

## CHALLENGES OF THE LABOR MARKET: AN ANALYSIS OF OPPORTUNITIES AND BARRIERS TO EMPLOYABILITY IN SANTA ROSA/RS



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### ABSTRACT

This study explores the labor market in Santa Rosa/RS, seeking to understand the local dynamics and challenges related to talent recruitment and retention. The region faces difficulties in attracting and retaining qualified professionals, which impacts economic and social development. Age diversity also emerges as an important trend, with companies increasingly valuing employees of different age groups. However, retaining younger talent presents additional challenges, given the difference in expectations and interests between generations. The main objective of the study was to identify the factors that hinder the recruitment and retention of talent in the local labor market, in addition to analyzing how these dynamics affect the development of the region. The study aims to provide a foundation for developing strategies that align labor supply and demand, promoting an inclusive and diverse work environment. To achieve the objectives, a descriptive research with a mixed approach was carried out, using questionnaires applied to human resources leaders and interviews with managers of local companies. The analysis included secondary data on the regional labor market and the characteristics of employment opportunities in Santa Rosa, covering economic, social, and organizational conditions. The results show a shortage of qualified professionals, especially in operational and technical positions. The difficulty in attracting young talent stands out as a concern, while companies observe a positive trend in multi-ageism, valuing diversity in age and experience. However, challenges remain in retaining young people, who often seek better conditions and prospects outside the region. Skills such as emotional intelligence, resilience, adaptability, and innovation have been identified as essential for the future. The study concludes that, in order to strengthen the labor market in Santa Rosa, it is essential that companies invest in strategies for appreciation, training and innovation, aligned with the expectations of different age groups. Retention policies that meet the interests of professionals and encourage local permanence are fundamental. These efforts can contribute to a more resilient, competitive,

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and sustainable development labor market in the region, promoting both economic growth and social well-being.

**Keywords:** Employability, Recruitment, Talent Retention, Economic Development.

## INTRODUCTION

In the context of Santa Rosa/RS, the dynamics of the labor market have presented increasing challenges, especially with regard to attracting and retaining talent. This scenario motivated the holding of a meeting, the Employment and Human Resources Forum, organized by the Northwest Border Development Agency of Santa Rosa (AD/FN), for two consecutive years, 2023 and 2024. The Forum emerges as a fundamental space to discuss the issues faced by local companies and professionals, in addition to providing a comprehensive analysis of the labor market in the municipality.

For these reasons, this event is in line with the ongoing study on the dynamics of the labor market in Santa Rosa. This research investigates the main difficulties of recruitment and retention, seeking to understand how economic, social and organizational factors influence these issues. The information and debates generated by the forum are, therefore, a valuable opportunity to enrich the analysis of the factors that directly impact the work environment in the region, contributing to the improvement of more effective talent management strategies, which aim to meet both the needs of companies and the expectations of local professionals.

With a diversified economy, Santa Rosa stands out mainly in the agricultural, industrial and service sectors. The presence of companies focused on agribusiness and manufacturing industries, such as the production of agricultural machinery, contributes significantly to the generation of employment in the region. In addition, the service sector has also expanded, driven by the growth of commerce and the growing demand for professionals in areas such as health, education, technology, and commerce.

In the contemporary scenario, workers' expectations have also evolved. Today, aspects such as quality of life at work, career planning, a healthy organizational environment, and well-being practices have become fundamental for attracting and retaining talent. Engagement is no longer restricted to a salary issue; The search for humanized management, which supports the mental and physical health of employees, is a competitive advantage in today's market. Thus, this study seeks to understand these dynamics in the labor market of Santa Rosa, analyzing the perceptions of the main actors involved and contributing to the construction of effective recruitment and retention strategies, aiming at the economic and social development of the region.

The main objective of the study on the labor market in Santa Rosa/RS was to understand the dynamics that characterize this market, with a special focus on the

difficulties of recruitment and retention of talents. The survey seeks to identify the main factors that influence the local employability scenario, including the economic, social and organizational conditions that affect both companies and professionals. By analyzing these dynamics, the study aims to provide a solid basis for the development of strategies that can respond to specific market demands, promoting a better match between the supply and demand of labor and contributing to the economic and social strengthening of the region.

As a research problem, it was outlined what are the main factors that hinder the recruitment and retention of talents in the labor market of Santa Rosa/RS, and how do these dynamics impact the economic and social development of the region?

