



Canadian Apprenticeship Forum
Forum canadien sur l'apprentissage

The challenge to finding an employer-sponsor



FINAL REPORT

March 2010

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Canada 

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The opinions expressed in this research document do not necessarily represent the views or official policies of the CAF-FCA or other agencies or organizations that may have provided support, financial or otherwise, for this project.

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*The challenge to finding an employer-sponsor.
Final Report*

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Forum canadien sur l'apprentissage (CAF-FCA)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to explore the challenge of finding an employer-sponsor. No matter how a person enters into an apprenticeship, every person interested in registering as an apprentice with their province or territory has to find a sponsor. Typically, an individual employer serves as the sponsor and is responsible for the on-the-job portion of the training.¹ Although most apprentices find a sponsor fairly quickly, for some individuals the search for a sponsor can take several months, or, in some cases, years. The struggles and delays faced when searching for employer-sponsors are issues of concern in the apprenticeship community. Despite the current economic downturn, analysts predict future skills shortages may impair growth if employers cannot find ways to connect with the employees they need. This research report explores the challenge of finding an employer-sponsor using qualitative and quantitative analysis. In order to understand the characteristics of the individuals reporting challenges and to identify the reasons for difficulty, it analyzes statistics on trade, location, and equity group. This report also tries to identify the successful strategies that apprentices used to connect with employer-sponsors by analyzing the experiences of apprentices through focus groups. Moving forward, it

1 Although an individual employer-sponsor is typical, in some cases another organization, such as a union hall or school, can sponsor an individual.

is hoped this information will contribute to the ability of apprenticeship stakeholders to connect employers and potential apprentices more efficiently.

Approach and sources

The study was approached using two distinct quantitative and qualitative methodologies: statistics and focus groups. Firstly, statistical trends were examined based on Statistics Canada's National Apprenticeship Survey (NAS) data. The questions in the survey relating to employer-sponsorship were identified and a trade, provincial/territorial, and equity group data breakdown was received from Statistics Canada. The respondents to the survey were individuals who had completed their apprenticeship training, those who were still continuing, or those who had stopped their training. The sample population for the survey was randomly selected from a list of people who were registered as apprentices with their provincial or territorial authorities from 2002 to 2004. The information was collected from January to May 2007.²

2 Marinka Menard, Frank Menezes, Cindy K.Y. Chan and Merv Walker, "National Apprenticeship Survey: Canada Overview Report 2007," Catalogue No. 81-598-XX No. 001, (Ottawa: Culture, Tourism and the Centre for Education Statistics Division, Statistics Canada, Ministry of Industry, 2008), 9-10.

Secondly, to understand apprentices' viewpoints, thirteen focus groups were completed with more than 100 apprentices from across the country. The apprentices talked about their experiences in finding an individual employer-sponsor. The respondents for this part of the study were current apprentices in their first, second, and third levels. It should be noted this group is distinct from the respondents to the NAS, some of whom had already completed or stopped their training. The focus groups occurred from March to June 2009.

This report summarizes the information from the statistics and focus groups in separate sections. While reading each section, readers should keep in mind the distinctions between the sources in terms of who was included and the timeframe.

In addition to this report, more concise communication materials were developed, including profiles of apprentices outlining the specific strategies they used to find an employer-sponsor. These profiles will be available on the CAF-FCA website and will hopefully assist potential apprentices looking for sponsors.

Relevance

The challenge to finding an employer-sponsor is relevant to the apprenticeship community because making more efficient connections at the beginning of the job search process benefits both employers and apprentices. By connecting with potential apprentices more efficiently, employers can gain access to the employees they need quickly, thereby reducing recruiting costs. If the apprentices continue to work with the employers after their training is complete, the employers can reduce turnover costs. Evidence suggests, however, that some employers perceive that apprentices are not applying to their organizations and they don't know where to find apprentices.³ Apprentices will also benefit by making more efficient connections. Potential apprentices sometimes have to go to several different employers prior to finding one that is willing to offer them an apprenticeship. Such long delays in finding an employer-sponsor are detrimental because they may discourage individuals from pursuing apprenticeships, may impair their completion, and may prevent workers from receiving increased wages and more advanced training essential to their career development.⁴ With the anticipated skills shortages that Canada will experience once the economy recovers, ensuring employers and potential apprentices are con-

3 CAF-FCA, "It pays to hire an apprentice: Calculating the Return on Training Investment for Employers-A Study of 16 Trades Executive Summary." (Ottawa: PrintWest, September 2009).

4 CAF-FCA, "Apprentices Enrolled at Publicly Funded Canadian Colleges and Institutes: Profiles, Investments, and Perceptions," (Ottawa: PrintWest, December 2007), 2, 12. CAF-FCA, "Apprentices Enrolled at Private Training Providers in Canada: A Comparative Analysis with the Experience of Apprentices at Publicly Funded Colleges and Institutes," (Ottawa: PrintWest, December 2007), 13.

necting in a timely manner will be especially important to ensuring economic growth and competitiveness.

The information in this report has value because it reinforces the value in the work already being done to encourage career exploration, to match employers and apprentices, to communicate the value of apprenticeship to employers, and to promote the business case for diversity. The report also contains valuable data that has never been published before. The statistics provide a broad overview and may help focus the apprenticeship community's energies and efforts on the trades and equity groups that have identified they are struggling to find sponsors. In addition, direct feedback from apprentices on their challenges will be valuable for apprenticeship stakeholders trying to address this issue. Finally, the report highlights in Appendix A some practices around connecting apprentices and employers from various regions that readers may find interesting.

Highlights from the National Apprenticeship Survey (NAS) data

- Approximately 83 per cent of respondents did not report having challenges when trying to find an employer-sponsor.⁵
- Approximately 17 per cent of respondents reported having challenges⁶

5 Marinka Menard, Frank Menezes, Cindy K.Y. Chan and Merv Walker, "National Apprenticeship Survey: Canada Overview Report 2007," Catalogue No. 81-598-XX No. 001, (Ottawa: Culture, Tourism and the Centre for Education Statistics Division, Statistics Canada, Ministry of Industry, 2008), 21.

6 *Ibid.*

- Within the 17 per cent that identified difficulty a more specific trade breakdown was obtained.
- A significant percentage of respondents from the following trades had difficulty:
 - automotive service technician,
 - millwright,
 - industrial mechanic,
 - machinist,
 - heavy equipment technician, and
 - truck and coach technician.
- Comparatively, fewer carpenters, cooks, and hairstylists had difficulty finding sponsors.
- Specific trades were more likely to identify certain reasons for having difficulty. A significant percentage of trade respondents identified the following reasons for having difficulty:
 - "no one was hiring:" millwrights, heavy equipment technicians, automotive service technicians, machinists, and industrial mechanics (millwrights)
 - "no work was available in the trade:" construction electricians
 - "lack of work experience or knowledge/ employer wanted licensed or qualified apprentice or journeyperson/ employer unwilling to train or pay apprentice:" truck and coach technicians, tool and die makers, heavy equipment technicians, hairstylists, and automotive service technicians

- When analyzing the 17 per cent based on categories such as women/men, visible minority respondents/non-visible minority, foreign-born persons/Canadian-born, Aboriginal peoples/Non-Aboriginal, and persons with disabilities/non-disabled, the following observations can be made:
 - Most of the groups, except women and Aboriginal peoples, had a higher probability of experiencing difficulties compared to their respective reference group.
 - Visible minority respondents were more likely than non-visible minorities to identify “lack of work experience/employer wanted licensed or qualified apprentice or journeyman/employer unwilling to train or pay apprentice” as a reason for difficulty.
 - “Discrimination” was more of an issue for visible minority respondents and women than for their reference groups.
 - More women than men and more foreign-born persons than Canadian-born persons identified “other” as a reason for difficulty.
- The participants were from Nova Scotia, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Ontario, and Manitoba. Most of the participants were from British Columbia.
- The participants were from a variety of trades. Most were electricians, carpenters, and cooks.
- Apprentices found employer-sponsors by using their networks, cold calling, sending out resumes, and through their pre-apprenticeship⁷ work terms.

Challenges

- Overall, apprentices thought the most challenging aspect was finding a supportive employer who was committed to seeing them through the entire process.
- Focus group participants agreed the following were some challenges when trying to find an employer-sponsor:
 - finding a supportive employer-sponsor,
 - lack of networking opportunities,
 - lack of experience, and
 - sector-specific conditions.
- Discrimination was noted as an issue by women when trying to find a sponsor. For the most part, visible minority participants did not perceive that their race was an issue when trying to find a sponsor.

Highlights from the Focus Groups

Description of participants

- 113 apprentices participated in the focus groups.
- There were thirteen focus groups.

⁷ It is acknowledged that there are many different definitions of pre-apprenticeship depending on the jurisdiction and trade. The technical definitions were not discussed at the focus groups. Apprentices referred only to pre-apprenticeship in general. Usually pre-apprenticeship includes some basic trades and safety training.

Recommendations from apprentices

All these recommendations came from the apprentices who attended the focus groups:

Continue to support career awareness programs and pre-apprenticeship programs for individuals interested in exploring careers in the trades.

- According to the focus group findings, participants did find career awareness programs at high schools and colleges helpful.
- College tours and pre-apprenticeship programs, particularly those with work terms, were mentioned as a useful way for potential apprentices to gain exposure to the trade, to learn about safety regulations, and to gain work experience with employers. For some apprentices, the work term connected them to the employer who eventually sponsored them.
- Apprentices noted that counsellors at high schools, local employment agencies, and Service Canada have access to career information on apprenticeship and the best ways to connect with sponsors.

Create a list for apprentices identifying employers who are interested in hiring apprentices

- Although it can be easy to find a job in general, some apprentices noted it can be difficult and time consuming to find an employer who is interested in taking on an apprentice. Some apprentices noted they had to work with several employers before they found one that would sponsor them.

Rather than cold calling employers in the yellow pages, a list of employers who are interested in hiring apprentices might make the process more efficient. Such a list may also provide employers with a mechanism by which to connect with apprentices.

Communicate the value of apprenticeship to employers

- Employers may benefit if they support the training and development of staff, according to apprentices. Apprentices entered the trades because they want opportunities for career advancement. They are seeking employers who will help them achieve their goals. Apprentices spoke very positively about employer-sponsors who encouraged them to complete their technical training and to pursue their certification and Red Seal endorsement. These employers also stayed on top of the administrative aspects of the apprenticeship and offered apprentices diverse on-the-job experiences. Some apprentices, however, said that they had to go through several employers before they found a supportive sponsor, indicating communication about the value of apprenticeship to employers is still necessary. Apprentices also supported tax credits for employers as incentives to participate.
- To ensure there are opportunities for apprentices, the business case for diverse hiring needs to be promoted to employers. Women in particular said more should be done to create awareness among employers about the value of hiring women.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The working group for this project also made some observations:

Sharing promising practices is helpful

- What are some promising practices for ensuring employers know about the value of apprenticeship training? As an example, the province of Manitoba has an advertising campaign designed to reach out to employers. Other jurisdictions may have completed similar activities. As was done in the past, there may be value in continuing to share promising practices and outcomes with other jurisdictions.
- It is acknowledged that across the country there are interesting practices and programs available to help connect employers and apprentices. What are provinces and territories doing to connect employers and apprentices? Have Ontario and Nova Scotia share promising practices from apprenticesearch.com and Building Futures for Youth (see Appendix A) with other jurisdictions. Consider replicating these programs in other areas if appropriate.

Reaching out to employers who currently do not hire apprentices is helpful

- In the trades where the employer was “unwilling to train or pay the apprentice,” according to the NAS data, perhaps there are opportunities to work with the industry associations to promote the advantages of training employees as apprentices.

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PART 1: INTRODUCTION



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Before providing the statistics and focus group findings, the purpose of the research, the background, key terms, and the methodological approach need to be described for context.

1.1 Purpose

This research had two main aims:

- to understand which trades, locations, and equity groups had challenges finding an employer-sponsor and what reasons they identified for these challenges.
- to talk directly to apprentices about their experiences and to identify the success-

ful strategies they used to connect with employer-sponsors.

1.2 Background

Findings from CAF-FCA's past surveys with apprentices and employers motivated the organization to further investigate this topic. CAF-FCA's previous research suggests there is a disconnect between apprentices' and employers' perspectives. Apprentices want to find a sponsor, but it is taking them a long time in some cases. Some employers are open to hiring apprentices, but don't know where to find them.

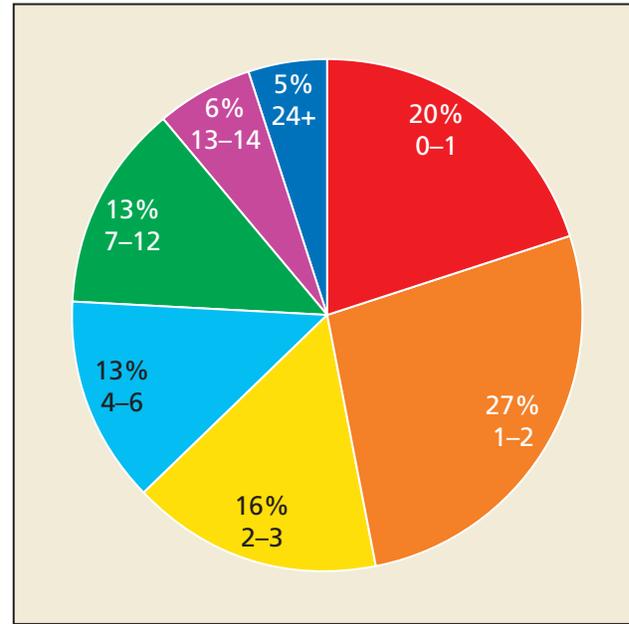
CAF-FCA has some quantitative evidence indicating the search times for apprentices. Two CAF-FCA surveys encompassing more than 2,200 apprentices enrolled at public and private training providers found that roughly 37 per cent of apprentices had to search for between four and twenty-four months before finding an employer-sponsor, with an average search period of seven months.¹

On the other hand, employers say they can't find apprentices. As a part of CAF-FCA's 2008 Return on Training Investment (ROTI) Study Phase II, employers that did not employ apprentices but employed journeypersons were asked to complete a short survey. These employer respondents worked in one of the sixteen trades included in the study.

The trades included in the CAF-FCA ROTI Phase II study were automotive service technician, bricklayer, construction electrician, construction millwright and industrial mechanic, cook, heavy-duty equipment technician, machinist, motor vehicle body repairer, refrigeration and air conditioning mechanic, sheet metal worker, boilermaker, cabinet-maker, electrical power line and cable worker, hairstylist, plumber and parts person.

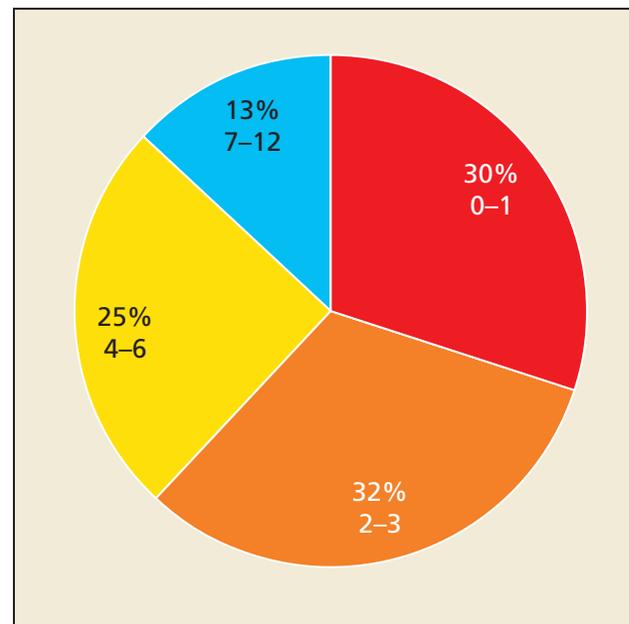
¹ CAF-FCA, "Apprentices Enrolled at Publicly Funded Canadian Colleges and Institutes: Profiles, Investments, and Perceptions," (Ottawa: PrintWest, December 2007), 2, 12. CAF-FCA, "Apprentices Enrolled at Private Training Providers in Canada: A Comparative Analysis with the Experience of Apprentices at Publicly Funded Colleges and Institutes," (Ottawa: PrintWest, December 2007), 13. Readers should note that although the CAF-FCA survey with apprentices asked respondents to estimate the approximate time it took to find a sponsor, the National Apprenticeship Survey did not ask this question, so additional national data on this issue could not be obtained.

Figure 1.1 Time to find a sponsor (in months)—public



Source: CAF-FCA, "Apprentices Enrolled at Publicly Funded Canadian Colleges and Institutes: Profiles, Investments, and Perceptions," (Ottawa: PrintWest, December 2007), 2, 12.

Figure 1.2 Time to find a sponsor (in months)—private



CAF-FCA, "Apprentices Enrolled at Private Training Providers in Canada: A Comparative Analysis with the Experience of Apprentices at Publicly Funded Colleges and Institutes," (Ottawa: PrintWest, December 2007), 13.

Employers were asked why they did not hire apprentices. The most common reasons reported by employers for not hiring apprentices were business-demand related:

- Respondents' businesses did not have enough continuous contracts to support hiring apprentices (30 per cent).
- Another common reason for not investing in apprenticeship was that the business was too small and there was no reported need for additional workers (25 per cent).
- 14 per cent of respondents indicated that they would be willing to hire apprentices, but perceived that there were few or no apprentices applying to their organizations.

Employers were also asked as a part of the survey whether anything could be done to change their minds about hiring apprentices. About half of the employers answered yes, there was something that could be done. These employers identified the following as factors that would contribute to them hiring apprentices:

- More than 40 per cent of respondents indicated that they would hire apprentices if there was a need for them in their business.

- Nearly one-third (31 per cent) of respondents indicated that they would hire apprentices if there were more financial support for employers doing so, such as tax credit incentives.
- 30 per cent of respondents indicated that they would hire apprentices if they could find them.²

CAF-FCA's previous work suggests there are opportunities to connect employers and apprentices more effectively. CAF-FCA, therefore, wanted to explore this issue in more detail through this current piece of research.

In a recent CAF-FCA survey with employers, 14 per cent of respondents indicated that they would be willing to hire an apprentice, but there were few or no apprentices applying to their organization.

About half of the employers surveyed confirmed that there was something that could be done to motivate them to hire apprentices. 30 per cent of respondents indicated that they would hire apprentices if they could find them.

² CAF-FCA, "It pays to hire an apprentice: Calculating the Return on Training Investment for Employers-A Study of 16 Trades Executive Summary." (Ottawa: Print-West, September 2009).

1.3 Defining Sponsorship

Before looking at the statistics and focus group responses, it is important to understand how employer-sponsor is being defined in this context and what role an employer-sponsor usually plays in the apprenticeship process. There are many ways to access an apprenticeship. Youth Apprenticeship Programs, pre-apprenticeship, and direct connection with an employer are all equally-valid options. No matter how a person accesses an apprenticeship, every person interested in registering as an apprentice with their province or territory has to find a sponsor. Typically, an individual employer serves as the sponsor. This employer is responsible for the on-the-job portion of the training. In some provinces and territories, however, the sponsor does not have to be an employer. Sponsors can include a school, a joint apprenticeship board, a union hall, or other organization. For the purposes of this report, the focus group participants talked about their experiences in trying to seek out an individual employer or company to sponsor them. Although the specific rules and regulations differ in each province and territory, employer-sponsors generally do the following:

- register the apprentice with the province or territory,
- pay the apprentice's wages,
- offer a safe place to work with proper equipment and facilities,
- provide a certified journey person to mentor the individual,
- release the individual for technical training, and
- monitor the apprentice's progress.

1.4 Differences in Sources Used

When doing this research there was a desire to obtain both the broad, national picture as well as individual stories. In order to gather this information, two distinct sources were used. Both have value and provide a fuller picture of the issue, but readers have to keep in mind they are not equal sources in terms of breadth or reliability. One of the sources is quantitative statistical data based on the NAS. This data was collected via a telephone survey completed by Statistics Canada with more than 30,000 respondents. This source is based on a significant number of responses so general trends can be drawn from this data. This information was gathered from January to May 2007. The respondents to the survey were individuals who had completed their apprenticeship training, those who were still continuing, or those who had stopped their training. The other source was qualitative. More than 100 apprentices participated in thirteen focus groups. The focus groups occurred from March to June 2009. This group included current apprentices in their first, second, and third levels. It should be noted this group is distinct from the respondents to the NAS, some of whom had already completed or stopped their training. The focus groups were useful in terms of gathering individual stories to add a personal dimension to the study. The limitation of this source is that the information gathered only reflects the opinions of a small number of people and the results are not necessarily representative of the broader population. Readers should keep this distinction in mind when drawing conclusions from the information. More specific descriptions of the sources are provided at the beginning of each of the relevant sections in the report.

In order to gather this information, two distinct sources were used: statistics and focus groups. Readers have to keep in mind they are not equal sources in terms of breadth or reliability. General trends can be drawn from the statistics. The focus group findings, however, only reflect the opinions of the individual participants.

This report deals with two distinct groups: respondents to the NAS and current apprentices. The respondents to the survey were individuals who had completed their apprenticeship training, those who were still continuing, or those who had stopped their training. The focus group participants were current apprentices in their first, second, and third levels.

Main Differences between Respondents and Focus Group Participants in Sources

	National Apprenticeship Survey	Focus Groups
Numbers	More than 30,000	113
Economic time period when looking for sponsors	Early 2000s or earlier. Employment growth was increasing during this time period.	Generally 2006 to 2008. Some individuals had looked for sponsors prior to 2006, but these were not the majority of participants. Overall, economic growth was strong during this time period, except during the latter half of 2008.
Who?	Individuals who completed their training (journeypersons), long-term continuers, (doing on-going training), and discontinuers (stopped training).	Current apprentices in their first, second, and third levels.
Referred to in report as...	Respondents	Apprentices or focus group participants
Value of source	Broad national picture based on a statistically significant data set.	Perspectives of apprentices who are currently in the system, individual stories, case study examples.
Limitations of source	Statistics based on earlier time period. Does not deal with current apprentices trying to find a sponsor.	Opinions only, not necessarily representative of broader population's viewpoints.

PART 2: NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP SURVEY (NAS) DATA



This section of the report provides findings from the 2007 NAS broken down by trade, jurisdiction, and equity group. Since most of the NAS respondents were looking for sponsors in the early 2000s, the economic conditions during this period are also briefly described for context.

2.1 Description of the National Apprenticeship Survey

The 2007 NAS was a telephone survey undertaken by Statistics Canada to gather information on the apprenticeship training, challenges and barriers, labour market experiences, and demographic information of

apprentices across Canada. The sample population for the survey was randomly selected from a list of people who were registered as apprentices with their provincial or territorial authorities from 2002 to 2004. A total sample of 67,000 respondents was targeted. However, in 2007, information was collected from only 30,572 respondents who represented 105,057 apprentices in the population.

Survey respondents were selected based on their apprenticeship status in 2002, 2003, or 2004 as reported by provincial or territorial jurisdictions. In the survey itself, respondents confirmed their apprenticeship status by answering a set of screening questions at the

beginning of the NAS questionnaire. Their status in 2007 determined the sequence of questions they were subsequently asked.

The last apprenticeship survey, the 1995 National Apprenticed Trades Survey (NATS), focused only on two groups of apprentices: “completers,” those who had completed their apprenticeship programs; and “discontinuers,” those who had dropped out of their programs before completion.

The 2007 survey included additional components and questions designed to address new issues and research topics related to the current context of apprenticeship in Canada. The survey also added a new group of apprentices, “long-term continuers,” those who had remained in their programs for one and a half times the expected duration or longer mainly to try to understand why some apprentices take longer to complete their apprenticeship programs. Thus, the three sampled groups were defined as:

- Long-term continuers: people who were still registered apprentices in 2004 *and* who had been registered apprentices for longer than one and a half times the prescribed duration time required to complete their apprenticeship programs and who had not earned their certification by 2004. In 2007, at the time of the interview, 7, 581 respondents were considered long-term continuers who were still continuing.
- Completers: people who had been registered apprentices *and* had completed their apprenticeship programs (with or without certification) at some point from 2002 to 2004. Based on the 2007 status, 18,318 respondents were considered completers by the survey at the time of the interview.

- Discontinuers: people who had been registered apprentices at some point in the past *and* had discontinued their apprenticeship programs between 2002 and 2004. In 2007, 4,673 respondents were considered discontinuers.

Between January and May 2007, the survey collected information¹ from the three groups of apprentices. Each group was asked a common set of questions as well as a separate set of questions specific to their situations. The questions focused on the following areas.

- Pre-apprenticeship educational, training, and work experiences
- Experiences concerning technical training and work as an apprentice
- Reasons why discontinuers do not complete their program
- Difficulties encountered during apprenticeship
- Experience with the certification process
- Employment since the apprenticeship program
- General social-demographic characteristics

¹ For more detailed information on the sampling methods used in the data collection, see “Microdata User Guide National Apprenticeship Survey, 2007,” provided by Statistics Canada in English: http://www.statcan.gc.ca/imdb-bmdi/document/3160_D2_T1_V1-eng.pdf. To see the document in French http://www.statcan.gc.ca/imdb-bmdi/document/3160_D2_T1_V1-fra.pdf.

The copyright rules can be found at the following site: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/reference/copyright-droit-auteur-eng.htm#a1>

2.2 Economic Environment When National Apprenticeship Survey Respondents Were Looking for a Sponsor

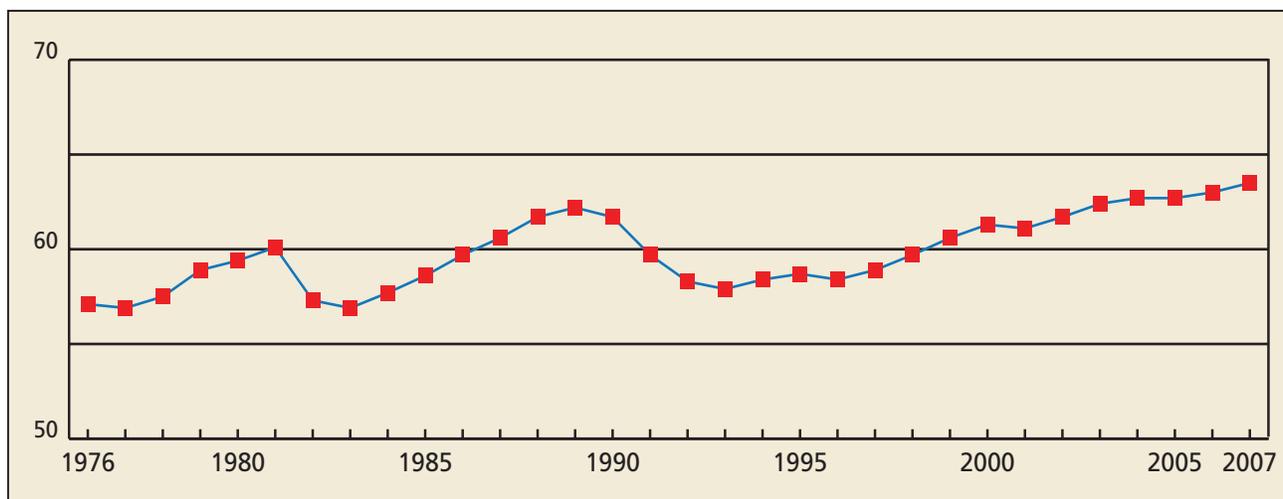
Economic conditions affect people's abilities to find employer-sponsors. It is therefore necessary to provide a brief overview of the employment trends by industry and region when the respondents in the NAS were looking for sponsors. Historical overviews are provided to give readers an indication of the trends over time. Although it is assumed most respondents were looking for sponsors in the early 2000s,² it is possible respondents were looking for sponsors before that time period, so the historical overview may be helpful. The information provided in this section was taken directly from economic reports provided by Statistics Canada.

² The National Apprenticeship Survey notes that some of the respondents completed their apprenticeship training during 2004 so that means they began the process of looking for a sponsor in 2000 or earlier.

Overview of Employment Trends amongst all Occupations in Canada

If it is assumed the individuals who participated in the NAS were looking for employers around the early 2000s, employment trends were increasing across all occupations during this time period, as outlined in Figure 2.1 below. These individuals may have had an easier time finding a sponsor than those looking during a more severe economic downturn.

Figure 2.1 Employment rate, Canada, 1976-2007 (percent)



Source: <http://www4.hrsdc.gc.ca/3ndic.1t.4r-eng.jsp?iid=13>. Originally obtained from Statistics Canada. *Labour Force Historical Review 2007* (Table Cd1T01an). Ottawa, Statistics Canada, 2008 (Cat. No. 71F0004XCB).

Overview of Trades Employment

For certain trades, employment was also growing during the early 2000s. The figure entitled “Slow but steady employment growth, but only since the mid-1990s in the trades” shows trades employment growth in comparison to non-trades from 1987 to 2007.³ This information was obtained from the Labour Force Survey by Statistics Canada.

