40,000 Jobseekers: Who Are They?

Changes in technology, a global economy and the political climate influence the composition of local employment opportunities more than an individual’s skills and experiences. Unemployment and career struggles affect people of all educational and professional backgrounds.

- **Age 24 or under:** 9%
- **Age 25-35:** 27%
- **Age 36-54:** 38%
- **Age 55 or over:** 26%
- **Minorities:** 39%
- **Veterans:** 7%
- **Female:** 45%
- **Male:** 55%
- **High School:** 48%
- **Less than High School:** 12%
- **Post-Secondary Training:** 17%
- **Master’s or higher:** 5%
- **Bachelor’s:** 10%
- **Associate’s:** 8%

In an increasingly complex economy, success is no longer just a personal issue. A person’s inability to find or retain employment has consequences for the economic well-being of families, neighborhoods, and the region’s business community.

If we filled every open job in the region, the unemployment rate would fall to two percent. If we put 40,000 people to work at an average wage, more than $2 billion in annual earnings would be added to the regional economy.

Changing demographics also send us a clear message: soon, the number of people leaving the labor market will surpass the number of people coming in. Businesses will struggle to fill positions, and our collective prosperity will be compromised.

At the same time, there are 40,000 people on the sidelines, ready to get to work. They are the unemployed or underemployed.

With the 40,000 for 40,000 campaign, we invite businesses, community organizations, workforce and economic development agencies, education institutions, the philanthropic community, elected officials, and policy makers to commit to helping our region’s jobseekers.

Change begins with one. One person, one organization, one action can begin to change the story for the region's jobseekers. From helping to train new skills to opening doors and making connections, opportunities to make change are plentiful.

Change must start somewhere. Why not with you?
Over the course of several weeks, Partner4Work convened and heard many of the region’s jobseekers. While each brought a unique perspective, several common challenges emerged.

I lost my job, now what?
Jobseekers who have experienced a job layoff or termination say there was little communication from the employer during the transition. They often report feeling blindsided, demoralized, and unsure where to start to navigate practical issues such as unemployment compensation, interim health insurance coverage, or re-employment services.

People tell me I should go back to school, but I don’t know if I can do it.
One of the region’s greatest assets is the abundance of educational institutions offering opportunities for career learning. Many jobseekers are willing to invest in learning new skills, but only 24% of people over the age of 35 find the courage, resources, and motivation to go back to school. Often they are not sure if they have what it takes to keep up with traditional students or if they can balance schoolwork and other life demands.

Why won’t anyone hire me?
In a world where most job applications are read by computers, having the right key words tends to yield more results than having the right skills, experience, and work ethic. Having sent out dozens or hundreds of applications but never hearing back, jobseekers often end up feeling confused about their market value and ultimately discouraged from trying find a job.

I am too old to be hired.
Despite the growing number of older workers in the local labor market (accounting for 25% of the active workforce), many jobseekers aged 50 or older feel that they are being overlooked by hiring employers. Their backgrounds may be too complex for hiring managers to assess them correctly, or they may be perceived as overqualified or too expensive. Older jobseekers say they feel they are losing against recent college graduates. Data shows that compared to the younger generation, older workers are more loyal, committed, and stable employees.

40% of the jobseekers are lacking robust support infrastructure such as affordable child care, reliable transportation, or stable housing.

6% of the active jobseekers have a criminal background. Navigating job opportunities is especially hard for them.

75% of the active jobseekers have sub-baccalaureate credentials. About 65% of open jobs ask for a bachelor’s degree or higher.

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