By exploring these dynamics, the study seeks to contribute to the development of strategies that strengthen the local economy and promote a more attractive and sustainable work environment for professionals and organizations.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **HUMAN CAPITAL**

The labor market is a fundamental component of a society's economic and social dynamics, reflecting the interaction between supply (workers) and demand (employers) for labor power. Its constitution and evolution over time are marked by economic, technological, political, and social changes. Becker (1964) already highlighted that investments in education and health can improve the skills and willingness to work of individuals, increasing their satisfaction and productivity, which would improve society as a whole.

Schultz (1971) when creating a theory highlights that the more satisfied an employee is in his personal life, the greater the possibility that he will work harder and better. Schultz sees that helping to improve the personal lives of workers is an investment. This investment can be made by the government and companies. Some examples are: investment to improve schools; companies' investment in workers' health; investment in the intellectual improvement of employees; holding lectures on important topics for private and social life; investment by companies in the improvement of employees in technical issues; encouragement of the union of employees through get-togethers and the practice of team sports and leisure activities. In Schultz's (1971) statement, the greater the development of human capital, the greater the development of capital.

In this case, the basic investment in the human being takes place through education through teaching and learning, and its meaning derives from the extraction of something

potential or latent from a person, improving him, morally and mentally, in order to make him susceptible to individual and social choices. Preparing them for a profession, through systematic instruction and exercising them in the formation of skills. This enhancement of acquired skills, coupled with advances in knowledge, is critical to boosting economic productivity and contributing to human well-being.

In short, investments in education, training, and workers' health increase their productivity, directly impacting employability and regional competitiveness.

## ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Since the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, organizations have played a crucial role in economic and social development, adapting to changes in the environment and the demands of society.

Understanding the structure, functioning, and dynamics of organizations is essential to understand how companies and institutions can deal with the challenges of an increasingly globalized, competitive, and technological world.

Surveys focused on the organization's culture become an important evaluative tool to be used by managers, in order to obtain knowledge of the employees' view of the organization, while surveys focused on satisfaction allow the evaluation of employees and their expectations in relation to the work environment (ROBBINS, 2005).

For Schein, culture can be characterized at different levels of manifestation, ranging from open and tangible manifestations to unconscious assumptions defined as the essence of culture. Between these levels are the values, beliefs, norms and rules of behavior that the members of a group assume and transmit to the new members, from a process of socialization (SCHEIN, 2009).

Organizations with a strong culture have a low turnover rate, demonstrating compliance and agreement of values between employees and the organization, thus ensuring that everyone is moving in the same direction. As employees internalize the organizational culture, they become less of a concern for managers (ROBBINS, 2005).

As soon as the culture is established, it becomes necessary to adopt practices in order to maintain them. Practices that are adopted in the selection and hiring of employees with values similar to those of the organization, in the actions and behaviors of managers, in order to transmit an example to be followed by employees and in the methods of

socialization of the culture in order to present to new hires the values and customs of the organization through activities and training (ROBBINS, 2005).

## MOTIVATION

Motivation is any stimulus that propels us in some direction, this stimulus varies according to the circumstances and different interests of each individual, not everything that is motivating for one person will be motivating for others, due to the personality of each one.

In the view of Oliveira and Silva (2021), recognizing that organizations are made up of people and, in an increasingly complex environment, it is vital to harmonize individual objectives with those of the organization to keep teams motivated.

Although motivation has been inherent to humanity since the beginning, Santos and Henriques (2020) highlight that its systematic study began to gain relevance from the Industrial Revolution, with the emergence of humanist theories. In the prehistoric era, motivation was directly linked to survival, such as the need to create fire to protect oneself from the cold. Over time, this motivating force has driven human beings to adopt new postures, make discoveries, and shape the course of history.

In classical and scientific theories, the motivational approach was based on remuneration. People are able to work hard and produce with quality when the motivation for their task is both intrinsic and extrinsic (SANTOS AND HENRIQUES, 2020).

Thus, it is important that the manager knows how to understand and accept these differences in order to know how to stimulate and provoke motivation in his employees, making them committed to the company and motivated with the proposed objectives (VERGARA, 2012).

In Gil's view, motivation is:

[...] the force that spurs people to act. In the past, it was believed that this strength was primarily determined by the action of others, such as parents, teachers, or bosses. Today it is known that motivation always originates in a need. Thus, each of us has our own motivations generated by different needs and it cannot, strictly speaking, be said that one person is capable of motivating another (GIL, 2014, p.202).

Following this same thought, Gil draws attention to the fact that the competitive advantage of an organization can be obtained from the generation of highly motivated labor committed to organizational objectives, developing highly motivated teams for the performance of companies:

The increasingly competitive world of business demands high levels of motivation from people. Employees who are motivated to do their jobs, both individually and in groups, tend to deliver better results. Motivation can be understood as the main fuel for the company's productivity (GIL, 2014, p.201).

For Tachizawa; Ferreira and Fortuna (2006), the motivation process should have special attention from leaders, as they need to have the ability to motivate and encourage their team, in addition to knowing the aspirations of their employees, verifying if their needs are being satisfied, because an employee who does not have his needs satisfied will hardly feel motivated to achieve the organization's objectives.

Following this same line of thought, Lisboa (2006) highlights the importance of the leader as an agent capable of understanding the behavior of his subordinates, identifying the factors capable of energizing them, how it is directed and how some are sustained or maintained.

Finally, returning to Tachizawa's perspective; Ferreira and Fortuna (2006) that motivation is a complex and difficult process, in which it is necessary to understand several motivational theories, from classical theories to contemporary theories, in order to understand how the process of commitment and motivation of employees occurs.

## LABOR MARKET

The labor market is a dynamic system in which employers and workers interact to offer and seek employment opportunities. It reflects the economic, social and technological conditions of a region or country and is directly linked to economic development, permeates dynamics such as: social, cultural, economic and historical factors that shape labor relations, the distribution of opportunities and inequalities between individuals.

Silva *et al* (2024) highlight that understanding the driving factors that sustain employee motivation is extremely important for managers and organizational leaders, as it allows them to develop effective people management strategies, promoting a stimulating and productive work environment.

The labor supply is represented by the available workforce, composed of both employed people and those who are looking for a job (CECATO and HILDEMBERG, 2023). The quality of this offer depends on levels of education, technical training and professional experience. On the other hand, the demand for work refers to the vacancies offered by companies and organizations, which vary according to the economic sector, technological innovations and political situation.



However, the market faces persistent challenges, among the main sectors of economic activities such as: agriculture, industry, commerce and services, while in some regions there is a shortage of qualified labor, in others there are workers without opportunities (PAULA JUNIOR *et al*, 2023). To address these challenges, public policies and business strategies have invested in programs and initiatives promoting well-being, professional development, health, and talent retention.

Recently, we have experienced the large-scale implementation of remote work and the replacement of several workers by machines, which have generated significant transformations in the labor market. In this context, a substantial change in the dimension and nature of work is observed. Many jobs, as we know them today, will undergo a reformulation in the way they are performed or even cease to exist, profoundly changing the role of work within organizations (FERREIRA, 2022).

In summary, the labor market is a constantly evolving system, which demands continuous adaptation from all its participants to meet the demands of a world in permanent transformation. These changes are directly reflected in the dimension of education, which plays a crucial role in preparing individuals for new challenges and opportunities.

For Ferreira (2022), once the offer of education adapts to the demands of the labor market, the way education is offered, financed, or even seen by recruiters, will undergo significant changes. Over the next few years, we will observe how such changes will influence the nature of work in the midst of an increasingly digitized, agile, and complex landscape.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study is characterized as an applied research, whose objective is to identify and seek solutions to the problems found in the field of analysis (GIL, 2010). In terms of purpose, it is classified as an exploratory research, since it aims to get closer to the field to understand its particularities and obtain a deeper understanding of the reality of the local labor market. According to Gil (2010), exploratory research is essential to provide greater familiarity with the problem, allowing it to be made more explicit and, eventually, contribute to the formulation of hypotheses.

Regarding the procedures, this study adopts a bibliographic and survey approach. The bibliographic research is based on the review of previously published materials, such as books, academic articles, journals and online sources, in order to build a robust



theoretical framework that will support the analyses. Survey research, in turn, is a common methodology in exploratory and descriptive studies and, in this case, will be conducted through data sampling, as recommended by Gil (1994).

Data collection was carried out through questionnaires. Initially, the focus remained on Santa Rosa's top employers, seeking to identify the specific challenges faced in the field of labor and employment. This collection provides a detailed view of the difficulties and dynamics that influence recruitment, retention, and stability of the local labor market, contributing to the construction of strategies aimed at strengthening the labor and economic environment in the region.

