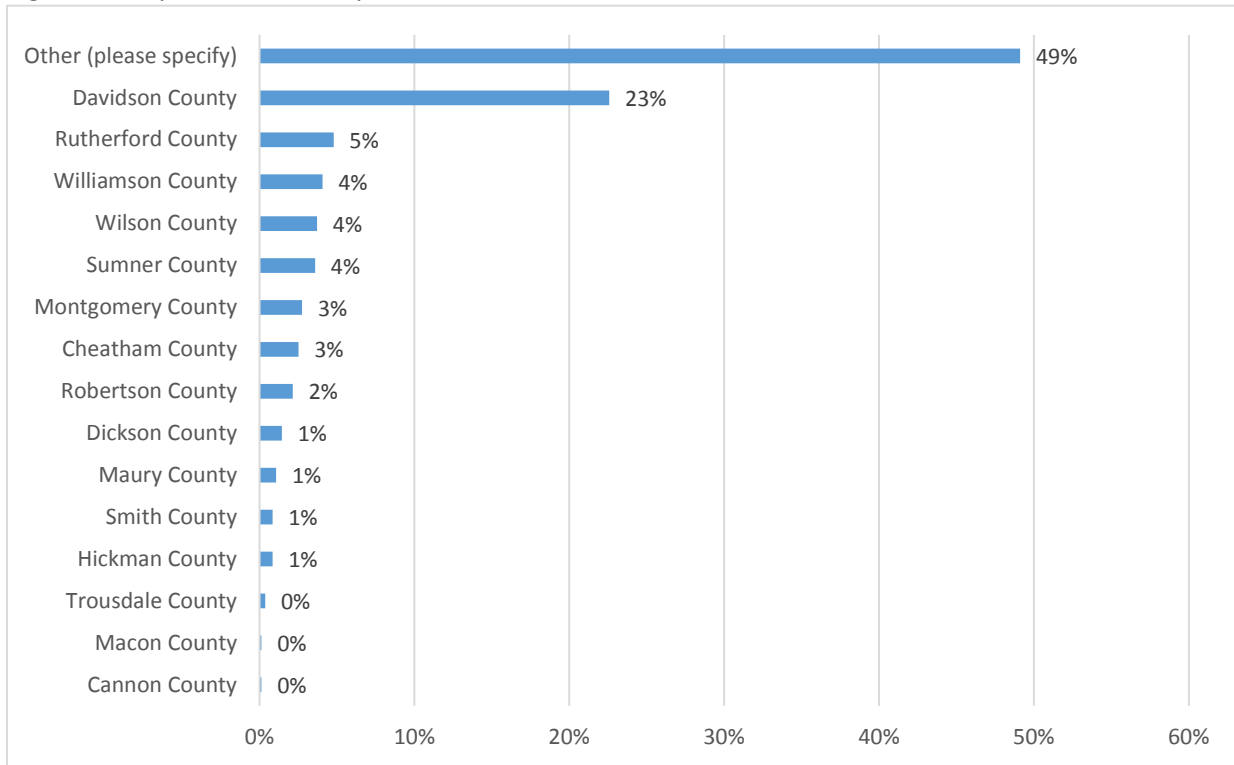


Figure 7. Percentage of respondents who have earned a degree while working at TDOT

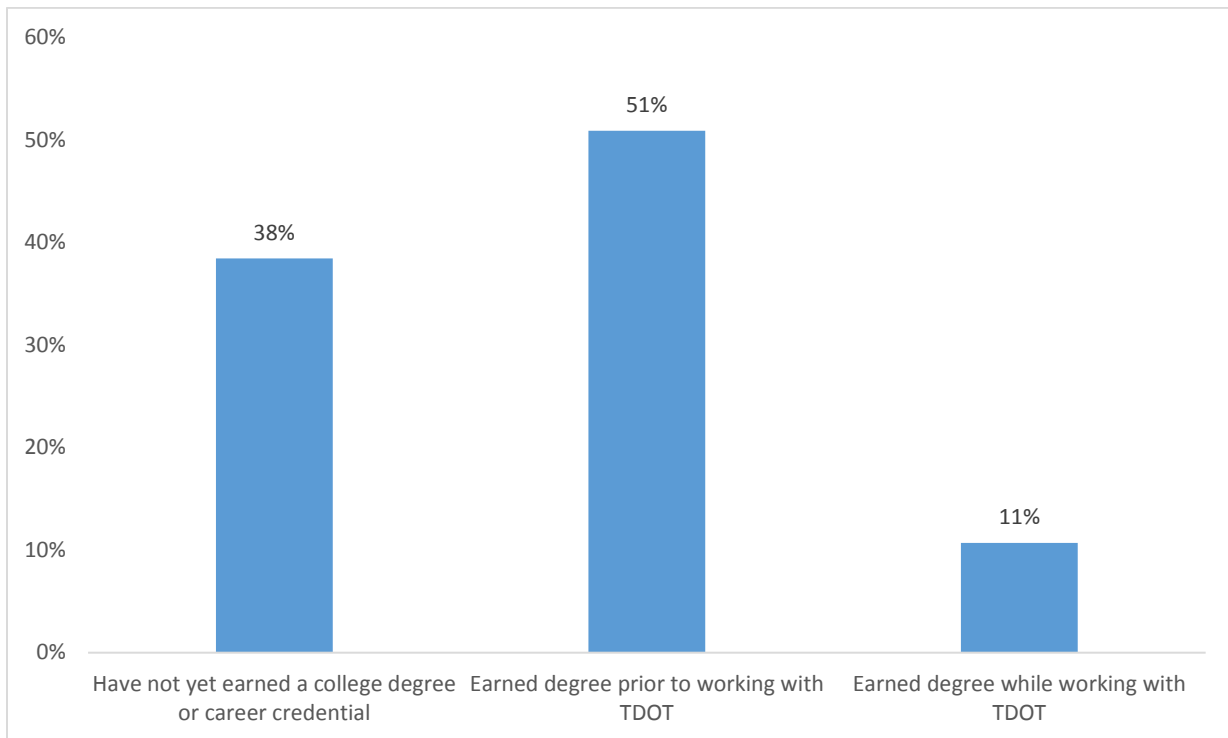


Figure 8. Degrees earned while working at TDOT

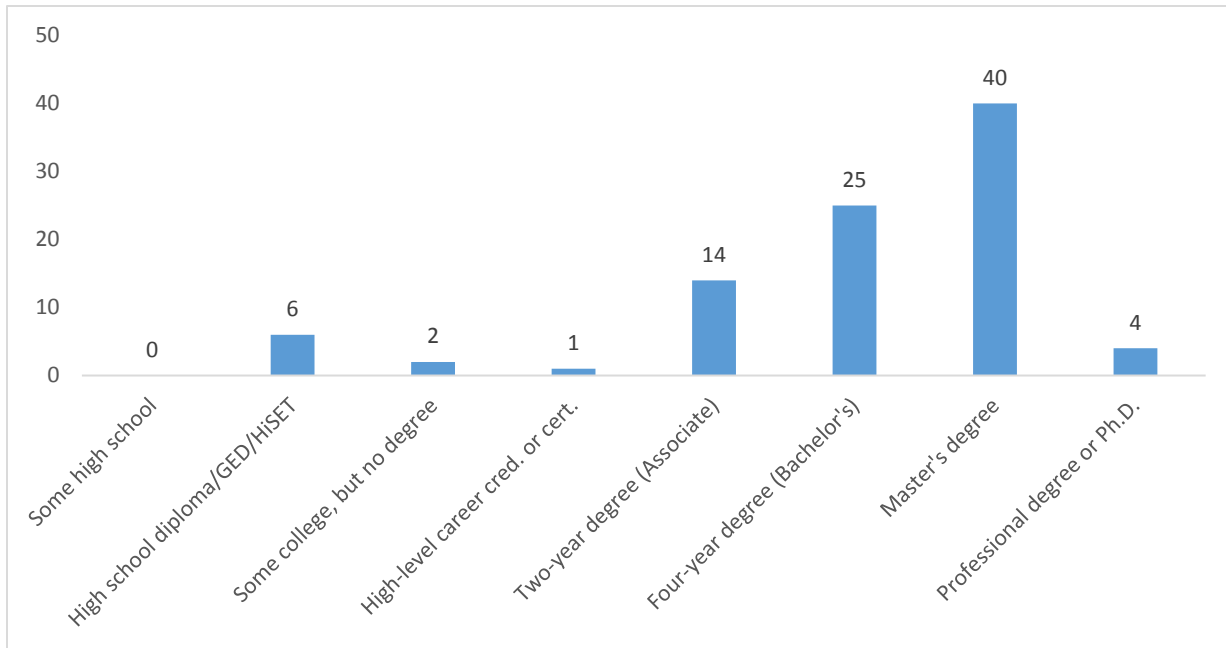
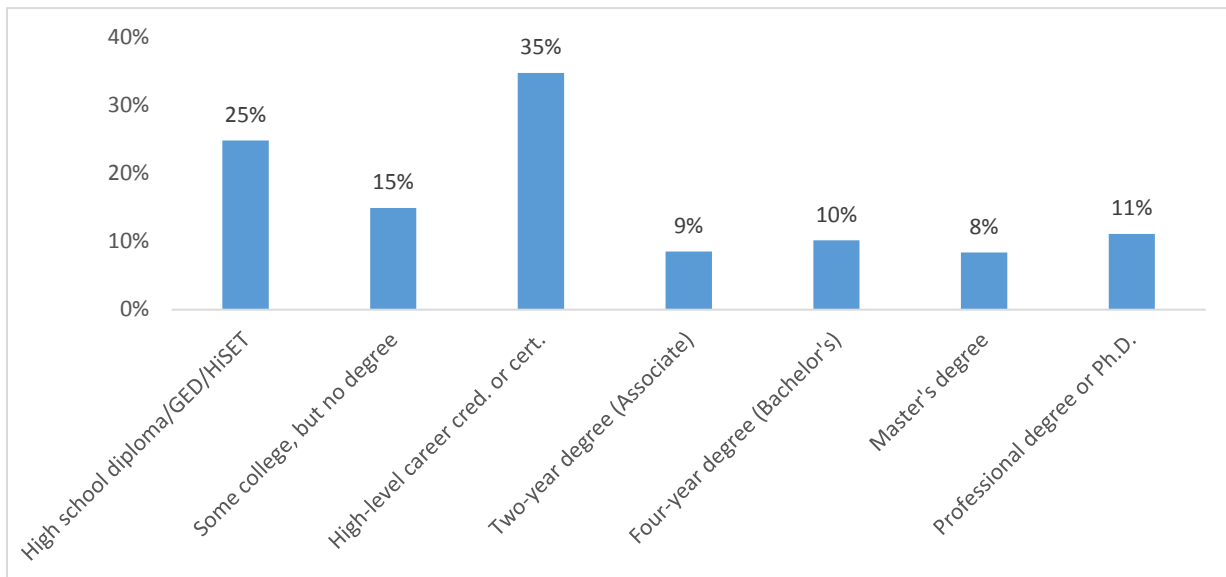


Figure 9. Individuals who do not know or are not sure of what they need to do to further their education



Only about one out of every 10 employees at TDOT has earned a degree while working for TDOT. Of those individuals, most earned a bachelor's or master's degree.

A total of 137 individuals reported not knowing the next steps to further their education. The majority of these individuals have completed high school or a high school equivalency, or some college, but no degree.

Table 1. Highest level of education attained by age

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
High school diploma/GED/HiSET	(0%) 0	(5%) 7	(16%) 35	(27%) 60	(19%) 37	(6%) 2
Some college, but no degree	(32%) 11	(12%) 16	(15%) 33	(21%) 47	(21%) 40	(13%) 4
High-level career credential or certificate	(0%) 0	(2%) 3	(3%) 7	(1%) 2	(3%) 6	(0%) 0
Two-year degree (Associate)	(9%) 3	(5%) 7	(5%) 11	(11%) 24	(14%) 27	(10%) 3
Four-year degree (Bachelor's)	(56%) 19	(51%) 71	(40%) 86	(27%) 59	(31%) 59	(55%) 17
Master's degree	(3%) 1	(22%) 30	(17%) 37	(11%) 24	(11%) 22	(13%) 4
Professional degree or Ph.D.	(0%) 0	(4%) 5	(2%) 5	(0%) 1	(1%) 1	(3%) 1

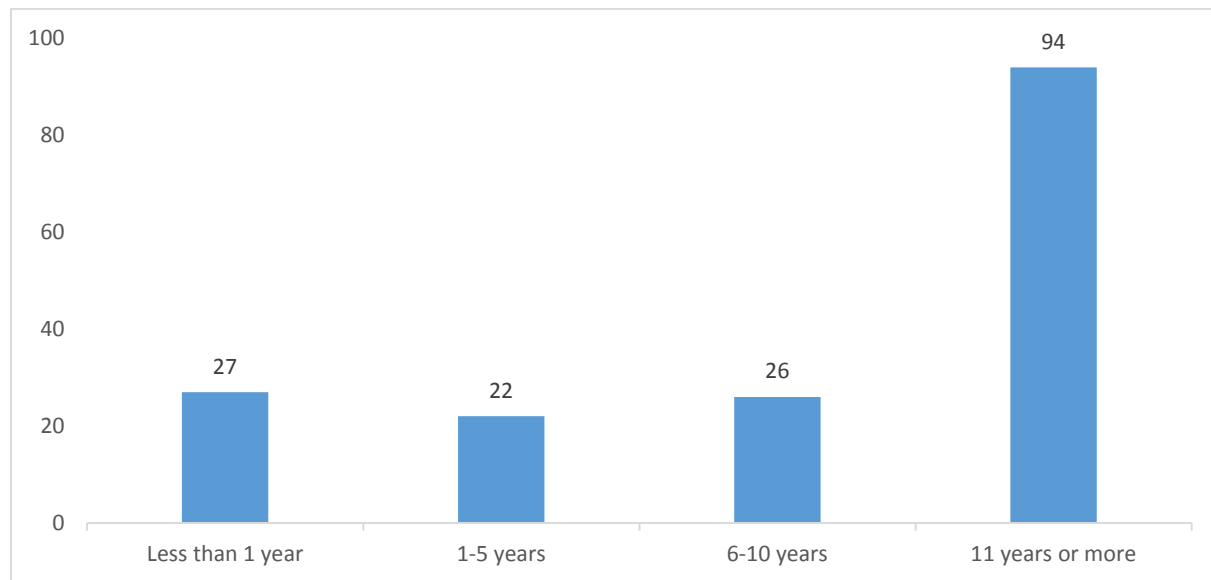
Table 2. Highest level of education attained by income

	High school diploma/GED/HiSET	Some college, but no degree	High-level career cred. or cert.	Two-year degree (Associate)	Four-year degree (Bachelor's)	Master's degree	Prof. degree or Ph.D.
Less than \$10,000	(2) 1%	(3) 2%	(0) 0%	(1) 1%	(1) 0%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%
\$10,000-under \$25,000	(26) 18%	(28) 18%	(3) 16%	(12) 16%	(9) 3%	(3) 2%	(0) 0%
\$25,000-under \$50,000	(89) 61%	(89) 58%	(9) 47%	(44) 59%	(121) 38%	(32) 26%	(3) 21%
\$50,000-under \$75,000	(12) 8%	(17) 11%	(3) 16%	(11) 15%	(117) 36%	(53) 42%	(6) 43%
\$75,000-under \$100,000	(0) 0%	(4) 3%	(0) 0%	(3) 4%	(44) 14%	(14) 11%	(2) 14%
\$100,000 or more	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(7) 2%	(3) 2%	(0) 0%

Individuals with a four-year degree tend to be younger than those with some college but no degree or with high school diploma or high school equivalency. Additionally, individuals with a four-year degree, master's degree or professional degree tend to earn more money than those with fewer certifications.

The length of time since employees participated in any college classes provides insights into the types of supports that may be helpful. Over recent years many aspects of higher education, including the widespread introduction of online learning, have changed the nature of college and may require additional adaptation and support for newcomers.

Figure 10. Number of years since last college class for individuals with some college but no degree



Findings

While one out of every 10 individuals surveyed has completed a degree their tenure at TDOT, there are many others who expressed an interest in pursuing additional education. TDOT has a high retention rate, with almost 50 percent working for TDOT for more than 10 years. Individuals who did complete a degree while working with TDOT were more likely to have worked at TDOT for more than 10 years.

Facilitating educational attainment can help enhance employee productivity, satisfaction and the likelihood that they continue to serve with TDOT. Individuals interested in pursuing education tend to be earning less money, and to be newer employees. Additionally, lower earners will often correlate with those having less education.

In the survey, respondents were asked about their level of interest in pursuing different additional levels of education, reasons for additional education, and the barriers to pursuing it. Additionally, they were asked about programs and support that would help in completing a degree.

Most respondents indicated that they knew what would be required to take the next steps in educational attainment. Still, 14.3 percent of respondents indicated that they did not know or were not sure of next steps. Individuals who have been employed with TDOT for more than 10 years are more likely to indicate that they do not know the next steps.

