

Industry Insight

2024 | Future competence and talent attraction

Talent attraction in the Norwegian aquaculture industry

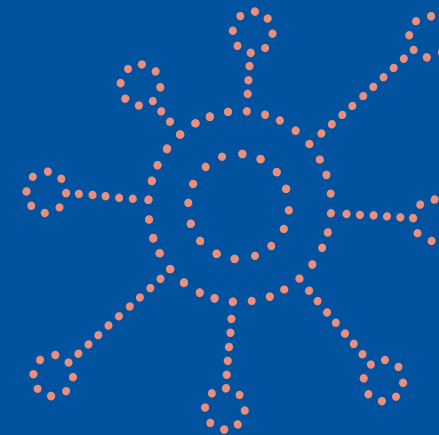




Photo Silje K. Robinson

Foreword

The ambitions and opportunities for value creation presented by the ocean are vast. The Norwegian aquaculture industry has significant growth ambitions. To achieve our goals, sustainable development is crucial, and several industrial challenges need to be addressed collectively. New operational methods are constantly being adopted, and the high pace of change is driving continuously evolving competence needs and steadily expanding the range of knowledge required in the industry.

Traditional 'blue' competence needs have evolved into a knowledge landscape where technological expertise, legal knowledge, and engineering skills are increasingly relevant. To be fit for the future, the industry must be visible to new talents and build a reputation as an attractive place to work considering the increasing competition from adjacent industries.

This backdrop has prompted our industry partners and members to express a need to map young talents' perspectives on career opportunities, the industry's reputation, and the key factors influencing their career choices. Hence, this initiative will not further elaborate on the recruitment challenges the industry faces, but rather aim to find possible solutions to these challenges. Through quantitative surveys, we have collected data from nearly 900 students with diverse backgrounds to gain insights into their perspectives. The primary objective of this 'Industry Insight' report is to highlight focus areas and identify actionable takeaways for companies and industry stakeholders, providing them with strategic tools to enhance their dedicated work in talent attraction. Following guidance from the steering group, the focus is specifically on the aquaculture industry.

The report is anchored in the industry by presenting the employer's perspective through case studies from companies with different profiles, locations, and impacts across the value chain. This approach enhances the student data by providing a comprehensive view on how aquaculture companies experience the talent attraction landscape. This adds context and creates a richer understanding of talent attraction in the aquaculture industry.

On behalf of the steering group, we hope that this report will serve as a valuable contribution to strategy development in companies and industry stakeholders and to fostering increased knowledge about the drivers behind students' career choices and how they view the industry as a potential employer.

And lastly, I would like to thank my good colleague Lena Bekken for putting this report together with valuable assistance from the steering group, Fride Iversen and PwC .

Trude J. Hagland

Trude Jansen Hagland
Managing Director
NCE Seafood Innovation





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Introduction

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Executive summary

This report explores young talents' career preferences and their perceptions of aquaculture as an employer.

The importance of early engagement with students through internships and career events to shape positive views about the industry. Further on the report shows that the industry has not been able to communicate its strengths, particularly regarding work environment and career development, leading to a disconnect between student expectations and the industry's attractiveness. The report emphasizes that increased knowledge about the industry correlates with a more positive perception.

Recruiting for rural positions is another challenge explored, as many companies find it difficult to attract and retain skilled workers. Interest in these opportunities increases when companies provide social venues and job opportunities for partners. Targeted employer branding and flexible work models can help bridge the recruitment gap and attract more talent.

Key takeaways from the report:

- To attract young talent, create direct engagement opportunities throughout their studies. Give them opportunities to learn about the work environment and career opportunities
- Industry actors do not have to change already formed opinions of the industry as an employer. Instead, they could aim at creating initial impressions.
- By increasing knowledge and awareness of the industry, its attractiveness should also rise.
- By accommodating the factors that are most important to the students, organizations can increase the likelihood of students choosing rural working opportunities.

Involvement across the value chain

The project has included relevant actors in the value chain to ensure broad involvement, quality assurance and stakeholder commitment.

Steering group

Siren Grønhaug, Lerøy Seafood Group

Kathleen Mathiesen, Grieg Seafood

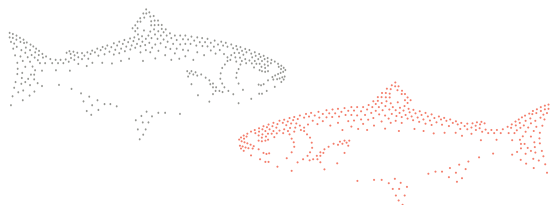
Kjersti Eikeseth, Mowi

Judith Tørvi, Cargill

Daniel Hosøy, Benchmark

Eirik Søråa, Coast

Maren Hognestad Sunde, AkvaGroup



Working group

Lena Bekken – Project Manager
Industry Insight Talent Attraction and
Programme Manager Seafood Trainee

Fride Iversen - Senior Project Manager
Future Knowledge and Talent Attraction

Karoline Aarebrot – Project Manager
Industry Insight Talent Attraction until
March 2024 (data collection)

A special thanks to Katarina Kindøen-Kjellnes
and Tina Saltskår at PwC for assistance
during the data collection period and
review of the final draft

Industry experts

Contributing with insight to key challenges
within talent attraction:

Anja Skarstein Scheen, Benchmark Animal Health

Liv-Ane Engelsen, Lerøy

Annikke Andersen, Inka

Lisa Cheah Hjelmstad, Cognizant

Ida Marie Andersen, Nutrimar

Janicke Eckhoff, Sjømat Norge

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Marit Berge, An fjord Salmon

Mathias Sagevik, Salmon City

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Trude Olafsen, Aqua Group

Sandra Sæter, Seaborn

Skjalg Steiro, Bimoar

Synnøve Austestad, Bolaks

Vidar Aslaksen Skjørli, Salmon Evolution

Viljar Ødelien, Steinvik Fiskefarm

Steffen Juranek, NHH



Part 1

Rationale and scope:
The big questions within
talent attraction

The need for future competence is significant and we need to understand the key drivers

The Norwegian Seafood Industry has significant growth ambitions and its future competence needs are diverse. In order to achieve the industry's sustainability goals, several industrial challenges need to be solved and new technology adopted. At the same time, the industry is facing major challenges in meeting current needs for skills and talents.

Challenges to overcome

Talent gap

The industry is growing, and is not able to maintain the required pace of recruitment.

Competence shifts

Changing circumstances and technology are creating a need for different competence.

Competition

The skills needed overlap with needs in other industries, creating a competitive recruitment environment.

Rural employment

Many companies struggle to hire talents for job opportunities in rural areas.

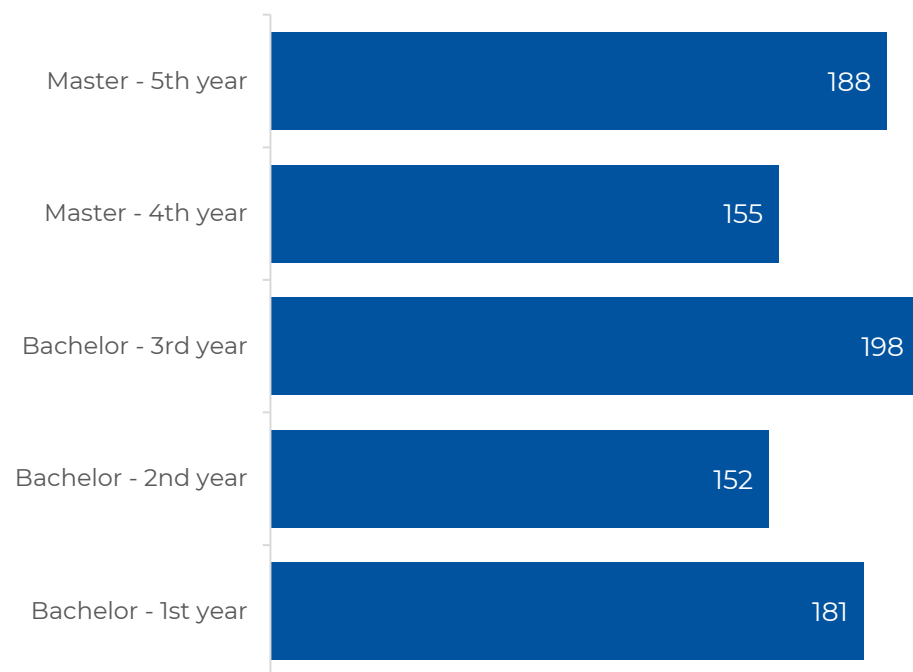
Møreforskning quantified some of these challenges in its 2022 report "Future Competence and Recruitment Needs in the Norwegian Seafood Industry". The report is based on the employer's perspective and identifies the most attractive occupational groups for the future, as well as the key challenges they face regarding their recruitment needs.

As already known to stakeholders, this report will not further elaborate the challenges the industry faces, but rather aim to find possible solutions to these challenges. The report will quantify the perceptions of young talents in regard to the industry, and through data analysis and case studies contribute to solutions for the challenges the industry faces.

877 Students contributed their perspectives

877 students in total completed an online survey asking them about their career preferences, perspectives on the aquaculture industry, and rural work interest. The respondents were quite evenly distributed by gender (52% female, 48% male) and year of study. This provides a good representation in the data.

Year of study



Home community



49 %

are from a city with
30,000 or more inhabitants



31 %

are from a town with
5,000 -30,000 inhabitants

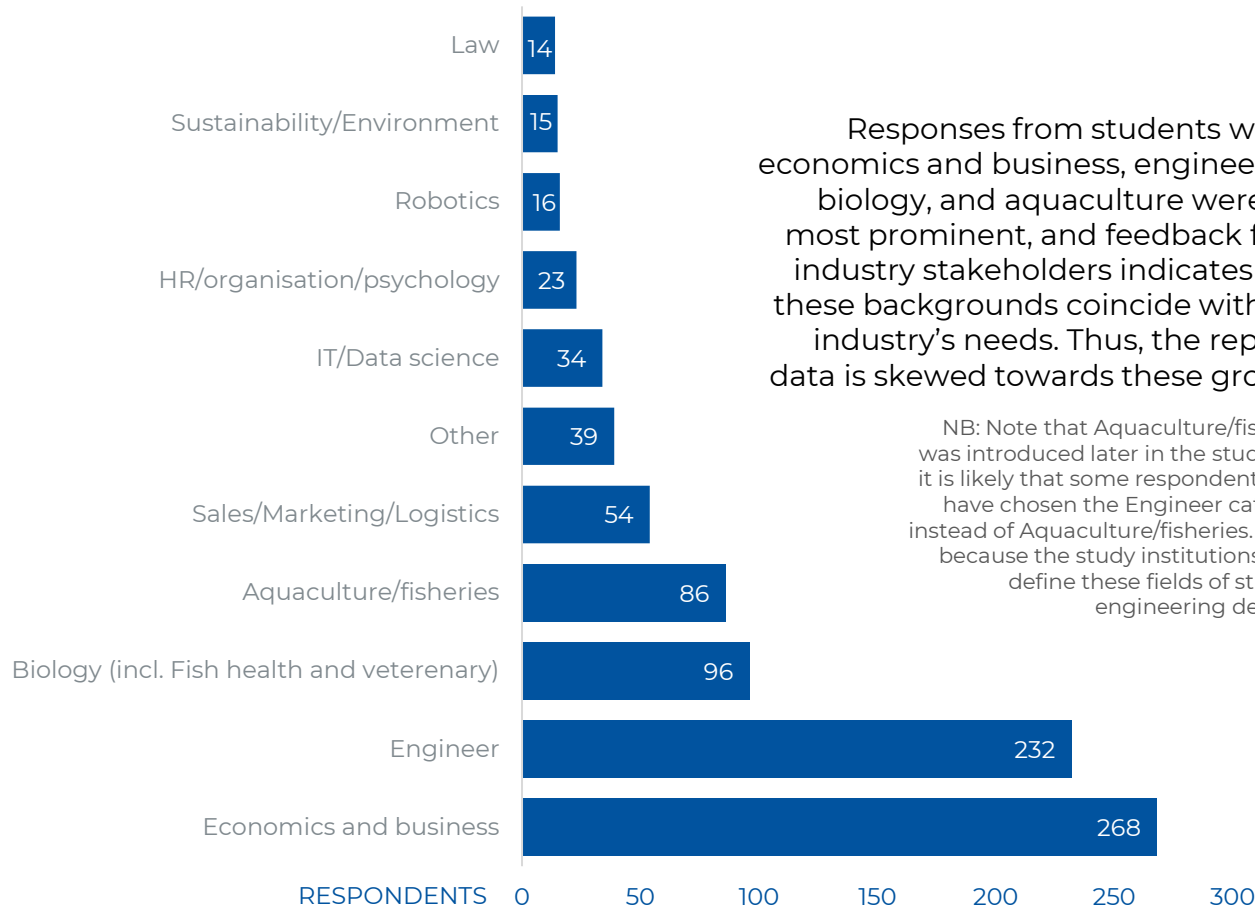


20 %

are from a community with
less than 5,000 inhabitants

The respondents' demographic distribution

Respondents' fields of study

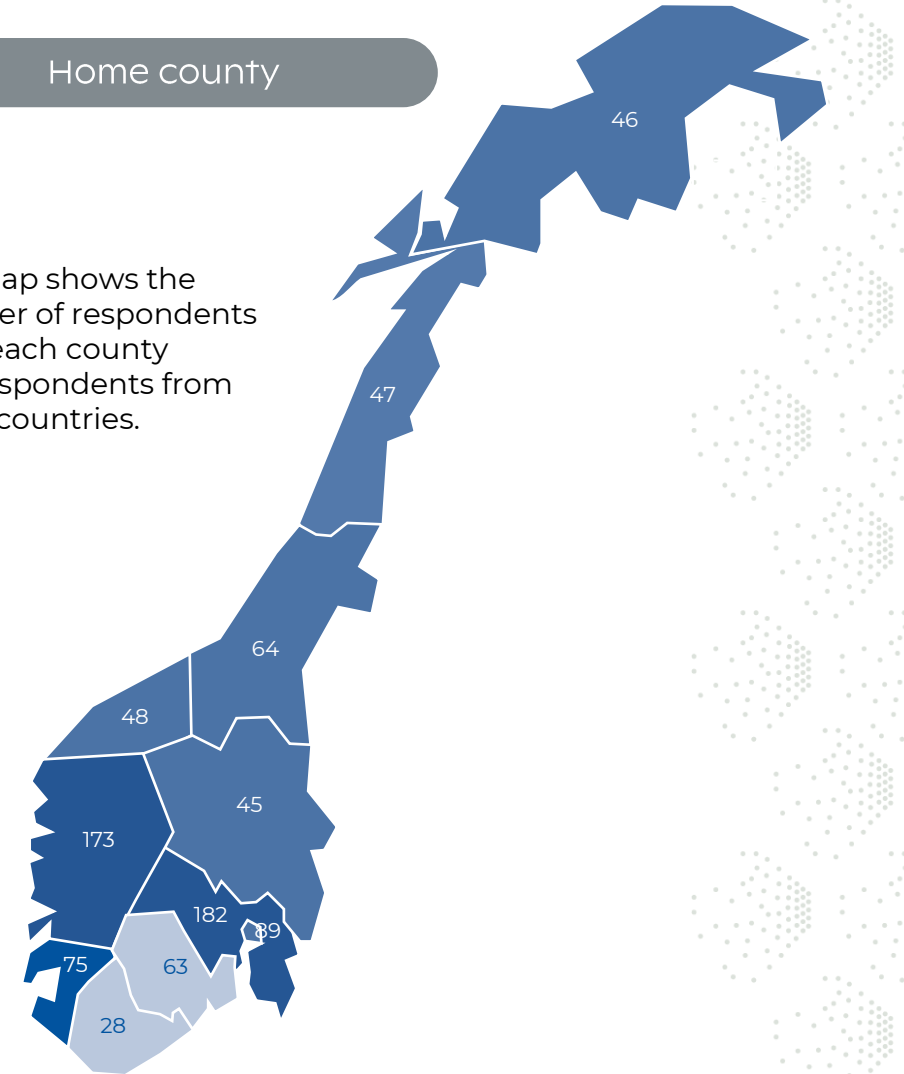


Responses from students within economics and business, engineering, biology, and aquaculture were the most prominent, and feedback from industry stakeholders indicates that these backgrounds coincide with the industry's needs. Thus, the report's data is skewed towards these groups.

NB: Note that Aquaculture/fisheries was introduced later in the study, and it is likely that some respondents thus have chosen the Engineer category instead of Aquaculture/fisheries. This is because the study institutions often define these fields of study as engineering degrees.

Home county

The map shows the number of respondents from each county + 17 respondents from other countries.





“We must interact at the point where people are about to make career decisions. We should offer master's programs with a supervisor, summer jobs, etc. It's difficult to change people's minds once they've already made a decision, but if we engage with them early, we can achieve a lot.”

Jørn Ulheim
CEO, Patogen



“We lack ambassadors for the industry. People who speak loudly about how fantastic it is. Ambassadors who can promote the industry as a whole. We need to reach the target audience and make it fun because we need engagement and show how enjoyable it is to work in the industry.”

Lisa Cheah Hjelmstad
Head of Communications, Cognizant

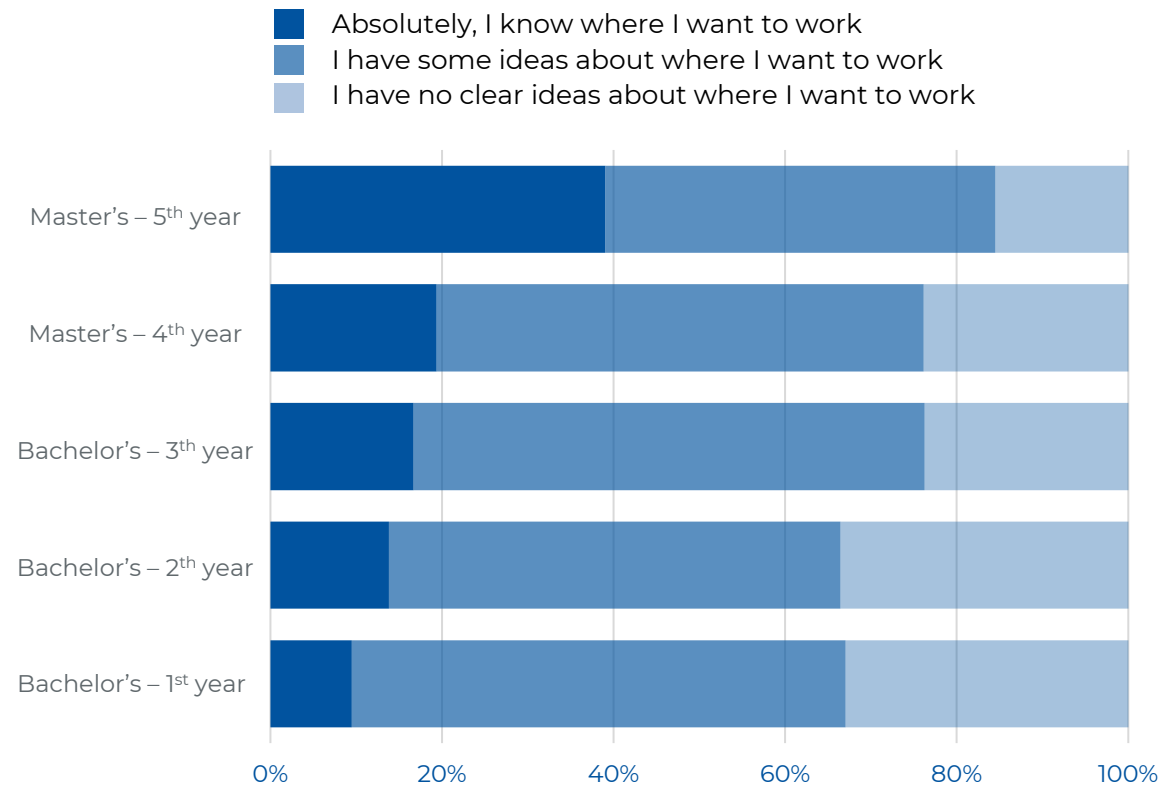


Part 2

Career choices and preferences

Early engagement is important to exert influence before career choices are made

Do you know where you want to work?



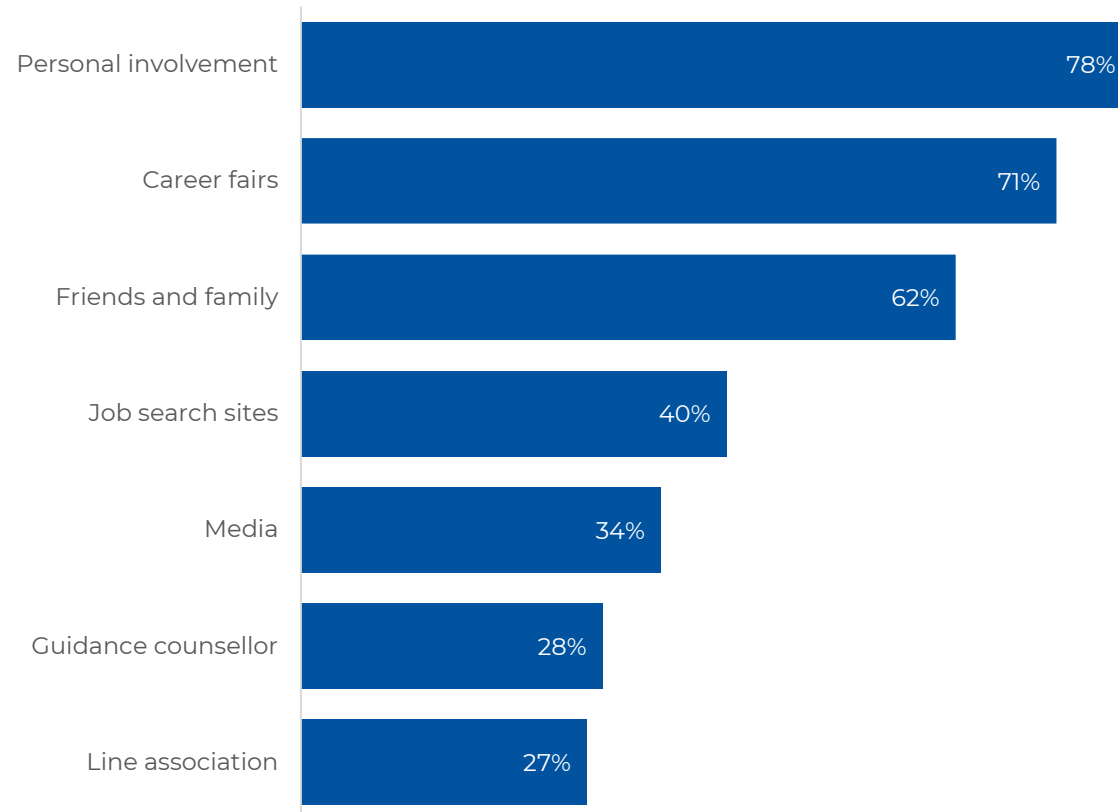
Students generally gradually become clearer about their career preferences as they progress through their studies.

By the final year of their Master's program, a significant number of students have a clear idea of where they want to work (nearly 40%). The increase in this year is particularly marked.

To reach students when they are the most open-minded about career opportunities, companies need to start talent attraction activities at an early stage.

Direct engagement is the best way to attract talent

Which arenas are important to engage your interest in an industry/company?



Overall, the data highlights the diverse methods students use to explore potential careers, with a strong emphasis on personal and direct interactions.

Direct engagement through jobs, internships, and dissertation collaborations is the most important source of information about job opportunities for students.

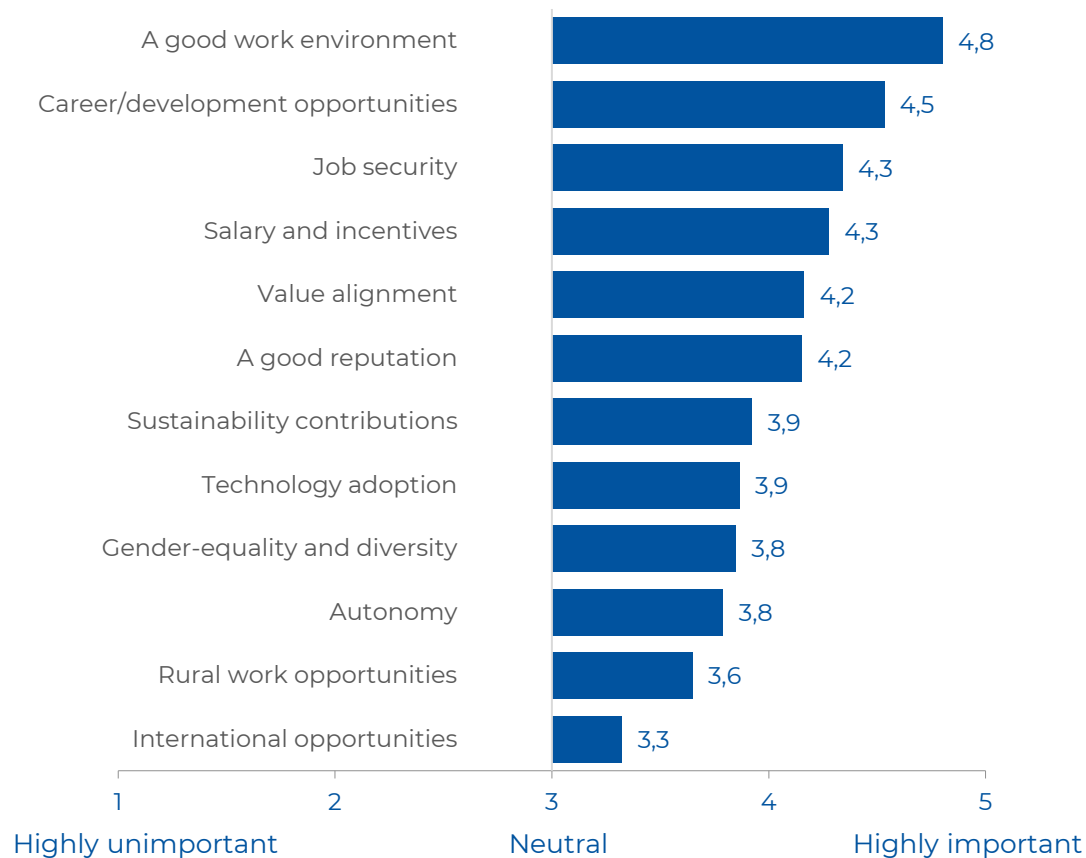
Personal involvement with employers through jobs, internships and dissertations are the most important sources to gain interest in a prospective employer.

Career fairs, including company stands and networking events, are also popular, ranking just below direct engagement.

Furthermore, many of the students reported that they knew the industry through friends, family and acquaintances – further emphasizing their importance in influencing career decisions.

The work environment and career opportunities are most important

Which of the following are important when choosing your future employer?



The most critical factors for students when choosing a workplace are a good work environment, career and development opportunities, job security, and salary and incentives.

Other important attributes are; job security, salary and incentives, value alignment and the company's reputation.

It is notable that since participants were not forced to prioritize, most factors received high scores, reflecting a broad range of considerations that influence a job choice.

Key takeaways

From the data we have learned that:

Start early

Students gradually become clearer about their career preferences as they progress through their studies. By the final year of their Master's program, a significant number of students have a clear idea of where they want to work.

Talk about your work environment

The most critical factors for students when choosing a workplace are a good work environment, career and development opportunities, job security, and salary and incentives.

Provide opportunities

Direct engagement through jobs, internships, and dissertation collaborations are the most important source of information about job opportunities for students.

Career choices and preferences:



- To attract young talent, create direct engagement opportunities throughout their studies.
- Give them opportunities to learn about the work environment and career opportunities.



"The media is increasingly motivated to cover scandals, which shape much [of the talents' perspectives]. How we manage our reputation, and an honest reputation, is important. We need to show how the industry is evolving positively. The best talents will choose both with their hearts and based on what is being promoted."

Jørn Ulheim
CEO, Patogen



"The seafood industry has a responsibility to engage with students. We must work together to promote the unique and exciting career opportunities, and to increase the reputation of the seafood industry in general.

Our vision at Lerøy is to become the leading and most profitable global supplier of sustainable quality seafood. To fulfill this vision, we need skilled employees who are motivated and engaged in their field of expertise. We are focused on employer branding by offering attractive jobs to skilled and result-oriented workers and realise the value of recruiting young adults and recent graduates to this industry of the future. At Lerøy we therefore offer programs for apprentices, seasonal summer positions, internships and trainee positions."

Siren Grønhaug
Lerøy Seafood Group ASA



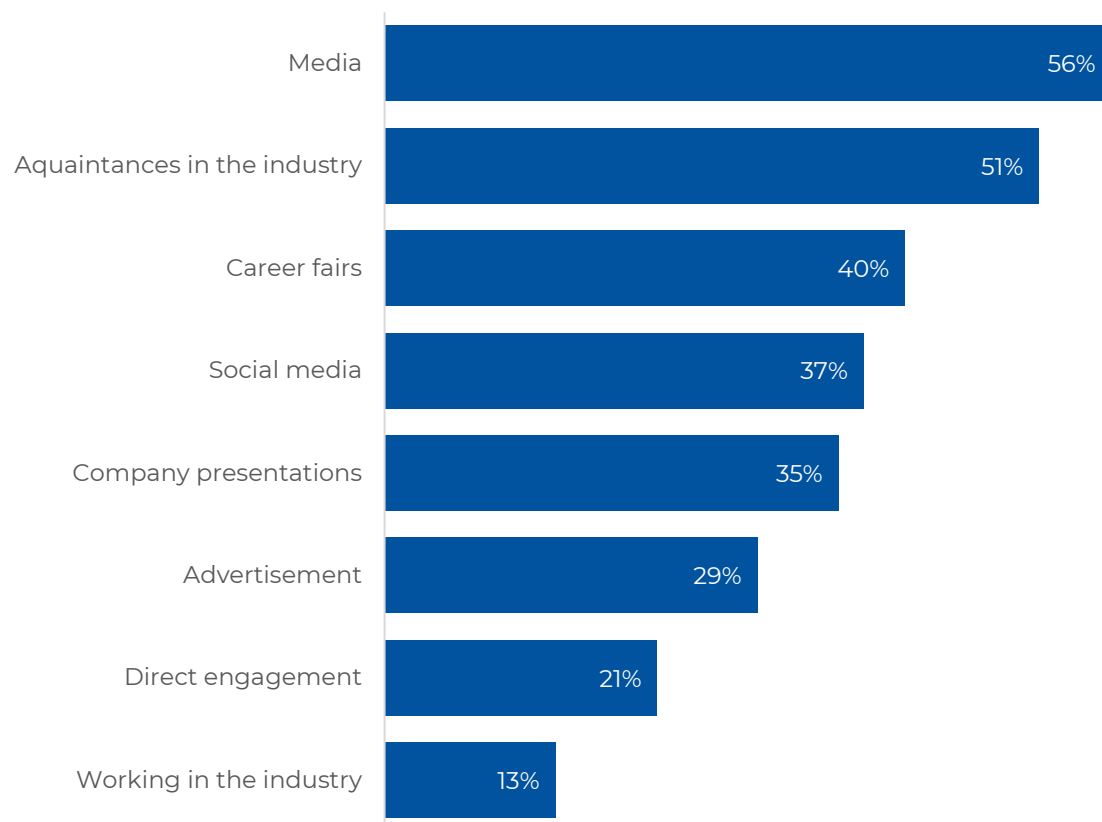
Part 3

The aquaculture industry as
an employer

The media and acquaintances shape student perceptions

How do you know the aquaculture industry as an employer?

Multiple options were possible, and most students chose more than one channel.



Although students report that direct involvement with the industry/company plays the most important role in forming career decisions, they score the lowest on where they actually receive information.

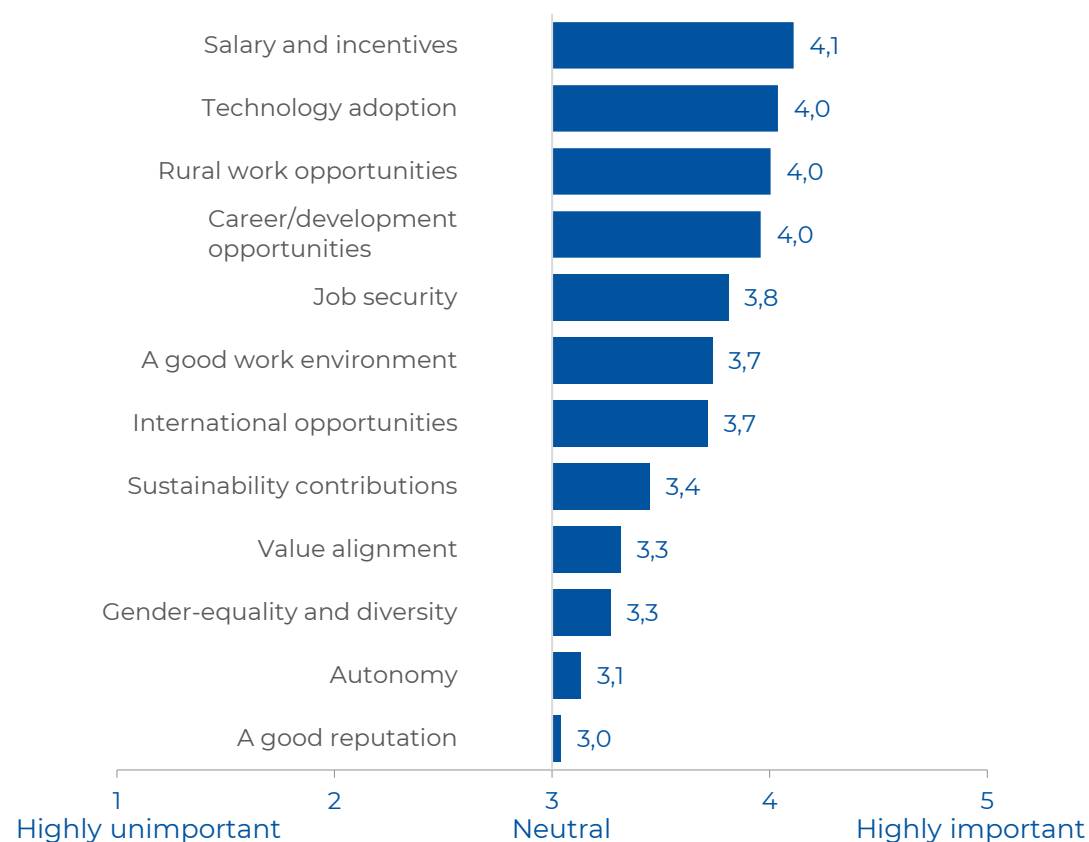
The top two sources of knowledge (media and acquaintances working in the industry) are factors beyond the direct control of employers.

Media shapes the public's opinion and awareness about industry trends, innovations, and opportunities, and employers have limited influence over media narratives.

Acquaintances working in the industry are highly influential. They provide informal channels of candid, unfiltered views of what it's like to work in the industry. Employers cannot control these personal conversations, but they can impact potential employees' perceptions through the employee experience.

Employer attribute ranking of the aquaculture industry

Employer attribute ranking of the aquaculture industry

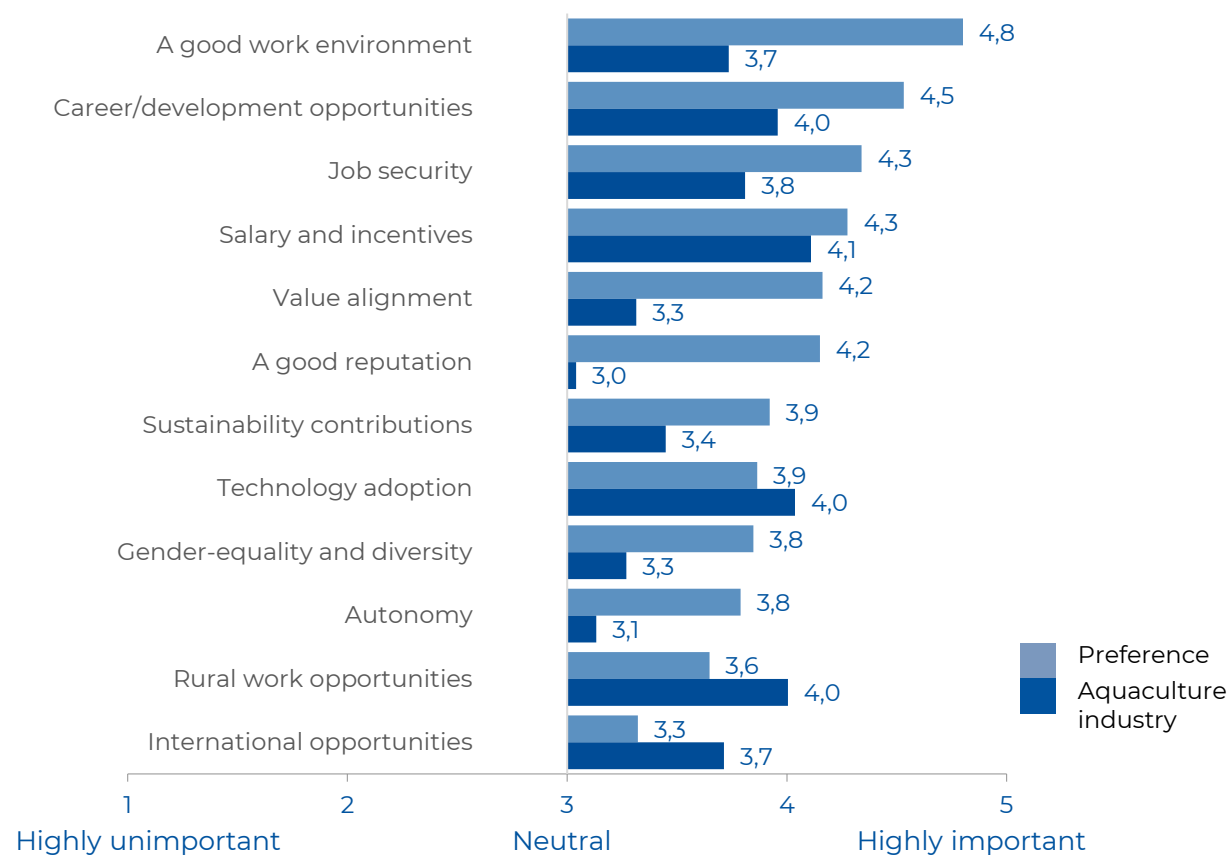


The highest-rated attribute is salary and incentives, suggesting that the industry is known for competitive compensation. This is followed by being early adopters of new technology, rural work opportunities and career/development opportunities.

Overall, the average score of the industry is positively across all dimensions. However, when comparing the answers to the attributes considered the most important by students, we discover significant gaps between the two.

The industry is missing the attribute mark

General preference vs. aquaculture industry

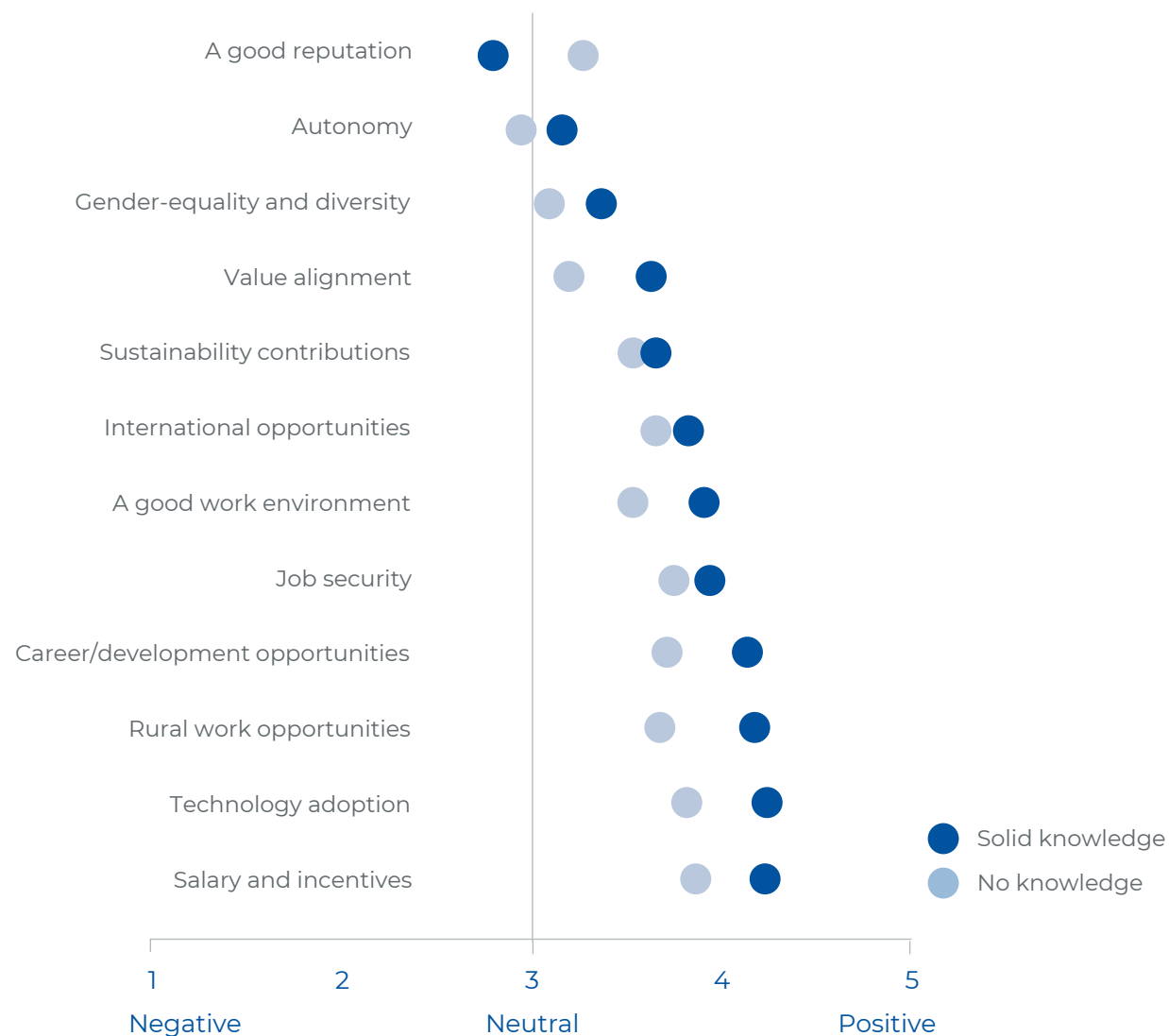


The data clearly shows that the areas that characterize the industry as an employer in the eyes of the students differ from their preferences for future employment.

In 9 of 12 attributes the students score the industry below their preferred level. The industry falls short in the areas that are most important to students (a good work environment, career and development opportunities, job security, salaries and incentives, value alignment, and reputation).

Conversely, the industry outperforms student preferences in areas that are generally less important to students; being early adopters of new technology, rural work opportunities, and international opportunities.

Knowledge increases the positive perception of the industry



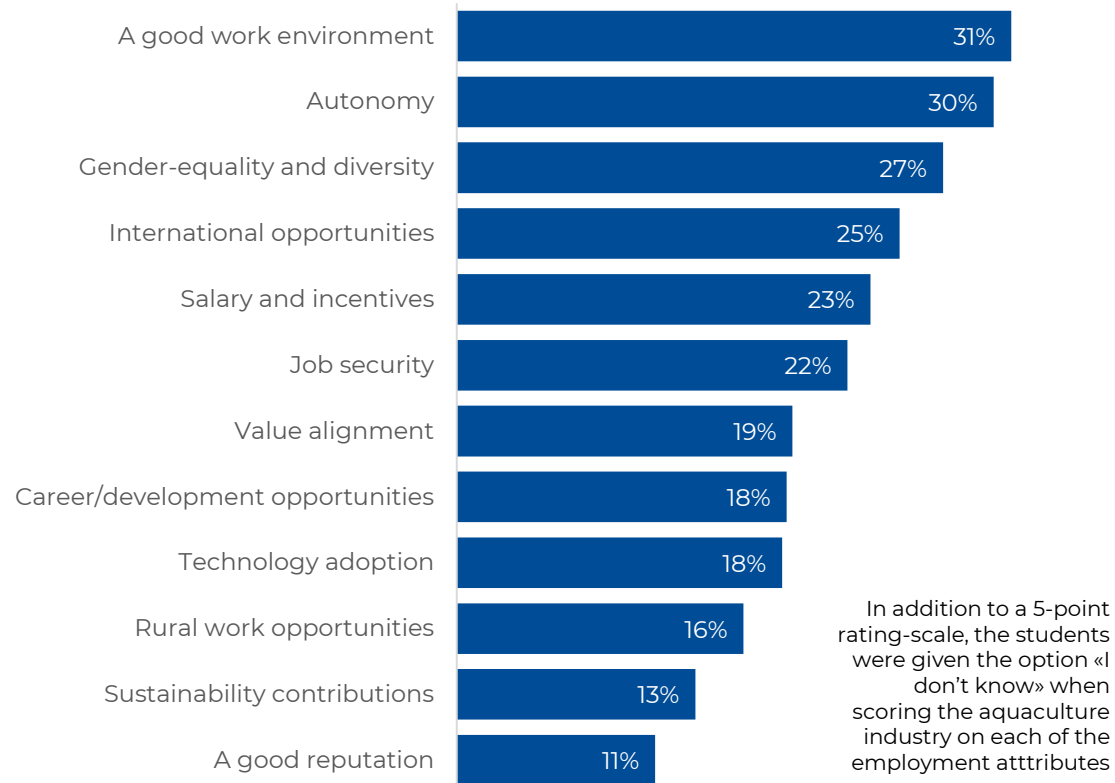
When the respondents were split into three groups based on their self-reported knowledge of the industry, the students' positive perceptions of the aquaculture industry increase in line with their knowledge of the industry.

Students who have solid knowledge of the industry rate it higher on all parameters, except the industry's reputation.

Enhancing knowledge about the industry could improve students' overall perception of the industry.

Students lack knowledge of the industry as an employer

% of students opting for "I don't know"



Many of the students are unsure how to score the industry.

For the most important attribute – a good work environment – the uncertainty is at 31%. The gap is also large on the second and third most important attributes; career/development opportunities and job security.

There is a great opportunity for employers: the more students know about the aquaculture industry, the more favourably they rate it. In addition, the big knowledge gap provides ample opportunity to inform and engage with students who have not already made up their mind about the industry.

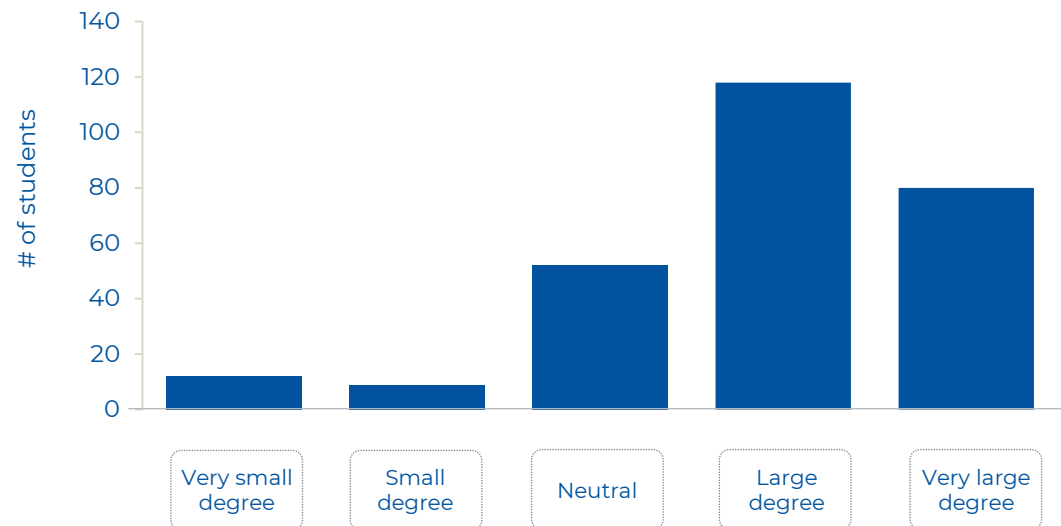
This means that employers do not have to change the perceptions of many of the students – they only have to form it in the first place.

A moderately attractive industry

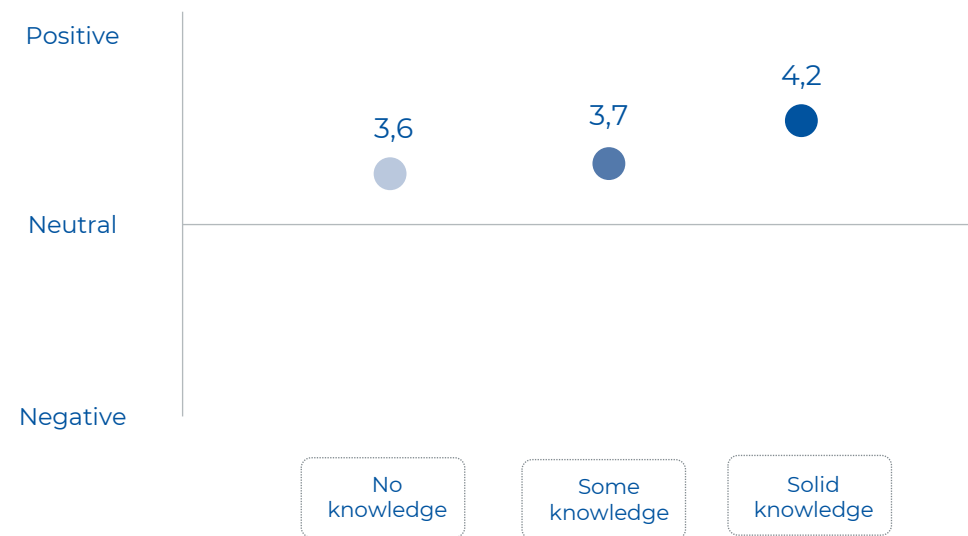
3,9

The aquaculture industry score an average of 3.9 out of 5 in the attractiveness rating. The score indicates a moderate level of attractiveness. There is a positive correlation between the level of knowledge students have about the aquaculture industry and how attractive they find it as a potential employer.

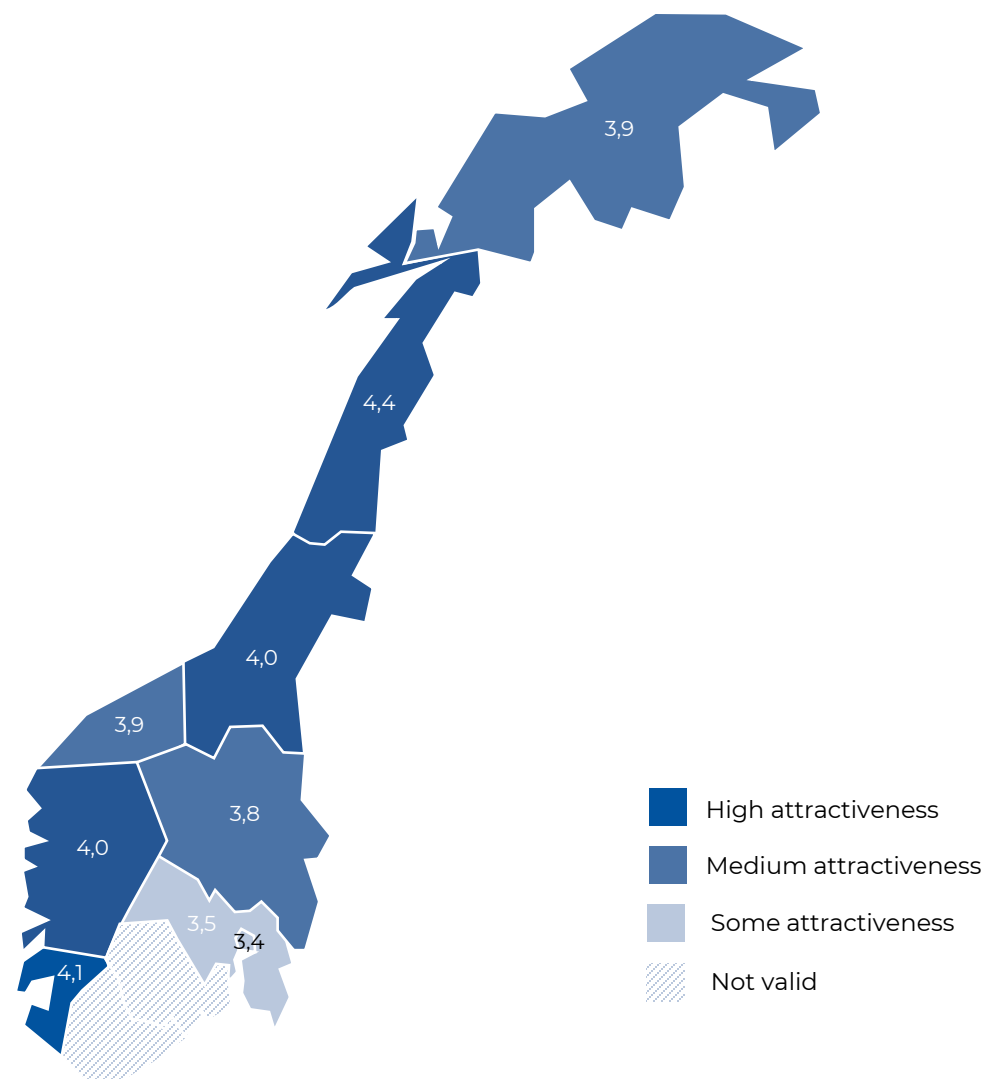
I consider the aquaculture industry to be an attractive employer



I consider the aquaculture industry to be an attractive employer



Low attractiveness close to political power



When we look at the distribution across counties in Norway, there are some differences between the regions, with a clear indication that students coming from counties known for aquaculture production, rate the industry as more attractive.

Around the capital, the industry's attractiveness is lower.

A common perception is that people from rural areas find the industry more attractive than those from the city. However, the data shows no significant difference between these groups.

Key takeaways

From the data we have learned that:

Low involvement

Although students report that direct involvement with the industry is most important in forming career decisions, they score the lowest on where they actually receive information.

Below target

The aquaculture industry scores below preferences on almost all employer attributes.

Knowledge is key

There is a knowledge gap, with many students uncertain how to score the industry.

Low scores close to power

Students from Oslo and nearby areas score the industry as less attractive.

The aquaculture industry as an employer:



By increasing knowledge and awareness of the industry, its attractiveness should also rise



"Grieg Seafood's farming has undergone a considerable transformation in the modern era, embracing technical developments and technological automation. As a result of the evolution of the roles within the farming sector, a distinct skill set is required compared to the skills needed for traditional farming techniques. This shift toward technology-driven farming necessitates staff capable of operating complicated machinery and comprehending data-driven decision-making. Fostering and growing interest in agricultural careers is critical for us, as is offering opportunities for professional development and internal internal progress."

Marie Nathalie Kathleen Offman Mathisen

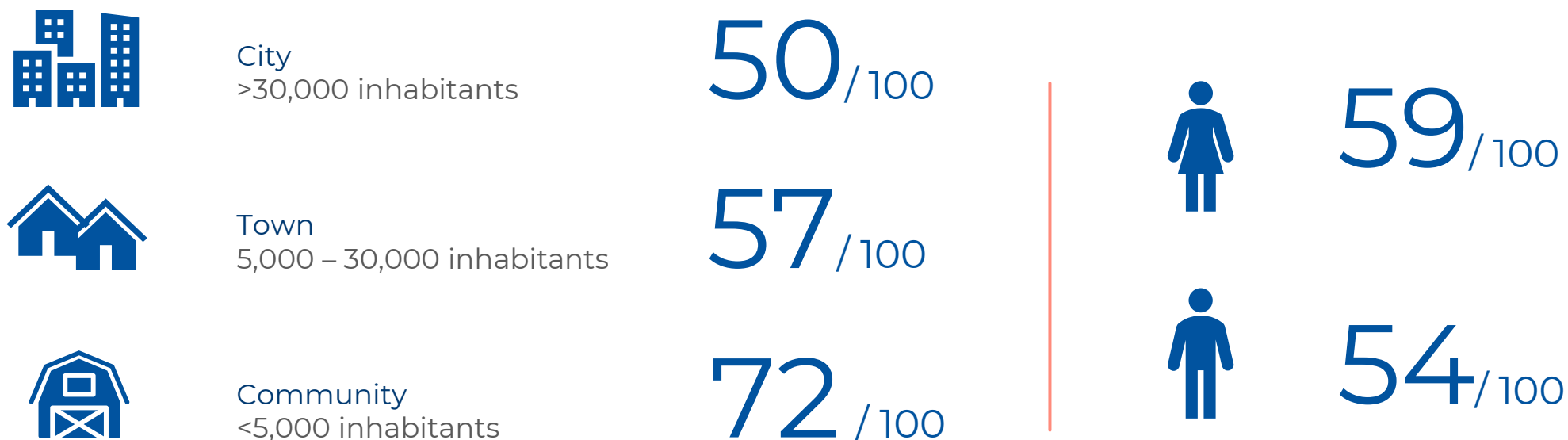
Chief Human Resource Officer and HSE/Internal Communication
Grieg Seafood



Part 4

Talent attraction for
employment in rural
areas

How interested are students in rural work opportunities?

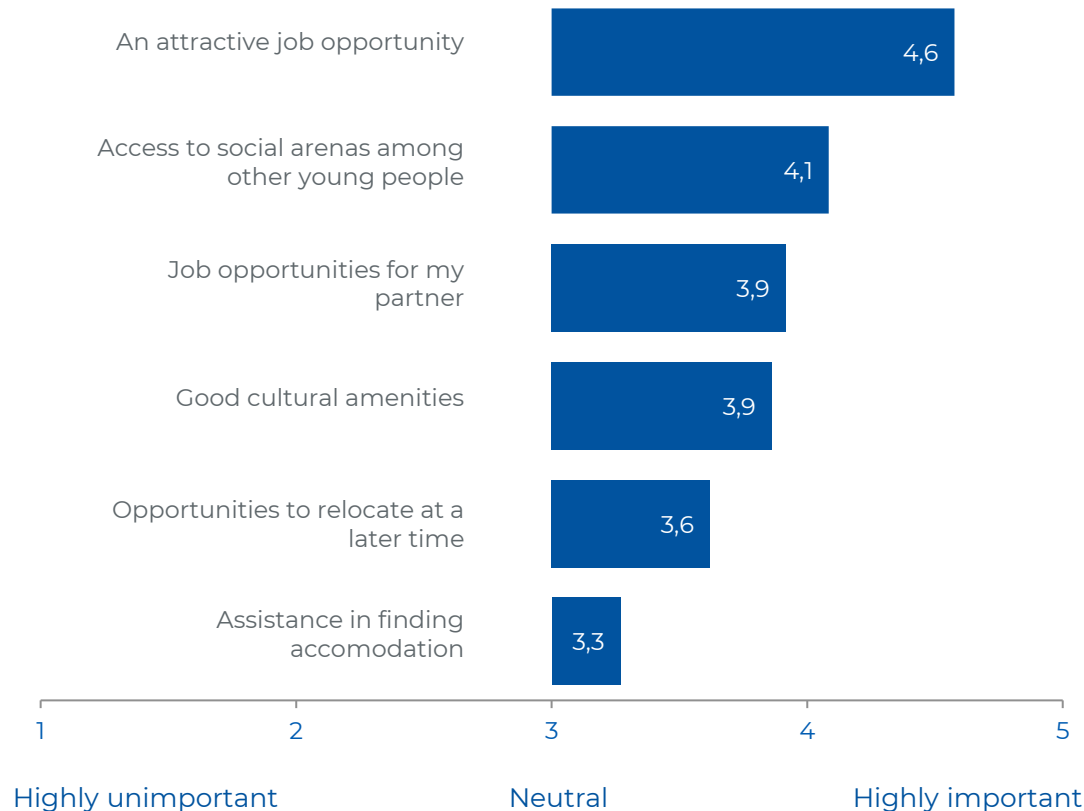


On a scale between 1 and 100, with 100 representing the highest interest, students scored their interest in rural work opportunities.

In general, students are interested in rural work opportunities. Students from rural areas are far more interested than those from cities. Women are more likely to express a high desire to work in rural areas than men. Although the interest is present, there are still more men than women in rural communities (SSB,2018) than in more central areas. However, this can be impacted by several factors other than the employer branding of rural work opportunities.

It's not just the job that is important when considering rural work opportunities

What is important for you to say yes to a job in a rural area



The following factors have been identified as keys to stimulate and enhance Talent attraction for employment in rural areas:

Social arenas

Creating vibrant social arenas could involve organizing events, sports leagues, and cultural activities, which can foster a sense of community and belonging. This effort may require collaboration with local businesses, volunteer organizations, and public services.

Job opportunities for partners

Additionally, offering job opportunities for partners is very important. Companies can work with local businesses, volunteer organizations, and public services to create a network of employment options for partners. Support programs such as relocation assistance and comprehensive onboarding for the entire family can ease the transition for those moving to rural areas.

Collaboration as part of the solution

Effective collaboration with local entities is essential in building a thriving environment that appeals to potential employees.

Significant interest increase in rural work opportunities is possible

It is possible to significantly increase the interest in rural work opportunities by accommodating the factors deemed most important by the students (see previous page). This increases interest for most students, and particularly for students from larger cities. The difference in interest is, to a marginal degree, higher for males than females.

If the company facilitated for the factors which you prioritized above, how interested would you then be in working and living in a rural area?

N= 278



City
>30,000 inhabitants

+38 %
(50 → 69/100)



Town
5,000 – 30,000 inhabitants

+32 %
(57 → 75/100)



Community
<5,000 inhabitants

+18 %
(85 → 72/100)



+29 %
(59 → 76/100)



+33 %
(54 → 72 /100)

On a scale between 1 and 100, with 100 representing the highest interest, students scored their interest in rural work opportunities.

Key takeaways

From the data we have learned that:

High interest in rural work

Overall, more students are interested in rural work opportunities than uninterested, which suggests there is potential for attracting young talent to rural areas.

Increase interest in rural work

Students from smaller towns prioritize rural work opportunities higher than those from larger cities. However, the difference is smaller if the company can accommodate important factors.

More than the job

Accommodating important factors such as social arenas in the community, and work opportunities for their partner significantly increases interest in rural work opportunities.

The key to increase interest in rural job opportunities:



By accommodating the factors that are most important to the students, organizations can increase the likelihood that they will choose rural working opportunities.



Part 5

Case studies

Nutrimar

Nutrimar is able to recruit and retain skilled employees at their production facilities in Frøya – a small island community with a population of 5,000.