Data collection was carried out in the 35 largest employing companies in the municipality in the years 2023 and 2024. The data were analyzed together with the theoretical framework, seeking to identify the influence on the labor market in Santa Rosa/RS and to understand the dynamics that characterize this sector.

Subsequently, the data were organized in Microsoft Excel and structured in a database, which gave rise to descriptive analyses of frequency, cross-referencing and demonstrations that were performed in the SPSS - *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* software.

## SEARCH RESULTS

Santa Rosa is a city located in the northwest of Rio Grande do Sul, with an economy historically linked to agriculture, industry and agribusiness. These activities continue to be relevant, especially due to the production of grains such as soybeans, corn, and the presence of industries and agricultural cooperatives that employ a large part of the local population. In this context, the Santa Rosa Development Agency was founded with the purpose of promoting economic and social growth in the region, acting as a link between the public sector, the private sector and civil society. Its work focuses on fostering economic development initiatives, attracting investments, supporting innovation and stimulating professional qualification and entrepreneurship. The agency works in strategic partnerships to boost projects that increase regional competitiveness and contribute to the generation of employment and income, aiming to strengthen the local economy and improve the quality of life of Santa Rosa residents.

From an event organized in 2023 and 2024 by the Development Agency, the data were collected, with the participation of the 35 largest companies in Santa Rosa, which

positioned themselves in relation to their reading of the labor market and the employability of the municipality. The results of the analyses and the results of the study are presented below:

Chart 1: Economic Context and Predominant Sectors.

<b>Industry</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
Industry	48,6	45,7
Trade	17,1	22,9
Services	34,3	31,4

Source: data from the Surveys, 2023 and 2024.

By analyzing the sector of operation of the labor market in Santa Rosa/RS, the percentages of the main sectors that drive the local economy were identified, in addition to the current trends and challenges faced by employers and workers.

Table 1 presents data on the participation of three sectors: Industry, Commerce and Services in the labor market of Santa Rosa in the years 2023 and 2024.

In relation to Industry, there was a slight drop in the share of industry, from 48.6% in 2023 to 45.7% in 2024. Despite this, the sector remains the largest employer in the region. As for trade, it showed significant growth, from 17.1% in 2023 to 22.9% in 2024, which indicates an expansion in the sector, possibly driven by new ventures and increased consumption. In the services sector, it showed a slight reduction in its share, from 34.3% to 31.4%. This decline may reflect changes in market demands or a migration of workers to other sectors, especially trade.

The agro-industrial sector is one of the economic pillars, responsible for generating direct and indirect jobs. Food companies, especially those related to soybean derivatives and food products, have a strong presence in the labor market, reflecting the importance of agribusiness in the region. The trade sector is also quite significant, supported by regional demand and the flow of consumers from nearby cities. In addition, the service sector has grown, especially in the areas of health, education and financial services. Small and medium-sized businesses offer a variety of services, catering to the local population and meeting specific needs.

The presence of manufacturing industries, such as metallurgical companies and machinery and equipment manufacturing, also contributes to the offer of jobs. This sector boosts the economy and attracts technical professionals, operators, and engineers. Generally speaking, industry remains as the main sector, but with a slight decrease due to, while trade grows substantially, and services face a slight decrease in share.

The drop in the production of agricultural machinery and equipment in 2023 and 2024 in Santa Rosa/RS can be attributed to a combination of economic, technological, climatic and market factors, among which economic and financial instability stand out, which led to a decrease in demand for new machinery and equipment. In addition, high interest rates and credit restrictions also make it difficult to finance agricultural investments, which discourages purchases. In addition, many farmers depend on subsidies and incentive policies to acquire new equipment. Changes or reductions in government programs to encourage agricultural modernization, such as subsidized financing, discouraged investment in new machinery. These factors corroborated the sector's reduction of its staff.

Chart 2: Field of Activity

Field of activity	2023	2024
Construction	6,2	14,3
Metallurgy	31,4	17,7
Agribusiness	20	20
Health	5	7
Financial System	3	3
Other	34,4	38

Source: data from the Surveys, 2023 and 2024.

Chart 2 shows the participation of different branches of activity of companies in Santa Rosa in the years 2023 and 2024, highlighting significant variations in some sectors.

The civil construction sector showed significant growth, from 6.2% in 2023 to 14.3% in 2024, indicating a possible increase in infrastructure works and investments in the region. There was a notable drop in the metallurgy sector, which went from 31.4% to 17.7%. This decline presents a slowdown in metallurgical production or a diversification into other sectors. Agribusiness maintained a stable share in both years, accounting for 20% of the market. This reflects the continued importance of this branch to the local economy. The healthcare sector saw a significant increase, from 5% in 2023 to 8% in 2024. It shows that it is booming, consolidating the city as a regional center of reference in the area. With hospitals such as Vida & Saúde, recognized for the high quality of services, and a growing network of specialized clinics, the municipality serves both the local population and neighboring cities. The modernization of equipment, the expansion of service capacity, and the offer of advanced treatments, such as oncology and hemodialysis, are factors that contribute to the growth of the sector. In addition, there is an increase in demand for preventive health, aesthetics, and wellness services, further driving the market.

The participation of the financial sector has remained stable at 3% in the last two years, showing consistency, although with low representativeness. The "Other" category increased from 31.4% to 40%, suggesting a diversification in the region's economic activities, with the emergence of companies in various branches that do not fit into the main categories.

There is an advance in the service sector, there is a growth trend in the areas of health and education, which are among the priorities of the population. The city, as a service hub, has also attracted new commercial establishments, such as specialized clinics and educational institutions, which favors the offer of vacancies.

Technological innovation applied to agribusiness is promoting the creation of new functions and boosting qualification in technical and operational areas. The search for greater productivity in the agribusiness encourages the adoption of digital solutions, which requires training and generates a demand for workers specialized in agricultural technology.

Table 3: Number of employees of the companies

Number of Collaborators	2023	2024
1 a 50	8,6	2,2
51 a 100	17,1	22,9
101 a 500	37,1	34,3
501 a 1000	11,4	14,3
1001 a 5000	22,9	17,7
More than 5001	2,9	8,6

Source: Survey Data, 2023 and 2024.

Table 3 presents the percentage of employees in Santa Rosa companies, segmented by the number of employees, for the years 2023 and 2024, revealing changes in the employment structure in local companies.

In companies with 1 to 50 Employees, there was a significant drop, from 8.6% in 2023 to 2.2% in 2024, indicating a decrease in micro and small companies or a resizing of these organizations.

In companies with 51 to 100 employees, this group had a significant increase, from 17.1% to 22.9%, suggesting that many small to medium-sized companies are expanding their operations and hiring more employees. Companies with 101 to 500 employees, considered medium-sized companies, showed a slight decrease, from 37.1% in 2023 to 34.3% in 2024, but it remains the group with the highest representativeness. On the other hand, companies with 501 to 1000 employees increased from 11.4% to 14.3%, which suggests a strengthening of medium and large companies in the local market. While

companies from 1001 to 5000 employees showed a reduction in this group, from 22.9% to 17.7%, indicating a possible reorganization or reduction in hiring by large companies. Also, companies with more than 5001 employees, this segment registered a significant growth, from 2.9% to 8.6%, which suggests the presence or expansion of large companies in the region, with a significant number of employees in their general staff.

In a more comprehensive analysis, it can be seen that the labor market in Santa Rosa shows an expansion in medium-sized companies and a considerable increase in large corporations, while small companies show a trend of decrease in participation.

Table 4: Level of greatest difficulty in hiring labor.

<b>Difficulty in hiring</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
Operational	57,1	65,7
Technical/Tactical	28,6	22,9
Management/ strategic	14,3	11,4

Source: Survey Data, 2023 and 2024.

Table 4 reveals the hiring difficulties faced by companies in Santa Rosa in 2023 and 2024, divided by function level (operational, technical/tactical, and management/strategic). At the operational level, it registers the greatest difficulty in hiring, with an increase from 57.1% in 2023 to 65.7% in 2024. This indicates that finding and keeping employees for operational roles has become even more challenging. At the Technical/Tactical Level, the difficulty of hiring for technical or tactical roles decreased from 28.6% to 22.9%, suggesting that, although still challenging, this level showed some improvement in 2024. While at the Management/Strategic level, the difficulties also decreased, from 14.3% to 11.4%, showing that hiring for leadership positions continues to be less challenging compared to the other levels.

In summary, it can be seen that companies in Santa Rosa face the greatest difficulty in hiring professionals in operational roles, and this difficulty increased in 2024, while hiring difficulties at the technical and management levels decreased slightly.