In this figure, the trade line refers to employment in the following trades only:

- Plumbers, pipefitters, and gas fitters (NOC-S H11),
- Carpenters and cabinetmakers (NOC-S H12),

- Masonry and plastering trades (NOC-S H13),
- Other construction trades (NOC-S H14),
- Stationary Engineers, power station operators, and electrical trades and telecommunications occupations (NOC-S H2),
- Machinists, metal forming, shaping, and erecting occupations (NOC-S H3),
- Mechanics (NOC-S H4), and
- Crane Operators, drillers and blasters (NOC-S H62).⁴

The non-trades line refers to all other occupations.⁵

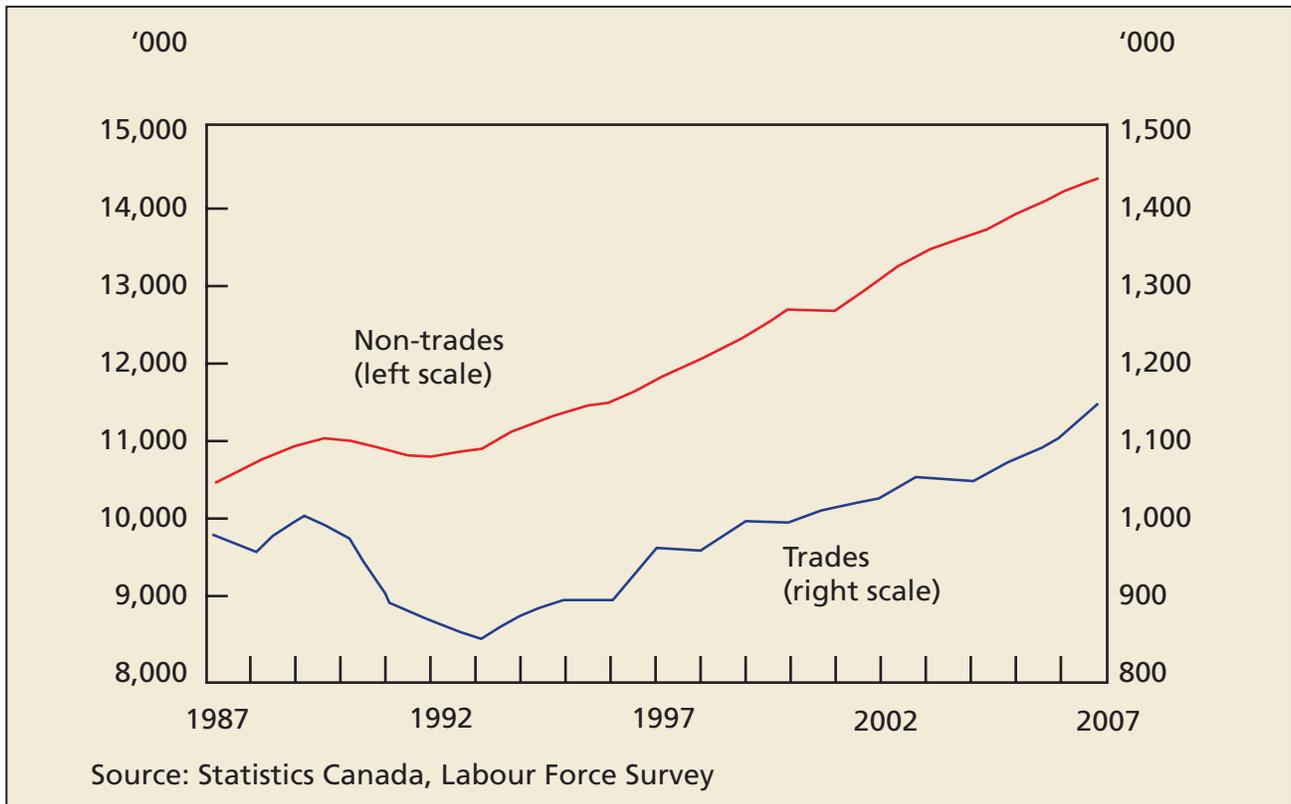
A chart outlining the employment rate for all trades was not found.

³ This chart is from Wendy Pyper, “Skilled Trades Employment,” October 2008, *Perspectives*. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-001-x/2008110/pdf/10710-eng.pdf>, 5-6.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

Figure 2.2 Slow but steady employment growth, but only since the mid-1990s, in the trades



Regional Perspective

To provide a regional perspective, statistics indicate that, in general, trades employment has grown in the West and declined in central Canada. For example, Alberta and British Columbia's percentage of trades employment increased from 1987 to 2007.⁶ In contrast, Ontario's percentage declined.⁷

Construction

- Looking at specifically at the construction industry for the time period from 2001 to 2006, employment increased 4.5 per cent per year, on average.⁸
- Between 2001 and 2006, this sector added an estimated 196,200 workers to its ranks, bringing total employment to 991,200 in 2006.⁹
- In general, growth in construction was in Alberta and British Columbia.¹⁰

6 *Ibid.*, 7.

7 *Ibid.*

8 Statistics Canada, "Canada's Changing Labour Force, 2006 Census," <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/analysis/labour/pdf/97-559-XIE2006001.pdf>. (Ottawa: Ministry of Industry, March 2008), 9.

9 *Ibid.*

10 *Ibid.*

Manufacturing

- While there was employment growth in construction, jobs were lost in manufacturing.
- Manufacturing shed 136,700 jobs during the five-year period from 2001 to 2006, equivalent to a 1.4 per cent decline per year.¹¹
- Losses in manufacturing were concentrated in Ontario and Quebec.¹²

Respondents to the NAS may have been affected by these specific industry conditions depending on the type of trade and sector they were trying to find sponsors in.

11 *Ibid.*, 6.

12 *Ibid.*, 10.

STATISTICAL NOTES

Standard Errors and Confidence Intervals

A statistic called the standard error is commonly used as the measure of error. Standard errors may be computed for most statistics such as means or percentages using established techniques. Standard errors are reported in graphs and tables along with the statistic being reported, to give a sense of the precision of the statistic. In practice it is more common to represent the sampling error in terms of a range within which the actual population value is expected to fall. This range is known as a confidence interval. Confidence intervals are reported as a number with a \pm (plus or minus) sign which represents the range above or below the reported value in which the population value is expected to be found with a specified level of probability, typically 95 per cent. This leads to the common expression found in reporting surveys that a result is accurate within some percentage range (typically 3 to 5 per cent) 95 times out of 100 (or 19 times out of 20).

Statistical Significance

When making comparisons between groups (such as the difference in percentages employed across trades), the difference is said to be statistically significant if the observed difference is greater than the sum of the confidence intervals for the groups being compared.

Weights

The ratio of population size to sample size gives a statistic called the weight which is applied when combining results across groups. This ensures that each population or sub-population is represented in the combined results in proper proportion to the group size. For example, large provinces will usually carry larger weights than small provinces. All results given in this report use weighted data so the results can be said to represent the whole population. However, error computations are based on actual sample sizes as errors are strongly related to sample size.

Graphical Presentations and Error Bars

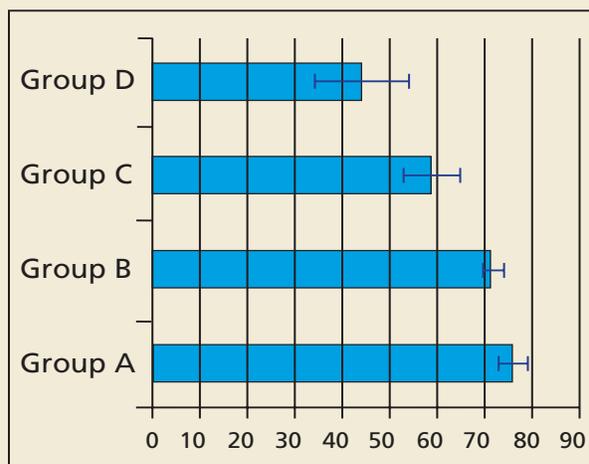
Most of the results in this report are presented as percentages of respondents answering particular questions and categories within questions. The results are presented mainly in the form of graphs, designed to give an at-a-glance view of response patterns and, where appropriate, of differences between groups. On bar graphs, the actual response percentages are attached to the left side of each bar as shown in the example below.

The graphs also allow confidence intervals to be presented as error bars, which consist of lines on either side of the bar corresponding to the width of the confidence interval. These error bars are also shown in the example graph.

The error bars may be used as a quick guide to whether the observed differences are statistically significant. If the error bars for any two groups overlap, the difference between these groups should be considered to be within the margin of error. If the error bars

do not overlap, the difference can be considered statistically significant.

In this example, Groups A and B are not significantly different from each other because their error bars overlap. Groups C and D are both significantly different from A and B because the error bars for each of these pairs do not overlap. Finally, although Groups C and D are, in percentage terms, more different from each other than Group C is from Group B, Groups C and D are not significantly different because their error bars are relatively large and overlapping.



2.3 Difficulties in Finding an Employer-Sponsor: Findings from the NAS 2007

The analysis of this report is based on data from the 2007 NAS. This survey collected data from 30,572 respondents who represented 105,057 Canadian apprentices. The NAS respondents were asked if they had any difficulty finding an employer since the beginning of their program and to identify the main reason they had difficulty. This part presents an analysis of this information for various groups of apprentices.

2.3.1 Overall difficulty in finding an employer-sponsor

The Extent of Difficulties

The NAS data indicates that approximately 17 per cent of apprentices reported having challenges when trying to find an employer-sponsor. This low percentage of apprentices experiencing challenges may be related to the fact that Canada was experiencing favourable economic conditions during the time period when the respondents were looking for sponsors. The stronger economic conditions perhaps made it less difficult for these apprentices to find sponsors than if the economy had been weaker.¹³

Reasons for Difficulty in Finding an Employer-Sponsor

The respondents who faced difficulty in finding an employer-sponsor were asked to identify the main reasons for difficulty. The distribution of responses is shown in figure 2.3. Note that reasons for difficulty in finding an employer are analyzed only for the 17 per cent of respondents who experienced difficulty.

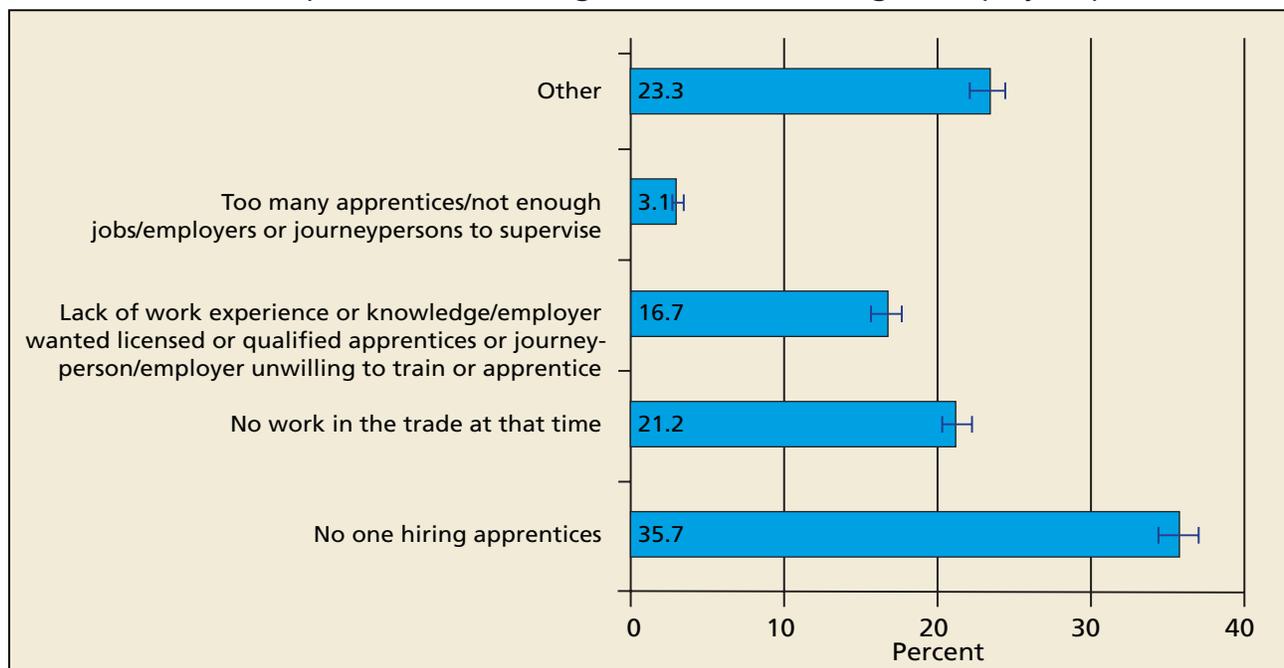
13 Marinka Menard, Frank Menezes, Cindy K.Y. Chan and Merv Walker, "National Apprenticeship Survey: Canada Overview Report 2007," Catalogue No. 81-598-XX No. 001, (Ottawa: Culture, Tourism and the Centre for Education Statistics Division, Statistics Canada, Ministry of Industry, 2008), 21.

Figure 2.3 shows that “no one was hiring apprentices” was the main reason mentioned by the highest percentage (35%) of apprentices who faced difficulties. Similarly, “no work in the trade” was also a main reason mentioned by a large percentage of the apprentices (21%). Thus, these two reasons could be considered as very common for the majority of the apprentices who faced difficulties. On the other hand, about 17 per cent of the apprentices mentioned that they were having difficulties due to “lack of work experience or knowledge/employer wanted licensed or qualified apprentice or journey-person/employer unwilling to train or pay apprentice,” and a very small percentage also mentioned the main reason as being “too many apprentices/not enough jobs/employers

or journeypersons to supervise.” Finally, for 23 per cent of apprentices, “other” reasons were responsible which included discrimination (age, gender, ethnic origin, language, educational credential, foreign credential, and favoritism), union issues/union requirements, and distance to employers, etc.

The NAS data (not shown in the graph) also shows that for most of the reasons selected by respondents, no significant differences were noted among the three groups of respondents: completers, long-term continuers, and discontinuers.

