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# Joining the Workforce

How International College Students Use Career Supports

Issue briefing | January 29, 2025



**Future Skills Centre** Centre des **Compétences futures**

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The Future Skills Centre was founded by a consortium whose members are Toronto Metropolitan University, Blueprint, and The Conference Board of Canada.

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**Blueprint**

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# Key findings

- International college students and graduates who participate in work-integrated learning (WIL) and/or career services report better employment outcomes and feel more prepared for the labour market.
- One in four international college students and graduates that we surveyed have not accessed WIL or career services.
- Financial and settlement stress, lack of time, difficulty accessing information, and limited transportation options are key barriers to their use of career services and WIL.
- Over a third of international college students and graduates we surveyed use family members, friends, classmates, and their instructors for career and employment support.
- Interview assistance and resumé workshops are the career services valued most by international college students and graduates. They also report needing more work experience and help with networking, overcoming language barriers, and understanding the workplace culture in Canada.

# Recommendations

Canadian colleges that would like to improve international students' study-to-work transitions can consider the following recommendations:

- Embed career education into academic programs or offer mandatory career readiness modules to ensure that all international college students receive comprehensive career education before graduation.
- Expand formal international student peer mentorship programs within career services.
- Encourage employers to hire international college students by clarifying immigration regulations, offering practical resources, and showcasing the value international students bring to their organizations.
- Promote the employment benefits of WIL to international college students and encourage them to complete at least one WIL experience before graduation.

# Supporting international student success

Over the past decade, international student enrolment in Canada has more than doubled, with the fastest increase at the college level.<sup>1</sup> Public colleges, particularly in Ontario where international student numbers have been highest, have become increasingly dependent on international tuition fees for financial stability.<sup>2</sup>

The increased volume of international students has prompted the scrutiny of post-secondary institutions and sparked a national conversation about their welfare and the integrity and sustainability of Canada's International Student Program.

International students face serious challenges in the near term. In 2024, the federal government introduced several changes to the International Student Program, including caps on new study permits and restrictions to the Post-Graduation Work Permit Program. These measures will greatly limit the number of international students who can study in Canada and remain after graduation.

While some international students choose to return home after their studies, the majority wish to stay in Canada,<sup>3</sup> with 58 per cent currently remaining after graduation.<sup>4,5</sup> Those who stay and transition to permanent residency are an important part of Canada's economic future, helping to offset Canada's aging population and low fertility rates.<sup>6</sup> To fully harness the potential of international students and maximize the investments made in their education and settlement, it is crucial that those who stay in Canada after graduation transition smoothly into the labour market.

1 Statistics Canada, "Table 37-10-0184-02. Postsecondary International Student Enrolments," 37.

2 Office of the Auditor General of Ontario, *Value for Money Audit*.

3 Canadian Bureau for International Education, "The Student Voice."

4 Five years after graduation, the international graduate retention rate drops to 50 per cent.

5 Choi and others, "International students as a source of labour supply."

6 Conference Board of Canada, *The, Surging Population Growth Eventually Wanes*.

However, international students and graduates face many labour market barriers.<sup>7</sup> Forty-three per cent of international students in Canada struggle to find work<sup>8</sup> and international graduates tend to earn less after graduation than their Canadian peers.<sup>9</sup> International college students, who are the focus of this study, earn 15 to 23 per cent less after graduation than Canadian graduates—except for those in STEM<sup>10</sup> fields.<sup>11,12</sup>

We focused on two key questions to help colleges improve international students' employment outcomes:

- How do international college students use formal and informal career supports to support their transition to work?
- How can these supports be improved to help international college students achieve better employment outcomes?

7 Arthur and others, "International Students' Views of Transition"; Arthur and others, "It's Not As Easy as They Say"; Ellis, "Race and Neoliberalism"; Thomas, "Should I Stay or Should I Go Home?"; Scott and others, "International Students as 'Ideal Immigrants' in Canada"; Shah and others, *Supporting Work-Integrated Learning*; Thomson and others, *International Students as Ideal Immigrants*; Peel Newcomer Strategy Group, *International Students Needs Assessment Report*.

8 Canadian Bureau for International Education, "The Student Voice."

9 Choi and others, "Early earnings trajectories of international students."

10 Refers to science, technology, engineering, and math.

11 International college students who earn certificates in STEM fields earn more one year after graduation than their Canadian counterparts.

12 Jung, *How Much Do International Graduates Make*.

To answer these questions, we:

- surveyed 502 final-year international college students and 500 recent international college graduates;<sup>13</sup>
- interviewed 42 final-year international college students and recent graduates;
- interviewed 42 public college staff working in international student services, career services, and work-integrated learning (WIL).

We focused on public colleges in Ontario and British Columbia, the two provinces where most international students are enrolled.<sup>14</sup> For full details on our methodology, see Appendix A.



13 Our study focuses on international college students and graduates who currently reside in Canada. As a result, the research does not capture the experiences of those who have left the country, whose experiences may differ from those who remain after completing their studies.

14 Statistics Canada, "Table 37-10-0184-02. Postsecondary International Student Enrolments," 37.

# Employment challenges

The most common employment challenge, reported by 61 per cent of the international college students and graduates we surveyed, was a lack of relevant contacts. (See Chart 1.)

Unlike domestic students, international students are often unable to draw on family connections and previous professional contacts to help them navigate the Canadian job market. While some college staff reported that they encourage international students to use volunteer opportunities to build their network, only a handful of the students and graduates we interviewed reported that they obtained volunteer experience.

Of the international college students and graduates we surveyed, 55 per cent reported that they needed to improve their interviewing skills to get a job. (See Chart 1.) In interviews with international college students, graduates, and staff, we learned that international college students are often unfamiliar with the types of questions they will face in a job interview. We also learned that international college students struggle to articulate their skills and typically have less interview experience than domestic students.

Many international college students and graduates we surveyed also reported that their resumés/CVs needed to be improved if they were to be competitive in the job market. Students and staff we interviewed reported that international college students are often unfamiliar with professional norms and standards for resumés, struggle to tailor their job applications, and find it challenging to showcase their skills effectively.

**Chart 1**

International college students and recent graduates face employment challenges

**Q:** Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: I need to improve my resumé or CV to get a job; I need to improve my interviewing skills to get a job; I need more relevant contacts in my network to get a job; there are not enough jobs available; the jobs available have poor working conditions and/or wages; discrimination in the hiring process affects my chances of getting hired. (percentage of students who agreed or strongly agreed with each statement, n = 1,002)



Note: Agreement was assessed on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Displayed percentages pertain to respondents who indicated a score of 6 or 7. Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

“I think getting to know more people is key here ... [employers] would rather give the job to someone [they] know or someone that is recommended because someone is vouching for them.... But because of that, I see that the international [students] are not getting the jobs that they studied [for].”

**Current international student**

The international college students and graduates we surveyed also pointed to broader challenges they believe affect their employment prospects. These include limited job availability, poor working conditions, and discrimination during hiring. (See Chart 1.) Some college staff echoed these concerns, noting that some employers are hesitant to hire international students due to negative biases and racism. Many staff also reported that employers do not always understand immigration regulations and the rules around hiring international students. As one college staff member explained, “There tends to be assumptions made from some employers that it’s too onerous. And so, they won’t hire an international student.” Some staff members suggested that post-secondary institutions could do more to educate employers on the immigration system and the value of hiring international students.

“Even though Canada is a bit open to immigrants, everyone still has somehow a bias.... I feel like every time we try something, the first idea that people have is that we are not capable.... I got my first job because it’s an entry level job ... it was easier. But to move from that, even inside my own firm or outside, it’s a bit harder.”

**International college graduate**

In interviews, most international college students and graduates emphasized the need for more work experience to make them more employable. Many students shared their frustration with the high experience requirements for entry-level positions, making it difficult for them to secure meaningful opportunities. As one student explained, “Even in an entry-level job they ask for two to three years of experience, which is near to impossible for me because to get a job, we need experience, and to get experience, we need a job.”

The most common challenges for international students identified by college staff were language barriers and unfamiliarity with Canadian workplace norms. For example, many staff observed that there are sometimes misunderstandings between international students and employers around things like work hours, workplace communication, and professional etiquette, which may differ from the practices in the students’ home countries. These factors further complicate the ability of international college students to navigate their job search and to secure meaningful employment.

“International students don’t or may not have insights about Canadian workplace culture. The dos and the don’ts, right? Around things like policy and law in the workplace. And things that you can say to people or can’t say to people, for example.... Canadian students who may have some work experience ... may be used to some of these things.”

**College staff**





# Use of career services and work-integrated learning

Participation in career services is linked to better employment outcomes for the international college students and graduates we surveyed. International college students and graduates who participated in career services are more likely to report having Canadian work experience. They also report higher job satisfaction and are more likely to say that their job aligns with their field of study and career goals than those who didn't use career services. (See Chart 2.)

“It would be ideal to have a career advisor teach a class [where] every week, we can have an actual topic that is going to be really beneficial to [their] career, whether it's networking, resumé, job searching, interviewing.... That would tremendously help students.... Every program should have a career course that is designed to prep students to find work and eliminate all barriers to employment.”  
**College staff**

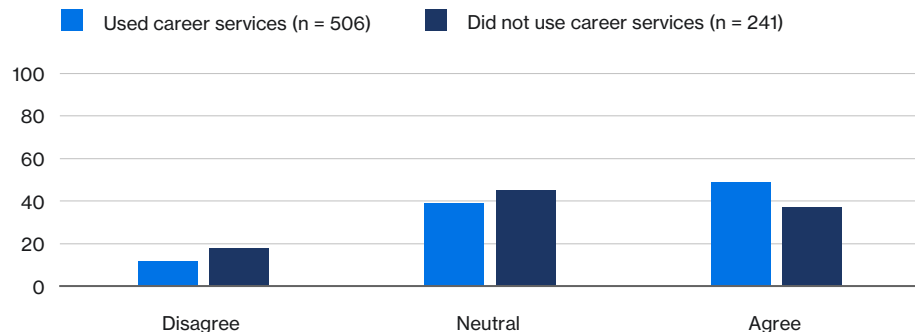
## Chart 2

Career service participants report higher job satisfaction

Q: Please indicate your level of agreement with the statement:

“Overall, I am satisfied with my current or most recent job.”

(percentage of respondents, n = 747)



Note: Agreement was assessed on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Responses were recoded as follows: disagree (scores from 1 to 2), neutral (scores from 3 to 5), agree (scores from 6 to 7). A chi-square test indicated statistical significance ( $p < 0.01$ ). Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

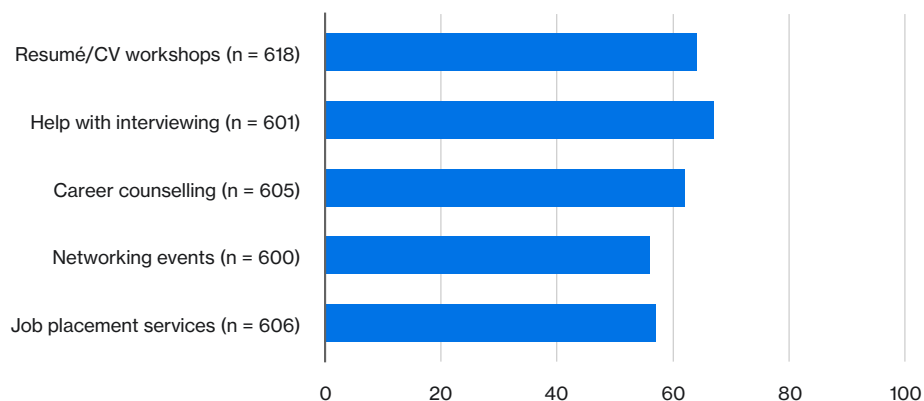


Interview assistance and resumé/CV workshops are the career services valued most by international college students and graduates. (See Chart 3.)

**Chart 3**

International college students and graduates find interview assistance and resumé/CV workshops most helpful

**Q:** How helpful did you find the following programs and/or services in preparing you for your job search or for helping you get a job? (percentage of respondents rating each service as helpful or very helpful)



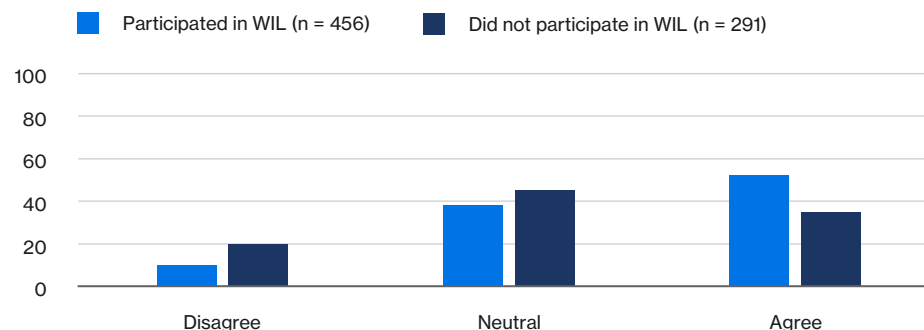
Note: Helpfulness was assessed on a scale from 1 (very unhelpful) to 7 (very helpful). Displayed percentages pertain to respondents who indicated a score of 6 or 7. Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

Current international college students and graduates who participated in work-integrated learning (WIL) also reported higher rates of employment and higher levels of job satisfaction. They are also more likely to say that their job aligns with their field of study and career goals compared to students and graduates who didn't participate in these services. (See Chart 4.)

**Chart 4**

Participation in work-integrated learning (WIL) is linked to higher job satisfaction

**Q:** Please indicate your level of agreement with the statement: "Overall, I am satisfied with my current or most recent job." (percentage of respondents, n = 747)



Note: Agreement was assessed on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Displayed percentages pertain to respondents who indicated a score of 6 or 7. A chi-square test indicated statistical significance (p<0.001). Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

“International students [who are] in a program that does not have a work-integrated learning component are at a significant disadvantage when they go into the labour market because they don’t have that forced opportunity to learn: What is a resumé? How do I participate in an interview?”

**College staff**

In interviews, international college students and graduates spoke about the benefit of WIL. Some of the benefits they noted included the opportunity to gain Canadian work experience and/or work experience related to their field of study and valuable references, which in some cases led to full-time employment.

“It’s been definitely helpful.... I used to work in a coding boot camp as a developer back [home]. That experience was not accepted here.... So, the co-op experience [is] Canadian experience ... proof of my work and my skill set. And the employers are thus able to take more [of a] chance on me.”

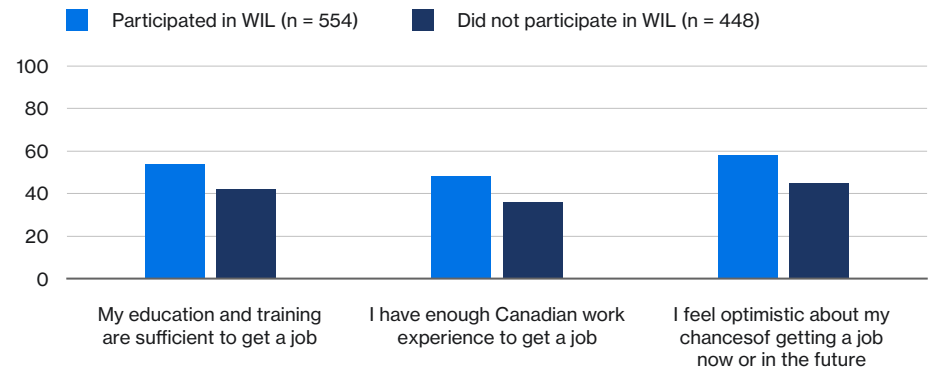
**Current international college student**



International college students and graduates who participated in WIL are more likely to agree that their education and training were sufficient to get a job and that they have enough Canadian work experience to do so compared to those who did not participate in WIL. They also are more likely to feel optimistic about their chances of getting a job now or in the future compared to students and graduates who hadn’t participated in WIL. (See Chart 5.)

