

Considering Canada:

A Look at the Views of
Prospective Skilled Immigrants

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Executive Summary

Canada’s immigration system is changing so rapidly that public data and evaluation research on recent immigrants to the country are sparse. For many stakeholders, the lack of information makes it difficult to effectively plan, develop, and deliver services, information, and support to skilled immigrants. Timely information on the demographics, motivations, expectations, and needs of immigrants—both before and after they arrive in Canada – can support a more coordinated settlement sector and lead to more successful immigrant outcomes.

World Education Services (WES) was designated by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) to provide educational credential assessments (ECA) for use as part of the application process for skilled immigrants. The volume of CIC-ECA applicants has grown quickly, demonstrating high interest in Canada’s immigration program. Their applications to WES for credential assessment provide a unique opportunity to learn more about prospective skilled immigrants to Canada, an understudied group that is traditionally difficult to reach.

In 2013, WES developed a CIC-ECA client survey to gather more information about the motivations, experiences, expectations, and service needs of prospective skilled immigrants to Canada. This report was compiled to disseminate WES’ survey results from 3,181 respondents.

Survey data about this immigrant population can support the development of effective, streamlined service delivery and information flow at the earliest stage possible. This information also contributes to an ongoing discussion about best practices for coordinating and delivering services and support to immigrants.

The survey findings, released in 2014, revealed that overseas CIC-ECA clients tend to be younger and better educated than 2013 skilled workers. These clients also possess significant professional work experience in a number of areas, many in the regulated professions. A high percentage (88%) of CIC-ECA clients surveyed indicated that they currently work full time.

Nearly half of CIC-ECA clients indicated that they intended to settle in Ontario, followed by Alberta and British Columbia. Compared to the 1% of skilled workers who settled in Nova Scotia in 2013, 4% of CIC-ECA clients surveyed intended to settle in Nova Scotia. The majority of surveyed CIC-ECA clients (62%) applied to immigrate on their own, while 36% used an agent or lawyer.

CIC-ECA survey respondents highlighted that they were largely motivated to immigrate to Canada for a “better standard of living.” Most had overwhelmingly high expectations for immigration success, in particular, for their careers, with more than nine out of ten expressing a positive sense of their future prospects in Canada. Despite overall optimism for career and employment success in Canada, CIC-ECA clients anticipated facing some challenges and barriers, with more than half (59%) indicating that their “lack of work experience in Canada” would be a significant barrier. The majority of CIC-ECA respondents noted their willingness to consider other career options.

CIC-ECA respondents said that they wanted employment and education-related services that complement their credentials. Of CIC-ECA-surveyed clients, 82% identified a “database of job opportunities” as the single most important service WES could offer, and 72% indicated that they wanted WES to provide recommendations on where to apply for employment based on the outcome of their credential equivalency. Other services, information, and support that CIC-ECA clients desired are job placement services, professional networking opportunities, employment counseling and advice, and support with licensure.

A number of service needs have been identified for WES and WES stakeholders, information that can be used to support strategic planning and to think about collaborative opportunities to provide innovative services, information, and programs to prospective skilled immigrants to Canada, as well as those already in Canada. Service needs identified through the survey data include access to information and services overseas, particularly online methods to link skilled immigrants with potential employers (e.g., through a database of opportunities) and online information about job search and preparation (e.g., through webinars and direct e-mails). More information on employment and education pathways in Canada, licensure, and alternative career information and support were also identified as important service needs.

WES' CIC-ECA survey is one of the largest recent surveys of prospective immigrants to Canada. It represents a unique opportunity to see how survey data can be used to improve service delivery and coordination, develop future research, and support evidence-based policy and/or service delivery design related to economic immigration and integration. As the immigration system continues to change, the demographics, motivations, expectations, and needs of immigrants will also change. The more that WES stakeholders know about Canada's prospective skilled immigrants, the better able they will be to respond to the changing Canadian immigration landscape and to creatively develop and deliver services and resources that support immigrant success.

Introduction

About World Education Services

World Education Services (WES) is an international non-profit organization with 40 years of experience evaluating international academic credentials. WES was founded in the U.S. and began operations in Canada in 2000 as the recognized service of the Ontario government.¹ WES' mission is to facilitate the integration of internationally-educated individuals into the employment and education environment of their newly adopted country. WES provides more than 180,000 academic credential evaluations each year, half of them in Canada.

WES is a member of the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC). WES' academic credential evaluations are used and recognized by thousands of employers, licensing bodies, academic institutions, apprenticeship programs, and governments. Through community engagement work, WES has been involved in public outreach and education initiatives with immigrants – using a variety of formats – to support and prepare them to achieve their academic and professional goals in Canada.

Credential Assessment and Immigration

In 2013, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Canada created a new requirement that individuals applying to immigrate to Canada through the Federal Skilled Worker Program (FSWP) must submit an educational credential assessment (ECA) for foreign credentials. The ECA process helps determine the authenticity and Canadian equivalency of foreign educational credentials for the purpose of designating appropriate education points for the FSWP. For prospective clients, the ECA provides a realistic understanding of how their foreign educational credentials are likely to be recognized in Canada.² WES was one of four organizations designated by CIC to provide ECAs, substantially increasing the volume of applications received by WES for academic credential assessments and in the overall volume of files processed by WES. In 2014, 80% of all WES credential assessments were done for overseas clients, compared to 16% in 2012, before CIC's ECA requirement and WES' designation.

Accompanying this significant increase in overseas assessments from the CIC-ECA applications³ is a new opportunity to reach and learn about prospective immigrants – their motivations and their information and support needs – while they're still overseas. In 2014, WES developed a survey of this overseas client pool to gather richer data and information to provide greater understanding of the motivations, perceived barriers, challenges, and opportunities for these individuals, and to enhance service delivery and knowledge dissemination.

WES Research

From the start, WES has been engaged in educational and policy-relevant research related to international education, credential evaluation and recognition, and migration and mobility. WES has a deep understanding of global higher education at both the institutional and student level, with 40 years of robust and comprehensive credential evaluation data in the Automated International Credential Evaluation System (AICES) database. WES' Research and Advisory Service (RAS) has been using these data and other complementary research to provide leadership and insights on:

Best practices in international student enrollment, recruitment, and retention.

- Institutional partnerships and transnational education models.
- International education trends and strategies.⁴

RAS has used the AICES database as a research tool, as well as the WES contacts within it, for subsequent survey data collection. WES' surveys have historically focused on collecting information on client satisfaction and customer service. However, RAS has expanded the research focus for WES to include data collection and analysis on such deeper issues as drivers of educational mobility.

With the significant increase in applications for credential assessment from overseas individuals in the last two years, RAS has begun to delve deeper into the CIC-ECA data, looking at new possibilities for research with a very difficult-to-reach population: prospective immigrants still overseas.

Research Objective

The purpose of WES' survey research on CIC-ECA clients was to identify prospective immigrants' "needs" and "wants" regarding immigration intentions and service requirements, and to compare and analyze these data by client stage and demographic segment. The guiding research questions were related to the motivations, expectations, and mobility and service needs of skilled immigrant clients:

What are their main motivations for immigrating to Canada?

- What are their main expectations when they arrive in Canada?
- What are their most pressing professional needs once in Canada?
- What additional services would they like WES to offer?

WES' 2013 CIC-ECA client survey was developed to gather greater information about the motivations, experiences, expectations, and service needs of prospective skilled immigrants to Canada in order to support effective, streamlined service delivery and information flow at the earliest stage possible. Overall, the reason for disseminating these data is to provide new information about prospective immigrants to Canada and to add to the ongoing conversation about best practices for coordinating and delivering services and support to immigrants to Canada.

Methodology and Scope

WES surveyed CIC-ECA clients to better understand their migration motivations, career and education plans, perceived barriers to success, and service needs, as well as deeper demographic data. The survey was launched on June 16, 2014, and ran for three weeks, to July 7, 2014. The online survey invitation was sent by e-mail to 28,851 CIC-ECA clients with WES CIC-ECA files completed as of May 31, 2014. The survey yielded an 11% response rate, with 3,181 fully completed surveys. CIC-ECA survey respondents appeared to be comfortable with this type of survey research, with 84% indicating that they would be comfortable with WES contacting them in the future for subsequent research.

Overall, the representativeness of the survey sample is consistent with the overall demographic characteristics and attributes of the FSWP client pool in WES' database. (See Appendix A for a full comparison of the datasets.) While the survey data are representative of the WES client pool for CIC-ECA clients, it is not possible to determine whether the survey is representative of the official CIC client population, as there are no publicly available records and data on FSWP clients.

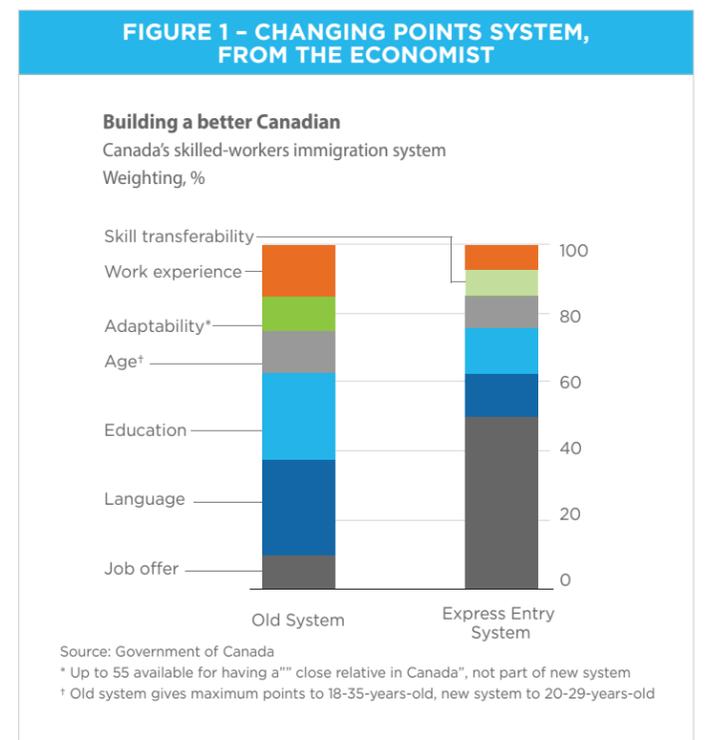
The CIC-ECA client survey was conducted in English and included 60 questions with a number of branch logic breaks to gather differential information based on unique survey responses. (See Appendix B for the logic model used for this survey.)

There were some limitations to the survey that may have affected the data collected and the survey results. Offering the survey in English may have impacted how overseas clients who are not native English speakers understood and responded to questions, and may have potentially favoured English-speaking respondents in the overall survey results. Another challenge with this survey may have been the perception that CIC was administering it, or that the responses would influence the respondent's immigration application to Canada. Despite the clear language and disclaimers used to describe the WES survey, CIC-ECA survey respondents may have believed that CIC would use the survey responses for immigration purposes. Similarly, WES' relationship with CIC-ECA clients may have influenced some survey responses. Earlier surveys of CIC-ECA clients show that 33% of WES' CIC clients thought WES was a government-affiliated agency, and only 28% thought WES was a non-profit agency.

Immigration Policy Context

The challenges of immigrant integration within Canada are well known and documented.⁵ Indeed, while Canada is internationally known for its skilled immigration system – the points system – the actual economic and social outcomes of many skilled immigrants to Canada have been disappointing. Many barriers to immigrant integration have been identified, including language barriers, the difficulty in getting credentials recognized, employment discrimination, and lack of immigrant access to social capital and networks. Many stakeholders have used different ways to try to mitigate barriers, create new opportunities, and ultimately improve economic outcomes and access to the labour market for skilled immigrants.

A significant response to immigrant integration challenges in Canada has come from government. In particular, there have been in the past five years considerable immigration policy changes at the federal level⁶ aimed at better attracting and screening "immigrants who will hit the ground running."⁷ These changes have focused on trying to get "the right immigrant" largely by tightening immigration requirements, furthering pre-screening requirements overseas, and processing applications more quickly. Federal policy changes have included modifications to the points system, the inclusion of the ECA and language test requirements, occupation-specific immigration caps, and priority processing for those with pre-arranged employment.



These changes have taken place rapidly in an attempt to quickly improve the economic labour market experiences of immigrants, sustain immigration growth, and contribute to the growth of the Canadian economy.