The survey was also dedicated to the construction of projections regarding trends in the workforce of companies for the periods from December 2023 to June 2024 and from December 2024 to June 2025, with responses from 35 largest employers in the municipality.

Effective Hiring:

2023-2024: 65.7% of the companies indicated that they were hiring effectively.
2024-2025: This number increased to 68.6%.

In a more comprehensive analysis, it can be seen that there is a slight increase in the expectation of effective hiring, suggesting a positive view for the growth of the teams.

Temporary Hiring:

2023-2024: Only 2.9% of companies considered temporary hires.
2024-2025: This number rose to 5.7%.

It can be concluded that the intention to hire temporary workers increased slightly from the first to the second period analyzed, possibly to meet seasonal demands.

Maintenance of the Current Staff (without firing and without hiring):

2023-2024: 28.6% of companies said they kept their headcount.
2024-2025: This percentage increased to 34.3%.

There is a greater number of companies that intend to keep the staff stable in the next period, possibly indicating a focus on consolidating the existing team.

Realization of Layoffs:

2023-2024: 8.6% of companies indicated their intention to make layoffs.
2024-2025: No companies reported plans for layoffs.

The absence of dismissal plans in the second period is noticeable, demonstrating a perspective of stability and retention of employees.

Between the two periods analyzed, there is an increase in the trend of effective and temporary hiring, as well as in the maintenance of the workforce, with a reduction in dismissal intentions. This indicates an expectation of growth or stability in the Santa Rosa labor market, with a focus on expanding teams and retaining employees.

Table 5: New work dynamics

Work dynamics	2023	2024
Hybrid work	11,4	14,3
Remote work	0	0
Face-to-face work	88,6	85,7

Source: Survey Data, 2023 and 2024.

Table 5 presents the work dynamics adopted by companies in Santa Rosa in the years 2023 and 2024, divided between hybrid, remote and face-to-face work.

Regarding hybrid work in 2023, 11.4% of companies adopted the hybrid model; while in 2024 these percentages increased to 14.3%. It can be seen that there is a slight growth trend in the adoption of the hybrid model, suggesting that more companies are making the physical presence of employees more flexible. As for face-to-face work in 2023, 88.6% of the enterprises operated with exclusively face-to-face work; in 2024, this number decreased slightly to 85.7%. In a more comprehensive analysis, it can be seen that although face-to-face work still predominates, there was a slight reduction, indicating a small change towards the hybrid model.

The labor market in Santa Rosa is still largely based on face-to-face work, but there is a gradual trend towards the adoption of the hybrid model, reflecting a flexibility in work dynamics. Remote work, however, remains unrepresentative, suggesting that local activities still require the physical presence of employees.

Table 6: Multiageism

Multi-etharism	2023	2024
Yes	77,1	91,4
No	22,9	8,6

Source: Survey Data, 2023 and 2024.

Table 6 shows the attitude of companies in Santa Rosa in relation to multi-ageism, that is, the hiring of employees of different age groups, including those over 60 years old, in the years 2023 and 2024.

In response to companies that practice multi-ageism, it can be seen that in 2023, 77.1% of companies said they adopted a multi-age approach; while in 2024 this number increased to 91.4%. In a more general analysis, it is clear that the significant increase indicates that more companies are valuing multi-age teams, recognizing the benefits of age diversity, especially of older people in the workplace.

The job market in Santa Rosa shows a strong and growing trend towards multi-ageism, with more and more companies hiring employees of different age groups. This appreciation of age diversity enriches the work environment with a variety of perspectives and experiences. For Delfini, Capo and Alexandrini (2024) highlight that we are beings in constant change and we are constituted by numerous facets, depending on where we are, the way we feel, among other variables that can influence our being.



However, there is also the possibility that younger age groups will be less interested in certain sectors or functions, either due to the lack of attractiveness of these opportunities or a difference in professional expectations. This can pose a challenge for companies, which will need to develop targeted retention and attraction strategies to maintain an adequate generational balance and engage young talent alongside more experienced professionals.

Table 7: Employment of immigrants for the labour force.

<b>Immigrants</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
Yes	71,4	57,1
No	28,6	42,9

Source: Survey Data, 2023 and 2024.

Table 7 presents the attitude of companies in Santa Rosa in relation to the hiring of immigrants in the years 2023 and 2024. In 2023, 71.4% of the enterprises said they hired immigrants; in 2024, this percentage fell to 57.1%. It is noted that there was a significant decrease in the hiring of immigrants, indicating a possible change in recruitment policies or a decrease in the availability of qualified immigrants for certain functions.

