



WORLD EDUCATION SERVICES

WHO IS SUCCEEDING IN THE CANADIAN LABOUR MARKET?

Predictors of Career Success for Skilled Immigrants



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To promote Canada’s economic well-being in light of the country’s aging population and decreasing birth rates, the Canadian government has made considerable efforts to attract and retain skilled immigrants. Over the past two decades, the federal government has shifted its immigration policy away from specific labour market shortages to focus on the country’s overall human capital needs and the recruitment of highly skilled, well-educated immigrants.

As an organization whose mission is to advance global mobility and the integration of people into academic and professional settings, World Education Services (WES) has a deep interest both in the labour market outcomes of skilled immigrants, and in the specific human capital assets that contribute to their professional success.

In 2018, WES conducted a survey-based study. We examined the demographic characteristics of skilled immigrants as well as their experience and education, and studied how these factors affect their labour market outcomes. This report is based on that study. The study does not look at employer or demand side factors. It is intended to inform Canadian policy and practice with respect to skilled immigrants, and to increase awareness among prospective immigrants of the factors that are associated with labour force success.

The report comprises three sections:

Section one profiles the respondents’ age, gender, country of origin, entry class, province of residence, years of study, and pre- and post-migration work sector.

Section two examines respondents’ employment outcomes from two perspectives:

- First, it examines employment rates and analyzes key factors that affect employment rates, including age, gender, prior experience and sector, education, and the country where respondents earned their highest degree.
- Second, it explores the extent to which employed respondents are doing work that is broadly commensurate with their previous education and experience. It also looks at related questions such as whether respondents have been able to find work in the same sector and at the same level they had prior to immigrating.

Section three explores the implications of these findings for various audiences—policy makers, service providers, and prospective skilled immigrants—and identifies information gaps where further research is needed.

The findings in this report are based on data collected from a sample of people who had applied to WES between 2013 and 2015 for an Educational Credential Assessment (ECA—see below) and who were subsequently admitted to Canada as permanent residents. The data reflect the responses of 6,402 participants who resided in Canada at the time of the survey, all of whom had been admitted through one of the economic immigration categories now included under the Express Entry system.



Educational Credential Assessment (ECA) is an assessment of the equivalency of a degree obtained outside of Canada; used by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada to verify that a degree, diploma, or certificate is valid and equal to a Canadian credential.

RESULTS

The survey results confirmed many of the trends in skilled immigrant employment outcomes that other research has revealed. However, our study went further, exploring in greater depth those results that related to employment commensurate with skills, experience, and education.

We saw both encouraging outcomes and persistent challenges for immigrants who arrive in Canada seeking work that leverages their skills, education, and experience.

On the positive side, more than 80 percent of survey respondents reported that they were employed, most of them in permanent jobs. This result aligns with Statistics Canada data, which show that the unemployment rate for newcomers in 2017 was at its lowest since 2006.¹

At the same time, we saw that many immigrants encountered challenges that prevented them from securing employment which fully leverages their skills, education, and experience. Only 39.1 percent of survey respondents had jobs with duties mainly similar in type and complexity to their pre-immigration jobs. Demographics, skills, education, and experience are among the predictors of both employment status and the extent to which respondents had obtained commensurate employment.

KEY FINDINGS

Predictors of employment:

- **Gender:** Men were 1.6 times more likely to be employed than women
- **Age:** Older respondents were significantly less likely to be employed; younger (age 20–29) survey respondents were most likely to be employed
- **Canadian experience:** Those who immigrated under Canadian Experience Class (skilled workers who have Canadian work experience) were 2.4 times more likely to be employed than those who immigrated through other economic immigration categories
- **Education level:** Employment rates declined at each successive degree level
- **International work experience:** Employment rates declined as years of international work experience increased

1 Yssaad, L., & Fields, A. (2018). The Canadian Immigrant Labour Market: Recent Trends from 2006 to 2017. Statistics Canada=Statistique Canada (Catalogue no. 71-606-X). Retrieved from: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-606-x/71-606-x2018001-eng.htm>

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- Sector prior to immigrating: Respondents who previously worked in food services were eight times more likely to be employed than those in other sectors; those in manufacturing two times more likely, those in the professional/technical sector 1.6 times more likely, and those in IT 1.5 times more likely.

Predictors of employment commensurate with prior skills, education, experience:

- Gender: Female survey respondents were less likely to be in commensurate employment
- English proficiency: Higher levels of English proficiency were associated with commensurate employment
- Canadian experience: Survey respondents with previous Canadian experience were more likely to be working in commensurate employment
- Sector: Survey respondents who worked in the IT and professional sectors prior to immigrating were more likely to be working in commensurate employment than those previously employed in other sectors
- Regulated profession: Survey respondents who reported working previously in a profession that is regulated in Canada were significantly less likely to be working in commensurate employment
- Country of education: Where respondents completed their degree was significant: U.S.-educated respondents were more likely to be in commensurate work than those who earned degrees in other countries

It was notable that both level of degree and years of international experience were not significantly associated with commensurate employment.

Pre- and post-migration shifts in sector and seniority:

- A high proportion of respondents had to change work sectors post-migration. Less than half were working in the same sector as they were pre-migration (though most preferred to stay in the same sector).
- There was a substantial decline in the proportion of survey respondents who were in management positions, from nearly half of respondents pre-migration, to approximately one-quarter post-migration.

The survey explores several key indicators related to **commensurate employment**:

- Duties: Similar in type and complexity
 - Education: Requires a university degree in their subject area
 - Experience: Leverages previous work experience
 - Seniority retention
 - Sector retention
 - Overqualification (those with a university degree or higher who were working at jobs that required only a high school degree or on-the-job training)
-

IMPLICATIONS

While the gap between unemployment rates of immigrants and those of the Canadian-born has narrowed considerably, the study results indicate that many immigrants still encounter persistent barriers to commensurate employment in the Canadian labour market.

A 2019 RBC Economics report states that “even as the balance of immigrants has shifted towards those with more skills and education, immigrants aren’t being fully rewarded by the labour market for the attributes that got them accepted in the first place. They earn around 10% less on average than Canadian-born peers” (Agopsowicz & Billy-Ochieng, 2019, p. 1). According to RBC, the immigrant earnings gap spans occupation, age, gender, and region, and is even wider (18 percent) for university-educated immigrants aged 45 to 54. At the same time, while recent data show that gains have been made in narrowing the gap in unemployment rates between immigrants and the Canadian-born, the gap remains.

More research evidence is needed to identify what specific policies and practices lead to better outcomes. Comparative research on the employment outcomes of skilled immigrants in other immigrant-receiving countries may shed new light. We need to build new (or scale existing) evidence-based policy interventions to improve opportunities for immigrants to obtain commensurate employment. The country benefits when immigrants can fully participate in the Canadian economy.

The results of this research point to many opportunities to further refine policies and practices so that skilled immigrants can more fully contribute their skills and education to the Canadian workforce. Specifically, policy makers and practitioners need to gather information and data that will allow stakeholders to effectively address several key concerns:

- **Employer confidence in international experience:** Respondents’ employment outcomes showed that their international work and academic experience was undervalued; providing evidence of the potential for competency-informed assessments to help elucidate the relevant skills, knowledge, experience, and judgment of immigrant job seekers may help to remedy this situation.
- **Information:** Immigrants continue to need more effective information about employment in Canada. There is an ongoing need to identify how to deliver realistic, specific, targeted, accurate, and timely employment information to prospective and recent immigrants.
- **Access to regulated professions and trades:** Despite successful interventions in this area such as profession-specific bridging programs, challenges persist. More evidence is needed to identify which

The study results indicate that many immigrants still encounter persistent barriers to commensurate employment in the Canadian labour market.

specific interventions, resources, and employer or regulatory practices enable immigrants to successfully navigate all the steps required to re-enter a regulated occupation in Canada.

- **Services and interventions:** All those working toward the integration of skilled immigrants need to collectively identify which specific employment services and service delivery models lead to the best results for skilled immigrant job seekers, and focus on services that help immigrants develop social capital and professional connections.

To further inform policy and practice, WES will continue to leverage its expertise and access to data to expand the evidence on skilled immigrant labour market outcomes. And we will advance the conversation around the role of competency-informed assessments to ensure that immigrants' prior experience, education, and skills can be fully recognized in the Canadian labour market.

WES advances the global mobility and integration of people into academic and professional settings, and will continue to engage in the development of solutions that drive that mission.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

To promote Canada’s economic well-being in light of the country’s aging population and decreasing birth rates, the Canadian government has made considerable efforts to attract and retain skilled immigrants. Over the past two decades, the federal government has shifted its immigration policy away from specific labour market shortages to focus on the country’s overall human capital needs and the recruitment of highly skilled, well-educated immigrants.

As an organization whose mission is to advance the global mobility and integration of people into academic and professional settings, World Education Services (WES) has a deep interest both in the labour market outcomes of skilled immigrants, and in the specific factors that contribute to their professional success.

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This report seeks to contribute to understanding why these gaps in employment levels and earnings persist, by looking more deeply into the factors associated with the ability of skilled immigrants not only to obtain employment, but to obtain employment in their field that is commensurate with their skills, experience, and education. The purpose of this study is to examine how a range of factors related to who respondents are and what they bring with them—including demographic characteristics, prior education, sector, years of experience, and degree level—affected these respondents’ labour market outcomes. This report is intended to inform Canadian policy and practice with respect to skilled immigrants, and to increase awareness among prospective immigrants of the factors associated with labour force success. The study does not look at employer or demand side factors.

In January 2015, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (now Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)) implemented the Express Entry two-step application process for skilled immigrants who want to settle in Canada permanently. Under Express Entry, interested individuals submit a profile and are assigned points based on core human capital factors (age, level of education, English/French language proficiency, Canadian work

Gender matters:
Men are more likely to be employed and in commensurate employment.

Prior Canadian experience matters:
Survey results show that individuals with prior Canadian experience were significantly more likely to be employed and in commensurate employment.

Sector matters:
Respondents who previously worked in financial, food service, IT, management, manufacturing, and professional sectors had significantly higher employment rates. Those working in IT or professional services pre-migration were also highly likely to be in commensurate employment.

experience), skill transferability, and others (IRCC, 2018). Invitations to apply for permanent residency under one of the Express Entry immigration programs are then issued every few weeks to a specified number of individuals in the pool.

An Educational Credential Assessment (ECA) is a requirement for Express Entry applicants. WES is one of five ECA providers (since 2013) designated by IRCC to evaluate academic credentials obtained outside of Canada. WES currently provides ECAs for the majority of Express Entry applicants.

In 2018, WES undertook a study to understand how potential immigrants who had applied to WES for an ECA and subsequently immigrated to Canada fared in the labour market, and what factors most affected their outcomes. While we explored factors associated with obtaining employment, we also delved more deeply into the notion of commensurate employment with a series of questions focused on the nature of the employment respondents obtained. Were they using their previous skills and education? Were they able to retain their sector and seniority?

These questions guided our analysis:

- **What are the strongest predictors of obtaining employment?**
- **What are the main predictors of obtaining commensurate employment?**
 - What are the main predictors of obtaining employment with duties similar in type and complexity to employment prior to immigrating, that uses previous experience, and that requires a degree in the respondent's subject area?
 - What predicts the likelihood of obtaining employment in Canada in the same sector and level of seniority as the respondent had prior to migrating?



Immigration Programs Under Express Entry

- **Federal Skilled Worker (FSW) Program:** for skilled workers with international work experience who want to immigrate to Canada permanently
- **Canadian Experience Class (CEC):** for skilled workers who have Canadian work experience and want to become permanent residents
- **Federal Skilled Trades (FST) Program:** for skilled workers who want to become permanent residents based on their being qualified in a skilled trade
- **Provincial Nominees Program (PNP):** for workers who
 - Have the skills, education, and work experience to contribute to the economy of a specific province or territory
 - Want to live in that province
 - Want to become permanent residents of Canada

Source: Government of Canada, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2018

PROFILE OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Findings in this report are based on data collected in 2018 from a survey of individuals who had applied to WES between 2013 and 2015 for an Educational Credential Assessment (ECA) required as part of their immigration application. The survey was completed by 26,395 respondents who applied to immigrate. Data analyzed in this study is drawn from the responses of 6,402 (24.25 percent) survey participants who were residing in Canada at the time of the survey in 2018 and had been admitted to Canada as permanent residents through one of the skilled immigration programs now included in the Express Entry system. This narrower sample was specifically selected in order to examine the labour market outcomes of immigrants who were admitted to Canada under one of the economic classes currently included under Express Entry. As all respondents had been residing in Canada as permanent residents for five years or less, this sample would be considered “very recent immigrants” according to Statistics Canada’s definition.

The majority of the sample (64 percent) arrived in Canada under the **Federal Skilled Worker** program.

Immigration Program

The majority of the sample (64 percent) arrived in Canada under the Federal Skilled Worker program (**Figure 1**). The next largest groups were Provincial Nominees (18.8 percent), Canadian Experience Class (10.7 percent), and Federal Skilled Trades (4.8 percent).

Demographic Characteristics

- Gender: 63 percent male; 37 percent female
- Age: 70.8 percent 30–39 years; 8.3 percent under 30
- Top three countries of origin: India (35 percent); Philippines (10.4 percent); Nigeria (8.8 percent) (**Figure 1**)

Education and Experience

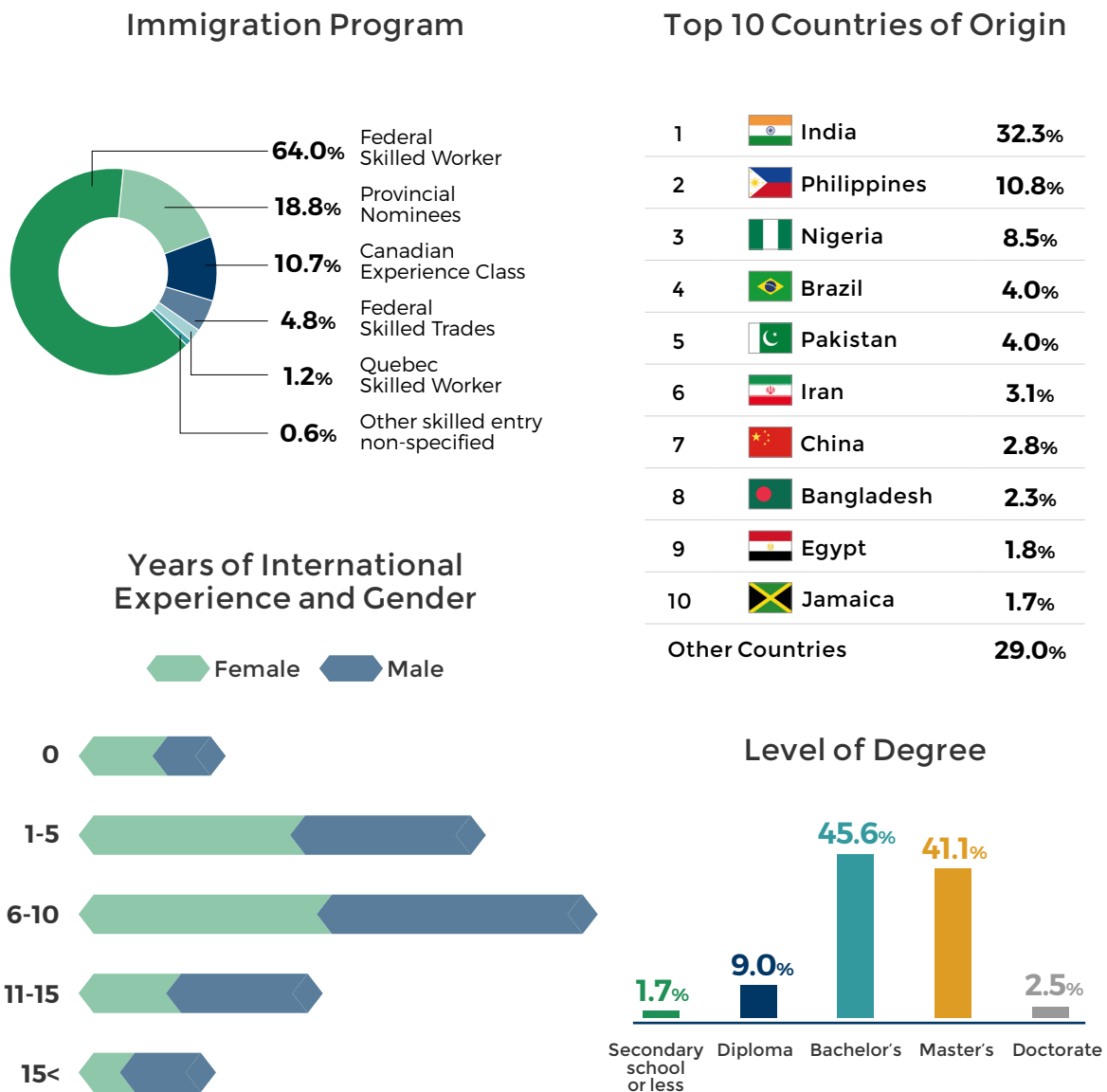
- 89.6 percent arrived with a post-secondary degree (**Figure 1**).
- 91.5 percent had some international work experience, with the largest group (37 percent) having 6–10 years of international work experience (**Figure 1**).
- Nearly half (48.9 percent) of survey respondents reported that their profession was regulated in Canada. The balance reported “no” (36.7 percent) or “not sure” (14.4 percent).
- 82.8 percent reported advanced spoken English skills; 83.9 percent reported advanced written English skills; 91.2 percent reported advanced reading skills in English.

- 91.2 percent indicated that they had completed all or most of their higher education in English.
- 20.8 percent reported that they had experience in Canada prior to entry—14.4 percent as a temporary worker and 9.5 percent as an international student.

Region of Residence Post-Migration

- 56.3 percent resided in Ontario; 20.4 percent in the Prairies; 14.7 percent in British Columbia; 6.0 percent in the Atlantic Provinces; 2.6 percent in Quebec.

Figure 1: Profile of Respondents



EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

The study examines two key aspects of employment outcomes. First, it examines employment rates and analyzes key factors affecting employment rates, including age, gender, prior experience, education, and the country where respondents obtained their highest degree. In addition, the study explores the extent to which respondents who are employed are doing work that leverages their previous education, skills, and experience. To do so, researchers created a scale of commensurate employment indicators based on the following: how similar in type and complexity the duties of their current job are to the jobs they performed prior to immigrating; whether the job requires a degree in their subject area; and how much of their previous work experience they use in their current job. The survey also looked at whether respondents have been able to find work in the same sector and at the same level as that of their previous experience.

BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

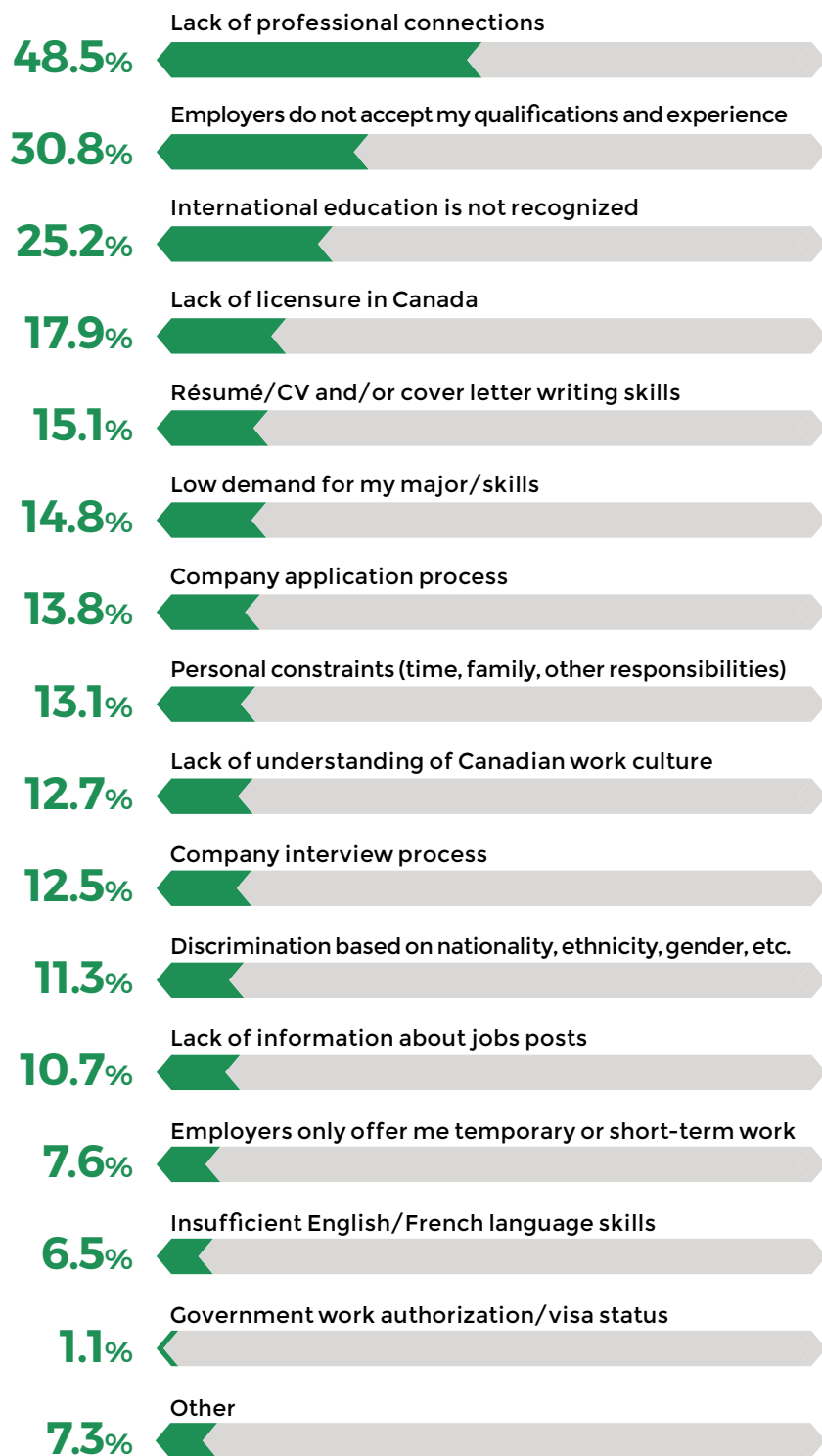
Before addressing employment outcomes, it is useful to review the barriers skilled immigrants encounter in the labour market. Survey respondents who were unemployed were asked to identify barriers to employment they had faced (**Figure 2**). Key among these barriers were:

- Lack of professional connections (48.5 percent)
- Employers not accepting qualifications and experience (30.8 percent)
- International education not being recognized (25.2 percent)

The survey asked several questions about the use of employment services to address barriers and improve outcomes. These results will be further explored in a separate report. It is important to note here, however, that the study did find a significant correlation between the use of employment services and obtaining employment: 77.3 percent of respondents who used employment services were employed, compared with 69.5 percent of those who did not use these services. Future analysis will explore associations between types of employment services and labour market outcomes.

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Figure 2: Main Barriers to Employment



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EMPLOYMENT RATES

Overall, 80.3 percent of WES survey respondents were employed in Canada, mostly in permanent jobs (78.7 percent). Most survey respondents (61.2 percent) who were employed found their first job in under three months. Within six months, 73.8 percent had found jobs. This finding is consistent with 2017 Statistics Canada data, which show that rates of employment among the university-educated population reached a record high of 82.1 percent for immigrants, compared with 91.4 percent for the Canadian-born population (Yssaad & Fields, 2018). The employment rate gap between immigrants and their Canadian-born counterparts was reported as the smallest since 2006. However, as will be explored in the next section, the results on employment commensurate with education and experience draw a more nuanced and concerning picture of skilled immigrants not working in their pre-immigration sector or using their skills.

KEY FACTORS AFFECTING EMPLOYMENT RATES

While overall employment rates among respondents reflect the general trend toward a narrower gap between immigrants and the Canadian-born, there was notable variation in the rates of employment depending on factors such as gender, age, pre-immigration sector, years of experience, country of origin, degree level, and province of residence, among others.

Gender: Female survey respondents experienced lower employment rates compared with those of their male counterparts. Men were 1.6 times more likely to be employed (**Figure 3**).

Age: Younger survey respondents experienced the highest employment rates and older survey respondents, the lowest. Older respondents were significantly less likely to be employed (**Figure 3**).