In January 2015, another immigration change took place with the introduction of CIC's Express Entry system, which focuses on attracting skilled immigrants with an existing job offer.⁹ This electronic system is designed to manage applications within most of Canada's economic immigration programs and is the new entry point for most economic immigrants. Modeled from the skilled immigration systems of New Zealand and Australia, Express Entry is a pre-screening tool where prospective immigrants state their interest in coming to Canada by putting together a profile (with an ECA) in order to be placed in the Express Entry pool.⁹ From there, they have the opportunity to be selected by governments or employers and to be invited to apply for immigration. This will be based on the points system, and those with a job offer receive a higher priority (see Figure 1). At that point, they can apply to immigrate.¹⁰

These many immigration changes are cumulatively altering the face of immigration in Canada.¹¹ Since these changes are so recent, there are few public data and little evaluation research available to date. However, since many of Canada's immigrants will now be coming through the Express Entry system, with increasingly available access to Canadian networks that lead to job offers, having a stronger understanding of the profile of prospective skilled immigrants can enable many stakeholders – from employers, governments, service providers, regulatory bodies, and academic institutions – to better plan and connect with immigrants both overseas and already in Canada.

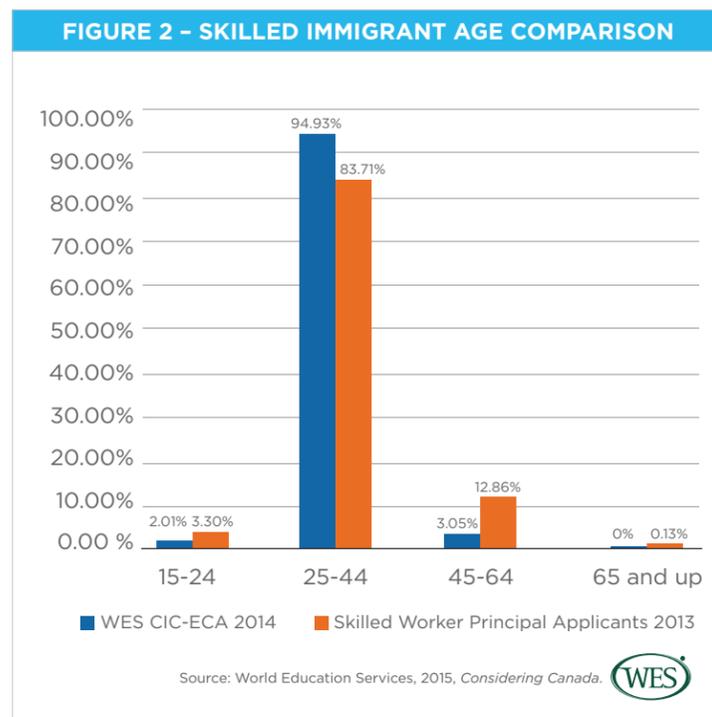
WES is uniquely positioned to learn more about prospective immigrants who are applying to have their credentials assessed (CIC-ECA) as part of their immigration process. Sharing this report and the information gathered through WES' survey research will give stakeholders an opportunity to refine and improve their work in the context of Canada's changing economic immigration system.

Research Highlights

Skilled Immigrant Profile

Overall, overseas CIC-ECA clients surveyed tended to be younger than 2013 skilled workers.¹² Of the CIC-ECA clients, 95% were 25 to 44 years old, and only 3% were 45 and older. By comparison, approximately 84% of skilled worker principal applicants landing in 2013 were between 25 and 44 years old, with about 13% between 45 and 64 years old (see Figure 2).

Most CIC-ECA clients were citizens of India (33%); the Philippines (16%); China, Nigeria, and Iran (all 6%); and Pakistan (5%).¹³ However, CIC-ECA data show that country of birth and citizenship are quite different from



country of residence, indicating that these overseas clients are a mobile group. When looking at top countries of residence, the data shift: The majority of CIC-ECA respondents still resided in India (26%) and the Philippines (12%), but 6% of CIC-ECA clients surveyed resided in the United Arab Emirates,¹⁴ with another 6% in Canada and 6% in China. While almost all survey respondents were located overseas, 10% indicated that they had resided in Canada before, 45% of them as international students and 28% as Temporary Foreign Workers (TFWs).

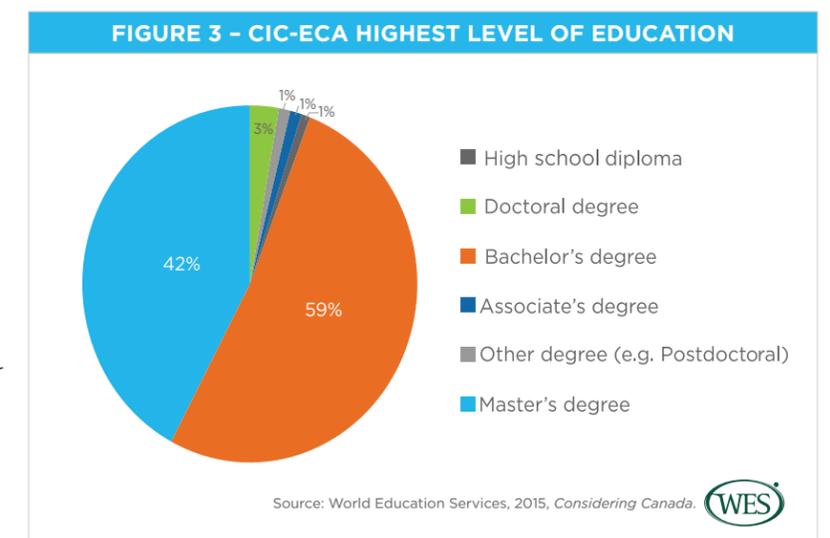
Of CIC-ECA clients, 73% indicated that they were married or in common-law relationships, while 26% indicated that they were single or divorced. A large percentage of respondents (76%) have dependents,¹⁵ while the remaining 24% said they have none. Of those CIC-ECA clients surveyed who have dependents, most (68%) said they have between one and three dependents.

CIC-ECA clients are highly educated. The majority surveyed (59%) said that their highest level of education is a bachelor's degree, while 42% had a master's degree and 3% had a doctoral degree. The remaining respondents listed a postdoctoral degree (1%), an associate degree (1%), and a high school diploma (1%) as their highest level of education (see Figure 3). Many indicated that their field of study is engineering (40%), followed by business and management (22%), health (17%), and math and computer science (13%).

By comparison, CIC's 2012 data on economic category principal applicants show that 34% had a bachelor's degree, followed by those with up to 12 years of education (28%), master's degree holders (18%), trade certificate or non-degree diploma holders (15%), and doctoral degree holders (5%).¹⁶ The survey data revealed that CIC-ECA clients have more degree-level qualifications than past skilled worker principal applicants.

CIC-ECA clients are not only highly educated but also possess significant professional work experience in a number of areas, many in the regulated professions. In terms of intended professional careers in Canada, CIC-ECA respondents identified a variety of professional areas where they will be working, or have applied to work. These were distributed across more than 60 professional categories.¹⁷

Top professional categories included registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses (6.7%); software engineers and designers (6%); and computer programmers, interactive media developers, information systems analysts, and consultants, with about 5.5% each. Other popular professional categories included financial and investment analysts (5%), civil engineers (4.5%), and university professors and lecturers, physiotherapists, and other categories, at about 4% each. CIC-ECA respondents reported that they held professional work experience in the professional field to which they were applying in Canada. Of CIC-ECA clients, 93% had at least three years of experience in their field. Most held between three to five



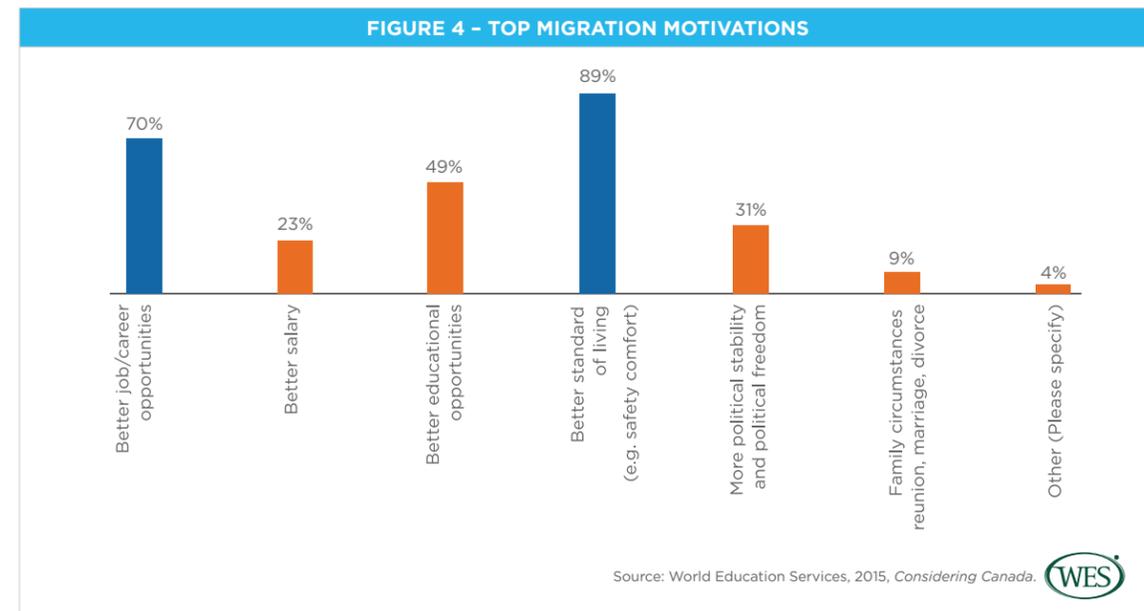
years of work experience in their professional category (33%), six to eight years (27%), or more than nine years (32%). Only 7% of CIC-ECA respondents said that they had two years of experience, and just 1% said that they did not possess professional work experience in that category.

Almost all (88%) CIC-ECA clients surveyed indicated that they currently work full-time.¹⁸ Only 5% said that they are currently unemployed, with others indicating that they work part-time (3%)¹⁹ or study (3%). When asked to indicate their “social class,” 50% of CIC-ECA respondents said they were middle-class, 35% said they were upper-middle class, 6% said they were lower-middle class, and only 3% said they were upper class. When looked at cumulatively, the CIC-ECA clients surveyed self-reported a comfortable, largely middle-class lifestyle, propelled by full-time employment.

Immigration Process and Plans

At the time of the survey, 48% of CIC-ECA respondents had applied to the FSWP and were awaiting a response. Another 36% were preparing applications, 9% had been accepted, and 2% had been rejected.²⁰ The majority of surveyed clients (62%) applied for the FSWP on their own, 28% used an agent to apply, 8% used a law firm, and 3% on a combination of friends, family, and other consultants for support and advice with the application. Of all the surveyed CIC-ECA clients, 7% (207) had applied to immigrate to another country besides Canada. Of these respondents, over half (54%) indicated that they applied to Australia, 24% to the United States, 13% to New Zealand, 9% to the United Kingdom, and 9.8% to relied other countries.

Of surveyed CIC-ECA clients, 21% indicated that another family member had also applied for the FSWP. Of these respondents, 77% said their spouse had applied, 36% said their child had applied, 14% said that a sibling had applied, and 9% indicated others had applied, such as their cousins, friends, and brothers- and sisters-in-law.



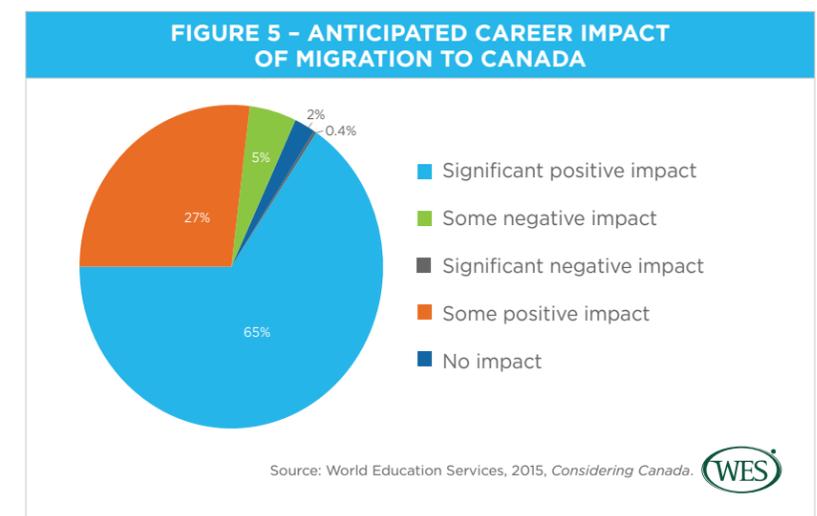
Almost all CIC-ECA surveyed clients were aware of other Canadian immigration programs and classes. The majority knew about the Federal Skilled Trades Program (53%), the Provincial Nominee Program (51%),

Quebec Skilled Workers (46%), and Family Sponsorship (40%). Only 13% of respondents indicated that they were unaware of other Canadian immigration programs.