Regarding companies that do not hire immigrants, the survey shows that in 2023, 28.6% of companies did not hire immigrants, while in 2024 this percentage increased to 42.9%. It is perceived that the increase in the number of companies that do not hire immigrants may reflect specific challenges, such as language barriers, cultural adaptations, or even changes in local demands for labor.

Although there is still a significant share of companies that hire immigrants, there was a downward trend between 2023 and 2024. This shift suggests that companies may be prioritizing hiring local labor or facing obstacles in hiring or integrating immigrants into the workplace.

Chart 8: Concern with the management of organizational culture

<b>Organizational culture management</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
Yes	97,1	94,3
No	2,9	5,7

Source: data from the Surveys, 2023 and 2024.

The management of organizational culture is a concern for companies in Santa Rosa, with a slight drop in the percentage of companies that consider the issue important when comparing the results from 2023 (97.1%) to 2024 (94.3%). Despite this, the focus on

actions aimed at organizational culture is still present, with the implementation of some initiatives in both years.

In 2023, the actions developed by the companies prioritized aspects such as communication of the company's values, integration of employees, holding meetings with leaders, implementing monthly meetings and weekly rites, and conducting training on the topic. The employee handbook was also used as a tool to reinforce the organizational culture.

In 2024, the actions expanded with the introduction of an organizational survey to assess employee perception, meetings with teams to strengthen culture, closer ties between senior management and employees, and improvements in the process of integrating new employees. The focus also expanded to the emphasis on the company's values in meetings, feedbacks and events, in addition to the use of internal newsletters and reinforcement in performance evaluation.

These actions reflect a continuous effort to consolidate and strengthen the organizational culture, seeking to align employee conduct with the company's values and improve engagement and internal communication. Employee attraction and retention actions in companies demonstrate a consistent effort to strengthen both employee recruitment and engagement throughout the years 2023 and 2024.

In 2023, attraction strategies focused on employee referral programs, preparation and use of institutional videos, use of social networks for attraction, and actions aimed at improving benefits and bonuses. Companies have also invested in job and salary plans, initiatives to promote the mental health of employees, participation in events and strengthening the organizational brand, through internal marketing and the promotion of organizational culture.

In 2024, actions have become more targeted and diversified. The companies improved the benefits offered, in addition to intensifying their presence on social media to attract candidates and use digital platforms to advertise vacancies. The partnerships with educational institutions and the program of referral of new candidates among employees stood out, as well as the partnerships with the National Employment System (SINE) and the participation in the Employment Fair held in the city. Strengthening the organizational culture continued to be a priority, further aligning actions with the company's values. These actions show an evolution in attraction and retention practices, expanding recruitment

sources and reinforcing communication and relationships with employees, while valuing well-being and development within the organization.

As for the well-being and mental health actions promoted by companies between 2023 and 2024, they show a clear evolution and an expansion of the resources and support offered to employees. In 2023, companies demonstrated a commitment to mental and physical well-being through initiatives such as the use of apps to promote self-care, psychological support, workplace gymnastics, lectures, and awareness campaigns. The introduction of integrative medicine practices suggests a holistic approach to health, while the "*day off*" on the birthday and the creation of collaborative environments and enhanced breakout rooms aim to improve work-life balance and foster a positive organizational climate.

However, in 2024, the actions have become more robust and specialized, with the offer of individualized psychological support and the implementation of virtual assistance (telemedicine) with psychologists, allowing for closer and more accessible monitoring for employees. The collaboration with CEREST (Reference Center for Workers' Health) and SESI brought specific actions on health and safety at work, and active listening was introduced as a practice to strengthen open communication and support between colleagues and leaders. In addition, the benefits were expanded to include agreements for discounts in gyms, free access to places to practice sports, monthly meetings with breakfast and the continuity of workplace gymnastics.

These actions reflect a broader and deeper response to the mental health and well-being needs of employees, indicating that companies are committed to creating a healthier and more welcoming work environment. The inclusion of continuous psychological support, access to physical activities and living spaces reinforces an integrated vision of well-being, promoting both physical and mental health in a sustainable way.

In response to the need to improve the qualification of the workforce, those responsible for HR at companies pointed out, in the years 2023 and 2024, a growing demand for technical and academic training courses that meet local needs, reflecting market gaps and the focus on the development of specific skills.

