



Salt Spring Literacy Society

*“You’re not really a Salt
Springer until you have held
four jobs simultaneously”*

Improving the employment experience of workers
on Salt Spring Island



By Gordon Handford

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Thanks

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Stewart Webb and Edith Glennie for their help, especially Edith's hawk like eyes for catching typos (any remaining are later mistakes she could not have caught).

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From the Salt Spring Literacy Board

The author wishes to dedicate this report to the following key contributors:

- Herb Burnett for the generous sharing of his deep knowledge of Salt Spring social history.
- Jamie Alexander for his unwavering dedication to support for those on island in any sort of need.
- Garth Hendren for his wisdom on island ways and his eagerness in lending support to our project.
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History and Methodology

During 2010 the Salt Spring Literacy Society received numerous requests from community members to learn skills such as Microsoft Office. The intent of the learners was to secure local employment. Although happy to oblige, the staff and volunteers wondered whether these skills really would be utilised by a majority of jobs on island. Collecting data on the skills required in the local employment market was the initial goal of the project.

A grant was submitted to the Ministry of Housing and Social Development to cover this research, the application was supported by a further eighteen letters of support from community employers and organisations (see appendix A). A steering committee was created to guide the project and to support the research consultant. The steering committee was open for anyone to join, there were no restrictions. The steering committee worked with the research consultant to set goals, develop the questionnaire and to suggest actions resulting from the data gathered. Because we wanted the research to be as useful to the wider community as possible, and because the steering committee represented a wide sector of the island, the initial goal of the project expanded to beyond simply collecting a list of skills required in the local employment sector. The new goal was to collect data that would identify strengths and weaknesses in the employment market in general, and to collect data that would identify strengths and weaknesses in the labour pool. It was hoped that this data could then be used to recommend actions for improving the employment situation on Salt Spring Island.

Due to restrictions in the funding we had a very small window for this project; six months. The questionnaires were available throughout the community; at the Literacy Centre, Community Services and CARE office, the research consultant also visited major employers and left copies in staff rooms and with management, additional questionnaires were available at community events such as Soups On and the Food Bank, and a booth was set up in Ganges one weekend. The surveys were also available for completion online. In order to capture additional community input we supplemented the questionnaires with community focus group meetings that were open to the public.

Timeline

Sept. 2010- Funding confirmed
Oct. 2010- The steering committee is formed
Nov. 2010- The goals and objectives are set
Dec. 2010- The questionnaire is finalised
Jan/Feb. 2011- Collecting the responses
Mar. 2011- Community Focus Groups
April 2011- The final report

Project Steering Committee

Garth Hendren (CRD Director)	Carolyn Flam (Youth & Family Counsellor, SSCS)
Suzanne Archer (CARE supervisor)	Rachel Scott (Coordinator, SSLS)
Carol Hall (Board Director, SSLS)	Leah Hartley (Senior Planner, Islands Trust)
Herb Burnett (Board Director, SSLS)	Gayle Mavor (CARE employment advisor)
Scott Finlay (SSCS volunteer)	Gary Anderson
Chris Leischner	Jamie Alexander (Counsellor, SSCS)

Executive Summary

Literacy Skills

- 90% of respondents rated literacy skills between “useful” and “essential”.
- High school certification appears to be valued more highly by the employees rather than the employers.
- Many job-essential skills appear to be undervalued by the employer group (both hard skills such as operating the cash register or computer skills, and soft skills such as dealing effectively with upset customers or co-workers, working well with different sorts of people, goal setting and prioritising, or responding quickly and well to problems). These skills have typically been related to greater job satisfaction, reduced employee turnover, improved productivity and profitability, and greater customer satisfaction, and reduced levels of stress and conflict.
- The self employed tend to evaluate skills similar to the employee group.

The underemployed and unemployed

- Improved cell phone coverage was valued by both employers and the self employed.
- Those already employed were consistently less interested in the suggested improvements which was to be expected.
- Improved transportation, microfinance, and small business training ranked the highest amongst the unemployed.
- While improved transportation and payphone availability, support for high school certification, and interest in a smorgasbord of counselling and support services are not of interest to all, they are essential for those struggling to establish and sustain stable, decent employment
- The unemployed/underemployed respondents were somewhat less “attached” to the Island: rating highly their lack of cash to move and dependence on a discount in their rent as reasons for staying.
- The under/unemployed rated low in having good connections to get work compared to the employees who rated higher.
- Word of mouth and personal connections appear to be the main route of recruitment for work, therefore building local connections seems crucial for the unemployed/underemployed.
- The under/unemployed indicated negative attitudes towards hiring the poor and unemployed and especially those with mental health issues.
- The unemployed/underemployed tend to live in poorer housing and are more transient.
- The under/unemployed have worked almost twice as many jobs in the last five years to log just over half as many years of employment.
- However the employed and the unemployed/underemployed average about the same wages, have essentially the same education and apprenticeship experience, have the same expectations for a living wage (around \$20), and the same mean age (almost 45 years, four years older than the BC average).
- The pay range indicates many people operate well below the living wage.

- The under/unemployed are more likely to be single or to live in smaller family groups. It is not clear whether this is result or cause of employment status.
- The under/unemployed are more likely to have volunteered, tried innovative, creative pursuits, self employment and work out of their homes, all of which are often suggested as strategies for gainful employment. Clearly something is going wrong, and in the absence of evidence to the contrary, it is most likely the lack of work. Careful attention to the specifics of every situation is going to be a more productive approach to counselling, support, and training for the unemployed.
- The under/unemployed report greater difficulty with finding and keeping safe, decent, affordable housing, seasonal changes in employment, short term employment, and stresses of stretching the little money there is to cover the basics and pay back money owed, all things we would expect in this category. However the majority of respondents report these as being only somewhat challenging.
- Our survey indicated there may be a need for a careful investigation of compliance to the Employment Standards Act on Salt Spring Island. Adherence to these principles might make a difference of as much as 10% in a worker's compensation.
- Focus groups passionately spoke of the personal, physical, social, emotional, and psychological costs of poverty, unemployment, and underemployment. They also attested to the barrier that common job orientation/training programs presented to some of them. They also suggested solutions to overcome traditional barriers including; orientation and training in a suitable format and schedule, the ability to share work or utilize flex time, and appropriate coaching and support.
- Finding methods for supporting the traditionally unemployable is crucial.
- Focus groups and steering committee consultations emphasized the informal nature of the Salt Spring economy and the role that gossip, the grapevine, and reputation play. They discussed the challenge of unprofessional communication on the part of both employers and workers.

Businesses managers and the self employed

- The self employed and employers/managers typically engage in a complex variety of different business activities with the self employed taking the lead.
- Self employed businesses have on average been established for a little less than half the time than employer/manager respondents.
- Both groups expressed reasonable satisfaction with the success of their business; gross income, ease of management, market share, effective staffing, and advertising/PR.
- While self employed businesses perceive themselves as more vulnerable to a variety of cyclic business influences (although no difference reached statistical significance) they also saw themselves at a fairly low trough in their cycle.
- There is an indication that self employment is a strong strategy for the island. A higher proportion of the employees in the self employed group are long term, skilled (69% vs 56%), and they are paid better (\$25.67 vs \$19.15).
- The self employment sector appears to be a very important driver of the Salt Spring economy based on the proportion and underlying tone of self employed responses.
- There is a significant turnover in employment, whether it is driven by the cyclic economy or a search for better employment or employees is not clear.

- Employer/manager and self employed groups don't perceive themselves to have any serious issues recruiting and training staff. This is interesting given staff turnover rates and the frequency of complaints regarding employees heard from business owners.
- The grapevine is the most commonly used recruitment tool.
- Only two items are considered moderately worrying: 'getting a decent pool of applicants to consider' and 'having applicants that are appropriately qualified'. Scores for self employed and regular employers were not substantially or significantly different.
- Employers expressed to the research consultant negative opinions of the prospective employees pool on Salt Spring; "the problem on SSI is not hiring someone, it's having them come back the second day". These attitudes were affirmed by the under/unemployed focus group.
- Employer respondents expressed lukewarm interest in any training in interviewing skills, human rights and privacy issues, specific literacy skills, soft skills like communication/interpersonal skills and managing difficult customers, performance appraisal, and so forth. At the same time, focus groups identified serious gaps in the quality and professionalism of management on island.
- Almost three quarters of respondents reported economic well-being much closer to the worst ever seen as opposed to the best in memory. However, when asked for a longer term outlook many tentatively looked forward to slight improvements in most areas.
- The employer groups noted the growing necessity of the underground economy in terms of survival which went hand in hand with their assessment of the ill-health of the open economy. Comments in the surveys and focus groups reinforced these findings and spoke to a strong appetite for coordinated economic development.
- Respondents appear to recognize the global interdependence of the local economy.

Recommendations Focused Around Labour Market Challenges

The research consultant, steering committee and focus groups considered the survey findings within the context of the local circumstances and made a series of recommendations. Several challenges were apparent in the Salt Spring labour market and these provided the focus for sets of recommendations.

Putting a Positive Face on Unemployment and Poverty

We identified a set of attitudes towards the unemployed, the poor, and those struggling with mental health issues that need to be revised if we are going to improve employability and job success. The focus groups identified resistance to equal consideration of the unemployed, particularly the very poor. As the education, training and experience of the unemployed and underemployed was comparable to the employed there is a pool of people who might be very well qualified for positions but who never get looked at. This is not just a local problem; recent studies have illustrated a pervasive resistance to hiring the unemployed. This resistance has become the focus of a study by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), a group looking into systemic prejudice against unemployed workers in the US.

There is a disturbing and growing trend among employers and staffing firms to refuse to even consider the unemployed for available job openings, regardless of their qualifications. Excluding unemployed workers from employment opportunities is unfair to workers, bad for the economy, and potentially violates basic civil rights protections because of the disparate impact on older workers, workers of color, women and others. At a time when we should be doing whatever we can to open up job opportunities, it is profoundly disturbing to see deliberate exclusion of the jobless from work opportunities.

Christine Owens, testimony to the EEOC¹

It is recognized that negative attitudes are likely to be reciprocal and self-reinforcing. So efforts at improving perceptions are most likely to be productive if focused on several different fronts.

- **Promotion**

We suggest approaching the local media for a series of articles profiling relevant individuals and raising awareness of the issue of discrimination. These would focus on presenting fuller pictures of those caught up in the struggles of our economy. There are precedents for similar strategies being effective in regards to other local social issues and it seems reasonable to hope for the same effect with unemployment. This also provides an opportunity to consider the layered issues for example, functioning with mental health issues.

- **Support**

A peer support group for the unemployed and underemployed people on Island could be created which could break the weighty sense of isolation and disempowerment that tends to settle around unemployment. Besides support, this group could continue to innovate ways of engaging the wider community to reduce prejudice. They might also be an agent that could

¹ Taken from <http://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/meetings/2-16-11/owens.cfm> 04/05/2011

promote an alternative to standard employment such as job-sharing, flex time, and mentoring.

- **Supporting CARE**

It is recommended that Salt Spring Literacy could formalise its support of CARE for example, through resume writing support and providing computer access and training².

- **Relationship Building Program for Salt Spring Literacy Society**

Many of the recommendations in this report could benefit from continued or improved partnerships or collaborations between a wide-ranging number of community organisations in addition to the many businesses. It is therefore suggested that continued efforts be made to promote or support such collaboration.

Advocacy, and Access

The daily lives of those most in need of social service resources are impacted by the absence of or relative scarcity of advocacy and limited access to government. However we do acknowledge and appreciate the effort both SSCS and Service BC have put into supporting the community in these matters. In other communities the MP and MLA constituency offices provide a broad variety of information and advocacy services, but such is not the case on SSI. Further, a complaint often heard on Salt Spring is that there is no centralization of advocacy. We suggest several approaches.

- **Salt Spring advocacy agency**

A dedicated organisation of advocacy could be very useful to the community. Issues which typically require advocacy include; discrimination in the workplace, securing benefits, rental disputes, and healthcare. A potential model for this could be found at the Citizens Advice Bureau in the UK.

- **Open office hours: federal and provincial elected representatives**

We suggest the elected representatives (MP and MLA) be approached or petitioned, by a collective of the community to provide direct access to their constituency staff on a predictable schedule and in a known space (perhaps shared).

Community Projects

- **Work schemes**

We recommend community wide work programs be instilled, such as the broom clearing program that was previously operated by Copper Kettle. Work schemes provide short term income to people who need it, as well as creating an arena in which workplace socialization and positive culture can be learned.

² Although Salt Spring Literacy currently does provide these services we feel this arrangement could be improved; perhaps expanded with scheduled help times for CARE clients or at least formalised with board recognition to provide greater security for the future.

- **Living Wage campaign**

The success of the living wage schemes globally (such as the London Living Wage) might encourage us to put some effort into exploring the potential of instituting a Salt Spring Living Wage campaign, a manageable figure somewhere midway between minimum wage and the usual living wage of about \$27 per hour.

- **Good Employer Awards**

Businesses who adhere to the principles of good employer practice ought to be celebrated and acknowledged by the community at large. Using standard indicators of good employment practice it is suggested there ought to be annual public award distributed locally and advertised in the local media to the better employers.

- **Stable income support**

We recommend schemes that specifically encourage employers to convert cyclic short term or part time jobs into permanent, perhaps full time work. This is perhaps achievable through education of better workplace practices and could be connected to the awards scheme mentioned above.

- **Positive workplace conduct**

We recommend community-wide schemes that would encourage better workplace communication, for example through media awareness or non-violent communication workshops.

Supporting Self Employment

- **Development of program supporting small business**

We suggest support or courses with a curriculum based on the positive feedback for the list suggested in the survey in order to support the innovation of small businesses. Hard skills (market research, business planning, goal setting and evaluation, financial literacy, fiscal management, etc.) will be balanced by soft skills (the role of positive thinking, mentoring and peer feedback and support, maintaining personal/home/work balance and self care). It is suggested that the teaching of such skills may fall under the mandate of the SSL.

- **Mobilization of business buddies**

A bank of seasoned entrepreneurs who wish to give back by mentoring new businesses ought to be created. This is a long term project and will require a commitment to developing and monitoring the success of mentoring relationships. The model is essentially the same one successfully by SSL for pairing learners and co-learners. As there are issues of confidentiality and information security/privacy, this will require very sensitive oversight and an anchoring relationship with an existing organisation such as SSL or Volunteer Salt Spring.

- **Microfinance**

Small business start-ups will require funding. One focus group suggested the wealthier residents could be utilised as a funding resource. Although, not unlike the Galiano Community Loan Fund, nevertheless this would take a serious investment of time, energy,

and expertise. In the meantime KIVA, VanCity or Victoria Microloans are possible sources of support or information on microfinance.

Non-Traditional Training and Employment

There was one concern repeated in the surveys, the project steering committee comments, and most strongly in the unemployed/underemployed focus group. Many highly motivated, skilled, experienced people do not secure satisfying employment because, for many different reasons, they can't orient and train effectively and don't function well in a 5 day per week, 9:00 to 5:00 work week. Or, alternatively, there are many people, particularly women, who might work very well in a non-traditional job who don't have the training, support, and track record to give them access. This is an underutilized labour pool that merits development and support. This is not a trivial undertaking but could have broad outcomes including widening the labour market, increasing the efficiency of matching work to labour, decreasing dependence on welfare and other social services, accessing rare skill sets, and improving the life experience of a group who is now suffering. There are two more-or-less independent branches to this effort.

- **Employment support worker**

We suggest the traditional unemployable or hard to employ have access to a dedicated employment support worker. Individuals who would benefit from this program include those who need a more gradual, phased, and supported experience, those who challenge regular routine and conventional accountabilities and schedules, those with intermittent disability, physical or mental/emotional, those with diminishing capacity due to age or injury, the chronically unemployed or welfare dependent, and people moving out of dependent relationships however conflicted they may have been. A coordinator would sketch out a tentative plan in consultation with the person, make appropriate arrangements with an employer or coach the person to do that, and follow up with whatever conflict resolution, training, or support that was necessary to facilitate success. A buddy system could be set up (either someone to keep you on track or someone to fill in your spot). This coordinator could collaborate with the peer group of unemployed and underemployed to get input, direction, and feedback. He or she would also have to build and maintain very effective relationships with businesses, the chamber of commerce, and social service providers.

- **Mentoring Non-traditional Trades**

Similar to the suggestion above, although more volunteer based would be a mentoring program. Some employers (typically contractors) are already known for taking on a similar role; training and supporting workers who are traditionally hard to employ. We suggest promoting and supporting such employers.

Miscellaneous

- **Caregiver support group**

We suggest further support be given to those in the care field. This seems pertinent because the older demographics of the island means this is a significant field but also because this is

typically a highly stressful job that often falls under a lower pay bracket. For independent caregivers a social or support group (emotional support and skill support) could be of use. For caregivers employed in an institution or facility different support may be required. For that group issues include the economic and lifestyle problems associated with casual or on call employment, conflict involving management or unions and workplace relations.

- **Ongoing advocacy to oversee roll-out of this study and report**

We recommend either the Salt Spring Literacy board or member of the steering committee continue to monitor the implementation, success and failures of the recommendations.

- **Sunday Market**

We recommend that the idea of a Sunday Market be explored. The Sunday market suggested would be aimed at struggling new crafts people, second-hand or flea market type sales, and local people who do not have a space in the Saturday Market.

- **New employment opportunities**

Of course in addition to the above it is obvious that Salt Spring needs more employment opportunities in order to adequately support the current population. We recommend that projects should be considered that would create new jobs, particularly those that would appeal to those with higher qualifications by providing intellectual stimulation, appropriate salaries and job satisfaction comparable to opportunities found elsewhere.

The Surveys

The project's steering committee decided to survey four groups that represent differing perspectives on the Island employment experience: the unemployed and underemployed, employees, employers and managers, and those who self-define as self employed (including those who work by themselves and those who manage their own small businesses)³. Under advice from the PSC the research consultant constructed four questionnaires. Items were included that might assess the experience of the under/unemployed, identify gaps in services and support, and guide program development and interventions by SSL. The survey findings would then form part of the basis for a list of recommendations which was the goal of this LMP study.

The under/unemployed and the employee surveys contained largely parallel content designed to probe the following factors that were suspected to have an impact on the ease of getting and holding a job on Salt Spring:

- Elements that might underlie attachment to the island and support for employment
- Living arrangements, educational preparation, personal and work history including the sorts of work performed and approximate per hour salaries, and a few demographic details (age and gender)
- An inventory of factors that might make effective employment more challenging; housing availability and affordability, transportation, poverty, personal lifestyle and psychological issues, competing responsibilities, etc.
- A variety of services which might support employability e.g. improved bus service, entrepreneurial support, counselling, etc.
- An inventory of the use of existing services
- The job performance impact of a number of work-related literacy skills
- An assessment of adherence to employment standards on island

The surveys for employer/managers and the self employed would look at the other side of the coin:

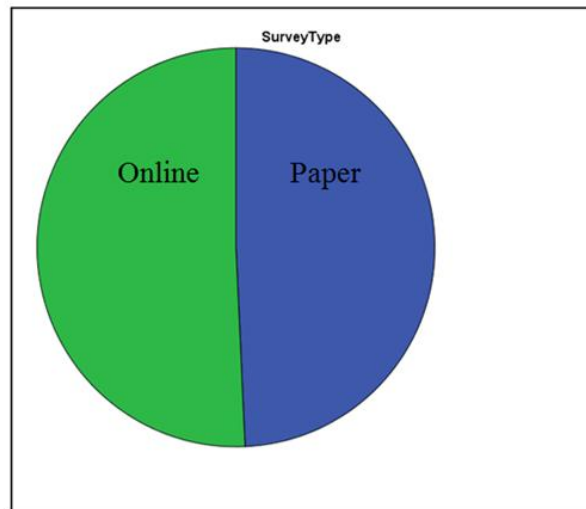
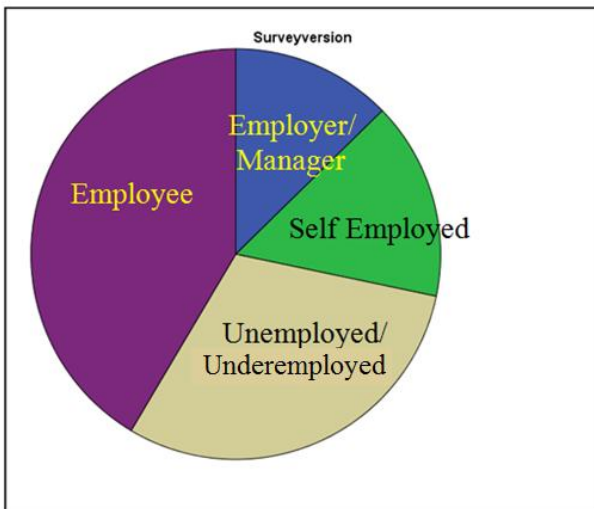
- The sort of work being performed on island and the length of time individual employers have been established
- An assessment of current business in the context of normal cycles
- Job profile, employee turnover, and current issues in finding or training effective employees
- Recruitment methods and training needs
- Relevant knowledge for starting up and maintaining a business
- The value (to their business and employees) of the same inventory of work-related literacy skills
- Services that might support employability e.g. improved bus service, entrepreneurial support, counselling, etc.

³ Retirees typically fall under employers- this assumes they may hire workers such as gardeners, electricians, plumbers etc.

Survey Administration and Response

The research consultant initially set a goal of four hundred surveys including a healthy representation of local businesses. This would allow for an analysis, by business type, of literacy training needs. We were constrained by the timing of the LMP contract to carry out data collection during a less than optimal period: beginning in mid-December and ending mid February. We later agreed that 200 was a more realistic target. We expanded from a paper survey by launching the surveys online through Survey Monkey, and these online responses composed half of our data pool.

Survey Responses



Going online gave us access to a very different pool of respondents. While paper surveys for the under/unemployed were largely from males in quite difficult situations (many homeless, longer term unemployed) the online under/unemployed responders were typically female with a longer work history on island and although struggling, managing to keep conventional housing.

Additionally, while the other groups were more or less evenly represented paper versus online, over ninety percent of all self employed responses were online. However, across hard copy and online surveys the relatively low number of business responses meant that we were not able to meaningfully break down the literacy skills by business sector.

A variety of approaches were engaged to secure responses to our survey campaign. We offered six draws for \$25 to interested participants. Ads were placed at four points in the local newspaper informing the public of the surveys, and one half page full colour ad to publicise the focus groups. Fifteen individually focused and staged notices were placed on the Salt Spring Exchange, an online community advertising service with over three thousand subscribers. Three articles were arranged as well as one letter to draw attention to the paper surveys. Posters were put up and regularly replaced in both Fulford village and Ganges. The consultant traveled on early morning ferries on both the Fulford and Vesuvius routes approaching commuters. Teams attended the SSCS Let's Do Brunch free meal and the Food Bank. Soup's On at the Anglican Church received several visits. People were approached in cafés and a table was set up outside a popular coffee shop. The consultant delivered surveys to well connected people in the south end whose opinions were sought. Forms for managers and workers were delivered to two cheese manufacturers and a centre that supports meditation and yoga. Cooperation was secured from more than a dozen major businesses in Ganges and four smaller businesses in Fulford Harbour, and surveys were left with posters, raffle entries and envelopes for secure return. These businesses were then regularly re-contacted in efforts to improve participation. Volunteers talked with their friends, encouraging participation. In addition participation was encouraged through the SSL email list. Although there were encouraging experiences (the cooperation at Let's Do Brunch and Soup's On and on the ferries stand out) the response from businesses, both management and employees, was discouraging. Despite securing cooperation and agreement to support data collection and then numerous follow-up visits and phone calls, many businesses failed to turn over any completed surveys. In contrast, those who completed the surveys, both on paper and online were with a few exceptions, enthusiastic, lauding both the efforts of SSL and the 'intelligence' and relevance of the survey itself. An exception was:

"This survey is one of the most complicated and unenjoyable [sic] surveys I have ever taken... and I take quite a few each year. I suggest doing some major simplifying in the future."

Analysis of Survey Data

The surveys were keyed in (paper) or transferred (online) to an SPSS database and the data cleaned up, erroneous entries identified and corrected, zeroes that had been automatically inserted by SPSS were located and removed, and decisions as to the inclusion of incomplete survey forms were made. The omnibus file was broken into two sub-files with much parallel information (unemployed/underemployed and employees, and employer/manager and self employed) so comparisons could be made that might identify information that varied systematically between groups. Analyses included simple addition where appropriate, means and variances, chi square for simple comparisons of incidence between groups (e.g. numbers of people reporting specific occupations in different groups), correlations to detect patterns of related responses (e.g. do people who value increased bus service also want designated hitchhiking areas), and ANOVA (analysis of variance) where groups are compared on scalar data (e.g. opinions on the work-related literacy skills) to identify patterns of responding that vary

significantly between groups. When a difference or relationship is described as ‘significant’, what is meant is that it is so large that the probability of it being encountered by accident is less than one in twenty. Many of the relations reported are so large as to be found by accident in less than one in one hundred or in some less than one in one thousand. If something is identified as statistically significant we can then meaningfully ask the important question: is it also socially significant?

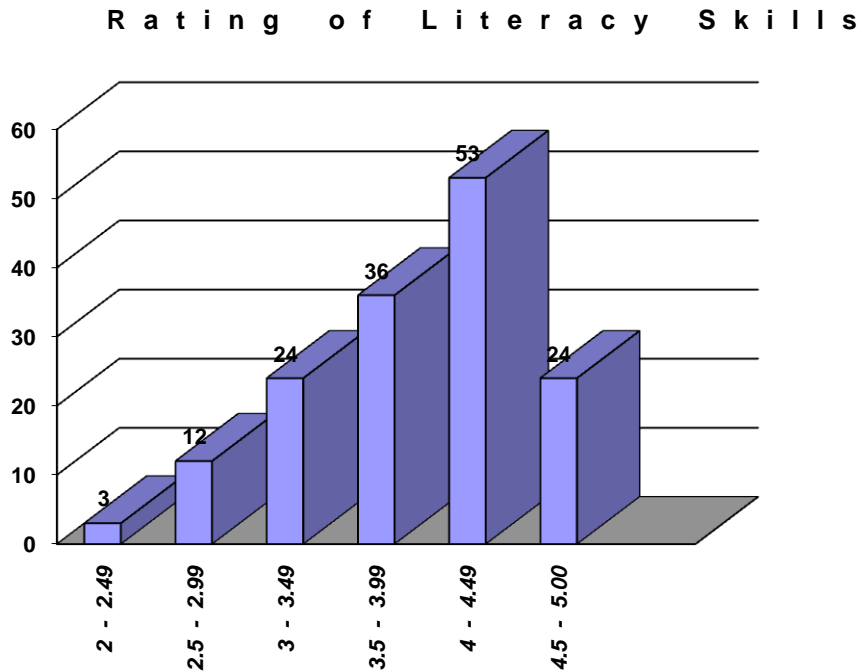
While the sample is large enough to detect interesting patterns and to make statistically meaningful distinctions between the perceptions of the different groups participating, it is not large enough or sufficiently representative that we could hope to accurately generalize to the whole island or as mentioned above to specific business sectors. However, the survey data combined with findings from the focus groups and advice of the steering committee will be seen to offer meaningful broad brush analysis of weaknesses in labour market preparation and supports to effective employment. This analysis will support a suite of recommendations that are consistent, practicable, and likely to improve the material circumstances and employability of a variety of groups and individuals. Comments by survey respondents have been integrated where they illustrate or highlight issues presented. We have chosen to not edit spelling or grammar. Throughout we will present comments as follows:

I'm pleased that you are doing this survey as I have seen first hand [sic] how illiteracy affects people's ability to work. Although my level of education is reasonably high, it has not been high enough for me to get or keep the type of job I would like to have. I am not happy at my current job and worry that I will have to stay at it for a long time because I don't see anything else available.

Survey Findings

Work-related Literacy Skills – All Groups Compared

All four groups were presented with the same list of 38 work-related literacy skills (e.g. has a positive influence on others, accurately reads and follows written instructions) or achievements (e.g. high school graduation). The subject was asked to rate the importance of each for most of the jobs he/she has held or for the success of his/her business or employees.