**Chart 5**

Participation in work-integrated learning (WIL) is linked to better employment outcomes  
(percentage of students and graduates who agreed or strongly agreed with each statement)

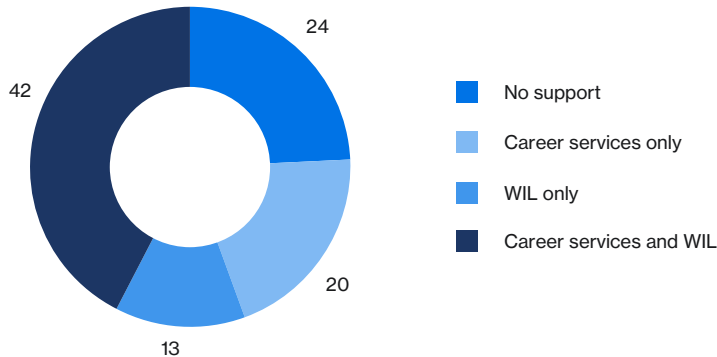


Note: Agreement was assessed on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Displayed percentages pertain to respondents who indicated a score of 6 or 7. A chi-square test indicated statistical significance (p<0.001). Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

# Barriers to accessing employment support

Although career services and WIL opportunities are associated with better employment outcomes for international college students and graduates, not all international students and graduates use these supports. Over one-third of international students we surveyed (34 per cent) haven't used career services and 45 per cent had not participated in WIL.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, one in four international students and graduates we surveyed told us they haven't accessed either WIL or career services. (See Chart 6.)

**Chart 6**  
 Respondents' use of career services and participation in work-integrated learning (WIL)  
 (percentage of respondents, n = 1,002)



Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

<sup>15</sup> Current data on WIL participation and career service use does not differentiate between international and domestic students, making it hard to compare our findings with domestic student participation rates. According to a 2022 benchmarking survey by the Canadian Association of Career Educators and Employers, 26 per cent of post-secondary students have used career services. Statistics Canada data shows that 61 per cent of college/polytechnic graduates have taken part in WIL.

Female international college students and graduates are less likely than male respondents to use career services. Older respondents (ages 36 to 45) are also less likely to use career services compared to younger students. East and South Asian students and graduates are also less likely to use career services compared to their peers from European cultural backgrounds. (See Appendix B, Table 5 for full results.)

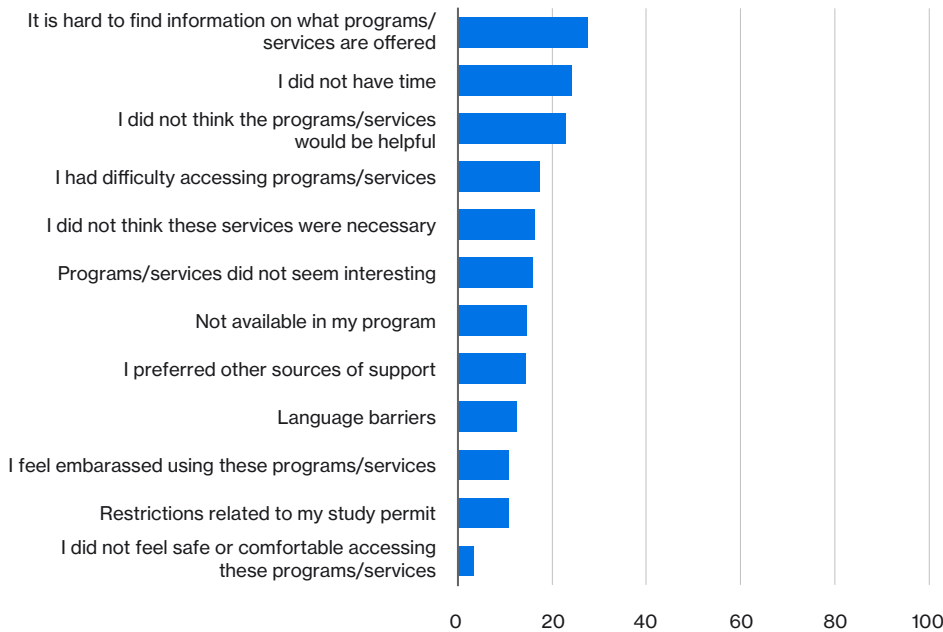
Older respondents (ages 36 to 45) are also less likely to participate in WIL compared to younger students. And international students and graduates reporting African, East Asian, South Asian, Southeast Asian, and 'other' cultural backgrounds are less likely than those of European backgrounds to participate in WIL. (See Appendix A, Table 17 for full results.)



Practical barriers also play a role in limiting participation in WIL and career services. The most common issue identified by international college students and graduates was a lack of information about the services available to them. In our survey, 28 per cent of students and graduates reported that it was difficult to find information on available programs and services at their college. (See Chart 7.)

**Chart 7**

Respondents identified a number of barriers to accessing career services  
**Q:** What challenges or barriers have you faced in accessing career services provided by your college and/or work-integrated learning? Select all that apply. (percentage of respondents selecting each response, n = 1,002)



Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

Nearly a quarter of international students and graduates we surveyed said that they do not have enough time to access relevant programs or services. Interviews with international college students and graduates revealed that for some students, adjusting to life in a new country while managing their studies and working long hours leaves them with little time to seek out career supports. The current career services model requires students to proactively seek out career services and employment supports, which can be particularly challenging for those who are already struggling with limited time or resources.

“When I came to Canada, I did not know anything about how colleges [worked] ... what are the things that they offer? And as a person just trying to get into [my] studies again, I was already feeling weighed down under that pressure. I was having too many things going on in my mind, like will I be able to cope with it, how will I study? And in that process, my mind was so one-track, I did not see the other opportunities that [my college] was offering.”

**Former international student**

Some international college students and graduates we interviewed also view WIL programs as financially risky. The uncertainty of securing a placement, combined with potentially higher program fees and/or a longer, costlier program adds to their financial burden.

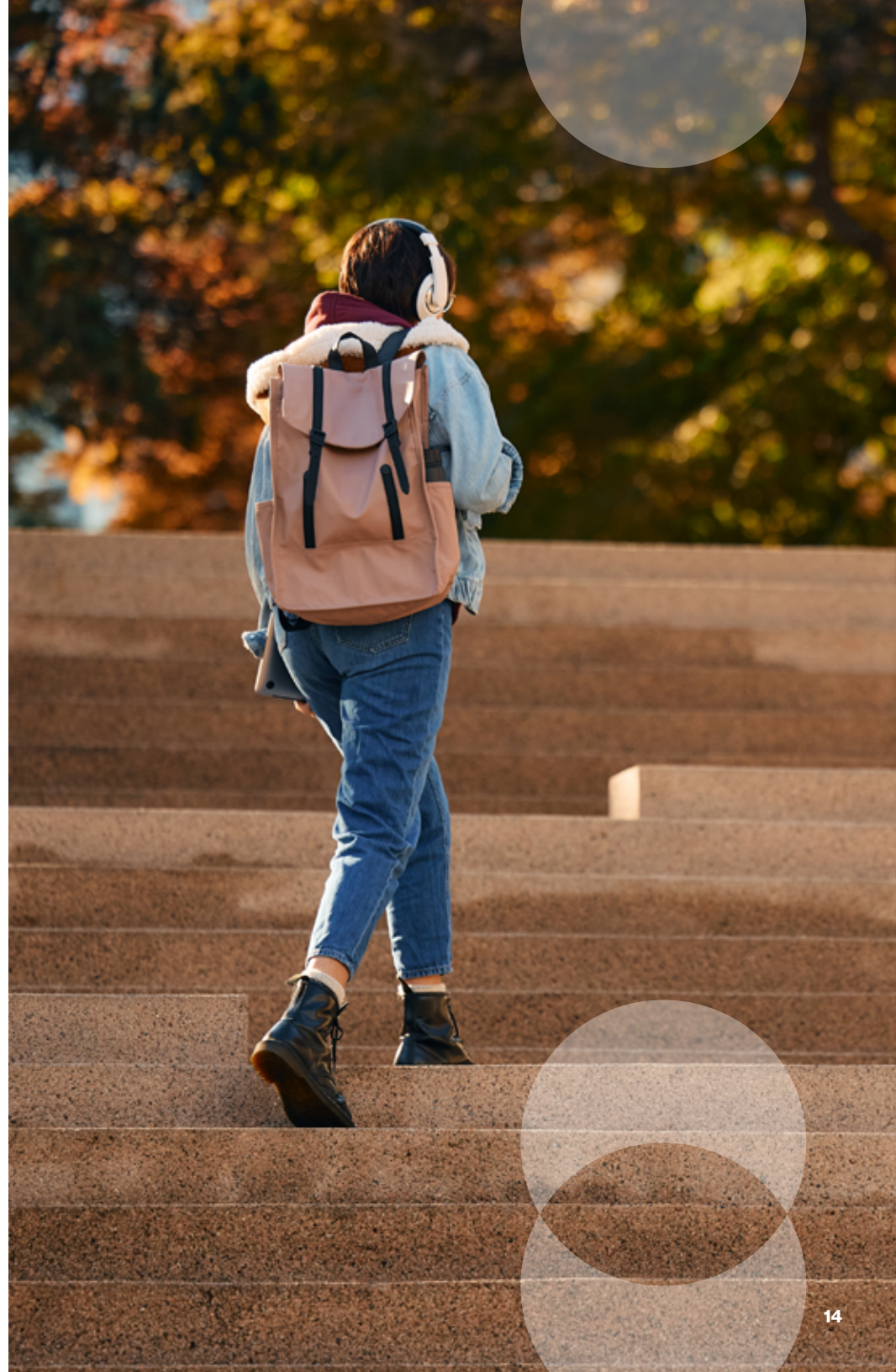
“I didn’t do a co-op. I just couldn’t afford to lose my job to go to [a WIL position] that was temporary.... The program itself was very expensive.”

**International college graduate**

Transportation-related barriers pose another barrier to participation in WIL. Some college staff noted that many WIL opportunities are not reachable by public transit or require students to move to a different city entirely. College staff explained that these obstacles disproportionately affect international students who often lack a driver's licence, access to a vehicle, or the financial means to relocate.

Policy barriers further compound these issues. Many college staff noted that employers do not receive the same federal wage subsidies when hiring international students for WIL positions as they do for domestic students.<sup>16</sup> This presents a disadvantage for international college students, as many employers rely on these subsidies when hiring. Since participation in WIL is associated with better employment outcomes for international college students, closing this funding gap is crucial to ensure more of these students can benefit from these valuable experiences.

<sup>16</sup> Under the Government of Canada's Student Work Placement Program, employers can receive funding for up to 50 per cent to 70 per cent of wages paid to domestic students during an experiential work placement. International students are not eligible for this funding.



# The power of peer and instructor support

College professors and instructors are an important source of career support for international students. Among the international college students and graduates we surveyed, 39 per cent said their instructors or professors had given them career advice or helped them get a job. (See Chart 8.) In interviews, we learned that international students and graduates received resumé and networking advice as well as job referrals from their college instructors and professors.

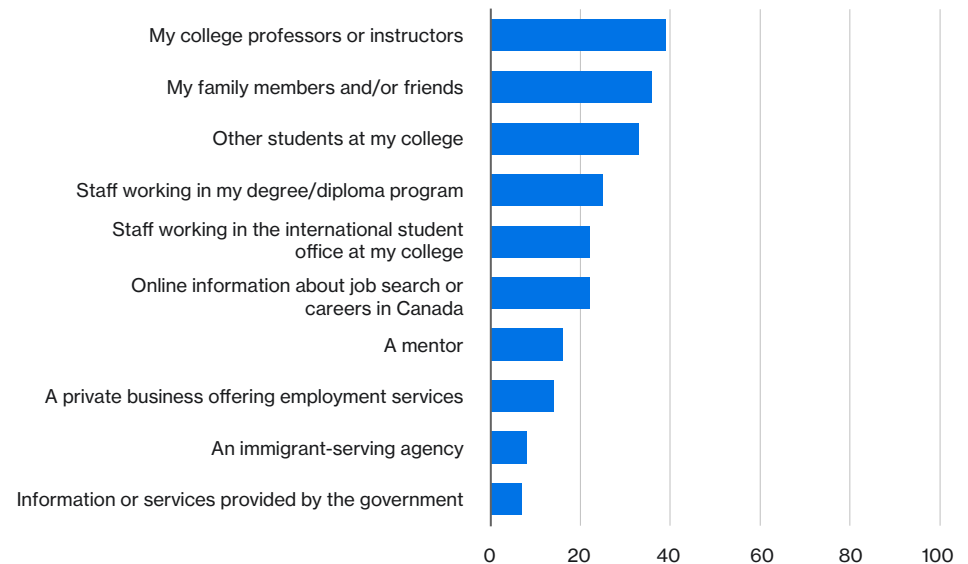
Peer networks are another important source of support for international students navigating the Canadian job market. Thirty-six per cent of international college students and graduates we surveyed said that they use family members and/or friends for career support. Thirty-three per cent said that they rely on advice from other students at their institution. (See Chart 8.) In interviews, we learned that students and graduates share job leads, resumé tips, networking strategies, and career advice with one another. Peer groups also help international college students and graduates get a foothold in the labour market by serving as key referral sources for job opportunities.

**Chart 8**

Professors, family members, and classmates are important sources of career support for international college students

Q: Who else has given you career advice or helped you get a job so far? Select all that apply

(percentage of participants selecting each response, n = 1,002)



Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

“[International college students] go to their friends [for employment advice]... They trust them, right? So even if they are getting wrong information, they will still trust them.”

**College staff**

Although peers are an important source of informal support for international college students, the quality of the information they receive from peers varies widely. In interviews, some college staff expressed concerns about the inconsistency of advice students receive from their peers, highlighting a need for more structured and reliable forms of peer mentorship.

For example, staff shared that sometimes students inappropriately generalize information or share incorrect information with their fellow students. Formal peer support programs could help leverage the value of peer-to-peer support while ensuring that students receive accurate and helpful career and employment guidance.

“[Career development professionals] would be able to provide them [with] a broader range of information rather than just their friends who have only been here for a couple of years.”

**College staff**





# Recommendations

We offer the following recommendations to colleges looking to improve international students' study-to-work transitions:

## **Embed career education into curricula or offer mandatory career readiness modules.**

At most colleges, students must proactively seek out career services and employment support. But many barriers, including lack of time and difficulty accessing information on relevant programs and services, hinder the ability of international college students to take advantage of these resources. By integrating career education into academic programs or offering mandatory career readiness modules, institutions can ensure that all international students receive comprehensive career support before graduation, which would reduce the burden on students and address equity concerns.

## **Encourage employers to hire international college students.**

Colleges can take a proactive role in helping employers understand immigration regulations related to hiring international students and graduates. Many employers have misconceptions about these rules, which can deter them from considering international talent. Institutions can offer targeted training and resources to clarify the hiring process and highlight success stories that demonstrate the value that international students bring to employers. This can help encourage more employers to leverage international student talent.

## **Expand formal international student peer mentorship programs.**

A third of international students and graduates we surveyed said they use friends, family, and classmates for career support. By incorporating structured peer mentorship programs, institutions can provide valuable guidance while offering professional development and paid opportunities for international student mentors. College staff working at institutions that offer peer mentorship programs report good success.

## **Highlight the employment benefits of WIL to international college students.**

WIL is linked with improved employment outcomes for international students, yet its use appears to be uneven. Post-secondary institutions should actively promote WIL programs during recruitment and orientation, highlighting the potential of these programs to enhance the employability of international college students. Having faculty champion WIL opportunities and securing student testimonials are also effective promotion strategies.<sup>17</sup> Collaborating with employers to develop accessible WIL opportunities, including remote work options, is crucial in making these experiences more attainable for international college students. Post-secondary institutions may also consider offering scholarships or bursaries to help offset financial barriers for international college students.

<sup>17</sup> Malatest, *Barriers to Work-Integrated Learning Opportunities*.

## Appendix A

# Methodology

In this research, we sought to understand international college students' transitions into the world of work. We asked: How do international college students use formal and informal career supports to support their transition to work? And how can these supports be improved to help international college students achieve better employment outcomes?

To answer these questions, we:

- surveyed 502 final-year international college students and 500 recent international college graduates;
- interviewed 42 final-year international college students and recent graduates;
- interviewed 42 public college staff working in international student services, career services, and work-integrated learning (WIL).

## Aggregate terms used in this issue briefing

**Table 1**

Aggregate terms used in this issue briefing  
(per cent)

Aggregate terms	Percentage
Some/a few	under 30
Many	30 to 40
Almost half	41 to 49
Half	50
Most/majority/over half	over 50

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

## Ethics

The project received ethics approval from Veritas, an independent research ethics review board. All participants gave informed consent and were guaranteed confidentiality.

## Interview recruitment

The research team sent email invitations to potential college staff interviewees over a three-month period (February to April 2024). In total, the research team contacted 531 public college leaders (director and manager level) and program administrators for participation in the study. To build the recruitment list, we generated contacts using publicly available staff lists and internet searches (495 individuals contacted), The Conference Board of Canada contacts (19 individuals contacted), and snowball sampling (17 individuals contacted). Forty-six individuals expressed interest in the study and 42 completed an interview.

The research team contacted potential international college student and graduate interviewees over a four-month period (April to July 2024). To build the recruitment list, the research team contacted survey respondents (see "Survey of international students and recent graduates" below) who indicated interest in a follow-up interview when they completed the survey. Two hundred and forty-nine international students and graduates from public colleges in Ontario and British Columbia indicated interest in a follow-up interview, all of whom were contacted by the research team. Of these, 43 individuals scheduled an interview and 22 completed an interview. Interviews were conducted with individuals who met eligibility requirements and were selected to achieve demographic representation. (See "Target interviews by subpopulation" below.)

The research team also sought participants through the offices of Vice-Provosts, Students (or equivalent) as well as directors and managers responsible for international student services at public colleges in Ontario and British Columbia. In total, the research team contacted 96 individuals working at public colleges in Ontario and British Columbia. The research team generated contact information using publicly available staff lists (82 individuals contacted) and The Conference Board of Canada contacts (14 individuals contacted). Overall, institutional outreach yielded responses from approximately 406 international students and recent graduates. Of these, 27 interviews were scheduled and 20 were completed. Interviews were conducted with individuals who met eligibility requirements and were selected to achieve demographic representation. (See “Target interviews by subpopulation” below.)

International students and graduates who completed an interview were compensated for their time and contribution to the research with a \$30 gift card.

## Target interviews by subpopulation

We sought interviews with public college program administrators and leaders in Ontario and British Columbia, where the highest numbers of international college students are enrolled.<sup>1</sup> (See Table 2 for detailed recruitment targets.)

**Table 2**

Target number of participants recruited by location, with highest percentage in Ontario  
(participants)

Province	Percentage of all international students studying at public colleges	Target number of interviews – public college directors/managers	Target number of interviews – public college front-line staff
Ontario	73	16	16
British Columbia	13	4	4
Total	86	20	20

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

1 Statistics Canada, “Table 37-10-0086-01. Postsecondary enrolments, by status of student in Canada, country of citizenship and gender.”

**Table 3**

Target number of interviews of college students and graduates by location  
(participants)

Province	Target number of interviews – current international college students	Target number of interviews – recent international college graduates
Ontario	16	16
British Columbia	4	4
Total	20	20

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

We targeted a minimum of 25 per cent male (n = 5) and 25 per cent female (n = 5) college leaders and program administrators. We aimed to have at least four cultural groups represented and at least 40 per cent of interviews with college leaders and program administrators (n = 16) to be with individuals who self-identified as having a cultural background other than European.

We sought interviews with international college students in their final year of study or who had recently graduated (after 2020) from a public college in Ontario or British Columbia, where the highest numbers of international college students are concentrated.<sup>2</sup>

We aimed for 50 per cent of respondents (n = 10 current students, n = 10 recent graduates) with India identified as their country of citizenship and the remainder of the sample to comprise a mix of countries of citizenship.<sup>3</sup> We targeted equal numbers of female (n = 10 current students, n = 10 recent graduates) and male respondents (n = 10 current students, n = 10 recent graduates).<sup>4</sup> We aimed for approximately 40 per cent of respondents to be under 25 years of age (n = 16), 25 per cent to be 25 years to 35 years of age (n = 10), with the remainder of the sample comprising people older than 35 years.<sup>5</sup>

2 Statistics Canada.

3 Statistics Canada.

4 Statistics Canada.

5 Statistics Canada, “Table 37-10-0163-01. Postsecondary enrolments, by International Standard Classification of Education, institution type, Classification of Instructional Programs, STEM and BHASE groupings, status of student in Canada, age group and gender.”

## Semi-structured interview questions

An independent research ethics board reviewed the interview guides. The guides were developed based on existing literature and in conjunction with the project's research advisory board.

### Sample interview questions included:

#### College leaders and staff

- As it pertains to your work with international students, has the strategic vision or goals for your department/office evolved over the past five years? Why have these changes taken place?
- What do you think your office does particularly well with respect to supporting international students? Is there a particular program or service that is especially successful?
- What are challenges facing your office, in terms of preparing international students to find work that is related to or builds on their training?
- Do you think international students have a good understanding of what they will need to find a job in Canada after their studies?

#### Current international students and recent graduates

- Have you ever received job search and/or career advice in your time in Canada? Who helped you and how?
- What has helped or hindered you in your job search?
- What factors are important for you when considering a job right now? Have the jobs you've had so far met your goals?
- How prepared did you feel to make the transition from college to work? Is there anything you wish you had done differently in college or after you graduated?

## Qualitative analysis

The research team conducted virtual interviews with public college staff and leaders between February and April 2024. Interviews lasted approximately one hour. Interviews were recorded and transcribed, yielding 293 pages (165,999 words) of text.

The research team conducted virtual interviews with current international college students and recent graduates between April and July 2024. Interviews lasted approximately one hour. Interviews were recorded and transcribed, yielding 309 pages (147,480 words) of text.

Interviews were coded and analyzed using NVivo qualitative software. Interview data was categorized thematically. Themes were refined and linked together based on the literature review, research questions, and an exploratory examination within interviews. Interrater reliability was measured using Kappa's statistic. The Kappa coefficient was 0.9. Themes were examined based on how frequently they were noted, as well as the intensity of the observation. Due to the small sample size, we cannot generalize to these populations based on study results.

