NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT

2026

Christine Zielke

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1. Executive Summary

The BC Municipal Safety Association (BCMSA) 2026 Needs Assessment Survey gathered responses from 273 participants across British Columbia, representing a broad range of municipal organizations, organizational sizes, and occupational roles resulting in 205 full survey completions. The survey provides insight into current occupational health and safety (OHS) priorities, barriers, service utilization, and opportunities for BCMSA program development.

Survey results indicate continued strong engagement with BCMSA services. Website resources, instructor-led training, and email communications remain the most commonly used services. Respondents reported high satisfaction with the accessibility, relevance, and practicality of BCMSA offerings, with more than 80% reporting that they had applied knowledge gained from BCMSA in their workplace.

Psychological Health and Safety remained the highest-ranked OHS concern across organizations, followed by ergonomics and repetitive strain injuries, confined space entry, traffic management, bullying and harassment, and emergency preparedness. Workplace violence also emerged as a growing area of concern, with respondents identifying a need for additional resources, training, and support related to violence prevention and de-escalation.

The most common barriers to implementing health and safety improvements included insufficient time or staffing resources, resistance to change, lack of financial resources, and regulatory compliance challenges. While many traditional barriers have declined since 2024, capacity constraints and change management continue to limit organizations' ability to advance health and safety initiatives.

Recommendations from respondents highlighted demand for:

- Psychological Health and Safety resources and programs
- Workplace Violence Prevention and De-escalation Training
- Emergency Preparedness resources and planning support
- Leadership and supervisor-focused safety training
- Practical templates, toolkits, and implementation resources
- More online and micro-learning training opportunities

The survey also identified claims management as an area where additional support may be beneficial, particularly in relation to mental disorder claims, return-to-work practices, and claims tracking and administration.

Overall, the findings reinforce BCMSA's continued role as a valued provincial safety partner while identifying opportunities to expand support in emerging and high-priority areas that reflect evolving workforce, community, and organizational challenges.

2 Background

The BC Municipal Safety Association (BCMSA) conducts an annual needs assessment survey to better understand the occupational health and safety challenges, priorities, and service needs of municipal organizations across British Columbia. The results support strategic planning, program development, and resource allocation while ensuring BCMSA services remain responsive and relevant to member needs.

The survey also provides insight into trends affecting municipal workplaces, including emerging psychosocial hazards, workforce pressures, training needs, and barriers to implementing effective safety management systems.

3 METHOD AND SAMPLE

The 2026 BCMSA Needs Assessment Survey was conducted online during April 2026 using the Simple Survey platform. Invitations were distributed through BCMSA communication channels, including email lists and social media outreach.

A total of 273 respondents participated in the primary survey resulting in 205 full responses a 53% growth in full responses from last year. Questions included multiple-choice, ranking, rating-scale, and open-ended responses designed to gather both quantitative and qualitative feedback regarding workplace safety priorities, BCMSA services, and organizational challenges.

4 DEMOGRAPHICS

Survey respondents represented organizations from all regions of British Columbia, with the highest participation from the Lower Mainland (39%) and Vancouver Island/Coast (24%).

Respondents represented organizations of varying sizes:

- 23% from organizations with 1–50 employees
- 27% from organizations with 51–250 employees
- 16% from organizations with over 1,250 employees

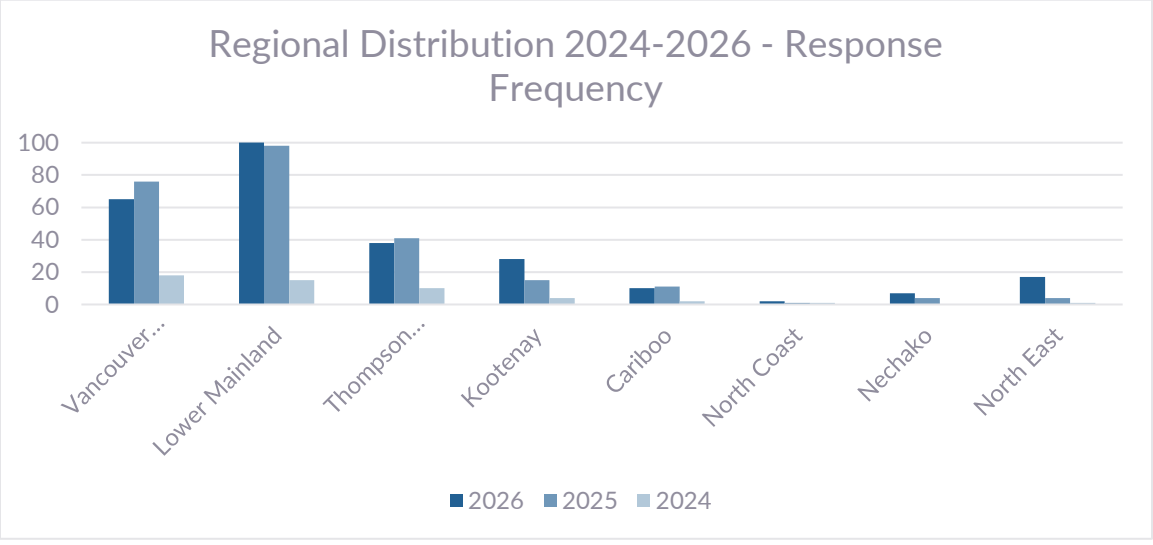
Roles represented included:

- Workers – 27%
- Supervisors/People Leaders – 24%
- Managers – 26%
- Senior Leadership – 24%

Most respondents (64%) reported responsibility for overseeing health and safety within their organization. 50% respondents were not members of their Joint Health and Safety Committee.

Respondents represented a wide range of municipal experience levels, with 26.3% having more than 20 years of experience and 23.2% having less than 5 years.

The age profile of respondents was concentrated in mid-career professionals, with 37.8% between ages 45–54 and 24.0% between ages 35–44.5.



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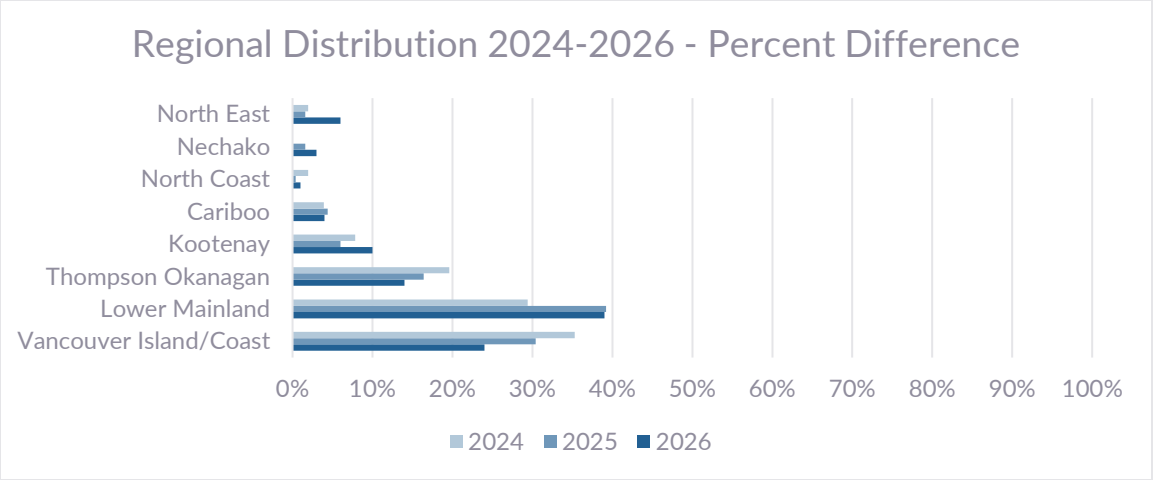

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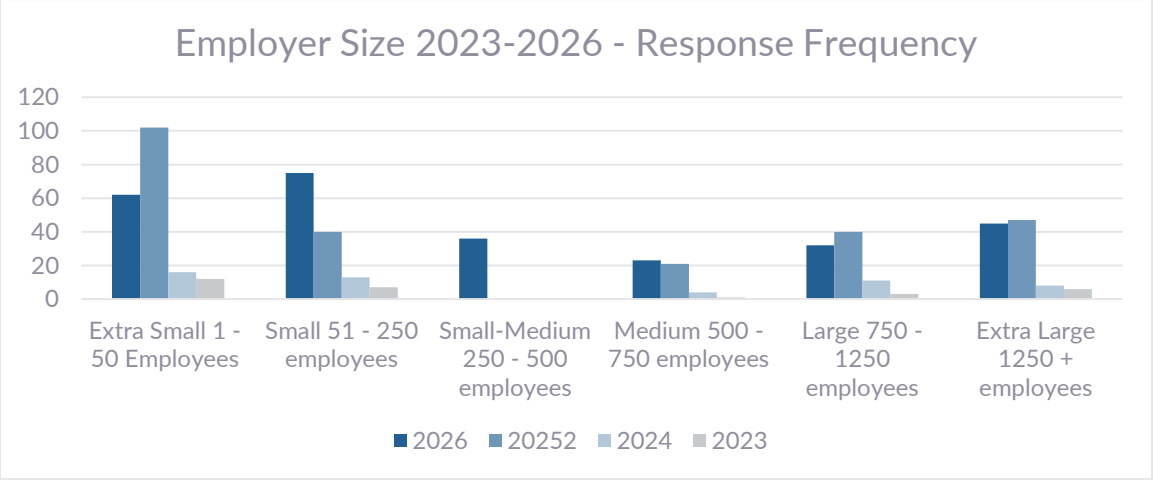

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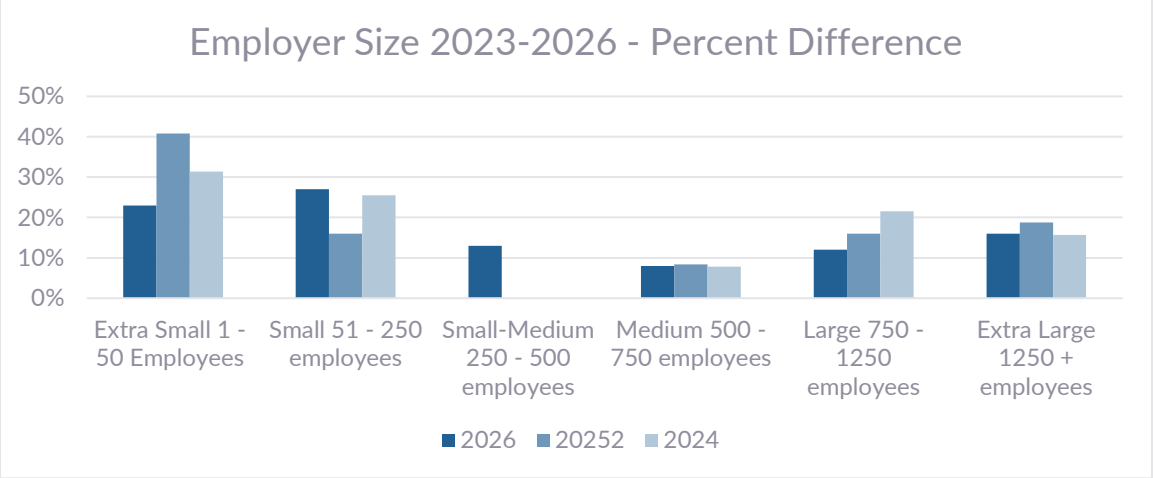

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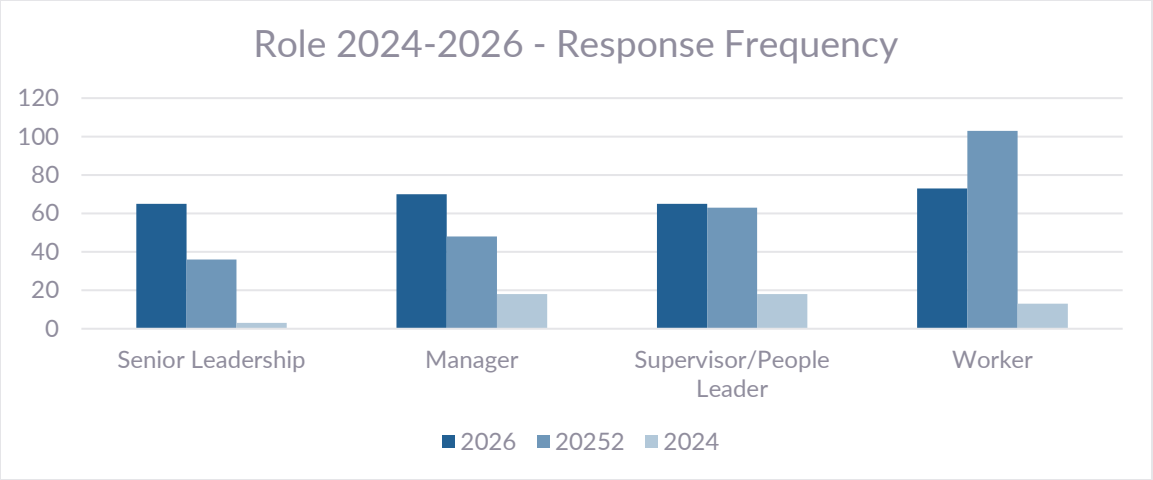

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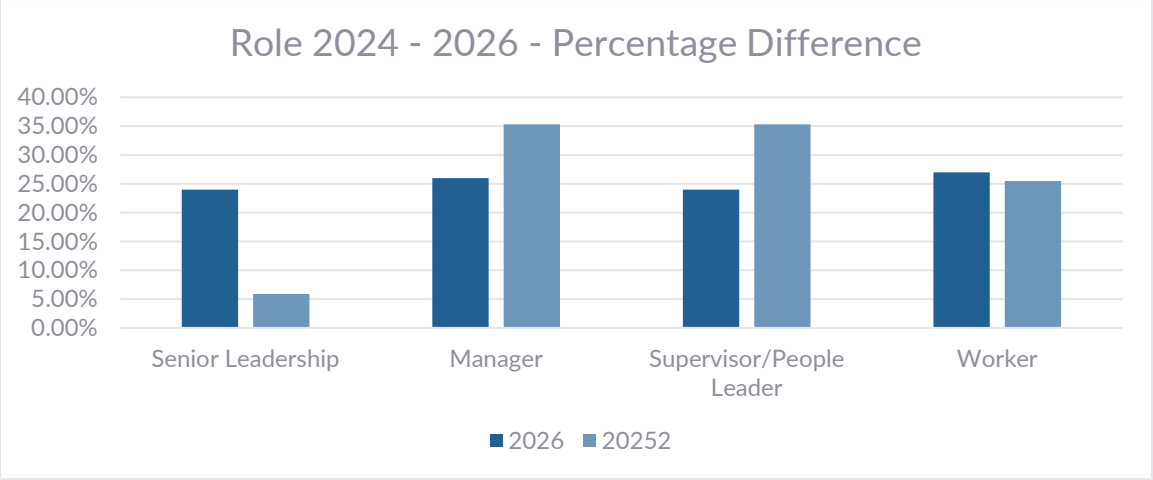

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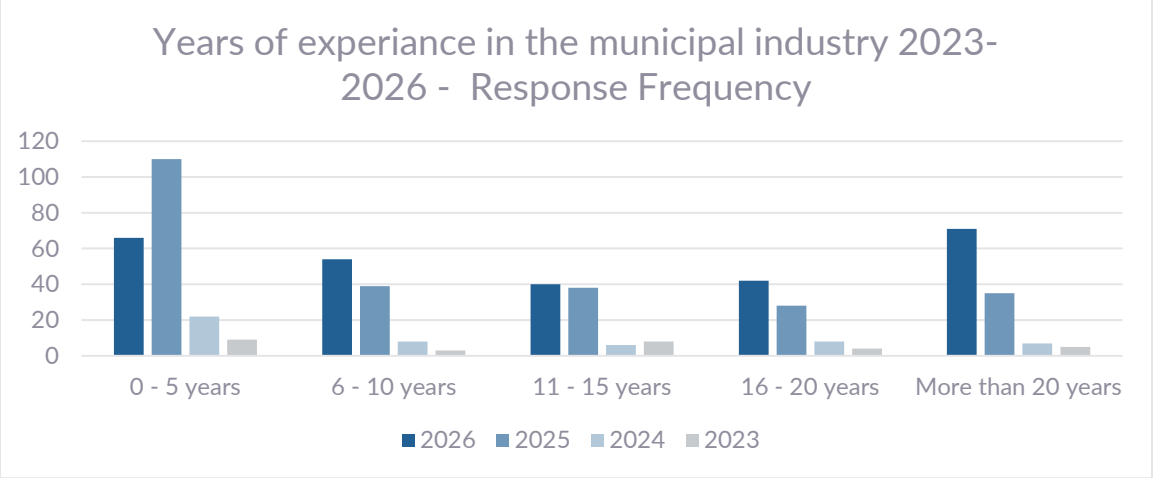

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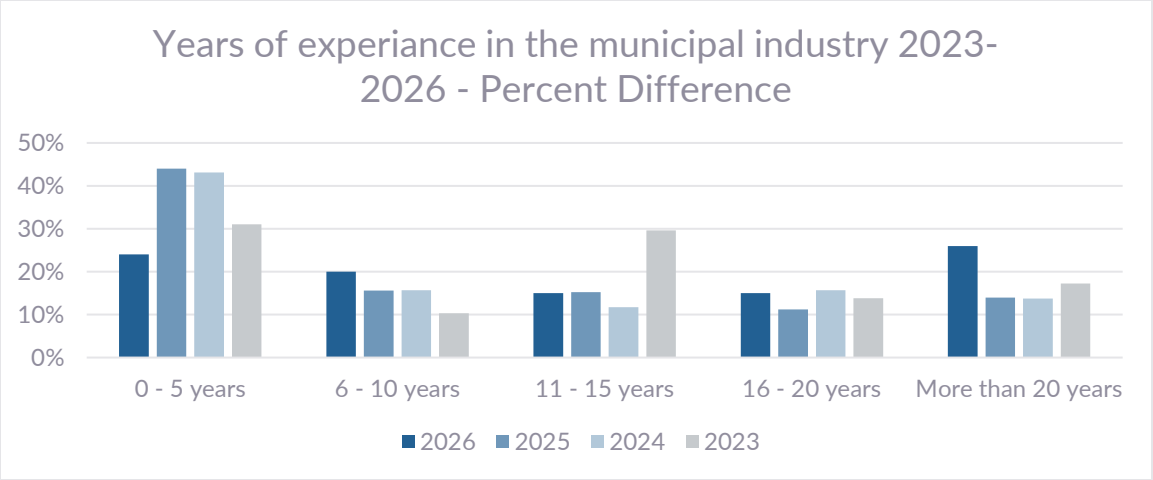

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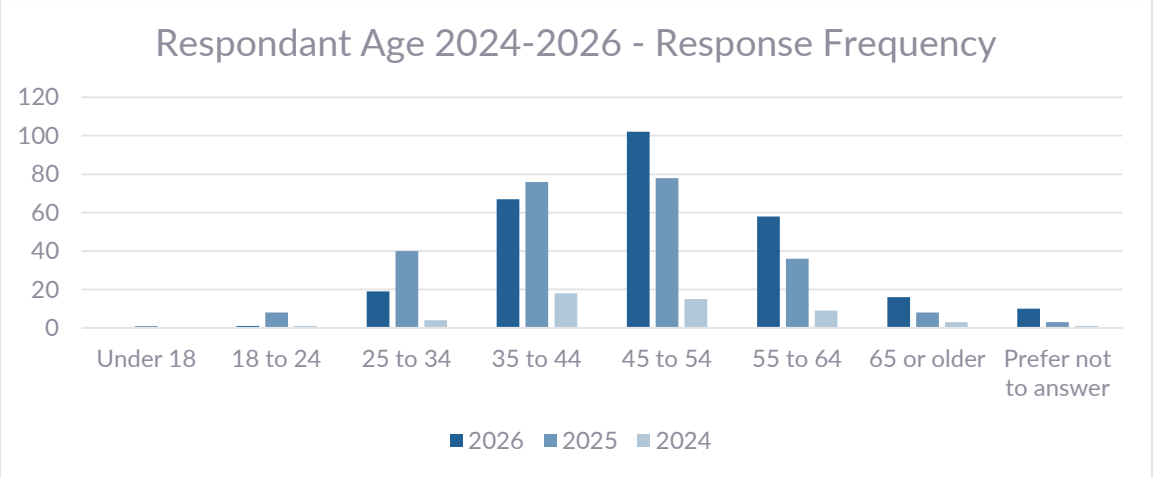

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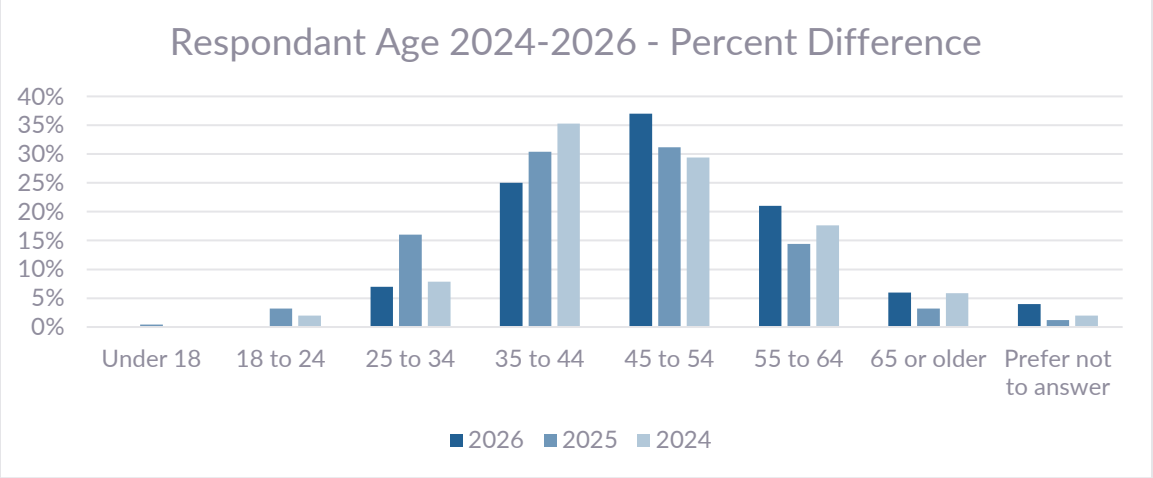

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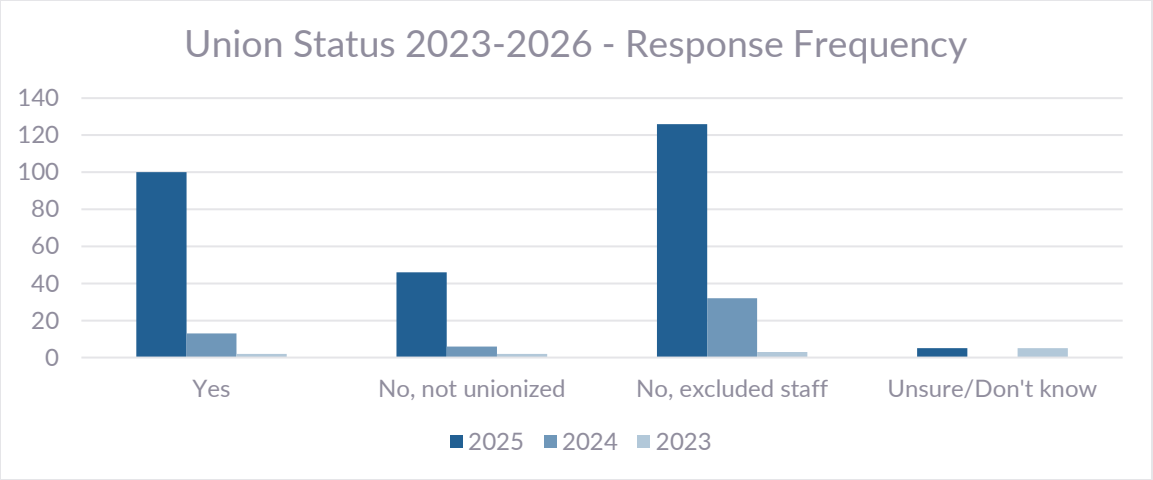

