

Hastings County

Literacy Service Plan and Data
February 2021



Acknowledgements

Thanks to the following community partners for their contribution to this report and for their leadership and tireless support for their community, including learners, job seekers and employers:

Community Learning Alternatives
Loyalist College – College Prep
Agilec Employment Services
Canadian Mental Health Association
Career Edge
Centre for Workforce Development
Community Employment Services
Contact North – Madoc
Elevate Plus
META Employment Services
Prince Edward Learning Centre
Hastings County Community and Human Services
Loyola School of Adult and Continuing Education
Ontario Disability Support Program (Hastings)
Quinte Adult Education
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OUR TEAM AND PROCESS

Literacy Ontario Central South (LOCS) would like to thank our community partners for supporting Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) organizations and for attending our quarterly Literacy Service Plan meetings. Community partners are very supportive and always willing to explore solutions for meeting the needs of learners and the community.

LOCS also wants to thank our Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) team for their ongoing work supporting learners. Hastings is well served by two LBS programs including one College Sector (Loyalist College) and one Community Sector (Community Learning Alternatives) with three locations. The two organizations all work well together to serve the community. The commitment and creativity demonstrated throughout the first year of the pandemic has been inspiring.

As people come to terms with a pandemic informed labour market and things slowly begin to recover and adapt, LBS will play a key role in preparing individuals for learning, work and independence, giving them the option to fully participate and contribute to the community and meet the demands of the new labour market. LOCS and the LBS team will continue to take steps to prepare and to work with our partners through the recovery stage.

CURRENT TRENDS

There has never been a more critical time for the foundational support of Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) programs; supporting both learners and the broader community. LBS can support individuals in all five goal paths, Apprenticeship, Secondary School, Post-Secondary School, Employment and Independence. LBS will play an important role in ensuring that people are prepared for the labour market demands going forward, in addition to being safe and informed members of our community.

Four Trends:

1. Technology – including access to technology and digital literacy.
2. Education – including remote and distance learning.
3. Health and Social – including mental health and safety and security.
4. Labour Market – including the unemployment rate and the participation rate.

Access to Technology

The pandemic has 'shone a light' on the digital divide, a term used to describe the gap in access to modern technology. Lack of access to technology creates barriers to learning, work and independence in the community. The pandemic has made it critical for people to:

1. have access to technology (hardware/software)
2. have access to reliable/stable/affordable Internet

Ideally, learners who want to participate in LBS programs will need the ability to access remote or blended learning programs. This means they must have access to computers - desktops or laptops, and the Internet, regardless of their goal. This affects all learners who are not in the financial position to purchase the tools needed to access LBS programs. This barrier to participation is significant for those living in poverty. (Note: 2019-2020 data shows that 50% of LBS learners in Hastings report their source of income as OW or ODSP or EI and 12% report no source of income.) Additionally, those living in rural locations with unstable Internet connections face additional barriers.

In a report released by AlphaPlus in February 2020 'The Impact of the Digital Divide', they reported that "39% of Ontarians with the lowest incomes (compared to only 1% with the highest incomes) are unable to gain the knowledge and consumer benefits as well as the social and personal benefits typically associated with seamless internet access." (<https://alphaplus.ca/download/the-impact-of-ontarios-digital-divide>)

Note: September 8th, 2020, Statistics Canada unveiled "Canada's Official Poverty Dashboard of Indicators." They now include literacy as one of the 12 indicators.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/poverty-reduction/reports/strategy.html#h2.4>

Digital Literacy

More than ever, it is essential that learners have online communication skills, as well as the skills to learn online. Since the pandemic, there has been a significant increase in our reliance on communication technology (Zoom, WebEx, Google, Messenger, Email). Learning to use these tools to communicate online is the critical first step to ensure individuals have access to training, employment services, jobs, and community services. It has been reported that some employers are using Zoom to interview potential candidates. In addition to skills for online communication, learners also need basic digital literacy to learn, work and manage online through the pandemic and beyond. This includes file and document management, form completion, online learning, and task completion.

There is an immediate and pressing need for training and support to help those learners who are currently unable to communicate online. Individuals who are able to communicate online can access support from LBS staff and volunteers, doctors, mental health professionals and other online services.

Once learners can communicate online; they need to develop basic computer skills so they can learn online. This will give learners the skills needed to access online training and complete tasks and assignments. It has been noted that basic computers skills are needed for anyone working on a learning plan right now. More advanced skills are needed for anyone who has identified a Secondary School, Post-Secondary School, Employment or Apprenticeship Goal Path. Note: Older learners have been identified as having a greater need for digital skills support.

As an example, in the Conference Board of Canada report “Bridging Generational Divides: Advancing Digital Skills in Canada’s Apprenticeships and Skilled Trades Ecosystem” noted the “digital revolution is coming to the skilled trades. Tradespeople will need a range of new digital skills to keep pace with the future of work.” [https://www.conferenceboard.ca/\(X\(1\)S\(bltb0ptp2mtbbtp41hoqbwgk\)\)/e-library/abstract.aspx?did=10707&AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1](https://www.conferenceboard.ca/(X(1)S(bltb0ptp2mtbbtp41hoqbwgk))/e-library/abstract.aspx?did=10707&AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1)

Strategies

Transportation continues to be a major issue, however, access to reliable, affordable, adequate Internet will now equally impact learners’ success and the ability to move forward in work and learning.

Note: Internet access in rural areas is a gap, but beyond the scope of LBS to address. However, we can seek ways to have a voice. There is currently a discussion at the national level.

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/article-ottawa-to-prioritize-rural-internet-service>

We need to find a way to reach those who are not participating because of barriers caused by digital literacy.

- Implement technology audits to ensure learners have what they need to access their programs before starting.
- Ensure that there are programs and supports available for individuals needing to develop the skills to communicate and learn online.
- Ensure computer training is available online or in a blended format, with a focus on those with limited computer skills.
- Monitor workplace demands for digital literacy through research, observation and discussion with employers and partners.

Remote Learning, Online Learning, Distance Education

It is hard to describe the impact that the lack of in-person and in-group instruction has had on training and education at every level, in every learning organization around the world. Although predictions are difficult right now, the consensus in our area is that we will never return to a system of 100% in-class delivery. Online (both synchronous or asynchronous formats) and blended learning will be the norm. This is happening at the same time as an increase in the need for training and education to prepare people for a changing labour market.

This is a critical time to support LBS services in moving their programs online, adapting to online delivery and ensuring content meets the needs of LBS learners. LBS services have pivoted to offer a range of services from fully online, including synchronous and asynchronous and blended learning options, as well as online workshops, webinars and remote tutoring. Online learning does have advantages; it allows for flexible schedules (accommodating people working and people with children), it reduces travel and expands program options. It is predicted that LBS services will have more appeal to employers if a flexible schedule can be offered to employees.

58% of learners in LBS programs in Hastings are women. Learners who are also home-schooling children or have young children at home, have limited or no access to childcare. Barriers to participating in learning programs impact learners on all five goal paths. Individuals with young children are often under 44. In the College Sector in 2019-2020 in Hastings, 81% of learners were under 44. In the Community-Based Sector 51% of learners were under 44 years of age.

Strategies

- Reach out to those who are not working or seeking work so they can upgrade their skills while at home.
- Ensure learners have quick access to instructors.
- Source existing online resources.
- Identify and support groups of learners interested in the same training.
- Explore expanding existing training e.g., redesign training modules to include digital literacy training.
- Develop orientation for learners around using virtual tools to access learning and the labour market.
- Promote that LBS programs are flexible, including schedules (asynchronous options).

Wraparound Services

One of the consistent topics of conversation in all LOCS Region LBS meetings has been the challenge of identifying learner needs so referrals to wraparound services can be made. We know the need has increased and we know that retention in LBS programs is greatly influenced by referrals. There is a need for creating a space online where trust and community is developed so needs become obvious and referrals can be made to community organizations. It has been noted that the demand on mental health services has increased.

Education facilitates social connections and hope and celebrates progress and successes, all things that are helpful during such a challenging time and will result in a positive impact on the mental health of learners. It is also easier to remain motivated when you are connected socially. At a recent LOCS area LSP it was noted that we need to promote “this time as an opportunity to position yourself for future success”, highlighting that there is hope and there are options. This need is not isolated to any one of the five LBS services. It is reported that learning, that includes some fun and socializing, helps to build community and relationships.

Safety and Security

Learning is only successful when the immediate needs of safety and security are addressed, which involves knowing about and accessing programs. This includes financial security, food security, housing and medical care. It is also critical that pandemic safety information reaches everyone. A community wraparound approach to ensure all basic needs are being met is essential so that learners can refocus on their education.

LBS can help by providing access to information and support in learning the skills needed to manage online, including the completion of online applications and government forms. LBS services can also ensure that learners develop the skills to stay safe online.

Strategies

- Continue providing the opportunity for learning and social connections for existing and new learners. This includes reaching out, maintaining relationships and offering support.
- Identify the need for wraparound services and continue providing a holistic approach through referrals to community services.
- Continue working with community partners so we are aware of the programs and services available and the referral process.
- We also need to reach out and maintain relationships with each other and to offer support. Note: Partners have identified LSP meetings as a good venue for this.
- Offer support in the development of basic digital skills so learners can access community services that are only available to them online.
- Provide information about and referrals to community resources that are available to meet basic safety and security needs.
- Build in online safety information, so learners remain safe online.
- Continue to share reopening plans and resources, policies and procedures and best practices around safety protocols.

