

A note on the self-initiated training of job-losers

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Education and training are now widely prescribed as an antidote to unemployment: improving skills is seen as essential by workers trying to safeguard their jobs. Indeed, one-third of full-time workers took some kind of employer-supported training in 1991. But does training play any role for workers who have lost their jobs?

This note looks at people who, in January 1992, were job-losers, that is, they were without work because they had lost or been laid off their last job. Those who had taken an education program of their own volition in 1991 are compared with those who had not. The focus is on job-losers aged 25 to 54, since many youths have a stronger attachment to the school system than to the labour market, and a substantial proportion of older job-losers slip from unemployment into retirement. [\(1\)](#)

Job-oriented job-losers

In January 1992, about 641,000 Canadians aged 25 to 54 were "job-oriented job-losers." That is, they were without work because they had lost or been laid off their last job, yet their actions indicated that they were apparently interested in finding employment. In the analysis that follows, they are classified into one of two sub groups of job-oriented job-losers: "unemployed non-trainees" or "self-initiated trainees" (see [Data source and definitions](#)).

Most job-oriented job-losers were unemployed (79%), meaning that they devoted their efforts to looking for work, or were waiting for a new job to start in the next four weeks, or were on temporary layoff. They were "unemployed non-trainees."

On the other hand, about one in five job-oriented job-losers took a different approach to the search for work. In 1991, they had enrolled, of their own volition, in an education program through which they hoped to eventually obtain a certificate, diploma or degree. They were "self-initiated trainees."

Self-initiated training

In 1991, 134,000 self-initiated trainees aged 25 to 54 were enrolled in a certificate, diploma or degree program in an educational institution. By January 1992, almost one-third (31%) had finished their program; of those who had not finished, 82% were still enrolled. The data suggest that for many trainees, enrolling in an education program was a direct response to unemployment, since 73% of trainees had been without work at the time they took it. Furthermore, by January 1992, more than half (53%) had been without a job for more than six months; by contrast, only one-third (33%) of unemployed non-trainees had been without work for that length of time.

Who takes programs?

Generally speaking, people in occupations that demand a high level of education are the most likely to acquire more education. To some extent, this observation applies to self-initiated trainees, 21% of whom had last been employed in "white-collar" jobs, compared with 15% of unemployed non-trainees. About 41% of self-initiated trainees were "blue-collar" workers, whereas 55% of unemployed non-trainees had worked in such occupations; another 38% of trainees had been service workers, compared with 30% of non-trainees . (For a description of the components of white-collar, blue-collar and service occupational groups, see [*Data source and definitions in "Employer-supported training - it varies by occupation"*](#) [Crompton, 1994] in this issue .)

The industries in which the two groups of job-oriented job-losers used to work reflect their occupations. Close to two-thirds (65%) of the self-initiated trainees had worked in service industries, mostly community services, public administration or commercial services (business, personal and miscellaneous services). By contrast, the industry profile of unemployed non-trainees was somewhat less heavily oriented toward services: 52% of them had been working in that sector before they lost their jobs.

Women made up a larger share (47%) of self-initiated trainees than unemployed non-trainees (32%). This disparity probably stems from the types of industries represented by the two groups, [\(2\)](#) although women's generally greater tendency to take adult education cannot be discounted ([Haggar-Guénette](#), 1991).

To some degree, training is affected by the freedom one has to delay a job search and retrain. Self-initiated trainees were relatively young: the majority of them (60%) were aged 25 to 34, compared with fewer than half (46%) of unemployed non-trainees. As well, 21% of self-initiated trainees were unattached individuals, compared with 16% of unemployed non-trainees. Of those who were living with their family, 64% of self-initiated trainees were in families where one or more members were working, as opposed to 58% of unemployed non-trainees. However, the total personal income of 72% of self-initiated trainees was under \$15,000 in 1991, compared with 54% of unemployed non-trainees.

What do they study? [\(3\)](#)

The programs in which self-initiated trainees enrolled presumably reflected the type of employment they hoped to obtain. The program and field of study chosen were probably also based on a combination of other factors, such as the program's availability and the trainee's previous educational attainment. It is even possible that some trainees returned to complete programs which they had previously interrupted.

In 1991, the largest proportion (41%) of trainees were enrolled in academic programs, and a further 36% were in trades; the remaining 23% were completing elementary or high school (see [Data source and definitions](#)).

The majority of trainees were studying full time. About 58% of those in academic programs were full-time students, as were close to 60% of trades trainees. By contrast, just under half of elementary/secondary school trainees were studying full time.

Excluding elementary/secondary programs, which do not specify subject matter, the most common field of study in both academic and trades programs - chosen by 32% of trainees - was engineering and applied sciences and technologies, which includes data processing and computer science. The second most popular field was commerce, management and business administration (28%). Social science and the humanities together attracted 20% of trainees. (For a description of the components of the major fields of study, see [Appendix of "Employer-supported training - it varies by occupation"](#) in this issue.)

Who pays? [\(4\)](#)

Over half the self-initiated trainees (57%) paid for their studies themselves and/or received assistance from a family member. [\(5\)](#) The higher the level of education, the more likely were trainees or their families to pay the costs; the proportion peaked at 72% for trainees in academic programs.

Close to four out of ten trainees (38%) received government assistance. [\(6\)](#) Such support was most likely to be given for high school studies, with the proportion of trainees receiving government help falling at successively higher levels of education.

Summary

In 1991, one in five job-oriented job-losers (134,000) had chosen to enrol in an education program to improve their qualifications. Compared with unemployed non-trainees, relatively high proportions of these self-initiated trainees had worked in white-collar occupations and in service industries. Thus, it seems possible that they were more familiar with what could be described as a "training culture", that is, an employment environment in which education is regarded as a means to advancement. To a lesser extent, freedom to pursue their studies may also have been a factor in the decision to enrol, as trainees tended to be younger people with fewer family responsibilities.

Data source and definitions

The 1992 Adult Education and Training Survey (AETS), a supplement to the January 1992 Labour Force Survey, was sponsored by Employment and Immigration Canada (now Human Resources Development). About 45,000 respondents aged 17 and over were asked to identify any structured education they had pursued during the 1991 calendar year.

Limitations

All labour force and demographic data related to the AETS pertain to January 1992, which follows the reference period for the AETS (January 1991 to December 1991). As a result, there are several significant gaps in this study. For example, it was not possible to identify job-losers who had taken a self-initiated education program while they were without work in 1991 but who were employed by January 1992. Nor was it possible to identify trainees who had found work after completing their program, but then slipped into joblessness by January 1992. In such cases, occupation data refer to their last job, not to the job they held before enrolling in the education program. Unfortunately, data limitations also preclude the analysis of at least one important question: "Does retraining help job-losers find work?"

Job-oriented job-losers: Persons aged 25 to 54 who were without work in January 1992 because they had lost or been laid off their last job and were either self-initiated trainees or unemployed non-trainees.

Self-initiated trainees: Job-oriented job-losers who had taken an education program in 1991 of their own volition, and who were without a job in January 1992 (42% were unemployed; the remainder were not in the labour force). About 80% of trainees had enrolled specifically for job- or career-related reasons; however, all job-oriented job-losers who had enrolled in an education program, regardless of the reason, are included among self-initiated trainees, because improving one's education should improve employment prospects.

Unemployed non-trainees: Job-oriented job-losers who did not take a self-initiated education program in 1991 and were unemployed in January 1992. They may have taken training supported by their employer, but this does not meet the "self-initiated" criterion. The purpose of any employer-supported training is unknown, and indeed, it may have been offered to help workers deal with job loss.

Education program: A combination of courses provided by an educational institution, usually for credit toward a certificate, diploma or degree. Programs may be taken at the elementary/secondary, apprenticeship, trade/vocational, community college or university level.

Trades program: To meet sample size requirements, apprenticeship and trade/vocational programs have been combined in a "trades" category. Trade/vocational programs accounted for over three-quarters of trainees in the trades category.

Academic program: To meet sample size requirements, college and university programs have been grouped in an "academic" category. College students made up two-thirds of these self-initiated trainees.

Notes

Note 1

Half (49%) of job-losers aged 17 to 24 were not looking for work in January 1992, and two-thirds (68%) of job-losers aged 55 and over had dropped out of the labour force.

Note 2

Men accounted for 78% of job-oriented job-losers in the goods-producing sector, which had a relatively low rate of training.

Note 3

About 3% of trainees enrolled in more than one program in 1991; for example, a respondent may have completed high school and then enrolled in college.

Note 4

Since this question allowed for multiple responses, the percentages add to more than 100.

Note 5

This category also includes government loans, because they must be repaid by the student.

Note 6

This category covers special programs such as retraining for the unemployed, as well as government scholarships, grants and bursaries.

References

- Crompton, S. "[Employer-supported training - it varies by occupation.](#)" *Perspectives on Labour and Income* (Statistics Canada, Catalogue 75-001E) 6, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 9-17.
- ---. "[Studying on the job.](#)" *Perspectives on Labour and Income* (Statistics Canada, Catalogue 75-001E) 4, no. 2 (Summer 1992): 30-38.
- Haggag-Gu  nette, C. "[Lifelong learning: Who goes back to school?](#)" *Perspectives on Labour and Income* (Statistics Canada, Catalogue 75-001E) 3, no. 4 (Winter 1991): 24-30.

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Source

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This is the second of seven articles in the issue.

