

Registered apprenticeship training programs, 2020

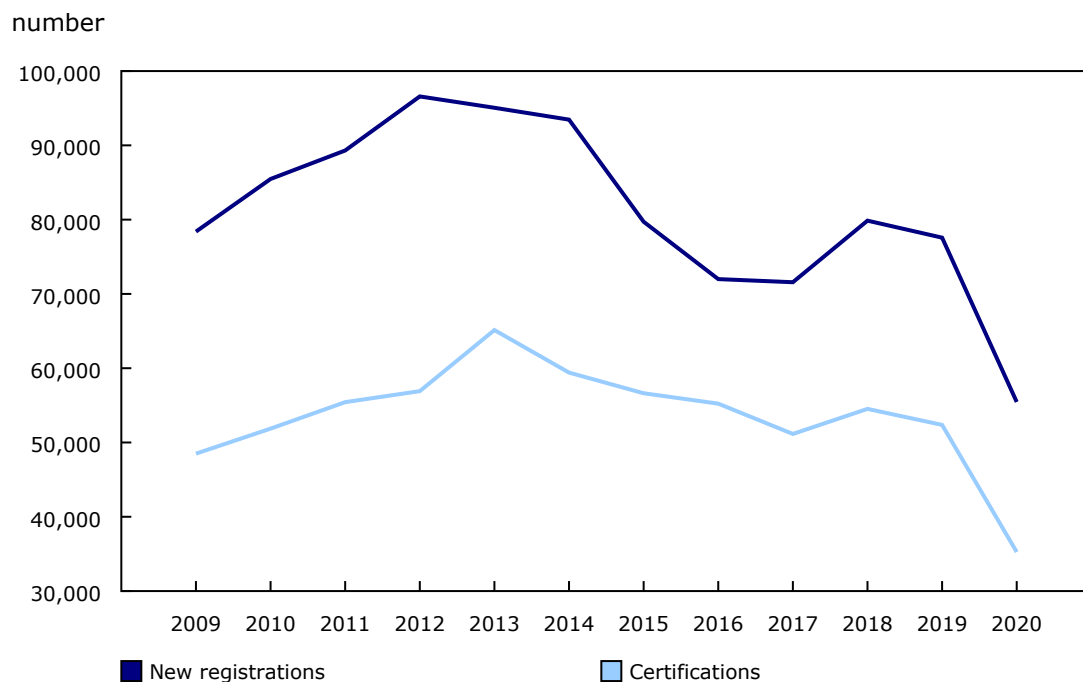
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New apprenticeship registrations were down by over one-quarter in 2020, and certifications were down by almost one-third—the largest declines since the data series began in 1991. Female apprentices were more likely than their male counterparts to be affected by the measures to contain the spread of COVID-19.

Largest year-over-year decline in new apprenticeship registrations and certifications on record

There were 55,455 new registrations in apprenticeship programs in 2020, down 28.5% (-22,119) from a year earlier, and 35,256 certifications, down 32.7% (-17,112). These were the largest year-over-year declines in both since the beginning of the series in 1991.

Chart 1
New registrations and certifications in apprenticeship programs, Canada



Source(s): Registered Apprenticeship Information System, 2009 to 2020 (3154).

With the onset of the pandemic in mid-March 2020, the provinces and territories implemented guidelines, restrictions and lockdowns that greatly impacted the ability of Canadians to register in an apprenticeship program or achieve certification.

Apprenticeship training programs and on-the-job experience are essential for developing the skills and knowledge of tradespeople and for maintaining a skilled labour force in Canada.



Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic could result in large gaps in the supply of and demand for journeypersons in future years

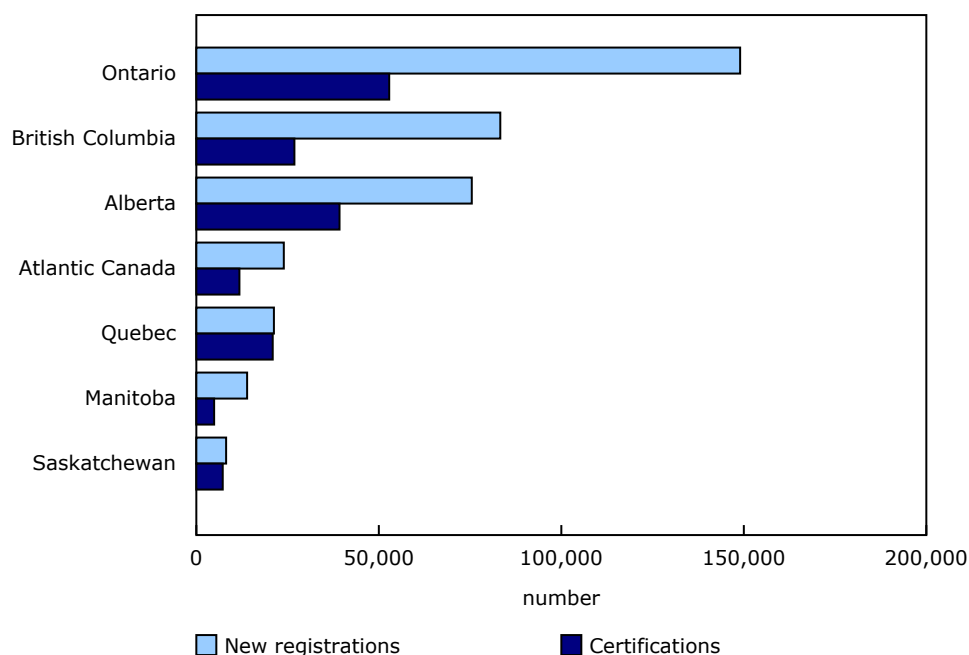
Many provinces and territories reported their lowest numbers of new apprenticeship registrations and certifications in a generation, with some hitting their lowest levels ever. The Northwest Territories (36) reported the lowest number of new registrations ever recorded in that territory, while Alberta (4,332), New Brunswick (636), and Newfoundland and Labrador (240) reported record low certifications in 2020.

The vast majority of the decline in new registrations and certifications occurred in Ontario, Quebec, Alberta and British Columbia. Ontario reported the largest drop in new registrations (-7,785, or -37.1%), followed by Quebec (-4,572, or -19.4%), Alberta (-3,927, or -33.8%) and British Columbia (-3,267, or -23.9%). All four provinces also reported similar declines in certifications, with Quebec posting the largest drop—down 5,313 (-27.9%) compared with 2019.

The declines in these four provinces, as well as the rest of Canada, could lead to discrepancies between the supply of and demand for apprentices in the future. A recent study by the [Canadian Apprenticeship Forum](#) found that, from 2021 to 2025, an estimated 375,026 new registrations and 163,785 certifications will be needed to sustain workforce requirements in the Red Seal trades.

According to the study results, demand for apprentices is projected to be especially pronounced in Ontario, Alberta, British Columbia and Quebec. From 2021 to 2025, the number of certifications will need to reach 52,843 in Ontario, 39,230 in Alberta, 26,869 in British Columbia and 20,927 in Quebec to sustain the skilled workforce in these provinces. In other words, these four provinces would require 328,986 new registrations in Red Seal trades over the five-year period, according to the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum.

Chart 2
Estimated new registrations and certifications required from 2021 to 2025



Source(s): Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, 2021.

COVID-19 restrictions have less impact on certifications in essential and construction-related trade groups in 2020

The consequences of COVID-19 restrictions were apparent in all major trade groups in Canada. However, the level of impact on the trades varied based on their provincial or territorial classification as an essential or non-essential service, and based on their ability to continue operating while following federal and provincial COVID-19 guidelines.

This was evident in Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) data. Journeypersons working in non-essential businesses or in industries without the ability to work remotely were most likely to receive the CERB. Over 70% of journeypersons in some sectors, such as hairstylists and early childhood educators, received the CERB in 2020.

While all industries received the CERB to some extent, journeypersons working in sectors deemed essential, such as construction and utilities, were less likely to have received the CERB compared with workers in service-related trades such as hairstylists and cooks. Some essential trades had CERB rates of less than 20%—this was the case for agricultural equipment technicians (7%), powerline technicians (13%), and truck and transport mechanics (18%), for example.

Certification rates echoed these findings. Among the major trade groups, the largest percentage declines in certifications were for community and social service workers (-62.7%), hairstylists and estheticians (-48.1%), electronics and instrumentation (-45.3%), early childhood educators and assistants (-44.4%), and food services (-43.4%). The severity of the impact on these trade groups was partially attributable to the forced closures of businesses deemed non-essential, combined with the fact that many other businesses operated at limited capacity, such as restaurants that remained open but had limited dining capacity or provided only delivery services.

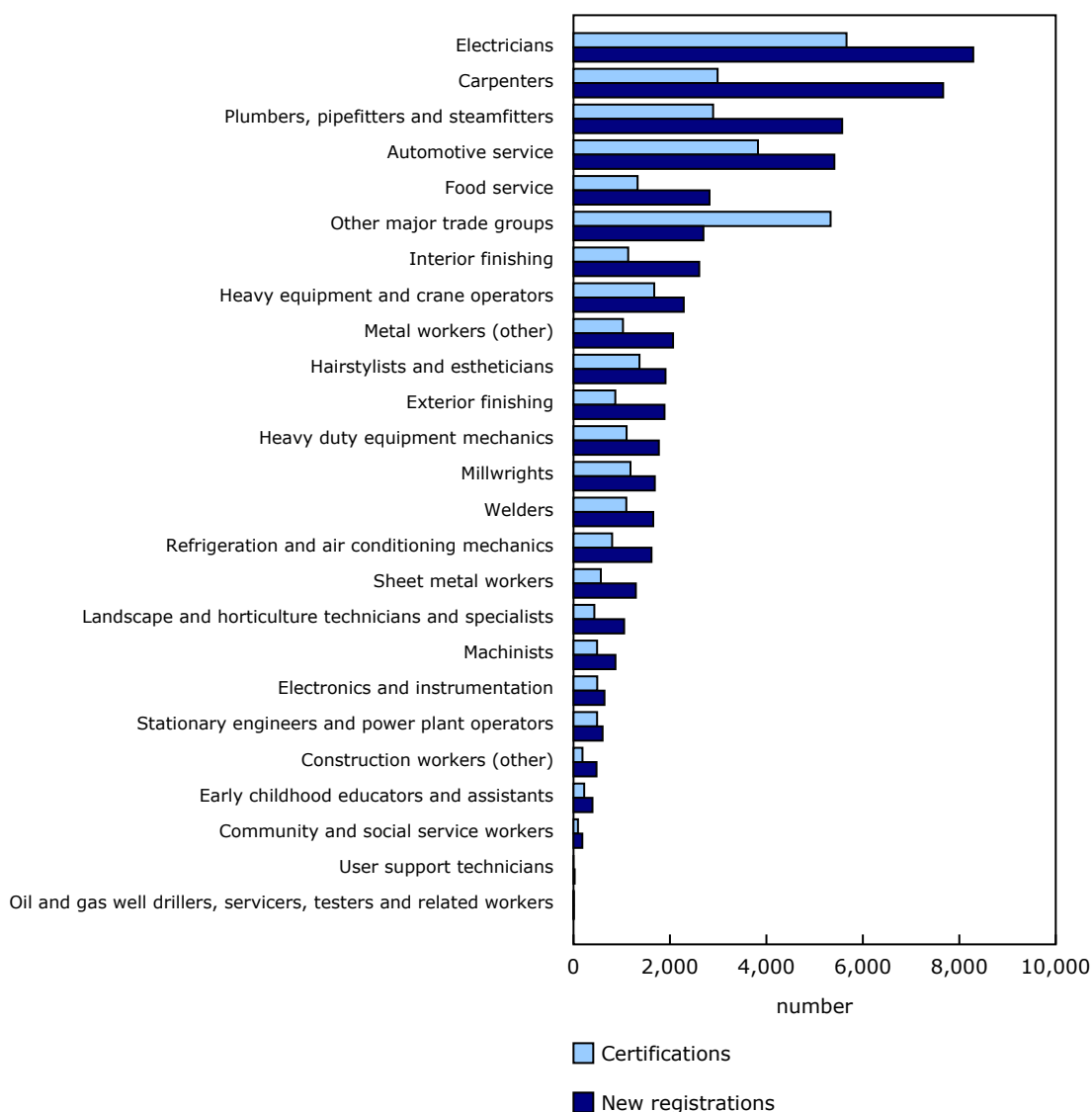
Conversely, landscape and horticulture technicians and specialists (-5.3%), exterior finishing (-16.7%), stationary engineers and power plant operators (-20.9%), and interior finishing (-23.2%) trades reported the smallest percentage year-over-year declines in certifications in 2020. Apprentices in these trade groups, along with several other construction-related trade groups, were less likely to be delayed in receiving certification given the partial continuation of many construction-related trades throughout the pandemic, and Public Safety Canada listing energy and utilities as one of the 10 critical infrastructure sectors during the pandemic.