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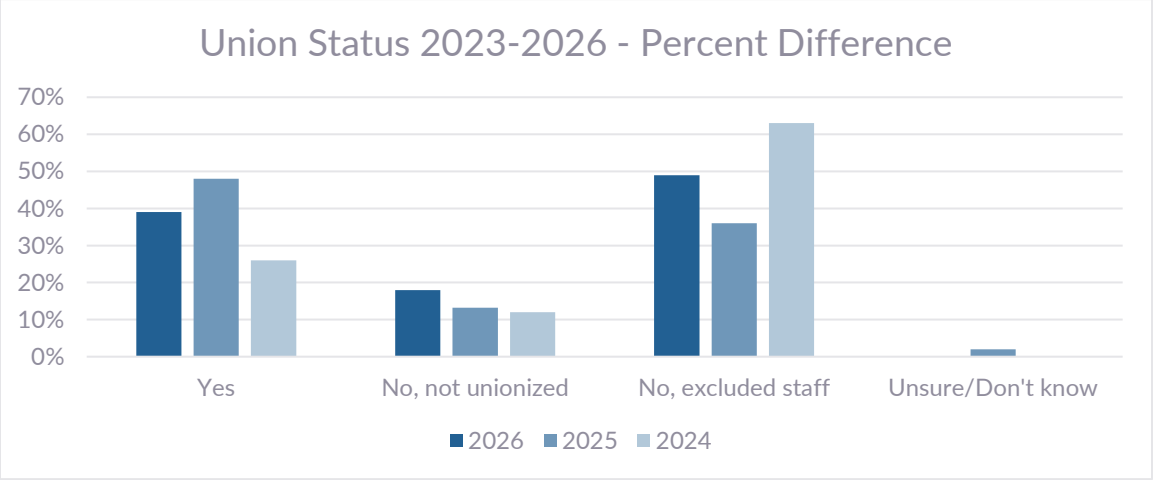

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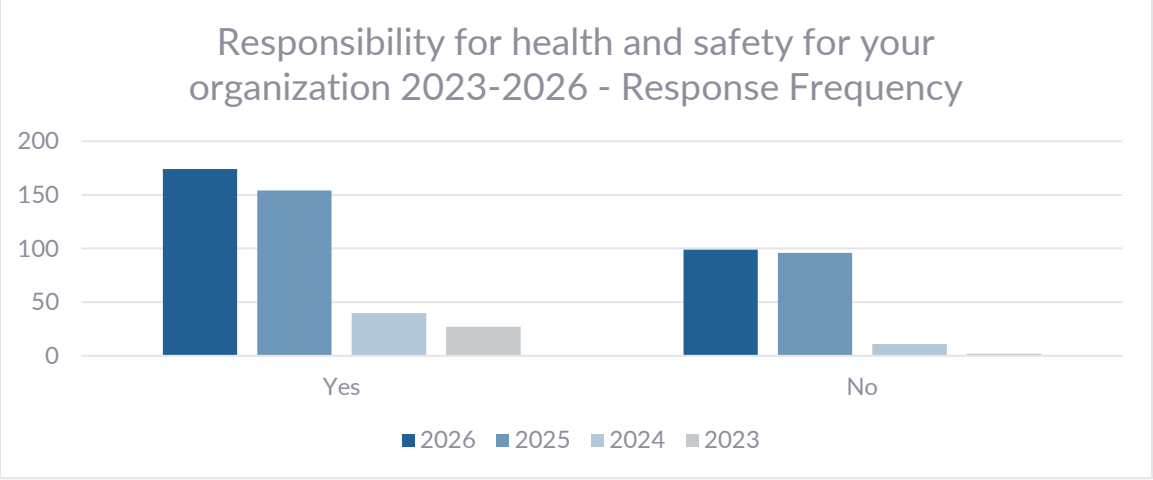

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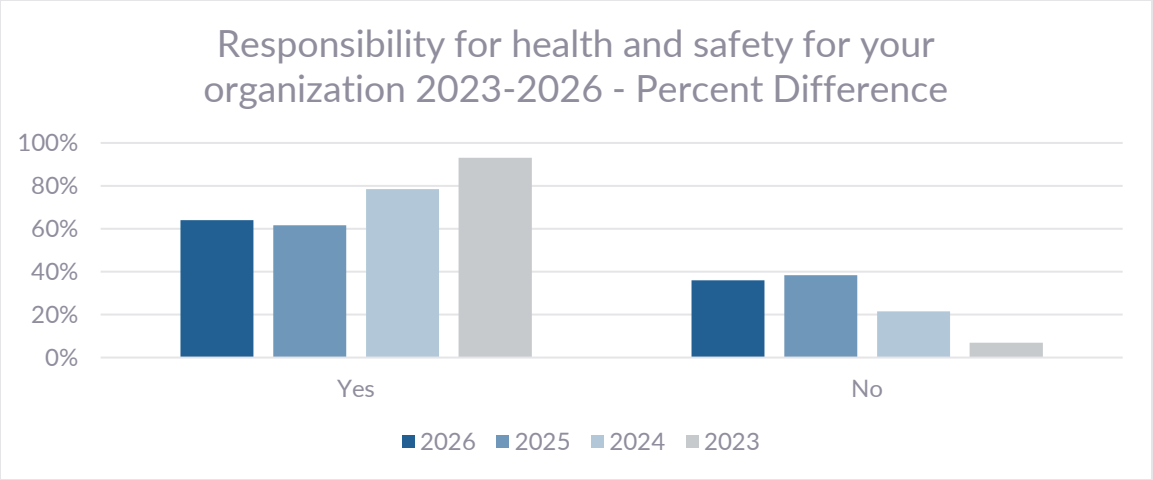

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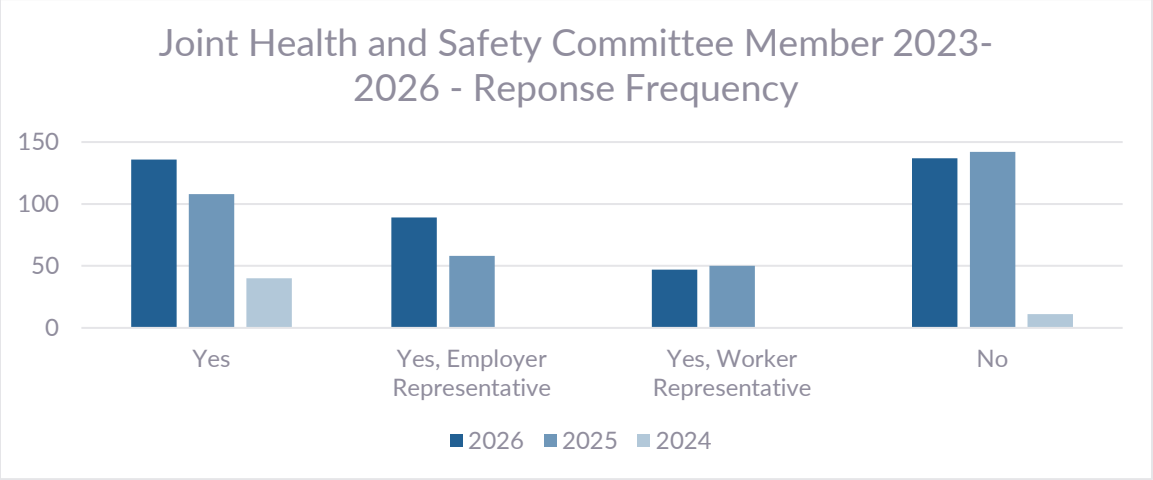


Chart 15

5 ENGAGEMENT

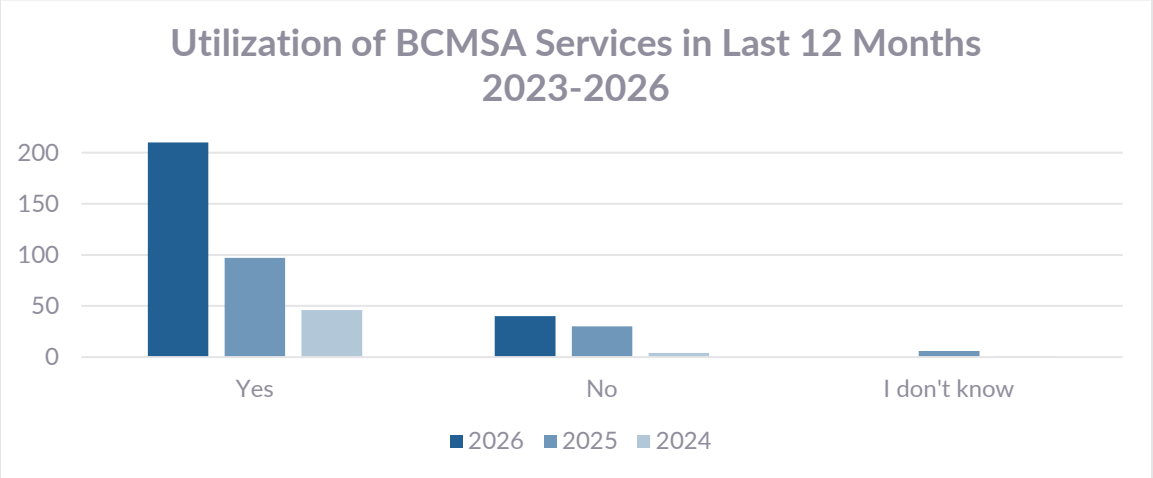
Engagement with BCMSA increased significantly in 2026, reflecting the success of targeted outreach efforts. Of the 250 partial respondents who answered questions about BCMSA services and supports, 88% (210) reported engaging with the association in the past 12 months. This represents an increase of 113 respondents compared to 2025, when 97 respondents reported engaging with BCMSA services (Chart 16). The 2026 survey recorded the highest number of engaged participants.

To help further distinguish some of the varying needs between organizational size another category was added to separate Extra small employers (1-50 people) from small employers (50-250 people) as it was felt the needs of micro organizations may vary from smaller organizations.

Engagement with BCMSA remains strong across all employer size categories in 2026, with notable increases among small and mid-sized organizations. The highest engagement levels were reported by employers with 250–500 employees (97%), 750–1,250 employees (97%), and 500–750 employees (95%). Small employers with 51–250 employees showed a substantial increase in engagement, rising from 66% in 2025 to 81% in 2026, while large employers with 750–1,250 employees experienced the most significant year-over-year growth, increasing from 63% to 97%.

Engagement among extra-large employers (1,250+ employees) also remained high and stable at 90%. These results suggest that BCMSA continues to maintain strong relationships across employer segments while successfully expanding engagement among organizations that reported lower participation levels in previous years. (Chart 17).

Regional engagement with BCMSA generally increased in 2026, with Vancouver Island/Coast (90%) and the Lower Mainland (89%) reporting the highest levels of engagement among respondents. Thompson Okanagan also showed improvement, rising to 80% from 67% in 2025. While engagement in the Kootenay region was reported at 67%, interpretation of this result should be considered alongside a significantly higher response rate than in previous years, largely driven by BCMSA's outreach efforts through the Castlegar event. The increased participation provided valuable input from organizations that may not have previously engaged with the survey and highlighted that not all employers in the region have accessed BCMSA services within the past 12 months. This presents an important opportunity for continued growth. BCMSA is encouraged by the increased awareness and connections established through regional outreach and remains committed to expanding its presence in the Kootenays, with the goal of seeing higher levels of service utilization and engagement in future years. (Chart 18).



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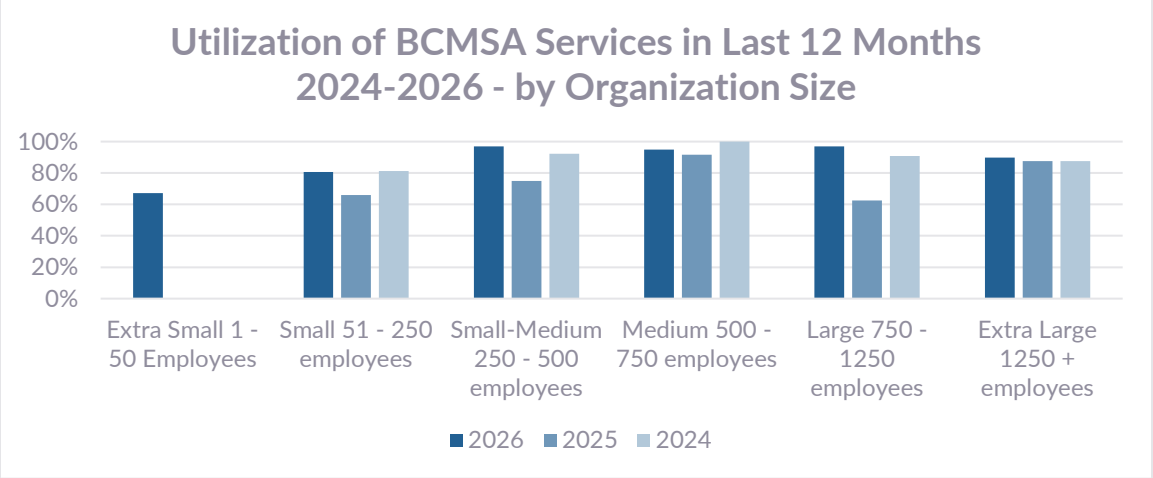

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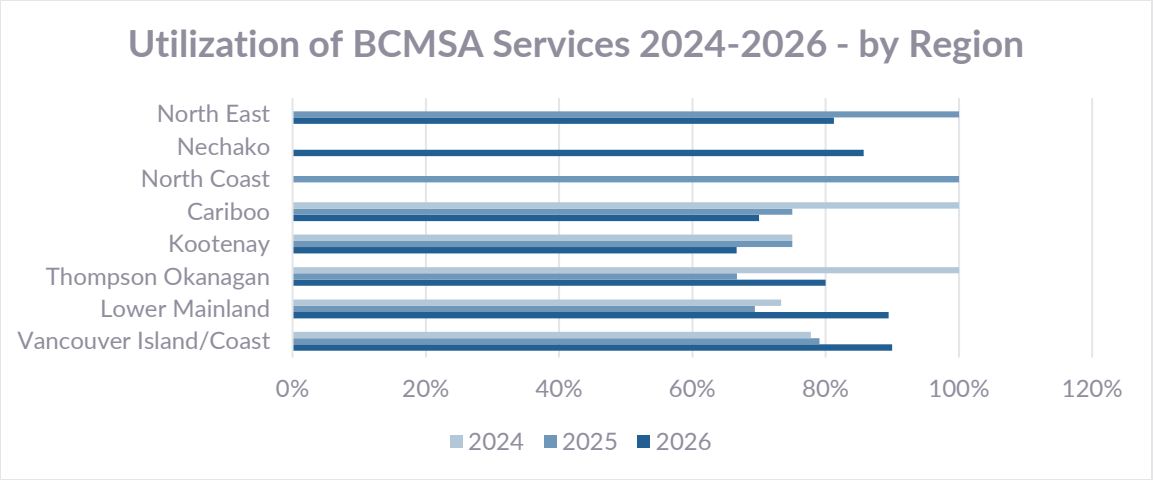


Chart 18

6 KNOWLEDGE APPLICATION & IMPACT

In 2026, 81% of respondents indicated they had applied knowledge or skills gained through BCMSA in their workplace, with an additional 3% reporting they had not yet applied the knowledge or skills but intended to do so. Fourteen percent indicated they had not applied what they learned, representing an increase from previous years (Chart 19).

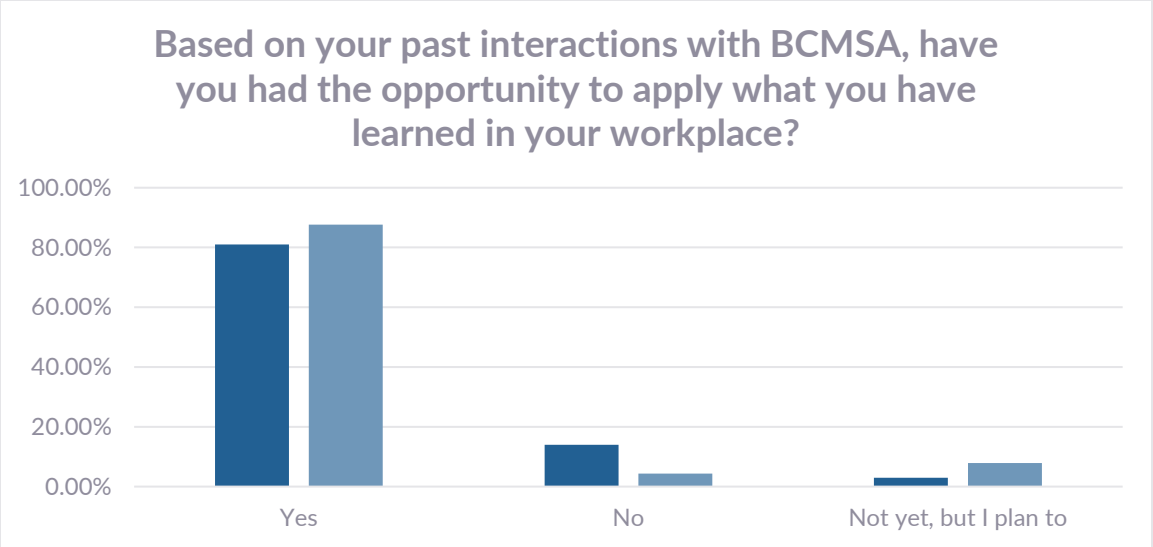
When asked whether BCMSA has contributed to or supported improvements in their organization's occupational health and safety, 91% of respondents in 2026 agreed or strongly agreed (76 strongly agree, 103 agree). This represents a significant increase from 2025, when 77% of respondents indicated that BCMSA had contributed to or supported improvements in OHS within their organization (Chart 20).

By organizational size, the highest levels of agreement on BCMSA improving their organizations workplace safety came from small-medium, large, and extra-large employers. Among respondents from small-medium organizations, 96% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. This was followed by 93% of respondents from large organizations, 91% from extra-large organizations, 89% from medium organizations, and 87% from very small organizations. All organization sizes reported only positive or neutral responses, with no negative responses recorded in any category (Chart 21).

Respondents were also asked whether BCMSA has made them more aware of workplace health and safety. In 2026, 87% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed (64 strongly agree, 84 agree), up from 66% in 2025. This represents a 21 percentage-point increase in respondents reporting that BCMSA has helped improve their awareness of OHS (Chart 22).

Responses were positive across all organization sizes. Small (98%), small-medium (92%), and very small organizations (90%) had the highest share of respondents reporting that BCMSA improved their awareness of OHS. Extra-large organizations (71%) showed more variation, with a higher proportion of neutral responses compared to strong agreement (Chart 23).

Overall, the year-over-year increase in agreement suggests that BCMSA's programs and outreach efforts are being received as relevant and valuable across a range of organization sizes.



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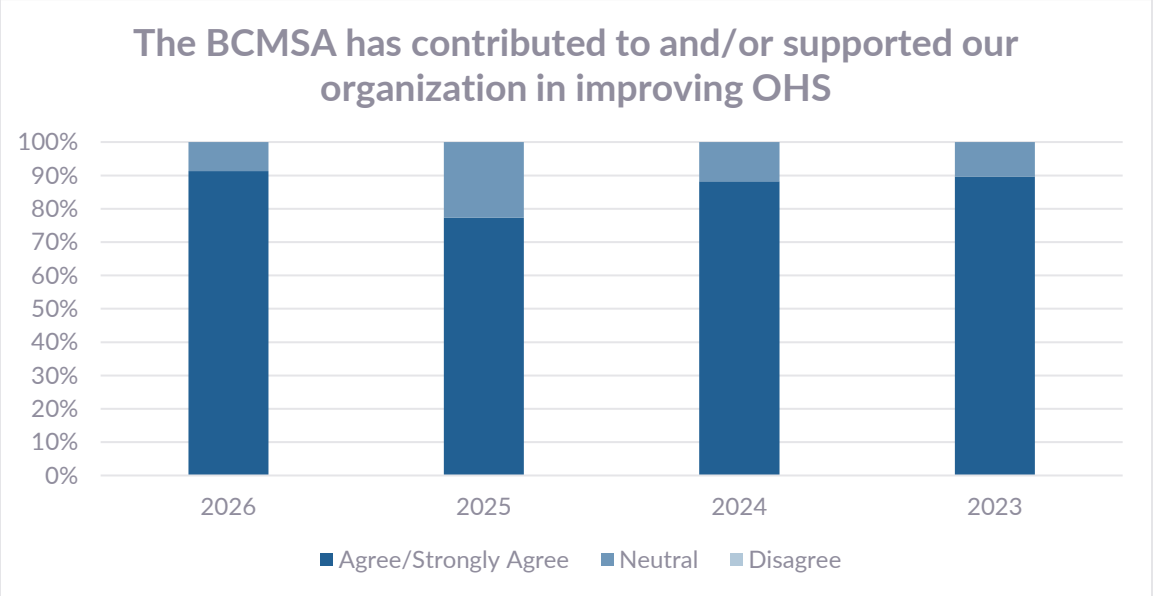

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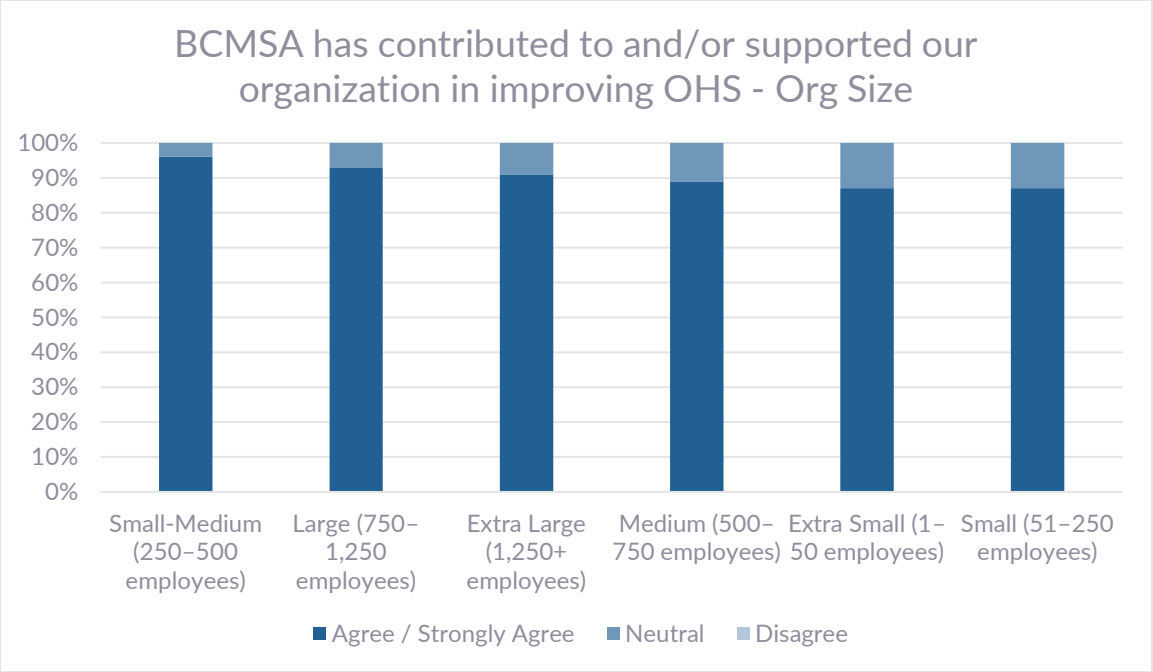

