

Stakeholder Summary

Ontario apprenticeship registrations rising, but completion rates are a concern

Since 2000, registrations for new apprenticeships have grown nearly every year, in Ontario and Canada. But a new report from the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) finds that completion rates have not kept pace with registrations. *Apprenticeship in Ontario: An Exploratory Analysis* shows that while there has been some improvement, still less than half of Ontario's registered apprentices are completing the requirements of their program within two years of their expected completion date.

Project Description

Apprenticeship in Ontario: An Exploratory Analysis provides an overview of the apprenticeship system in Ontario. The paper examines the historical evolution of the province's apprenticeship model, typical pathways, legislation and the key issues affecting it today. The paper also reviews the state of apprenticeship in Ontario by analyzing data from the national Registered Apprenticeship Information System (RAIS), which compiles information on individuals who receive training and obtain certification in apprenticeable occupations. Completion rates are difficult to calculate precisely, as year to year individual progress is not tracked by RAIS. However, using a formula to approximate completion times, the data can be used to create a good estimate. Additional data are also provided by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Findings

In 2012 there were almost 165,000 registered apprentices in Ontario, a number that has increased every year since 2000, with the exception of a small drop in 2011. Apprenticeship still comprises a relatively small proportion of the labour force. Alberta has the highest proportion of apprenticeships in its provincial labour force at 3.6% and Ontario is fifth in the country at 2.2%. IT user support technician had the most registered apprentices, followed by automotive service trades, electricians and hair stylists.

After more than a decade of completion rates fluctuating between 30% and 39% (the lowest average rate in the country) Ontario had a 46.8% completion rate in 2012, possibly a sign of an upward trend. The trades with the lowest completion rates (all below 10%) were bakers, floor covering installers, concrete finishers, aircraft mechanics/aircraft inspectors and roofers/shinglers. The trades with the highest completion rates (all above 80%) were boilermakers, steamfitters/pipefitters/sprinkler system installers, early childhood assistants, industrial electricians and petroleum/gas/chemical process operators.

Although there are many programs geared towards youth and young adults, the average age of Ontario apprentices is around 30 years old, which is in line with the rest of Canada. This is an age where family and financial responsibilities may be heightened, potentially having a significant impact on completion of apprenticeship certification. In contrast to many European countries like Germany, Austria and

Switzerland, apprenticeship in Canada primarily attracts adults who have had some work or postsecondary education experience.

While Ontario saw an 11.4% increase in female registrations from 2000 to 2012 and has by far the highest participation rate in Canada, the overall percentage of females in apprenticeship remains quite low at less than 25%. Females who are registered in the trades tend to dominate a few select occupations. In 2012, 92.8% of early childhood educators, 88.4% of hairstylists and 75.6% of community and social service workers were females. With the exception of IT user support technicians and the food service sector, females made up less than 20% of apprentices in all remaining trade groups.

Authors of *Apprenticeship in Ontario: An Exploratory Analysis* are HEQCO researchers Erica Refling and Nicholas Dion.