

Study: Over-education and life satisfaction among immigrant and non-immigrant workers in Canada, 2009 to 2014

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In the context of high global migration of skilled workers, research has focused on the economic costs of immigrants' over-education. However, less is known about other consequences of an education-occupation mismatch.

A new study, "Over-education and Life Satisfaction among Immigrant and Non-Immigrant Workers in Canada", addresses this research gap by examining the relationship between over-education and the life satisfaction of immigrant and non-immigrant workers in Canada. This study uses data from the 2009 to 2014 Canadian Community Health Survey and focuses on university-educated employees aged 25 to 64.

Both immigrants and Canadian-born university-educated workers have lower levels of life satisfaction if they are in a job for which they are overeducated. However, immigrants were found to be less impacted, in terms of life satisfaction, than their Canadian-born counterparts.

Over-education is defined as university graduates employed in occupations requiring high school or less education, while an education-occupation match is defined as university graduates employed in occupations requiring a university degree.

Among university-educated workers, 12% of people born in Canada were estimated to be over-educated, compared with 30% of immigrants.

Among workers born in Canada with an education-occupation match, the average life satisfaction score was 8.33 on a scale ranging from 0 (very dissatisfied) to 10 (very satisfied). Among their counterparts whose education exceeded what was needed for their job, the average life satisfaction score was 7.93. The magnitude of this difference (0.4) was in line with that associated with being separated, divorced, or widowed rather than being married.

Among immigrant workers, life satisfaction was 0.25 points lower, on average, among those who were over-educated for their job.

Over-educated workers had lower incomes, on average, than workers with an education-occupation match. Among immigrant workers, this accounted for most of the difference in life satisfaction observed between groups. Among workers born in Canada, income differences accounted for less than one-third of the difference in life satisfaction between over-educated workers and those with an education-occupation match.

Among immigrants, the negative relationship between over-education and life satisfaction diminished with years in Canada. In addition, the negative relationship between over-education and life satisfaction was weaker among immigrants from developing countries than among those from developed countries.

Definitions, data sources and methods: [survey number 3226](#).

The research paper "[Over-education and Life Satisfaction among Immigrant and Non-immigrant Workers in Canada](#)," part of the *Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper Series (11F0019M)*, is now available.



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