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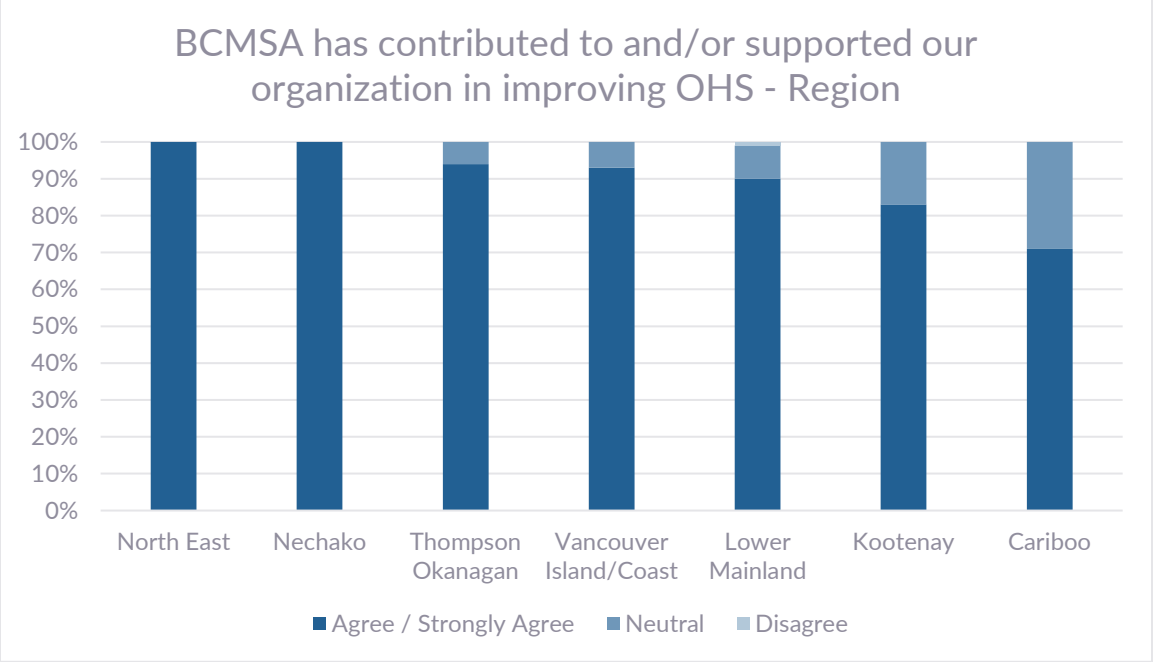

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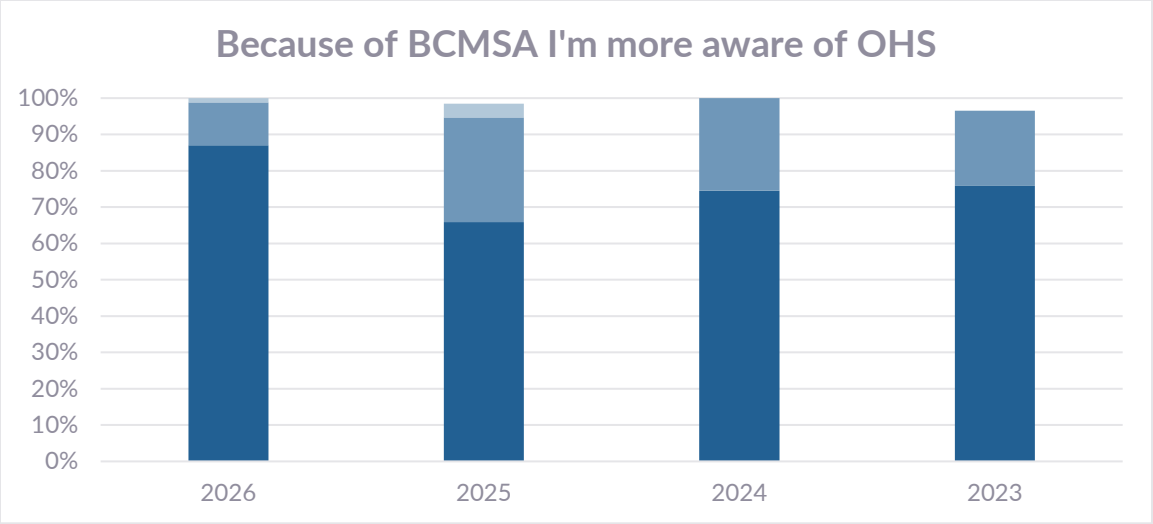

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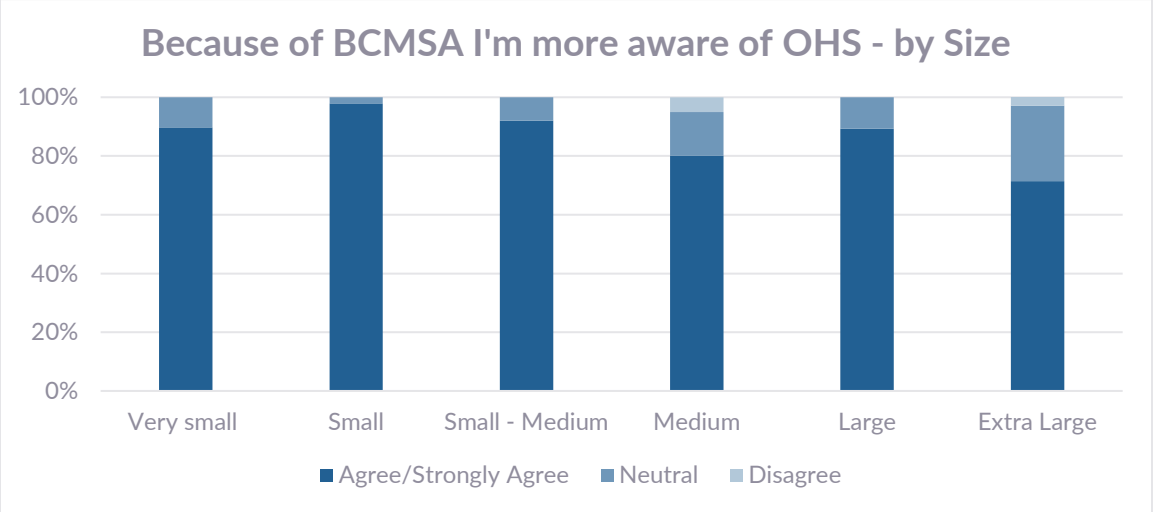

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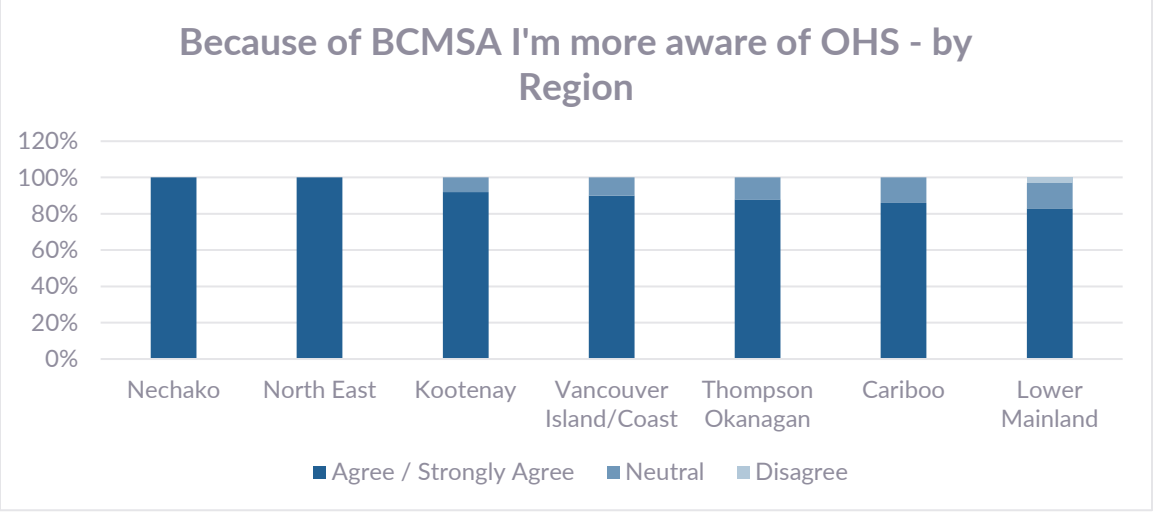

Chart 25

7 UTLIZATION AND QUALITY OF SERVICES & PROGRAMS

To improve the survey experience and encourage participation, the 2025 Needs Assessment Survey was streamlined from previous versions. Rather than asking respondents to rate each BCMSA program individually, the survey focused on identifying which services members currently use and gathering feedback on their overall experience with those services. Survey results indicate that BCMSA's most frequently utilized services are the Website (185 respondents), Training (173), and Email Communications (149). The Website, Training, and Email Communications are BCMSA's primary points of connection with members. These channels represent important opportunities to strengthen awareness of the full range of services and supports available through BCMSA. Given their high levels of engagement, they can be leveraged to promote underutilized programs, increase member awareness, and help organizations access additional resources that support their health and safety objectives.

Resources and Tools (113), Events and Conferences (95), and COR Programs (63) demonstrated moderate levels of utilization, indicating continued engagement with BCMSA's core business.

Reduced utilization was reported for Networking Opportunities (46), Social Media (43), Programs and Services (42), and Advisory/Consulting Services (40). These findings suggest there may be opportunities to improve awareness and understanding of these services among members.

Notably, 42 respondents indicated they had not used BCMSA services in the last 12 months, highlighting an opportunity to strengthen outreach and ensure members are aware of the resources and supports available to them but it can be understood that not everyone may need to access supports we have on an ongoing basis.

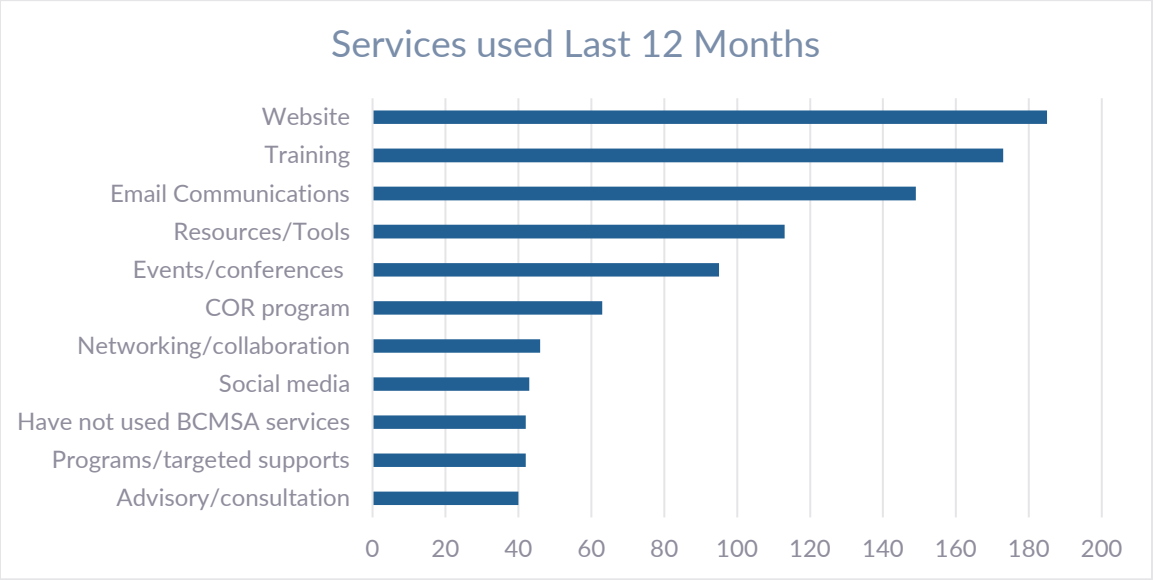

Chart 26

Respondents who had used BCMSA services were asked to rate their overall experience across several service quality measures, including relevance to local government, practicality for their work, ease of access, quality of delivery, and effectiveness in addressing safety challenges. Results were consistently positive, with the majority of respondents rating BCMSA services as either Great or Okay across all categories (Chart 25).

The strongest results were observed for Relevance to Local Government and Ease of Access, where respondents overwhelmingly reported positive experiences. These findings suggest that

BCMSA's programs, resources, and communications are well aligned with the needs of local government employers and that members are generally able to access services when needed.

Respondents also reported positive experiences regarding whether services were Well Delivered, Practical for Their Work, and Helped Address Safety Challenges. The consistently strong ratings across these measures indicate that BCMSA is not only providing information and resources, but is also delivering supports that members find applicable and useful in their day-to-day health and safety responsibilities.

While ratings were positive overall, respondents were somewhat more likely to select Okay rather than Great when assessing whether services helped address safety challenges. This may suggest an opportunity to further demonstrate the impact of BCMSA programs and services on organizational health and safety outcomes, particularly for members facing complex or emerging workplace safety issues.

The high level of satisfaction across all service quality measures, combined with the strong utilization of core services such as the Website, Training, and Email Communications, suggests that members view BCMSA as a trusted and valuable source of occupational health and safety support. These highly utilized channels may also provide opportunities to increase awareness of other BCMSA programs and services that currently experience lower levels of engagement.

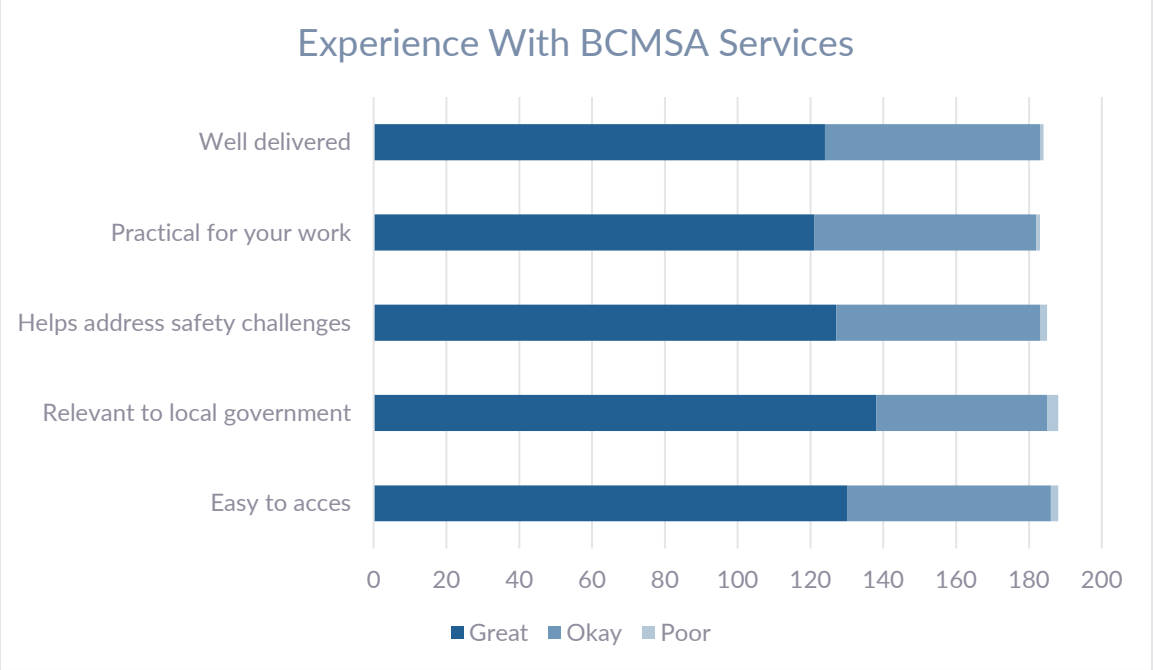

Chart 27

Respondents were also invited to provide open-ended feedback regarding the services they find most valuable and how BCMSA could better support their organizations. The responses were overwhelmingly positive and aligned closely with the quantitative survey findings.

Training was the most frequently mentioned strength, with respondents consistently highlighting the quality, variety, and accessibility of BCMSA's training programs, webinars, conferences, and online learning opportunities. Members also identified safety talks, templates, mental health resources, COR support, networking opportunities, and access to knowledgeable advisors as

valuable components of BCMSA's service offering. Many respondents emphasized the value of resources that are tailored specifically to the local government sector.

When asked how BCMSA could better support their organizations, respondents most frequently requested additional training opportunities, more practical and specialized resources, and expanded online learning options. Several respondents expressed interest in more content related to psychological health and safety, disability management, return-to-work practices, workplace violence, leadership, and emerging health and safety issues. Others requested increased opportunities for networking, peer-to-peer learning, and regional training delivery.

A recurring theme throughout the feedback was the desire for practical, easy-to-implement resources that can be applied directly within the workplace. Respondents also indicated that increased awareness of available BCMSA services, improved website navigation, and enhanced communication regarding training opportunities would help members make greater use of existing resources.

8 OHS Priorities

Respondents were asked to identify the most significant occupational health and safety risks currently facing their organizations and the areas where they would like additional support from BCMSA.

The most commonly identified workplace risks were Psychological Health and Safety (39%) and Ergonomics and Repetitive Strain Injuries (32%), followed by Confined Space Entry (20%), Traffic Management (19%), Bullying and Harassment (17%), and Emergency Preparedness (15%) (Chart 27). Additional risks identified by respondents included Excavations, Manual Handling and Lifting, New and Young Worker Safety, Contractor Safety Management, and Workplace Violence.

When asked where they would like additional support from BCMSA, Psychological Health and Safety was by far the most frequently selected topic, accounting for approximately one-quarter of all support requests. This was followed by Emergency Preparedness, Ergonomics and Repetitive Strain Injuries, Workplace Violence, Traffic Management, and New and Young Worker Safety (Chart 27). Additional support topics identified by respondents included Contractor Safety Management, Slips, Trips and Falls, Biological and Chemical Hazards, Bullying and Harassment, Confined Space Entry, and Manual Handling and Lifting.

Several areas showed strong alignment between organizational risk and demand for support. Psychological Health and Safety and Ergonomics were among both the most commonly identified workplace risks and the most requested support topics, suggesting these remain significant challenges for local government employers. Traffic Management also ranked highly in both categories, indicating an ongoing need for resources, training, and guidance.

The findings also reveal several areas where support needs exceeded the level at which the hazard was identified as a current organizational risk. Workplace Violence, New and Young Worker Safety, and Emergency Preparedness generated comparatively high levels of interest in support. This may reflect emerging priorities within the sector, including increased concern regarding worker interactions with the public, the growing occupational health and safety implications of climate-related emergencies, and the need to support a new generation of workers entering the workforce. Together, these findings suggest that organizations are seeking

resources and guidance to prepare for evolving workplace challenges rather than responding solely to existing risks.

Conversely, some hazards, including Confined Space Entry, Excavations, and Manual Handling and Lifting, were identified as notable workplace risks but generated comparatively lower levels of demand for support. This may indicate that organizations have existing programs, established procedures, or internal expertise to manage these hazards effectively.

Overall, the results suggest that members are seeking support in both established and emerging areas of occupational health and safety. While Psychological Health and Safety and Ergonomics continue to be key areas of concern, the strong interest in Emergency Preparedness, Workplace Violence, and New and Young Worker Safety highlights opportunities for BCMSA to support organizations as they respond to evolving workforce, community, and environmental challenges.

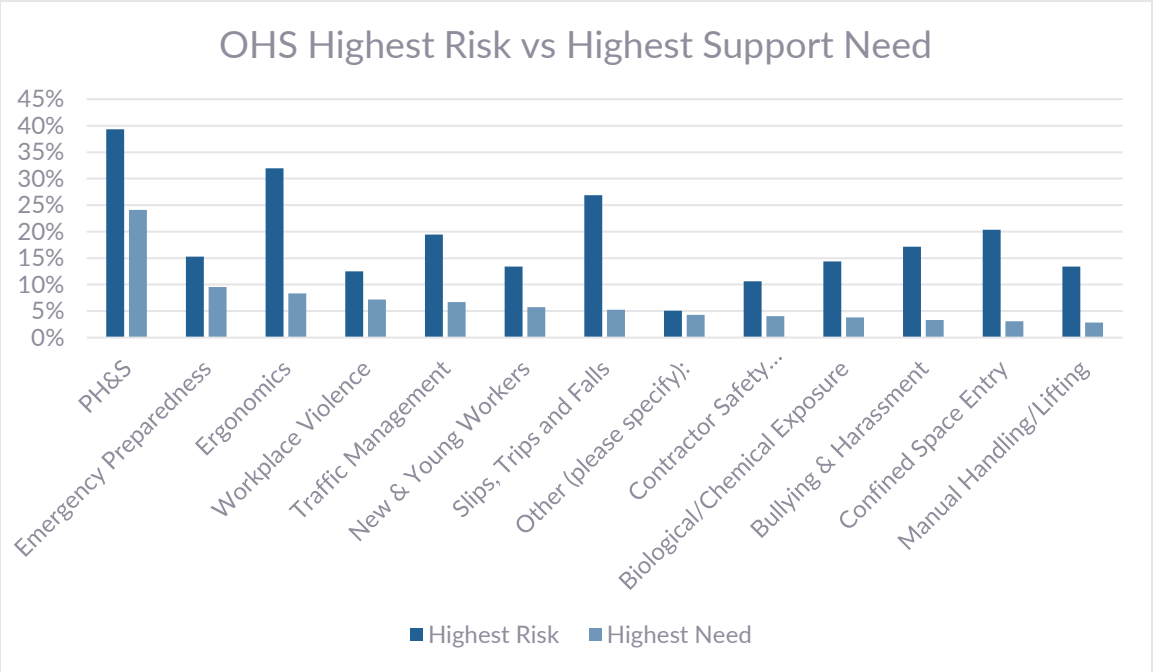

Chart 28

9 Regional and Organization Size Themes

9.1 Regional Themes

Lower Mainland

- Strongest focus on **P**sychological Health and Safety.
- Higher concerns related to Bullying & Harass**ment** than most other regions.
- Ergonomics and Traffic Management were also prominent priorities.
- Reflects a workforce increasingly focused on psychosocial hazards and workplace culture.

Vancouver Island/Coast

- **E**rgonomics and Repetitive Strain Injuries was the leading concern.
- Higher emphasis on Confined Space Entry and Emergency Preparedness than many other regions.

- Suggests a mix of office, operations, and field-based workforce risks.

Thompson-Okanagan

- Strong focus on Psychological Health and Safety.
- Traffic Management/Vehicle Safety was a more significant concern than in most other regions.
- Reflects the importance of transportation, public works, and field operations.

Kootenays

- Slips, Trips and Falls emerged as the leading risk.
- Greater emphasis on Biological/Chemical Exposures and Confined Space Entry.
- Suggests a stronger focus on traditional operational and field-based hazards.

North East

- More emphasis on Heat/Cold Exposure and New & Young Workers than other regions.
- Ergonomics and Slips, Trips and Falls remained important concerns.
- May reflect workforce turnover and environmental exposure challenges.

Smaller Northern Regions (Nechako, North Coast, Cariboo)

- Results should be interpreted cautiously due to smaller sample sizes.
- Emergency Preparedness, Fire Prevention, Slips, Trips and Falls, and Confined Space Entry appeared more frequently than psychosocial hazards.
- Indicates a stronger focus on operational readiness and traditional workplace risks.

9.2 Organizational Size Themes

Extra Small Employers (1–50 Employees)

- Most concerned with Emergency Preparedness, followed by Psychological Health and Safety.
- Also reported higher concern with Traffic Management and Bullying & Harassment.
- Suggests smaller organizations are balancing preparedness, limited resources, and broad employee responsibilities.

Small Employers (51–250 Employees)

- Strong focus on Psychological Health and Safety, Ergonomics, and Slips, Trips and Falls.
- Higher concern for Confined Space Entry than many other size categories.
- Reflects organizations managing both psychosocial and operational hazards.

Small-Medium Employers (250–500 Employees)

- Ergonomics was the leading concern, closely followed by Psychological Health and Safety.
- Lower concentration of specialized risks.
- Suggests a focus on day-to-day workplace injury prevention.

Medium Employers (500–750 Employees)

- Risks were more evenly distributed.
- Ergonomics, Psychological Health and Safety, Slips, Trips and Falls, and Traffic Management all ranked highly.

- Indicates a balanced mix of office, operational, and field-based hazards.

Large Employers (750–1,250 Employees)

- Strong emphasis on Psychological Health and Safety.
- Higher concern with Excavations and Confined Space Entry than smaller organizations.
- Reflects the complexity of managing larger operational workforces.

Extra Large Employers (1,250+ Employees)

- Highest concentration of complex and emerging risks.
- Greater focus on Workplace Violence, Excavations, and Confined Space Entry, alongside Psychological Health and Safety.
- Suggests large employers are managing both significant operational hazards and increasingly complex psychosocial risks.

10 BCMSA Program Priorities

Respondents were asked what new program, course, or resource would be most valuable to their organization. While many respondents indicated they were unsure or did not have a specific suggestion, several clear themes emerged from the responses.

The most common theme was Psychological Health and Safety, including mental health, psychological safety, workplace culture, burnout prevention, and implementation of the CSA Z1003 Psychological Health and Safety Standard. Respondents also identified a growing need for Workplace Violence Prevention and De-escalation Training, particularly for workers who regularly interact with the public.

Additional areas of interest included Emergency Preparedness, Contractor Safety Management, Traffic Management, New and Young Worker Safety, Ergonomics, and Combustible Dust Hazards. Many respondents expressed interest in practical, scenario-based training and resources tailored to the local government sector.

Overall, the responses align closely with other survey findings, reinforcing psychological health and safety, workplace violence prevention, and emergency preparedness as priority areas for future BCMSA programming and resource development.

11 Barriers

Respondents were asked to identify barriers that limit their organization's ability to improve occupational health and safety.

The most frequently reported barrier in 2026 was Insufficient Time or Staff to Support Safety Management Systems (44%), followed by Resistance to Change Among Employees or Management (33%) and Lack of Sufficient Financial Resources (24%) (Chart 29). Respondents also identified Regulatory Compliance Challenges (17%), Labour Management Concerns (16%), and an Organizational Culture that Prioritizes Productivity Over Safety (14%) as barriers to health and safety improvement.

While these barriers remain significant, most have declined since 2024. Notably, the proportion of respondents identifying Lack of Sufficient Financial Resources as a barrier decreased from 45% in 2024 to 24% in 2026. Similarly, Regulatory Compliance Challenges declined from 31% to 17%, while Lack of Buy-in or Commitment from Senior Leadership decreased from 27% to 11%.

The proportion of respondents who were Unsure How to Implement Effective Change also fell from 20% in 2024 to 11% in 2026.

Despite these improvements, capacity-related challenges continue to be the most commonly reported barriers. Nearly half of respondents indicated that insufficient time or staff resources limit their ability to support health and safety initiatives, while one-third identified resistance to change among employees or management. These findings suggest that organizations may be increasingly aware of what needs to be done to improve health and safety, but continue to face practical challenges in dedicating the time, resources, and organizational support required to implement change.

Overall, the results indicate that barriers to health and safety improvement are shifting. Financial resources, regulatory complexity, and leadership commitment appear to be less significant concerns than in previous years, while capacity constraints and change management remain key challenges for organizations seeking to strengthen workplace health and safety programs.

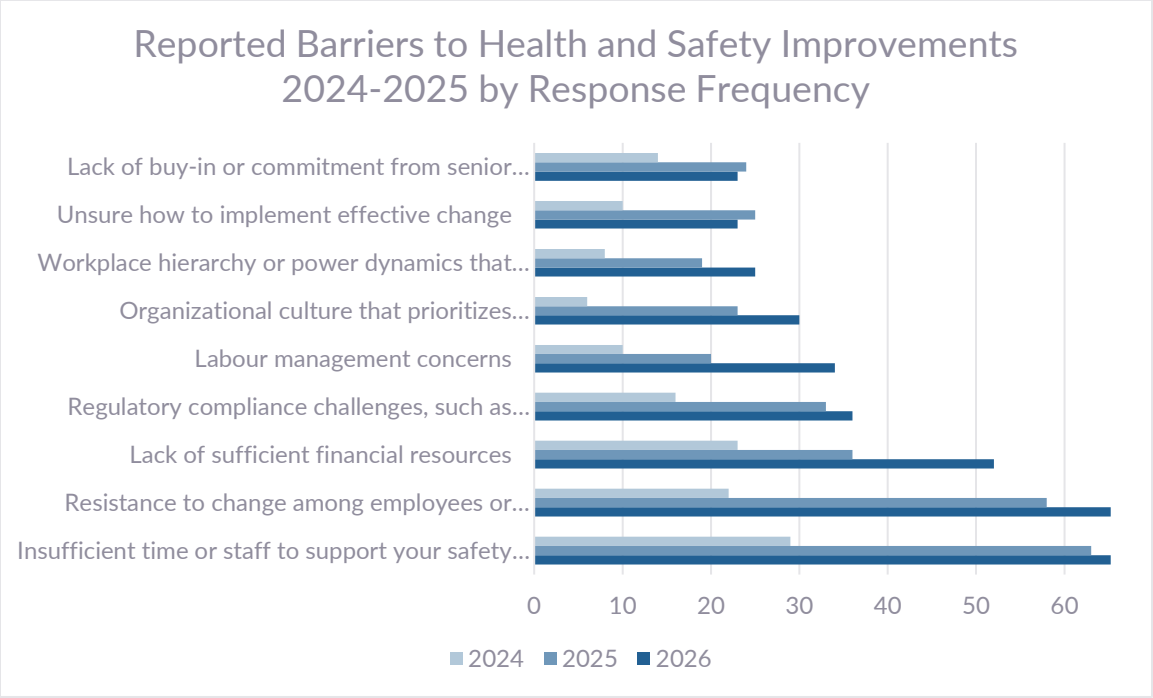

Chart 29

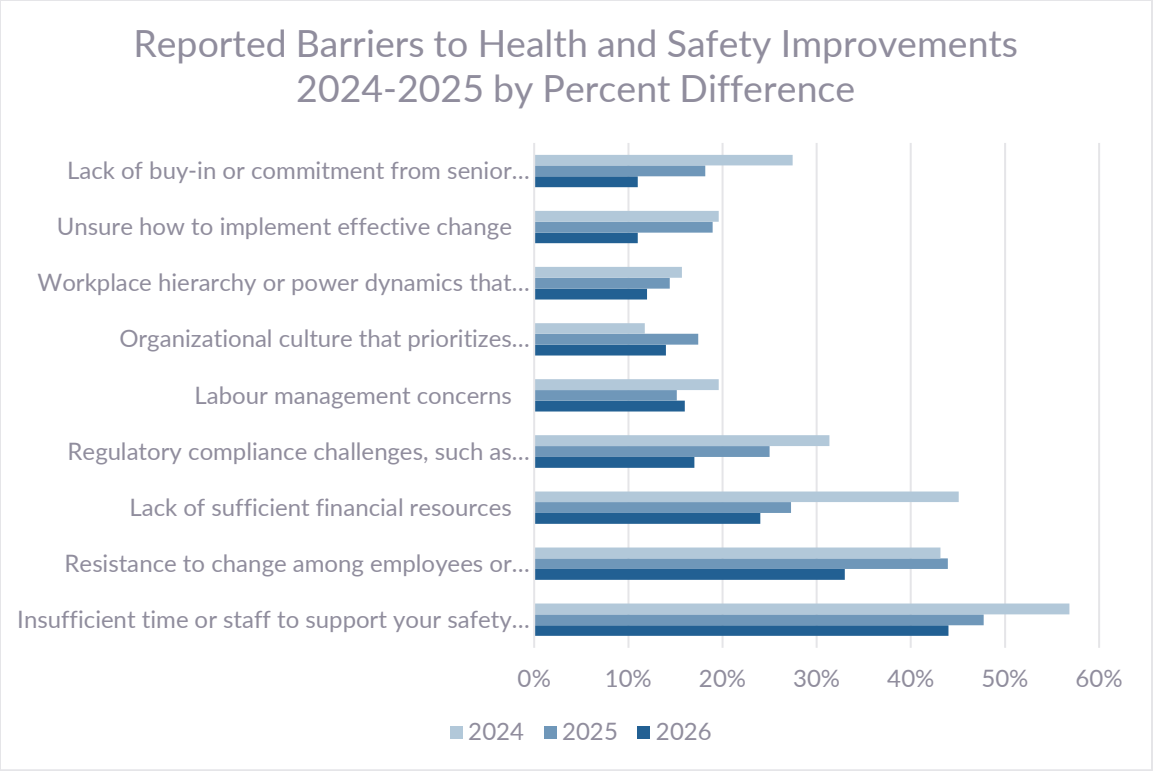

Chart 30

12 Violence Prevention Program

Respondents were asked whether their organization has a violence prevention program in place. In 2026, **69%** of respondents indicated that their organization has a violence prevention program, compared to **64%** in 2025 (Chart 30). Sixteen percent reported that their organization does not have a program, while 21% were unsure.

Respondents were asked to assess how well their organization's violence prevention program is meeting current needs. In 2026, the average rating was 2.44 out of 5, with responses indicating that many organizations believe their current violence prevention programs are only partially meeting their needs (Chart 31).

To support year-over-year comparison, 2025 responses were converted to the same five-point scale. The average rating declined from 3.0 out of 5 in 2025 to 2.44 out of 5 in 2026. This suggests that organizations may be experiencing growing challenges related to workplace violence or that existing violence prevention programs are not keeping pace with evolving risks and expectations.

The decline in perceived effectiveness aligns with the increased interest in workplace violence resources identified elsewhere in the survey, suggesting that organizations are seeking additional

guidance, tools, and support to address this emerging area of concern.

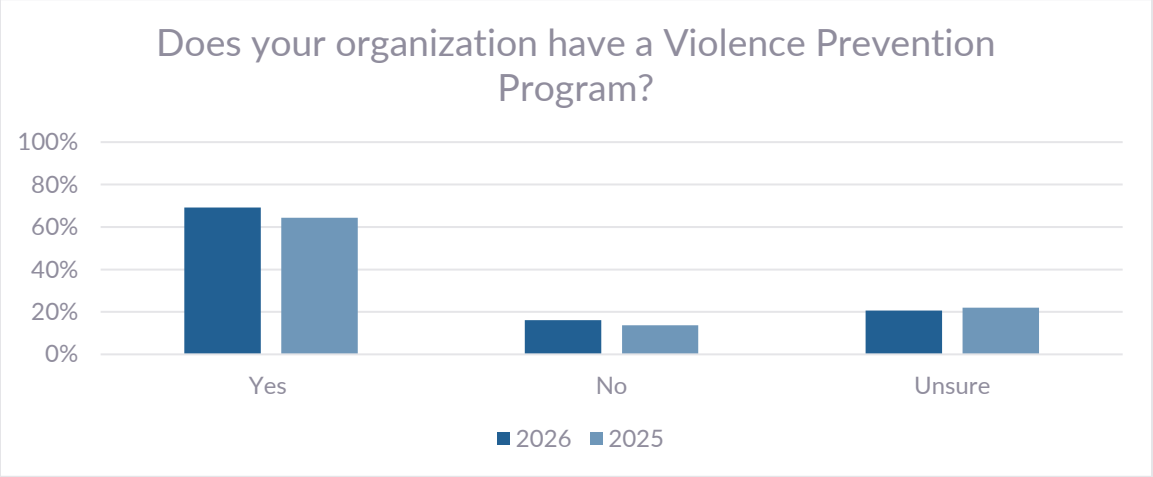

Chart 31

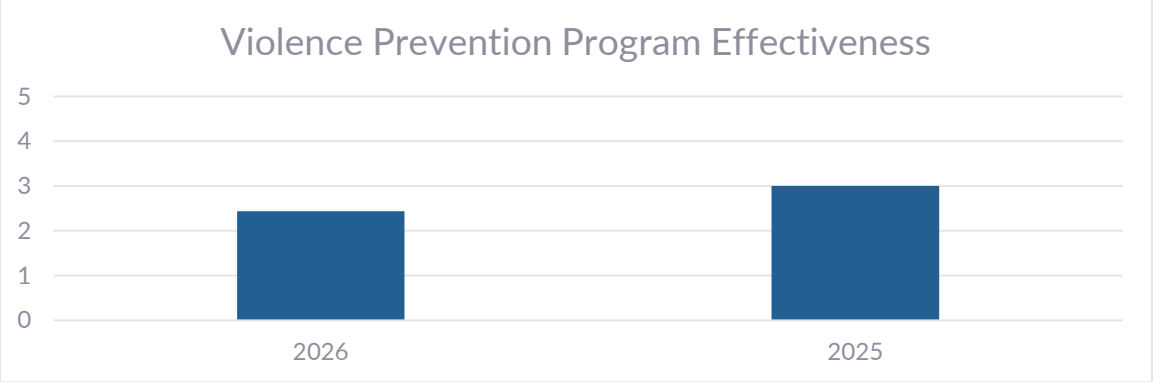

Chart 32

13 Claims Management

Respondents were asked whether they are responsible for occupational claims management within their organization. In 2026, 37% of respondents indicated that claims management forms part of their responsibilities, while 63% reported that it does not (Chart 32).

Respondents who are involved in claims management were then asked to identify the areas they find most challenging. Mental disorder claim support (56%) was identified as the most significant challenge, followed by Return-to-Work (RTW) practices (47%) and Analytics and Tracking Systems (34%) (Chart 33). Smaller proportions of respondents identified challenges related to claim eligibility and allowance decisions, understanding how claims costs impact premiums, and navigating the claims process.

The results suggest that the most significant claims management challenges are associated with supporting workers through complex and often sensitive claims, particularly those related to mental health, as well as facilitating successful return-to-work outcomes. The prominence of analytics and tracking systems as a challenge may indicate a need for improved tools, processes, or guidance to support data-informed claims management practices.

Overall, the findings suggest that organizations involved in claims management are seeking support in areas that require a combination of technical knowledge, employee support, and

administrative processes. The results also align with broader survey findings that identified psychological health and safety as a key area of concern across the sector.

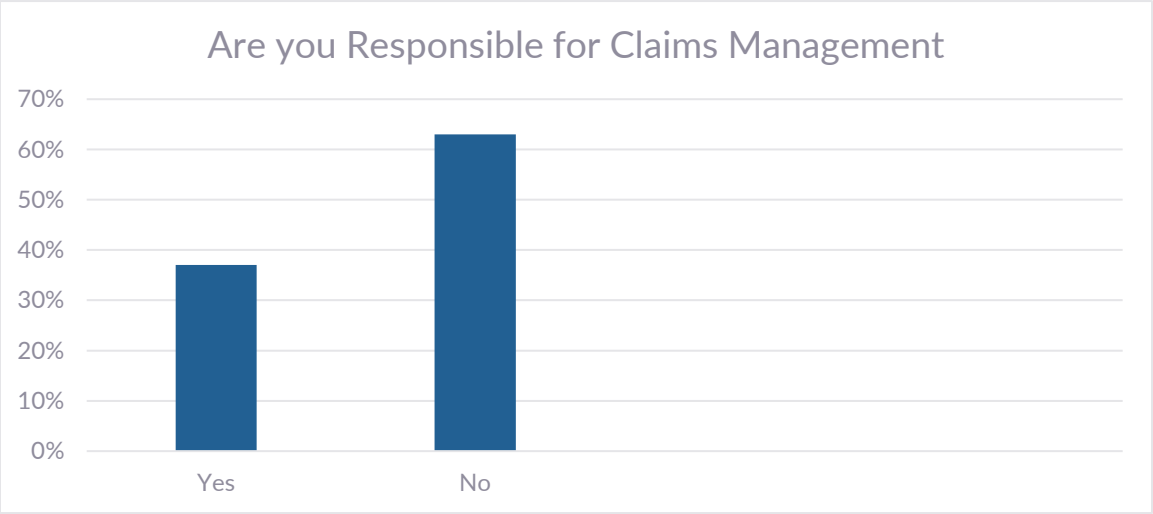

Chart 33

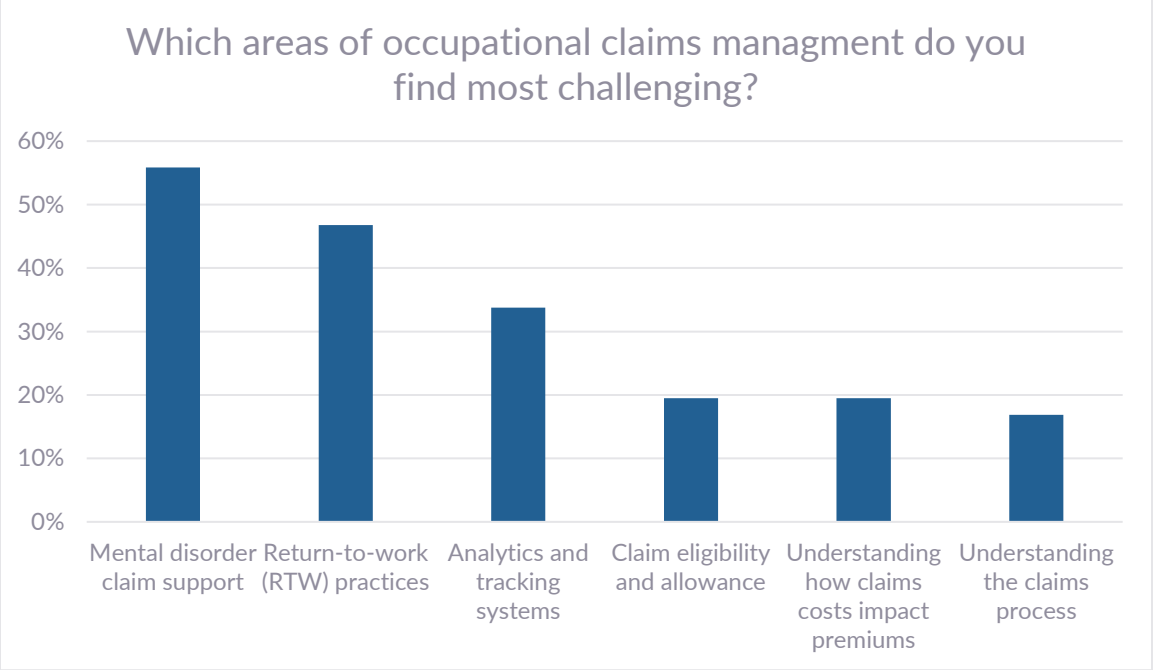

Chart 34

14 Member Improved Program Accessibility

Respondents were asked how BCMSA could make its resources, education, and services more accessible.

The most frequently selected recommendation was Short, Practical Resources (69%), followed by Online, Web-Based Learning Opportunities (43%), Customized Resources and Support (42%), and Improved Communication and Awareness of Available Services (37%) (Chart 34). Respondents also expressed interest in Better Website Navigation and Access to Resources (17%) and Networking Opportunities (18%).

The findings suggest that members are looking for resources that are easy to access, practical to implement, and responsive to their organization's specific needs. The strong preference for short, practical resources aligns with other survey findings that identified limited time and staff capacity as key barriers to advancing health and safety initiatives. Similarly, interest in online learning opportunities reflects the need for flexible professional development options that can accommodate diverse organizational sizes and geographic locations.

The demand for customized resources and improved communication also indicates that members want greater awareness of available BCMSA supports and resources that can be adapted to their unique workplace environments. Overall, the results suggest that accessibility is influenced not only by how resources are delivered, but also by how easily members can find, understand, and apply them within their organizations.

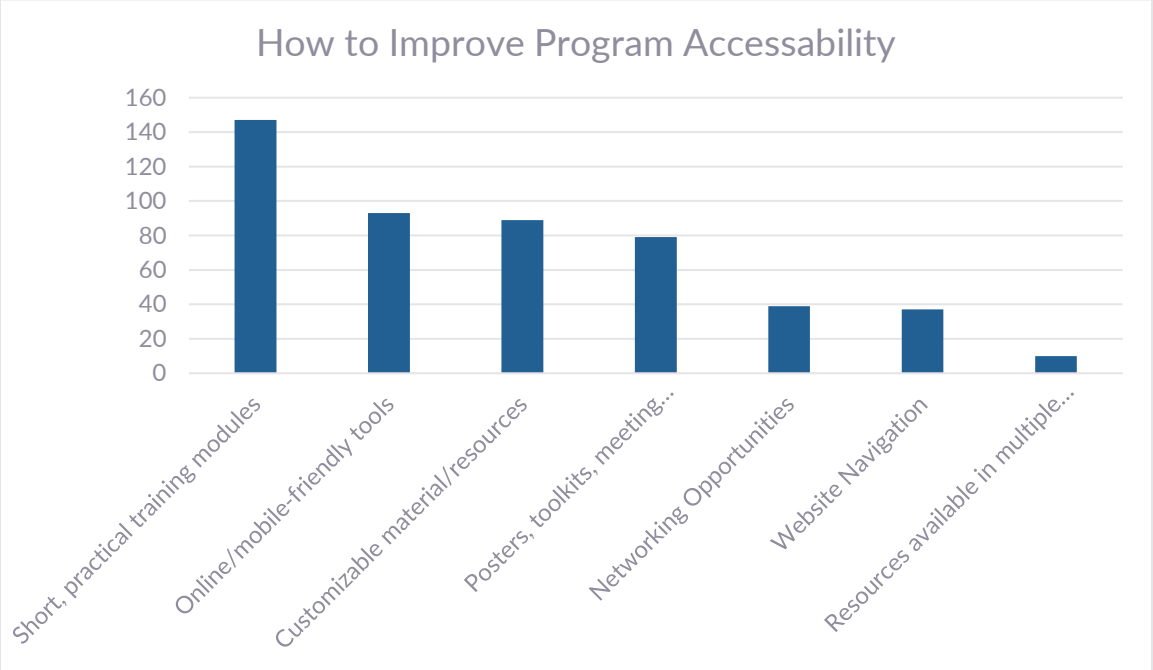

Chart 35

15 Conclusion

The 2026 Needs Assessment Survey highlights strong member engagement and continued confidence in BCMSA's services, resources, and training. Respondents reported high levels of satisfaction with BCMSA's offerings and identified BCMSA as a valuable contributor to workplace health and safety improvements within their organizations.

Psychological Health and Safety, Workplace Violence Prevention, Emergency Preparedness, Ergonomics, and Traffic Management emerged as key priorities for support and future program development. The survey also identified claims management as an area where organizations would benefit from additional support, particularly in relation to mental disorder claims, return-to-work practices, and claims tracking and administration.

Overall, the findings provide clear direction for BCMSA's future efforts and reinforce the importance of practical, accessible, and municipal-specific resources that help members address both current and emerging health and safety challenges.