Figure 11. Respondents who do not understand next steps to further their education by years employed by TDOT

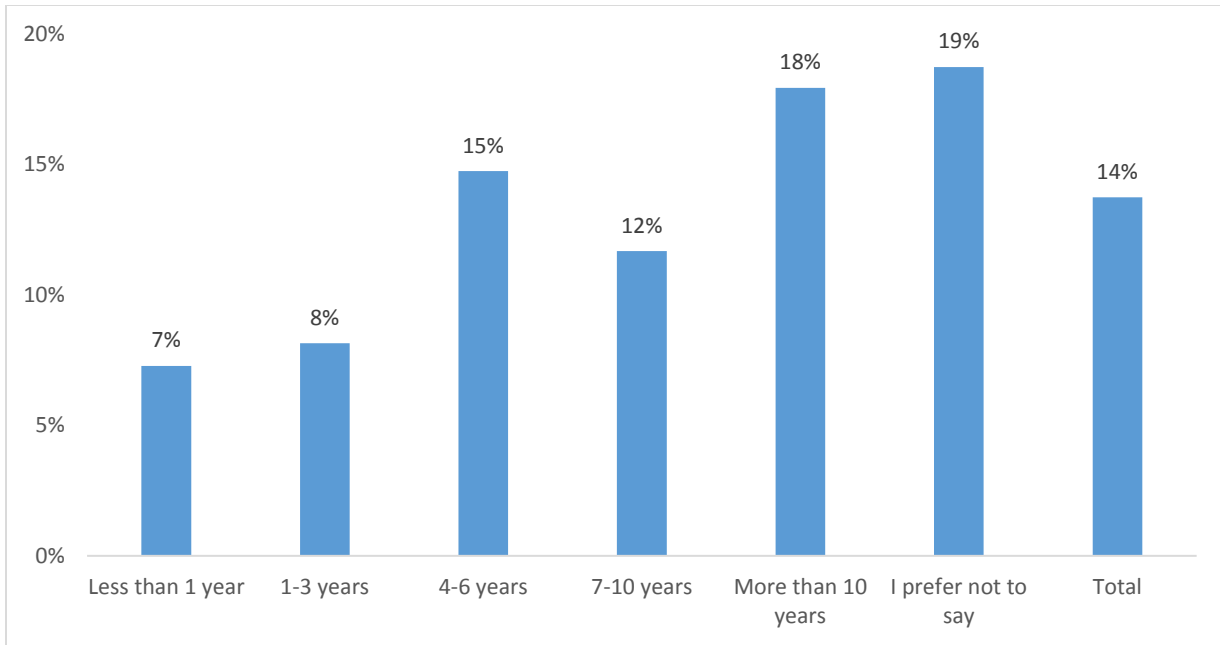
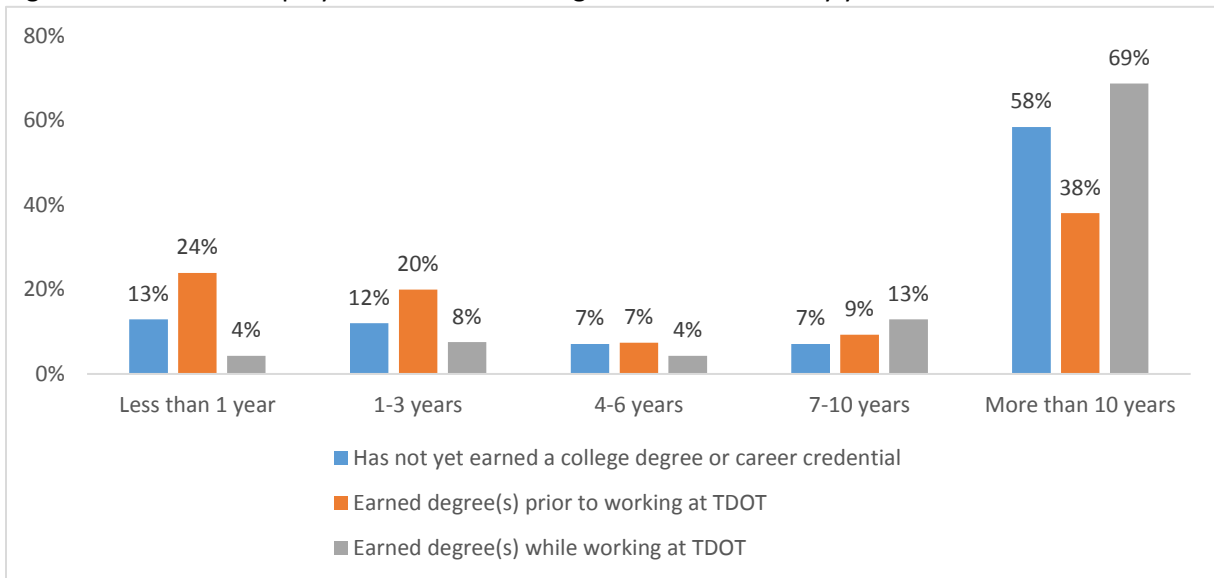


Figure 12. Whether employees had earned a degree while at TDOT by years worked at TDOT



Interest in Additional Education

Regarding employee interest in pursuing additional education, respondents were asked if they were “extremely, moderately, somewhat, slightly or not at all” interested in each of the following levels of education:

- High school diploma/GED/HiSET;
- Two-year degree;
- Four-year degree;
- Master’s degree;
- Professional degree or Ph.D.

In this study, the responses “extremely interested,” “moderately interested” and “somewhat interested” signify interest in pursuing additional education.

The following table provides the interest of TDOT respondents in pursuing additional levels of education according to their highest level of education attained. The shading in the chart identifies higher overall rates in green, lower rates in red, with middle-range rates in yellow. Not surprisingly, and with considerable importance for Tennessee Reconnect offerings, those persons with some college and no degree constitute a sizable pool of workers who desire additional education at multiple levels. Notable were the high percentages of individuals with some college, but no degree and with high-level career credentials interested in pursuing a high-level career credential, a two-year degree, and a four-year degree.

As one would expect, there is a green “stair-step” of interest, where an individual is interested in completing the next highest degree. A notable exception is the high-level career credential, which is of interest across individuals of many different levels of education. The actual number of respondents is shown to most clearly illustrate the relative magnitude of each pool of respondents in these categories.

Table 3. Preferences of individuals interested in additional education by highest level completed

	Interested In Pursuing Degree				
	High-level career cred. or cert.	Two-year degree (associate)	Four-year degree (bachelor)	Master’s degree	Prof. Degree or Ph.D.
High school diploma/GED/HiSET	(64) 63%	(65) 60%	(48) 48%	(19) 24%	(12) 16%
Some college, but no degree	(46) 69%	(87) 71%	(79) 69%	(35) 43%	(18) 25%
High-level career cred. or cert.	(5) 71%	(12) 80%	(7) 70%	(3) 43%	(2) 29%
Two-year degree (Associate)	(7) 54%	(4) 57%	(55) 79%	(22) 61%	(13) 43%
Four-year degree (Bachelor's)	(47) 75%	(6) 30%	(18) 55%	(197) 66%	(74) 33%
Master's degree	(24) 80%	(4) 36%	(7) 54%	(24) 77%	(61) 52%
Professional degree or Ph.D.	(2) 50%	(1) 33%	(1) 33%	(4) 57%	(4) 67%

Returning to the question of knowing how to pursue additional education, respondents interested in a high-level career credential or two-year degree were less likely to know the next step. There are a total of 118 respondents across all levels of current educational completion who acknowledged they do not know the next steps, but are interested in completing another level of education – from career certificate through master’s degree.

Table 4. Interest in additional educational attainment by knowledge of next steps

	Interested In Pursuing Degree				
	High-level career cred. or cert.	Two-year degree (associate)	Four-year degree (bachelor)	Master's degree	Prof. degree or Ph.D.
Know next steps	155	150	185	270	161
Don't know next steps	43	35	32	36	23
Percent of interested who don't know	22%	19%	15%	12%	13%

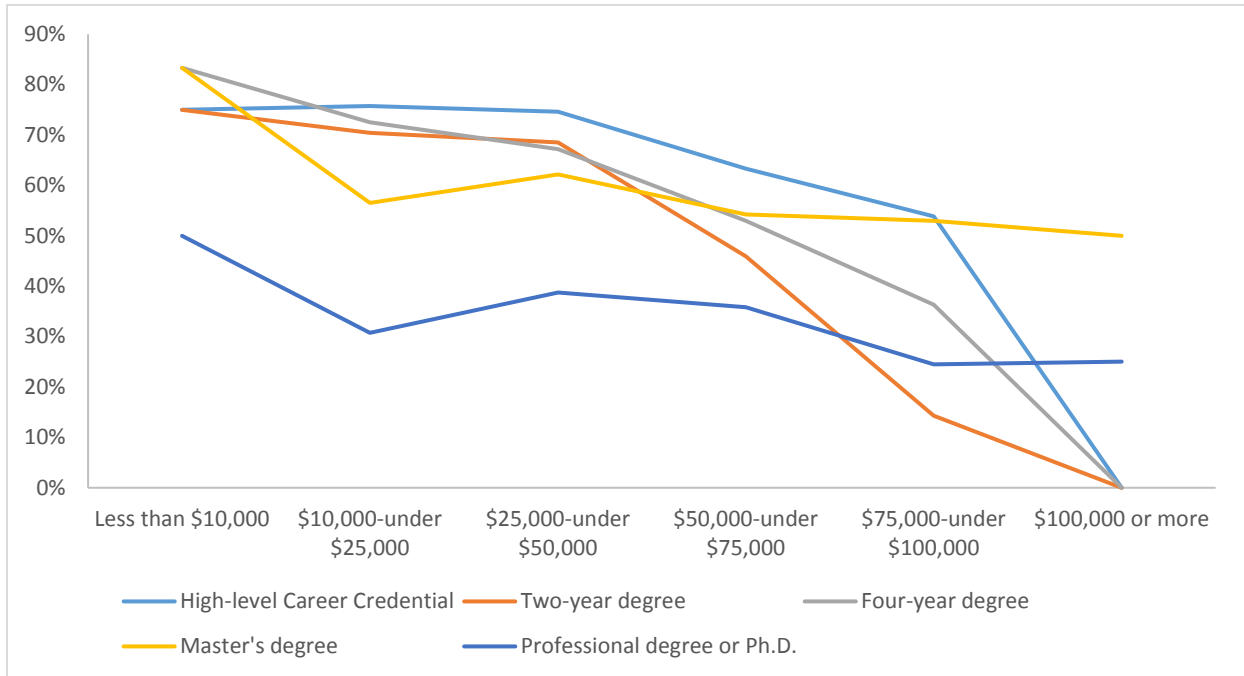
As shown in Table 5, individuals in lower income ranges more frequently expressed an interest in pursuing additional certification. This would be one way of ascertaining the intensity of interest among the entire set of respondents. As only 1 percent of respondents, or 7 individuals, earned less than \$10,000 per year, those responses were excluded. For each education level, interest decreases with income level, except with the master's degree and professional degree.

Table 5. Interest in pursuing additional education by income level

	\$10,000-under \$25,000	\$25,000-under \$50,000	\$50,000-under \$75,000	\$75,000-under \$100,000	\$100,000 or more	I prefer not to say
High-level career cred.	76%	75%	63%	54%	0%	59%
Two-year degree	70%	69%	46%	14%	0%	56%
Four-year degree	73%	67%	53%	36%	0%	50%
Master's degree	57%	62%	54%	53%	50%	37%
Prof. degree or Ph.D.	31%	39%	36%	24%	25%	31%

As mentioned above, the shading in the chart identifies higher overall rates in green, lower rates in red, with middle-range rates in yellow. The chart highlights the clustering of highest interest for lower-level degrees by those individuals with lower incomes. Similarly, the far right and bottom right clusters illustrate a diminishing interest in highest levels of education, as well as overall interest in further education, among those in high-earning categories. An additional portrayal of this range of interest by level of earnings is shown below. Each of these findings provides useful insight for where TDOT as an employer may find opportunity to emphasize efforts in assisting persons in key roles and occupations to pursue further education.

