

CAALL Outreach Survey Project – April 2011

Overview

The Labour Standards Division conducted an online survey from January 10, 2011 to February 18, 2011. The survey was sponsored by the Canadian Association of Administrators of Labour Legislation (CAALL) – an organization to which all federal, provincial and territorial labour ministries and departments belong. CAALL is dedicated to improving the administration and effectiveness of labour legislation in these jurisdictions.

The survey was directed to employers in an attempt to determine what resources governments can use to best support employer understanding of, and compliance with, employment/labour standards. In total 79 respondents accessed the survey, 58 proceeded through the qualifying questions and of those 58, 50 respondents completed the entire survey and 8 respondents completed only a portion of the survey.

- 53% of respondents use the Labour Standards Division as their main source for Employment/Labour Standards information.
- Approximately half of the respondents have used the Labour Standards Division's website; brochures, pamphlets, or factsheets; and Guide to the Labour Standards Code in the six months prior to filling out the survey. Apart from the above mentioned resources, approximately three quarters of respondents have not used any of the Division's other available resources including 76% who did not use the telephone helpline and 100% who have not attended the Division's seminars.
- For the respondents who have used the resources, over three quarters were satisfied with each resource. The highest satisfaction was with the brochures, pamphlets, or fact sheets at 89% satisfied, while the lowest satisfaction was with the telephone helpline at 77% satisfied.
- For the respondents who were dissatisfied with the resources, the leading dissatisfaction trends were that the information is contradictory, absent, and not useful.
- 90% of respondents chose e-mail as one of their two top preferred methods of being notified of changes to employment/labour standards requirements.
- 60% of respondents chose brochures, 48% chose Guides and 31% chose the telephone helpline as one of their three most valuable employment/labour standards resources that should be provided.
- The most understood employment/labour standards were vacation pay and time and minimum wage while the least understood employment standards were the protected leaves.

The data in this report will be used by CAALL in the year July 2011 to June 2012 to develop best-practice resources that governments can use to support employer understanding of, and compliance with, employment/labour standards. It will also be used by the Nova Scotia Labour Standards Division for the same purpose.

Introduction

At the request of CAALL, the Labour Standards Division (Division) was charged with collecting data from employers within Nova Scotia to get a sense of the employment resources that employers use or want to use and to get a sense of the areas that employers do not understand. CAALL also wanted to know if there is any correlation between the age of the business or the number of employees they have to their needs, wants, and understanding.

The Division developed an online survey consisting of a total of 23 questions and gathered the data requested. The survey was promoted by local business organizations who advertised the survey to its members by direct email or newsletter. Additionally, local businesses were visited to request their input into the electronic survey.

The survey was open for responses from January 10, 2011 to February 18, 2011. In total, 79 respondents accessed the survey, 58 proceeded through the qualifying questions and of those 58, 50 respondents completed the entire survey and 8 respondents completed only a portion of the survey.

In addition to answering questions about our resources, respondents were also asked to provide some basic information about their business so we could determine if different resources are required for businesses of different industries, sizes, or maturities.

Analysis

Respondent Business Information

In order to cross reference the data received to employer size, maturity, and industry, respondents were asked to estimate the number of employees that work at their location, to estimate how many years their organization has been operating (maturity) and to identify by selecting from a table of options, the industry that best describes their organization.

Fifty eight percent (29) of respondents reported that they had 6 to 50 employees working at their location, 28% (14) reported that they had 1 to 5 employees, 8% (4) reported that they had 51 to 100,

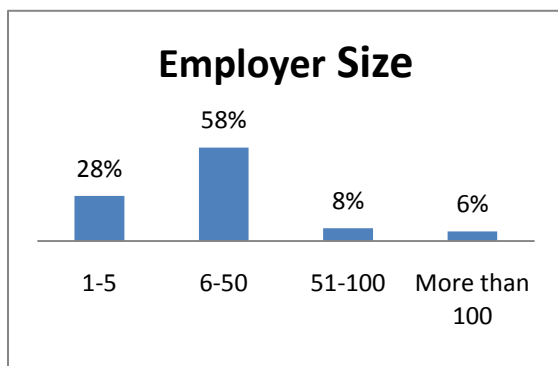


Figure 1

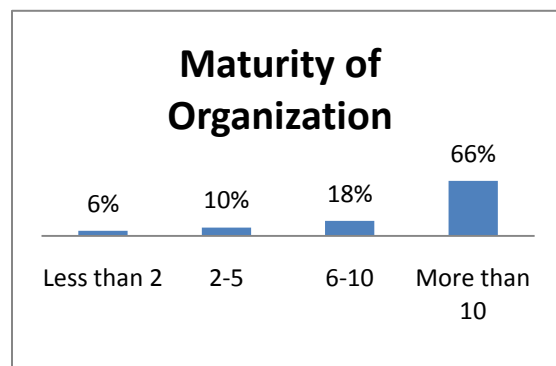


Figure 2

and 6% (3) reported that they had more than 100 employees. This data is illustrated in Figure 1.

Sixty six percent (33) of respondents reported that they were operating for over ten years, 18% (9) reported that they were operating for six years to ten years, 10% (5) reported that they were in business for two years to five years, and 6% (3) reported they were in business less than two years. This data is shown in Figure 2.

Table 1 below shows the industry data as reported by respondents. Other Services was the most selected industry while Retail Trade came in at a close second.

Industry	Responses	Percentage
Other Services (except Public Administration)	17	34%
Retail Trade	14	28%
Health Care and Social Assistance	5	10%
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	3	6%
Public Administration	2	4%
Marketing and Sales	2	4%
Utilities	2	4%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	1	2%
Construction	1	2%
Manufacturing	1	2%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	1	2%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	1	2%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	0	0%
Wholesale Trade	0	0%
Transportation and Warehousing	0	0%
Information and Cultural Industries	0	0%
Finance and Insurance	0	0%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	0	0%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	0	0%
Administrative and Support, Waste Management and Remediation Services	0	0%
Educational Services	0	0%
Total	50	100%

Table 1

It is noted that a number of industries were not represented in the survey. Many of these industries were not specifically targeted by our efforts to promote the survey. The retail and restaurant industries were two of the directly targeted industries due to the trends in the complaints the Division receives. As the restaurant industry is one industry that was directly targeted, it is assumed that the majority of respondents that selected “Other Services” came from the restaurant industry. “Restaurant Industry” was not provided as an option for respondents to select due to the parameters of the survey from CAALL.

Employer use of the Labour Standards Division

To determine if employers use the Division as their main source to learn about employment/labour standards, employers were asked to select what was their main source of information on employment/labour standards. The results as shown in Figure 3 show that 53% (31) of respondents use the NS Labour Standards Division as their main source of information followed by 19% (11) of respondents who use In-house counsel or specialist, 9% (5) who use business, industry or professional association(s) and, 3% (2) who use an external legal or consulting firm. Sixteen percent of respondents indicated that they used none of the choices provided in the survey as their main source of information on employment/labour standards.

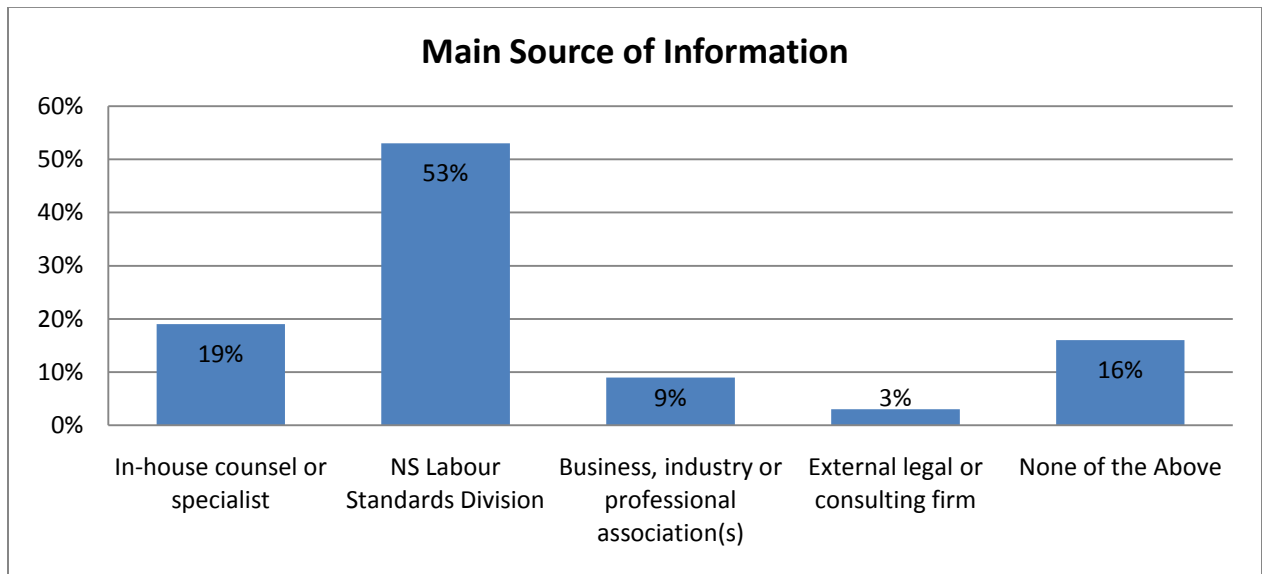


Figure 3

Given that 53% percent of the respondents use the Division as their main source of information for employment/labour standards, the data supports the conclusion that the Division should continue to supply resources for employers.

To determine if there was any correlation between employer size and their main source of information, the survey data was cross referenced. The data shows that 50% of respondents with 1-5 employees, 66% of respondents with 6-50 employees, 25% of respondents with 51-100 employees and 33% of respondents with more than 100 employees use the Division

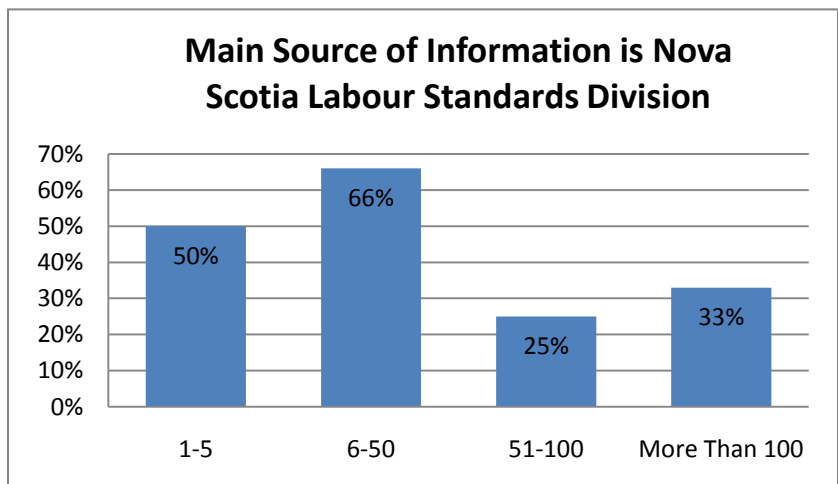


Figure 4

as their main source for information on employment/labour standards. This data is shown in Figure 4. No significant conclusions can be drawn from this data to determine if there is a correlation between employer size and their main source of information for employment/labour standards as the number of responses from employers with more than 51 employees represented only 14% of the total responses to the survey.

Employer Use of Current Resources

Employers were asked if they used any of our following resources in the past six months: websites; brochures, pamphlets, or fact sheets; guides; seminars; telephone hotline; labour standards staff; and FAQ's. The purpose of this question was to gather data concerning the use of individual resources to assist the Division in determining which resources to retain or discontinue and to identify which resources require improvement. Employers were given the option to state whether they were: very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, very dissatisfied, or did not use/attend.

As shown in Figure 5, the most used resource was the website. The data shows 53% of respondents have used the website in the past six months; followed by 49% who have used either brochures, pamphlets, or fact sheets; and 44% who have used the Guide to the Labour Standards Code of Nova Scotia.

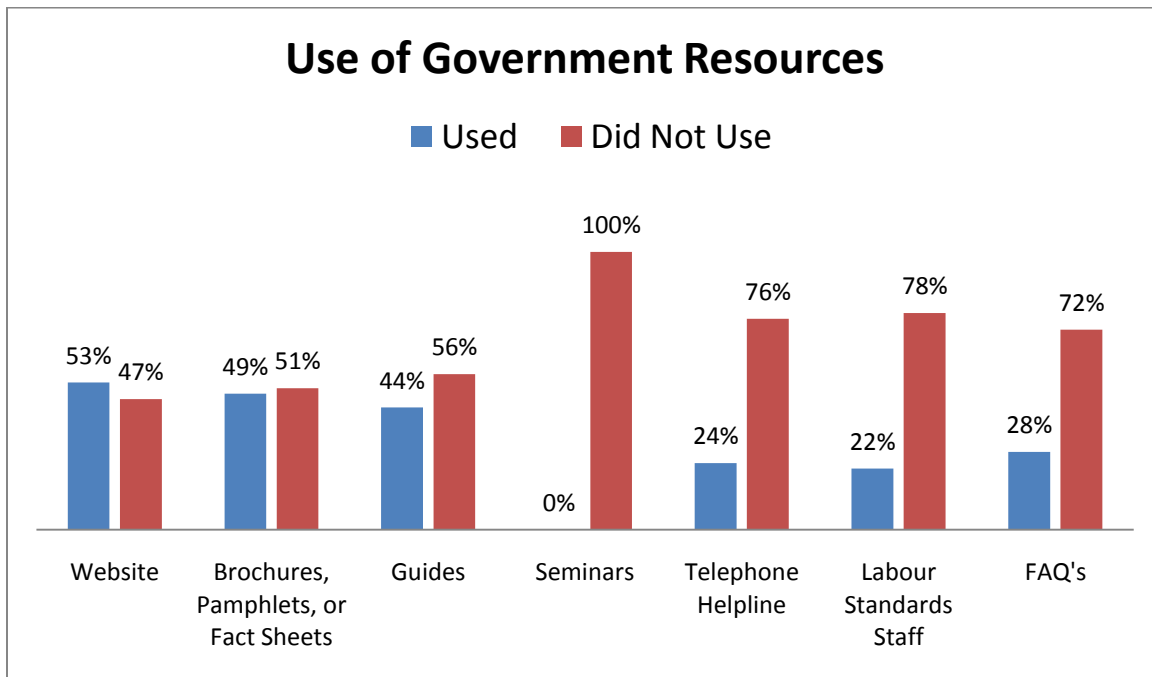


Figure 5

On the other side of the spectrum, the most unused resources were the seminars, where 100% of the respondents have not attended a seminar in the past six months, followed by 78% who have not used labour standards staff, then 76% who have not used the telephone helpline.

The data was then combined to show the satisfaction rate of employers who have used the specific resources. Responses that were either very satisfied or satisfied were grouped together as satisfied and responses that were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied were grouped together as dissatisfied. As shown in Figure 6, all resources received a high satisfaction rate from the respondents. The highest satisfaction rate was with the Division’s brochures at 89% satisfied, while the lowest satisfaction rate was with our telephone helpline at 77% satisfied.

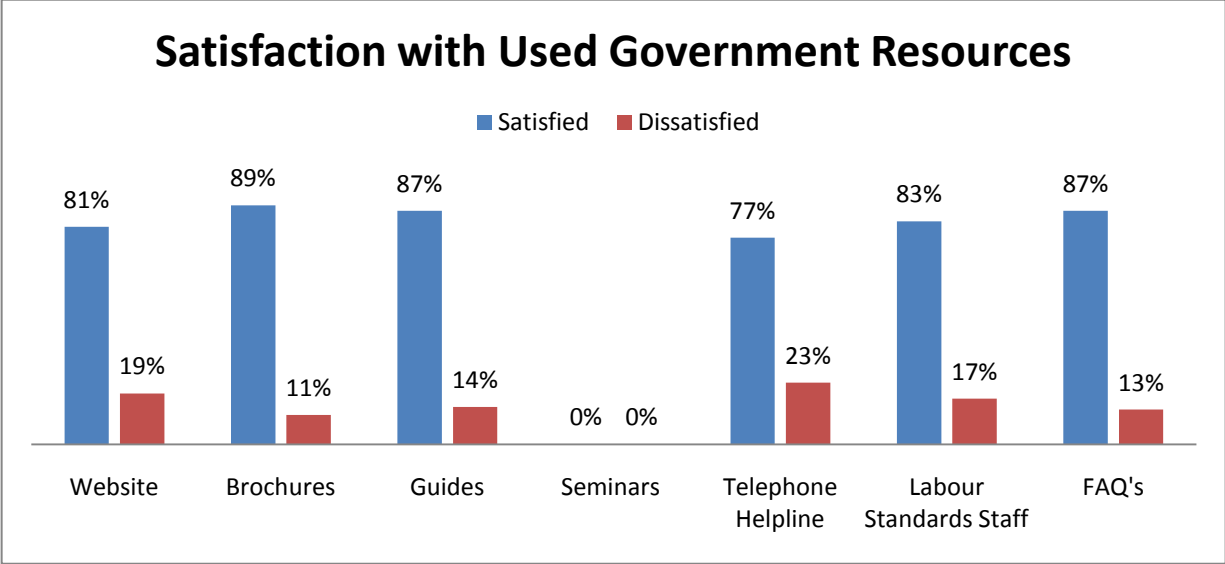


Figure 6

Every respondent who selected that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with a resource was asked to choose the reason for their dissatisfaction. The responses indicate that the main reasons for the dissatisfaction are because the information provided to them is contradictory, absent, and not useful. The top five reasons are shown in Figure 7.

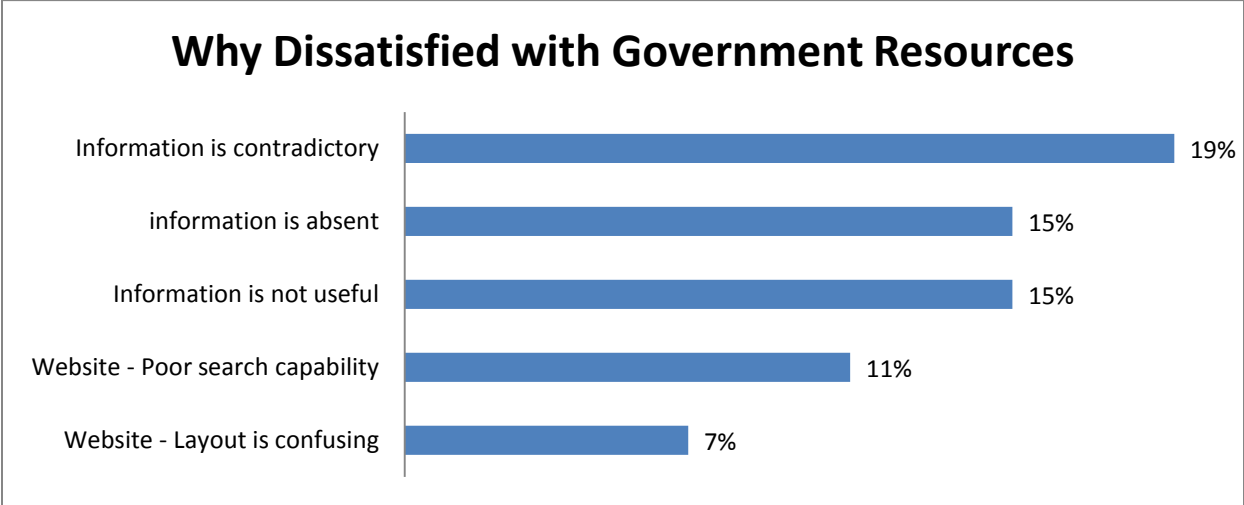


Figure 7

A conclusion that can be drawn from the data is that the majority of the resources the Division has available are not being used by employers. However, given the satisfaction rate from the employers who do use the resources, the Division should look at ways to communicate/publicize the availability of the resources it has for employers.

Additionally, given the feedback from employers who were dissatisfied, the Division should review its resources to ensure that the information given is complete, useful, and not contradictory. The Division should also look at ways to make the website more user-friendly.

Employer Desired Resources

Employers were asked to choose the top three resources that they feel would be most valuable for the Division to provide in the future. The responses to this question will assist the Division in prioritizing the development of new resources and the expansion of existing resources. Table 2 below shows the responses received from the list of possible resources in order of most desired to least desired.

Rank	Types of Resources Desired	Responses	Responses Percentage
1	Brochures, pamphlets or fact sheets	31	60%
2	Guides	25	48%
3	Government telephone helpline	16	31%
4	Distribution of information through business, industry or professional association(s)	13	25%
4	FAQ's	13	25%
4	Interactive tools	13	25%
7	Webinars	10	19%
7	Seminars	10	19%
9	Streaming informational videos	8	15%
9	Web-based course	8	15%
11	Employment standards conference	5	10%
12	Regular short survey	4	8%

Table 2

The data was also compared to the employer's size and industry to get insight into whether preferences for future resources vary by demographic characteristics. There were no trends that suggested any such correlation. The data does show that employers want written materials and the ability to speak to someone. If funding is a barrier, the Division should concentrate its funding resources on the most desired preferences prior to using its resources on the lesser preferred resources.

Best Ways to Communicate Changes

Employers were asked to choose their top two preferences on the best ways to inform them about changes to employment/labour standards and the availability of new resources. The responses to this question will assist the Division in deciding which types of communication to expand upon or, if necessary, to develop.

Table 3 shows the responses listed by the most preferred to the least preferred. The data shows that employers' overall top preferred method was to be notified by email that changes or updates have been made to either employment/labour standards or the Division's resources. Ninety percent of all respondents chose e-mail as one of their top two preferred choices.

Communication Preference for Updates	Responses	Response Percentage
E-mail	47	90%
Regular mail	26	50%
Downloadable newsletter	15	29%
Fax	9	17%
Telephone call	7	13%
RSS feed, Blog, Twitter	0	0%

Table 3

Regular mail was the second overall preferred choice. At least 40% of the respondents who chose regular mail also chose email as one of their top two choices.

The Division should maintain a list of employers' email addresses and mailing addresses so that it can provide employers with updates by mail and/or email.

Employer Understanding of Employment/Labour Standards

Employers were asked to rate their understanding of specific employment/labour standards as excellent, good, fair, or poor. The purpose of this question was to ascertain from employers which employment/labour standards are the most difficult for them to understand. The responses to this question will assist the Division in determining which employment/labour standards require more or enhanced resources to help employers understand them.

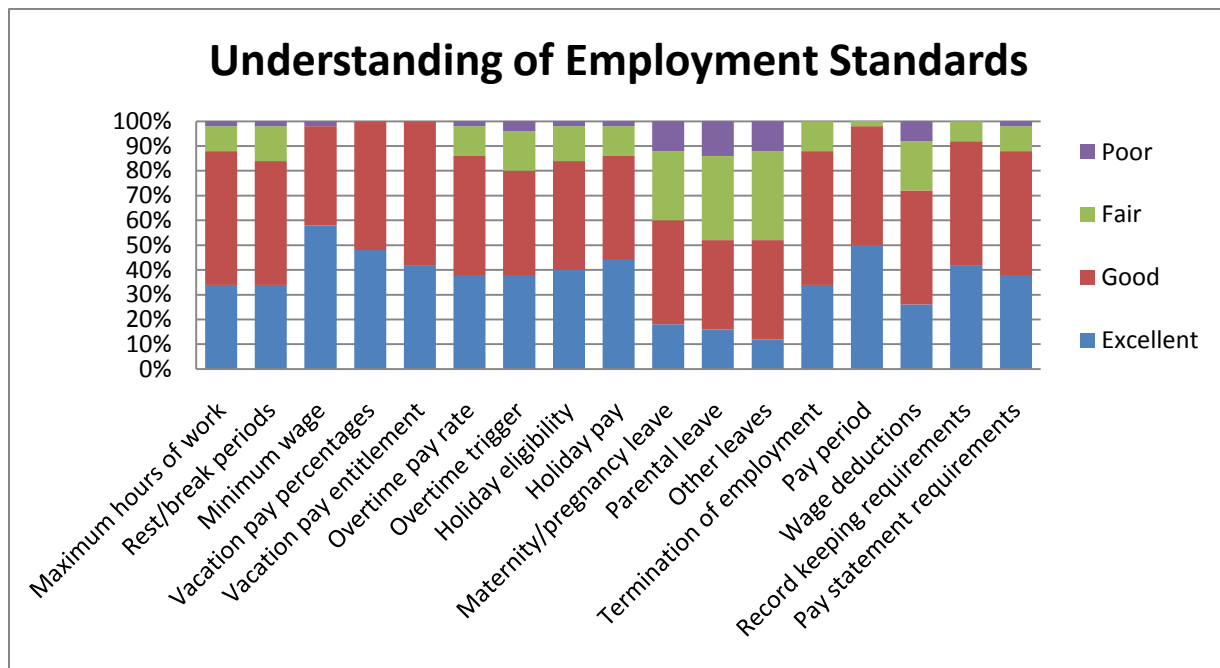


Figure 8

Figure 8 above shows the results for employers' overall understanding of each employment/labour standard. All responses came back higher than a 50% good knowledge; however, pay related standards tended to have a higher level of knowledge while protected leave standards tended to have a lower level of understanding.

The standards were further examined by combining the responses. The responses that were received as either good or excellent were combined and labeled as good understanding while responses that were received as poor or fair were combined and labeled as a poor understanding. With the data combined the least understood standards were clearly Parental, Maternity/Pregnancy, and Other Leaves. As shown in Figure 9, at least 40% of all respondents did not have a good understanding of protected leave standards.

The results were also compared to company size and maturity. The purpose of this comparison was to gain insight into any differences based on these demographic characteristics and, if so, to allow the Division to tailor its resources to address such differences. The data did not show any significant correlation.