Labour Market Trends

The Centre for Workforce Development in Bellville released a report in March 2020 called “CFWD Labour Force Participation Rate”. https://cfwd.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/CFWD_Labour_Force_Participation_Rate_Report.pdf

Although the pandemic is likely to have shifted those numbers, it is a good starting place. The report found that there has been a ten-year decline in the Eastern Ontario’s participation rate, from 67.8% to 62%. The reports states that this is concerning because employers were already having trouble filling positions. A low participation rate can tell us that people have lost confidence in the labour market. One recommendation was encouraging the participation of those age 55 to 64, the very group that LBS now sees approaching them for support. Community-Based programs have seen an increase in older learners who have been laid off or lost their jobs and are now looking for work.

In 2019-2020, 67% of learners in Hastings LBS programs identified as being ‘unemployed’. We can assume that there will be more people accessing LBS services based on job precarity increasing the number of people reevaluating their goal paths. We will need to be prepared to serve individuals unemployed because of COVID-19, especially those who find themselves without the skills to enter the current labour market or change direction. We can also anticipate that individuals who have dropped out of the labour market could also reach out to LBS services when they see the labour market improving.

In 2019-2020, 35% of learners in LBS programs in Hastings identified an Employment Goal Path and 40% identified a Post-Secondary Goal Path. This area may find an increase in the number of learners selecting these goal paths going forward.

The Centre for Workforce Development released a report “In Demand Skilled Trades – A Local Perspective” that will be very helpful in looking at apprenticeship needs going forward. https://cfwd.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/CFWD_In-Demand_Skilled_Trades_2020_Final.pdf

Strategies

- Work with Employment Services to reach people early on in their unemployment.
- Continue monitoring the Labour Market through participation in local meetings, through LSP updates.
- Explore ways of reaching and serving those individuals captured in the ‘low participation rate’.
- Prepare for an increased demand for LBS programs.
- Explore enhancements to pre-employment supports and programs through LBS and community partners.
- Monitor the ongoing transportation issue and explore access to locations in smaller communities in the region.
- Track reports to stay current in both jobs and skills demand in the local labour market. Draw on this information for program development and promotion.
- Incorporate essential workplace skills into all training plans to ensure learners can adapt to shifting labour market demands.

REFERRALS

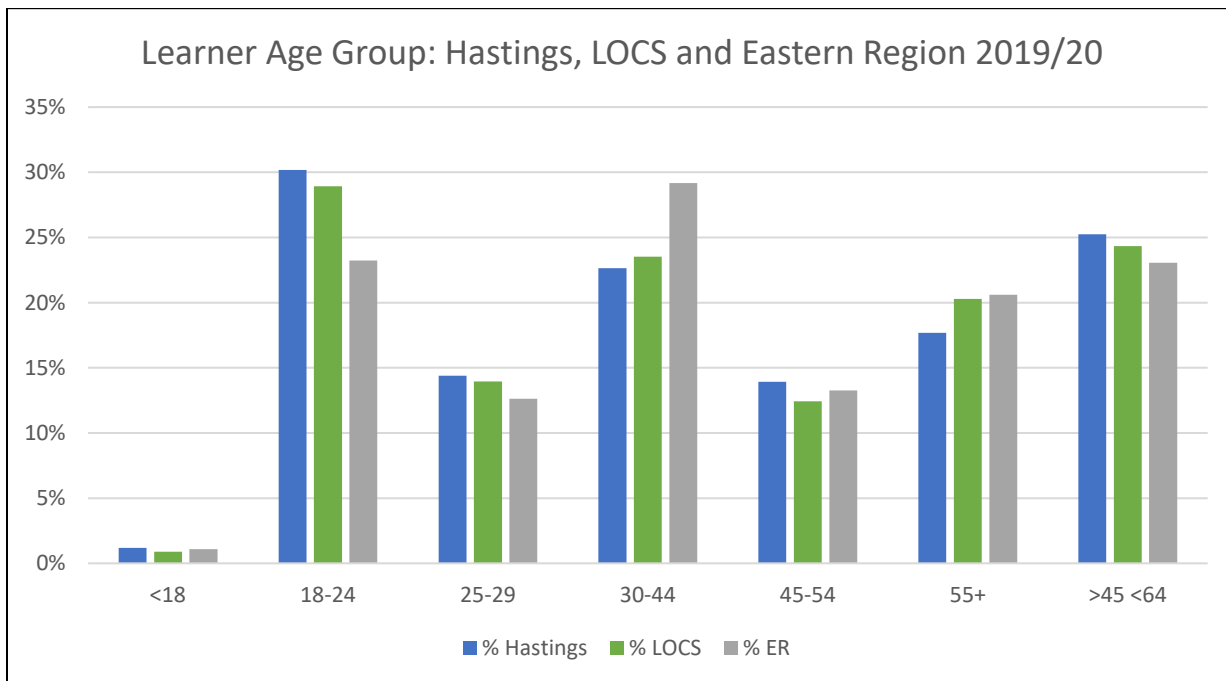
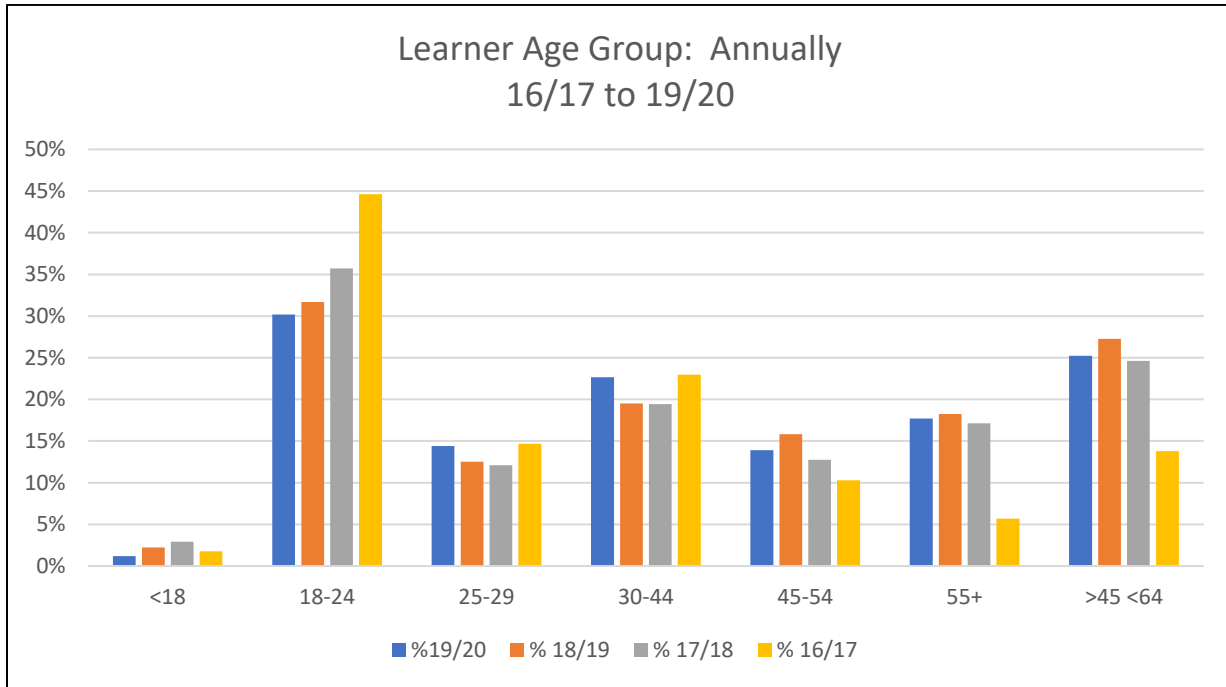
In an LSP meeting someone said LBS is one of the best kept secrets. There has never been a more important time to find ways to address this.

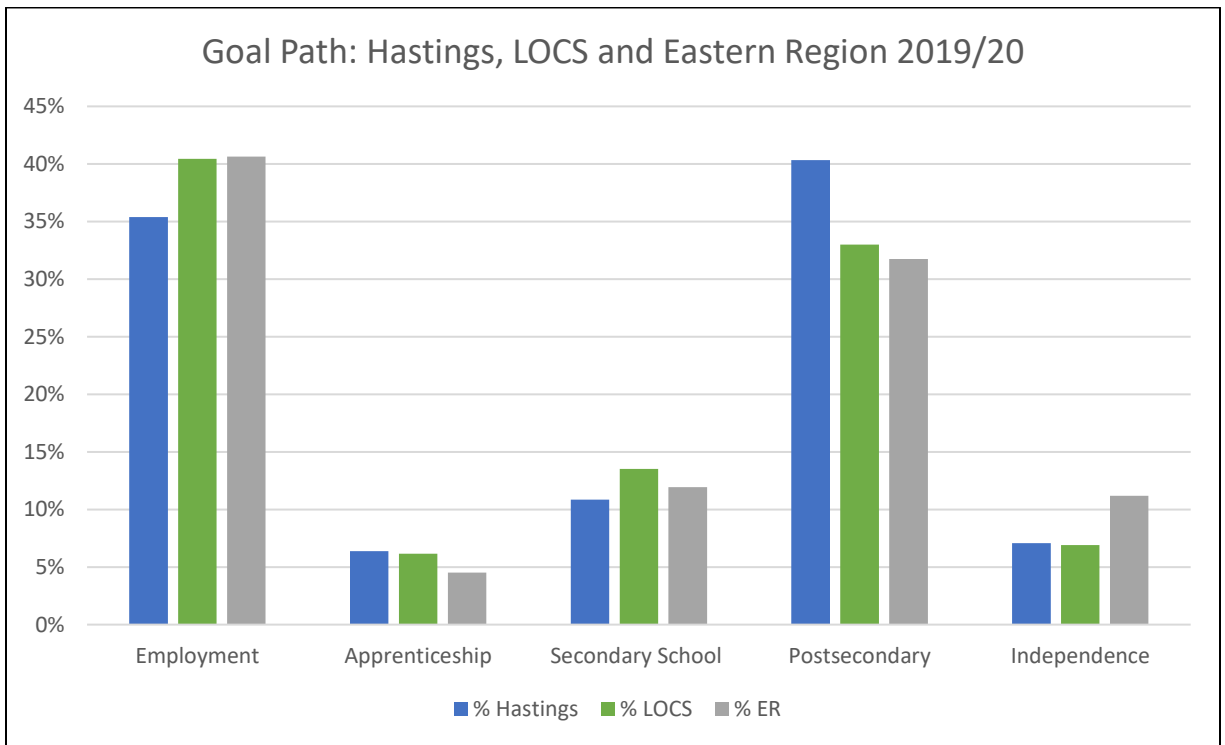
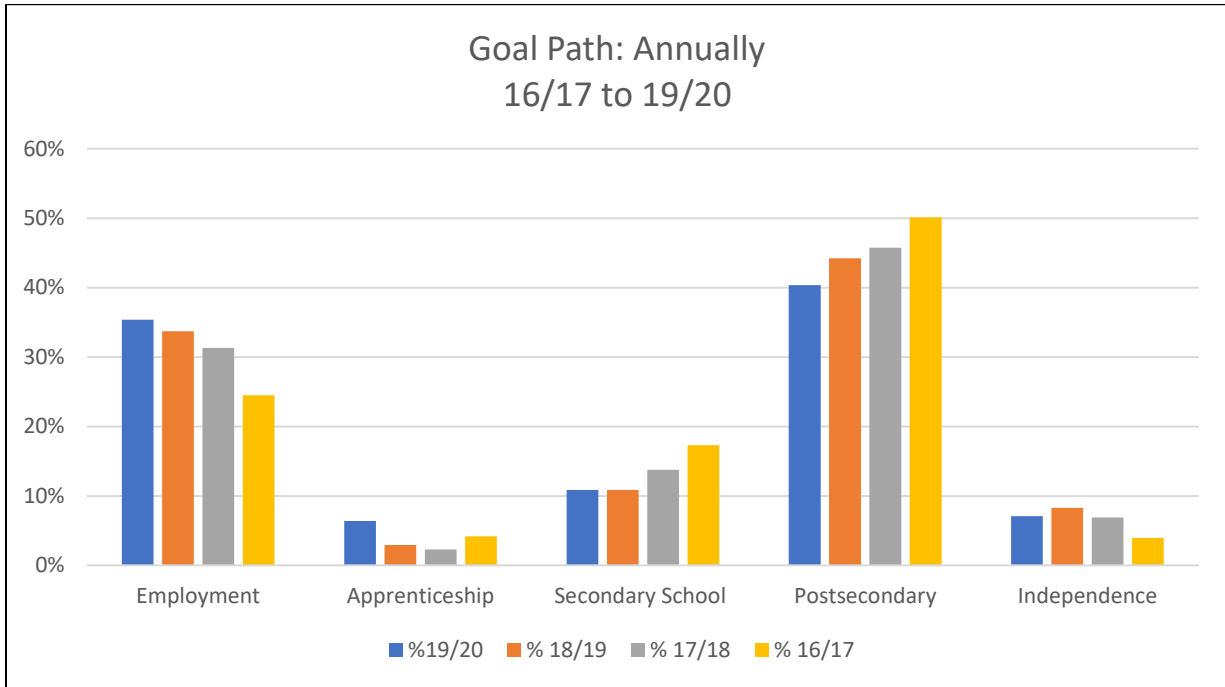
Referrals:

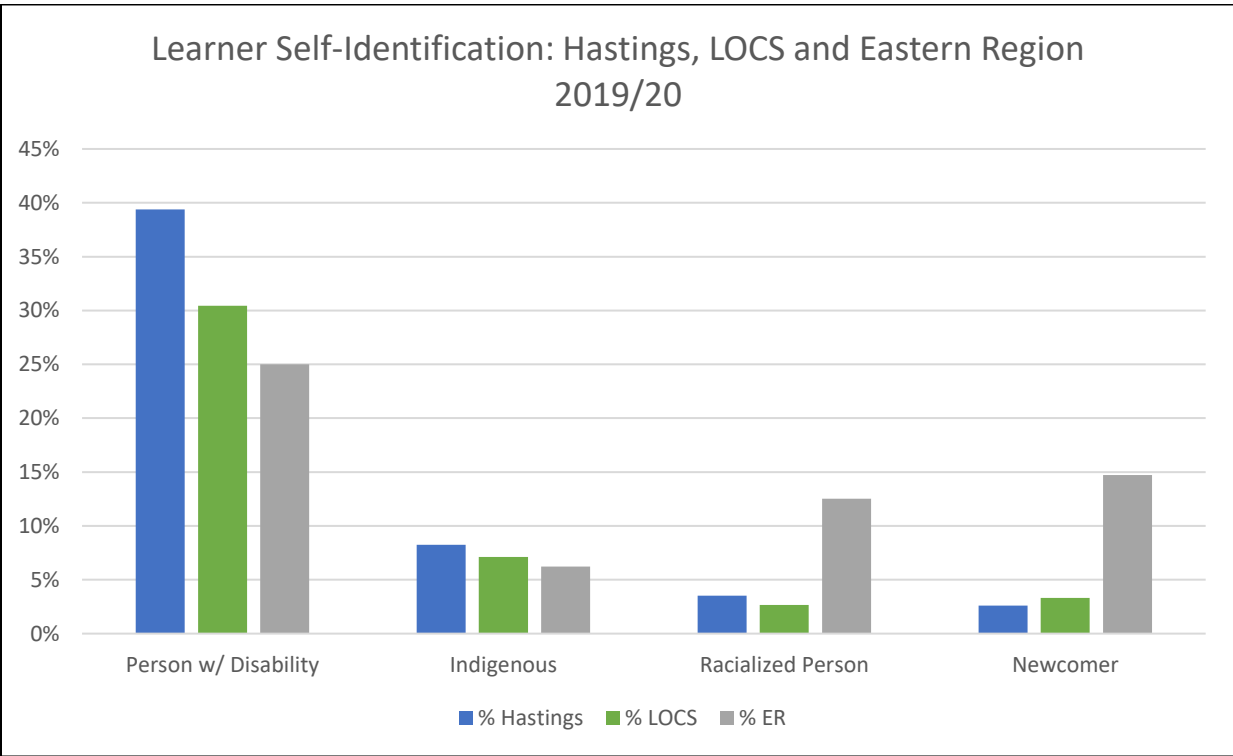
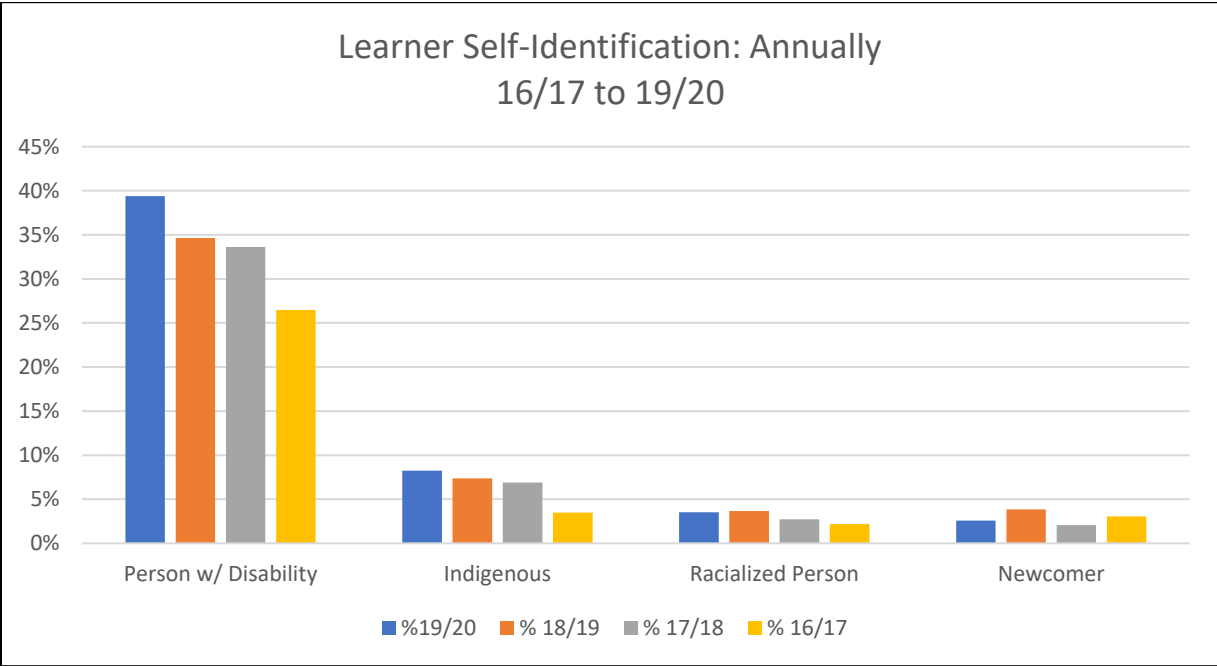
- Communicate with community partners so they know LBS is serving learners.
- Leverage the Internet (social media) to communicate with partners and potential learners.
- Work with employment services to reach people early.
- Promote all five goal path options, with a focus on the current labour market demands.
- Develop and expand partnerships and collaborate with community partners.
- Develop a strategy for reaching people who are not 'participating' in the labour market.
- LBS organizations need to know what community services are available, how they are provided (online, in-person, group) and how to refer. This changes rapidly. LSP meetings are helpful for staying current.
- LBS providers need to be watchful for needs identified by learners and create a 'space' for people to feel comfortable so referrals to wraparound services can be offered.
- Continue to provide 'handoffs' through a phone call or even a Zoom or WebEx introduction.

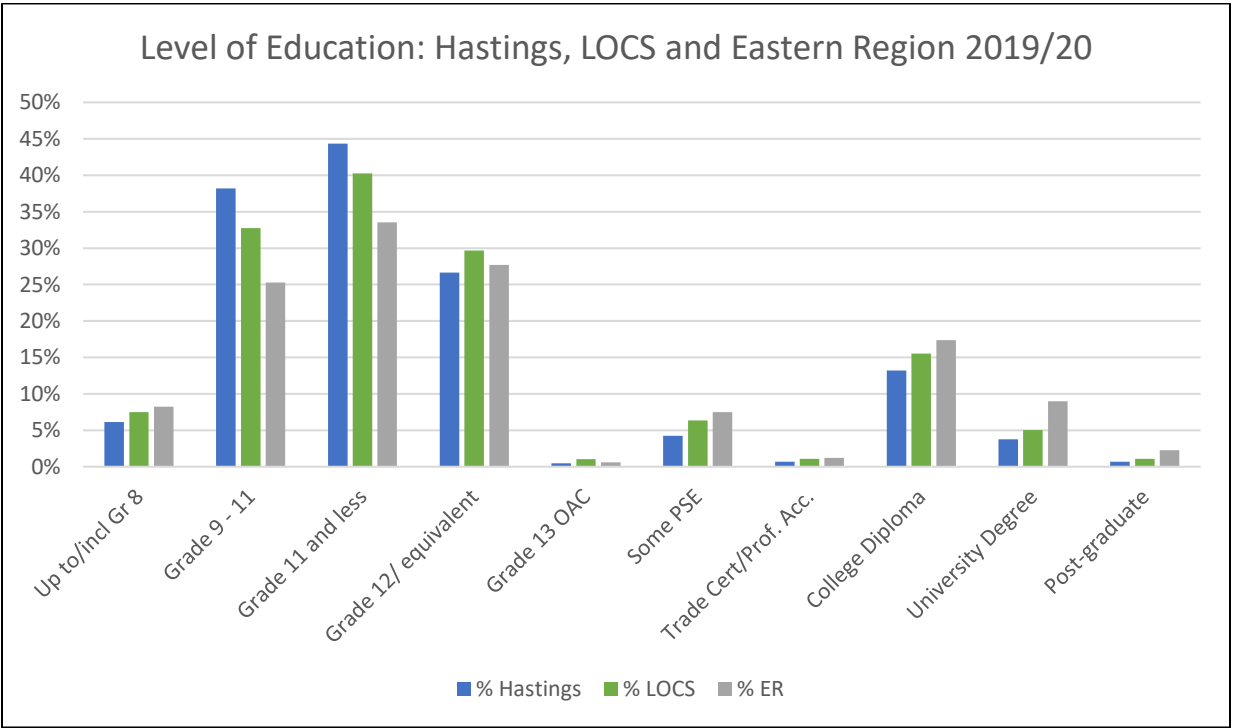
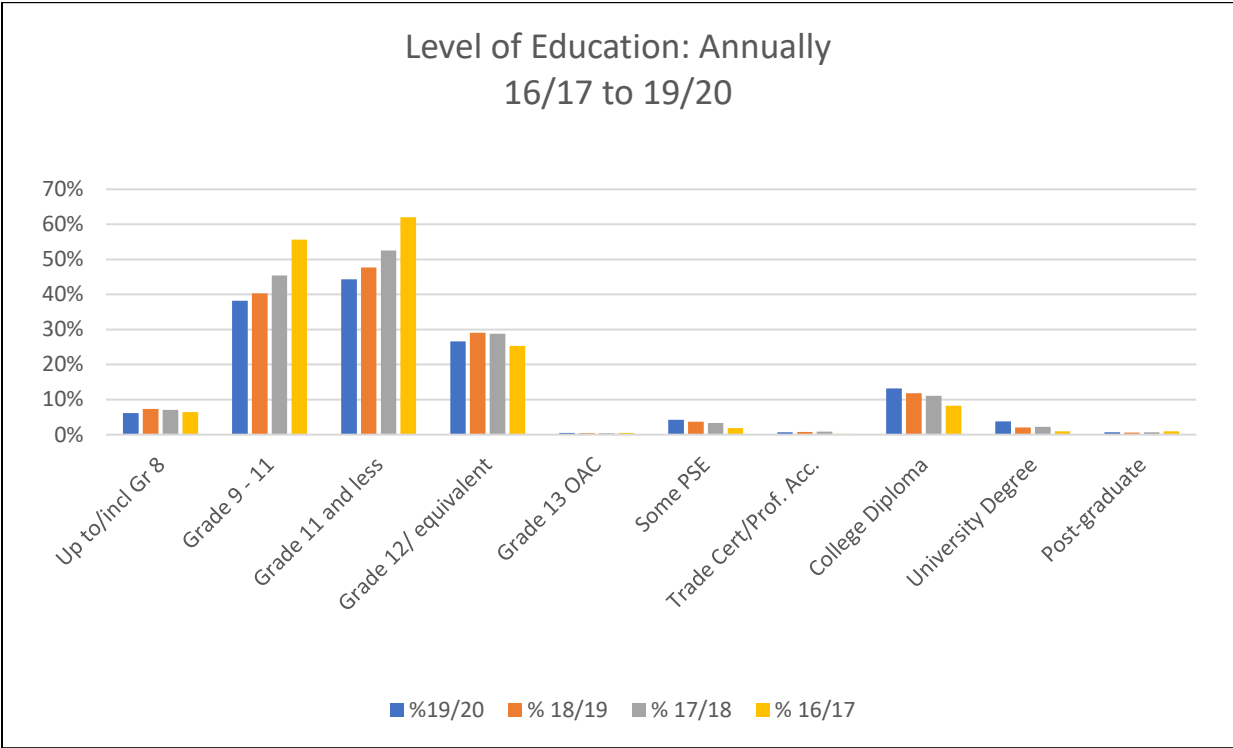
APPENDIX

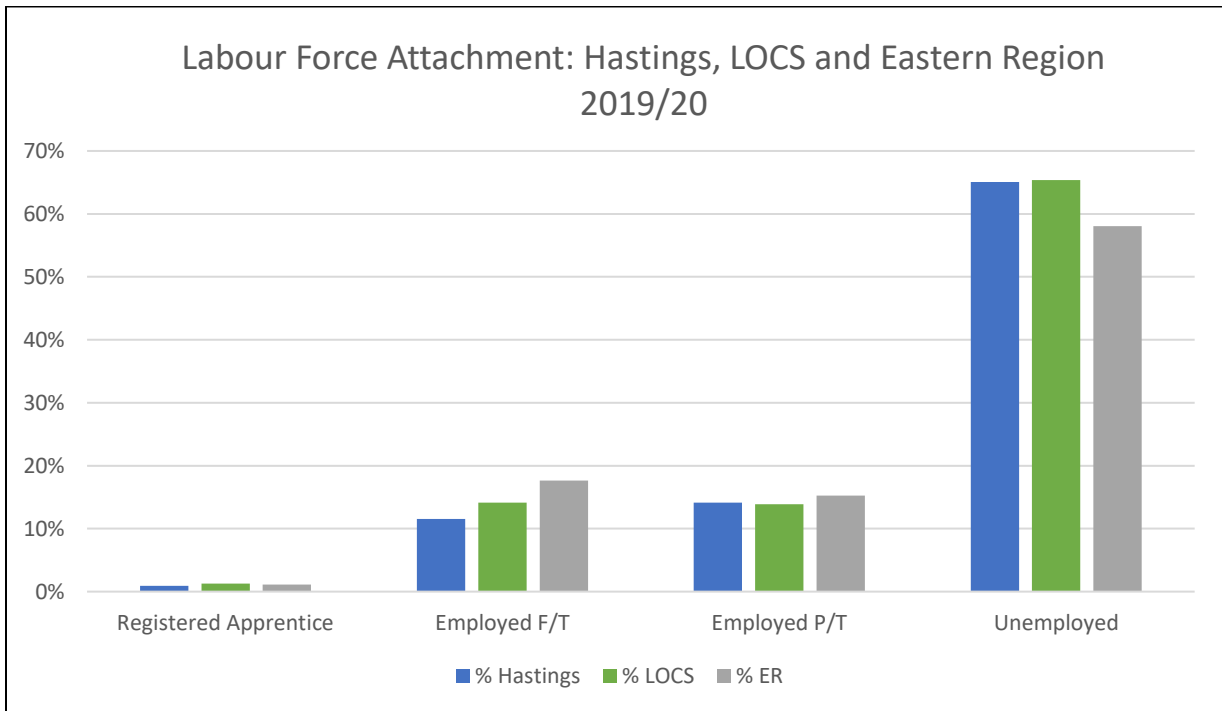
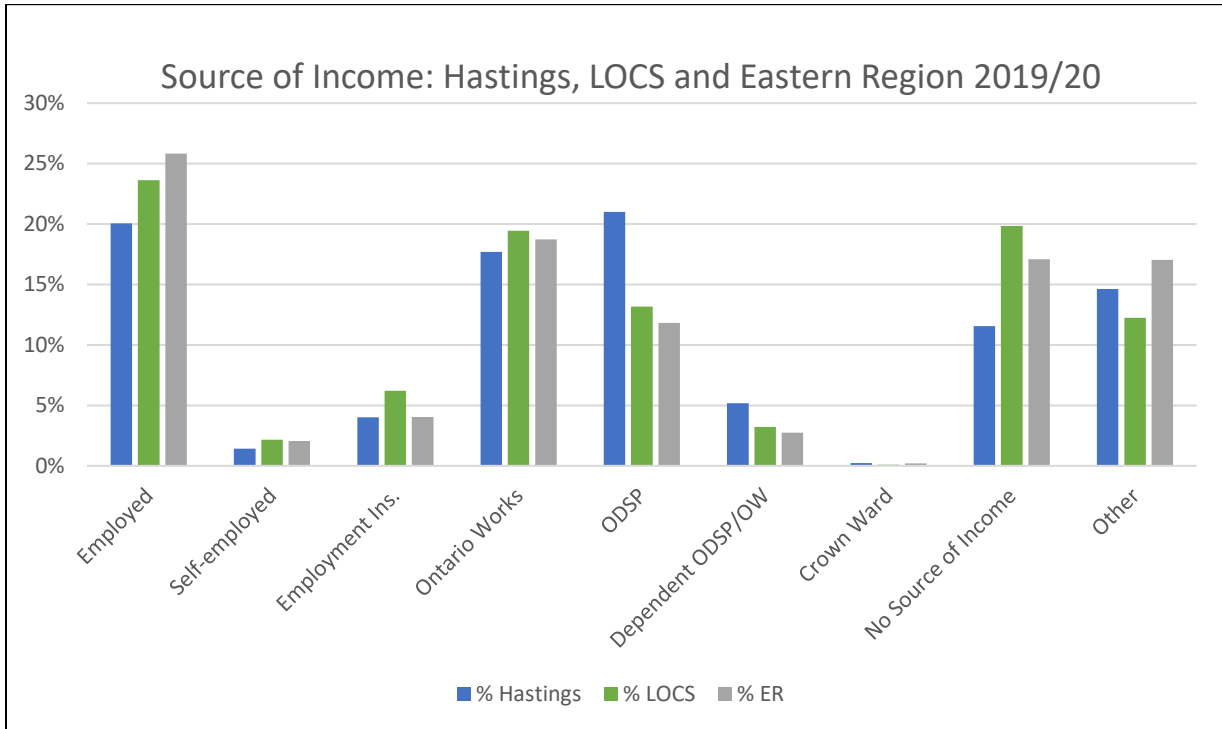
Appendix A – Learner Profile Data for Hastings (2019-2020)

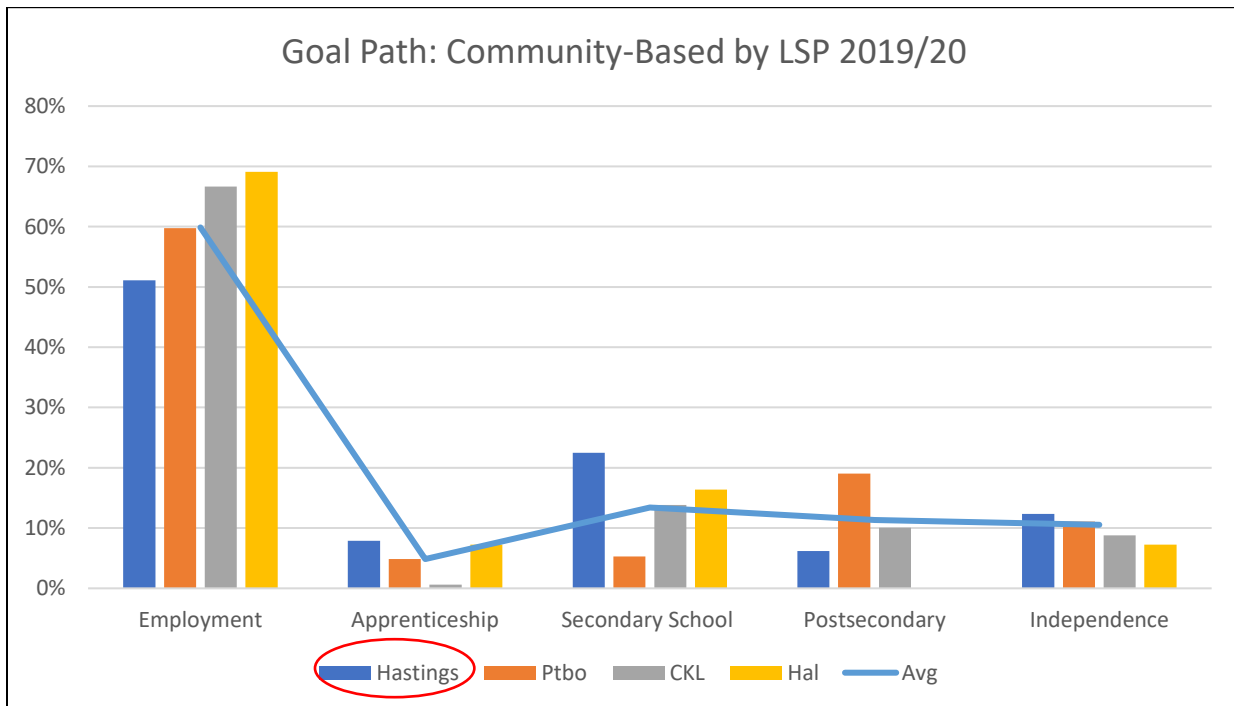
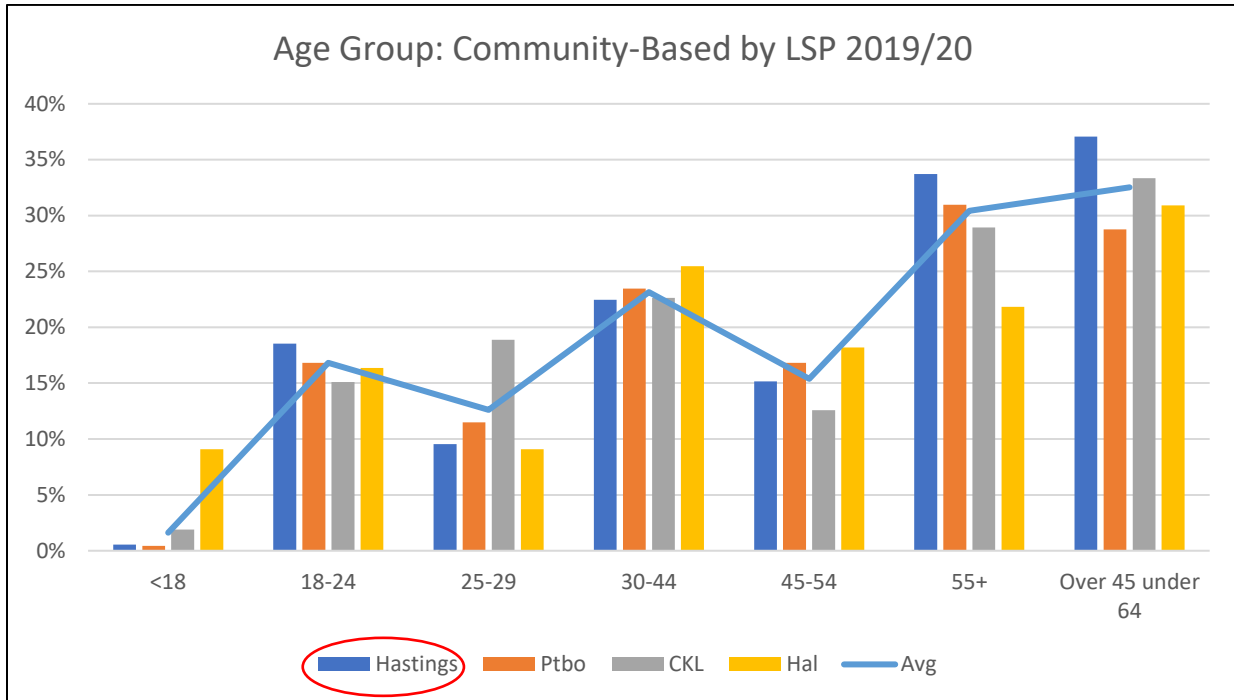


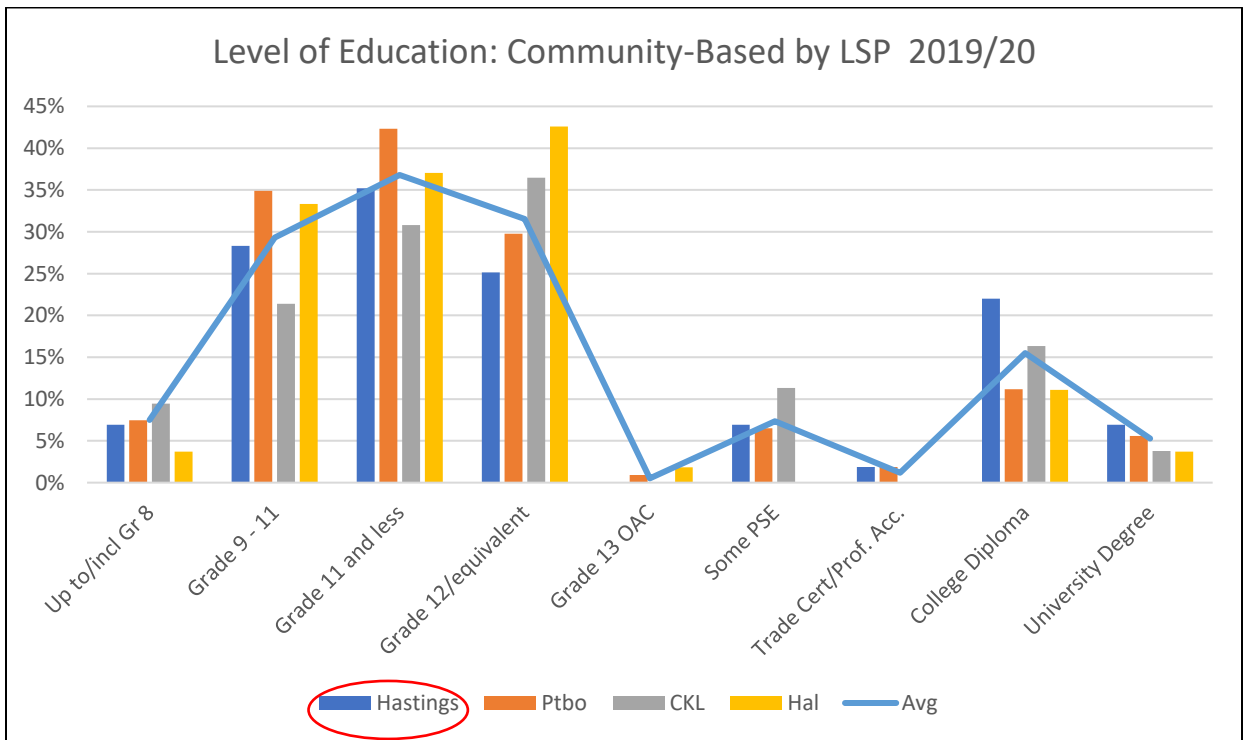
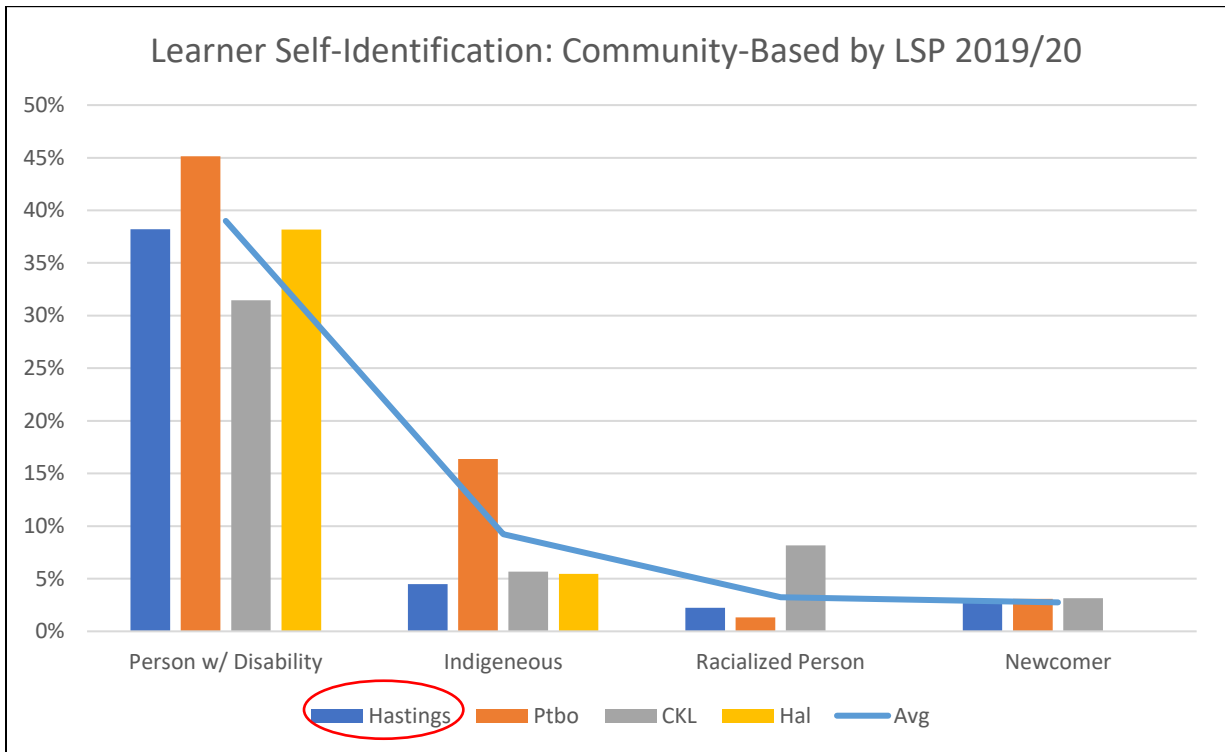


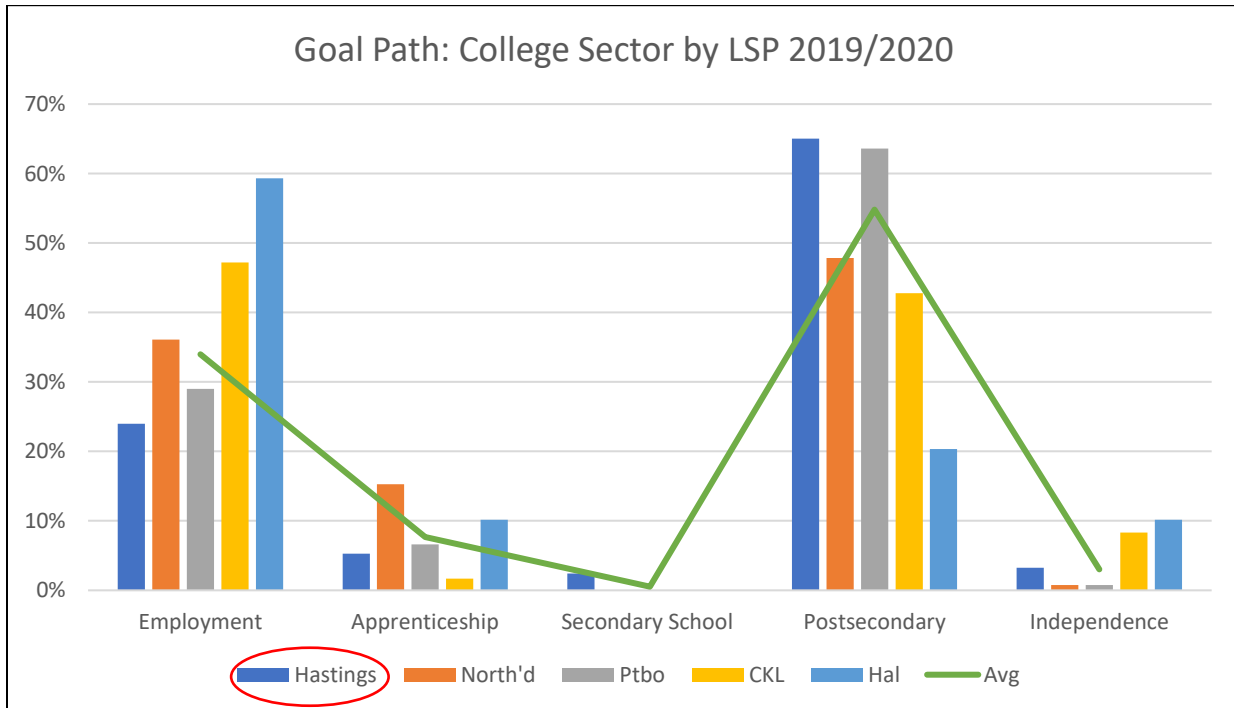
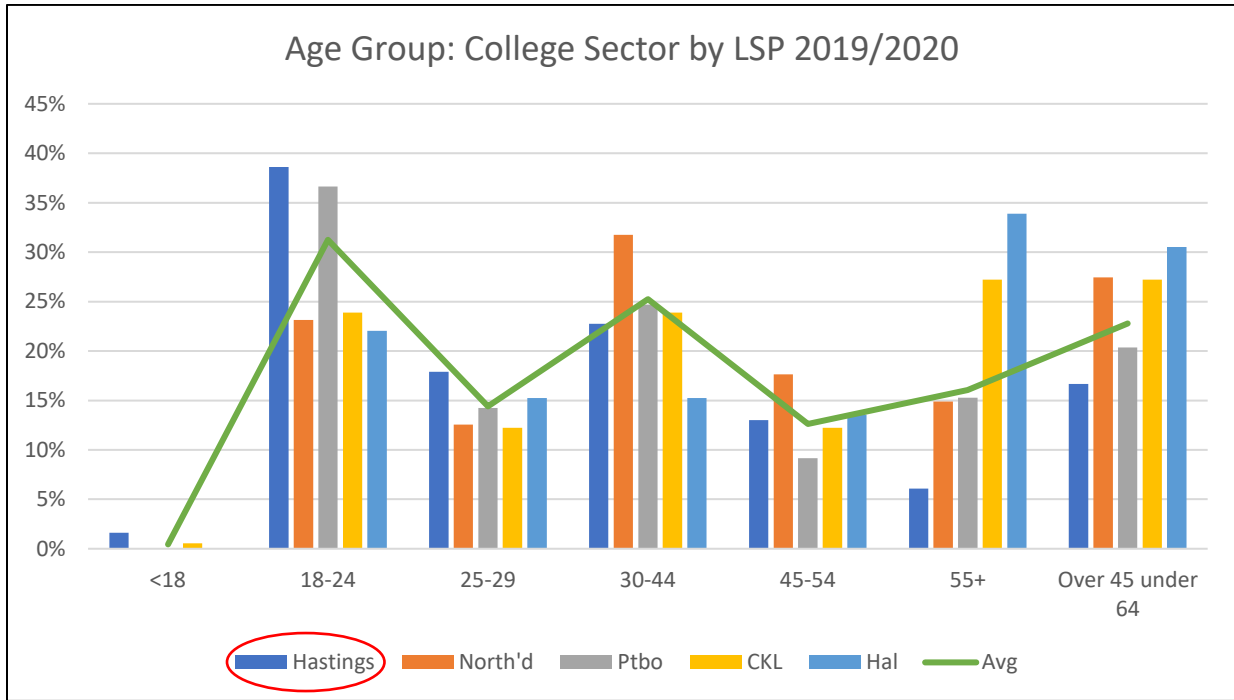


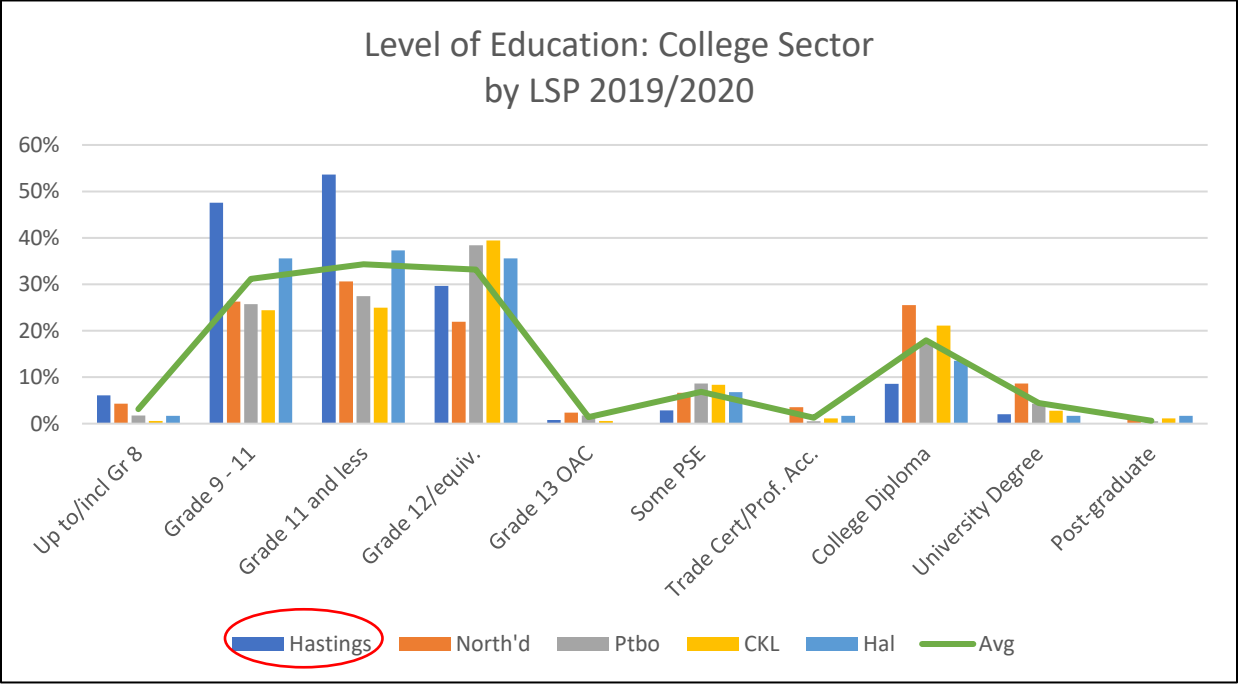
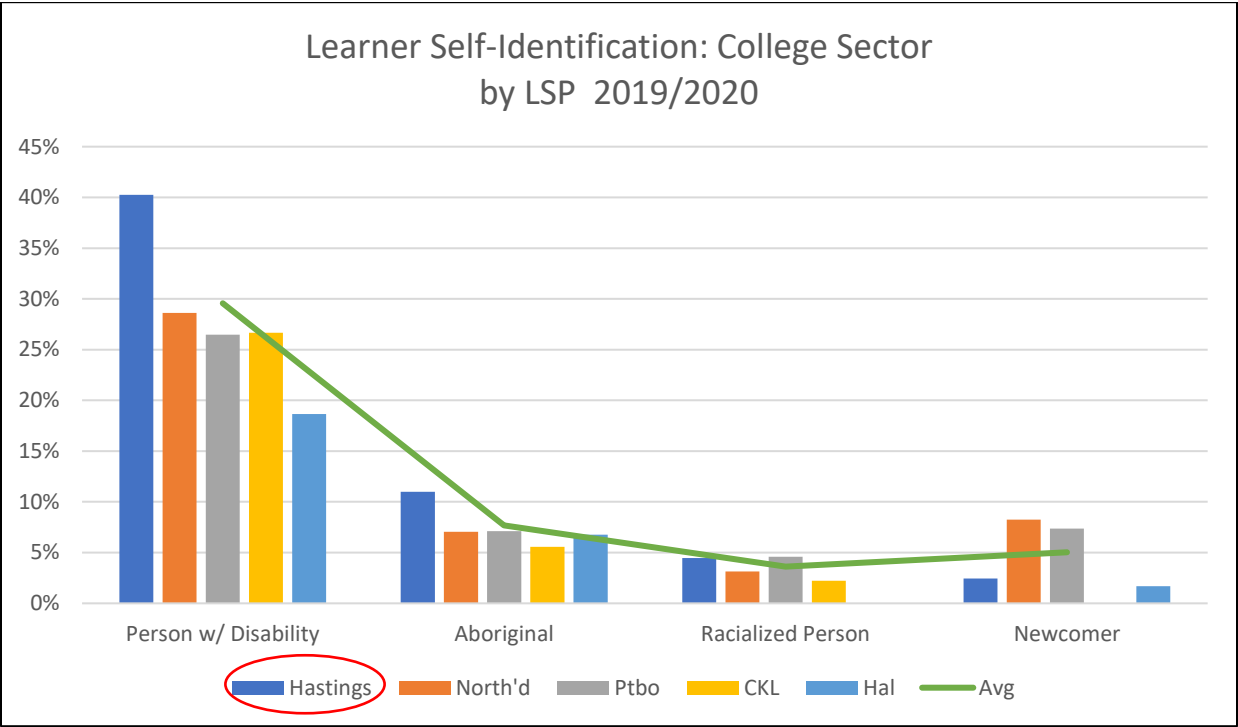




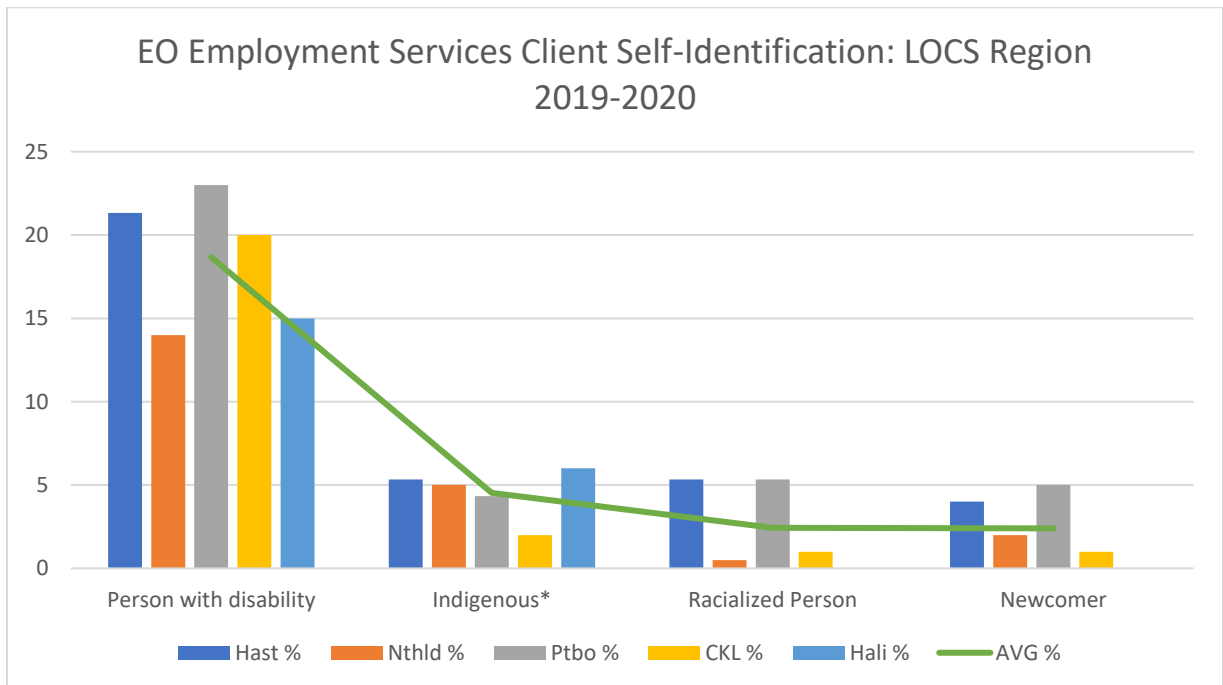
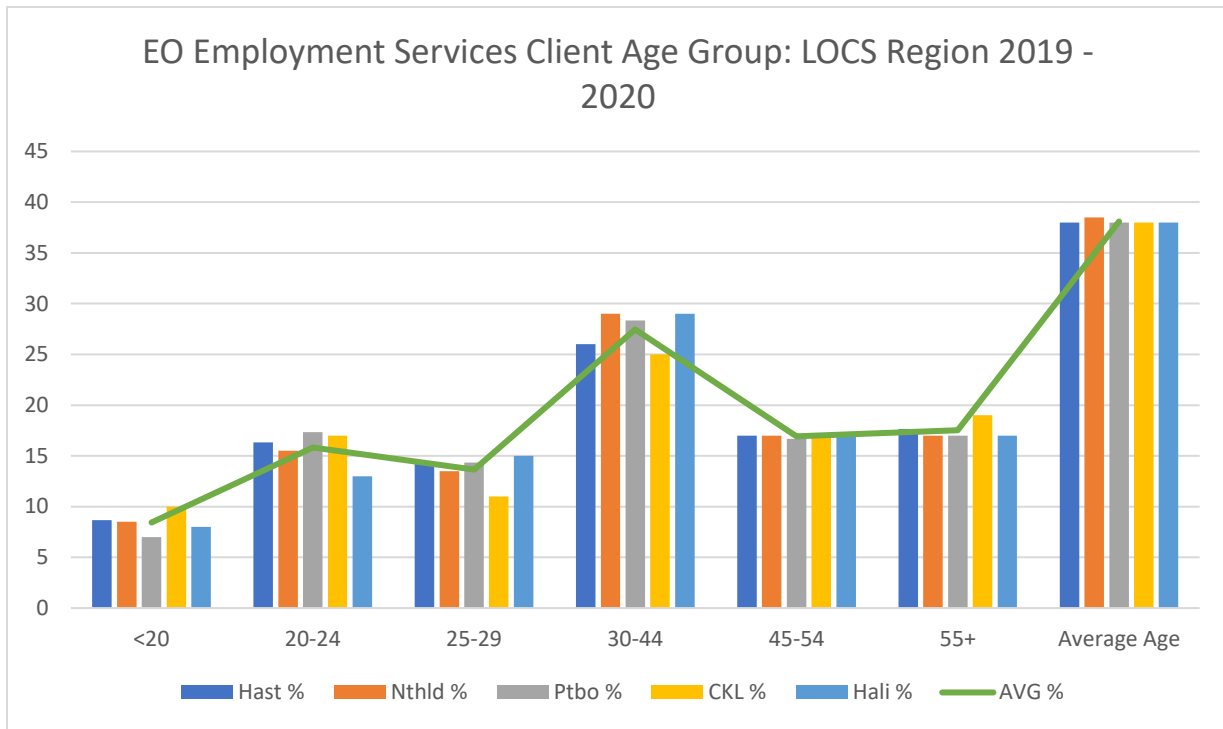




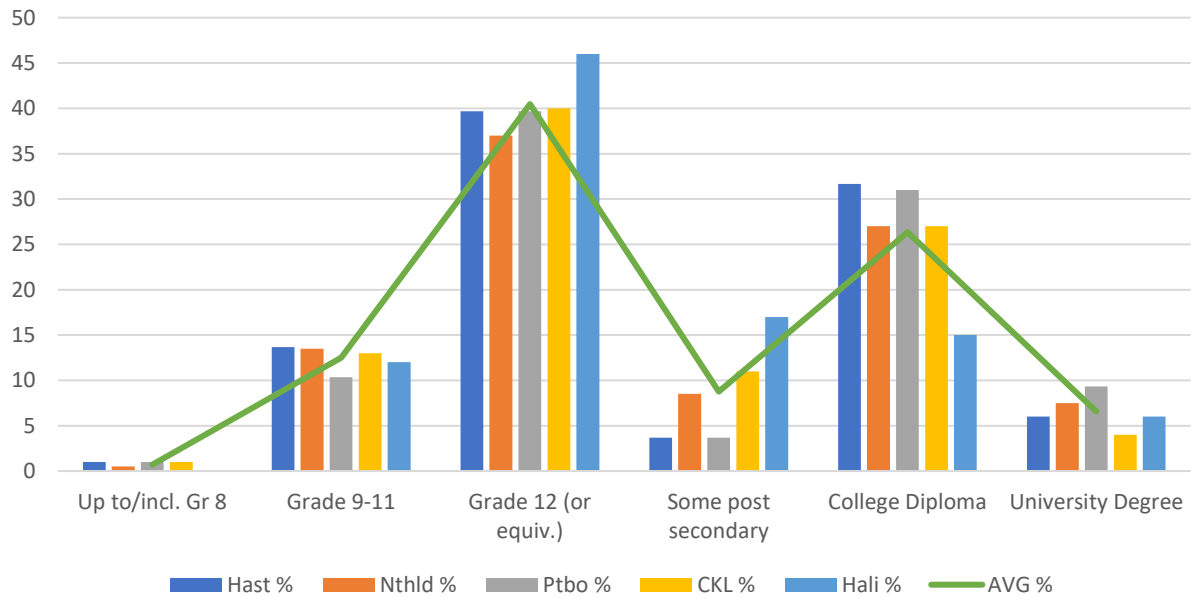




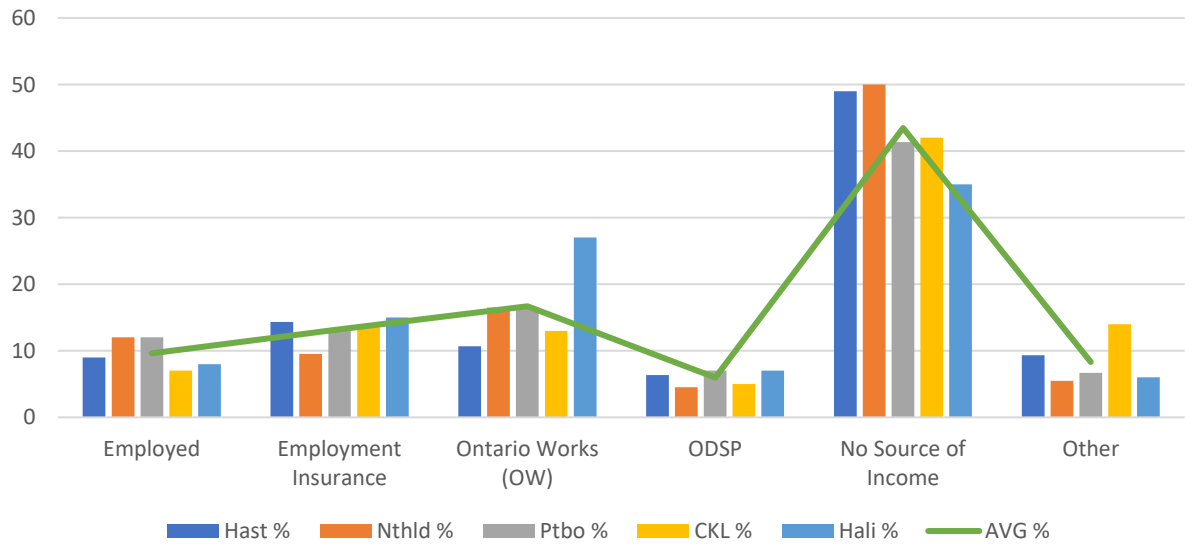
Appendix D – EO Employment Services, LOCS Region (2019-2020)
 (Assisted Service clients only)



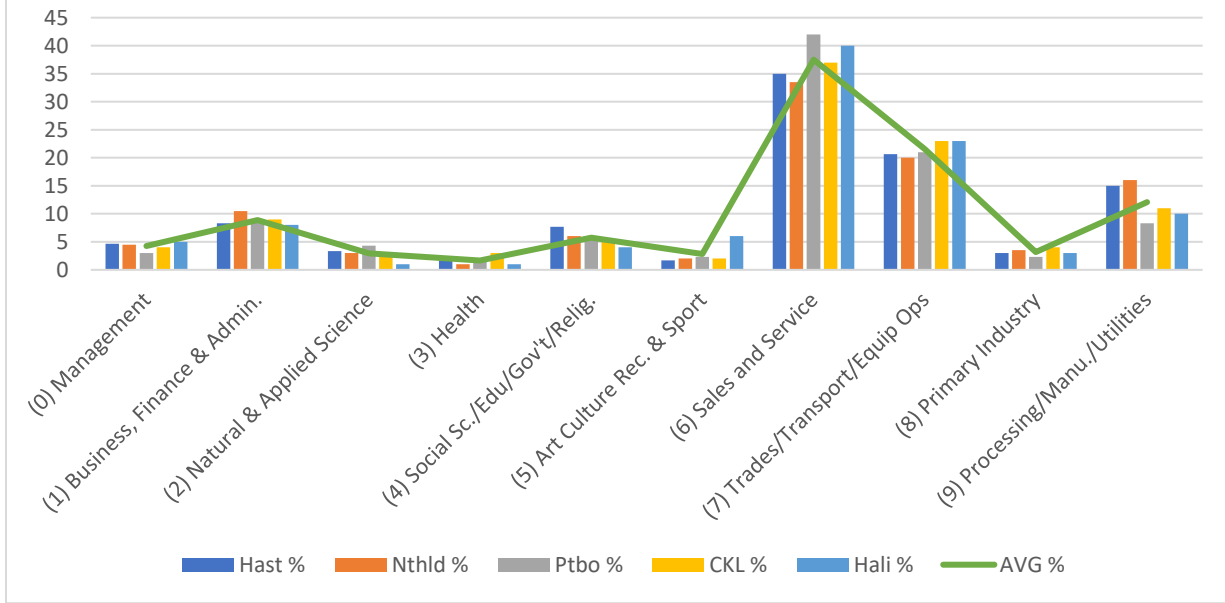
EO Employment Services Client Level of Education: LOCS Region
2019-2020



EO Employment Services Client Source of Income: LOCS Region
2019-2020



EO Employment Services Client Last Employment Occ.: LOCS Region 2019-2020



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