Main priority: the employee experience, with a focus on practical and tangible initiatives.

Nutrimar at a glance

- Employees: 70
- Head office: Trondheim
- Production facilities: Frøya
- Approximate yearly hires: 5



Photo: Berre

"The most important thing we can do to be attractive, is to take care of our employees. That is proactive employer branding. We have a very low turnover and ensure that those who have joined us are happy. That reputation is going to be spread."

Ida-Marie Andersen,
Head of HR and Administration at Nutrimar

Balancing work, life, and location

Solutions for attracting talent to Frøya

Frøya, with a population of just over 5,000, presents unique challenges when it comes to attracting and retaining talents.

Nutrimar have found that a candidate's willingness to move to Frøya depends on several factors, including the timing and the candidate's life situation and sense of connection to the region.

To address the increased competition from other large companies seeking similar expertise, the company has developed innovative solutions around work hours and flexibility, enabling employees to work on Frøya even if they live elsewhere. They invest in the employees and their competence development and their approach to employer branding is not only about attracting new talents but also ensuring that current employees feel valued and proud to be part of the company.



Flexible shift systems

- Allows employees to commute from larger cities while maintaining a good work-life balance
- Includes longer work periods followed by extended time off, making it appealing to employees who prioritize both stable work and free time
- Helps Nutrimar offer attractive jobs on Frøya, even though many of their employees might not wish to relocate permanently



On-site housing support

- Assists in finding temporary housing by putting candidates in contact with local letters
- Makes it easier for employees to manage their work shifts without permanently moving to Frøya



Off-site remote work opportunities

- With the head office located in Trondheim, it is possible for employees in administrative roles to work for Nutrimar whilst still residing in the city.



Summer internship

- Has been effective in increasing candidate interest
- Allows interns to spend four weeks in a rural setting
- Bridges the gap between urban talent and rural work opportunities
- Blending theory with practical work and allows interns to gain hands-on, factory-based experience



Employee development

- The chance to gain a trade certificate is offered to all employees as a source of professional pride and job security as well as personal and professional growth
- Employees of all ages taking advantage of the opportunity
- Can contribute to increase employees' wages
- Creates ripple effects, synergies, a stronger culture and unity by joining colleagues from different shifts and departments to study and work together



Employer branding

- Investment through fostering a strong internal culture and engaging in proactive communication
- Focus on creating a supportive and inclusive work environment
- Regularly organizing social activities to strengthen bonds among employees
- Continuous work on public image, ensuring a positively media imprint and recognition within the industry



Photo: Berre

Attractive compensation and work conditions

Frøya, with a population of just over 5,000, presents unique challenges for attracting and retaining talent. To address this, Nutrimar has developed innovative solutions around work hours and flexibility, enabling employees to work on Frøya even if they live elsewhere.

A key strategy is Nutrimar's flexible shift system, which allows employees to commute from larger cities like Trondheim or Molde while maintaining a good work-life balance. "We have a very good shift system that allows people to commute and have an apartment in Frøya while living somewhere else," explains Nutrimar. This shift model, includes longer work periods followed by extended time off, making it appealing to employees who prioritize both stable work and free time. This system also helps Nutrimar offer attractive jobs on Frøya, even though many of their employees might not wish to relocate permanently.

To further support commuting employees, Nutrimar assists in finding temporary housing on Frøya, often through local networks and existing employees. "We have capacity for those who need housing on Frøya. As an employer, we do not offer housing, but we assist in putting candidates in contact with those who do." says the company. This solution makes it easier for employees to manage their work shifts without permanently moving to Frøya. By offering flexible work arrangements and housing support, Nutrimar has successfully attracted a broader range of talent, though challenges remain for certain roles.

Hiring for administrative positions on Frøya has proven more difficult for Nutrimar, as these roles typically require relocation. Nutrimar have found that a candidate's willingness to move to Frøya depends on several factors, including the timing/the

candidate's life situation, and sense of connection to the region. Additionally, Nutrimar faces competition from other large companies seeking similar expertise. However, their office in Trondheim and increased options for remote work have alleviated this challenge. To further address the recruitment gap, Nutrimar has developed a successful summer internship program, which helps bridge the gap between urban talent and rural work opportunities. This initiative allows interns to gain hands-on, factory-based experience on Frøya, blending theory with practical work. "They found it motivating and even exotic," Nutrimar noted, referring to interns spending four weeks in the rural setting. The program, now in its second year, has been effective in reducing candidate reluctance.

Commitment to employee development

Nutrimar places a high priority on hiring skilled candidates with a trade certificate. This has in part led to strategies that makes the company a very attractive employer.

Some time ago, Nutrimar decided to offer the trade certificate to all employees who wanted it, and strongly encouraged everyone to participate. This decision was based on a desire to invest in their employees and their competence development. Nutrimar understands that obtaining a trade certificate is a source of professional pride, new perspectives, and provides a sense of job security. In addition to these benefits, the scheme also increase employees' wages. This approach meant that, even though they already had highly skilled colleagues on board, the trade certificate could provide both personal and professional

growth. The initiative proved to be very popular, with employees from their early 20s to those over 60 taking advantage of the opportunity. In retrospect, Nutrimar also noticed other positive ripple effects. Employees from different shifts and departments worked together on tasks, studied together, and built a stronger culture and sense of unity. The support and motivation they gave each other were significant and valuable.

Other initiatives

In addition to attractive compensation, work conditions, and a focus on employee development, Nutrimar invests in employer branding by fostering a strong internal culture and engaging in proactive communication. They emphasize creating a supportive and inclusive work environment, regularly

organizing social activities to strengthen bonds among employees. Nutrimar also actively works on its public image, ensuring they are positively represented in the media and recognized within their industry. Their approach to employer branding is not only about attracting new talent, but also ensuring that current employees feel valued and proud to be part of the company.

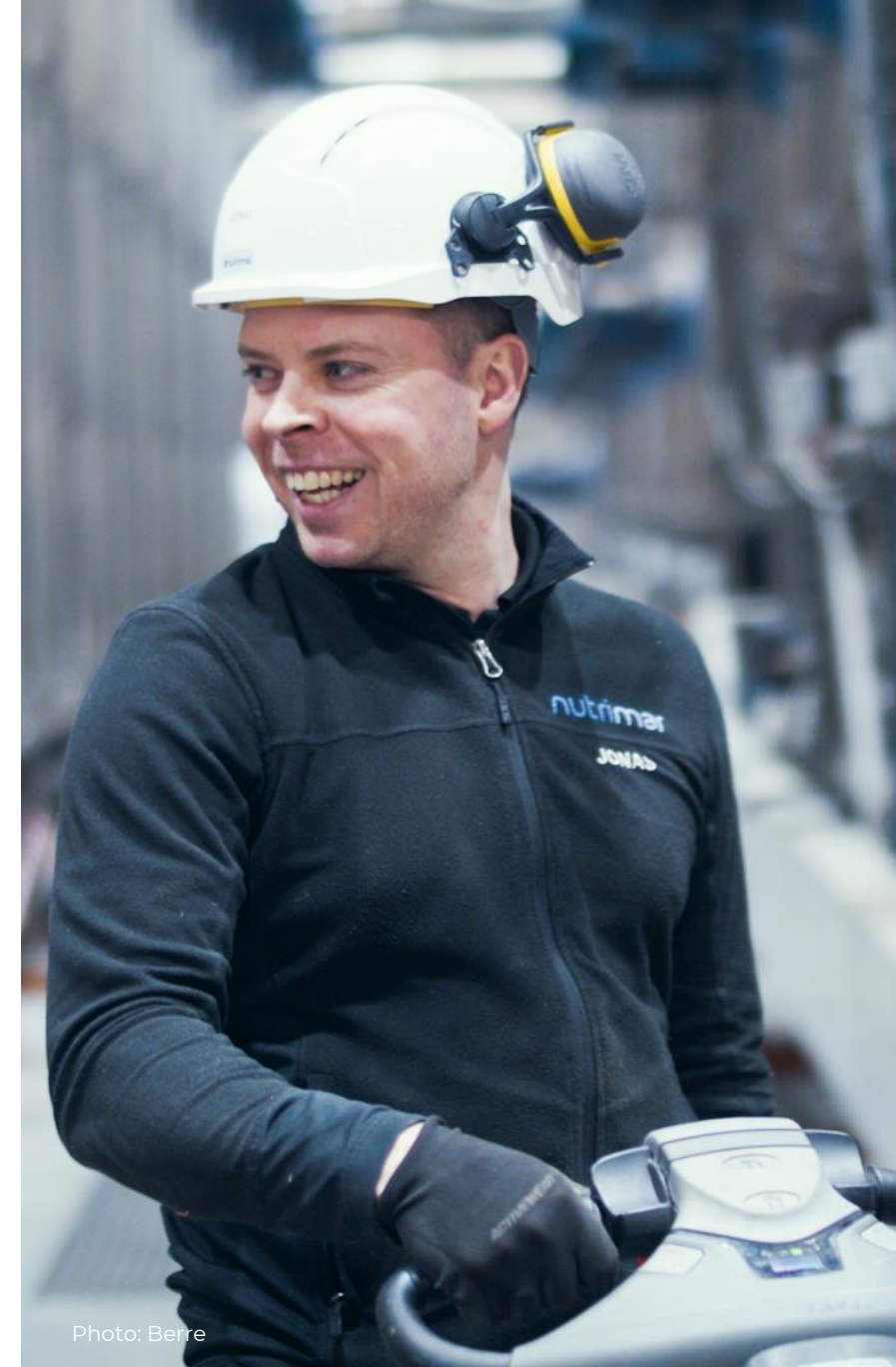


Photo: Berre

Bolaks

Bolaks genuinely engaged with their local community in Eikelandsosen, a rural village one hour's drive from Bergen.

Main focus: the many small initiatives that shape the culture at Bolaks, and thus the employer brand.

Bolaks at a glance

- Employees: 125
- Head office: Eikelandsosen
- Production facilities: All across Bjørnafjorden
- Approximate yearly hires: large variations, but a steady growth during the past 5 years.

“At Bolaks, it's not just the big initiatives that shape our employer brand, but the many small, consistent activities that truly make a difference. Whether it's sponsoring local teams, small gestures, hiring apprentices, or inviting the community to our facilities. It's these acts that showcase our commitment to the community and our employees.

We believe that building a strong brand is about creating meaningful connections, both inside and outside the company. It's not one grand move, but the accumulation of many small ones that makes us stand out as an employer.”

Synnøve Austestad
Head of HR at Bolaks



Photo: Vigdis Øvreeide

The many small initiatives that create an attractive employer brand

Bolaks, a major private employer in Bjørnafjorden, is based in Eikelandsosen, a village of around 550 residents.

Committed to the local community, they foster local goodwill through small-scale initiatives, positioning themselves as more than just a business. As a cornerstone of the community, they promote local pride and a sense of collective achievement. A dedicated talent attraction strategy builds a strong connection between the company and young talent, creating a pipeline for new talents. By investing in its employees through education, training, and career development in a supportive environment, Bolaks successfully retains talented staff and nurtures a motivated, dedicated workforce.

Organizational approaches

For operational roles: offer flexibility as far as possible in work arrangements to accommodate personal needs and alignment with family schedules. The company's shift system is very popular and gives Bolaks a competitive edge.

For administrative and technical roles: offer great flexibility with a modern approach to working hours, work environment, and sustainability measures to accommodate the younger workforce's preferences. They offer hybrid work and create a work environment that respects the personal lives and responsibilities of their employees. The company has also established a second office in Os, which is much closer to Bergen, making administrative positions even more attractive.



Community engagement

- Small-scale activities build goodwill and strengthen the relationship to the community
- Sponsor local sports teams and organizations
- Demonstrate their appreciation for the local community through active involvement



Talent attraction work

- Create diverse job opportunities for young people at different educational stages such as work shadowing, apprenticeships and part-time positions for university students



Employee retention

- Prioritize career development, fostering a supportive environment for personal and professional growth
- Offer advancement opportunities through internal promotions
- Invest in education and training for employee development
- A flat organizational structure enables easy engagement with leadership
- A strong focus on building a team spirit through a variety of social activities



Job opportunities for young talents

Bolaks offers a range of job opportunities designed to engage young people at various stages of their education.

For school students, Bolaks provides work shadowing experiences where students can spend time observing and learning about the aquaculture industry first-hand, offering early exposure to potential career paths. For high school students, particularly those enrolled in vocational programs, Bolaks offers apprenticeships that provide practical training toward earning a trade certificate. These apprenticeships are hands-on, with experienced staff mentoring students as they gain the skills needed for a successful career in aquaculture. On average 8-10% of the employees at Bolaks are apprentices. In addition, university students have the opportunity to work in 20% part-time positions while

they complete their studies, allowing them to apply their academic knowledge in a real-world setting and gain valuable work experience that benefits both the students and Bolaks. These opportunities foster a strong connection between the company and young talent, creating a pipeline for future skilled employees.

Bolaks is deeply committed to fostering strong ties with the local community through a variety of engagement initiatives. As one of the largest private employers in Bjørnafjorden municipality, the company actively participates in sponsoring local sports teams and organizations, ensuring its presence is felt throughout the community. Bolaks also takes pride in small but meaningful gestures, such as distributing cocoa and biscuits to local schools, demonstrating their

appreciation for the people around them. These regular, small-scale activities help build goodwill and strengthen the relationship between the company and the community. This consistent engagement highlights Bolaks' role not just as a business, but as a cornerstone of the community, promoting local pride and a sense of shared success.

Employee retention

Bolaks places a strong emphasis on career development and creating a supportive workplace environment that fosters both personal and professional growth. Employees are offered numerous opportunities to advance within the company, with many moving into higher positions through internal promotions.

Bolaks also invests in education and training, ensuring that employees have the skills they need to excel. The company's commitment to career growth is matched by its focus on building a positive and inclusive workplace culture

Bolaks encourages a sense of belonging and camaraderie through a variety of social activities, from large events like summer parties and Christmas dinners to smaller, informal gatherings like sports tournaments and cooking classes. The workplace environment is characterized by openness and respect, with a flat organizational

structure that allows employees to easily engage with leadership. This combination of career opportunities and a supportive environment helps Bolaks retain talented employees and cultivate a motivated workforce.

Bolaks has found it relatively easy to attract candidates for operational positions. Candidates are particularly drawn to the flexibility in work arrangements, which the company offers to accommodate personal needs. For operational staff, where fixed schedules are often required, Bolaks still offers adjustments such as shifts that align with family schedules. Their shift system is in particular very popular amongst employees and candidates alike, and gives Bolaks a competitive edge.

For more administrative and technical roles, flexibility is even greater. "We try to be as modern as possible in our approach to working hours and flexibility," says Bolaks. They have noticed that the younger workforce in

particular place increasing importance on flexibility, work environment, and sustainability measures. While Bolaks has been successful in attracting operational staff, they still face challenges in recruiting highly educated candidates to their more rural location.

Employees who live locally or can commute easily tend to stay longer. However, for those who are required to commute longer distances, retention can be more difficult. To address this, Bolaks has increased flexibility where possible, offering hybrid work for administrative positions and creating a work environment that respects the personal lives and responsibilities of its employees. The company has also established a second office in Os, which is much closer to Bergen, making administrative positions even more attractive.



Photo: Vigdis Øvreeide



Photo: Vigdis Øvreeide

Choosing rural work opportunities

Whilst both Bolaks and Nutrimar face similar challenges in attracting talents to rural areas, in particular for positions requiring higher education.

They have also found solutions in their work time arrangements, and by offering flexibility. Although this solves many of the recruitment challenges in rural areas, the question of rural relocation is still unresolved. However, amongst many of the solutions, there are still candidates who are willing to move to rural areas. One of them is Ella, an operational manager at Bolaks. She moved with her partner and child to Eikelandsosen because of Bolaks, and have made the community her home. Ella's story is one of passion, adaptability, and seizing opportunities as they arise. Originally from Meldal, a rural area 70 km south of Trondheim,

Ella's path to Bolaks was anything but straightforward. As a 16-year-old, she had barely been in a boat, and was entirely unfamiliar with the aquaculture industry. However, she was uninterested in the conventional school options, and after meeting a persuasive representative at a career fair (and after four visits to the same stand), she decided to explore this unfamiliar field, ultimately becoming the only young woman in her aquaculture class. This decision marked the start of her journey into the seafood industry.

After completing her vocational training, Ella worked with Lerøy on Frøya for several years. She later pursued a Bachelor's degree in Biomarine Innovation, followed by a spell at Salmar. However, after some time, Ella and her partner faced a crossroads during the Covid-19

Name: Ella Dombu

Employer: Bolaks AS

Position: Operational Manager

*Why aquaculture:
Found her way to the aquaculture industry through a career fair*

pandemic, with job opportunities scarce. They ended up in Knarvik, where Ella's partner landed a great job. A short time after Ella discovered her dream job through a job opening at Bolaks in Eikelandsosen, a company she knew little about at the time.

During the interview process, she immediately felt an affinity with the company's culture. "I was sold after the first meeting with Esben and Bjørg at Bolaks.





They presented the role in a way that showed how I could grow and influence the work. It felt like a place where I could thrive," Ella recalls. The decision to join Bolaks was an easy one, thanks to the welcoming and inclusive atmosphere: "It wasn't just about the job. Bolaks made me feel genuinely welcome, not just as an employee, but as a person. They were so interested in who I was and how I could contribute."

Bolaks also demonstrated their commitment to Ella's professional growth by promoting her to a leadership role. "When they offered me a leadership role when I was five months pregnant, it showed me just how much they believe in their people. It really reflects who they are as a company. Bolaks understands that we all have lives outside of work. They've made it easy for me to manage both," Ella says, noting how the company has adapted her work hours to accommodate her family's needs.

Initially, she commuted from Knarvik to Eikelandsosen, but the long daily drives became challenging. In January 2023, after a period of consideration, Ella and her family made the decision to move to Eikelandsosen. She highlights how

her coworkers helped her family integrate into the local community: "It was the people at work who made it feel like the right place to be. My colleagues introduced us to the community, and suddenly, Eikelandsosen felt like home."

Moving to a small, rural town with her young son has turned out to be a perfect fit for Ella and her family. "It's easier to settle into a place like this with kids. My son, now two-and-a-half years old, is already part of the community, playing for the local football team and making friends." The sense of community has been strong, with colleagues introducing her to local activities and inviting her to social events, helping Ella and her family build a new network.

Ella's journey to Bolaks is a testament to how a strong company culture, coupled with genuine community support, can make all the difference when attracting and retaining talent in rural areas: "I've never felt apprehensive about going to work at Bolaks. I look forward to seeing my colleagues every morning, and that's what made me want to settle down and build a life here."



Photo: Vigdis Øvreeide



Appendix

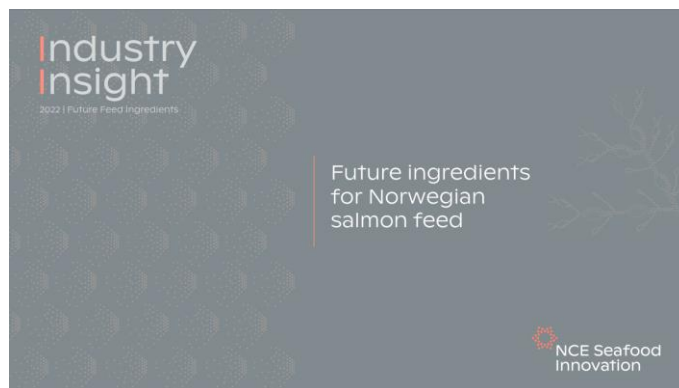
Further reading

References

Data collection method

Further reading

NCE Seafood Innovation has published several Industry Insight reports based on the cluster's five industrial areas of priority.. These are all freely available on the company's website.



Download here:

[Future Ingredients For Norwegian Salmon Feed](#)

Published: October 27, 2022



Download here:

[Data Sharing In The Norwegian Aquaculture Industry](#)

Published: May 9, 2023



Download here:

[The Future Of Plastics In The Norwegian Aquaculture Industry](#)

Published: October 20, 2023

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Data collection method and considerations

Data was collected through an online questionnaire distributed among various student groups. The objective was to reach a wide and diverse range of students, including those not primarily interested in the aquaculture industry

Collection period

Data was collected between November 2023 and April 2024.

Distribution methods

Multiple distribution methods were employed:

- Career fairs across the country, both specific to the seafood industry and general career fairs hosted by universities and student associations.
- Social media, primarily Instagram, via The Seafood Innovation Cluster and Seafood Trainee.
- Distribution through The Seafood Innovation Cluster network, with assistance from academic partners.
- PwC also contributed to the distribution through their network.

Questionnaire modifications

Changes were made during the collection process. Two specific questions were added later:

- Rating the attractiveness of aquaculture as an employer on a 5-point scale.
- Ranking the attractiveness of rural work opportunities before and after considering several factors.
- These additional questions received approximately 270 responses, compared to the original 877, and are shown in the corresponding graphs.

Considerations

The distribution channel might in some cases have an impact on the answers given by the respondents - especially regarding where students access information about future career opportunities. This potential effect cannot be measured with the current data, but is noted in the relevant places in the report

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