

# Study: Career decision-making patterns of Canadian youth and associated postsecondary educational outcomes, 2000 to 2010

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Career decision-making for the majority of Canadian youth is an on-going process, occurring throughout adolescence and typically lasting well into adulthood.

These findings come from the Youth in Transition Survey, conducted between 2000 and 2010, which collected data every two years from the same respondents starting at age 15. The current study provides findings from Canadian youth aged 25 in 2010 whose information was available over the 10-year period.

Among youth aged 25 who were asked about their career expectations on a regular basis from the age of 15, few held to the career expectations they had as teenagers. Almost 10% of 25-year-olds kept the same career expectations that they held at age 15, while 6.9% held the same career expectations that they had at age 17. About one-third had made their choice during their early twenties, with 15.9% having the same career expectations from age 21 and 16.0% from the age of 23.

For the remaining majority of 25-year-olds, there was a lot of uncertainty in terms of their career choices. More than 13% of young adults were still undecided about a career at age 25, while almost 4 in 10 (38.3%) had decided to pursue a new career.

Changing early career decisions was typical for both females and males. At age 25, 10.1% of female respondents had been consistent in their career expectations from age 15, compared with 9.1% of their male counterparts.

Among the other factors involved in choosing a career, the higher the priority parents placed on postsecondary education, the greater the consistency youth demonstrated in their career expectations. This was especially true for those who held on to the same career choice from age 21. A greater proportion of these youth (17.2%) showed consistency compared with those whose parents valued postsecondary education less (8.5%).

The parental views on the importance of postsecondary education had a similar effect among those who had reached age 25 without having made a firm career choice. Nearly one-half of young adults whose parents valued postsecondary education reported either making a new career decision (36.9%) or being as yet undecided (12.4%). In contrast, more than two-thirds of youth whose parents placed a lower priority on postsecondary education were either making new decisions (46.8%) or were undecided (19.4%) as to their career choice.

When family socioeconomic status (SES) was taken into account, a greater proportion of youth with a high family SES (13.6%) demonstrated consistency of career choice from the age of 15, compared with 7.9% of those with a low family SES. As well, youth with a high family SES were less likely to be undecided on a career path at age 25 (9.3%) than youth with a low family SES (16.0%).

Early demonstration of consistency in career decision was associated with earlier entry into postsecondary studies and higher levels of educational attainment at age 25. Youth who demonstrated consistency in their career plans at ages 15 and 17 represented a higher proportion of those who entered postsecondary studies within 15 months after graduating from secondary school than of those who entered 16 months or more after graduating from secondary school. In contrast, those who remained inconsistent in their career choice up to age 25 were less likely to enter postsecondary studies within 15 months.

As well, all those who showed consistency in their career expectations at some point were more likely to complete postsecondary education at the Bachelor degree level or higher at age 25, compared with the 25-year-olds still undecided on a career path.



### Note to readers

*This fact sheet is based on longitudinal data from cycles 1 through 6 (2000 to 2010) of the Youth in Transition Survey (YITS). The YITS was jointly conducted by Statistics Canada and Employment and Social Development Canada to examine major education, training and work transitions in the lives of youth.*

*The data were collected every two years, from the same respondents starting at age 15 (YITS Cohort A, cycle 1). These youth were asked, "What kind of job or occupation would you be interested in having when you are about 30 years old?" They were asked the same question at ages 17, 21, 23 and 25 (cycles 2, 4, 5 and 6, respectively). The question was not asked at age 19 (cycle 3).*

*Analytical categories were defined based on the ages at which respondents' career expectations began to be "consistent," that is, their responses indicated the same occupational group and required level of education from one cycle to the next until the end of the survey, when they were 25 years old.*

*Parental valuation of postsecondary education was asked of YITS respondents at ages 15 and 17. Respondents were asked about the importance their parents placed on them pursuing a postsecondary education.*

*The family socioeconomic status indicator was derived from data describing parental education levels, parental occupations, and the material and cultural possessions in the home.*

*This fact sheet is a product of the Pan-Canadian Education Indicators Program, which is an initiative of the Canadian Education Statistics Council, a partnership between Statistics Canada and the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada.*

### Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [4435](#).

The fact sheet "Career Decision-making Patterns of Canadian Youth and Associated Postsecondary Educational Outcomes," part of the *Education Indicators in Canada: Fact Sheet* series ([81-599-X](#)), is now available from the *Browse by key resource* module of our website under *Publications*.

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