

# Where are all the young workers today?

*Pete Aarssen - September 2019*

With so much analysis being done on the challenges confronting employers to hire and engage millennials in the workforce today, those presented by hiring people of any other demographic are often ignored. The truth is that there are as many older workers within our workforce as there are millennials. The proportion of Baby Boomers nearing retirement has resulted in the aging of today's available workforce; making the hiring of younger talent a challenge for employers in the coming years; according to a recent study from Statistics Canada.

The data showed that there is now an equal number of workers aged 25 to 34 and those aged 55 and above active in the workplace. In 1996, senior colleagues comprised just 10% of the workforce. By 2018, the proportion of older employees rose to 21%. The report went on to say that the population under 35 is seeing virtually no growth. In my business, providing employers with health and dental plans, I frequently hear about the difficulty they are having even finding younger employees! A very high percentage of millennials have obtained a post-secondary education; more than in any other era in our history so, it is no wonder that the study also showed that jobs not requiring a university degree tend to draw a higher share of older workers to them, not younger persons. As an employer, understanding these shifts may help shape your recruiting efforts or at least help make some sense out of why there are fewer younger people applying to do non post-secondary type work.

Given the current composition of our actual labour pool, employers should identify which skills are most important for them; not all work requires a younger employee, nor should we become biased to any demographic. There are skills and benefits to be found among all demographics of available workers yet, the environment of work itself, is changing! There is an increased reliance on workplace automation; highly automated work is generally devoid of a requirement for an employee from a specific demographic. With agriculture so prevalent in Lambton County, many farm enterprises have worked to lessen the need for younger workers; technology radically changing farm practices. In 2016, 52% of farm managers themselves were aged 55 or older. This fact alone doesn't evidence the added data on their support staff requirements but more and more, previously highly labour intensive practices have been re-purposed to the domain of technology and automation. These workplace trends are in themselves neither negative or positive but knowing how the labour pool is changing; the human resource availability needed for most work, can be a very interesting and highly beneficial study.