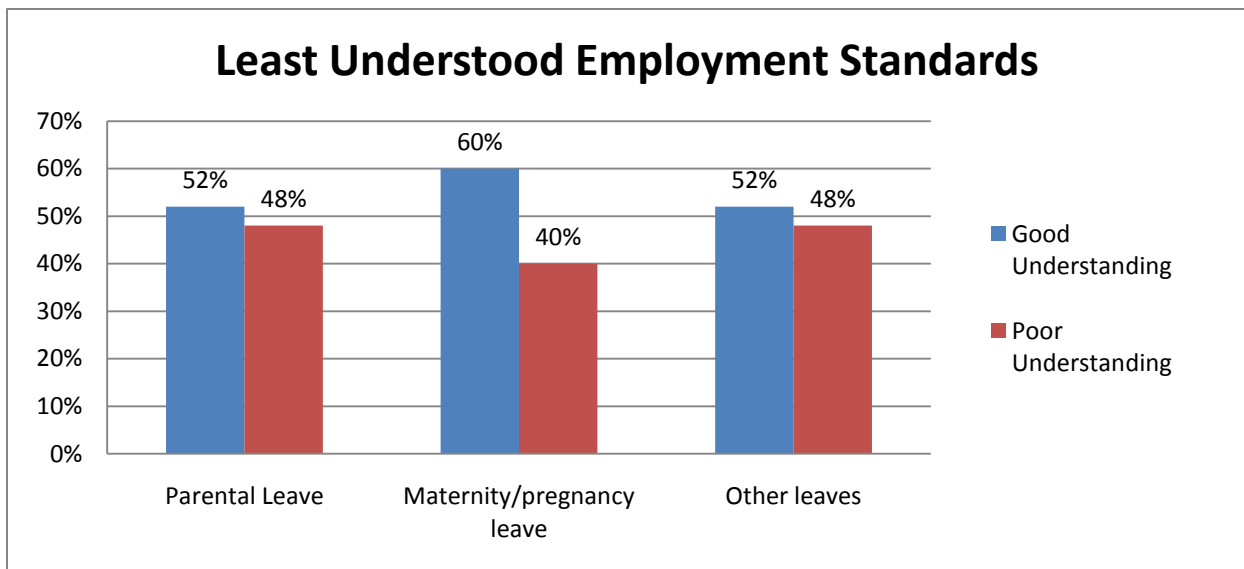


Figure 9

Additional Comments relating to employment/labour standards resources

Employers were asked to provide any additional comments that they would like to share. The purpose of this question was to provide employers with the opportunity to qualitatively comment on employment/labour standards resources generally. The responses to this question will provide the Division with qualitative input to support findings of the survey and other useful input on the subject of employment/labour standards.

Below are the relevant comments:

- The web sites seem out of date.
- The people you talk to won't commit by fax, making the info unreliable
- The more information that is available on the web, the better!
- We used to receive more mailed out brochures and information. Received almost none over the last 5+ years.
- Have never heard of training sessions being provided. This would be very helpful.
- This entire office required a complete overhaul... the labour board lacks credibility and therefore is viewed as more government red tape... just another difficulty facing business owners in Canada...
- It would be very beneficial to most employers to receive regular updates of labour standards... webex sessions would also be very helpful...thank you

A number of these comments are supported by the data and will be addressed in the recommendations.

Conclusions

The conclusions that can be drawn from the data and comments are:

1. A significant number of employers use the Division and its resources for information concerning employment/labour standards.
2. Employers tend to use our use website; brochures, pamphlets, or fact sheets; and our Guide to the Labour Standards Code regularly. Employers tend to be satisfied with all of the Division's resources that they use; however, employers who were dissatisfied with our resources, including staff resources, claim that the information given to them is incomplete, not useful, or contradictory.
3. Employers want the Division to provide, or continue to provide, labour standards information by brochures, pamphlets, or factsheets; guides; and by a telephone helpline.
4. A large number of employers would like to be notified by email about changes to the employment/labour standards or about changes to our resources on employment/labour standards.
5. Employers do not have as great of an understanding of the protected leave standards as they have of other employment/labour standards.
6. Employers are not familiar with our availability to provide seminars to groups of employers.

Recommendations

Based on the data and comments received and the conclusions reached, we make the following recommendations:

1. As employers tend to want to receive updates by email, the Division should maintain a database of employer email addresses. To ensure that this list includes as many email addresses for employers as possible, it should provide avenues for employers to provide their email addresses to the Division. The Division could allow employers to provide their email address via the website in order to be added to the master email database.
2. As no respondent employer has attended a seminar in the past six months and comments were received showing that they are not familiar with the ability to attend a seminar, the Division should publish its criteria for employer seminars on its website and also provide an online request form.
3. Due to the comments and the reasons of dissatisfaction for some of our employment/labour resources, the Division should ensure that its resources contain up-to-date, accurate, and non contradictory information.
4. Due to a lower level of understanding of leave standards, the Division should develop additional resources to aid in the understanding of all protected leave standards.

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