

Stakeholder Summary

New reports examine the experience and outcomes of Ontario apprentices, with data on pathways, challenges and labour market outcomes

The labour and skills of tradespeople are integral to Ontario's economy and the provincial apprenticeship training system is an important component of the postsecondary education landscape. Media reports warn of an impending shortage of skilled workers and the provincial government has made an effort in recent years to promote the trades as a viable and valued employment pathway. Apprenticeship training is known to be a key route to careers in the trades, but less is known about the individuals who pursue apprenticeship programs and their labour market outcomes. Moreover, those who work in the trades require a specialized set of skills and knowledge and most don't appreciate the wide range of work that apprentices do or understand how apprenticeship works.

The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) has undertaken research to deepen the understanding of Ontario apprentices. This pair of studies improves understanding of the province's apprenticeship system, provides insight into a postsecondary pathway that is sometimes overlooked and explores in some detail the 10 most common apprenticeship programs in Ontario. The research provides insight into issues of equity, labour market outcomes and the geographic distribution of tradespeople across Ontario. Newly available data linkages from Statistics Canada allowed researchers to use the 2016 Census, the 2015 National Apprenticeship Survey and the Longitudinal and International Study of Adults (all of which have been linked to income tax files) to discover more about the various paths taken to apprenticeship and where those who go through these programs end up.

Apprenticeship includes learning while on the job and involves both in-class and on-the-job training. A would-be apprentice must find a sponsor, usually an employer or trade union, to support their training. In the analysis, this was cited as the most frequent challenge with regard to progressing through an apprenticeship.

Trades in Ontario are categorized into the following four sectors:

- **Construction** (e.g., masons, general carpenters, painters)
- **Industrial** (e.g., draftspersons, truck drivers, welders)
- **Motive-power** (e.g., auto-body workers, small-engine technicians)
- **Service** (e.g., cooks, bakers, hairstylists)

The research showed that many apprentices completed a postsecondary credential before embarking on their program and that most individuals begin an apprenticeship from the workforce (while either looking for work or employed). Researchers found that completion rates varied widely across trades and that women, visible minorities and immigrants are underrepresented in many of these fields (the exceptions being hairstyling and food services). These two publications are unique in that they seek to understand the trades from the perspective of those who participated in apprenticeship programs in

Ontario and demonstrate that there is considerable variation in the experiences and outcomes of apprentices both between and within trades.

While this work sheds new light on apprentices in Ontario, there are a number of avenues worthy of future research including in-depth consideration of the variation in completion rates and exploring how enrolment trends and geographic distribution vary from one trade to another.

The Journey of Ontario Apprentices: From High School to the Workforce was written by Ken Chatoor and Amy Kaufman; *Diving into the Trades: An In-depth Look at 10 Apprenticeship Programs in Ontario* was written by Ken Chatoor and Sarah Brumwell; Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario.