

# Immigrants nearly three times more likely to experience persistent overqualification than non-immigrants

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Overqualification among immigrants is a well-documented issue in Canada. In general, immigrants are more likely than the Canadian-born population to hold positions that require lower levels of education.

For example, according to 2016 Census data, immigrants with a university degree (bachelor's degree or higher) were twice as likely as people born in Canada to have a job that required no more than a high school education.

However, much less is known about persistent overqualification over time. This is an important issue because the longer overqualification lasts, the greater the impact it can have on workers' economic well-being.

The study entitled "Persistent overqualification among immigrants and non-immigrants," published today in *Insights on Canadian Society*, examines this issue by using integrated data from the 2006 and 2016 censuses. The study shows that immigrants were almost three times more likely than non-immigrants to be overqualified in both 2006 and 2016, and therefore to experience persistent overqualification.

The study defines overqualification as having a job that requires no more than a high school education among workers aged 25 to 49 who had at least a bachelor's degree in 2006.

The issue of overqualification among immigrants is still of interest in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. As shown by a recent Statistics Canada study, immigrants trained in a health field are more likely than non-immigrants not to work in their field, even though there are many job vacancies in the health care sector.

Also, another study showed that, in 2016, 25% of immigrants who were working as nurse aides, orderlies or patient service associates had at least a bachelor's degree, compared with 5% of non-immigrants.

## Immigrants are nearly three times more likely to experience persistent overqualification than non-immigrants

To be considered persistently overqualified, workers aged 25 to 49 with a university degree must have held a job in both 2006 and 2016 that required no more than a high school education.

In total, about 1 in 20 workers (5.3%) were overqualified in both 2006 and 2016. However, immigrants were almost three times more likely (10.1%) than non-immigrants (3.6%) to have been persistently overqualified.

Location of study was an important factor in these results. After controlling for different factors including age, sex, highest level of education and field of study, the probability of having experienced persistent overqualification was less than 4% for workers who earned their degree in Canada. This was similar for both immigrants and non-immigrants.

When other factors were taken into account, the probability of persistent overqualification was 6% among those who earned their degree in Oceania or Western Europe, 5% among those who earned their degree in the United States, and 4% among those who earned their degree in Northern Europe.

In contrast, the probability of persistent overqualification was significantly higher among workers who earned their degree in Southeast Asia (20%), South Asia (18%), and the Caribbean and Bermuda (12%).

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## Differences by country of origin persist after considering other characteristics

Even among those who earned their degree in Canada, not all immigrant workers had similar probabilities of experiencing persistent overqualification; their place of birth also had an impact.

For example, immigrants from South Asia (6.3%) and Southeast Asia (5.5%) who earned their degree in Canada were still more likely to have experienced persistent overqualification compared than immigrants from Oceania, Eastern Europe and Northern Africa (with 3% or less) who earned their degree in Canada.

## Other factors are associated with persistent overqualification

Other factors, including field of study, were associated with persistent overqualification among both immigrants and non-immigrants.

In general, workers most likely to experience persistent overqualification were graduates in humanities, social and behavioural sciences, law, visual and performing arts, and communications technologies (probabilities ranging from 8% to 11%).

In contrast, persistent overqualification was relatively less common among mathematics, computer and information science, and health graduates (probability of 3% or less).

Other factors associated with a higher probability of persistent overqualification, specifically among immigrants, included familiarity with English or French, and whether an additional degree was earned during the period between 2006 and 2016. Immigrant women who graduated outside Canada were also more likely to be persistently overqualified than their male counterparts.

### Note to readers

*This study is based on integrated data from the 2006 and 2016 censuses. The integration consists of linking the responses of the same person who responded to the long-form census questionnaire in the two census cycles.*

*The population includes graduates with a bachelor's degree or higher who were between 25 and 49 years of age in 2006 (35 to 59 years old in 2016), and who reported having a job during the census reference week or, if they were not working that week, during the period up to January 1 of the previous year.*

*The term "immigrant" refers to individuals who are not Canadians by birth and who were admitted to Canada as permanent residents. The term "non-immigrant" refers to Canadian-born individuals.*

The study "Persistent overqualification among immigrants and non-immigrants" is now available as part of the series *Insights on Canadian Society* ([75-006-X](#)).

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; [STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca](mailto:STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca)) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; [STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca](mailto:STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca)).