Prior Canadian experience: Survey respondents with previous experience or education in Canada (either as an international student or a temporary foreign worker) were significantly more likely to be employed than those without (**Figure 3**).

Immigration program: Employment rates were highest for survey respondents who entered in the Canadian Experience Class (CEC) program (**Figure 3**) and lowest for Provincial Nominee Program, Federal Skilled Trades, and Quebec Skilled Worker program, highlighting the value employers continue to place on Canadian work experience.

Those who immigrated who immigrated under CEC were 2.4 times more likely to be employed than those who entered through other economic immigration programs. Of note, the highest proportion of respondents who entered as CEC (21.2 percent) had previously been employed in the food

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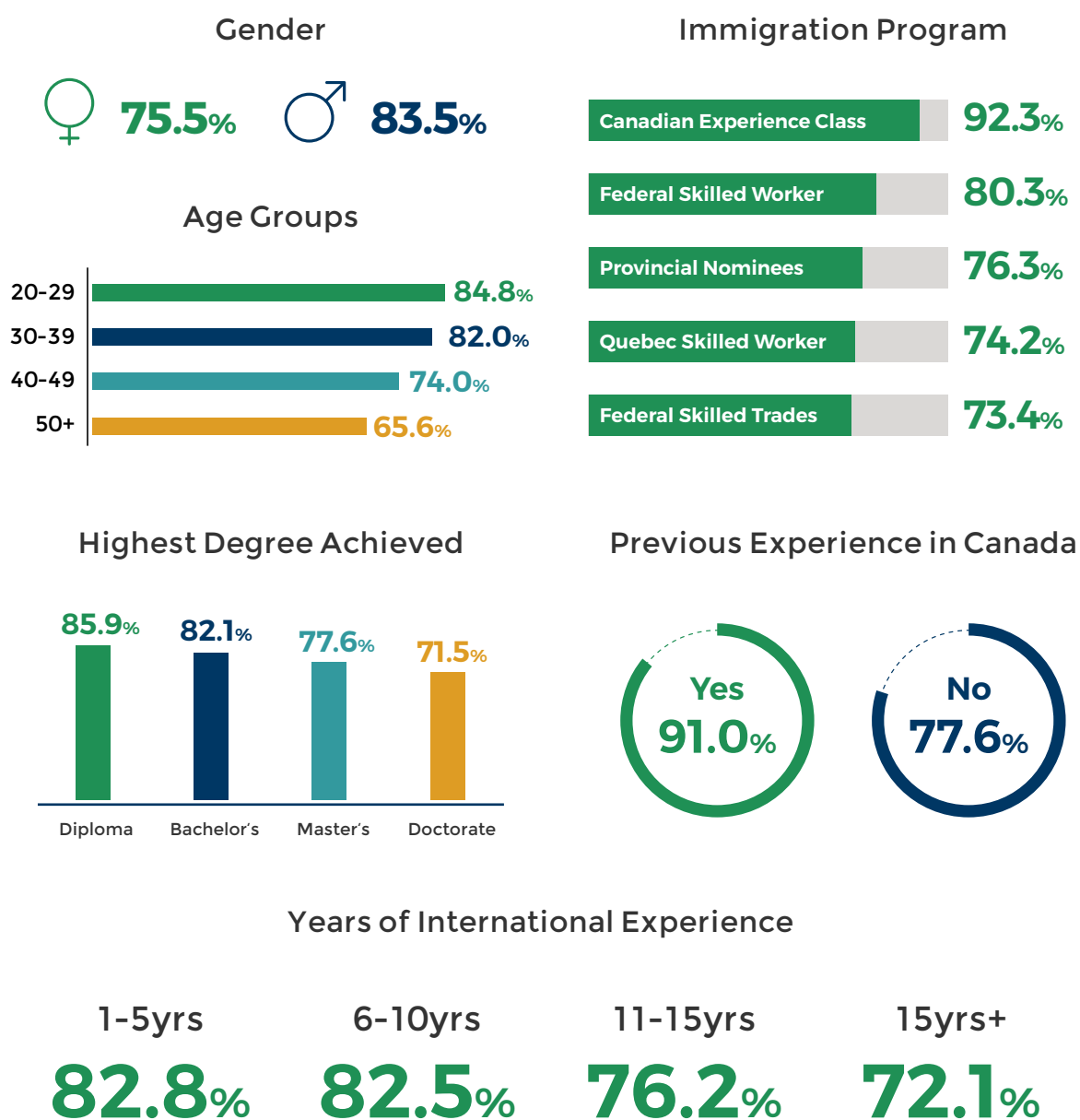
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services sector, and the highest proportion of Federal Skilled Workers (70 percent) had previously been employed in the health sector.

Years of international work experience: As with age, employment rates declined as years of international experience increased (Figure 3).

Level of education: Employment rates declined at each successive degree level; 85.9 percent of survey respondents with a college diploma were employed; declining to 71.5 percent of those with a doctorate (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Employment Rates

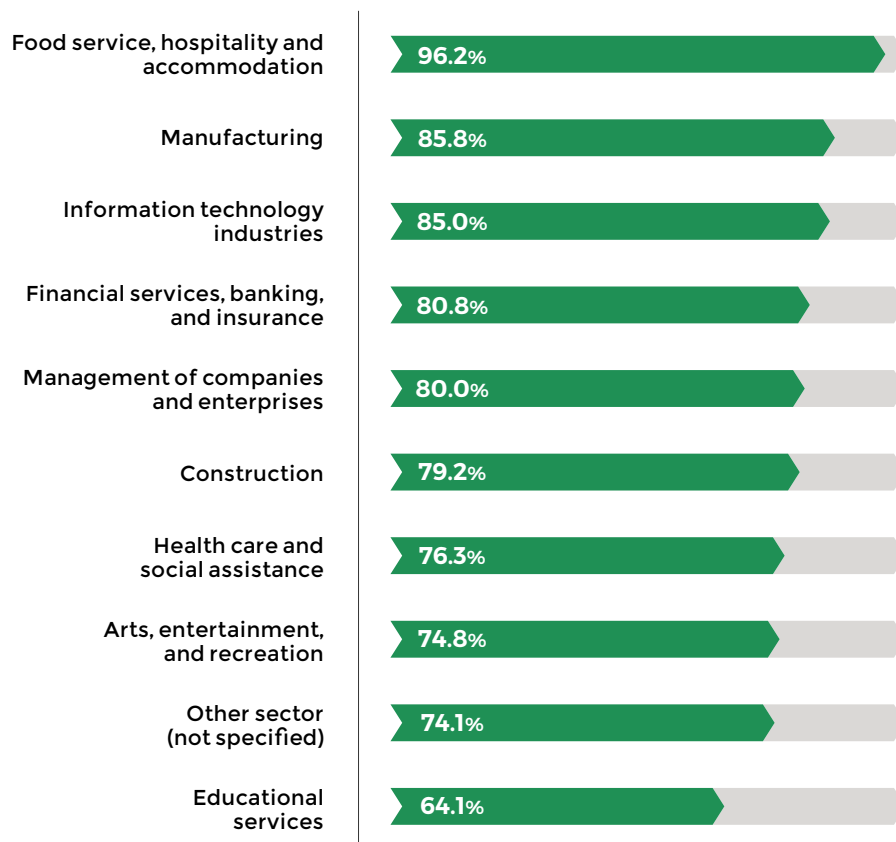


Sector prior to immigrating: Sector prior to immigrating was an important predictor of employment. Sectors are based on the North American Industry Classification System developed by the statistical agencies of Canada, Mexico, and the United States. Respondents who previously worked in financial, food service, information industries, management of companies and enterprises, manufacturing, and professional, scientific, and technical sectors had significantly higher employment rates (**Figure 4**).

Respondents who previously worked in food services were eight times more likely to be employed than those in other sectors; those in manufacturing two times more likely, those in the professional or technical sector 1.6 times more likely, and those in IT 1.5 times more likely.

Country of origin: We examined employment rates by country of origin for the top 10 respondent countries of origin and found variations that were similar to those discussed in the Statistics Canada report, *The Canadian Immigrant Labour Market: Recent Trends from 2006-2017* (Yssaad & Fields, 2018). WES survey respondents from Nigeria, China, Iran, Bangladesh, and Egypt experienced lower employment rates than survey respondents from other countries of origin, for example, the Philippines and Brazil (**Figure 5**).