In 2023, the demand was concentrated in technical and practical courses, with an emphasis on skills applicable to the job. In addition, there was interest in self-development and *soft skills courses*, which included communication and teamwork skills, as well as training in technology, management and leadership. In 2024, the companies highlighted the

importance of carrying out projects in public schools to encourage the appreciation of work from an early age and promote the development of technical courses already existing in the region. There was an expansion in the areas of interest, with a strong demand for technical and higher education courses, especially in areas not yet available locally, such as Agronomy, Information Technology (IT), Commercial Management, Civil Construction, Logistics and *Supply Chain*, Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy, Pharmacy, Human Resources and Psychology. For Halwass and Del Pino (2024), it is up to formal education to align the expectations of individuals with this new work format, prepare for the prevailing global competitiveness, provide qualification for functions that can be created, remodeled or even extinguished by Industry 4.0.

These needs reflect a growing trend of diversification and specification of the areas of training demanded, evidencing an effort by companies to strengthen the qualification of employees to meet the challenges of their operations and the demands of the local market.

Regarding the future workforce, HR leaders of companies pointed out in 2023 and 2024 a concern about the shortage of qualified operational professionals and the need to develop essential behavioral and technical skills to face market challenges.

In 2023, companies indicated difficulties in finding labor, especially in operational positions, and identified the development of a positive attitude and appreciation of work as a priority. The most valued skills included emotional intelligence, self-development, commitment and responsibility, analytical thinking, creativity, and innovation. In addition, the need to professionalize management, promote active learning, and encourage adaptation to artificial intelligence tools to support digital transformation in companies was highlighted. Already in 2024, the necessary skills have evolved to include resilience, problem-solving, assertive communication, adaptability, and critical thinking. The recognition and appreciation of the importance of work also remain in the spotlight, along with the demand for innovation and humanization in work routines, while automation gains importance.

These expectations reflect a vision of the future in which adaptability and *soft skills* play central roles, complemented by a balance between automating processes and valuing the human aspects of work, aiming to create a more balanced, innovative and resilient workforce.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Concluding this study on the labor market in Santa Rosa/RS, it is observed that the municipality faces significant challenges in the recruitment and retention of talent, directly influenced by economic, social and organizational factors. The central objective of understanding local dynamics revealed a gap between the supply of qualified professionals and the needs of companies, evidencing a shortage of labor in operational and technical positions, as well as the growing demand for behavioral and technical skills.

The study highlights that, in order to answer the research problem on the main factors that hinder the recruitment and retention of talent and their impact on regional development, it is essential that local companies and institutions invest in strategies for valuing and training. This includes training and technical qualification programs, development of behavioral skills, strengthening of organizational culture, and incentives for professional engagement. In addition, adaptations in management practices, such as the integration of new technologies and the appreciation of assertive communication, are pointed out as fundamental steps to respond to market demands.

Finally, the results of this study serve as a basis for initiatives that can better align the supply and demand of labor, contributing to the economic and social strengthening of Santa Rosa. Implementing such strategies can result in a more resilient, competitive, and sustainable labor market, benefiting both professionals and local businesses.

The study has some limitations that may influence the interpretation and applicability of the results. First, the research is restricted to the specific geographic context of Santa Rosa, which may limit the generalization of the findings to other regions with different market dynamics and characteristics. In addition, data collection was based on local sources and perceptions, which may reflect a narrow perspective on the experiences and challenges reported by a limited number of companies and professionals, failing to capture potential influences from external factors, such as macroeconomic trends or regulatory changes at the state or national level. Another limitation refers to the focus on economic, social, and organizational conditions, which excludes the analysis of variables that may have an indirect impact on the labor market, such as accelerated technological evolution and changes in the demands for digital skills. The absence of a longitudinal approach also prevents the assessment of how these dynamics evolve over time, limiting the ability to predict future trends more accurately.

For future studies, it is suggested to expand the analysis to nearby regions or with similar economic characteristics, in order to perform a comparison and understand whether the factors that hinder the recruitment and retention of talent in Santa Rosa are observed in a similar way in other contexts. In addition, explore the impact of technological and digital factors on employability, investigating how automation and digital transformation affect the demands for specific skills. Further analysis of young people's expectations and professional aspirations in relation to the local labour market could also provide insights to develop more effective attraction and retention strategies.

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