Of CIC-ECA clients, 47% indicated their intent to settle in Ontario. For other destinations, 22% selected Alberta, 12% selected British Columbia, and 4% selected Nova Scotia, while 7% were unsure. The remaining responses were evenly distributed at 2% among Manitoba, Quebec, and Saskatchewan. Compared to immigrants in the Economic category landing in 2013, 32% came to Ontario, 23% to Quebec, 15% to Alberta, 13% to British Columbia, 6% to Manitoba, and only 1% each to Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. The CIC-ECA survey indicated interest in immigration to non-traditional Canadian settlement regions and that, as of 2013, where immigrants actually go may be more reflective of provincial immigration programs, real and perceived employment opportunities, and pre-existing communities and settlement ties.²¹

Migration Motivations and Expectations

CIC-ECA respondents said that they were motivated to immigrate to Canada largely for a “better standard of living.” Indeed, when asked to identify the three largest migration motivators to come to Canada, 89% of respondents noted that a better standard of living (including safety and comfort) was important, followed by 70% who said they felt that a main motivator is better career and job prospects, and 49% who said they felt that there would be better educational opportunities for themselves and their families. Other migration motivators include better salary (23%), more political stability and freedom (31%), and other reasons related to family reunification, immigration policies in Canada, opportunities for children, and overall culture in Canada (13%) (see Figure 5).

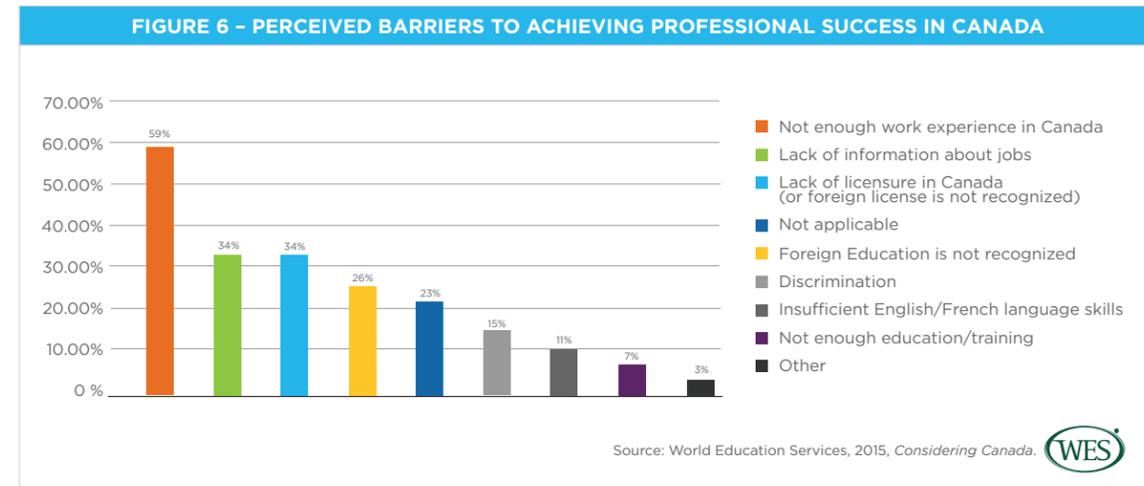


CIC-ECA client respondents had overwhelmingly high expectations for immigration success, especially for their career prospects. Of CIC-ECA-surveyed clients, more than nine out of ten were positive about their future prospects in Canada, with 65% indicating that immigration to Canada would have a significant positive impact on their career, and 59% indicating that they expected to find a job in their field within a year (see Figure 5). As for length of time needed to find work, 20% said they felt that they would find skilled employment in their field in one to three years; the remaining respondents (18%) said that they were not sure and that they felt it would be three or more years (4%). CIC-ECA clients from India were the most certain that they would be successful within a year, with 77% indicating their expectation of finding skilled employment in that timeframe. Over half (59%) of all CIC-ECA respondents indicated that they were likely or very likely to consider a career switch in Canada. In contrast, about 41% said that they were unlikely or very unlikely to consider a career change.

Despite overall optimism for career and employment success in Canada, clients surveyed who had been accepted for immigration anticipated facing challenges and barriers. When asked to identify three barriers to

successful settlement and integration in Canada, more than half (59%) of CIC-ECA respondents indicated that their “lack of work experience in Canada” would be a significant barrier to achieving professional success.

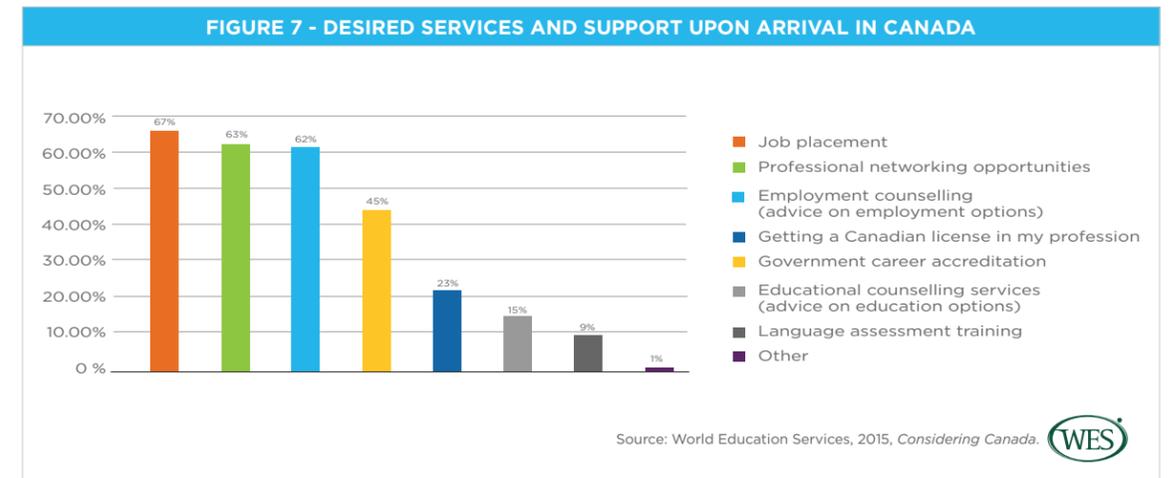
Other perceived barriers and challenges to career success in Canada included lack of information about jobs (34%), the difficulty of the licensing process in Canada (34%),²² lack of recognition for foreign education (23%), discrimination (15%), language barriers (11%), not enough education and training (7%), and other (3%). Still, 26% of CIC-ECA respondents said they felt that this question was not applicable to them, that barriers would not prevent them from achieving their career and work goals (see Figure 6). The perceived challenges that CIC-ECA clients identified align with the top barriers reported by immigrants after landing and have been persistently noted in immigration research and studies in Canada.



When analyzing CIC-ECA responses by country of citizenship, Chinese clients were more likely (26%) to hold a negative view of their future career prospects in Canada, compared to Indian clients (1%), Filipino clients (2%), and respondents overall (5%). In addition, the perceived barriers varied considerably by the country where respondents were educated. More than half of Filipino respondents (59%) identified “lack of licensure in Canada” as their top professional barrier, while three-quarters of Chinese respondents identified “lack of work experience in Canada” as their main barrier to professional success. This may reflect what prospective migrants learn from those who have already migrated to Canada, as well as differences in intended occupations and perceived professional barriers by professional areas (e.g., regulated professions).

Desired Information and Services

The WES survey asked CIC-ECA clients about career and employment services and what kinds of support they desired upon arrival in Canada.²³ CIC-ECA respondents said that they were most interested in job placement services (67%), professional networking opportunities (63%), employment counseling and advice (62%), and getting a Canadian licence (45%). In terms of the particular services that WES could provide, over 70% of CIC-ECA respondents said they would like employment- and education-related services in addition to credential assessment. Specifically, 82% of CIC-ECA respondents identified “database of job opportunities” as the single most important service WES could offer when they landed in Canada. Similarly, 72% of all CIC-ECA respondents indicated that they wanted WES to provide recommendations for where to apply for employment based on the outcome of their credential equivalency assessment (see Figure 7).



The information needs of CIC-ECA respondents varied by country of citizenship. While nearly all Indian respondents indicated that they needed information on “job placement services” (83%), (67%) of Filipino respondents shared “getting a Canadian licence” was most useful, and more than (64%) of Chinese respondents mainly wanted information on “professional networking opportunities.”

Different educational levels and intended occupations likely determined the information needs of CIC-ECA respondents. Those with a master’s degree were more likely (71%) to give “job placement services” as their main information need, while those with a doctoral degree expressed more interest (74%) in “professional networking opportunities.” Holders of bachelor’s degrees were more likely (50%) to identify information on “getting a Canadian licence” as their top request.

Summary of Identified Service Needs and Expectations

This survey research reveals unique information about the current profile, application statuses and experiences, expectations and motivations, and support needs of prospective immigrants to Canada under the FSWP. It is one of the first surveys of its kind and represents a unique opportunity to see how these types of data can be used to improve service delivery and coordination, develop future research, and support evidence-based policy and/or service delivery design for economic immigration and integration.²⁴

The following recommendations highlight some key considerations related to improving and aligning career and employment information as well as support for immigrants considering or coming to Canada within this new immigration context. While these focus on service delivery, it is clear that multiple stakeholders must work together to improve service delivery and outcomes for immigrants to Canada. Additional suggestions are also presented for future research and data analysis on prospective immigrant experiences, as well as immigration and settlement policy considerations based on these data.

Information and Service Needs

The point at which overseas and prospective immigrants to Canada are “ready” to receive information about settlement may vary. However, the current focus on finding employment in Canada while still overseas means that there are particular support and information needs that prospective immigrants need at an earlier point than ever before. This survey revealed that prospective immigrants desire employment support and information. More research about where and how prospective immigrants research and find information about employment and career paths and how they prepare for and access opportunities would better identify the best methods for delivering information and support.

Based on this survey, online methods to link with potential employers (e.g., through a database of opportunities) and online information about job search and preparation (e.g., through webinars and direct e-mails) would be beneficial. In a context where many of these prospective immigrants do not ultimately come to Canada, and certainly may not settle in their intended region or even keep the job they accepted to immigrate, questions about information, services, and service evaluation metrics need to be explored.

Through community engagement activities, WES has been responding to the changing information and service needs of prospective immigrants, as well as immigrants already in Canada. WES has developed and launched a quarterly e-newsletter, a social media campaign, and a series of webinars to provide relevant and timely information as well as access to resources and other support for employment, education, training, professional licensing, and settlement in Canada. WES’ community engagement initiatives have been adapted to best respond to the service and information needs identified in this research.

Organizations supporting newcomer employment and settlement might explore how they could collaborate and offer webinars about searching for Canadian employment online. These could include existing skills building and contextually important information about searching for employment in Canada (e.g., creating Canadian-style résumés) as well as specific information about applying for employment as a prospective immigrant (e.g., noting their immigration process within an application). Webinars presented from multiple stakeholders – in particular, employers – would also be beneficial.

The survey group identified the benefits of a database to consolidate information about employment opportunities and potential employers in Canada for prospective immigrants. The Express Entry pool promises to provide this type of database, although it might be worth looking at ways that such a database could be enhanced to offer a greater range of useful information.

Navigating regulatory requirements and licensure in Canadian provinces and territories is a topic of concern to many prospective immigrants. These data show that this concern as well as the need for information and support is more prevalent among immigrants from some regions and professions than others. Clear, easy-to-navigate information needs to be available about regulatory requirements and opportunities for fast-tracking and bridging. Evidence shows that the immigrants – in particular those in regulated professions – who more quickly get their careers on track are more likely to succeed economically and socially, as well as to fill vital employment gaps in Canada. Other ways to obtain licensure (or become closer to obtaining licensure) overseas could include overseas testing and online bridge-training and gap courses. Tracking demand for these types of services could be used to identify pilot-testing regions and professions for programs and test centres.

In addition to information about career pathways and licensure, this survey reveals that many prospective immigrants would consider a career change. It’s therefore important to consider what information, tools, and resources could assist in this process.

This survey also shows that prospective immigrants are now considering a move to provinces and territories that have historically been less attractive to newcomers. It also reveals that some regions continue to be underexplored as a destination choice for prospective migrants. Employment opportunities drive many decisions related to migration destination, and the survey shows that job-related information is a key information need for prospective immigrants.

While the respondents in the CIC-ECA survey constitute a younger group of immigrants, many of the motivations to come to Canada remain as before: safety, family, career, education, and more. The reasons for choosing where to settle are not limited to the career and employment success of these migrants, many of whom come with dependents and have long-term desires that include family reunification and sustained support for family settlement. Further, other immigrants already in Canada, as well as other groups of migrants and refugees, should not be forgotten when developing innovative services for this group of prospective skilled immigrants.

Future Research and Policy Considerations

Although Canada is an immigration destination for many, this research highlights the fact that many prospective skilled immigrants are considering other destinations for immigration. While not the focus of the survey, Canada’s simple and transparent immigration system was noted as a positive pull-factor for many CIC-ECA respondents. Further data could be collected to explore the extent to which Canada’s immigration is – and will be – accessible to prospective immigrants. Maintaining a reputation as a country where people around the world can access a streamlined process to become immigrants and citizens could help Canada remain competitive as a destination. Also critical is ensuring that the current system and accompanying support elements enable these immigrants to succeed. Future research tracking the short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes of these immigrants – as well as successes and challenges in their settlement in Canada over the long term – can best inform evidence-based immigration policies.

Future research on prospective immigrants to Canada could explore many other areas, particularly the information and support needs of clients who are still overseas, the service needs of accompanying family members, the long-term intentions of clients for settlement in Canada, client views of and experiences with the Canadian immigration system compared to other immigration programs, and the ways these clients access information about Canadian immigration and determine what to expect in Canada and how and where to find support.

How services, information, and support are delivered to immigrants by settlement agencies and other stakeholders is changing and must continue to change to best serve the needs of prospective immigrants. Funding and research on this work needs to keep pace with these changes. New ways to measure service delivery in an increasingly online environment to prospective immigrants could be considered and developed in collaboration with settlement agencies and governments.

Conclusion

Canada's immigration landscape is changing. It is important to understand the changing profile, motivations, and needs of prospective immigrants applying to come to Canada to best adapt and provide relevant services, support, information, and interventions. The CIC-ECA is an early-stage immigration requirement for overseas skilled immigrants who intend to apply to come to Canada. Therefore, WES is uniquely positioned to learn and share more about prospective skilled immigrants.

This report highlights how patterns of immigration are changing and will continue to change with new immigration priorities and systems in place. Information gathered through WES' survey research with prospective immigrants provides stakeholders with timely and detailed data and information on skilled immigrants in the context of Canada's changing economic immigration system. This type of information is critical to refining services, resources, and programs to better connect with immigrants both overseas and in Canada.

Express Entry is likely to once again shift the profile, expectations, and needs of prospective and future immigrants. A great number of Canada's immigrants will now come through the Express Entry system, which offers valuable access to Canadian networks that can lead to job offers. Those who arrive in Canada may not all need the same type of employment support and services. However, their overall settlement needs and their families' needs may be similar to those of Canada's past skilled workers and dependents.

This survey research reveals that there is a discrepancy between intended destinations within Canada and actual immigrant landing locations, which may reveal challenges for prospective immigrants in pursuing desired settlement regions. WES has collaborated with community agencies, employers and their associations, academic institutions, and regulatory bodies to develop and run a series of webinars through its community engagement work to address this need and will continue to look to other service providers, employers, and institutions for future collaboration.

Providing services and support to prospective immigrants overseas has led, and will lead, to improved settlement and integration outcomes upon arrival. The WES client group overseas will also include many people who either choose to immigrate elsewhere, come to Canada with a different status, or delay their journey to Canada. Questions remain as to what type of relationship WES should continue to have with them.

WES' CIC-ECA survey reveals interesting findings about prospective immigrants to Canada. It is one of the largest recent surveys of its kind and represents a unique opportunity to see how this type of data can be used to improve service delivery and coordination, develop future research, and support evidence-based policy and/or service delivery design related to economic immigration and integration.

Further changes to the immigration system will continue to shift the profile, motivations, expectations, and needs of immigrants. The more that WES stakeholders know about Canada's prospective skilled immigrants, the better able they will be to respond to the changing Canadian immigration landscape and to creatively plan, develop, and deliver services and resources that support immigrant success.

Appendices

Appendix A: Representativeness of Sample

AICES sample				Survey sample			
CIC Original Sample				Data Collection Period	As of: 06/18/14 - 07/07/14		
Total sample size	28,851 **			Average Profile	3,181 **		
Gender	Male 66%			Gender	Male 68%		
Age groups	<30	30 - 40	41 - 51	Age groups	<30	30 - 40	41 - 51
Academic level	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree	Doctoral degree	Academic level	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree	Doctoral degree
	58%	40%	2%		52%	42%	3%
Profile of Top 3 Countries (by Country of Education)	India	Philippines	China	Profile of Top 3 Countries (by Country of Education)	India	Philippines	China
Volume (% share of total applicants)	34%	15%	5%	Volume (% share of total respondents)	33%	16%	6%
Gender	Male 70%	Male 43%	Male 60%	Gender	Male 76%	Male 39%	Male 64%
Age groups	30 - 40	30 - 40	30 - 40	Age groups	30 - 40	30 - 40	30 - 40
	54%	58%	76%		58%	55%	78%
Academic level	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree	Academic level	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree
	63%	91%	39%		50%	89%	31%

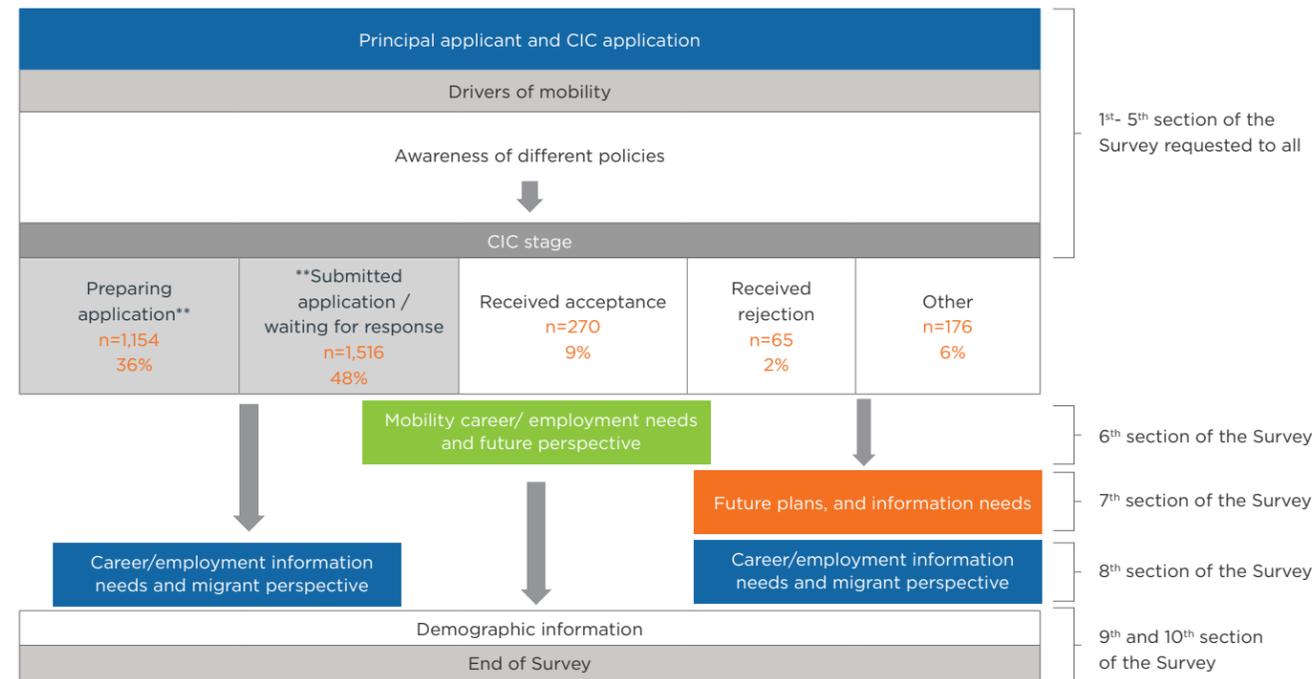
** Indicate completed files only

* REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE DEFINITION: In the widest sense, a sample which is representative of a population. Some confusion arises to whether "representative" is regarded as meaning "selected by some process which gives all samples an equal chance of appearing to represent the population"; or, alternatively, whether it means "typical in respect of certain characteristics, however chosen. (OECD Glossary of Statistical Terms)"

Source: World Education Services, 2015, *Considering Canada*. 

Appendices

Appendix B: Survey Flow and Logic CIC 2.0



"Preparing application", "Submitted application" responses are analyzed as one common group classified as = "Applicant Stage"***

Appendix C: Acronyms

ACESC	Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada
AICES	Automated International Credential Evaluation System
CIC	Citizenship and Immigration Canada
ECA	Educational credential assessment
FSWP	Federal Skilled Worker Program
RAS	WES' Research and Advisory Service
TFW	Temporary Foreign Worker
WES	World Education Services

Endnotes

- ¹ The acronym WES will be used throughout this report to describe the work of both WES-Canada and WES-US, acknowledging that the organization works collectively. While this report focuses on the Canadian immigration and settlement context, the survey research used for this report was led and supported by WES-US.
- ² "CIC Backgrounder". 2013. Available at: http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/media/backgrounders/2013/2013-04-18.asp?_ga=1.206590227.1819408986.1414690134
- ³ "CIC-ECA applicants" will be used throughout this report to refer to those who apply for a WES credential evaluation for the purpose of applying to the FSWP.
- ⁴ About RAS. 2014. Available at: <http://www.wes.org/ras/index.asp>
- ⁵ See research from Alboim, N., Sweetman, A., Reitz, J., & G. Picot.
- ⁶ The focus of this report is skilled migration under Canada's FSWP. There have been many changes to other aspects of Canada's immigration system – these other changes intersect and impact one another (e.g., family reunification can affect long term retention and settlement for economic immigrants).
- ⁷ Speaking notes for The Honourable Jason Kenney, P.C., M.P. Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism. March 28, 2012. Available at: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/media/speeches/2012/2012-03-28.asp>
- ⁸ *The Economist*. January 10, 2015. "No Country for Old Men". Available at: <http://www.economist.com/news/americas/21638191-canada-used-prize-immigrants-who-would-make-good-citizens-now-people-job-offers-have>
- ⁹ Ibid
- ¹⁰ CIC. Express Entry. Available online: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/immigrate/express/express-entry.asp>
- ¹¹ Ibbitson, J. 2014. *Bootstrap Immigrants: Assessing the Conservative Transformation of Canada's Immigration Program*. Centre for International Governance Innovation. Available at: https://www.cigionline.org/sites/default/files/pb_no52.pdf
- ¹² *CIC Facts and Figures*, 2013. "Immigration Overview: Permanent Residents". Available at: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2013/index.asp>
- ¹³ Many of the survey questions asked that respondents select multiple responses; therefore, percentages presented in this report do not always add up to 100%.
- ¹⁴ Conversely, only 1% of CIC-ECA applicants surveyed indicated birth in the UAE.
- ¹⁵ The term "dependents" was not defined in the survey and likely includes a broader definition than children, family members with disabilities, and elderly parents.
- ¹⁶ *CIC Facts and Figures*, 2012. "Immigration Overview: Permanent and Temporary Residents". Available at: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2012/index.asp>

¹⁷ Survey question asked respondents to state the National Occupational Classification (NOC) that most closely aligned to their intended field of work in Canada.

¹⁸ Employed and self-employed full-time.

¹⁹ Employed and self-employed part-time.

²⁰ The remaining 6% of respondents indicated “other” and gave responses such as applying for other programs, not applying to immigrate, being uncertain, and waiting for test results (e.g., medical and language tests).

²¹ *CIC Facts and Figures*, 2013. “Immigration Overview: Permanent Residents”. Available at: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2013/index.asp>

²² This includes challenges with attaining professional licensure in Canada.

²³ The survey did not ask CIC-ECA applicants about their current information and service needs related to employment and career support while still overseas. Based on responses, it appears that respondents highlighted services that could be supported in an overseas and online capacity.

²⁴ This survey represents a first look at a particular group of prospective immigrants and should be adjusted and run again to best reflect changes to current immigration systems and policy.

Notes

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