Figure 4: Employment Rates by Pre-migration Work Sector



The relationship between immigrants' country of origin and employment rates may be partially explained by pre-migration sectors of employment. The data collected in this study did not permit a full analysis, however, some initial observations were noted. This is an area where further study is warranted.

A high proportion of respondents from China, Iran and Egypt had previously been employed in professional sectors and a high proportion of respondents from Bangladesh had been employed in the education sector. Professional, management and education sectors all showed a downward shift post-immigration (**Figure 6**). While a substantial number of respondents from the Philippines worked in health care before migration, the proportion working in health care declined post-migration while the proportion working in food services and other sectors grew significantly post-migration.

A higher proportion of respondents from Brazil worked in IT (a high-demand sector) post-migration (32.3 percent) compared with pre-migration (23.4 percent). While levels of work in IT remained unchanged or increased for immigrants from most countries of origin, the number of IT workers from Nigeria dropped post-immigration, adding to the overall pattern of less favourable outcomes for respondents from Nigeria.

Figure 5: Employment Rates by Country of Origin





















1		Philippines	89.7%
2		Brazil	89.2%
3		Jamaica	85.5%
4		India	78.1%
5		Iran	70.7%
6		Nigeria	63.8%
7		Bangladesh	60.4%
8		China	59.8%
9		Pakistan	56.7%
10		Egypt	52.7%

Figure 6: Changes in Work Sector by Country of Origin

Country of origin	Top pre-migration sector(s) of work	Post-migration change (%)
 India	IT - 23.7%	--
	Professional - 21.2%	↓ 4.0
	Management - 16.8%	↓ 1.6
 Philippines	Health care - 28.0%	↓ 5.0
	Management - 21.1%	↓ 5.8
	Food service - 10.8%	↑ 4.4
 Nigeria	Management - 22.7%	--
	Financial - 16.6%	↓ 3.5
	IT - 16.6%	↓ 4.0
 Pakistan	Management - 29.3%	↓ 8.1
	Professional - 19.1%	↓ 2.6
 China	IT - 23.1%	--
	Management - 22.2%	↓ 8.8
 Iran	Professional - 38.8%	↓ 12.5
 Brazil	IT - 23.4%	↑ 8.9
	Management - 22.5%	↓ 7.3
	Professional - 19.8%	↓ 9.7
 Bangladesh	IT - 27.4%	--
	Management - 19.8%	↑ 7.2
	Professional - 14.2%	↓ 3.1
	Education - 10.4%	↓ 7.2
 Egypt	Professional - 33.8%	↓ 12.2
	IT - 18.9%	--
	Health care - 13.5%	↓ 8.1
 Jamaica	Management - 25.5%	↓ 8.5
	Financial - 27.3%	↓ 2.2

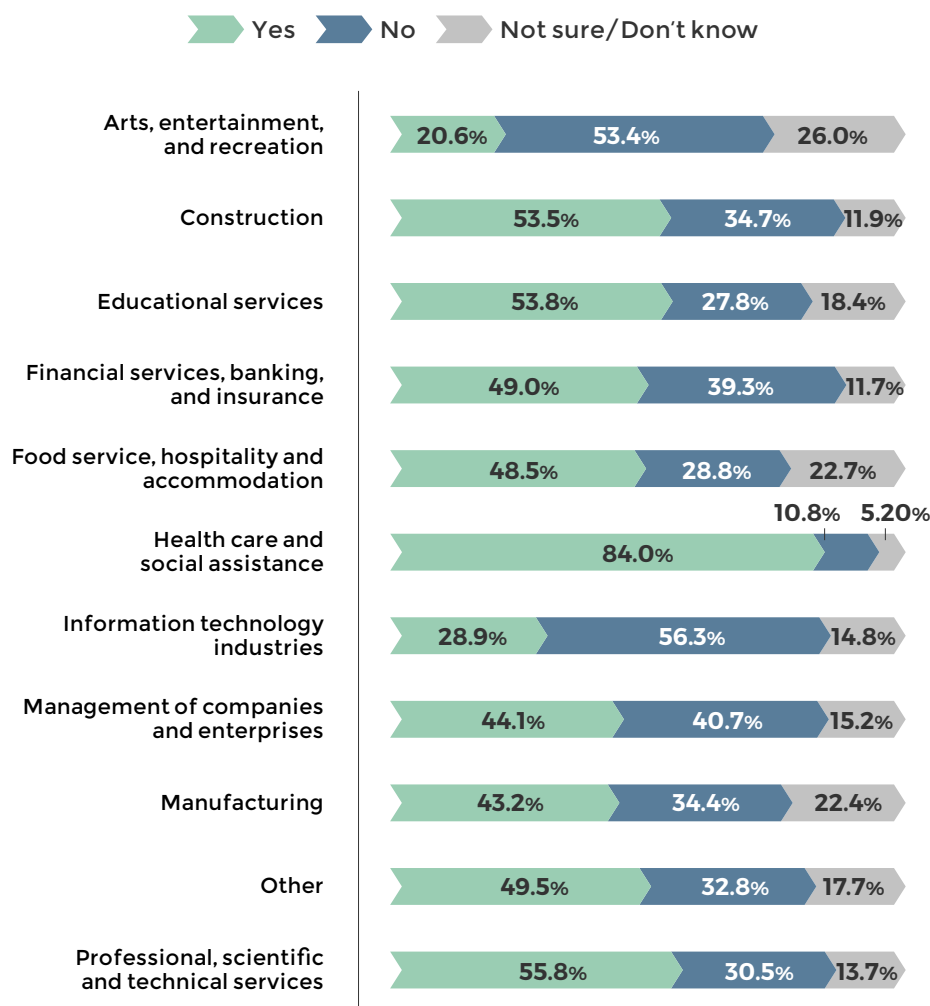
Regulated occupation: Survey respondents who reported working in a profession that is regulated (requires a licence or certificate of registration with a designated regulatory body) in Canada experienced similar rates of employment (80 percent) as respondents not in regulated professions (82.2 percent) or were “not sure” (76.7 percent) if their profession was regulated.

A closer examination of the work sectors of those reporting that their profession (**Figure 7**) is regulated in Canada indicates that the responses may in fact reflect a degree of misinformation or inaccuracy, which may

lead to inflated self-reporting of regulated status. Nearly half (48.9 percent) of survey respondents reported that their profession was regulated in Canada. The balance reported “no” (36.7 percent) or “not sure” (14.4 percent). The proportion of those reporting a regulated profession was high relative to the Canadian-born population. In 2006, the comparable proportion of Canadian-born working-age university graduates who had studied in fields that would typically place them in a regulated occupation was 39 percent (Zietsma, 2010).

Province of residence: Employment rates for respondents residing in Quebec (74.1 percent), the Atlantic Provinces, and Newfoundland (77.6 percent) were lower than employment rates of those residing in British Columbia (86 percent), the Prairies (80.6 percent), or Ontario (79.3 percent). These findings closely resembled Canadian employment rate trends.

Figure 7: Percent of Study Population in Regulated Professions



COMMENSURATE EMPLOYMENT

While the gap between unemployment rates among immigrants and the Canadian-born has narrowed considerably and the overall employment rate among respondents was 80.3 percent, results of the study indicate that many immigrants still encounter persistent challenges in finding commensurate employment in the Canadian labour market.

COMMENSURATE EMPLOYMENT SCALE

To assess the degree to which respondents were in commensurate employment, the survey asked:

- Does your current job require a degree in your subject area?
- How similar are the duties in your current job in type and complexity to those of your pre-immigration job?
- How much of your previous experience are you using in your current job?

Only 39.1 percent of survey respondents had jobs with duties similar in type and complexity to their positions pre-immigration; only 54.1 percent used a lot of previous job experience in their current post; and 50.3 percent were working in a job requiring educational credentials in their discipline and at their degree/diploma level.

Looking at these three key elements of commensurate employment (duties similar to pre-immigration jobs, uses previous experience, same field requiring similar degree level), we created a commensurate employment scale. Using the scale, we found the following to be the most significant factors associated with obtaining commensurate employment:

- Gender: Female survey respondents were less likely to be in commensurate employment.
- English proficiency: Higher levels of English proficiency were associated with higher commensurate employment. However, it should be noted that language proficiency was self-reported and proficiency ratings were high across the whole sample.
- Canadian experience: Survey respondents with previous Canadian experience as a student or temporary worker were more likely to be working in commensurate employment.
- Sector: Survey respondents who worked in the IT and professional sectors prior to immigrating were more likely to be working in commensurate employment than those previously employed in other sectors.
- Regulated profession: Survey respondents who reported previously working in a profession that is regulated in Canada were significantly less likely to be working in commensurate employment.

Persistent challenges in finding commensurate employment in the Canadian labour market:

39.1%

had jobs with duties similar in type and complexity to their positions pre-immigration

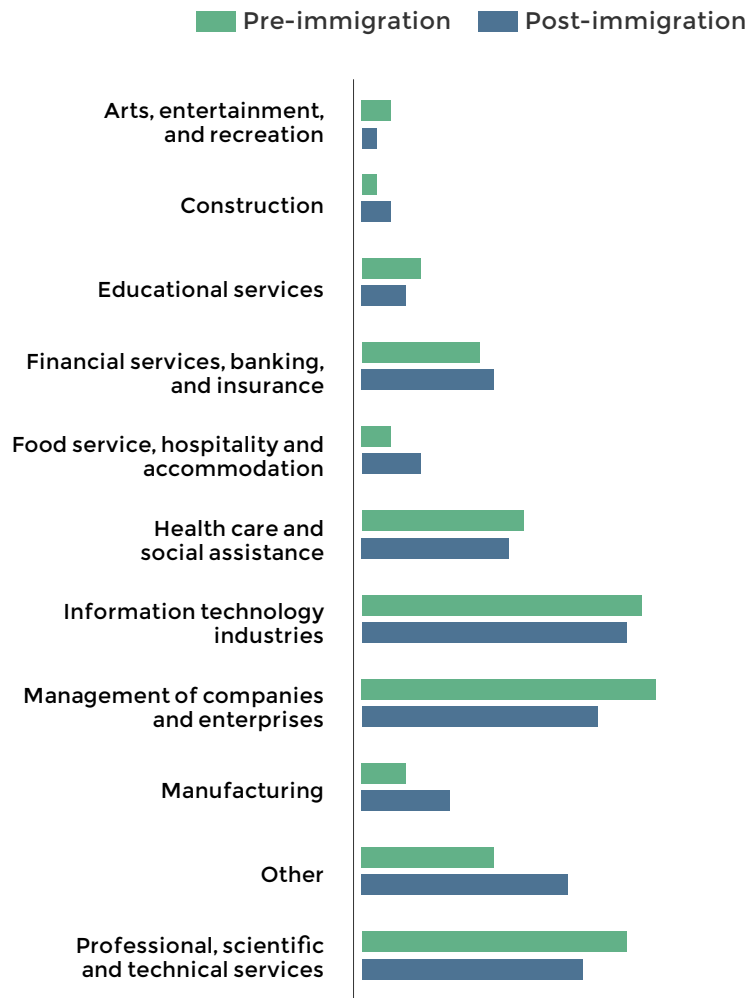
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were working in a job requiring educational credentials in their discipline and at their degree/diploma level.

54.1%

used a lot of previous job experience in their current post.

Figure 8: Percent of Study Population by Pre- and Post-Migration Work Sector



COMMENSURATE EMPLOYMENT: SECTOR AND SENIORITY

The research explored other related aspects of commensurate employment: Have respondents been able to find work in the same sector and at the same level as they did prior to immigrating? Most (91.4 percent) respondents hoped to work in the same profession after immigrating. However, results show that less than half (47.2 percent) were in fact working in the same sector as they were pre-migration (28.2 percent changed sectors and 24.2 percent were unemployed).

The proportion of respondents working in each sector pre- and post-migration is presented in **Figure 8**. The changes were most apparent for survey respondents who had previously worked in professional, management, education, and health sectors. Post-migration, there was an increased proportion of survey respondents working in food services, manufacturing, finance, construction, and other sectors. Survey respondents who had previously worked in IT were very likely to continue working in their sector. As noted above in the section on employment rates, there were also important interrelationships between sector and country of origin.

There was strong evidence that survey respondents experienced significant changes in levels of job seniority, the majority experiencing a decrease in their level of seniority post-migration (**Figure 10**). There was a marked decline in the proportion of survey respondents who were in management positions, from nearly half of respondents' pre-migration to approximately one-quarter post-migration.

COMMENSURATE EMPLOYMENT: OTHER FACTORS

Gender: **Figure 9** indicates that 51.7 percent of males worked in the same sector post immigration, as compared with only 41.3 percent of females. As well, men who did not work in their sector were still more likely to be employed in a different sector, while women were more likely to be unemployed.

Table 3 presents data on changes in pre- and post-migration level of job seniority by gender. Despite high levels of education and experience, more than one-quarter of survey respondents were working in entry-level positions post-migration. Gender differences were pronounced, with an even higher proportion of females in entry-level positions.

Years of international experience: It is notable that having more education or more international experience did not significantly help survey respondents obtain commensurate employment.

Level and country of degree: An individual's country of education did make a significant difference in obtaining commensurate employment. Respondents who completed their highest degree in the U.S. were more likely to be working in a commensurate role, while respondents who completed their highest degree in the Philippines or Nigeria were the least likely to be employed in a commensurate job, suggesting that where higher education was obtained has a greater impact on commensurate employment than on employment in general.

Having more education or more international experience did not significantly help survey respondents obtain commensurate employment.

Figure 9: Sector Retention after Migration by Gender

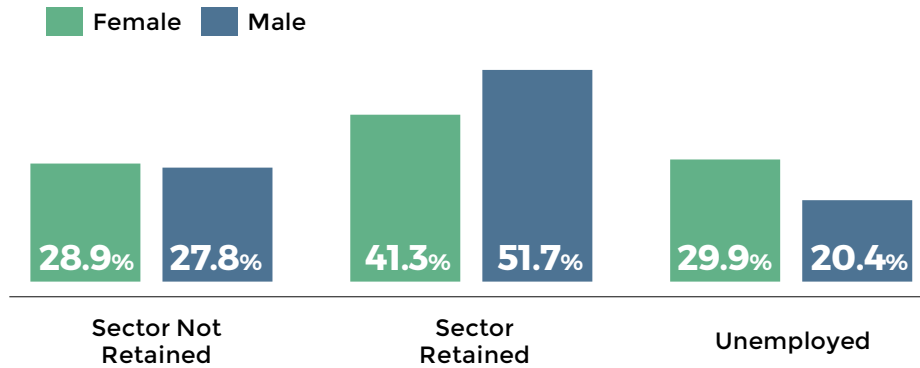


Figure 10: Changes in Level of Seniority by Gender

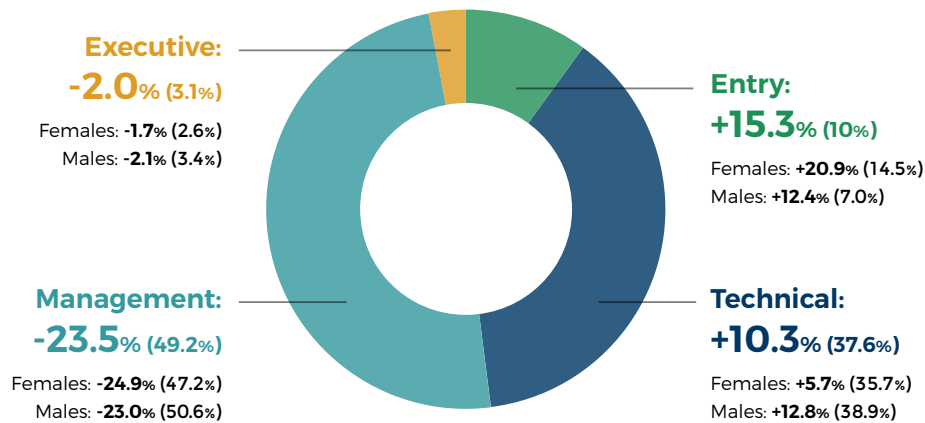


Figure 11: Changes in Level of Seniority

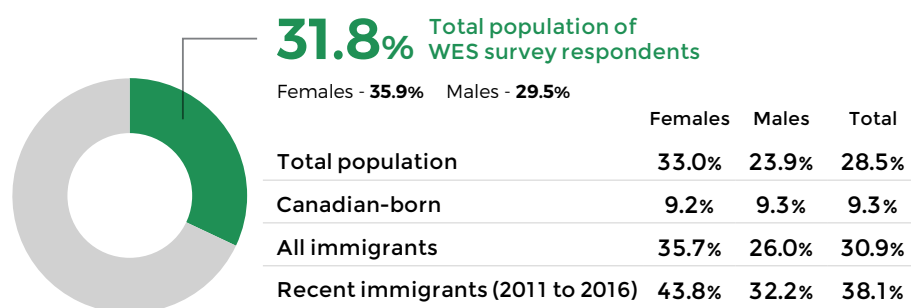
↑	Increased level of seniority	7.2%
↓	Decreased level of seniority	35.4%
—	Stayed at entry level	6.2%
—	Stayed at technical level	30.2%
—	Stayed at management level	20.5%
—	Stayed at executive level	0.6%

OVERQUALIFICATION

One additional way to approach commensurate employment is to look at rates of overqualification. Overqualification is defined by Statistics Canada as having a university degree or higher and working at a job that only requires a high school degree or on-the-job training.