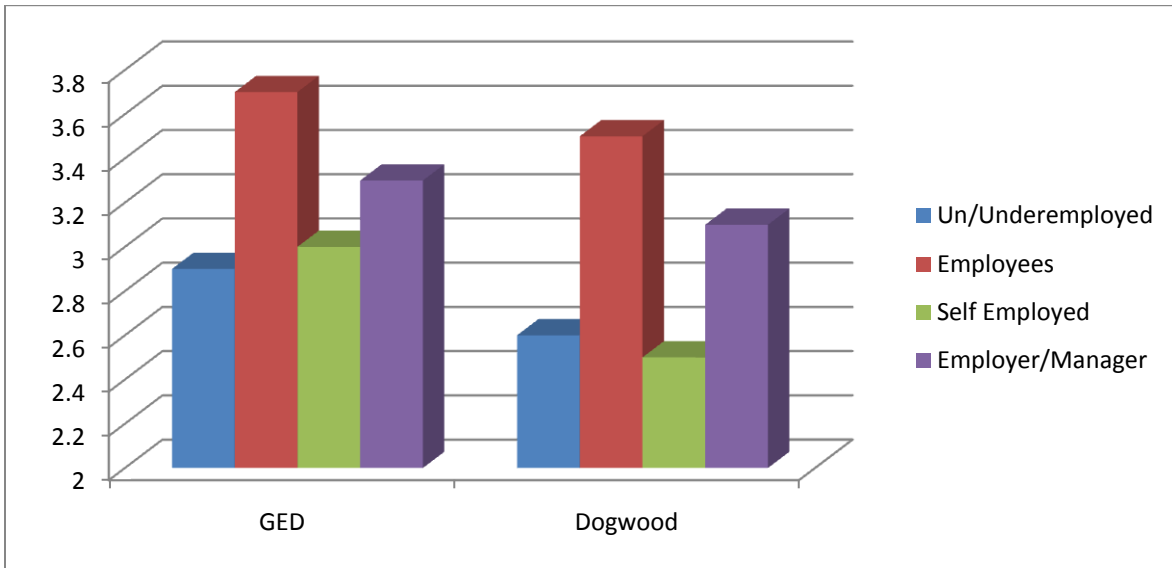


1: Of no importance 2: Somewhat important 3: Useful 4: Very useful 5: Essential for most jobs

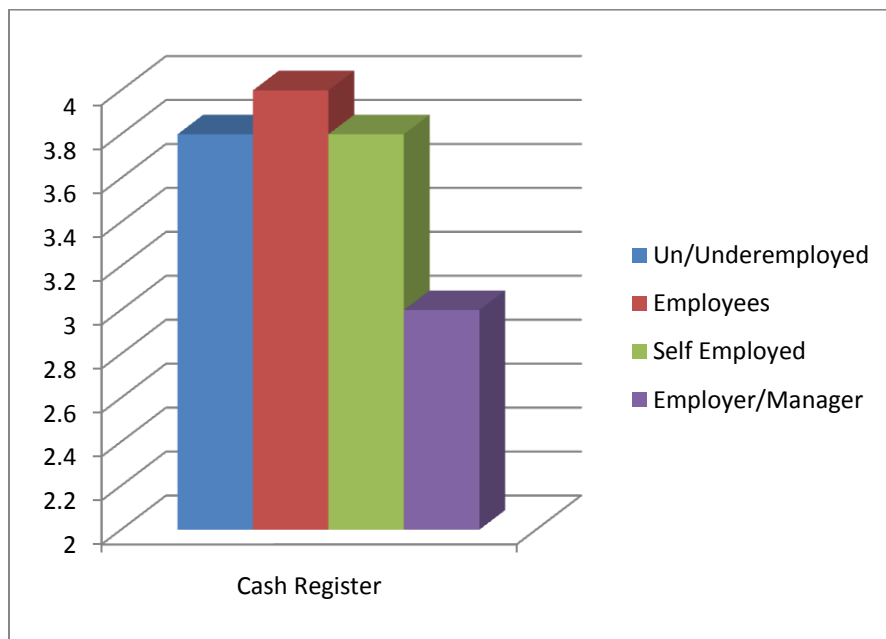
The above graph presents the range of evaluations made of thirty-eight workplace literacy skills and achievements made by the four groups for a total possible 152 evaluations. What is immediately apparent is that, on average, these skills are well regarded by the survey respondents; over half of the ratings averages were between ‘very useful’ or ‘essential for most jobs’ and 90% were between ‘useful’ and ‘essential’.

Positive workplace culture (timely arrival, taking initiative, working productively, never turning up to work drunk or otherwise intoxicated, and being positive influence on others etc.) was highly valued from ‘very useful’ to ‘essential’. Evaluations of traditional literacy skills (accurately reading and following written instructions, communicating effectively through writing and speech, writing legibly and interpreting handwriting) ranged between 3.9 and 4.6. An interesting difference was detected in the perceptions of the value of basic school certification either high school ‘dogwood’ graduation or the general education diploma- GED. These were valued most highly by the employee group 3.5 – 3.7. Their perceptions were echoed less strongly by employers/managers. The unemployed/underemployed and self employed valued these certifications significantly less. These differences ranged 0.7 – 1.0 pts between the

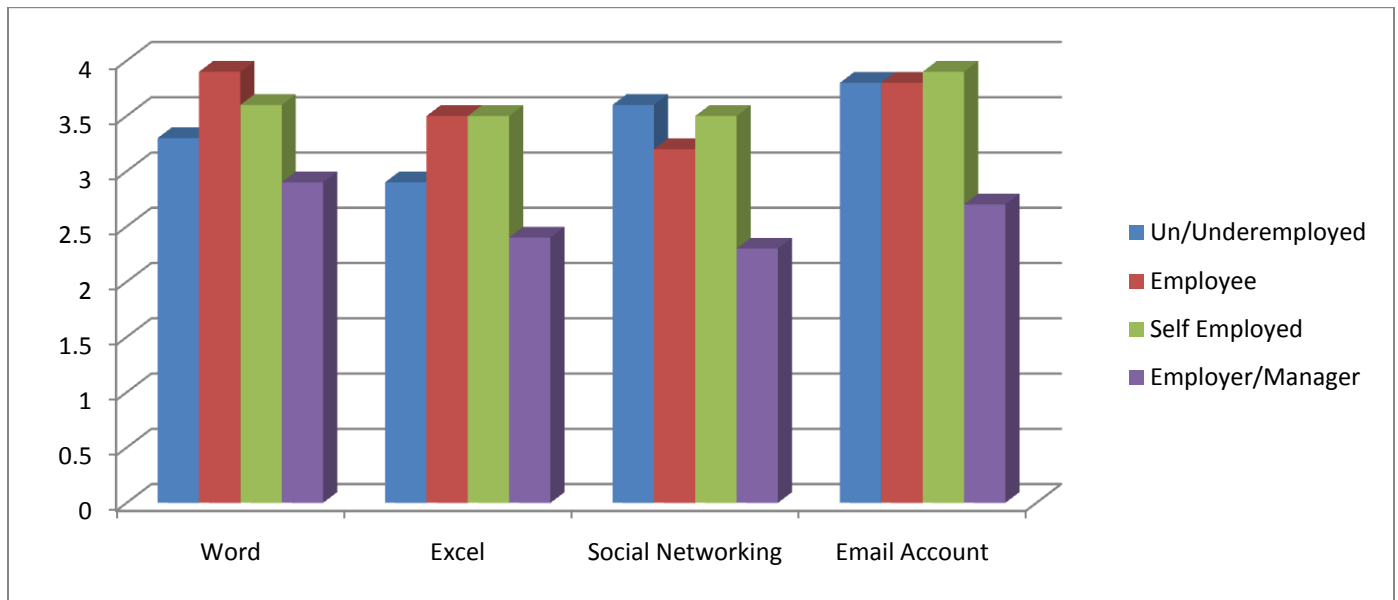
unemployed/underemployed and the employee groups. This respect for traditional high school certification may be worth drawing to the attention of the unemployed/ underemployed by volunteers with SSLS.



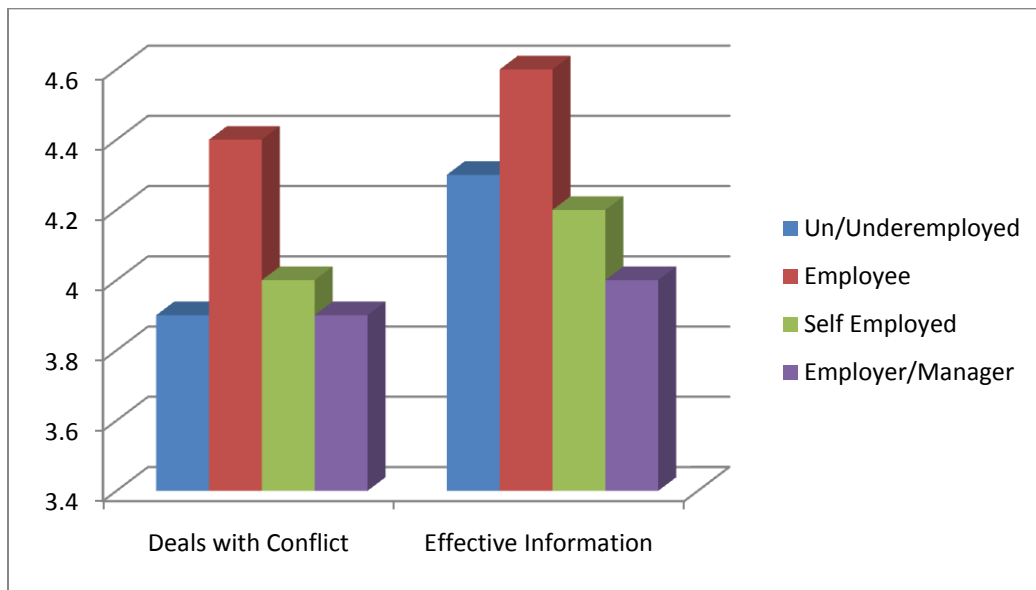
Another significant difference in perception was the valuing of comfort on the cash register, more valued by all groups than it was by the employers/managers (0.9 points higher by employees). This could indicate a key skill that is more apparent to the employee than to those paying the salaries and providing training support.



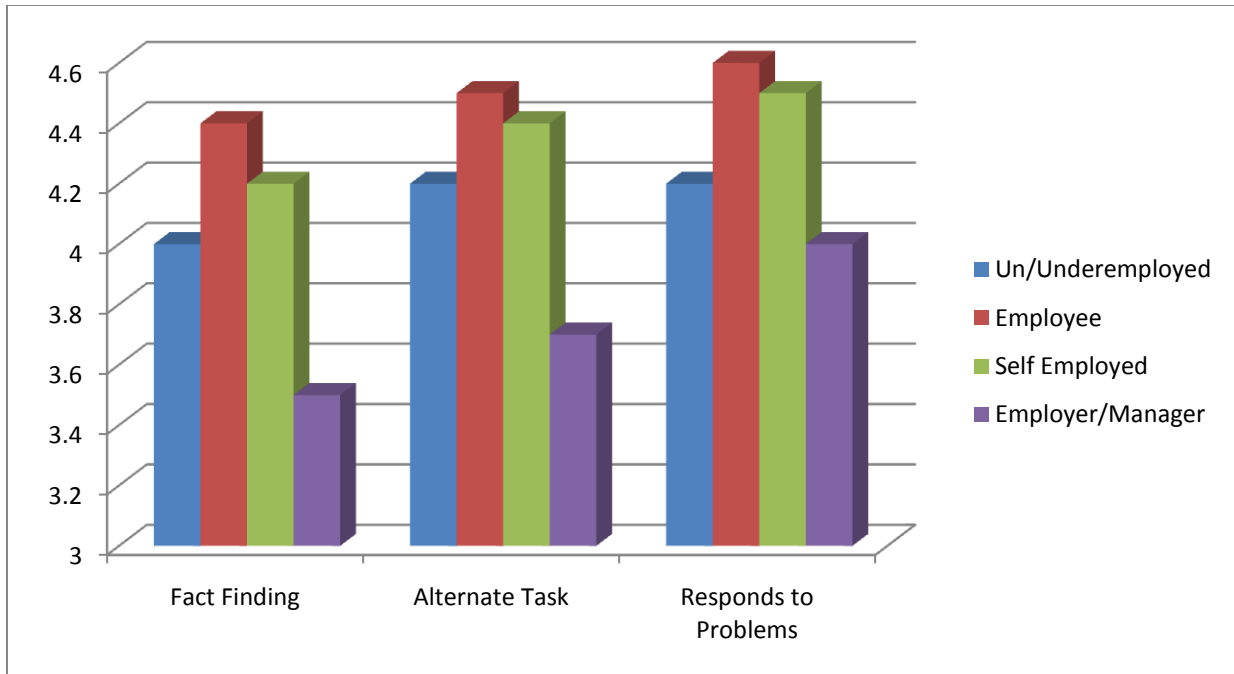
In the same vein, employer/managers were significantly less valuing of a variety of indicators of computer literacy (WORD, EXCEL, online job hunting, social networking, email, basic graphics) than most.



A similar pattern of evaluation was seen with the group of communication and conflict resolution skills, assets that were in general highly valued, around or above 'highly useful' although again the employer/manager group rated lower. 'Dealing effectively with upset customers or co-workers' and 'presenting information effectively' were significantly more valued by the employee group. 'Working well with different sorts of people' was significantly more valued by everyone else than it was by employer/managers.



In the area of problem solving and task management skills, three were significantly less valued by employer/managers than by the other groups; using fact finding skills to solve a problem, setting goals and priorities and can juggle competing tasks, and responding quickly and well to problems.



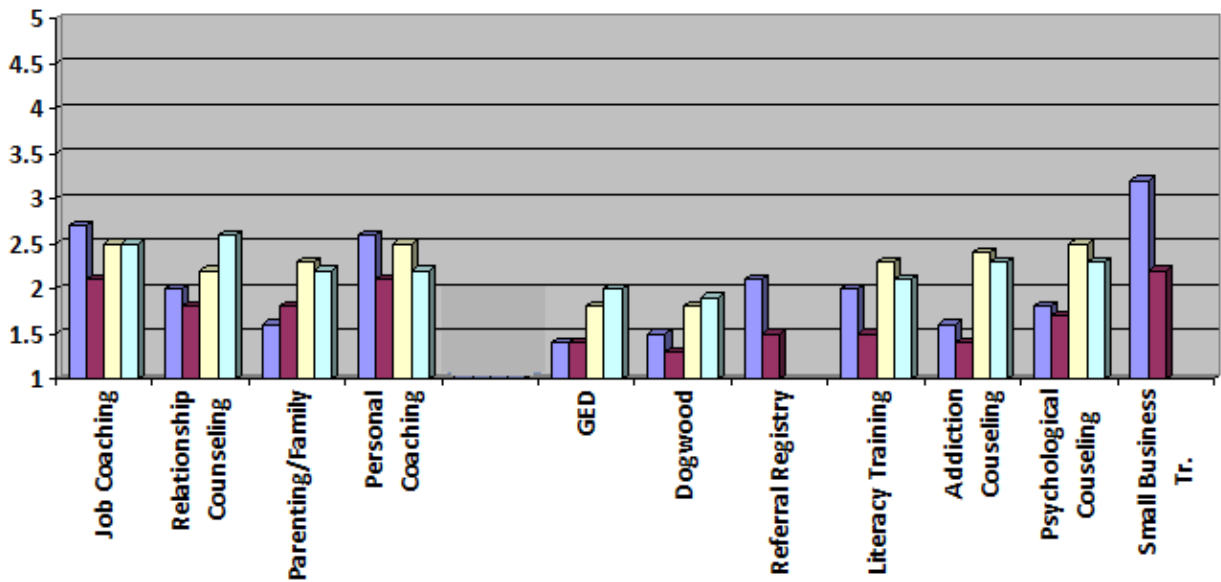
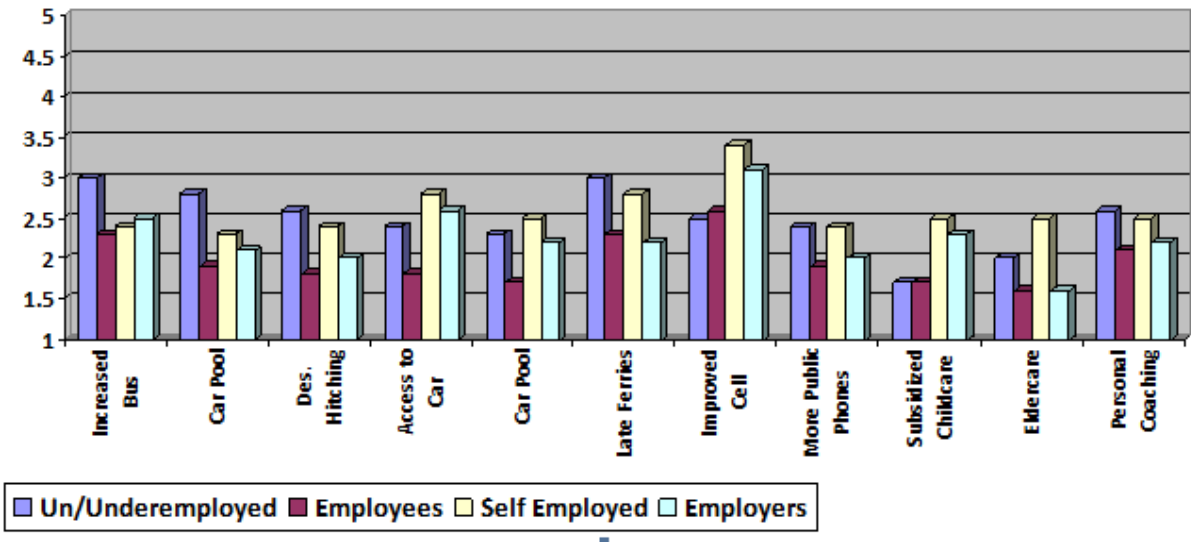
It is not a stretch to say that employer/managers appear to hold a lower value for a variety of skills that are a routine component of their employees’ day-to-day jobs. Self employed people, who are also on the front line, hold them in a similar regard as employees, and even those seeking employment recognize their value more than employer/managers. The implication might be that they are not recognizing and rewarding the active interpersonal and management skills being exercised by their employees, and more to the point are therefore less likely to be training and supporting these skills. It is widely recognized that improving the kinds of skills assessed in this survey can lead to greater job satisfaction, reduced employee turnover, improved productivity and profitability, and greater customer satisfaction, not to mention reduced levels of stress and conflict, and improved ability to deal with change and uncertainty. The contrast in relative weighting of these skills between those who hire and support and those who actually need to practice them is both grounds for concern and a basis for arguing for ongoing training in communication, problem solving, and management skills.