In addition to remaining largely operational during the pandemic, construction-related trade groups are expected to see an increase in new registrations and certifications in the near future. A [recent study by BuildForce Canada](#) forecasted an estimated 259,000 retirements in the construction industry over the next decade. The large number of retirements in the industry, along with projected growth in residential and non-residential construction, will likely result in a significant increase in new registrations and certifications in construction-related trade groups in the coming years.

Female apprentices more likely than male apprentices to be affected by public health measures to contain the spread of COVID-19

Nationally, new registrations of male apprentices declined by 18,672 (-27.8%) in 2020 compared with 2019, while certifications decreased by 14,649 (-31.9%). Although electricians, carpenters, automotive service, plumbers, pipefitters and steamfitters had the largest declines for the year, they remained the most popular trade groups in both new registrations and certifications for male apprentices.

Chart 3
New registrations and certifications by trade, 2020



Source(s): Registered Apprenticeship Information System, 2009 to 2020 (3154).

The declines in new registrations and certifications among women were proportionately larger than those among men, as new registrations declined by 3,447 (-32.9%) and certifications fell by 2,460 (-38.5%) in 2020. This was partly because of the large share of female apprentices registering and certifying in the same trade groups. Since the beginning of the series in 1991, 59.1% of all female apprentices have registered in programs for hairstylists and estheticians, food services, and early childhood educators and assistants. Nationally, all three of these trade groups experienced large workforce disruptions and were among the hardest hit by the pandemic in 2020.

In addition, job loss may have also played a role in the proportional difference in new registrations and certifications between male and female apprentices in 2020. According to the article "[Gender differences in employment one year into the COVID-19 pandemic: An analysis by industrial sector and firm size](#)," women were more likely than men to become unemployed during the pandemic because of the large employment losses in service industries, where women account for the majority of the workforce.

Declines in new registrations and certifications not as pronounced as preliminary estimates suggested

Preliminary results published in 2020 suggested a 38.2% decline in new registrations and a 42.9% decrease in certifications, whereas current data show a 28.5% decline in new registrations and a 32.7% decrease in certifications. Although the declines were still large, the addition of Quebec and Nunavut data to the preliminary estimates, as well as revisions, resulted in a less pronounced decline in 2020 than originally estimated.

In addition, there is potential for further recovery in apprenticeship programs in 2021. One of the consequences associated with the lockdowns and restrictions was a large increase in [job vacancies](#) in the trades. While job vacancies in all sectors were up in the second quarter of 2021, compared with before the pandemic in the first quarter of 2020, the largest increases in demand were in health care and social assistance (+37,770), retail trade (+33,995), accommodation and food services (+28,800), construction (+27,800), and manufacturing (+23,830).

The loosening of COVID-19 restrictions, along with the increased demand for tradespeople, could result in significantly higher new apprenticeship registrations and certifications in 2021.

Note to readers

Context

The provinces and territories, which provide the data for this release, make operational and administrative changes related to the training and certification of the trades within their jurisdictions. These changes may affect historical comparisons. For the 2013 and 2014 reporting periods in particular, these changes substantially affected data for Ontario, including the number of registrations, participation in Red Seal and non-Red Seal apprenticeship programs, and certificates awarded. The data should be interpreted within the context of these administrative and operational changes. For further information on federal, provincial and territorial changes, see the [Registered Apprenticeship Information System Guide](#).

Certification

The requirements for granting a certificate vary by jurisdiction in Canada. In most instances, an apprentice is issued a certificate if they complete requirements such as supervised on-the-job training and technical training, and pass one or more examinations. Meanwhile, most trade qualifiers become certified once they pass an examination.

Designated trades

The provincial and territorial jurisdictions determine the trades for which apprenticeship training is made available. These are referred to as designated trades. The jurisdictions also determine which of the designated trades require certification to work unsupervised in the trade. The list of designated trades varies considerably between jurisdictions. Data from the Registered Apprenticeship Information System include only the trades that are designated in at least one province or territory.

Registered apprentices are people who are in a supervised work training program in a designated trade. The apprentice must be registered with the appropriate governing body (usually a ministry of education or labour, or a trade-specific industry governing body) to complete the training. Some apprentices could be registered in more than one apprenticeship program at the same time.

Registrations

The reference period of all registrations in 2020 is from January 1, 2020, to December 31, 2020.

Total registrations: The total number of registrations carried forward from the previous year, new registrations and reinstatements.

- **Already registered:** The number of registrations carried forward from the previous year.
- **New registrations:** New entrants to any apprenticeship program within the 12-month reporting period.
- **Reinstatements:** Registrations by people who had left an apprenticeship program in a specific trade in a previous year and returned to the same apprenticeship program during the reporting period.

Red Seal and non-Red Seal programs

The Red Seal Program sets common standards to assess the skills of tradespeople across Canada in trades referred to as the "Red Seal" trades. Tradespeople who meet the Red Seal standards, through examination, receive a Red Seal endorsement on their provincial or territorial trade certificates.

Non-Red Seal trades, however, do not have interprovincial standards. Many non-Red Seal trades do not require an exam to work in the trade.

Trade qualifiers or trade challengers are people who have worked in a specific trade for an extended period of time, without having ever been an apprentice, and who have received certification from a jurisdiction. This is usually done via a skills assessment in the trade.

Available tables: [37-10-0023-01](#), [37-10-0024-01](#), [37-10-0089-01](#), [37-10-0137-01](#) and [37-10-0142-01](#).

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [3154](#).

The article "[Factors associated with the completion of apprenticeship training in Canada](#)" is now available as part of the series *Insights on Canadian Society* ([75-006-X](#)).

The infographic "[The Impact of COVID-19 on Apprenticeship Programs in Canada, 2020](#)" is now available as part of the series *Statistics Canada —Infographics* ([11-627-M](#)).

The product "[Canadian Apprenticeship Registrations and Certifications: Interactive Tool](#)" is now available as part of the series *Statistics Canada - Data Visualization Products* ([71-607-X](#)).

A new version of the technical reference guide "Pathway indicators for registered apprentices in Canada, 2008 to 2019" is now available as part of the *Technical Reference Guides for the Education and Labour Market Longitudinal Platform* ([37200001](#)).

New data on certification, continuation and discontinuation rates of registered apprentices, for 2008 to 2019, are now available (Table [37-10-0193-01](#)).

New data from the Registered Apprenticeship Information System are now available.

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; infostats@statcan.gc.ca) or Media Relations (statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca).