

# Immigrants in Canada's Skilled Trades

Untapped Talent Amid Growing Demand



The Future Skills Centre (FSC) is a forward-thinking centre for research and collaboration dedicated to driving innovation in skills development so that everyone in Canada can be prepared for the future of work. We partner with policymakers, researchers, practitioners, employers and labour, and post-secondary institutions to solve pressing labour market challenges and ensure that everyone can benefit from relevant lifelong learning opportunities. We are founded by a consortium whose members are Toronto Metropolitan University, Blueprint, and Signal49 Research, and are funded by the Government of Canada's Future Skills Program.

# Contents

4

Highlights

5

Why skilled trades immigration matters now

6

Canada's skilled trades labour shortages

7

Immigrants in the skilled trades today

8

Skilled trade immigration pathways

9

Skilled trade immigrants' labour market outcomes

11

Barriers to immigrant participation in the skilled trades

12

Progress toward fair foreign credential recognition

13

What's next

14

Appendix A: Methodology

15

Appendix B: Bibliography

# Highlights

- Immigrants are under-represented in the skilled trades, including in high-demand construction trades. Only 19 per cent of immigrants with foreign trades experience who intend to work in the trades in Canada become certified in their field after arrival.
- The number of immigrants arriving with trade certifications continues to lag labour market needs, highlighting a gap between demand and the responsiveness of our current immigration programs.
- Immigrants in the skilled trades have strong initial economic outcomes compared with other immigrants, but they earn less initially than their Canadian-born peers in the trades and see their wages stagnate over time.
- Innovative practices in sectors like healthcare highlight promising approaches that could be adopted to help strengthen certification pathways in the skilled trades.



# Why skilled trades immigration matters now

Canada has set ambitious infrastructure development goals, including expanding our rail infrastructure, investing in clean energy, and building affordable housing.<sup>1</sup> Achieving these priorities depends on having enough skilled tradespeople<sup>2</sup> to do the work, now and in the future.

But we face a growing challenge: The gap between the workers Canada has and the workers its infrastructure plans require is widening. While more people are registering in apprenticeship programs, many do not complete their program on time or they leave their programs altogether.<sup>3</sup> As a result, the number of skilled tradespeople is not keeping pace with rising demand.

While it can take years to train and certify new tradespeople domestically, immigration offers a path to grow the skilled trades workforce more quickly by drawing on workers who already have relevant training and experience. With Canada's population growth declining<sup>4</sup> and immigrants expected to drive most of Canada's future population and labour force growth,<sup>5</sup> immigrants are also an important talent pool for the skilled trades in the long term.

We conducted a literature review to understand the current representation of immigrants in the skilled trades and the challenges Canada faces in using skilled trades immigrant talent. We reviewed literature related to:

- the demand for skilled tradespeople and why immigration will be part of addressing labour shortages in the skilled trades
- immigration pathways for skilled trades immigrants
- where immigrants work in the skilled trades today and their labour market outcomes
- documented barriers preventing skilled trades immigrants from working in their intended occupation

See Appendix A for our full methodology.



1 Prime Minister of Canada, "Prime Minister Carney launches Build Canada Homes to supercharge homebuilding across the country"; and Prime Minister of Canada, "Prime Minister Carney announces ambitious new plan to defend, build, and transform the North."

2 Skilled trades refer to professional occupations that require specialized training and hands-on work.

3 Statistics Canada, "New registrations, certifications and pathway indicators of registered apprentices in Canada, 2024."

4 Signal49 Research, "Canadian 20-Year Outlook: Demographics and Labour."

5 Signal49 Research.

# Canada's skilled trades labour shortages

Canada is facing a shortage of skilled tradespeople, and the consequences are already being felt.

By 2028, more than 700,000 skilled trades workers are expected to retire.<sup>6</sup> The construction sector will be hit particularly hard, with 15 per cent of its labour force projected to retire by 2034.<sup>7</sup>

Yet negative perceptions about the trades persist and continue to deter prospective entrants.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, the sector struggles to attract and retain women and other under-represented groups.<sup>9</sup> While attitudes toward the skilled trades are improving,<sup>10</sup> thousands of positions in the trades remain unfilled.<sup>11</sup>

To restore housing affordability, Canada must nearly double annual housing starts through 2035,<sup>12</sup> and will need more workers across the trades to meet the targets of Canada's 2030 Emissions Reduction Plan.<sup>13</sup> Achieving federal housing, infrastructure, and clean-growth priorities could require as many as 520,000 additional skilled workers above current levels by 2030.<sup>14</sup>

The most acute shortages are expected in Red Seal<sup>15</sup> trades, which already make up two-thirds of Canada's skilled-trade gap.<sup>16</sup> Construction trades such as

electrical installers and plumbers, as well as vehicle maintenance workers, are among the occupations facing severe and ongoing labour shortages.<sup>17</sup>

These shortages are already impacting our economy. Signal49 Research forecasts that eliminating labour gaps in construction alone would have increased Canada's GDP by \$2.4 billion over the past two years.<sup>18</sup> A quarter of construction firms identify labour and skills shortages as the primary factor limiting growth.<sup>19</sup> And across sectors, businesses report widespread consequences, including delivery delays, higher costs, and growing strain on workers' mental health.<sup>20</sup>

Canada's nation-building ambitions will intensify these pressures.<sup>21</sup> To help meet increased labour demand, the federal government announced Team Canada Strong in April 2026—a \$6-billion initiative to recruit, train, and hire up to 100,000 new Red Seal trades workers over five years.<sup>22</sup> The initiative focuses on building domestic supply by recruiting young Canadians into the trades and modernizing apprenticeship pathways. But it can take years of education and apprenticeship before workers are fully qualified,<sup>23</sup> and the shortage is immediate. Immigration therefore remains an essential part of the solution to meet these labour needs.

6 Powell and Richardson, *Powering Up*.

7 Stratton and others, "Builders, baby, builders?"

8 Government of Ontario, "Supporting an accessible and inclusive skilled trades and apprenticeship system in Ontario"; and Signal49 Research, *Building Tomorrow*.

9 Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, *The Demographics of the Skilled Trades Workforce in Canada*.

10 Signal49 Research, *Building Tomorrow*.

11 Signal49 Research, *From Shortages to Solutions*.

12 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, *Canada's housing supply shortages*.

13 Signal49 Research, *Building Tomorrow*.

14 Stratton and others, "Builders, baby, builders."

15 The Red Seal is a Canadian trade designation that indicates the holder has met the national standard in that trade and can practise their craft across Canada without taking additional exams. There are currently 54 trades that are designated as Red Seal trades in Canada, although not all provinces and territories recognize all Red Seal occupations.

16 Signal49 Research, *From Shortages to Solutions*.

17 Signal49 Research, *Skills and Productivity*.

18 Signal49 Research.

19 Statistics Canada, "Table 33-10-0995-01."

20 Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters, *CME 2022 Labour and Skills Survey*.

21 Department of Finance Canada, *Canada Strong: Budget 2025*.

22 Prime Minister of Canada, "Prime Minister Carney announces Team Canada Strong."

23 Signal49 Research, *From Shortages to Solutions*.

# Immigrants in the skilled trades today

Immigrants—defined as people who are, or who have ever been, permanent residents—are less likely than their Canadian-born counterparts to work in the skilled trades,<sup>24</sup> and they are also under-represented in skilled trades apprenticeships.<sup>25</sup> Attracting and keeping more immigrants in the skilled trades, through both domestic training and immigration pathways, will be important to meeting labour needs now and over the longer term.

## Entering the trades

Provinces and territories oversee regulated trades in Canada, although the process to certify is similar across the country. To legally practise a regulated<sup>26</sup> trade in Canada, foreign-trained workers need a Canadian Certificate of Qualification from the relevant provincial or territorial authority.

Immigrants who arrive to Canada with skilled trades experience from their home countries or elsewhere can certify in a regulated trade without completing an apprenticeship. To do so, they must first demonstrate, with clear and verifiable documentation, proficiency in the trade's required skills and experience in the trade that is equal to an apprenticeship. Once these conditions have been met, the applicant can challenge their trade's certifying exam.

Most immigrants become certified in their trade by challenging their trade's certifying exam,<sup>27</sup> but other immigrants become certified after completing an apprenticeship in Canada. This includes people who were unable to recertify in their intended trade, as well as those who have no prior trades experience or who choose to pursue a different trade after coming to Canada.

Sources: Frank and Jovic.

Immigrants working in the skilled trades in Canada today are mostly men, mirroring the gender profile of the skilled trades workforce overall.<sup>28</sup> The majority of immigrant tradespeople work in a Red Seal trade, although they are less likely to do so than non-immigrants.<sup>29</sup> Immigrants are under-represented in in-demand occupations, including construction professions such as electricians and carpenters.<sup>30</sup> They are also under-represented in mechanic and repair technologies (e.g., auto repair) and precision production (e.g., welding).<sup>31</sup> However, the number of immigrants working in the trades varies regionally. For example, the number of immigrants employed in some construction trades in Ontario, such as tile setters, concrete finishers, and bricklayers, exceeds their share of the overall labour force.<sup>32</sup> Areas with larger cities are also more likely to have higher shares of immigrants working in the trades than regions with smaller cities.<sup>33</sup>

24 Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, *The Demographics of the Skilled Trades Workforce in Canada*.

25 Frank and Jovic, *National Apprenticeship Survey*.

26 Not all trades require certification. Non-compulsory trades, such as cook and child care practitioner, do not require a certification to practise, although it may offer career benefits.

27 Hyeongsuk and Kopp, *Post-migration education of immigrants admitted in 2010 and 2011*.

28 Hou and others, *The labour market outcomes of economic immigrants in the skilled trades*.

29 Frank and Jovic, *National Apprenticeship Survey*.

30 Statistics Canada, "Canada leads the G7 for the most educated workforce"; and Picot and others, "The provision of higher- and lower-skilled immigrant labour to the Canadian economy."

31 Statistics Canada, "Canada leads the G7 for the most educated workforce"; and Picot and others, "The provision of higher- and lower-skilled immigrant labour to the Canadian economy."

32 PRISM Economics and Analysis, *DEMOGRAPHICS & DIVERSITY*.

33 PRISM Economics and Analysis.

Immigrants are under-represented in training pathways for the skilled trades. Most apprentices in Canada are young, Canadian-born men.<sup>34</sup> Immigrants, on the other hand, account for just 9 per cent of all apprentices in Canada—less than half immigrants' share of the overall working-age population.<sup>35</sup>

Immigrants who have completed apprenticeship training are more likely to enter lower-paying trades compared with Canadian-born apprentices. Immigrant men frequently certify as automotive service technicians, truck and bus mechanics, or cooks.<sup>36</sup> These roles generally pay less and offer less stability than other trades.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, immigrant women often certify in lower-paid, female-dominated trades such as early childhood educators and assistants.<sup>38</sup>



## Skilled trade immigration pathways

Immigration is one of the few ways governments can quickly increase the supply of skilled tradespeople in the short term. It also shapes the long-term size and composition of the workforce. Using immigration effectively requires a careful balance between addressing immediate needs and long-term goals.

Canada's economic immigration system primarily follows a human capital model. It privileges academically credentialed applicants over those with technical or apprenticeship-based training, alongside Canadian work experience and language proficiency.<sup>39</sup> Because these factors are associated with higher employment rates and earnings over time,<sup>40</sup> the human capital approach works well for supporting the labour market long term. However, this model is less effective in responding to acute labour shortages, such as those in the skilled trades.

As the demand for skilled trades workers has intensified, Canada's immigration system has adapted to respond. Over the past two decades, the Provincial Nominee Program was expanded, creating more immigration pathways for skilled trades immigrants aligned with regional labour needs. At the national level, the Federal Skilled Trades Program was launched in 2013 as a dedicated pathway for skilled trades immigrants. In 2023, the federal government held the first targeted Express Entry category-based draw for the skilled trades.<sup>41</sup> Between August 2023 and April 2026, there has been a total of six draws for skilled trades applicants.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Frank and Jovic, *National Apprenticeship Survey*.

<sup>35</sup> Frank and Jovic.

<sup>36</sup> Paul and others, "Bridging capital."

<sup>37</sup> Paul and others.

<sup>38</sup> Paul and others.

<sup>39</sup> Hou and others, *The labour market outcomes of economic immigrants in the skilled trades*.

<sup>40</sup> Hou, *The improvement in the labour market outcomes of recent immigrants since the mid-2010s*; and Picot and others, "The Human Capital Model of Selection and the Long-Run Economic Outcomes of Immigrants."

<sup>41</sup> Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, *2023-2024 Report to Parliament*.

<sup>42</sup> Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, "Ministerial instructions respecting invitations to apply for permanent residence under the Express Entry system."

Despite these changes, immigration flows are still not keeping up with the demand for skilled tradespeople. The Federal Skilled Trades Program, designed to help close the gap, has consistently fallen short of its annual admission target. In some skilled trades sectors, the gap between the flow of immigrants with trade certifications and demand is as high as 87 per cent.<sup>43</sup>

The low number of skilled trades immigrants compared with other economic immigrants may partly reflect challenges in attracting enough workers with the required skills. At the same time, it highlights a broader system issue: While Canada's immigration system is effective at selecting newcomers with strong long-term economic potential, it is less well-equipped to select and admit sufficient numbers of workers who can meet urgent labour market needs. This creates a gap in translating skilled trades experience into immediate labour market supply.

## Skilled trade immigrants' labour market outcomes

In the early years after arrival, immigrants working in the skilled trades often have good economic outcomes.<sup>44</sup> In the first years after admission, skilled trades immigrants are more likely to be employed than other economic immigrant principal applicants.<sup>45</sup> In the first year after arrival, their employment rates were higher than other economic principal applicants by 10 percentage points for men and 7 percentage points for women.<sup>46</sup>

Immigrant men in the skilled trades are still more likely to be employed than other economic immigrants 14 years after arrival,<sup>47</sup> but the early employment advantage that immigrant women in the trades experience disappears by year five.<sup>48</sup>

Immigrants with skilled-trade certifications also earn more after arrival and this earnings premium continues through seven years after admission compared with other principal economic applicants.<sup>49</sup> Skilled trades immigrants are also more likely to avoid low-income status than immigrants with other types of post-secondary education or who have no post-secondary education.<sup>50</sup> One reason may be the structure of apprenticeship training. Unlike most academic programs in Canada, apprentices can earn wages while they learn, helping them build work experience and financial security early on.<sup>51</sup> However, over time, skilled trades immigrants see their earnings grow more slowly compared with other economic immigrants who eventually earn more than skilled trades immigrants.<sup>52</sup>

When compared with their Canadian-born counterparts, immigrant tradespeople have weaker economic outcomes. Immigrants working in the trades earn less in their first year after certification and find their wages stagnate over time compared with Canadian-born tradespeople. In their first year after certification, immigrant tradespeople earn roughly 8 per cent less than comparable Canadian-born workers.<sup>53</sup> Although their wages catch up and can surpass those of Canadian-born tradespeople in sectors such as construction, wages for skilled trades immigrants eventually stagnate and decline overall.<sup>54</sup>

43 Signal49 Research, *From Shortages to Solutions*.

44 Hyeongsuk and Kopp, *Post-migration education of immigrants admitted in 2010 and 2011*.

45 Hou and others, *The labour market outcomes of economic immigrants in the skilled trades*.

46 Hou and others.

47 Hou and others.

48 Hou and others.

49 Hyeongsuk and Kopp, *Post-migration education of immigrants admitted in 2010 and 2011*.

50 Hyeongsuk and Kopp.

51 Hyeongsuk and Kopp.

52 Hou and others, *The labour market outcomes of economic immigrants in the skilled trades*.

53 Banerjee and others, *The Apprenticeship Pathway*.

54 Banerjee and others.

Low wages and stalled career growth may result from job and skill mismatches. These mismatches lower overall economy productivity levels, increase turnover, and can reduce job and life satisfaction.<sup>55</sup> Stagnant or declining earnings are also associated with a higher likelihood of onward migration, meaning that Canada potentially loses the benefits of immigration in the long term.<sup>56</sup>

We were unable to find studies that explore how labour outcomes for skilled trades immigrants vary by admission stream—for example, outcomes for skilled trades immigrants who arrive via different economic immigration pathways, or immigrant tradespeople who come to Canada via economic streams compared with family class or humanitarian entrants. Understanding these differences would give us a more nuanced picture of how immigrants integrate into specific skilled trades and where supports are most needed to improve labour market outcomes.



## Supporting immigrants in the skilled trades

Targeted settlement programming is helping internationally trained newcomers navigate complex certification systems and transition into Canada's labour market.

Programs such as Power of Trades, Trades Connect, and the [Centre for Skills Development's Trades Exploration for Newcomers](#) offer specialized, trades-focused settlement supports for newcomers pursuing careers in the skilled trades. Services include:

- pre-employment training
- guidance on apprenticeship and certification pathways
- job-specific language training
- job search assistance
- work placements

Settlement programs have been found to help improve participants' language skills and knowledge about the labour market.<sup>57</sup> Expanding trades-specific settlement programs and the funding needed to support them could support increased labour market entry for skilled trades immigrants.

Sources: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada; Hyeong Suk and Kopp.

<sup>55</sup> Lovei, "Job mismatch among core working age immigrants with postsecondary education."

<sup>56</sup> Signal49 Research, *The Leaky Bucket 2025*.

<sup>57</sup> Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, "2023 Settlement Outcomes Report."

# Barriers to immigrant participation in the skilled trades

Immigration can help address skilled trades shortages, but only if newcomers are able to qualify in a timely manner and enter their intended occupations. In practice, only 19 per cent of immigrants who arrive with foreign trades experience and intend to work in the skilled trades in Canada become certified in their field after arrival.<sup>58</sup> This means four out of five foreign-trained tradespeople either obtain credentials in another trade or leave the trades altogether, despite the experience they bring.

Despite the importance of immigration in addressing Canada's skilled trades shortages, our understanding of how immigrants enter and remain in the trades is surprisingly limited. Much more research exists on internationally trained professionals in other regulated fields such as healthcare or engineering. This research shows that immigrants routinely encounter barriers including racism, bias, and discrimination in the hiring process, devaluation of foreign credentials, and challenges with language proficiency that can slow or derail their ability to work in their intended occupations.<sup>59</sup> In contrast, empirical research focused on challenges and experiences particular to immigrants in the skilled trades is limited in scope and scale. As a result, we know little about the full range of challenges that skilled trades immigrants may face.

What we know so far suggests that many of the challenges faced by skilled trades immigrants echo those encountered by immigrants in other occupations, especially regulated professions. A key challenge is foreign credential recognition.

Credential recognition and certification processes are fragmented across provinces and regulatory bodies,<sup>60</sup> leaving newcomers to navigate complex requirements with limited guidance. Understanding the assessment process, which assessments are required, and which pathway is most appropriate can be both confusing and time-consuming. In addition to standard exam fees, immigrants can incur additional costs for third-party credential assessments, language testing, and bridging programs.<sup>61</sup>

Lengthy and costly certification processes can push immigrants into lower-paid transitional jobs or extended retraining, delaying entry into their professions, resulting in lost income.<sup>62</sup> For some immigrants, entry into the skilled trades occurs only after unsuccessful attempts to have their credentials and experience in another occupation recognized or to gain employment in their original field.<sup>63</sup>

Skilled trades immigrants may also face challenges specific to the trades, including difficulty securing an employer willing to sponsor an apprenticeship, particularly when applicants lack Canadian work experience or are perceived to have inadequate language skills.<sup>64</sup> Technical examinations that require familiarity with trade-specific terminology in English or French can present an additional barrier for skilled trades immigrants.<sup>65</sup> Ontario does not permit candidates to have a translator present during their exam, although they are permissible elsewhere in the country.

58 Hyeongsuk and Kopp, *Post-migration education of immigrants admitted in 2010 and 2011*.

59 Ng and Gagnon, *Employment Gaps and Underemployment for Racialized Groups and Immigrants in Canada*; Cheng and others, "Barriers and Facilitators to Professional Licensure and Certification Testing in Canada"; Sakamoto and others, "'Canadian Experience,' Employment Challenges, and Skilled Immigrants"; Salami and others, "Downward occupational mobility of baccalaureate-prepared, internationally educated nurses to licensed practical nurses"; Konnikov, "Intersections on the road to skills' transferability"; Augustine, "Immigrant Professionals and Alternative Routes to Licensing"; Augustine, "Employment Match Rates in the Regulated Professions"; and Fulton and others, "Migrant Social Workers, Foreign Credential Recognition and Securing Employment in Canada."

60 Wayland and Goldberg, *Access to Trades for Newcomers in Ontario*; and Ross, "Adult Immigrants Seeking Entry into the Trades in Rural Alberta."

61 Cheng and others, "Barriers and Facilitators to Professional Licensure and Certification Testing in Canada."

62 Ross, "Adult Immigrants Seeking Entry into the Trades in Rural Alberta."

63 Ross.

64 Wayland and Goldberg, *Access to Trades for Newcomers in Ontario*.

65 Wayland and Goldberg.

## Lowering the cost of entry to the trades

Entering the skilled trades can involve substantial costs, including tools, training, and licensing fees. For immigrants, these costs can present a barrier at an already critical transition point. Newcomers are eligible for a number of supports to help reduce financial barriers, including:

- **targeted financial supports** such as Ontario's [Tools Grant](#), Nova Scotia's [Apprenticeship Tool Grant](#), and the federal [Canada Apprentice Loan](#) to help apprentices manage the cost of equipment and training during the early stages of their careers;
- **microloans** such as those provided through [Windmill Microlending](#), which allow newcomers to borrow up to \$15,000 to help cover costs related to education and training.

Expanding financial supports for newcomers could help improve immigrant participation in the skilled trades.

Some studies examining labour market outcomes for skilled trades immigrants suggest that factors such as negative perceptions of the trades, lack of knowledge about the career pathways in the skilled trades, limited labour market information, and few social connections may contribute to delayed or unsuccessful entry into the skilled trades.<sup>66</sup> However, we currently lack empirical research that directly examines these barriers, how they are navigated by skilled trades immigrants, and what factors may facilitate immigrants' entry into the skilled trades. We also do not yet understand the role trade unions may play in the certification and integration experiences of skilled trades immigrants.

## Progress toward fair foreign credential recognition

To certify in a regulated skilled trade, immigrants who arrive with trades experience must have their skills and credentials assessed to ensure they are equivalent to those acquired through a Canadian apprenticeship. However, the process for assessing foreign credentials can be complex and challenging for many immigrants.<sup>67</sup>

Canada is making progress toward a more transparent and timely system for recognizing foreign credentials. For example, Ontario's Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act (2006) prohibits regulated professions, including compulsory skilled trades,<sup>68</sup> from requiring Canadian work experience for licensure, unless such requirements can be demonstrated as necessary. The Act also requires regulated professions to have registration practices that are transparent, objective, impartial, and fair, and provides independent oversight of these professions.

The federal government has also committed \$97 million to Employment and Social Development Canada over five years (beginning in 2026–27) to establish the Foreign Credential Recognition Action Fund. The fund aims to help provinces and territories improve the fairness, transparency, and speed of credential assessment processes, with a particular focus on sectors such as construction, where unmet labour demand is most urgent.

66 Vasavithasan and others, *Building Solutions*; and Paul and others, "Bridging capital."

67 Ng and Gagnon, *Employment Gaps and Underemployment for Racialized Groups and Immigrants in Canada*.

68 Compulsory trades (e.g., plumbers, electricians) require a certificate of qualification to work in the trade.

In Canada and around the world, governments and regulators are experimenting with practical ways to help internationally trained professionals quickly enter the workforce without compromising public and workplace safety. While many of these approaches were developed in the health sector, they offer promising opportunities for the skilled trades.

- **Work while qualifying pathways** allow internationally educated professionals to work in a supervised capacity while completing their licensure. The College of Nurses of Ontario and the College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia offer specialized licences classes that allow for internationally educated health professionals to work in supervised or otherwise limited roles while completing their licensure.
- **Mutual recognition models** can streamline the licensing process. The Medical Council of Ireland recognizes internships from select countries as equivalent to Irish internships, reducing the time it takes to obtain a licence.<sup>69</sup>
- **Standardized foreign credential recognition frameworks** can reduce complexity. Germany's Federal Recognition Act (2012) standardizes credential recognition across the country, increasing transparency and consistency. Following its implementation, the share of immigrants with recognized foreign qualifications increased by 15 per cent.<sup>70</sup>
- **Flexible ways to meet language requirements** can improve efficiency. The College of Nurses of Ontario recognizes multiple accepted pathways other than standard testing for candidates to demonstrate language proficiency. This reduces unnecessary repeat testing and lowers costs for internationally trained candidates.

Approaches like these show that strengthening credential recognition processes is possible. While research is needed to understand how and whether similar approaches could be applied to the trades, they provide a useful starting point for considering ways to help internationally trained tradespeople enter the workforce sooner.

## What's next

Immigration can support both immediate labour shortages and long-term workforce development in the skilled trades. But we're not currently making the most of the talent available. Our literature review shows that immigrants are under-represented in the trades, including in high-demand occupations. The number of skilled trades immigrants arriving to Canada is not keeping pace with labour market demand and, after arrival, many skilled trades immigrants do not certify in their intended trade.

We identified a number of knowledge gaps that limit our ability to understand how to better use immigration to address labour shortages in the skilled trades. We found limited evidence related to:

- the barriers that specific skilled trades immigrants face and how these differ from the experiences of other immigrants
- which trades have the lowest certification rates for skilled trades immigrants
- how labour market outcomes for skilled trades immigrants may vary across immigration pathways
- interventions that improve labour market outcomes for skilled trades immigrants specifically

These gaps matter. Addressing the barriers that skilled trades immigrants face and developing a clearer picture of their labour market experiences can help build the workforce needed to deliver on Canada's housing, climate, and infrastructure priorities.

69 Cukier and others, *Pathways for Internationally Educated Health-Care Professionals*.

70 Cukier and others.

## Appendix A

# Methodology

This literature review was designed to gather insights into the challenges Canada faces in leveraging immigrant talent to meet the growing labour demand for skilled trades. It is part of a research project that aims to understand:

- how Canada can enable more skilled trades immigrants to practise in their area of expertise;
- the barriers that skilled trades immigrants face when pursuing equivalency assessments, apprenticeship, or Red Seal certification in their intended trade;
- which trades show the greatest disparity between immigrants' qualifications and their eventual occupation;
- which trades Canada could target for improved credential recognition and certification pathways based on projected labour demand in the coming decade.

We aimed to answer the following questions in this review:

- What is the demand for skilled tradespeople in Canada?
- How represented are immigrants in the skilled trades and what are their labour market outcomes?
- What barriers prevent skilled trades immigrants from working in their intended occupation?

## Literature selection and assessment

The research team evaluated potential sources for inclusion using the CRAAP test<sup>1</sup> to ensure credibility and relevancy. This involved assessing currency (how recent and up-to-date the information is); relevance (how well the source aligns with the research topic); authority (the expertise and trustworthiness of the author); accuracy (the reliability and evidence base of the content); and purpose (the intent behind the information).

Sources were included if they were directly relevant to the research questions, demonstrated strong methodological rigour or evidence base (e.g., peer-reviewed articles or empirical studies), and were produced by credible authors or institutions. While we prioritized literature published from 2013 onward to reflect the current Canadian immigration context, earlier sources were also included where their findings remained relevant and applicable to present-day policy and program considerations. We also included high-quality grey literature—such as program evaluations, policy briefs, and policy papers—when they provided relevant empirical findings or policy insights. Sources were excluded if they lacked sufficient relevance to the research questions, did not demonstrate methodological transparency or evidence, or originated from unverified or low-credibility sources. Eighty sources were reviewed.

1 Meriam Library, California State University, "Evaluating Information."

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