Services to Improve Ability to Get or Hold Employment - All Groups Compared

In an attempt to poll respondents’ views of changes or services that might be helpful to them, we included 27 items in the unemployed/underemployed survey and a slightly reduced list of 22 items for the employee survey. Ratings were recorded as:

1: Wouldn’t make any difference, 2: Not that useful to me, 3: Useful, 4: Very useful, 5: Life changing

The survey for unemployed/underemployed had five additional items thought to be of exclusive interest to this group: daily hot meals, fresh produce in the food bank, a formal labour exchange, a job hunter's support group, and access to showers and clean clothes. The self employed and the employer/managers received a list of 20 items, not including either the job referral registry or the small business training proposal (and leaving off the five listed above). The following charts summarize the averages for the 20 items all surveys held in common, plus the job referral registry and small business training.



At first blush, our respondents were not impressed with our suggestions. Even though all items had someone who thought it would change their life (5), the weight of responses were in the 'wouldn't make any difference' and 'not that useful to me' range. Only three ratings, averaged, broke 'useful' barrier. Both employer/managers and the self employed thought that improved cell phone coverage would be useful to them and the under/unemployed were somewhat keen on small business training.

A second pattern that is apparent is the relatively lower ratings given by the employed. They made the lowest ratings on all but four items, and were essentially tied with the un/underemployed on two of those. While the employed provided the largest single group (85 out of 205 surveys returned) they were also often difficult to engage. This group forms the majority of the adult population and on that basis might have produced a much larger portion of the data base. With some notable exceptions, when the consultant attempted to personally encourage or coax employees into completing a survey he was met with bewilderment; more than one person said ‘I have a job, why should I fill in your survey?’ Appeals to the needs of the unemployed and the desire for the community to get a better knowledge of training or support needs weren’t compelling in most cases. Perhaps crossing the threshold into secure employment on Salt Spring changes one’s sense of investment or allegiance to the larger community? Or perhaps once employed a survival mode kicks in leaving one erroneously feeling immune to the state of unemployment.

Typically the under/unemployed felt stronger about suggestions to changes or development of new services. This is not surprising as they are likely to be the group that would currently benefit from such schemes. However, only three had a mean that broke the ‘useful’ (3) barrier: increased bus service, microfinance to support self-employment, employment set-up costs, or rent deposit, and small business training. Some other ideas that piqued the interest of the under/unemployed respondents included provision of an internet or phone carpool registry (2.8), designated hitchhiking (2.6), personal coaching to get past roadblocks, etc. (2.6), and coaching/mentoring in the local job scene (2.7). The interest in all of these was strongly supported in the focus groups which will be reported on later. So while averages might be low, there is a constituency eager for change. It is worth noting that these services are supported, often more strongly, by both the self employed and the employer/manager groups.

The evaluation of the personal utility of high school certification (GED, and the Dogwood certificate) ranged from 1.3 to 1.5, all below ‘not that useful to me’. This likely reflects a devaluation of qualifications one already has. As noted in the section on literacy skills that began this section, when asked to rate the significance of these same qualifications in relation to job performance they do gave much higher ratings of 3.5 to 3.7. Interestingly, the self employed and employers value these more highly than the other two groups, closer to more balanced ratings just noted. So, high school certification, preferably the Dogwood Certificate, is a very functional asset and attainment by potential employees should be supported.

While there were no items that, on average, stirred strong interest (very useful - life changing) the vast majority of the possible inter-correlations were large enough to be statistically significant (ranging from a low of 0.18 to a high of 0.84) and they were all positive (rating one item highly means you will rate the other highly as well, and vice versa).⁴ A correlation of 0.18 denotes a weak relationship between items, rating of one item predicts less than one-twentieth of the range of the other. By contrast, a correlation of 0.84 allows us to predict about 71% of the variability in the other item: a strong inter-relationship. This preponderance of significant positive correlations means that we can still derive interesting information from these evaluations

⁴ The pattern of inter-correlations for the pooled Self Employed/Employer group was similar but with a lower proportion of significant correlations and a range of from 0.3 to 0.95. We will not report patterns in this data as they are not in conflict with that reported for the Unemployed/Underemployed and Employee groups.

of changes or services intended to support getting or holding employment, despite the fact that the averages indicate little general interest. While the *average* rating of the item by the whole group may be low, those that value that item also value the other. So we are looking for clusters of medium (0.4 – 0.6) to high (0.7 – 0.9) correlations to guide us (these are items collectively that make an important difference to some while having little appeal to others). All the transportation improvement items (except ‘late night ferries’ for which interest was random) were inter-correlated between 0.501 and 0.776 (0.776 predicts 60% of the related item). As well, those who were concerned about getting around more easily were also concerned about improved availability of public telephones. Looking back at the low ratings for the two levels of high school certification, these appear very differently when looked at from this “cluster” perspective. Ratings on these produced the highest inter-correlations of all: 0.80, 0.81, and 0.84. Of course most rated these lower, but also some rated them very highly, and people’s scores were very consistent between the two items. And this cluster interestingly included ‘support/counselling for drug/alcohol addiction issues’ as well (correlations of 0.62, and 0.70 respectively). Interest in a variety of support services produced another cluster (literacy training, relationship counselling, personal coaching, support/mentoring for parenting/family issues, support/counselling for drug/alcohol addiction issues, support/counselling for bipolar disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, attention deficit and/or hyperactive disorder, depression or anger management). In conclusion, while improved transportation and payphone availability, support for high school certification for those who lack it, and interest in a smorgasbord of counselling and support services are not of interest to all, they are essential for those struggling to establish and sustain stable, decent employment.

Comparison of Unemployed/Underemployed and Employee Groups

The following seven sections focus on only the data for the under/unemployed and employee groups. These survey forms had a great deal of overlap and therefore beg comparison. We have already reported on the literacy skills material that formed the core of all four survey forms.

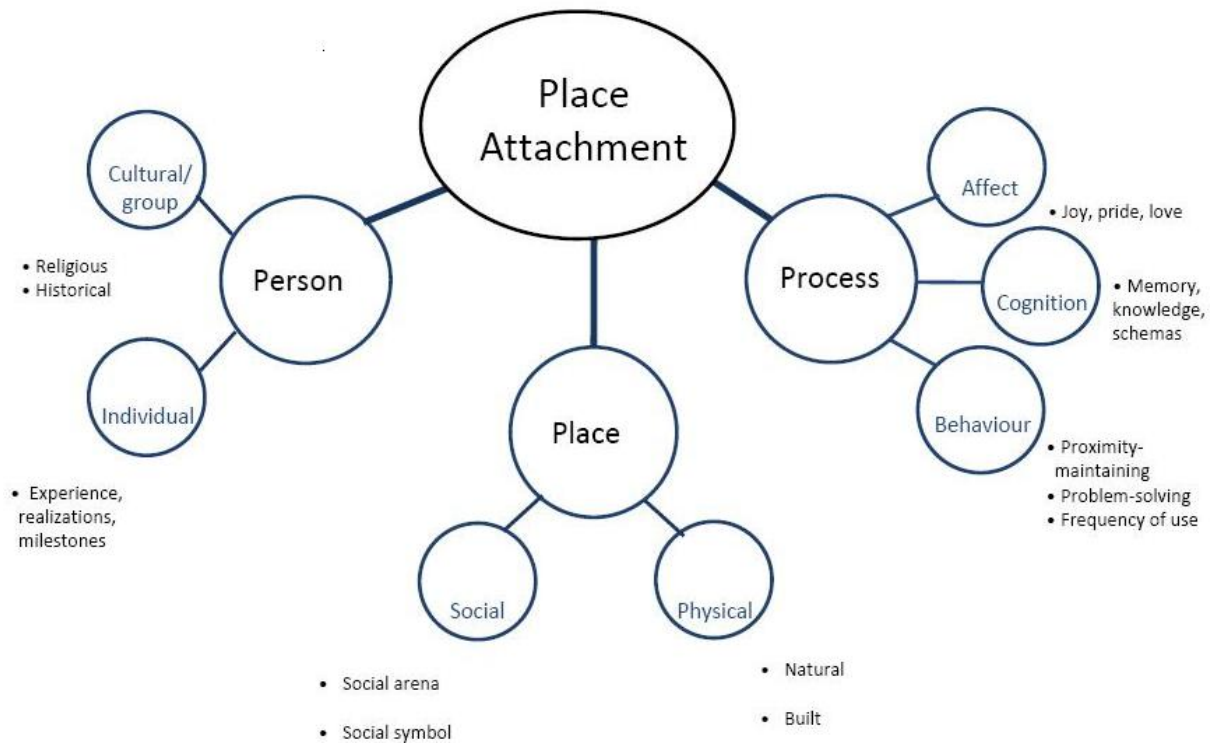
Integration of Workers into the Salt Spring Community

Our surveys for the unemployed/underemployed and employee groups were structured to detect ways in which the two differed to help us understand the factors that might support getting and holding a job on island. We began with looking at the extent to which people in each group are or feel like they are anchored to the island.

I need to leave the island as soon as I can get a job back in the city. I am wanting to leave for 2 reasons. 1, I am single and can't survive here in a way that is viable, 2, Socially it is challenging for someone of my age group, 3, I am not intellectually stimulated in spite of everything going on after a while it feels very “small town” like I should come back when I'm 65 or 70, but of course I still couldn't afford it so what would be the point with no stable housing?

We derived our items through reading the literature on place attachment and adapting a set of items developed at the University of Victoria. Based on our collective understanding of the job market on Salt Spring, a person’s survival, especially if they are at the margins of the economy, often hinges upon the degree to which they are connected to the island. We had many stories of people surviving because they had supportive families, good connections to the labour grapevine, access to

lower than market housing, etc. We thought that a sense of being firmly anchored to Salt Spring might allow people to weather difficult economic circumstances, both psychologically and materially. This model by Leila Scannell points to the complex interactions that build place attachment⁵.



We asked how rooted or attached one feels to Salt Spring Island, how one might feel about having to move away, and to rate the most important things about living on SSI (community, friends and family, the natural environment, and the rural character). Then respondents were asked to rate five things that might be part of this attachment (supportive friends or family, investment in making a home here, good connections, lack of cash to move, a break on rent). All of the items except lack of cash and a break on rent were significantly and positively inter-correlated (at high enough levels that there was a probability of this being accidental of less than one in one hundred). The same items were also quite positively rated: most between 7.5 and 9.3 out of 11. So respondents like Salt Spring in general and those that like it a lot like most aspects a lot as well (the so-called halo effect). But this also works in the opposite direction; if you don't feel attached you are likely to be down on a lot of other aspects as well. Cash to move and break on rent were only correlated with each other.

I have worked my way up on this island and over 8 years have built up a lot of great references. The only concern I have is for the ability for even the middle class to afford a mortgage.

⁵ Taken from

<https://dspace.library.uvic.ca:8443/bitstream/handle/1828/925/Thesis%20Final%20Version%20April%2023rd.pdf;jsessionid=D9A49D063451718CB8DB03FCCDFAB903?sequence=1> on 05/05/11.

...cheap rent and decent landlord [sic] just like it here; the creative vibe

I did leave for a couple of years while I went to university and the lack of support and community was so awful I lost my health. I don't intend to ever leave again.

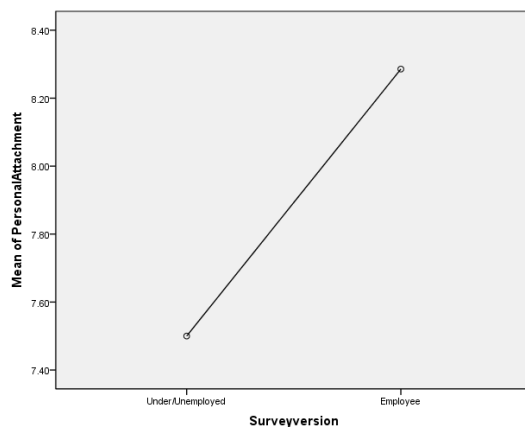
Long time island family (100+ years)

I've got a comfortable steady job

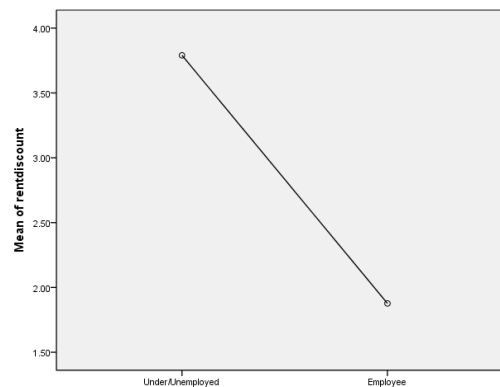
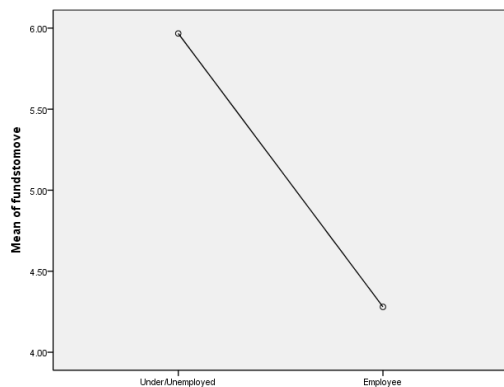
...rent from family

...for me its [sic] all about friends, community and beauty, and a sense of real potential and intelligence. however [sic], the price of rent and land, and lack of well paying jobs keeps me on the fringe- makes it hard to feel really stable here. we [sic] have to leave to work for a few months a year.

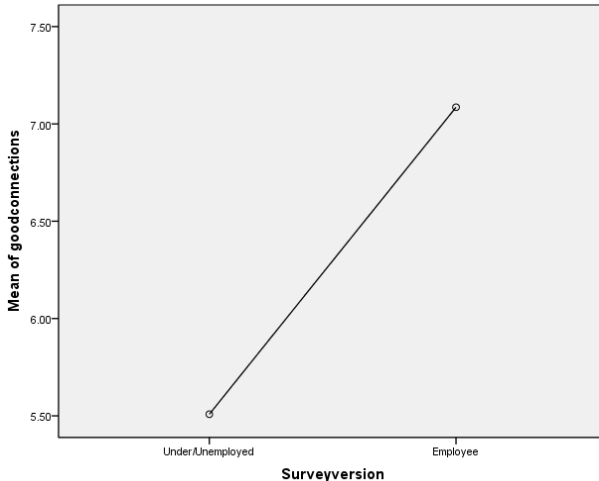
Does this tell us only about the individuals involved or can we draw any inferences about factors that make a difference to employment status? Interestingly, when the two groups are compared (under/unemployed vs employees) only four items varied noticeably in their averages.



The employed were about 0.8 points more positive in their attachment to the Island (8.3/11 vs 7.5/11 and this almost reached the standard of 1 in 20 chances of being accidental).



The under/unemployed rated lack of cash and dependence on a discount in their rent as significantly more important (6/11 vs 4.3/11 and 3.8/11 vs 1.9/11 respectively) which both speak of being stuck.



Graph of the rating of ‘good connections here to get me work’. Under/unemployed on the left and Employed on the right.

Of the four, the difference which sticks out and merits comment is that the employed rated ‘I have good connections here to get me work when it is available’ at 7.1 out of 11 while the under/unemployed rated this at 5.5. A linear regression was done to see which of all these attachment variables predicted membership in either the under/unemployed or employee groups. Two were significant. The largest and most significant was the ‘good connections’ item. It was by far the best predictor of whether you filled in a survey for employees or the under/unemployed and the higher you rated this, the more likely you were employed. The second significant item was ‘I have done a lot to make a home here and do not want to give that up’. In this case it was negatively related to being in the employee survey group. This begs explanation. While there was not a significant difference between the means for this item between the two groups, those in the under/unemployed group averaged higher (7.7 vs 7.5): while not a large difference this reticence to let go and move on positively predicted completing the unemployed/underemployed survey.

Except for the three noted above (reluctant to give up home, lack of cash to move, and discount on rent), the averages for the various measures of attachment were consistently slightly lower for the unemployed/underemployed group. They were also, as noted, positively correlated. We will later note that the predominant method used by employers for recruiting on island is word of mouth. So if we imagine an unemployed person, down a bit on island living, tenuously connected to the local grapevine, and feeling trapped rather than rich with opportunities, we can see how circumstance and posture collude to decrease chances of getting work, especially in a thin job market. Conversely, these observations can be the basis of very helpful advice and counselling to one in this position.

Contrasting Circumstances of Employed versus Unemployed/Underemployed

Housing

One striking difference between groups was their current living arrangements. The average score for the employed was 7.4 between renting an adequate residence and owning a modest home or apartment. The unemployed/underemployed averaged 5.7 between staying in a place courtesy of family or friends and renting a decent place that is overcrowded. Of interest in reinforcing this difference is that when we look at the range that statistically characterizes 95% of the sample (the 95% confidence interval) scores range from 5 – 6.3 for

unemployed/underemployed and 7 – 7.7 for the employed, scores that do not overlap, meaning two groups whose housing experience in terms of quality and security does not overlap either.

Choose the best description of your current living arrangements									
Group	Homeless/ Living out of doors	Homeless/ Living with Friends	Squatting	Renting Cold. Damp Shelter	Courtesy of Friends or Family	Renting Overcrowded Place	Renting Adequate Residence	Owning Modest Home	Owning Fine Home
Unemployed/ Underemployed	6.8%	3.4%	1.7%	11.9%	11.9%	8.5%	30.5%	18.5%	6.8%
Employees	0	1.3%	1.3%	2.6%	3.9%	5.4%	34.2%	32.9%	18.4%

The picture of the raw data above complicates this view by recognizing that 55.8% of the under/unemployed reside in adequate to better housing. But the corresponding figure is 85.5% for the employed. Or, conversely, 44.2% of the unemployed/underemployed survey respondents live in substandard housing while only 14.5% of the employed respondents find themselves in that position.

I live aboard my sailboat by choice. If I did not, I would not be able to live on Saltspring – the rents on real estate prices are much too high. Salt Spring needs more affordable year-round housing and better bus service. I live in Ganges Harbour and row my dinghy to work. I have never taken the bus because it never goes where I need to go when I need to get there.

Affordable housing is important In [sic] order to enable employees earning lower wages to live and raise a family here.

there [sic] is no housing to home the every day [sic]workers who provide services to our tourists (which are so necessary to keep this community going). at [sic] the current stage i [sic] am unable to survive here and am being forced off the island due to being unable to find work that can support the cost of living

Previous to 5 years ago I had to work for some of the small businesses on the Island - they were not all very employee supportive - I worry about people that do not have stable employment here or good dependable accommodation [sic]. I worry for the people that are being taken advantage of by ruthless[sic] land owners that provide sub-level accomodation [sic]. Greater effort should be made to stop this type of repressive activity. We need to get people out of shanty town types situations for their health, that of

the community and of the environment. Good accommodation [sic] is a stepping stone to being a healthy worker and a healthy worker needs to be respected and remunerated [sic] decently and fairly.”

While years living on Salt Spring differ significantly on average between the groups (just over five years for the under/unemployed and over six and a half years for employees) scores overlap and range from less than 6 months to more than 21 years. The under/unemployed group is significantly more transient, having moved off island a mean of 0.7 times in the last five years (vs 0.2 times for the employees or one in five having moved once).

Employment and pay

The under/unemployed have worked for significantly less time over the last five years: 2.8 years vs 4.3 years. To make matters worse, they have worked significantly more different jobs to generate that lower number of total years: 4.6 vs 2.6. That is almost twice as many jobs to log just over half as many years of employment. The average compensation received does not vary significantly; present job \$16.80, worst paying \$10.24, best paying \$22.44. Although it is interesting that the current rate of pay is well below the best. Interestingly both groups had essentially the same educational qualifications scoring on average 5.5 which puts them midway between college or other diploma (e.g. BCIT) and some university but no degree. Just over a quarter claimed some apprenticeship or trade qualification, again the same for both groups.

We asked what people perceived to be the per hour amount necessary to cover reasonable living expenses (not including buying a house or taking extended vacations) assuming full time employment, a concept similar to living wage which is usually about \$27 per hour in most calculations for BC. Both groups came in low, at \$19.55 for the under/unemployed and \$20.38 for the employees. This may reflect awareness of the low entry-level wages that are common in the service and sales sectors here and elsewhere. The mean age of each group was comparable (45.0 and 44.7 years) and quite a bit higher than the provincial average of 40.7 according to BC Stats. This may reflect a shift of young workers off island.

The below BC average wages on Salt Spring coupled with the higher than average costs of living lead us to recommend an introduction of a local living wage. Perhaps using the model adopted under the London Living Wage campaign: a hybrid wage which sits at a manageable point between the current minimum wage and the full living wage. Findings have been positive: it has been very widely adopted in areas of London and has become the dominant wage expectation for service and entry-level jobs moreover it was not as onerous on business as anticipated and has led to decreased absenteeism, reduced turnover, great job satisfaction and greater customer evaluations.

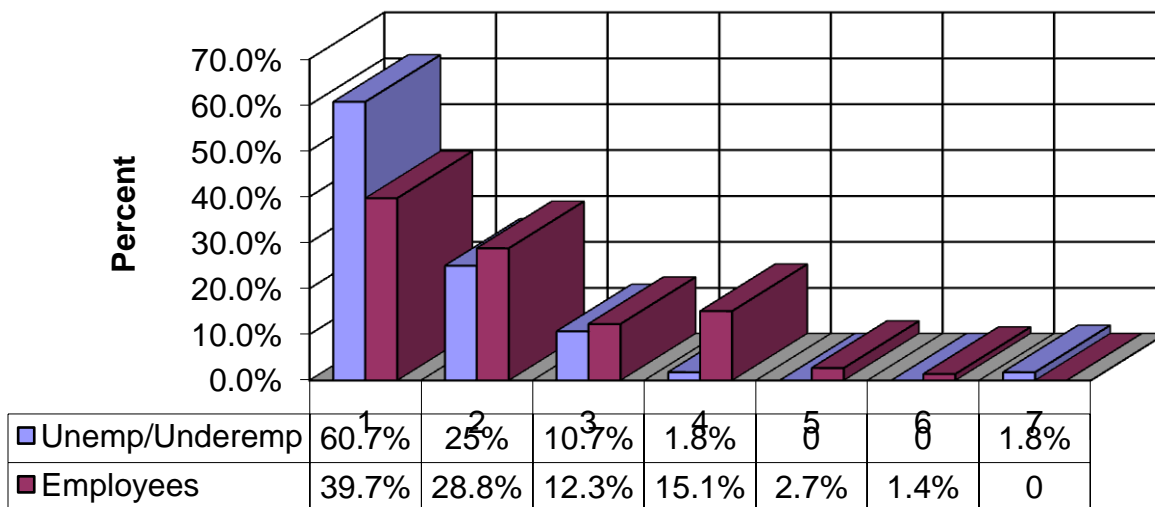
This middle ground may be something that might be considered on Salt Spring. The dominant ethos amongst employers appears to be that any change in worker remuneration will hurt their bottom line. The stats we will report later in the section on employee profiles and wages paid by the self employed make strong argument for higher wages being quite compatible with success. This is a very complex and loaded problem and will require a long term strategy and a lot of work.

What can I say about the employment situation on saltspring [sic]? It's like an altered reality. The wages are incredibly low. The expectations of employers for what they pay

are unrealistic. The level of professionalism in terms of conduct with their staff on the part of some employers is sometimes unimaginable. Often employers ask for ridiculous combinations of skills such as web design, organic farming and bookkeeping [sic] for \$14 per hour. Give me a break. Who are these people? And yet we choose to live here. Unless you are successfully self-employed or independently wealthy, work as a physician, or in the school district, the RCMP or the Post Office, there are no good jobs on Salt Spring. The only thing that this place has going for it is the natural beauty, the spirit of the people in spite of everything and the artistic community. That's it. It's not that much different from any rural community in BC. It's economically depressed.

Perhaps the most profound difference between the two groups was revealed in responses to the question ‘Counting yourself, how many people do you need to support?’ While the averages don’t differ too dramatically, 1.6 for the unemployed/underemployed versus 2.2 for the employee group, the distribution is more revealing. The graph shows that the two groups are part of very different social structures. Over 60% of the under/unemployed are single, and just under 40% of the employed. The portion in couples is about equal (25% compared with 28.8%). Finally those in families with three to seven members is 14.3% for the under/unemployed and more than double for the employee group at 31.5%. It is impossible to know whether employment status underlies this difference (i.e. people with secure employment are able to support larger family networks) or reflects it (i.e. those with fewer dependents have less drive to secure stable employment).

Including Yourself, How Many Do You Need to Support?



Comparison of Work Activities (Volunteer and Employed)

We asked survey respondents to indicate all the types of work they have done during the last five years. The following table presents those work categories in which there were significant differences in participation (chi square).

Employment Category	Unemployed/Underemployed (% out of 62 possible)	Employee (% out of 85 possible)
Volunteer work	41.9%	7.1%
Construction	22.6%	9.4%
Forestry/Wood Cutting	11.3%	2.4%
Creative/Interpretive/Artistic	33.9%	15.3%
Housekeeping/Cleaning	46.8%	10.6%
Gardening/Landscaping	38.7%	15.3%
Educational Services	27.4%	11.8%
Home or Other Daycare	17.7%	3.5%

Here we see that the under/unemployed are two to six times more likely to have done eight out of the 18 jobs listed. In fact, only office /administration had a greater representation amongst the employee group (21.0% vs 27.1%) although this was not statistically significant. As noted earlier, these people have worked in almost twice as many different jobs as the employee survey respondents which accounts for much of this observation. The under/unemployed are working a greater variety of job types and for shorter periods of time than those who are currently employed. And they seem to be doing all the things one might recommend: they volunteer (5.9 times as often), try innovative, creative pursuits (2.2 times as often), try self employment (housekeeping/cleaning 4.4 times as often and gardening/landscaping 2.5 times as often), and working out of home (5.1 times as often). Again, it is impossible to tell from this data whether we are seeing people who because of their employment circumstances have had to scramble at a variety of work situations, or if we have identified a difference in the people themselves. Did people leave their jobs because the jobs dried up, or have we a pattern of short term employment? Clearly, simple solutions are not going to make the difference, and careful attention to the specifics of every situation is going to be a more productive approach to counselling, support, and training for the unemployed.

I can't see that it [the local economy] has changed. I make double working off island and at the same kind of job I could get on island. The commute is easy and affordable. Home to work one hour 20 min. ferry, 15 min car [sic]. If we lose the Queen of Nanaimo and if BC [ferries] ports their boats off Island [sic]. Economy will tank. I did work for a short time on SSI for an employer who didnt [sic] give sick days paid very low wage and was harassing [sic]. They could always get employees but very short term. Revolving door. They knew that.

Challenges to Getting or Holding Employment

We included sixteen items that we thought may capture important challenges that workers on Salt Spring might face and asked respondents to rate each:

1: Doesn't apply to me, 2: A minor issue, 3: Somewhat challenging, 4: Challenging, 5: Makes it much harder

In each case the under/unemployed rated these higher than the employees, and in 11 of 16 items these differences were significant. Even still only three broke the 'somewhat challenging' barrier for the under/unemployed; 'finding and keeping safe, decent, affordable housing' (3.3),

‘seasonal changes in employment, short term employment’ (3.2), and ‘stresses of stretching the little money there is to cover the basics and pay back money I owe’ (3.2). For the employed these were 2.3, 1.9 and 2.6 respectively. To put this into perspective, while there were ratings at either end of the scale the majority of respondents report being, at worst, only somewhat challenged. But this data does support the earlier findings on the impact of inadequate housing and unstable work which you would expect to relate to financial concerns. Incidentally, there was also no significant difference in the perception of literacy skills as a major impediment to success, both groups rated it as below a minor issue at 1.6 and 1.4. When read with the earlier responses which strongly supported the link between good employment and literacy skills one can conclude that by and large the respondents felt they possessed these skills and an absence of work indicated a different ‘block’.

Use of Existing Services

We asked respondents how much they had taken advantage of five named services: the bus, SSL, SSCS, Copper Kettle, and CARE plus a sixth ‘other’. The two year old bus service is being used by a significantly larger portion of the under/unemployed group than those who are employed (38.5% vs 20%). The recent announcement of increased bus service, including adding Sunday service, should help many in this group.

Survey Group	<i>Use of Existing Specific Services (by %)</i>						
	<i>Bus*</i>						
	<i>0 x/year</i>	<i>5 x/year</i>	<i>10 x/year</i>	<i>15 x/year</i>	<i>20 x/year</i>	<i>25 x/year</i>	<i>25 x/year</i>
Unemp/Underemp	61.5%	25%	5.8%	1.9%	3.8%	2.0%	2.0%
Employee	80.0%	11.3%	2.5%	3.8%	0%	1.3%	1.3%
	<i>Salt Spring Literacy Society</i>						
	<i>0 x/year</i>	<i>5 x/year</i>	<i>10 x/year</i>	<i>15 x/year</i>	<i>20 x/year</i>	<i>25 x/year</i>	<i>30+x/year</i>
Unemp/Underemp	84.6%	9.6%	1.9%	0%	1.9%	0%	0%
Employee	95.1%	1.2%	1.2%	0%	1.2%	0%	0%
	<i>Salt Spring Community Services*</i>						
	<i>0 x/year</i>	<i>5 x/year</i>	<i>10 x/year</i>	<i>15 x/year</i>	<i>20 x/year</i>	<i>25 x/year</i>	<i>30+x/year</i>
Unemp/Underemp	44.2%	25.0%	7.7%	3.8%	5.8%	5.8%	5.8%
Employee	87.5%	8.8%	0%	1.3%	0%	0%	1.3%
	<i>Copper Kettle</i>						
	<i>0 x/year</i>		<i>5 x/year</i>		<i>25 x/year</i>		
Unemp/Underemp	92.2%		7.8%		0%		
Employee	94.9%		3.8%		1.3%		
	<i>CARE*</i>						
	<i>0 x/year</i>	<i>5 x/year</i>	<i>10 x/year</i>	<i>15 x/year</i>	<i>20 x/year</i>	<i>25 x/year</i>	<i>30+x/year</i>
Unemp/Underemp	60.0%	20.0%	8.0%	0%	4.0%	2.0%	6.0%
Employee	84.8%	11.4%	2.5%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	<i>Other*</i>						
	<i>0 x/year</i>	<i>5 x/year</i>	<i>10 x/year</i>	<i>15 x/year</i>	<i>20 x/year</i>	<i>25 x/year</i>	<i>30+x/year</i>
Unemp/Underemp	70.0%	5.0%	0%	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%	10.0%
Employee	91.5%	8.5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
*significant difference in the incidence of usage between the two groups							

The utilization of SSL, despite being three times higher by under/unemployed, did not reach significance at 15.4%. This could indicate that the under/employed do not feel they need literacy support (as suggested above) or it could reflect the relatively fledging stance of the society which has only been in operation for three years. 55.8% of the under/unemployed took advantage of the many services of SSCS. Although some data collection was carried out during SSCS programs this number may be skewed, but given the breadth of services provided by SSCS it is likely reliable. Copper Kettle appears to have a low reported use in this sample, but 7.8% is disturbingly high given their mandate which is aimed at those in extreme and poverty and urgent need. CARE was used by an impressive 40% of under/ unemployed and a significantly lower but still notable 15.2% of the employee group. CARE's popularity amongst the unemployed coupled with the later note that employers tend not to advertise through CARE is something that ought to be addressed. 'Other' accounted for an additional 30% of the under/unemployed use of services. The 'others' named included the Salt Spring Exchange Website and United Church food vouchers. The Food Bank and Family Place, both SSCS programs, were also noted here perhaps suggesting the 55.8% reported above is actually an underestimation.

Three years ago I was on E.I. - I had been previously been in a seasonal office job for a couple of years and on contract work prior to that. CARE employment center assisted me in developing a 40 page proposal to go back to school for retraining I was accepted into this program and did my studies for one year on-line from home and working part-time and getting island related work. Since that time I have secured 2 part-time positions (for a total of 28 hrs/week) with benefits – one at the local school district (there I have a temporary contract til [sic] end of June, with high likelihood of rehire and/or lots of work on the sublist [sic], eventually – it is a unim [sic] – I will get a permanent position), CARE was very helpful in assisting me to get more permanent work with benefits. I am happily on a new career path here on the island, thanks to their help.”

Employment Standards

This is a wonderful survey – I hope the information is well-shared amongst the population – we need to be active in job creation and support development of job variety on island. ALSO, I think its [sic] important to educate people on employee rights – stat. holiday pay, minimum wage etc. I think a lot of EMPLOYERS need awareness of these too!

We included a short survey of the extent to which workers experienced the adherence to principles of the BC Employment Standards Act. We were concerned that there might be a widespread disregard for these standards, perhaps from ignorance or general custom. We were also motivated by the notion that adherence, say simply paying for statutory holidays not worked, or alternatively paying at 1.5 x hours plus an average day's pay, could make a difference of almost 4% to income. When combined, the application of the whole set of standards could improve income by perhaps 10%. What we found may support the suspicion that employment standards are being disregarded, and there is anecdotal evidence of specific instances of failure to comply sometimes colluded with by the employee concerned to not make waves. The following table captures the responses to the question 'In the jobs you have held on Salt Spring Island, did you receive the following compensations in full time jobs that lasted more than one month?'

Group	<i>Elements of the Employment Standards Act</i>				
	<i>4% Holiday Pay</i>	<i>Overtime Pay</i>	<i>Statutory Holiday</i>	<i>Lunch Break</i>	<i>Paid for no work</i>
Unemp/Underemp	48.4%	40.3%	43.5%	45%	32.8%
Employees	62.4%	47.1%	56.5%	52.9%	48.2%

Sadly we are not able to say whether the deviations from expectation of 100% adherence reflect failures of adherence to employment standards, failure of our respondents to complete this component accurately, or some combination of the two. The difference in percentages reported by the two groups may express the more marginal work and life experience of the under/unemployed group found in several other facets of the surveys, although the differences only approach significance with the last item ‘If asked to turn up for work which isn’t there, [workers] must be paid for two hours, if asked in for 8 hours, must be paid for 4’ (chi-square p 0.052). This facet of our survey merits further investigation. If there are businesses that wink at all or some of these requirements, education and some form of investigation that protects the anonymity of affected employees are most likely to improve the situation.

Comments on the Economy On-Island Now and Looking to the Future

Good jobs are few and very competitive – low paying service jobs can not [sic] support families. Let's promote clean-local-industry and better supports for mentally ill, marginal, homeless population

Not enough full-time good paying jobs. Tourism [sic] down because of economy and high ferry rates. Most islanders don't seem to be concerned about creating more full-time jobs (economic development). They are here for [sic] lifestyle and to retire and spend up to half a year away in tropical areas. That seems to be the culture here. That's why it is all about preserve and protect and why there is no municipality. How do you create jobs when islanders generally like the status quo?

The economy is in a tight place right now. I think rent is high, the cost of food and human necessities are expensive with a lot of underpaid employees working to keep the island going. There is a real mix of extreme wealth and extreme poverty on this Island.

Hoping the economic development commission may help create jobs. Hoping the island trust will be more flexible is [sic] allowing more business to set up there. Perhaps a municipality would help – more economic development, better roads, better transportation services and overall a better managed island – rather than the current disorganized way things get done on the island. I never heard of your organization until I got this survey. The cost of living, especially rent and food is too high on this island, given the relatively low wages. Too much tax in this province, should eliminate prov [sic] sales tax. Should encourage more, younger people to live here rather than just retired people on fixed incomes or rich people with 2nd homes. We need to encourage economic development, preserve the environment (ie.[sic] discourage wood burning, roads with bike paths, limits on tree removal, limits on developing land, more parts) and become more progressive. What are we doing in green technology? Why aren't we self-sufficient in food production? Why do we have bad roads? Why don't we have an ice area and curling rink? Why does the Islands Trust seem to be so anti-business? Why don't we have

a college on this island? Why don't we have a convention centre? There are many opportunities to create jobs.

I would guess it's down about 50%. The jobs have lower standards of how they treat their staff and environment. it's [sic] getting worse, it's time to move so I can make money in a safe environment. If the places open to help people find jobs were actually useful and not 'make work' gov't [sic] programs more people would benefit. If large corporations weren't allowed to take over the small little businesses then there would be more jobs. If employers weren't so money hungry then it would be more affordable to work and live here.

it's [sic] getting hard to find work in certain areas, and that quality workers for service and construction are hard to find i [sic] think it will bounce back for some, but will become increasingly more difficult for those in the health, [sic] service and construction industry [sic] full time transition house workers have not had a raise in the 3 years I've worked there, probably much longer, and relief workers have taken a cut in pay since I started

I think the local economy is worse than it was a couple of years ago. I'm very concerned about the future as it doesn't look prosperous from here.

very [sic] slow, trades are not working as much-families with no money to spend, not eating out

hopeful [sic] -need trades to get back to work and have places that tourists can afford to come and stay over instead of day trips i [sic] have been very lucky and found good jobs quickly. many [sic] of my peers work at several different places and have to juggle scheduling stress with everything else. very [sic] few good paying jobs for people trying to raise families. Lack of overall coordination of services for the island. single minded governance structure[sic]

There are less jobs on Salt Spring. I don't think it will change very much in the near future. I feel more businesses should be encouraged to the island. Encourage more people to start-up new businesses by bringing the expertise over to the island. Alternatively, encourage the existing banks on island, to assist people in developing business plans. More training for people to get the necessary skills for the type of employers that exist on island.

You have to be self-motivated and a go-getter. The jobs are out there... and if they aren't, invent your own job! It is very easy to make connections and get work on the island through who you know, but you have to be presentable, professional, mature, and a hard worker. People who want comfort and security would do better in Victoria where there are more government jobs and more unionized positions.

A definite downturn in the economy: an imbalance between the well to do and people needing better finances which is reflected through misunderstandings between various groups, we need more tolerance, better balance, more opportunities, more younger

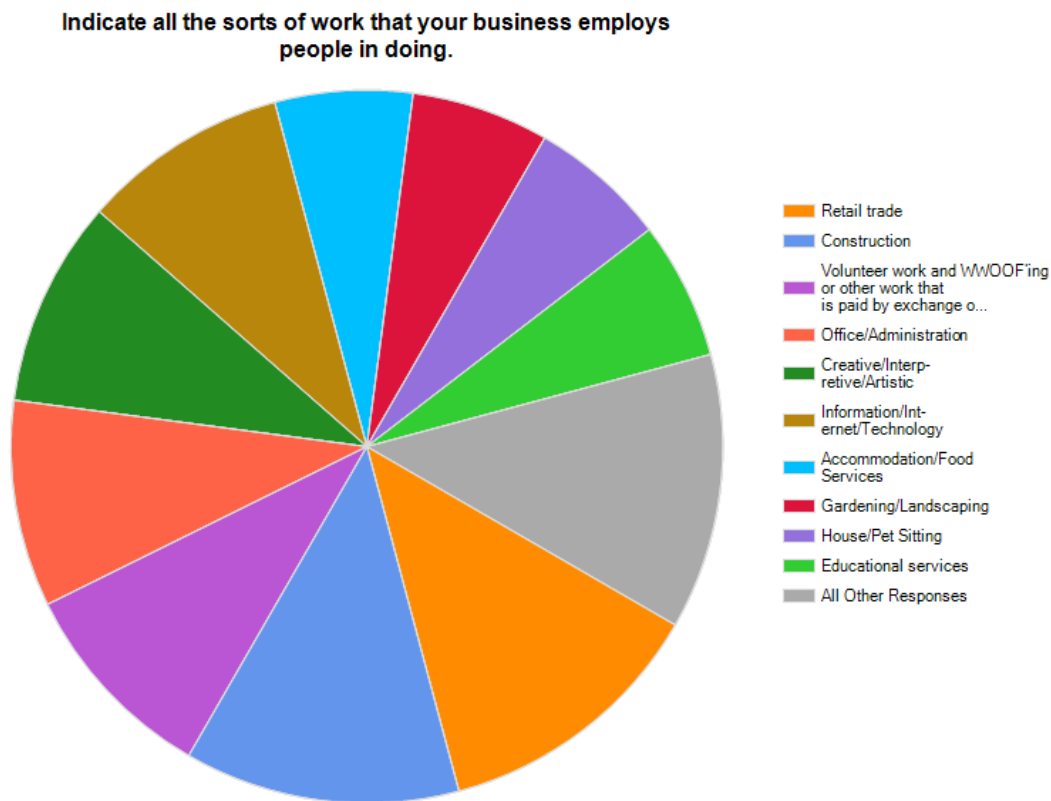
people establishing homes here, more training needs to be available locally, the community needs more awareness of the full spectrum of its members, more localized governance, better ferry services, better transit here and off island

Comparison of Self Employed and Employer/Manager Group

Nature of Business

These survey respondents were asked the nature of their business on Salt Spring. Clearly, from the total number of businesses noted (75 for 32 self employed respondents and 76 for 26 employer/managers) there is a great variety of entrepreneurial activity going on amongst Salt Spring businesses. To make sense of this, one might imagine a large food retailer: may accept volunteer labour, of course does retail, offers catering/food services, has an office/admin component, and engages in graphic design for local advertising and displays. One self employed individual listed volunteer, construction, forestry/wood cutting, creative/interpretive/artistic, house/pet sitting, educational services, information/internet, and finally, personal services. The joke amongst employees on the island is that you're not really a Salt Springer until you have held four jobs simultaneously.

The following pie chart, while only including the data from the online respondents, makes the point that we had pretty even representation of the possible occupation groups.



Only two fields were significantly different in incidence between the self employed and employer/manager groups: information technology/internet services were exclusively the focus

of self employed individuals, while more employer/managers fell into the ‘other’ category (film production, long term home rentals, architectural design, partner in retail business, book keeping, web and print design, project -based work, research/analysis, layout/design/web). ‘Creative/Interpretive/Artistic’ came close to significance with those self employed leading conventional businesses (10 to 3). This degree of multitasking amongst those creating employment on Salt Spring raises important questions. Remembering the challenges we had getting engagement by the conventional, single focus businesses on island (building supplies, grocers, household goods/hardware, bakeries, etc.) it is likely that we have tapped survey respondents that have to scramble to maintain their businesses, both employers and the self employed. The multiplicity of activities also argues for the importance of the ‘cultural industry’ on Salt Spring. It has been suggested that cultural industry (which broadly includes volunteer groups, theatre, film and video, publishing/book sales, galleries, festivals, cultural spaces, cultural and sports tourism, music of all sorts) is a much larger driver in the economy than the traditional foundations of agriculture, mining, fishing, and forestry combined. When we reflect on the visible Salt Spring economy, the impact of the cultural industry becomes clear: amateur theatre, the Fall Fair, Apple Festival, Pride weekends, ArtCraft, WinterCraft, individual art shows and studios, public galleries, Christmas and crafts fairs, ArtSpring offerings, and so on. Over one third of the employment activities of the self employed can be seen in this context. If we look back at the employment activities of the under/unemployed, they parallel those of the successfully self employed.

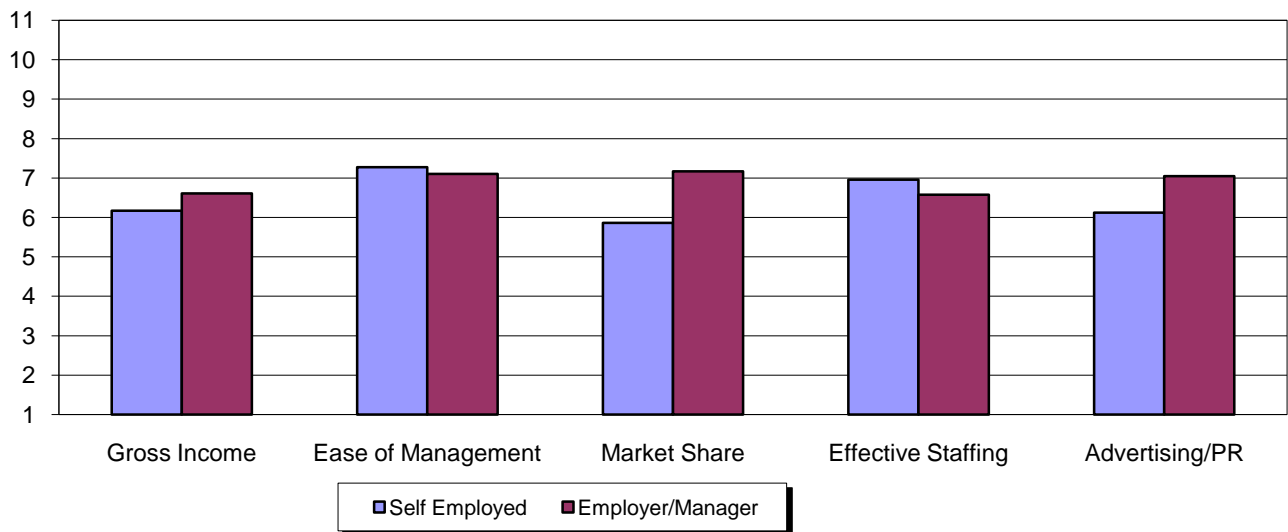
Employment Category	Self Employed		Employer/Manager	
	#	%	#	%
Volunteer Work	5	15.6%	3	11.5%
Retail/Wholesale Trade	7	21.9%	10	38.5%
Accomm/Food Services	4	12.5%	4	15.4%
Construction	9	28.1%	4	15.4%
Healthcare/Social Assistance	1	3.1%	2	7.7%
Office/Admin/Financial	4	12.5%	8	30.8%
Agriculture	4	12.5%	2	7.7%
Forestry/Wood Cutting	2	6.3%	1	3.8%
Creative/Interpretive/Artistic	10	31.3%	3	11.5%
Housekeeping/Cleaning	3	9.4%	3	11.5%
Gardening/Landscaping	2	6.3%	4	15.4%
Craftsman/Artisan	4	12.5%	5	19.2%
House/Pet Sitting	1	3.1%	3	11.5%
Educational Services	4	12.5%	6	23.1%
Home or Other Daycare	2	6.3%	2	7.7%
Information/Internet	8*	25.0%*	0*	0.0%*
Personal Services/Fitness	2	6.3%	2	7.7%
Contract/Home Based Business	3	9.4%	2	7.7%
Other	0*	0.0%*	3*	11.5%*
* statistically different (chi-square)				

Business Presence and Success on Salt Spring Island

The following table illustrates the length of time a business has been in operation. While many of the self employed have been established for a long time (34.4% for 11-20 years) clearly people completing the employer survey have somewhat deeper roots over all (39.1% for 21 or more years). The average of ratings (which because of the scaling were of numbers 1 – 7) was 4.44 for self employed and 5.26 for employer/managers. While this difference was not quite significant (p 0.09 instead of the target p <0.05) these ratings translate into a fairly large difference in actual years, with a mean of about 6.8 years for self employed as compared with 12.6 for the employer group. However, at the leading edge, businesses established within the last three years, both groups are comparable (31.3% vs 30.4%).

Group	<i>Number of Years in Business on Salt Spring (# and % of group)</i>							Totals
	<6mo	6mo-1yrs	1-3 yrs	4-5 yrs	6-10 yrs	11-20 yrs	21+ yrs	
Self employed	2 6.3%	1 3.1%	7 21.9%	6 18.8%	4 12.5%	11 34.4%	1 3.1%	32 100%
Employer/Managers	1 4.3%	0 0.0%	6 26.1%	1 4.3%	1 4.3%	5 21.7%	9 39.1%	23 100%
Totals	3 5.5%	1 1.8%	13 23.6%	7 12.7%	5 9.1%	16 29.1%	10 18.2%	55 100%

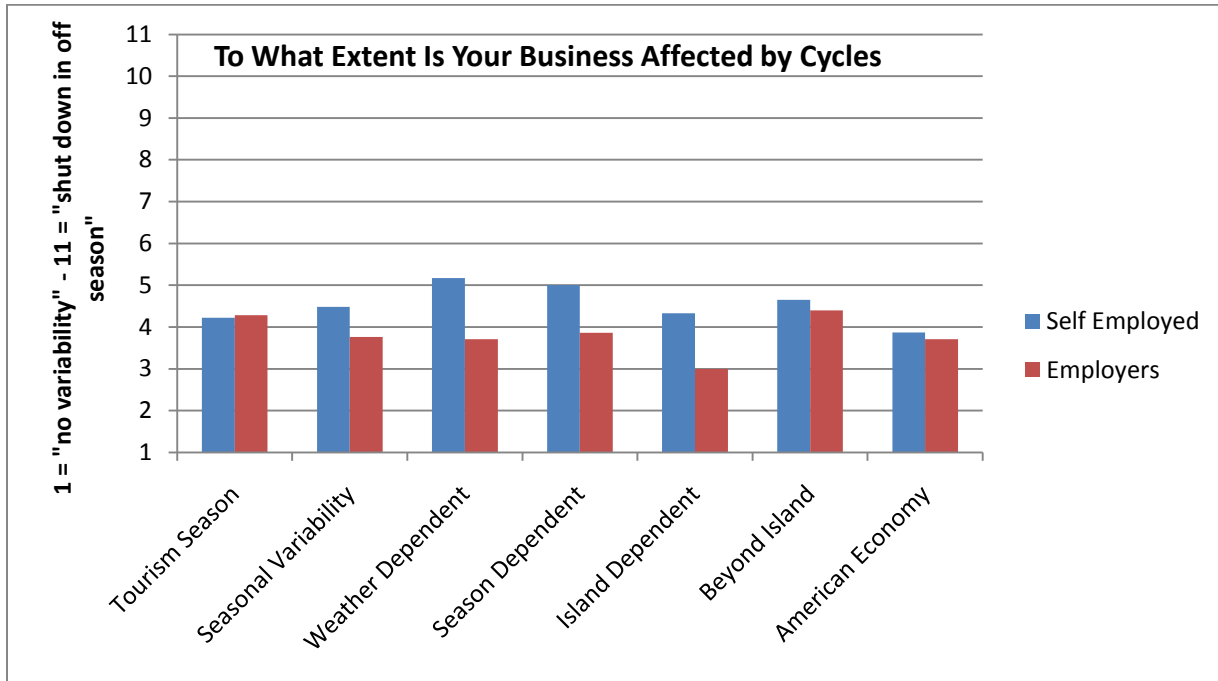
‘Describe the general success of your business at the present moment.’
Ratings here ranged from 1: ‘I am folding up the business’ to 11: ‘Can’t imagine better’.



While it is clear things could be better, we see ratings that are above the middle of the scale and more or less comparable between the groups (no significant difference between mean ratings) and not highly varied between the business aspects we asked them to rate. No rating average fell below the midpoint on the scale. We might view this as an expression of an absence of urgent crisis in the local economy.

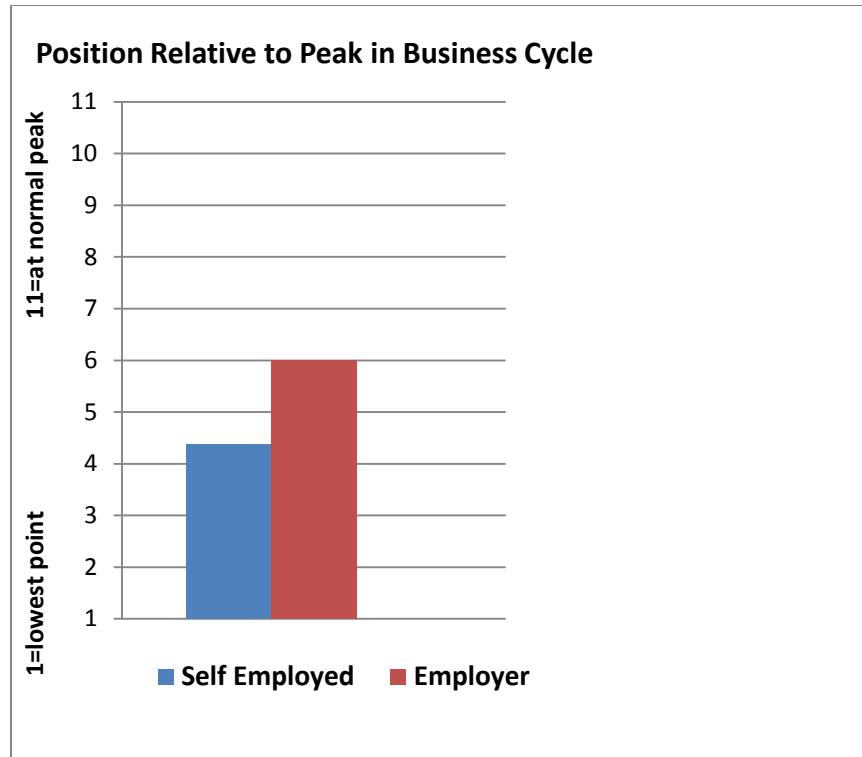
Effect of Business Cycles on the Local Economy

It is common to hear that our local economy is highly cyclic in nature. To what extent do our respondents perceive their business to be affected by cyclic variability? And to what sorts of cyclic influences is it subjected? The following chart summarizes the answers to these questions.



Here we see the self employed somewhat more vulnerable to a variety of cyclic influences, specifically work is weather dependent (less in winter), seasonal (e.g. market garden, wood supply), and affected by the success of other on-island businesses. No individual difference was large enough to reach statistical significance. The overarching message is that businesses are not overtly cyclic.

When we put this in the context of respondents' sense of where they are in their particular business cycle, these estimations seem even more positive, especially for the self employed businesses. The chart below shows the self employed in a relative trough, at 4.4 out of 11 the normal peak, and conventional businesses at just above mid-cycle at 6.0. In this context the self employed are reporting fair confidence in the viability of their business if it is essentially keeping pace with the estimates of success of regular employers while at a fairly low ebb in its natural cycle.



Details of Employee Profile

Our sense that some of the larger anchor employers (larger building supply stores and larger food retailers) were not included in our sample appears to be confirmed in this table. There is high and quite consistent turnover in casual or on-call workers. The use of volunteers or woofers is prominent in both the self employed and regular employer sample. Clearly volunteers play an important and broad role in local businesses, more so in a seasonal or fluctuating capacity in traditional businesses. Two self employed businesses reported a 40% fluctuation in numbers of full time employees. It is when we look at salaries that we see the biggest difference between self employed and traditional businesses: a higher proportion of employees are long term skilled (69% vs 56%), and they are paid better (\$25.67 vs \$19.15). The fact that we have comparable numbers of respondents from the two groups (32 self employed vs 26 regular businesses) makes these comparisons quite informative. Self employment, despite its challenges, appears to be a very important driver of the Salt Spring economy. This supports the idea brought forth in focus groups that training and support of this sector could be an important strategy for improving employment on Island. SS Community Education always found eager interest in their offerings in self employment training.

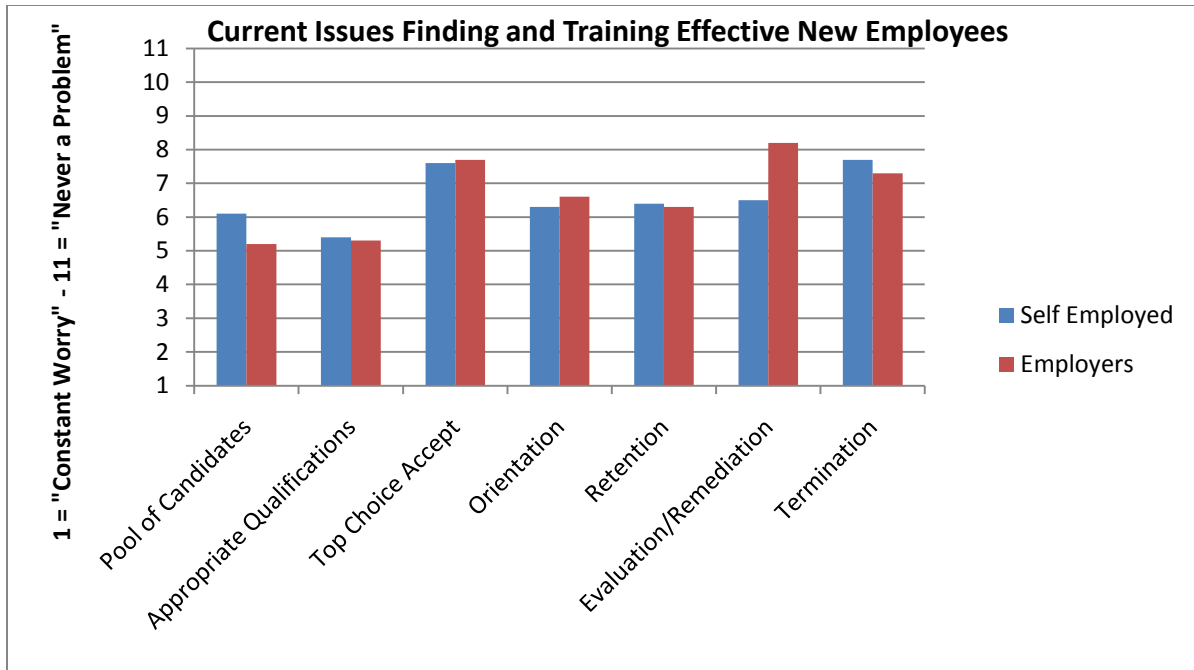
<i>Category</i>	<i>Self Employed</i>			<i>Regular Employer</i>		
	# reporting	# of people	% decline	# reporting	# of people	% decline
Casual/On Call	(14)	2.4	47%	(16)	3.9	45%
Volunteer/Woofing	(7)	2.3	10%	(5)	4.2	37%
Part Time <15 hrs	(6)	1.5	10%	(11)	2.2	27%
Part Time 16-30 hrs	(5)	2.2	5%	(12)	4.9	15%
Full Time	(2)	2.5	40%	(13)	4.5	28%
<i>Breakdown Entry Level vs Skilled Percent and Mean Salary</i>						
Percent Entry Level Low Skilled	(14)	25%		(13)	13%	
Mean Salary – Entry Level		\$21.05			\$12.69	
Percent Long Term skilled	(14)	69%		(13)	56%	
Mean Salary – Long Term Skilled		\$25.67			\$19.15	

When asked to estimate the approximate percentage of staff that have been replaced over the last year they provided an average of 27.4%. To put this in perspective, half the businesses reporting had only ten percent or less turnover, one quarter replaced 30-50%, and one quarter replaced 70-100% of their employees over the last year. We do not have sufficient data to tell what portion of these differences reflect seasonal variability of employee requirements or specific businesses with difficulties retaining employees.

Housing costs are [sic] main barrier to keeping employees

Describe Your Current Issues in Finding and Training Effective New Employees

This question was asked to plumb problems that SSL might assist in resolving. The rating scale ranged from 1 ‘this a constant worry’ to 11 ‘never a problem’. Only two items averaged below 6.4: ‘getting a decent pool of applicants to consider’ and ‘having applicants that are appropriately qualified’. Scores for self employed and regular employers were not substantially or significantly different. Considering that getting enough appropriately qualified candidates is the starting point for successful hiring, the first two columns (below) are cause for concern.



How is the Current Economic Climate Affecting Your Business?

Following from this, what are the impressions of the economic climate on-island, right now at mid-winter, and looking forward? As the numbers of people prepared to make an estimate attests, people were more comfortable making global assessments of the here and now ('compared with the very best you have experienced') than they were of a nebulous 'looking to the future'.

The "Looking to the Future" makes no sense [sic] how you have the questions framed. Are you attempting to measure optimism, which has little to do with reality? The only people who are taking part in major discretionary spending are rich retirees or those whose businesses depend on vice or absolute need.

In all but one comparison, the self employed are seeing a slightly more depressed economy than are employer/managers. And the general view of the economy is not bright: only two estimates of 40 met or broke the scale midpoint of 6; 27 of 40 estimates fell below 5, some as low as 3.2 out of 11, very close to the 'worst I have seen'. In 14 of 20 contrasts of now and the future, the future looked marginally more positive. One rating requires explanation: 'the importance of the underground economy for people's survival' is rated lower moving forward. Presumably people see the variety of activities that are not accessible to normal taxation (giving a break on a price for goods or services for cash, barter, under-the-table employment, perhaps growing and selling illicit crops, and so forth) as less significant as the economy improves. Interestingly, the self employed, who are better positioned to leverage the underground economy and likely more accurately informed, see this as less important right now, and significantly decreasing in importance as the economy rebounds.

Your Impression of the Economic Climate on Island: at Present and Looking Forward						
<i>Factor</i>	<i>Group</i>		<i>Current</i>		<i>Looking Forward</i>	<i>Sig?</i>
		<i>#</i>	<i>Out of 11</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>Out of 11</i>	<i>p</i>
		1="worst I have seen", 11="best in my memory"				
General economic conditions	<i>Self Employed</i>	25	3.6	17	3.9	.02*
	<i>Employer/Manager</i>	17	4.8	14	5.4	.06
Confidence in local economy	<i>Self Employed</i>	28	4.1	17	4.0	.12
	<i>Employer/Manager</i>	15	5.1	14	5.6	.06
Availability of work	<i>Self Employed</i>	27	3.6	17	3.7	.08
	<i>Employer/Manager</i>	15	4.8	14	4.9	.14
Major purchases	<i>Self Employed</i>	26	3.7	14	4.2	.30
	<i>Employer/Manager</i>	16	4.4	11	4.8	.50
Health of tourism	<i>Self Employed</i>	26	3.5	13	3.6	.04*
	<i>Employer/Manager</i>	15	4.6	14	5.1	.05*
Major home improvements	<i>Self Employed</i>	25	4.5	15	4.5	.51
	<i>Employer/Manager</i>	14	4.1	11	5.1	.51
Building activity	<i>Self Employed</i>	25	4.1	15	4.1	.34
	<i>Employer/Manager</i>	15	4.8	12	5.3	.22
Major off-Island holidays	<i>Self Employed</i>	25	4.2	13	4.9	.08
	<i>Employer/Manager</i>	15	5.2	12	5.2	.74
Offering cash breaks	<i>Self Employed</i>	24	4.3	13	4.9	.07
	<i>Employer/Manager</i>	13	5.7	10	5.4	.52
Underground economy	<i>Self Employed</i>	26	5.0	26	3.2	.04*
	<i>Employer/Manager</i>	15	6.3	12	6.0	.00*

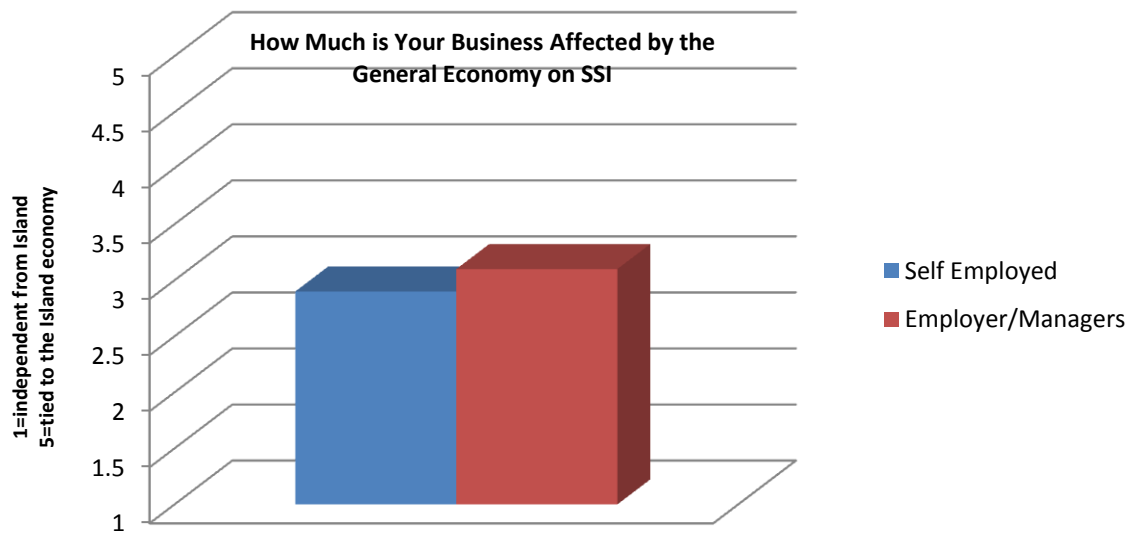
These ratings were reinforced by the comments volunteered by respondents, and they allude to a need for some coherent economic development planning and support.

...we have no mechanism to steer/develop the economic health of activity on SSI so I predict things will only get worse. We will end up with charity being the only proactive activity to support individuals and families facing long term unemployment or underemployment".

...the global economy as we know it is going to tank this year, and according to Ben Bernanke, the Fed [sic] boss, it will be 10 years before we get back on track.

If others are doing well, specifically our customers/clients and their customers/clients, all can be more successful. The sooner businesses realize how far out from their immediate circle of customers their dependence is, the sooner our economies will recover.

The last table in this section shows an economy that recognizes the interdependence of its diverse components. The self employed saw their businesses as slightly less linked to the collective health of Salt Spring economy. But the middle of the road ratings made by respondents speak as much about their confidence in their own skills and capacities as it does about the ultimate reliance of each individual business on the vigour of the larger economy.



Employer’s Recruitment Methods

Anecdotally, the consultant encountered comments from employers that the problem on SSI is not hiring someone, it’s having them come back the second day. This view seems quite entrenched, being the rationale for some refusals to participate in the study: “I have been struggling for years to change the attitudes and work habits of Salt Springers. I give up!” The pool of candidates on Salt Spring is limited compared with larger communities, but, as is illustrated by the variety of jobs held by the under/unemployed group and their training which matches that of the employee group, there is a pool of people who might be very well qualified for positions but who never get looked at. Recent studies have illustrated a pervasive resistance to hiring the unemployed. This resistance has become the focus of a study by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EOCC), a group looking into systemic prejudice against unemployed workers in the US.

There is a disturbing and growing trend among employers and staffing firms to refuse to even consider the unemployed for available job openings, regardless of their qualifications. Excluding unemployed workers from employment opportunities is unfair to workers, bad for the economy, and potentially violates basic civil rights protections because of the disparate impact on older workers, workers of color, women and others.

At a time when we should be doing whatever we can to open up job opportunities, it is profoundly disturbing to see deliberate exclusion of the jobless from work opportunities.”
Christine Owens (EEOC)⁶

In a constrained labour market such as exists on island, attitudes which might limit those being actively considered for employment must be examined and somehow addressed. The focus groups identified this resistance to equal consideration of the unemployed, particularly the very poor. The first focus group had some creative ideas for putting an appealing face on poverty and directly engaging stereotypes about the unemployed.

It appears that prospective employers protect against this perceived failure of an open job market by depending upon word of mouth, better the devil you know. The largest single recruitment method reported by this sample of employers is ‘word of mouth/the local grapevine’. At eighteen it is twice the next most common which is placing an ad in the Driftwood at nine.

We haven't advertised for employees since we took the store over. We will be looking for someone in the near future, but will do so by word of mouth.

To be fair, six employers used multiple ways of getting the word out, but this dependence on word of mouth raises questions as to how inclusive, effective, and thorough the screening of the potential labour market really is. As noted earlier, this small (23) group of regular employers includes only a few respondents from the larger conventional employers. The low number of employers (2) reporting using CARE, the major formal employment agency on island, is grounds for concern or at least question. This general reliance on word of mouth was supported in the focus groups: ‘It’s not what you know, but who you know’ was repeated several times. The largest focus group vigorously identified island perceptions of the poor and unemployed as a major impediment to their success and brainstormed a campaign to address this issue through direct action.

Indicate all the Ways in Which you Recruit Workers	
Posting on your corporate website	6
Want Ad in the Driftwood	9
Want Ad in the Marketplace	1
A posting in off-Island papers	2
Posting on an employment website	3
Posting on the Salt Spring Community Exchange	5
Word of mouth/the local grapevine	18
Poster Boards (SS Coffee, Barb’s, Dagwoods, Country Grocer, etc.)	2
CARE posting	2
Embe’s Bakery, Barb’s Buns, Dagwoods, Salt Spring Coffee	1
Total (many respondents had more than one method of recruiting)	49

⁶ As before.

Employer's Training Needs

When we asked employers direct questions about the kinds of educational support they, their managers, or employees might be able to profit from, we received a barely lukewarm response. Only one item, 'training in performance appraisal, giving feedback, goal setting', made it above the midpoint in our scale between 'of no use' and 'start offering this today'. These seem to be areas that are perceived to be the rightful preserve of the employer. In fact, one respondent reiterated after each section that "*We provide employee training.*" This apparent relative disinterest in utilizing the training resources which could be found in the wider community is interesting. Especially when paired with the findings indicating the generally low value held by employers of the necessity of 'soft skills' such as 'deals effectively with upset customer or co-worker', 'presents information effectively', 'works well with different sorts of people', 'uses fact finding skills to solve a problem', 'sets goals and priorities and can juggle competing tasks', and 'responds quickly and well to problems'. Comments were made in the focus groups that the quality and professionalism of management on Salt Spring is variable. The case needs to be creatively and effectively made to the employer community that these skills are trainable and can make a difference on the work environment and the bottom line.

Employer's Training Needs		
<i>What kinds of educational support might you, your managers, or employees gain from? (1="of no use", 11="start offering this today!")</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>Mean</i>
<i>Pre-employment Skills Training</i>		
Behavioural interviewing, human rights, protection of privacy issues	15	4.3
Communication/interpersonal skills, complaints, self-management, team work	16	5.3
Specific literacy skills (written or verbal communication)	14	5.7
Specific numeracy skills (basic math, making change, percentage, fractions, etc)	15	5.7
Basic computer literacy (Word, Excel, graphics, etc.)	16	4.9
<i>Retention-Critical Skills</i>		
Communication/interpersonal skills, complaints, self-management, team work	16	5.4
Specific literacy skills (written or verbal communication)	14	5.1
Specific numeracy skills (basic math, making change, percentage, fractions, etc)	16	5.5
Basic computer literacy (Word, Excel, graphics, etc.)	16	5.4
<i>Advancement-Critical Skills</i>		
Performance appraisal, giving feedback, goal setting	12	6.1

Beginning manager skills (communication, leadership, feedback, perf. appraisal)	13	5.2
Specific literacy skills like, basic research skills and report writing, etc.	12	4.7
<i>Termination/Moving On</i>		
Workshops to managers: performance appraisal, giving feedback, setting goals	13	5.2
Moving on, learning about yourself, setting goals, planning, etc.	14	5.1

Self Employed: Ideas About Starting Up and Maintaining a Small Business

We asked our respondents to share what they saw as most useful in starting up and maintaining a small business. Despite its popularity in the offerings of SS Community Education, a business start-up course or workshop polled the bottom of the pack at 5.3 out of a possible 11. ‘Celebrate successes and hold a wake for your misses’ followed at 5.7. Consulting an unbiased expert came next in popularity at 5.9, almost the midpoint of 6. Everything else above 6, some like ‘Build a network of mentors and peers for feedback and support’ and ‘Plan how personal financial needs will met during start-up’ were rated more than 8 while ‘Maintain personal/home/work balance including self-care’ came in at 9.2. In supporting potential entrepreneurs hard skills (market research, business planning, goal setting and evaluation, financial literacy, fiscal management, etc.) and soft skills (the role of positive thinking, mentoring and peer feedback and support, maintaining personal/home/work balance and self care) seem to all be of use.

Advice from the Self Employed		
<i>What can you share about starting up and maintaining a small business? 1=“not at all important”, 11=“essential to survival and success”.</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Participate in a business start-up course/workshop	23	5.3
Conduct market research including studying the competition	23	6.5
Develop a complete business plan	23	6.4
Review plan with unbiased experts in your field	23	5.9
Keep goals and plans fresh and relevant	21	7.8
Implement positive/productive thoughts/images/emotions (Millionaire Mind)	22	7.1
Build and apply systems for tracking cash flow, costs, profits	23	7.5
Build a network of mentors and peers for feedback and support	23	8.2
Regularly set short and long term goals	23	7.8
Regular evaluation of progress: shed unproductive activities	22	7.0

Maintain personal/home/work balance including self-care	22	9.2
Maintain personal budget: pay yourself first	22	7.8
Plan how personal financial needs will met during start-up	22	8.2
Organize funding for business start-up	22	7.2
Have “emergency reserve” should you <i>really</i> need it	21	8.1
Hold regular consultation with backers and support group	22	6.0
Celebrate successes and hold a wake for your misses	22	5.7

Glossary of abbreviations

CARE.....	Careers Assistance and Resources for Employment
LMP.....	Labour Market Partnership
PSC.....	Project steering committee
SPSS.....	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences: IBM
SSCS.....	Salt Spring Community Services
SSL.....	Salt Spring Literacy Society
Woofers.....	Worldwide opportunities on organic farms

Appendix A

Letters of support

Owners, staff or volunteers from the following organisations or businesses wrote letters of support as part of our initial application process:

- The Islands Trust
- The Capital Regional District
- Copper Kettle
- Salt Spring Community Services
- CARE
- Salt Spring Public Library
- The Salt Spring Chamber of Commerce
- Watermark Books
- Pure Colour
- TJ Beans/Island Star Video
- Elements Home Design
- Salt Spring Auto Services
- Treefrog Daycare
- Salt Spring Cheese
- Wrangellia Rockworks
- Blue Spruce Drilling and Blasting
- Soul Food Bakery

There were also letters from individual community members who did not represent a named business or organisation.

Focus Group

Detailed notes were maintained during the focus group discussion by the facilitators Chris Leischner, Gordon Handford, Stewart Webb and Edith Glennie. In order to protect the privacy of focus group members no names are attached to comments. If you would like a copy of the notes please email coordinator@saltspringliteracy.org.

The Surveys

If you would like copies of the four surveys please contact coordinator@saltspringliteracy.org