## Interview demographics

**Table 4**

College leader and program administrators by location and role (participants)

Province	Leader	Program administrator	Total
Ontario	17	15	32
British Columbia	5	5	10
Total	22	20	42

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

**Table 5**

College leaders and program administrators by sex (per cent, n = 42)

Sex	Per cent
Male	33.3
Female	66.7

Note: Possible responses included male, female, and prefer not to answer.

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

**Table 6**

College leaders and program administrators by cultural background  
(per cent, n = 42)

Cultural background	Per cent
African	7.1
European	47.6
East Asian	4.8
South Asian	9.5
South East Asian	4.8
Hispanic or Latinx	2.4
Middle Eastern	2.4
Other	21.4

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

**Table 7**

International college students and graduates by student status and location (interviews)  
(participants)

Student status	Ontario	British Columbia	Total
Graduate	17	5	22
Student	16	4	20
Total	33	9	42

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

**Table 8**

International college students and graduates interviewed by sex  
(per cent, n = 42)

Sex	Per cent
Male	42.9
Female	57.1

Note: Possible responses included male, female, and prefer not to answer.  
Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

**Table 9**

International college students and graduates interviewed by age  
(per cent, n = 42)

Age range	Per cent
Under 25 years	47.6
25 to 35 years	28.6
36 to 45 years	19.0
46 to 55 years	4.8

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

**Table 10**

International college students and graduates interviewed by cultural background  
(per cent, n = 42)

Cultural background	Per cent
African	14.3
European	2.4
South Asian	57.1
South East Asian	7.1
Hispanic or Latinx	19.0

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

**Table 11**

International college students and graduates interviewed by country of citizenship  
(per cent, n = 42)

Country of citizenship	Per cent
India	47.6
Other	52.4

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

### Survey of international students and recent graduates

We conducted a survey of international students in their last year of study at public colleges in Ontario and British Columbia and recent graduates (graduated between 2020 and 2023) from public colleges in Ontario and British Columbia. The survey included a mix of Likert-scale, multiple choice, and open-ended questions. There were overlapping and distinct sets of questions for students and recent graduates. The survey also captured demographic information for between-group analyses (e.g., sex, cultural background, region, age). Respondents were given the option to leave their email address if they were interested in participating in a follow-up interview. All survey questions were reviewed and approved by Veritas, an independent research ethics board. Survey responses were anonymous, and participants were guaranteed confidentiality.

We used Leger, a Canadian market research firm, to distribute the survey online between February and June 2024. The survey was pre-tested among 61 respondents before fielding to ensure its external validity and to identify any wording problems. Five hundred and two international college students and 500 international college graduates completed the survey.

## Survey demographics

**Table 12**  
Survey respondents by sex  
(per cent, n = 1,002)

Sex	Per cent
Male	57.4
Female	42.4

Note: Possible responses included male, female, and prefer not to answer.  
Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

**Table 13**  
Survey respondents by age  
(per cent, n = 1,002)

Age range	Per cent
Under 25 years	36
25 to 35 years	54
36 to 45 years	9
46 to 55 years	1

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

**Table 14**  
Survey respondents by cultural background  
(per cent, n = 1,002)

Cultural background	Per cent
African	9
European	20
East Asian	14
South Asian	34
South East Asian	10
Hispanic or Latinx	8
Middle Eastern	2
Other	3
Prefer not to say	2

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

**Table 15**  
Survey respondents by top 10 countries of citizenship  
(per cent, n = 506)

Cultural background	Per cent
India	31.9
China	8.1
Nigeria	4.7
Philippines	3.6
Brazil	2.9
Australia	2.8
Japan	2.3
United States of America	2.1
Colombia	2
Pakistan	1.7

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

**Table 16**  
Survey respondents by province  
(per cent, n = 1,002)

	Per cent
British Columbia	34
Ontario	64

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

## Quantitative analysis

We used descriptive statistics to analyze the frequency of responses on key variables (e.g., career services use, industry in which they are currently employed). We produced contingency tables to investigate the bivariate association between variables of interest (e.g., levels of job satisfaction by career services use). Where applicable, variables were recoded to facilitate the analysis and interpretation of findings. For example, in the 7-point scale where respondents indicated their level of agreement with the statement “Overall, I am satisfied with my current or most recent job”, responses 1 to 3 were recoded as “disagree” and responses 5 to 7 were recoded as “agree.” We produced charts to visualize key findings.

In addition, we used multiple logistic regression models to investigate how sex, age, cultural background, province, and student status (student or graduate) were associated with the use of career services and participation in work-integrated learning (WIL). We also used similar models to investigate whether the use of career services and participation in WIL predicted various job outcomes, while controlling for socio-demographic factors.

**Table 17**  
Logistic regression models  
(n = 968)

Variable	Career services (estimate)	Work-integrated learning (estimate)
Male	1.00 (ref.)	1.00 (ref.)
Female	-0.40**	-0.18
Under 25	1.00 (ref.)	1.00 (ref.)
25 to 35	-0.1	-0.33*
36 to 45	-0.66**	-0.57*
46 to 55	0.37	-1.37
European	1.00 (ref.)	1.00 (ref.)
African	-0.46	-0.57*
East Asian	-0.57*	-0.88***
South Asian	-1.00***	-1.28***
South East Asian	-0.43	-1.17***
Indigenous	-13.94	-13.33
Hispanic	-0.24	-0.49
Middle Eastern	-0.44	-0.85
Other	-0.81	-1.71***
British Columbia	1.00 (ref.)	1.00 (ref.)
Ontario	0.13	0.48**
Student	1.00 (ref.)	1.00 (ref.)
Graduate	-0.33*	-0.02

Note: \*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

## Appendix B

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