



Hiring Difficulties in Minnesota

This survey aims to pinpoint the extent and reasons for hiring difficulties in skilled manufacturing occupations.

The third round of Minnesota's Hiring Difficulties Survey focuses on skilled production, repair and engineering technician occupations in manufacturing. This survey follows up with Minnesota employers that had job postings in these occupations during second quarter 2018 to learn about their hiring experience. The survey is being conducted currently with results due out soon.

The specific occupations that are included in the current study round are:

- Production Supervisors
- Machinists
- Computer Controlled Machine Tool Operators
- CNC Programmers
- Machinery Maintenance Technicians
- Industrial Machinery Mechanics
- Engineering Technicians including Mechanical, Industrial and Electrical

These occupations were chosen because they showed the most difficulty to fill in previous rounds of the survey. As the labor market tightens with low unemployment and continued job growth, it is likely that hiring difficulties have increased in these occupations. Moreover, the Job Vacancy Survey provides evidence that demand for workers in these occupations has increased.

Greater numbers of vacancies and high vacancy rates indicate that most of these occupations are increasingly in high demand. Demand for production supervisors picked up in 2011 and reached its highest number of vacancies on record at 562 during fourth quarter 2018. Other occupations follow similar patterns. CNC programmers, a relatively new and very small occupation, also saw its highest number of job vacancies to date during fourth quarter 2018, and job postings for machinists reached an all-time high during fourth quarter 2017 at 1,101. Likewise, demand for industrial engineering technicians picked up in 2015 and has remained high with a vacancy rate of 10.8 percent.

Furthermore, anecdotal evidence from discussions with employers and media reports indicate that, in particular, skilled production and repair jobs are increasingly difficult to fill.

The Hiring Difficulties Survey questions were developed to gather more information on the educational and skill requirements of the jobs, identify if employers experienced difficulty filling the positions, and gather information on what specifically the difficulties were. The survey also asks employers what their strategies are when they do face hiring difficulties and what the consequences would be if they are unable to fill these positions.

Part of the goal of the survey is to identify if skilled manufacturing jobs are difficult to fill because of a skills gap or because of a demand-side reason like low pay, hours or inadequate advertising of the vacancy. Where skills gaps do exist, the study aims to identify the specific in-demand skills and disseminate that information to job seekers and the education system.

Another goal of the survey is to identify best employer practices in recruiting and training staff in hard-to-fill occupations. Particularly in manufacturing, where jobs require specific skills that often can only be acquired through work experience, employers have a role to play in training.

Stay tuned. Results from the current round of the Hiring Difficulties Survey will be published in the September 2019 issue of Trends. [T](#)