We compared rates of overqualification among survey respondents and the Canadian-born. Rates of overqualification for survey respondents were consistent with high rates of overqualification found by Statistics Canada among immigrants. **Figure 12** shows WES survey respondents were significantly more likely to be working in lower-level jobs (31.8 percent) compared with the Canadian-born population (9.3 percent) (Statistics Canada, 2016).

Figure 12: Overqualification Rates in University-Educated Canadian Population and WES Survey Respondents Aged 25-54



Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population, WES Applicant Survey

FACTORS AFFECTING JOB SATISFACTION

Despite challenges in obtaining commensurate employment, 71.3 percent survey respondents were satisfied with their sector of work. Satisfaction with opportunities for advancement (60.7 percent) and level of seniority (53.8 percent) was lower. The study identified several factors associated with lower job satisfaction: not having commensurate employment, a lower salary, and being in a casual or informal job. Job satisfaction was significantly lower among respondents who stayed in entry-level positions or who lost seniority, compared with those who remained at executive, managerial, or technical levels or increased their level of seniority. Job satisfaction was also significantly lower among respondents who reported that they previously worked in a profession that is regulated in Canada and among respondents who were not able to retain their sector of employment.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

As an organization whose mission is to advance the global mobility and integration of people into academic and professional settings, WES intends these findings to contribute to the overall understanding of skilled immigrants' employment outcomes in Canada. While considerable progress has been made in reducing the barriers that skilled immigrants encounter in the labour market, challenges persist. This study sheds light on some of the specifics of those challenges in order to inform policy and practice.

CANADIAN EXPERIENCE

Our results clearly indicate that immigrants with experience studying or working in Canada have higher employment rates. Results also indicate that more years of international experience do not lead to higher employment levels or commensurate employment. While these findings are consistent with the success of immigrants admitted through the Canadian Experience Class, they also indicate a devaluation of international experience and skills in the Canadian labour market, and potentially an over-valuing of brief periods of Canadian experience. In an economy that is increasingly dependent on immigration to sustain our labour force, this persistent reliance on Canadian experience presents a challenge to effective labour market integration of immigrant talent, and ultimately, to the Canadian economy.

A recent paper issued by Pathways to Prosperity (Fitzsimmons, Baggs, & Schuetze, 2018) explored why there is a fundamental mismatch between national immigration policy, which assesses the value of an immigrant's skills, and the value that the nation's employers place on that same immigrant's skills. The paper argues that while training programs for immigrants can be effective in addressing labour market barriers such as language and cultural proficiency, other interventions are needed to create an environment in which employers value immigrants' skills. The authors point to international firms that value the mobility of global skills.

Shifting towards a more holistic, competency-informed approach has the potential to support and accelerate the evaluation, recognition, and utilization of immigrant talent. Competency-informed assessment can inspire employer confidence in immigrant job candidates' skills, knowledge, experience, and judgment—irrespective of where these competencies were obtained or developed. WES is undertaking a mapping exercise that will catalogue current practices in this area internationally. We will also be exploring other projects in competency assessment that have the potential for scale and broad applicability.

The persistent reliance on Canadian experience presents a challenge to effective labour market integration of immigrant talent, and ultimately, to the Canadian economy.

REGULATED EMPLOYMENT

Our study results point to persistent challenges in the area of access to regulated professions and trades. Despite decades of initiatives to provide both prospective and recent immigrants with information on regulated professions and the pathways to licensure or certification, a surprising proportion of survey respondents did not know whether their profession was regulated in Canada, or may have reported incorrectly that their profession was regulated. Clearly, more effective efforts are still required to ensure that prospective and recent immigrants get specific, targeted, accurate, and timely information.

Some provinces have made progress in creating a fair access framework for occupational regulatory bodies and have supported successful bridging models. Nonetheless, respondents in this study who worked in regulated professions pre-immigration were significantly less likely to work in commensurate employment. More consistent implementation of proven policies, interventions, and employer or regulatory practices can enable immigrants to more successfully navigate licensure and the labour market.

There are also gaps in the national picture of outcomes for internationally trained professionals. Further study is required to understand why licensure rates for internationally educated applicants in some regulated fields are higher than in others. WES intends to investigate the current landscape of access to licensure to create an updated picture of advances, ongoing challenges, and outcomes for internationally trained applicants.

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Our study found significant association between the provision of post-migration employment services to skilled immigrants and increased levels of employment. More research is needed to determine which specific types of employment services and service delivery models are most associated with positive results in terms of commensurate employment. Responses regarding the main barriers encountered in the labour market suggested that more services are needed to help immigrants build social capital and professional connections. Study results also indicate a need for continued focus on information, bridge training, and other interventions for those in regulated professions. WES will continue to engage immigrant- and refugee-serving organizations to share best practices, knowledge, and outcomes across the sector to support strong outcomes.

A surprising proportion of survey respondents did not know whether their profession was regulated in Canada.

INFORMATION

Potential immigrants to Canada need access to information that is realistic, accurate and timely regarding all the factors associated with success in employment, job satisfaction, and prospects for commensurate employment. To increase awareness of these factors and improve access to services, WES will work with partners to bring accurate and timely information to future immigrants to Canada and expand and refine our direct referrals to pre-arrival services.

CONCLUSION

Canada is recruiting skilled immigrants, yet losing out when the labour market does not leverage what they bring. The results of this study indicate that a large proportion of respondents have had to change sectors and are working at a lower level of seniority. This issue is not a new one, but it is increasingly urgent. According to the Conference Board of Canada, “Immigration will remain a formative solution, accounting for all of Canada’s net labour force growth—3.7 million workers—and one-third of the economic growth rate between 2018 and 2040” (Conference Board of Canada, 2019, p. 3). A significant proportion are working in jobs for which they are educationally overqualified and which do not leverage their skills and experience. Results also show that gender and country of origin continue to be major indicators of employment outcomes for skilled immigrants.

While this study begins to unpack the factors affecting commensurate employment, more research is required to support the development of innovative, evidence-based policy and program interventions aimed at both employers and immigrants. More research is essential to determine what specific policies, programs, and practices are effectively addressing these challenges. Such interventions would improve the likelihood of immigrants obtaining commensurate employment and the Canadian economy fully leveraging skilled immigrants’ potential contribution. Comparative research on the employment outcomes of skilled immigrants among other immigrant-receiving countries may shed new light.

WES will continue to use its access to applicant data and its expertise to further inform policy and practice. We will continue to examine factors affecting employment outcomes. And we will advance the conversation on the role of competency-informed assessment as a tool for ensuring that the prior experience, education, and skills of immigrants can be credibly demonstrated and fully recognized in the Canadian labour market. WES advances the global mobility and integration of people into academic and professional settings, and will continue to engage in the development of solutions that drive that mission.

WES will advance the conversation on the role of competency-informed assessment as a tool for ensuring that the prior experience, education, and skills of immigrants can be credibly demonstrated and fully recognized in the Canadian labour market.

APPENDIX ONE: STUDY POPULATION ADDITIONAL DATA

Figure 13: Percent of Study Population by Province/Region of Residence

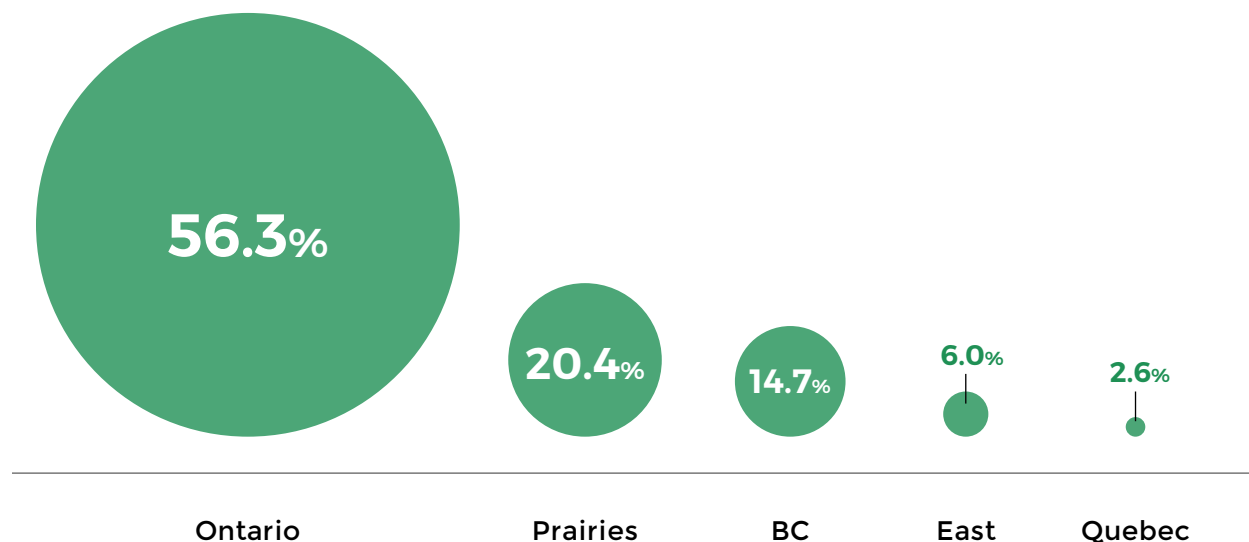


Figure 14: Survey Respondents by Country of Origin and Previous Work Sector

Country of origin	Arts	Construction	Educational	Financial	Food	Health	IT	Management	Manufacturing	Other	Professional	Total
India	1.7%	0.7%	3.7%	7.6%	1.2%	13.7%	23.7%	16.8%	3.4%	6.4%	21.2%	1304
Philippines	1.0%	1.8%	2.6%	3.6%	10.8%	28.0%	11.1%	21.1%	6.7%	5.4%	8.0%	389
Nigeria	1.5%	3.7%	3.1%	16.6%	0.0%	5.8%	16.6%	22.7%	2.8%	19.0%	8.3%	326
Pakistan	2.5%	0.0%	5.1%	13.4%	0.6%	6.4%	10.8%	29.3%	1.3%	11.5%	19.1%	157
China	3.4%	0.9%	6.8%	6.0%	0.9%	5.1%	23.1%	22.2%	3.4%	11.1%	17.1%	117
Iran	3.4%	3.4%	5.2%	1.7%	0.0%	6.9%	15.5%	7.8%	3.4%	13.8%	38.8%	116
Brazil	6.3%	2.7%	3.6%	6.3%	0.9%	4.5%	23.4%	22.5%	1.8%	8.1%	19.8%	111
Bangladesh	0.9%	0.0%	10.4%	7.5%	0.0%	4.7%	27.4%	19.8%	2.8%	12.3%	14.2%	106
Egypt	0.0%	5.4%	6.8%	1.4%	0.0%	13.5%	18.9%	9.5%	2.7%	8.1%	33.8%	74
Jamaica	0.0%	0.0%	3.6%	27.3%	0.0%	7.3%	18.2%	25.5%	1.8%	7.3%	9.1%	55
Other countries	3.8%	3.1%	6.3%	6.6%	0.9%	5.9%	17.6%	20.2%	3.1%	10.1%	22.3%	969
Total	2.4%	1.9%	4.6%	7.8%	1.9%	11.0%	19.3%	19.3%	3.4%	9.2%	19.1%	3724

APPENDIX TWO: STUDY LIMITATIONS

A number of survey data limitations and considerations should be noted. While only 6,402 (24.25 percent) of the 26,395 completed responses were analyzed for this report, this narrower sample was specifically selected to examine the labour market outcomes of immigrants who were admitted to Canada under one of the economic programs currently included under Express Entry. In terms of the data itself, data on occupation, sector, and regulated occupations presented some difficulties in coding. For example, an IT professional working in the health sector may have reported working in either the IT sector or health sector. As well, there may be self-reporting bias effects in responses; for example, on questions regarding English language proficiency and on whether a respondent's occupation is regulated in Canada or not. Finally, the survey was offered only in English. Questions on French language proficiency were not included.

APPENDIX THREE: WES SURVEY SAMPLE COMPARED WITH EXPRESS ENTRY POPULATION

Figure 15 compares the characteristics of the WES survey respondents to the 2018 Express Entry population on key characteristics: gender, age, country of origin, immigration program, and highest level of education. Notably, the WES sample was largely aged 30 to 39 and had more years of international work experience while the majority of Express Entry Invitations to Apply (ITA) were issued to applicants in the 20 to 29 age bracket who had fewer years of international work experience.

Gender: The WES respondents and Express Entry ITA populations have roughly similar ratios of males to females.

Age: The WES sample was somewhat older than the 2018 ITA population. The majority of WES respondents (70.8 percent) were between the ages of 30 and 39, whereas only 32 percent of the Express Entry ITAs were issued to people aged 30 to 39. The majority of ITAs (52 percent) were issued to applicants between the ages of 20 and 29.

Immigration program: The breakdown of immigration programs was somewhat different between the two groups. While the proportion who were admitted to Canada under the PNP were roughly similar, 64 percent of the WES sample was admitted as FSWs, compared with 45.8 percent of 2018 Express Entry applicants admitted as FSWs. The WES sample also had a smaller proportion (10.7 percent) who were admitted under the CEC as compared to 37 percent of 2018 EE applicants.

Country of origin: India is the top country of origin for both the WES sample and those admitted in 2018 through Express Entry. However, the Philippines, the second-largest group in the WES sample, does not appear in the top four countries admitted through Express Entry.

Level of education: The breakdown of education levels of the WES sample and the Express Entry ITA population is somewhat different. In the Express Entry ITA group, the highest degree for 48 percent is a master's or entry to practice degree, and 4 percent held a PhD; while in the WES sample the highest degree is a master's for 41.1 percent and 2.5 percent PhD.

Years of international work experience: Thirty-nine percent of the Express Entry ITAs were issued to applicants who had more than five years of international work experience, while 72.4 percent of WES respondents reported having more than five years of international work experience prior to arrival in Canada.

Experience in Canada: Forty percent of those who were invited to apply through Express Entry had more than one year of Canadian work experience. While the WES survey did not specifically collect data on years of work experience in Canada, 14.4 percent of survey respondents reported having been under a temporary worker status prior to applying for permanent residency. In addition, 25 percent of those who were invited to apply through Express Entry had received some education in Canada, whereas the WES sample included only 9.5 percent of participants with education in Canada.

Figure 15: Comparisons between WES survey respondents and Express Entry Population

Descriptor	Express Entry (%)	WES (%)
Gender	Admissions	Admissions
Male	60	63
Female	40	37
Age	Invitations to apply	Admissions
20-29 years	51	8.3
30-39 years	45	70.8
Immigration program	Admissions	Admissions
FSW	45.8	64
PNP	16.5	18.8
CEC	37	10.7
FST	0.01	4.7
Top countries of origin	Admissions	Admissions
	India - 43	India - 35
	China - 6	Philippines - 10.4
	Nigeria - 7	Nigeria - 8.8
	United States - 4	China - 3.1
Highest Level of education	High school or less - 2	High school - 1.7
	1- or 2-year post-secondary credential - 5	Diploma - 9.0
	3-year or longer post-secondary credential - 42	Bachelors - 45.6
	Masters or entry to practice degree - 48	Masters - 41.1
	PhD - 4	PhD - 2.5

Note: Express Entry population data were derived from the Express Entry year-end report 2018. Most data included in the table were from those admitted through Express Entry; however, some descriptors were available in the report for invitations to apply (ITA).

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