Figure 13. Interest in additional education by income earned



Reasons to Pursue Additional Education

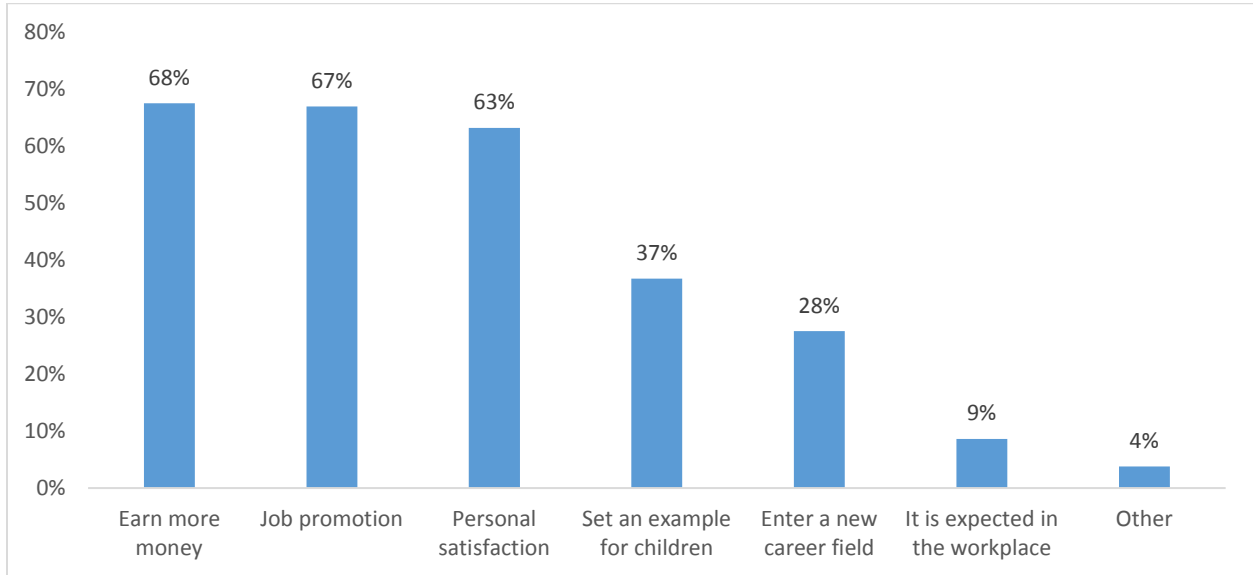
Respondents were asked their top reasons for pursuing additional education and were able to select as many reasons as they found to be important for their situation. There is a strong consistency of reasons cited across motivations for pursuing all levels of education. Personal satisfaction, higher earning potential and job promotion easily head the list of reasons selected for continuing on with education for respondents.

Table 6. Reasons for pursuing additional degrees

	Interested In Pursuing Degree				
	High-level career cred. or cert.	Two-year degree (associate)	Four-year degree (bachelor's)	Master's degree	Prof. degree or Ph.D.
Job promotion	74%	67%	67%	65%	64%
Earn more money	74%	68%	69%	70%	64%
Personal satisfaction	69%	63%	72%	78%	84%
Set an example for children	34%	37%	40%	34%	34%
Enter a new career field	27%	28%	27%	28%	32%
It is expected in the workplace	9%	9%	9%	8%	7%
Other	3%	4%	4%	4%	5%

The graph below shows results for individuals interested in a two-year degree. Since results provide highly consistent across degree types, only the data for two-year degree aspirations is shown as an illustration.

Figure 14. Reasons individuals are interested in a two-year degree



Barriers to Education

Despite an expressed high interest in additional education, only 11 percent of respondents have completed a degree while employed with TDOT. There are several significant barriers that prevent individuals from starting and from completing further education. Respondents were asked about these barriers and were able to select all barriers that pertained to their experience. Barriers named again proved fairly consistent across all degrees of interest. Tuition and fees remain a very significant barrier, with more than 80 percent of all interested individuals reporting cost as an inhibiting factor. A collection of other barriers related to convenience in scheduling and the ability to manage educational along with other responsibilities.

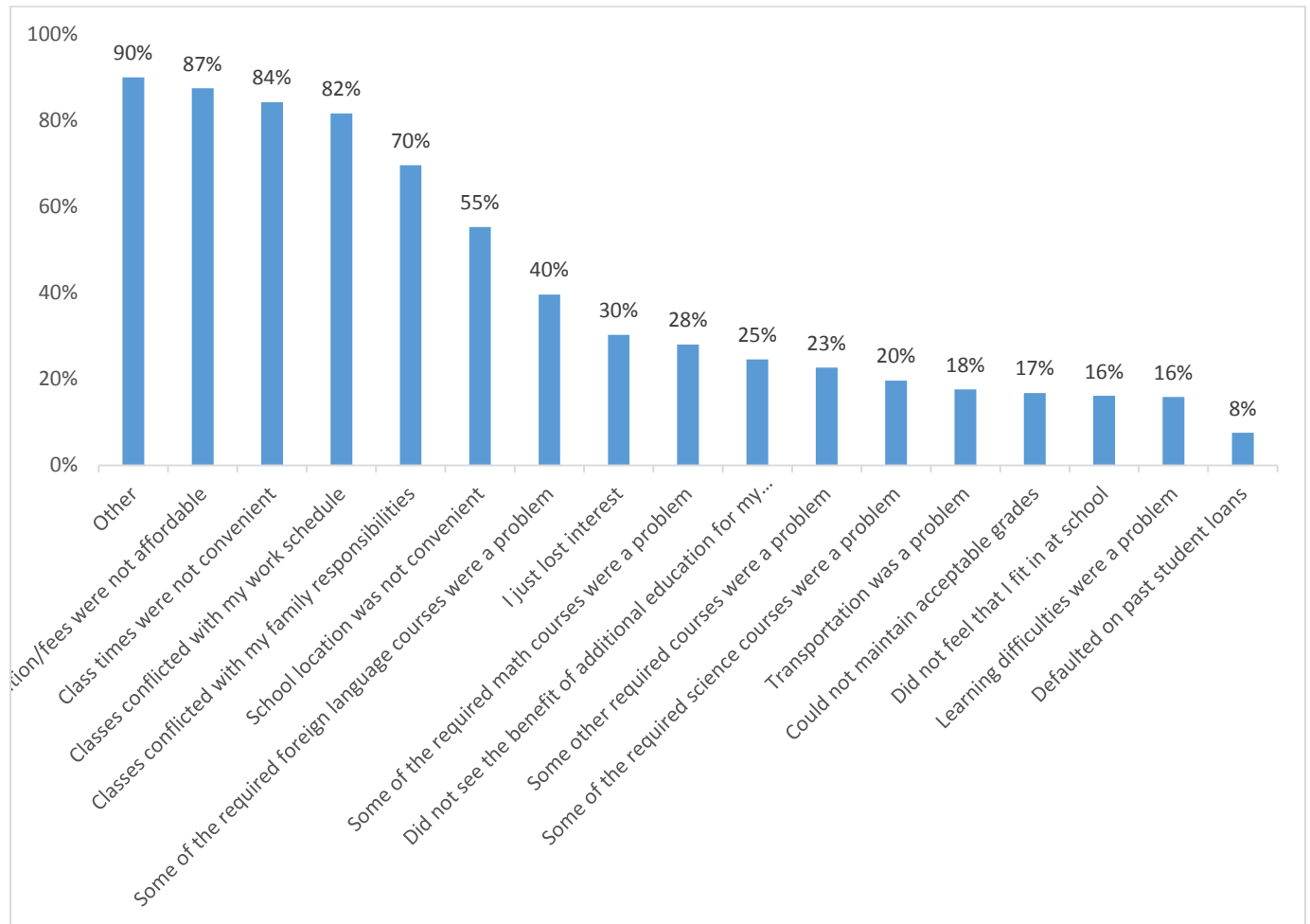
Table 7. Barriers to pursuing different degrees

	Interest In Pursuing Degree				
	High-level career cred. or cert.	Two-year degree (associate)	Four-year degree (bachelor's)	Master's degree	Prof. degree or Ph.D.
Tuition/fees were not affordable	88%	87%	88%	82%	86%
Classes conflicted with my work schedule	81%	82%	82%	78%	82%
Class times were not convenient	75%	84%	79%	71%	77%
Classes conflicted with my family responsibilities	65%	70%	64%	56%	59%
School location was not convenient	56%	55%	54%	53%	65%
Other	50%	90%	82%	67%	58%
I just lost interest	38%	30%	27%	29%	30%
Some of the required foreign language courses were a problem	29%	40%	30%	14%	15%
Did not see the benefit of additional education for my current or future role at the company	27%	25%	19%	18%	20%
Some of the required math courses were a problem	21%	28%	28%	12%	16%
Some other required courses were a problem	19%	23%	18%	9%	9%
Learning difficulties were a problem	18%	16%	14%	12%	15%
Did not feel that I fit in at school	17%	16%	12%	7%	10%
Transportation was a problem	16%	18%	17%	15%	17%
Defaulted on past student loans	15%	8%	18%	16%	17%
Could not maintain acceptable grades	14%	17%	13%	9%	8%
Some of the required science courses were a problem	14%	20%	17%	7%	11%

Some of the reasons included as “other” were cited as time conflicts, questionable payoff, and the need for guidance. Several respondents mentioned not having engineering degrees available locally with evening and night classes. Others explained that they feel they are too close to retirement to merit the investment.

As shown below, tuition and fees, class conflicts with work schedules and overall inconvenience of class times lead the list of barriers along with the items listed in the previous paragraph for “other.” Several individuals also pointed to a “change in educational leave policy” and the difficulty of taking one night class at a time.

Figure 15. Barriers for individuals interested in pursuing a two-year degree



Factors that would help overcome barriers

There were quite similar preferences expressed by respondents for resources needed for more education across interest in degrees. Assistance in finding money to pay for classes was the most frequently named need, which is not surprising insofar as tuition was identified by far as the leading barrier to further education. The following table regarding programmatic support needs highlights tuition reimbursement, again, as the leading response.

Individuals interested in a two-year degree were the most likely to be interested in advice and guidance in finding a program, as well as developing a customized plan. Individuals interested in four-year degrees typically were more likely to be interested in credit transfers.

Table 8. Resources that would assist in completing a degree

	Interest In Pursuing Degree				
	High-level career cred. or cert.	Two-year degree (associate)	Four-year degree (bachelor's)	Master's degree	Prof. degree or Ph.D.
Assistance in finding additional money to pay for college	65%	69%	69%	67%	71%
Advice and guided searches to identify a program that's right for me	49%	53%	51%	36%	38%
Customized plans for successful degree completion	42%	45%	48%	46%	49%
Information about maximizing credit transfer and getting college credit for work/life experience	40%	42%	50%	38%	43%
Work/life balance advice	40%	39%	41%	44%	42%
Classes and workshops to refresh my study skills	41%	37%	31%	25%	24%
Academic advice	33%	32%	33%	32%	32%
Stress management education	26%	19%	20%	18%	23%
Other	2%	5%	5%	6%	8%

The range of programmatic support opportunities is varied and, ultimately, a useful set for employers to consider. TDOT employees name financial concerns and career advice as two leading support options from their perspective. Additionally, individuals cited flexible work schedules and onsite classes as particularly helpful in their potential path to additional education.

Table 9. Interest in programmatic support

	Interest In Pursuing Degree				
	High-level career cred. or cert.	Two-year degree (associate)	Four-year degree (bachelor)	Master's degree	Prof. degree or Ph.D.
Tuition reimbursement	76%	71%	73%	79%	83%
Flexible work schedule	74%	72%	76%	79%	81%
Financial aid for books, lab fees, commuting costs, etc.	66%	70%	72%	68%	72%
Onsite classes that earn college credit	60%	56%	60%	51%	55%
Knowing which degree/credential would help advance my career	57%	59%	51%	48%	46%
Computer skills training	32%	28%	28%	20%	20%
Mentoring program with employees who have completed their degrees/certificates	27%	28%	27%	20%	18%
Networking opportunities with other employees who are enrolled in school	27%	28%	25%	26%	24%
Study group opportunities	27%	25%	25%	24%	26%
Study breaks	26%	26%	27%	28%	30%
Graduation recognition	22%	19%	22%	21%	29%
Other	3%	4%	3%	2%	4%

Discussion

Data and findings from this unique, employee-based survey show there is a high level of interest on the part of employees—particularly employees without a four-year bachelor’s degree—in pursuing additional education. The two main reasons cited for this interest, along with personal satisfaction, are job promotion and earning more money. Yet, respondents listed financial concerns and time as barriers. Ninety percent of individuals interested in a two-year degree and more than 80 percent of those interested in a four-year degree selected “other” as a barrier, although few wrote in a response. The most frequently noted included needing to pay for classes up front, “employer commitment,” and being too close to retirement.

The responses for barriers, support, and programming support point to three main categories: reducing risk, or improving the likelihood that the payoff is greater than the cost of additional education; flexibility, or the need for both employers and schools to provide options to make completing school while working possible; and assistance, or guidance and information to facilitate the process. Each will be discussed in the next three sections in more depth.

Reducing Risk

As mentioned above, many employees do not see direct payoff opportunities for pursuing additional education. There is not a clear indication of what education will help them, and whether it will be worthwhile. On the question about what TDOT and Middle Tennessee Reconnect could offer to assist with returning to school, responses in the “other” section included: “more incentives to make it worth getting,” “paid leave,” and “time from work.”

With as many individuals concerned about tuition and fees for career certificates and two-year degrees, the findings suggest employees are not familiar with the offerings of the Middle Tennessee Reconnect Community, which could significantly reduce the cost burden. Providing additional information about existing and new programs could help reduce the perceived risk of additional education.

Flexibility

Another theme in responses was the need for greater flexibility on the part of education providers and TDOT. For the question on programs that could be offered, between 72 and 81 percent of respondents said a flexible work schedule would help them return to school. The most common write-in responses for what TDOT could offer related to time and flexibility. Individuals requested “flexible schedules,” “time from work,” “work leave,” and “Employer committed [sic] to giving time to take classes”

Assistance

Finally, assistance in determining the appropriate direction for additional education is also a priority. Many respondents expressed interest in acquiring a new degree to help “be more effective in [their] current job.” Individuals stated they would like to continue education for options such as: “increase technical knowledge and skill sets” and “acquiring new skills/understanding enabling me to contribute to advancing/improving the scope and development of my field.” However, individuals also asked for clarity in the way forward. One individual requested: “An actual career path that provided opportunities. I already have an MS and I am a low man on the totem pole despite applying for other TDOT jobs.” Another asked for “all the help I can get.”

Across the board, economic incentives were the most often-cited barrier and need. Salary incentives, promotions, and assistance with fees stand out as the greatest concerns. Assistance in returning to school needs to include education on future opportunities following graduation.

Conclusions

The importance of employer involvement in creating innovative policies related to education attainment in the Nashville area and in Middle Tennessee cannot be overstated. These programs have the opportunity to transform the lives of individuals and provide significant gains for employers of those individuals. The use of these findings can provide meaningful insights and direction for TDOT and all employers participating in this survey process.

Financing education is a key consideration, in particular for those who have not been involved in higher education in the past or recently. In particular, career path information is highly useful to individuals as they build their educational "reservoir." Upon degree completion, there may be many opportunities in TDOT, including in occupations chronically difficult to fill. Determining which degree or certificate to pursue and which skills are needed for available jobs are central topics that can help guide persons making these important decisions. Likewise, understanding how a degree would enhance an individual's current work and lead to greater economic return will shape these decisions.

The Middle Tennessee Reconnect Community can help address the concerns brought forth in this study in the following ways:

- Assistance in training supervisors and those in management roles with techniques to support adults in the workplace who want to return to school to advance their career;
- Provide sample policies and guidance to employers who want to implement innovative policies that support employees returning to school, including flex time, mentoring and employer reimbursement;
- Provide onsite advisement: Reconnect Advisors come into the workplace to set up a Reconnect Café, and provide education guidance in a convenient location for the workforce;
- Connect you with others in the region, and around the nation, who have created a workplace environment to support adults returning to school in order to share best practices;
- Provide lunch-hour seminars related to education, balancing priorities to return to school, financing education, and many more. These can be conducted in a location convenient for you over the lunch hour or during meetings.

Guidance in charting career pathways and then incorporating employees in these pathways in order to assist employees can fundamentally change the path of an employee's career. By providing additional support, an employer can play an important role to the employee making important career decisions and help build important skills and loyalty to the employer.

About the Research Center

The Nashville Area Chamber's Research Center focuses on topics and trends useful to understanding and expanding the economic vitality of the joint metro region. Chamber researchers provide analysis and reporting on current and emerging issues focused on real-world needs of business, communities and the region.

If you are interested in a similar study around a specific issue in your organization, please contact Rebecca West with The Research Center at 615-743-3060 or rwest@nashvillechamber.com.

Dr. Garrett Harper

Dr. Garrett Harper serves as vice president of research for the Research Center at the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce, a position he has held since 1990. Harper is past president of the American Chamber of Commerce Researchers Association and a Certified Community Researcher. He serves on the national steering committee of the U.S. Census American Community Survey Data Group and is active in a variety of academic and practitioner organizations relating to demographics, regional science, music and entertainment industries, quality-of-life research, workforce development, and economic and international development. His research specializes in impact analysis, survey research, and market feasibility. A frequent speaker on business, economic and demographic topics, his work has been featured in *The Atlantic Cities*, *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Carnegie Reporter*, NPR and other media. Harper serves as an adjunct professor at Lipscomb University, Trevecca Nazarene University, Cumberland University, Volunteer State Community College and Columbia State Community College. He holds a Ph.D. in international development, an M.P.H. in health administration and planning, an M.B.A. in health care marketing, an M.T.S. in theology, a J.D. in law, a certificate in Geographic Information Systems, and is completing an M.S.A.N.R. in agribusiness and natural resources.

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Rebecca West serves as director of applied research. She began her Chamber career as manager of a small-business accelerator program called ScaleUp Nashville. Prior to her work with the Chamber, West worked in nonprofit management and started a non-profit called L.E.T.S. Play. West has completed a M.A. in economic development, a M.A. in Latin American studies and a B.A. in theology.

Chris Zimmer

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