



Employment and Social Development Canada Emploi et Développement social Canada

2024-2025 National Skilled Trades Advertising Campaign – Public Opinion Survey

Executive Summary

Prepared for Employment and Social Development Canada

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Canada 

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September 2023

This public opinion research report presents the results of the online survey conducted by Earncliffe Strategy Group on behalf of Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC). The survey was conducted in July 2023.

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Executive summary

Earnscliffe Strategy Group (Earnscliffe) is pleased to present this report to Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) summarizing the results of the quantitative research conducted to support the 2024-25 National Skilled Trades Advertising Campaign.

In Budget 2022, the Government of Canada proposed to provide \$84.2 million over four years to double funding for the Union Training and Innovation Program (UTIP). It asserted that the skilled trades are vital to the future of the Canadian economy and offer workers rewarding careers in fields ranging from carpenters to electricians and boilermakers.

Budget 2023 reasserted that Canada's economy depends on skilled trades people, as these skilled workers are essential to ensuring that the country has the appropriately trained workforce required to build Canada's clean economy and double the number of new homes that will be built in Canada by 2032. Consequently, increased recruitment to the trades is necessary.

After successful campaigns in fiscal year 2021-2022 and fiscal year 2022-2023, ESDC continued the campaign in fiscal year 2023-2024 while a campaign refresh is produced for fiscal year 2024-2025 to continue to attract attention.

The fiscal year 2024-2025 campaign will feature a revamped advertising campaign, using the insights gained through this research and lessons learned from previous years campaigns and experiential marketing, including events across the country which will target the audiences of this research.

The purpose of this quantitative research is to support the development of the 2024-2025 advertising campaign and gauge perceptions on the skilled trades. It informs both the advertising campaign and experiential marketing strategies.

Specifically, this research sought to:

- Ascertain whether perceptions around the skilled trades have changed compared to research baseline results from fiscal year 2020-2021 prior to the previous campaign's launch;
- Gauge opinions and beliefs around post-secondary education and career opportunities;
- Aid in understanding barriers faced when considering the skilled trades; and,
- Explore audience media habits to further supplement and support the media mix data used to inform advertising campaign tactics.

To meet the objectives, Earnscliffe conducted an online survey of Canadian youth (16 to 19 years of age) and young adults (20 to 34 years of age) who plan to change careers, continue their schooling, or go back to school in the next few years. A total of 1,514 Canadian residents completed the survey between July 18th and 27th, 2023. The survey took an average of 11 minutes to complete. The data for this survey was weighted based on age, gender, and region as reported by Statistics Canada 2021 data.

The fieldwork subcontractor for this assignment was Leger and all samples were drawn from Leger’s opt-in online panel.

The key findings of this research are presented below.

General career planning questions

- Overall, pay (64%), work-life balance (55%), job satisfaction (40%), and job stability (38%) are among the most important factors in choosing a career, while getting into the workforce quickly (8%), working with one’s hands (6%), and status (5%) are among the least important factors tested.
- The majority of youth respondents (77%) expected to enroll in post-secondary education – that is, university (49%) or college (28%) – after high school, while significantly fewer (14%) expected to either begin a full-time, permanent position (7%) or enroll in trade school (7%).
- Similar to youth expectations, after high school, 72% of young adult respondents enrolled in post-secondary education, either university (44%) or college (28%), while more began a full time, permanent position than expected (17%) and fewer enrolled in a trade school than expected (4%).

Attitudes and awareness of skilled trades as viable career path

- The vast majority of respondents (81%) are at least somewhat familiar with what is meant by “skilled trades”, while 16% say they are not familiar.
- Nearly half of respondents name plumbers (47%) and electricians (45%) when asked what jobs they associate with the skilled trades. While carpenter/woodworkers (29%), mechanics (20%), welders (18%) and construction workers (15%) are also top-of-mind, they are cited by significantly fewer respondents.
- Just over half (55%) of respondents have a positive impression of the skilled trades, while 41% have a neutral impression and only 1% say thinking of the skilled trades evokes a negative impression.
- One-quarter of respondents (27%) say they currently (12%) or have previously (15%) worked in the skilled trades. Twice as many young adults say that they have or have had a job in the skilled trades (30%), compared to youth respondents (15%).
- Among those who have never worked in the skilled trades, consideration of having a career in in this field is divided with 47% of respondents saying they have considered it and 53% saying they have not. Young adults (49%) and respondents who identify as men (56%) are more likely to say that they have considered a career in the skilled trades compared to their counterparts.
- Of those who have considered a career in the skilled trades, perceived compensation (40%) is the most significant reason why. Among those who have not considered a career in the skilled trades, having other career aspirations (26%), and disinterest/having other interests (24%) are the main reasons why.

- Over half of respondents (56%) say they are not likely to consider a career in the skilled trades in the future, while 39% say they are somewhat (30%) or very likely (9%) to. Those who identify as men are more likely than those who identify as women to say they are likely to consider a career in the skilled trades in the future (44% versus 35%).
- Though fewer say they are likely to consider a career in the skilled trades for themselves (39%), over half of respondents (59%) say they have recommended or would recommend a career in the skilled trades to someone else. Young adults are more likely than youth to say they would recommend a career in the skilled trades (64% versus 42%).
- While the majority of respondents found all six of the presented possible reasons to pursue a career in the skilled trades compelling, the most compelling reason was that you can earn while you learn (91%). Furthermore, half of respondents either say there are no barriers to entering the skilled trades (39%) or are unable to name any (10%).
- Overall, more respondents see pay, availability of jobs, and getting into the workforce quickly as appealing aspects of a career in the skilled trades than unappealing, while impact on one's health, status, and environmental sustainability are seen as unappealing aspects for more respondents than appealing.
- A plurality of respondents believes that a career in the skilled trades could begin while completing (43%) or after graduating high school (35%), or after completing an apprenticeship (35%).
- The vast majority of respondents (82%) agree that the skilled trades are a respectable career option, however, half (51%) say a job in the skilled trades does not appeal to them, and 41% believe others in their life do not consider it a respectable option.
- Six in ten respondents (63%) believe that people in their lives would be surprised if they pursued a skilled trade, and 45% say that they care a lot about how their career is perceived by others. Furthermore, the majority (67%) of respondents feel it is at least somewhat important that people close to them approve of their career, while 30% say it is not important.
- Young adults are more likely than youth to agree that people in their lives would be surprised if they pursued a career in the skilled trades (65% versus 57%), that they care a lot about how their career choice is perceived by others (47% versus 39%), and that there are people close to them who would not consider a career in the skilled trades to be a respectable career option (45% versus 29%).

Media habits to inform ad campaign

- Two-thirds of respondents (67%) say they look for information on career options at least sometimes, including one in six who look often (16%). Only 5% say they never look for information on career options.
- When looking for information on career options, school, or industry resources (53%), government websites (49%), and social media (48%) are the top information sources used.

- Among those who references school or industry resources, post-secondary institution websites are used most often (at 73%), while fewer reference recruitment sites (47%) or school counsellors (36%).
- A plurality of respondents (30%) is unaware of any Government of Canada programs and services related to the skilled trades or apprenticeship; however, one-fifth of respondents (21%) are aware of the Red Seal Program. Young adults and respondents who identify as men are more likely to be aware of at least one of the programs or services listed (62% and 61%, respectively).

Language to inform ad campaign

- A plurality of respondents (33%) feels each of the seven messages tested would be effective calls to action, and “Earn money while you learn” tops the list with an additional 39% of respondents say the message would encourage them to find out more information about the skilled trades.
- @CanadaYouth is the most favourable social media channel name among respondents (35%) followed by @YouthInCanada (23%). As many respondents (26%) are unable to say which name is best suited for social media channels.

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Signed:

Date: September 8, 2023



Stephanie Constable
Principal, Earnscliffe