Figure 2.3
The Distribution of Top Reasons for Having Difficulties in Finding an Employer-Sponsor



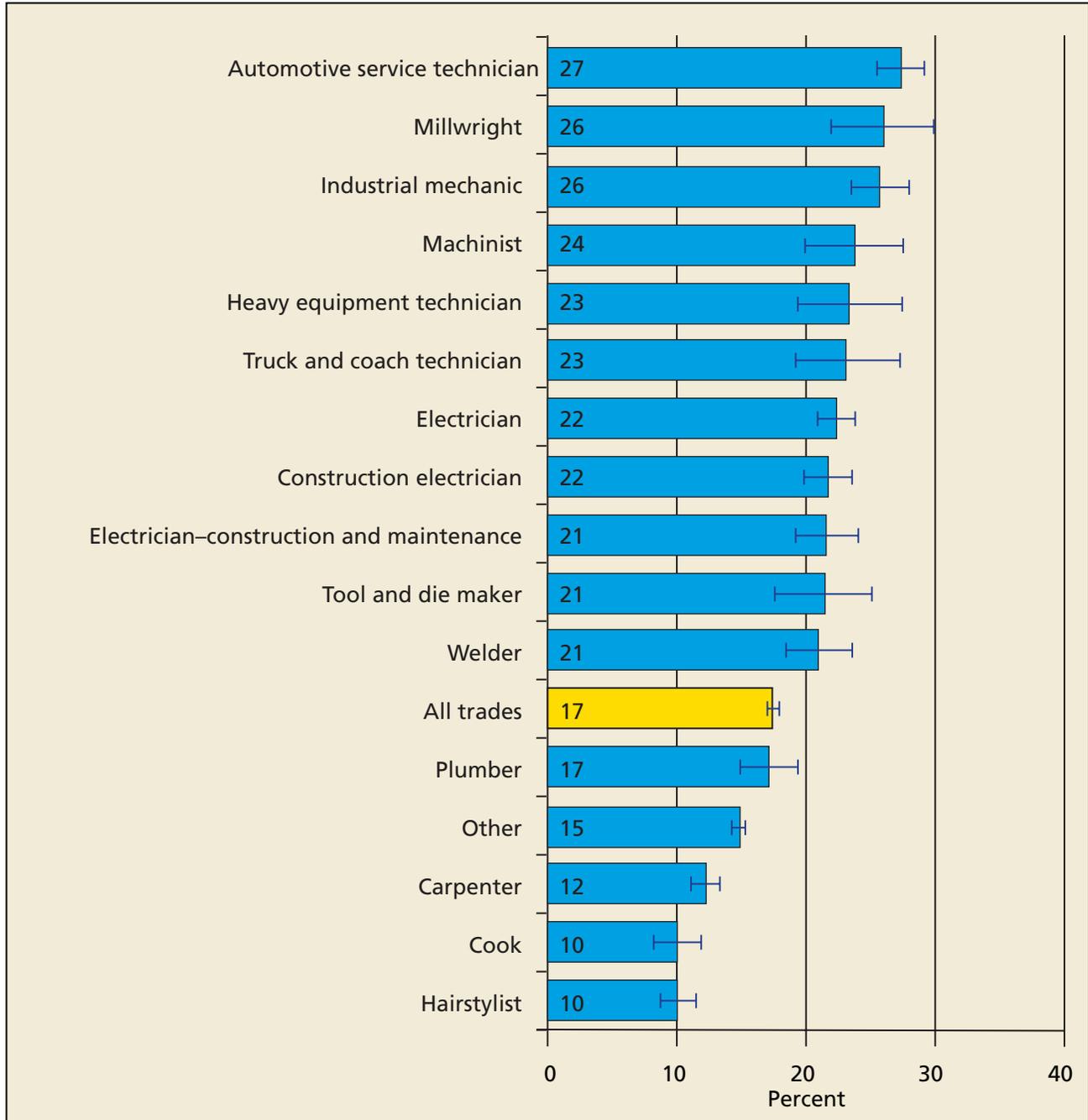
Source: National Apprenticeship Survey data obtained by CAF-FCA through Statistics Canada

2.3.2 Difficulties Faced by Trade

This section outlines the distribution of difficulties by the top fifteen trades in which apprentices identified having the most diffi-

culty in finding an employer-sponsor. In a few cases, data was not available for all fifteen trades, so the number of trades represented on each chart or graph will vary.

Figure 2.4
Percentage of Apprentices Having Difficulties by Top 15 Trades

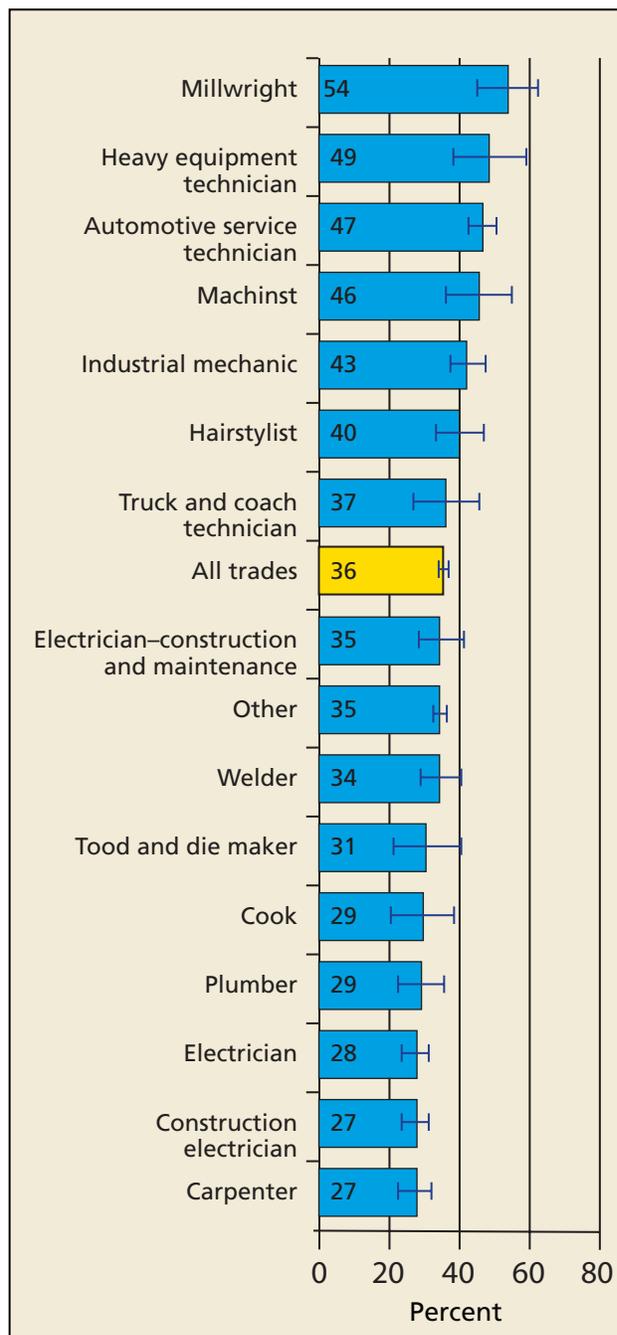


Source: National Apprenticeship Survey data obtained by CAF-FCA through Statistics Canada

Figure 2.4 indicates that automotive service technicians, millwrights, industrial mechanics, machinists, heavy equipment technicians, and truck and coach technicians had the highest percentage (23 to 27%) of apprentices who faced difficulty. This percentage was significantly and considerably higher than the average percentage of all trades (17%). It was also higher for electricians, construction electricians, and electrician-construction-maintenance trade groups (21% to 22%) compared to that of the overall percentage (17%). On the other hand, it was lowest for carpenters, cooks, and hairstylists (10% to 15%). This indicated that it was comparatively easier for apprentices in these trade groups to find an employer to complete the on-the-job training part.

As shown earlier (Figure 2.4), about 36 per cent of respondents who faced difficulties mentioned that the main reason was “no one was hiring apprentices.” However, figure 2.5A shows that the percentages varied by trade group with higher percentages in some trades. For example, when asked to identify the reasons why they had difficulty, more than 50 per cent of millwrights and heavy equipment technicians and more than 40 per cent of automotive service technicians, machinists, and industrial mechanics (millwrights) said “no one was hiring.” On the other hand, fewer than 30 per cent of the cooks, plumbers, electricians, and carpenters reported that this factor was the main reason for difficulty in finding an employer.

Figure 2.5A
Distribution of Top Reasons for Difficulty by Trade. Reason for difficulty—no one was hiring apprentices.



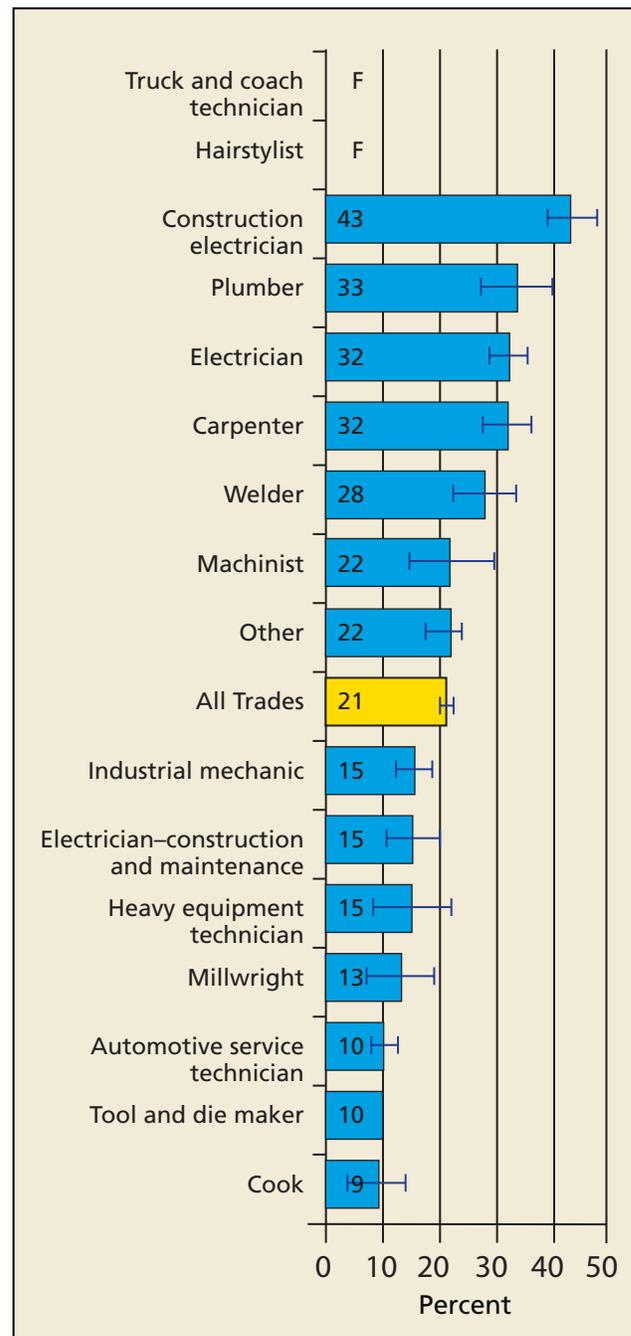
Source: National Apprenticeship Survey data obtained by CAF-FCA through Statistics Canada.

Figure 2.5B shows the distribution of apprentices who reported that main reason for difficulty was “no work was available in the trade.” It indicates that the percentages varied considerably by trade. The highest percentage was for construction electricians (43%) and the lowest for automotive services technicians, tool and die makers, and cooks (less than 10%). For plumbers, electricians, and carpenters the percentage was also very high (more than 30%). The percentage of several trade categories such as machinist, electricians-construction-maintenance, and heavy equipment technicians was not significantly different from that of the overall percentage for all trades (21%).

Figure 2.5C presents the distribution of respondents who identified that “lack of work experience/employer wanted licensed or qualified apprentice or journeyman/employer unwilling to train or pay apprentice” was the reason for their difficulty in finding an employer. The percentage of respondents for whom this was the main reason was significantly higher (more than 22%) for truck and coach technicians, tool and die makers, heavy equipment technicians, hairstylists, and automotive service technicians compared to that of the average for all trades (17%), while it was significantly lower (less than 12%) for carpenters, construction electricians, and machinists.

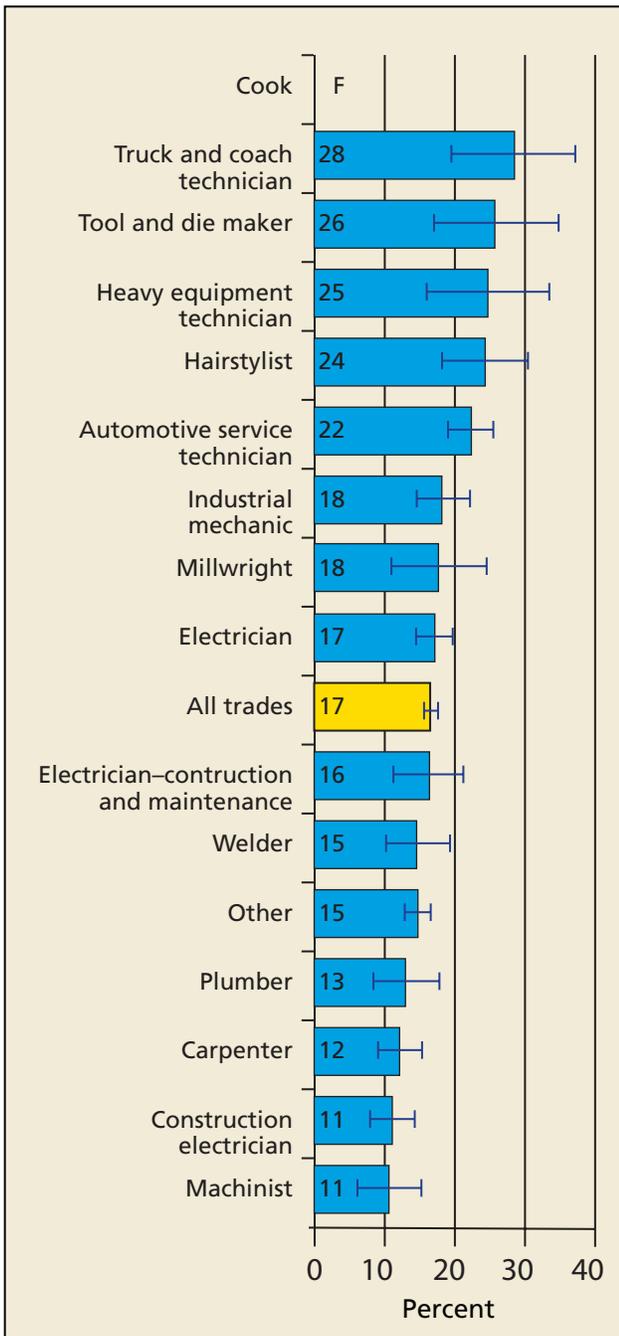
Figure 2.5D shows the distribution of respondents who identified “not enough jobs/employers/ journeymen to supervise” as the reason for having difficulty by trade. For most of the trades, the number of respondents was too low to publish. Among those trades where the numbers could be published, only cooks and electricians-construction-maintenance trades had a higher percentage of respondents (more than 7%) compared to that of the overall average (3%).

Figure 2.5B
Distribution of Top Reasons for Difficulty by Trade. Reason for difficulty—no work was available in the trade.



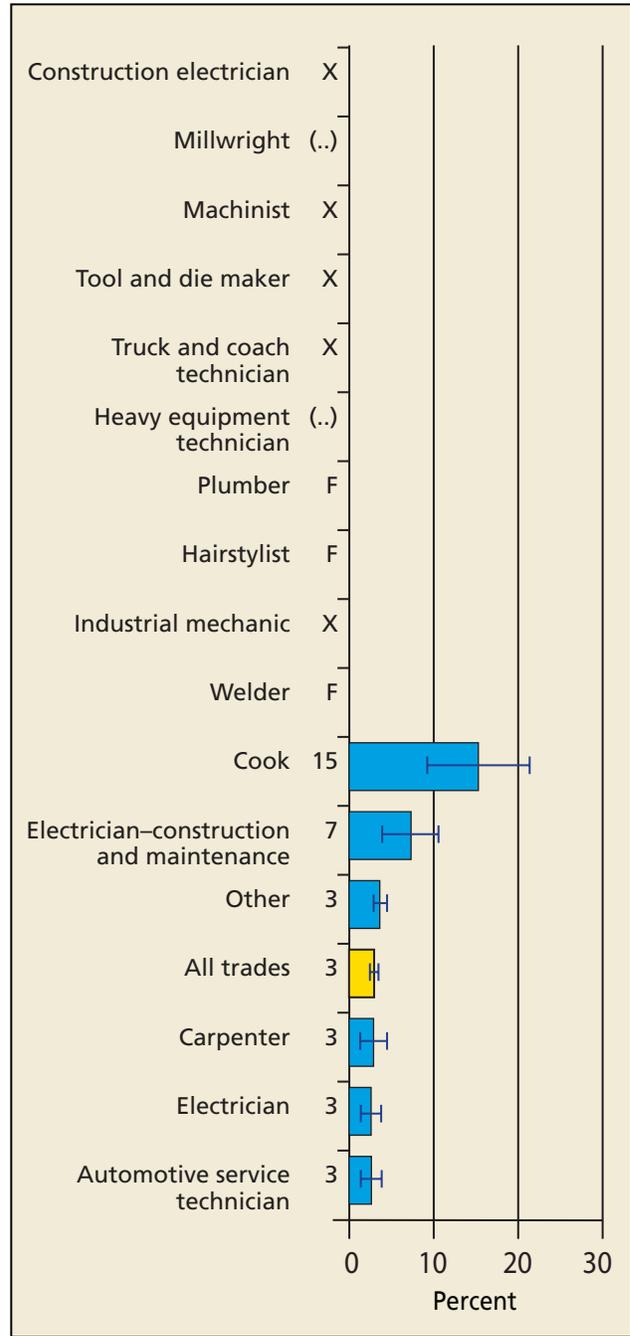
Source: National Apprenticeship Survey data obtained by CAF-FCA through Statistics Canada. Note: F indicates too unreliable to be published.

Figure 2.5C
Distribution of Top Reasons for Difficulty by Trade. Reason for difficulty—lack of work experience or knowledge.



Source: National Apprenticeship Survey data obtained by CAF-FCA through Statistics Canada.
Note: F indicates too unreliable to be published

Figure 2.5D
Distribution of Top Reasons for Difficulty by Trade. Reason for difficulty—not enough jobs/employers/journeypersons to supervise.



Source: National Apprenticeship Survey data obtained by CAF-FCA through Statistics Canada.
Note: (..) indicates not reliable for a specific reference, (...) indicates not applicable, (x) indicates the numbers are suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the Statistics Act, F indicates too unreliable to be published.

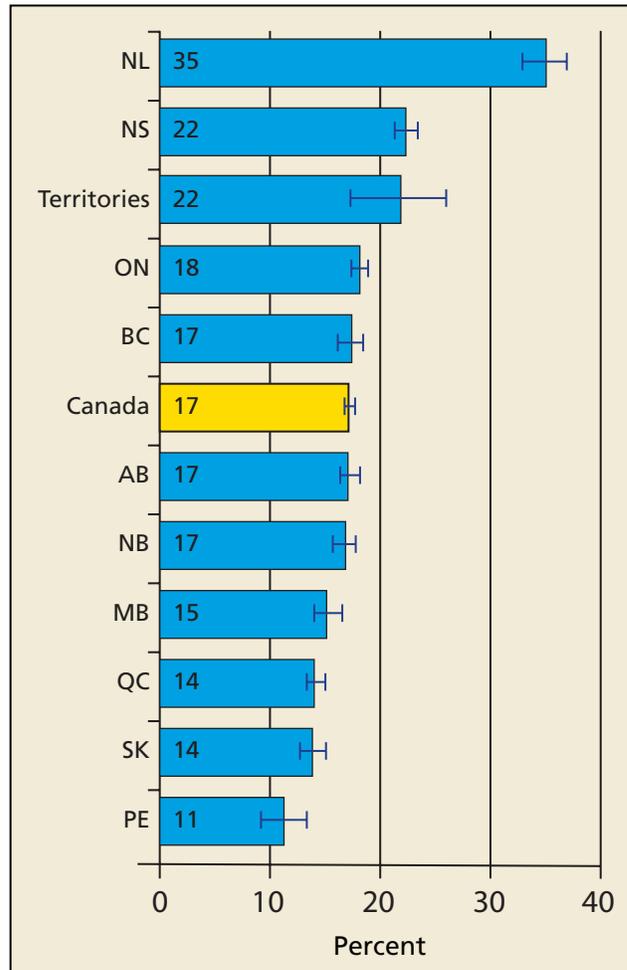
2.3.3 Difficulties Faced by Jurisdiction

Extent of Difficulties Faced by Jurisdictions

Figure 2.6 shows the distribution of respondents who experienced difficulties in finding an employer-sponsor. Although, on average, only 17 per cent of apprentices faced difficulties, the percentages varied considerably by jurisdiction. Among the provinces, Newfoundland and Labrador had the highest percentage of apprentices (35%) who faced difficulties in finding an employer-sponsor. Similarly, Nova Scotia and the territories on average also had a very high percentage of apprentices that experienced difficulties (22%). This could be due to limited job opportunities in those areas. On the other hand, Quebec, Saskatchewan, and Prince Edward Island (PEI) had the lowest percentage of apprentices (14% or fewer) who faced difficulties. It is interesting that only 11 per cent of the respondents from PEI reported having difficulties which is lower than the national average of 17 per cent.

Figure 2.6

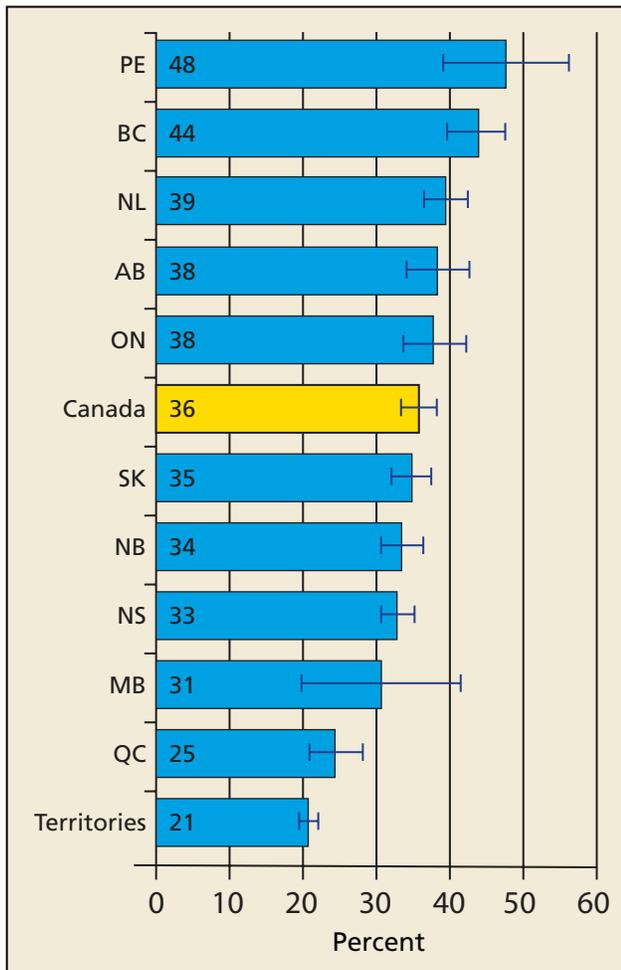
Percentage of Apprentices Having Difficulties in Finding an Employer-Sponsor by Jurisdictions



Source: National Apprenticeship Survey data obtained by CAF-FCA through Statistics Canada.

As shown earlier (Figure 2.4), about 36 per cent of respondents who faced difficulties mentioned that the main reason was “no one was hiring apprentices.” However, figure 2.7A shows that the percentages varied by jurisdictions. PEI and BC had a higher percentage of respondents (more than 40%) compared to the national average and Quebec and the territories had a lower percentage (25% and 21%, respectively).

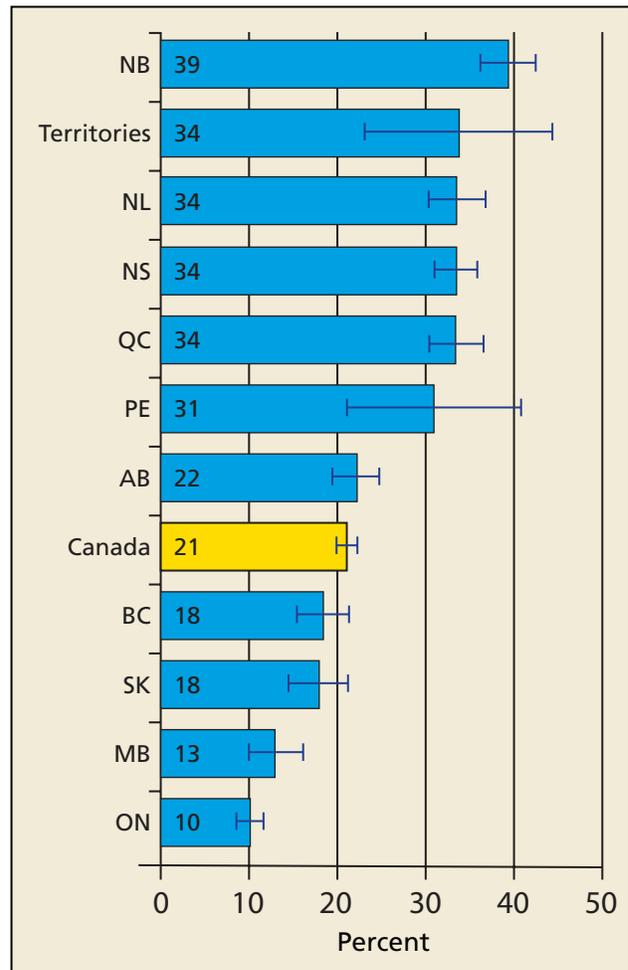
Figure 2.7 A
Distribution of Top Four Reasons for Difficulty by Jurisdiction. Reason for difficulty—no one was hiring.



Source: National Apprenticeship Survey data obtained by CAF-FCA through Statistics Canada.

Figure 2.7B shows the distribution of apprentices who reported that the main reason for difficulty was “no work was available in the trade” by province. It indicates that there was significant variation across the provinces. Percentages were significantly above the national average of 21 per cent in New Brunswick (39%) and the territories, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, and Quebec (34% for each). On the other hand, Ontario and Manitoba had a lower percentage of apprentices

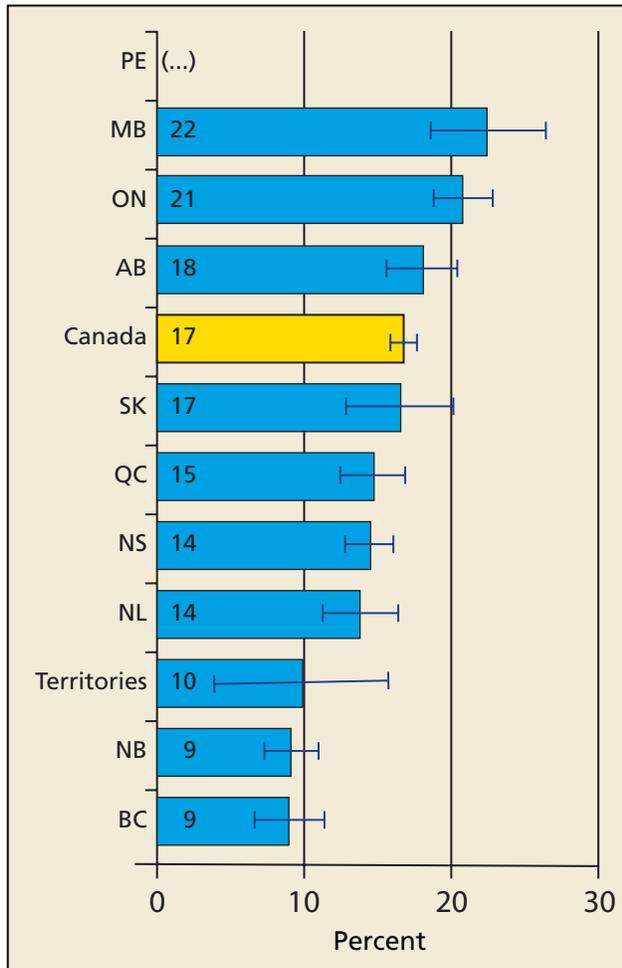
Figure 2.7 B
Distribution of Top Four Reasons for Difficulty by Jurisdiction. Reason for difficulty—no work was available in the trade.



Source: National Apprenticeship Survey data obtained by CAF-FCA through Statistics Canada.

(13% or fewer) who reported this factor as the main reason for their difficulty in finding an employer-sponsor.

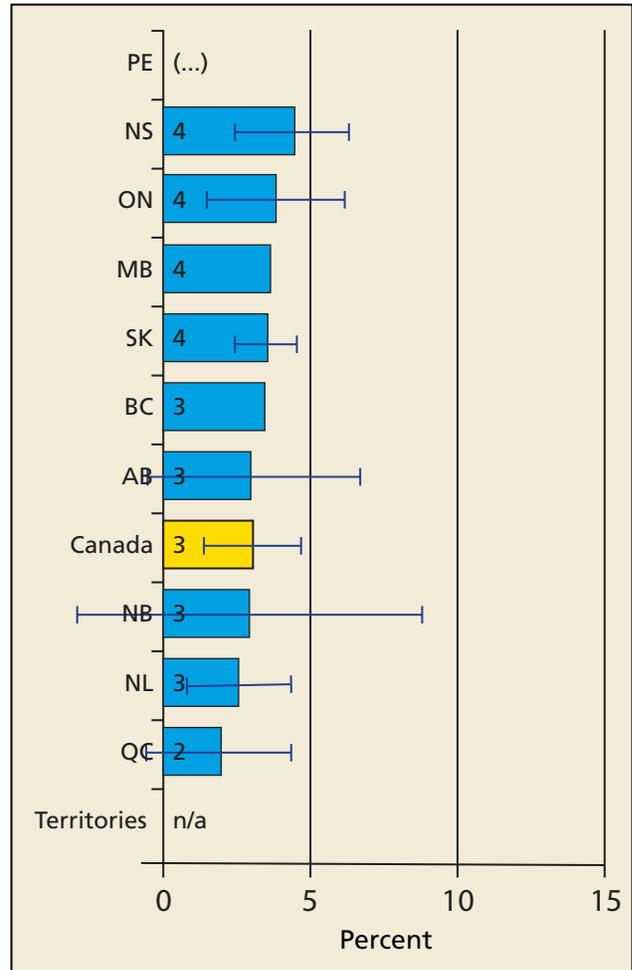
Figure 2.7 C
 Distribution of Top Four Reasons for Difficulty by Jurisdiction. Reason for difficulty—lack of work experience or knowledge.



Source: National Apprenticeship Survey data obtained by CAF-FCA through Statistics Canada. Note: (...) indicates not reliable for a specific reference.

Figure 2.7C presents the distribution of respondents who identified that “lack of work experience/employer wanted licensed or qualified apprentice or journeyman/ employer unwilling to train or pay apprentice” was the reason for their difficulty in finding an employer-sponsor by jurisdictions. The percentage of respondents who found

Figure 2.7 D
 Distribution of Top Four Reasons for Difficulty by Jurisdiction. Reason for difficulty— not enough jobs/employers/journeypersons to supervise.



Source: National Apprenticeship Survey data obtained by CAF-FCA through Statistics Canada. Note: (...) indicates not reliable for a specific reference.

this factor as the main reason was significantly higher for Manitoba and Ontario (more than 20%) compared to the national average. On the other hand, New Brunswick and British Columbia had a significantly lower percentage (9%) who reported this factor as their main cause for difficulty.

Figure 2.7D shows the distribution of respondents who identified “not enough jobs/employers/journeypersons to supervise” as the reason for having difficulty by provinces and territories. The graph shows that there was not a significant difference between the provinces and the national average. It indicates that all the provinces and territories were facing similar types of difficulties when the apprentices’ distribution was analyzed for this reason.

2.3.4 Difficulties Faced by Equity Groups

This section of the report summarizes the data pertaining to equity groups. For the purposes of this report, equity groups included women, visible minorities, foreign-born persons, Aboriginals, and persons with disabilities. These individuals were required to self-identify when responding to the NAS. It was important to discuss these groups because the struggle to find an employer-sponsor can be even more difficult in their case. In addition to equity groups, differences in difficulties faced by respondents with various educational backgrounds are also discussed in this section.

In general, equity groups tend to be under-represented in apprenticeship compared to their proportion in the Canadian population. A typical apprentice in Canada is a male, under 35 years old, non-Aboriginal, non-immigrant, non-visible minority, with no

history of disability.¹⁴ Only one in ten apprentices is female, even though women represent almost half of the population.¹⁵ Immigrants make up 3 to 5 per cent of apprentices, even though immigrants represent 20 per cent of the Canadian population.¹⁶ Visible minorities represent between 5 and 7 per cent of apprentices compared to 16 per cent of the Canadian population.¹⁷ An exception is Aboriginal peoples, who represent 4 to 5 per cent of apprentices which is comparable to their proportion of the Canadian population (5%).¹⁸

14 Marinka Menard, Frank Menezes, Cindy K.Y. Chan and Merv Walker, “National Apprenticeship Survey: Canada Overview Report 2007,” Catalogue No. 81-598-XX No. 001, (Ottawa: Culture, Tourism and the Centre for Education Statistics Division, Statistics Canada, Ministry of Industry, 2008), 21.

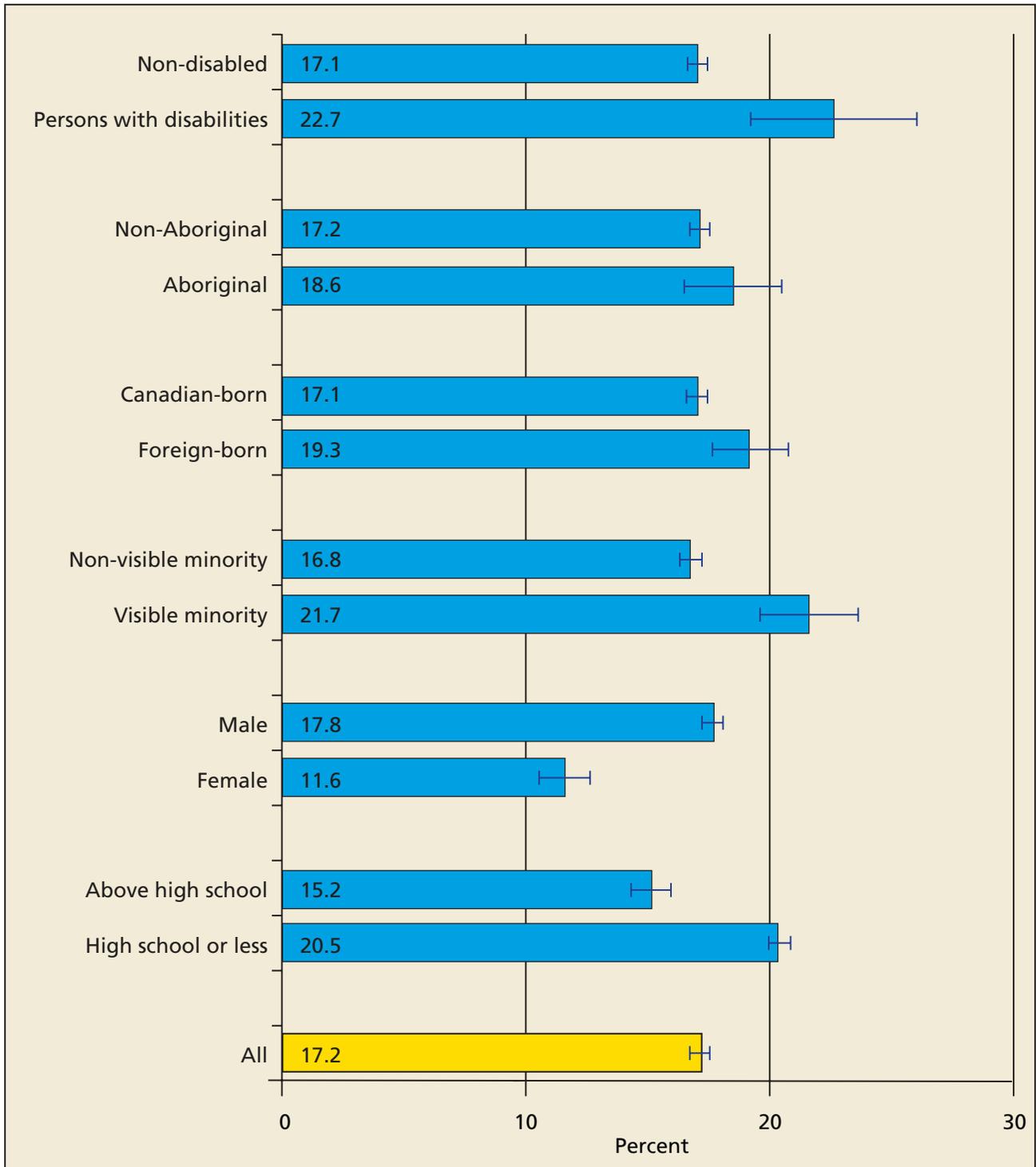
15 *Ibid.*

16 *Ibid.*

17 *Ibid.*

18 *Ibid.*

Figure 2.8
 Percentage of Apprentices Having Difficulties in Finding an Employer-Sponsor by Equity Group



Source: National Apprenticeship Survey data obtained by CAF-FCA through Statistics Canada

Extent of Difficulties Faced by Equity Group

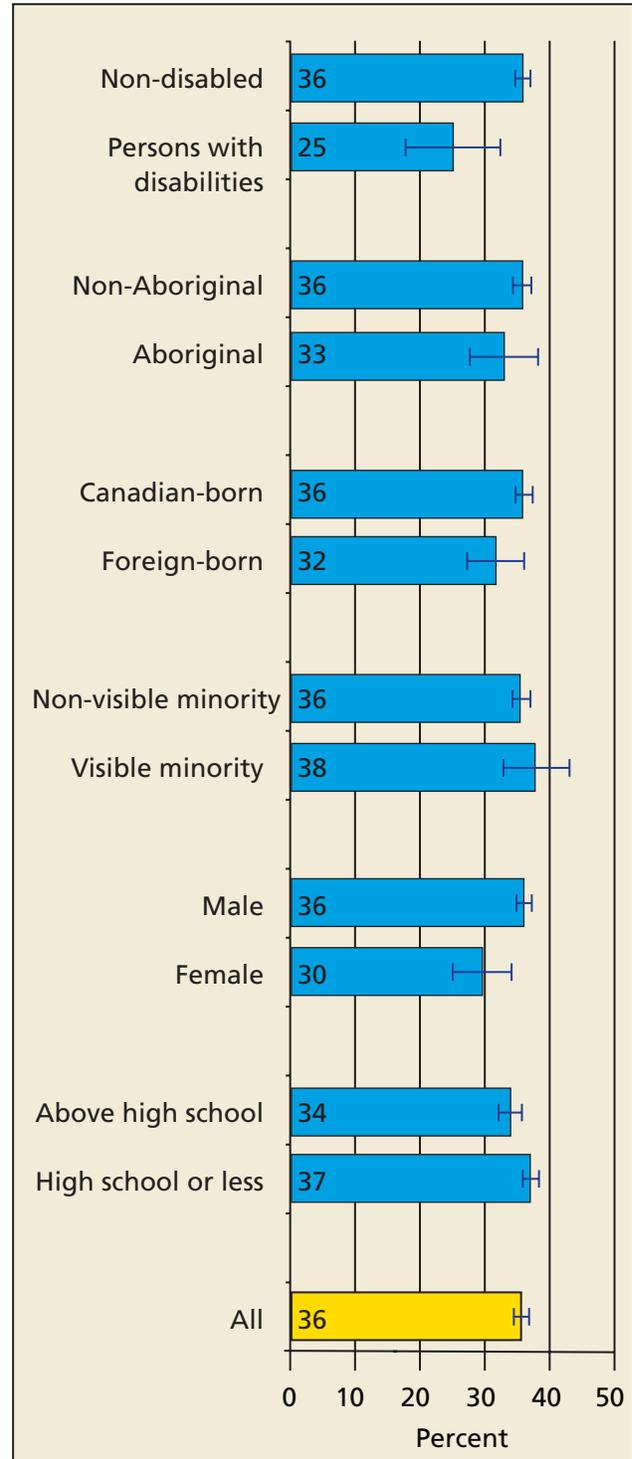
Figure 2.8 shows the distribution of respondents having difficulties by equity group. It shows that except for women and Aboriginals, all of the equity groups had a higher probability of experiencing difficulties compared to their respective reference group. For example, as expected, persons with disabilities had a significantly higher probability of having difficulties compared to persons without disability (23% vs. 17%). It is interesting to note that women had a lower probability compared with men. This may be due to the fact that they were mostly concentrated in hairstylist, food services, and child care services where finding an employer was relatively easier.

Reasons For Difficulty by Equity Group¹⁹

Figure 2.9A shows the distribution of apprentices by equity group who reported that the reason for difficulty in finding an employer was “no one was hiring.” It shows that, except for females and respondents with disabilities, all other equity groups were experiencing similar difficulties. It is interesting that a lower percentage of females and respondents with disabilities identified the above factor as the cause of their difficulties compared to their counterparts. This could be due to the fact that most of them were employed in part-time and low-paying jobs which were more likely to be available.

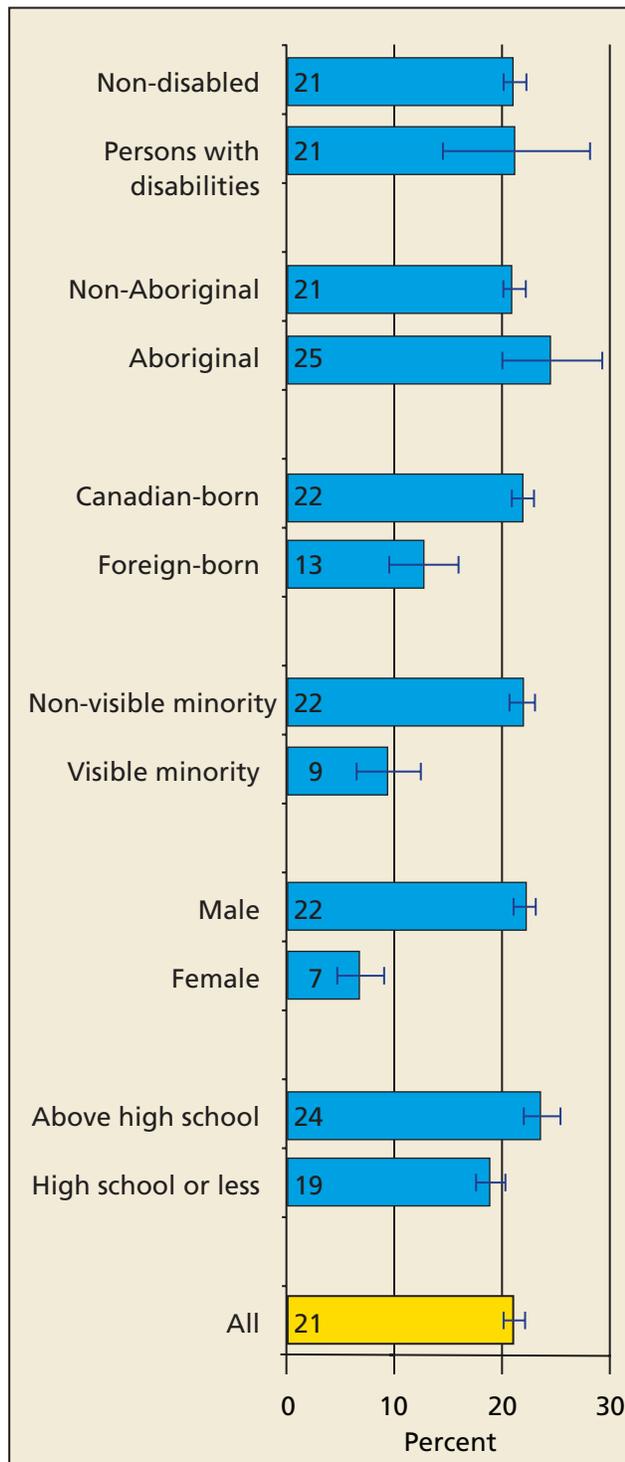
¹⁹ For equity groups, discrimination and other reasons are also analyzed since they could provide useful information for policy purposes.

Figure 2.9 A
Top Four Reasons for Difficulty by Equity Group. Reason for difficulty—no one was hiring



Source: National Apprenticeship Survey data obtained by CAF-FCA through Statistics Canada

Figure 2.9 B
 Top Four Reasons for Difficulty by Equity Group. Reason for difficulty—no work was available in the trade.



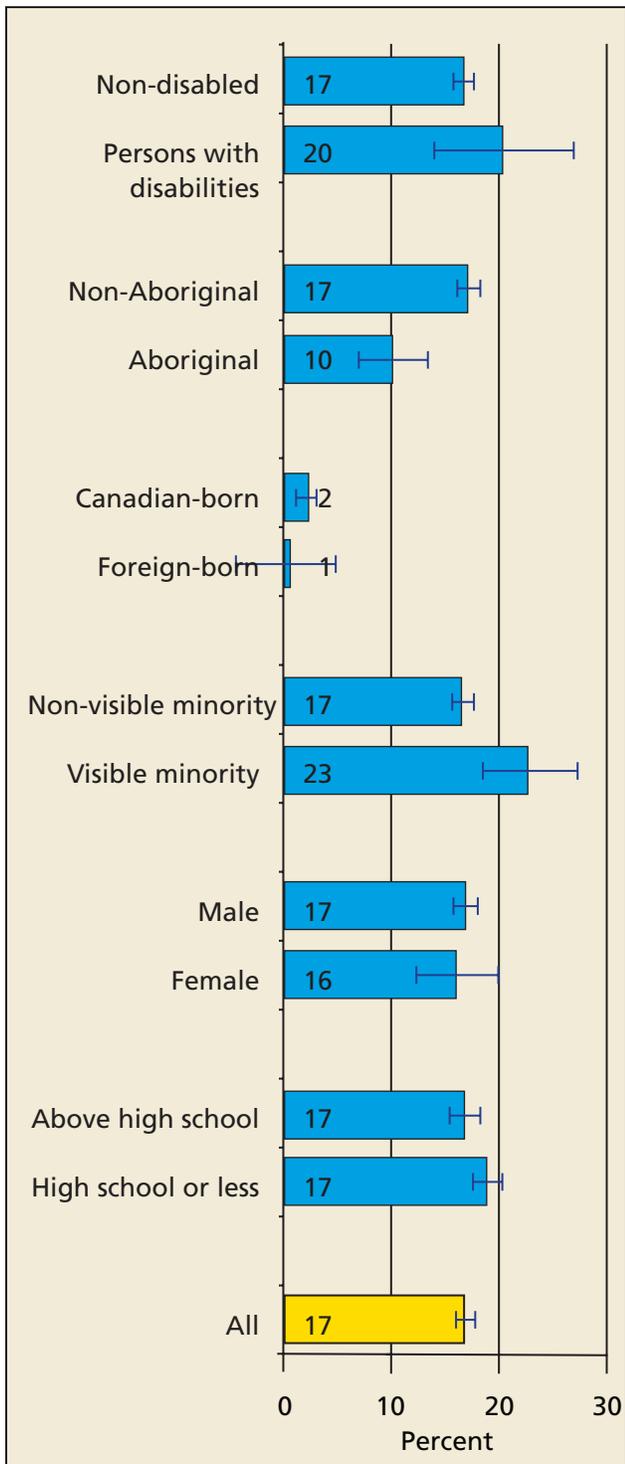
Source: National Apprenticeship Survey data obtained by CAF-FCA through Statistics Canada

Figure 2.9B shows the distribution of apprentices by equity group who reported that the main reason for difficulty was “no work was available in the trade.” It indicates that, except for respondents with disabilities and Aboriginals, a lower percentage of all other equity groups identified this factor as the cause of their difficulties. Again, as mentioned earlier, this could be related to the type of jobs they were doing, which were usually low-paying and non-standard jobs.

Figure 2.9C presents the distribution of respondents from equity groups who identified that “lack of work experience/employer wanted licensed or qualified apprentice or journey person/employer unwilling to train or pay apprentice” was the reason for their difficulty in finding an employer. The graph shows that those from the visible minority group had a significantly higher probability compared with their reference group (23% vs. 17%) to identify this factor as the reason for difficulty. All other equity groups had a similar percentage (about 17%).

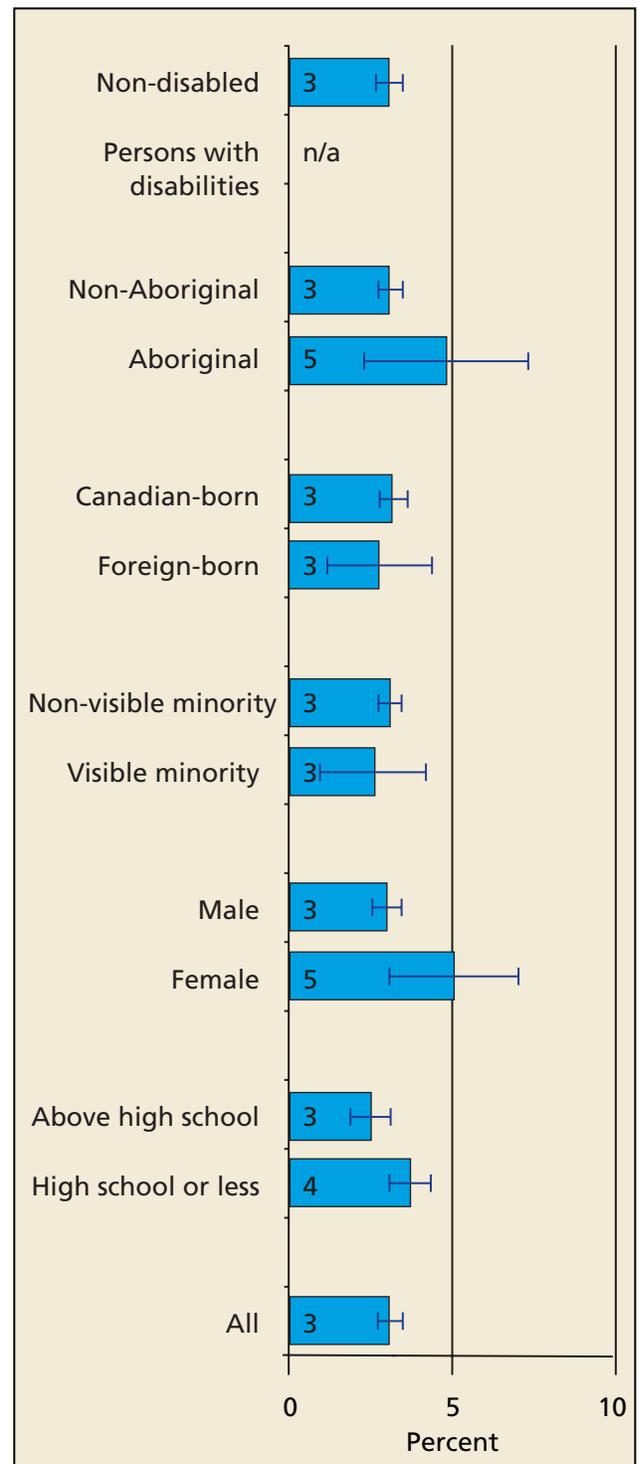
Figure 2.9D shows the distribution of respondents who identified “not enough jobs/employers/journey persons to supervise” as the reason for having difficulty by equity group. The graph shows that the differences in percentages between equity groups were not statistically significant. This indicates that every group had similar percentage.

Figure 2.9 C
 Top Four Reasons for Difficulty by Equity Group. Reason for difficulty—
 lack of work experience or knowledge.



Source: National Apprenticeship Survey data obtained by CAF-FCA through Statistics Canada

Figure 2.9 D
 Top Four Reasons for Difficulty by Equity Group. Reason for difficulty—
 not enough jobs/employers/journeypersons to supervise.



Source: National Apprenticeship Survey data obtained by CAF-FCA through Statistics Canada

Figure 2.10 Discrimination (age, gender, ethnic origin, language, education, foreign credentials, favouritism) by Equity Group

EQUITY	Completers %	Standard Error	Long-Term Continuers %	Standard Error	Discontinuers %	Standard Error
Women	13.0	(2.2)	25.9	(4.9)	23.5	(4.9)
Men	1.3	(0.2)	2.9	(0.5)	2.1	(0.5)
Total Gender	2.1	(0.2)	4.4	(0.6)	3.9	(0.7)
Persons with disabilities	X	(1.6)	X	(3.2)	X	(5.5)
No disability	2.1	(0.2)	4.4	(0.6)	3.6	(0.6)
Total persons with disabilities	2.1	(0.2)	4.4	(0.6)	3.9	(0.7)
Visible Minorities	4.6	(1.3)	12.3	(3.7)	X	(4.4)
Not a visible minority	1.8	(0.2)	3.5	(0.6)	3.3	(0.6)
Other	X	(1.4)	X	(3.0)	X	(3.7)
Total visible minority	2.1	(0.2)	4.4	(0.6)	3.9	(0.7)
Aboriginal People	X	(0.9)	X	(3.2)	X	(3.9)
Non-Aboriginal	2.1	(0.2)	4	(0.6)	3.7	(0.7)
Other	X	(0.0)	X	(21.9)	X	(0.0)
Total Aboriginal peoples status	2.1	(0.2)	4.4	(0.6)	3.9	(0.7)

Source: National Apprenticeship Survey data obtained by CAF-FCA through Statistics Canada. Note: X indicates data was suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*.

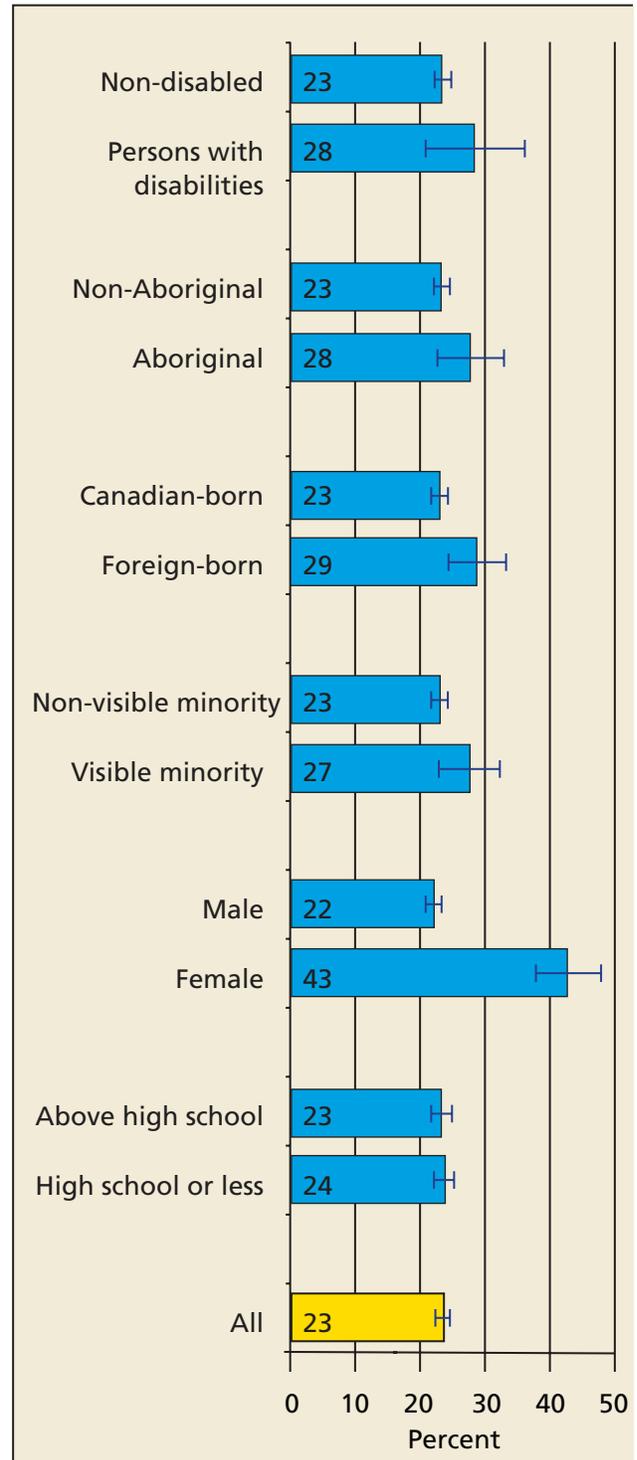
Discrimination was also a Reason for Equity Groups

Figure 2.10 indicates that discrimination was more of an issue to long-term continuers who identified as visible minorities and women than to non-visible minorities or men.

Other Reasons

Figure 2.11 shows the distribution of respondents from equity groups who identified “other” as the reason of their difficulty in finding an employer-sponsor. This “other” factor included a range of issues which were specified by the respondents but not provided in the survey. The graph shows very interesting findings for females and immigrants (identified as foreign-born peoples in NAS). Compared to males, a considerably higher percentage of females (43% vs. 22%) mentioned “other” as the reason for difficulty in finding an employer. Similarly, 29 per cent of immigrants as opposed to 23 per cent of non-immigrants (identified as Canadian-born peoples in NAS) also mentioned this factor as the reason. This indicates that these groups faced different challenges when they searched for an employer-sponsor.

Figure 2.11
Reason for Difficulty—Other-by Equity Group.



Source: National Apprenticeship Survey data obtained by CAF-FCA through Statistics Canada

PART 3: FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS



This section of the report deals with the qualitative data from the thirteen focus groups. As readers will recall, this information is based on the opinions of a small number of people who chose to participate in the focus groups. Unlike the NAS data, it is not statistically significant or necessarily representative of the broader populations' viewpoints. Despite the limitations of this source, the findings from the focus groups are still valuable because they allow apprentices to share their perspectives in their own words and to offer advice to others. Their stories add a personal dimension to this project that could not be gathered through the statistics.

The focus group findings give readers a chance to learn about what apprentices had to say in their own words. It is important to keep in mind that, unlike the NAS data, the focus group findings are not statistically significant or necessarily representative of the broader populations' viewpoints. This information does not represent the opinions of CAF-FCA or any of its stakeholders.

3.1 Focus Group Recruitment and Structure

Overall, thirteen focus groups were conducted with 113 apprentices from across the country. Efforts were made to recruit all types of apprentices from across the country. Different recruitment methods and structures were used in order to attract more participants.

Two recruitment methods were used: an online recruitment screener which was distributed by email and recruitment by apprenticeship branch officials, college staff, and instructors at Mohawk College, L'Institut des Metiers de La Cité collégiale, and Red River College.

All the apprentices who were recruited had found sponsors. These findings, therefore, do not reflect the opinions of those individuals who ended up leaving the trades because they could not find a sponsor. Readers should note that most of the apprentices talked about finding an individual employer or company to sponsor them. Those who may have had another type of employer-sponsor arrangement such as a union hall or school were not necessarily represented among the focus group participants.¹

The focus groups had two different structures. Some were in-person focus groups. Others were conducted online with specific groups where it would have been difficult for people to gather in one location. In-person groups were conducted in Vancouver, British Columbia; Winnipeg, Manitoba; Hamilton, Ontario;

¹ None of the apprentices on the tapes or transcripts talked about a union hall or school sponsoring them, but since the consultant doing the focus groups didn't ask them that question specifically it cannot be known for sure whether any of them had this type of employer-sponsor arrangement.

Ottawa, Ontario; and Halifax, Nova Scotia. In addition, four online focus groups were held. Two online groups were held for self-identified rural participants.² One of the rural groups had participants from British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan. The second rural group had participants from Ontario and Nova Scotia. An additional group was held online with women from British Columbia, Nova Scotia, and Ontario. Another group was held with visible minorities from British Columbia, Nova Scotia, and Ontario. The number of participants at these online groups tended to be higher and the feedback was more detailed.

² As a part of the recruitment strategy, the consultant started with phone numbers as far as possible outside of metropolitan areas and then worked through the sample towards small town areas, as necessary. Actual urban centers were avoided. Not all participants, however, were from "deep" rural areas.

Figure 3.1 Focus Group Structure

Four online focus groups with participation from various provinces	Nine in-person focus groups in the specific cities
2 rural	2 in Vancouver, BC
1 women	2 in Winnipeg, MB
1 visible minority	2 in Hamilton, ON
	2 in Halifax, NS
	1 in Ottawa, ON

3.2 Key Characteristics of Focus Group Participants

For context, some key characteristics of the 113 participants are described so readers will have a sense of who was providing the feedback. The 113 total represents all the apprentices who participated in the focus groups whether it was in-person or online.

The apprentices in the focus groups ranged from level one to three. In general, this would probably mean they were looking for sponsors from 2006 to 2008. The economy was fairly strong during this time period, although there was a decline in the latter half of 2008. The strength of the economy perhaps made it less difficult for these apprentices to find sponsors than if the economy was experiencing a more severe downturn.

The apprentices were from a mix of Red Seal trades and non-Red Seal trades. There was also a mix of voluntary and compulsory trades. Most of the participants were from the carpentry and electrical trades. Participants self-identified as being from particular trades.

Figure 3.2 Number of Focus Group Participants by Trade

Trade	Number of apprentices
Electrician	21
Carpenter	19
Cook	14
Automotive Service Technician/Auto Mechanic	14
Refrigeration HVAC	8
Plumber	6
Steam Fitter	4
Machinist	3
Millwright	3
Construction Electrician	3
Gasfitter	3
Hairstyling	2
Boilermaker	1
Cabinetmaker	1
Tower Crane Operator	1
Commercial Transport Mechanic	1
Industrial Electrician	1
Heavy Equipment Technician	1
Joiner	1
Early Childhood Educator	1
Welding	1
Tool and Die	1
Funeral Director/Embalming	1
Horticultural Technician	1
IT	1
TOTAL	113

Most of the participants were from British Columbia.³

Most of the participants were from urban areas. The rural participants were from locations in Nova Scotia, Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Ontario. For the purposes of this project, participants self-identified as being from a rural area. The rural participants contributed to the online focus group. In addition, a couple of participants in the in-person focus groups were currently from an urban area, but also commented on their past rural experiences.

3 This higher rate of participation is probably due to the fact that it was possible in British Columbia to send a mass email to a database of thousands of apprentices. As a result of this database, the online recruitment screener was able to reach a significantly higher number of apprentices.

Figure 3.3 Number of Participants by Province

Province	Number of apprentices
British Columbia	39
Ontario	30
Manitoba	19
Nova Scotia	15
Rural Nova Scotia, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Ontario	10
TOTAL	113

Figure 3.4 Number of Participants by Rural/Urban Area

Area	Number
Rural	12
Urban	101
TOTAL	113

Some participants chose to self-identify as being from an equity group. Out of the 113 focus group participants, 56 chose to self-identify. Among those who self-identified, women were the most represented equity group with thirty participants.⁴ Some of these women went to in-person focus groups and others participated in the online focus group specifically for women. Twenty-four⁵ visible minorities self-identified. Some of these visible minorities went to in-person focus groups and others participated in the online focus group specifically for visible minorities. Out of the twenty-four visible minority participants, four also self-identified as women, two people self-identified as Métis, and one person self-identified as First Nations. In addition, two people self-identified as persons with disabilities.

4 Some of these women could be visible minorities or persons with disabilities as well, but none of them made this additional self-identification during the course of the focus groups.

5 In this context, visible minority participants self-identified. Some participants further identified themselves as being Aboriginal peoples, foreign born immigrants, or from ethnic groups. The number of immigrants that specifically participated was not identified.

3.3 Summary of Focus Group Findings

This section describes the opinions and experiences of the apprentices that participated in the focus groups. As already mentioned, readers should not draw generalized conclusions from this information. Below are the main questions that were asked at the focus groups:

- What were the specific challenges you faced when trying to find an employer-sponsor?
- How did you address and overcome these challenges?
- Ultimately, how were you able to find your employer-sponsor?
- What do you think made it easier or harder for you to find an employer-sponsor compared to others?
- What advice would you give to someone else looking to find an employer-sponsor?
- Based on your experience, are there any recommendations that you would offer to make the process easier?

For more detail, see Appendix B for the moderator's guide which outlines the specific questions asked at the focus groups.

3.4 Challenges

Across the various focus groups, apprentices identified some common challenges when looking for sponsors. There was a strong degree of consensus amongst the participants regarding the types of challenges faced:

- finding a supportive employer,
- lack of networking opportunities,
- lack of experience,
- sector specific conditions, and
- discrimination.

Finding a Supportive Employer

One of the biggest challenges identified by the participants was finding an employer who was willing to sponsor and actively support an apprenticeship, one who provided quality mentorship and offered a variety of work experiences. Participants reported having to go to several different employers prior to finding one that would sponsor them.

"Getting into a company was easy, but having someone in the company teach you and make you a better tradesperson was difficult. If you were good at one thing, you were stuck doing it for a while so you wouldn't learn."

"Plenty of companies were willing to hire me as a helper, but when the time came to sign me on, they would let me go and hire another helper."

"I haven't had any problems finding work... you can go almost anywhere...it is hard though to find someone willing to teach you."

"You want an employer that treats you fairly, pays the going rate, doesn't use you in ways they shouldn't, [respects] safety..."

According to the participants, employers gave similar reasons for not wanting to hire apprentices:

- Perception apprentices are not beneficial to employers' businesses. According to apprentices, certain employers seemed to lack knowledge about the benefits of hiring apprentices.
- Wanted apprentices with more work experience.
- No time to train.
- No spots left.
- Unwilling to train or pay apprentices.
- Apprentices said that sometimes they had to work for several employers as labourers before they found one that would support them as an apprentice. Some employers only wanted labourers who would do repetitive work.

Once the participants eventually found a supportive employer-sponsor, they had positive experiences. Apprentices said their sponsors encouraged them to complete their technical training, handled the administrative aspects of the apprenticeship, offered diverse training experiences, and promoted the value of certification. Participants noted that supportive employers will take the time to teach and will ensure apprentices can meet the requirements, even if it might not apply to their business. For example, one employer got his apprentice a diesel engine to work on

because it was a requirement, even though his shop didn't fix diesel engines. A few employers helped apprentices pay for their technical training. Apprentices noted that the supportive employers were committed to having their apprentices progress through the levels of training to finish their programs.

Participants emphasized the value of the apprenticeship training experience because it:

- provides opportunities to gain experience, learn, and develop skills,
- involves journeypersons who can serve as teachers, guides, and mentors, and,
- has technical training periods that provide useful theoretical background.

Lack of networking opportunities

A lack of networking opportunities was another common challenge identified by participants. Some participants said they sent out hundreds of resumes. Others said they visited more than twenty employers and sometimes were able to get interviews, but did not hear back.

Lack of Work Experience

A lack of work experience was identified as a particular problem for younger participants in the focus groups. Readers will recall that in the NAS information mentioned earlier, “lack of experience” was one of the top reasons given when respondents were asked to identify why they had challenges. Older individuals said that their age helped them find an employer-sponsor because they had more work and life experience. Some of the younger participants overcame the challenge of lack of experience by working as labourers or by completing pre-apprenticeship programs.⁶

Participants had mixed views on pre-apprenticeship programs. Some participants from British Columbia valued the six-month Entry Level Trades Training (ELTT) pre-apprenticeship program available and said it was a preferable route than gaining experience as a labourer. Others were keen to get on the job site as quickly as possible because that is where they felt they learned the most.

⁶ It is acknowledged that there are many different definitions of pre-apprenticeship depending on the jurisdiction and trade. The technical definitions were not discussed at the focus groups. Apprentices only referred to pre-apprenticeship in general.

Participants were also divided on whether pre-apprenticeship programs helped them find a sponsor. One apprentice said, “...after I finished my ELTT, I was taken seriously, and I found an employer that was willing to give me a chance.” Most would have agreed with the one apprentice who noted that ELTT can help you find a sponsor, but noted there are many ways to go about it. As the apprentice said, “...it gives you some of the basic skills and it looks good on your resume too having taken an ELTT course. [It] helps in finding a sponsor, but it is not the only option.”

For those interested in the pre-apprenticeship option, access to financial support is important, according to some participants. Some women, for example, noted that the promotion of the trades needs to be accompanied by financial support for women to gain actual work experience through pre-apprenticeship programs.

A lack of work experience may be a particular issue for those with disabilities. One apprentice with autism struggled for years to find an employer-sponsor. He called more than fifty employers. No one would hire him because they said he did not have enough work experience. He started working as a labourer and was eventually able to get an employer to sponsor him. At first he struggled when talking to customers, but eventually he was able to improve his ability to communicate. His employer has encouraged him to stick with it, despite the challenges he has faced.

Sector Specific Conditions

Some of the participants said they experienced unique challenges in particular trades. For example, some participants in the electrician trade perceived that ratios were an issue, although others acknowledged in some trades ratios are necessary for safety reasons and to ensure adequate supervision is available. It is important to note that every province or territory and trade has different regulations regarding ratios so perceptions of whether or not there are challenges may vary based on region and trade. Some cook participants noted that it was hard to find a certified journey-person to mentor them. They perceived that there was a lack of certified journey-persons in the trade.

Discrimination

Women

Discrimination was another challenge mentioned by women who participated in the in-person and online focus groups. Although some positive experiences were reported, most of the female participants perceived that they were discriminated against because of their gender when trying to find a sponsor. It was acknowledged that many organizations are working to promote under-represented groups in the trades. A few participants did say employers understand the value of hiring women apprentices. As one apprentice said, "...my employer was happy to hire a female, [he] wanted to have different ideas, throw someone new into the mix...I think most employers would feel the same way, if someone is positive and passionate about what they do I don't think it matters if it is male or female." Another participant noted, "I feel very fortunate with the companies I have

worked for and the job sites I have been on. There is usually the initial check you out thing that goes on when you work at a new site for the first time, but once they realize you are there to work and can do your job, you become just one of the crew. I have encountered very little negative...." Most of the participants, however, said they had negative experiences, especially when trying to get hired. They said they asked several employers, but no one would get back to them. Male participants confirmed this perception that many employers are skeptical about hiring women.

The following comments from female participants, based on their perceptions and experiences, illustrate the struggles women have faced when trying to get hired as an apprentice:

"The biggest issue was being a female in a male-dominated trade. I knew there would be issues with that and that I had to work harder than the guys to prove myself, but I was not expecting employers to basically turn their heads when I walked in. Most of them did not even take me seriously when they saw me, due to my size and being a mechanic."

"It has basically been a 50-50 chance of finding sponsors easily. The shop that I did my work term at hired me as a receptionist and said that once my work term was done, they would hire me out back in the shop. Once my work term was up, they told me they weren't going to hire me in the shop because a female doesn't belong there, they should be out front. It was definitely a rough work term altogether, but it gave me the push to prove everyone wrong, that a female can be in a man's world...."

"I find that being a woman in the cook trade sometimes I feel like I don't get taken seriously when I'm applying for jobs."

“Being an older woman I felt like I had two strikes against me right from the beginning. It took me quite a while to get my first sponsor. I would reply to ads and they would sound interested until they realized I was replying to the ad for myself and not a brother, boyfriend, son, or other male.”

Yet despite the challenges they’ve faced in entering a new job, most female participants emphasized that even though getting hired was difficult, they were able to overcome the challenges they faced once they were on the job:

“I think the biggest hurdle of my apprenticeship was finding the first company willing to take a chance with you... once that happens it is much easier to find employment as tradespeople talk and if you are any good they know. Also, it is easy for them to remember you as you are usually one of the only women on-site. There were so many employers in the beginning that basically shut down or told me the job was taken when they realized I was a female.”

“I found it much more difficult to find a job than I believe most men would. It was hard to be taken seriously at first, especially since I had very little previous experience as a labourer or with any kind of construction. I think it is much easier for a young man with no experience to get a foot in the door than it is for a woman with the same level of experience. Employers assume that men are more “naturally” suited to the work. Or they assume that a woman would not make as good a labourer as she has less physical strength. Once hired, this issue quickly goes away when they see that I am a hard worker and just as competent as the men. It’s just getting that foot in the door that I found very difficult.”

“I find it challenging getting hired at new places because of my gender, plus my small stature. I can lift beams, full sheets of plywood, everything a man can do....I do find that once I prove myself the little things start getting easier. I just wish people wouldn’t judge me at first glance.”

Visible Minority Participants

Although it was acknowledged that racism still exists, fewer visible minority participants identified discrimination as an issue when trying to find an employer-sponsor. One participant who self-identified as a visible minority individual and a woman said that she perceived her gender was a greater barrier than her race. When talking about challenges finding employer-sponsors, most of the visible minority participants tended to identify factors similar to those identified by the other apprentices, such as lack of experience. If they did talk about issues related to their race, it related to discrimination on the job. Overall, participants agreed that attitude and appearance, in terms of dress and physical strength, were bigger factors than race when trying to find a sponsor.

Here is a selection of some comments from the visible minority participants indicating that they did not perceive their race was an issue in getting a sponsor:

“Being a part of a visible minority had [no] effect on getting a job, or getting sponsored for an apprenticeship...”

“I’m part of a visible minority group and honestly never really had a problem with my colour with an employer, but have had some issues on site...”

“I think it’s equally hard to [get] your foot in the door [whether] you’re a minority or not. It’s keeping the job that defines who you are.”

One participant had mixed views: “I think it can be both an advantage and a disadvantage. It really comes down to racism. If the employer has pre-conceived ideas about your

race then it could be either a challenge or an advantage depending on whether those ideas are positive or negative.”

When asked what visible minority apprentices could do to be successful as an apprentice once they have found an employer, one participant commented, “I would just have to say to respect the employer for giving you a chance to prove yourself. And then prove to them that they didn’t make a mistake in hiring you. If you can break some of the stereotypes that an employer holds, then you’ve made it just that much easier on the next person of your ethnicity to get into the trade.”

Although race was generally not seen to be an issue when looking for a sponsor, some visible minority participants tended to report more negative experiences due to race when working on the job site:

“Yes, plain and simple, I think it is harder to be a visible minority in the trades. It has been my experience that I have had to push myself harder and further than the peers around me, to prove that I can do the job.”

“Well, I was the only person of a different race at my first shop that I worked...I found that people were not helpful...also did not communicate professionally with me...I always had the feeling like they did not know how to interact with me!”

“I’m visible minority and never really thought I was ever getting treated differently. Racism does exist; most racism I encounter is on sites.... I always just walk away. Seems to work MOST of the time.”

Rural Area Challenges

In general, focus group participants from rural areas talked about the same challenges that other apprentices talked about. There were, however, some specific challenges that were mentioned. These included fewer employers, transportation, travel, and access to technology. There are fewer employers in rural areas so sometimes it can be harder to find employers who need apprentices. According to participants, a car is basically a requirement in rural areas for getting to employers’ businesses or work sites. The road conditions in rural areas can be worse than in urban areas, which can be particularly hard on an individual’s vehicle. Travel to technical training away from the rural area can also be an issue. Access to a computer with internet was another challenge for some of the participants. They needed the computer to complete their technical training, but could not afford one or did not have access to one.

When trying to find a sponsor, transportation was the main issue for apprentices in rural areas based on the focus group feedback:

“...distance was a limiting factor in the beginning for me because I didn’t have a car then....”

“...if you had no car you would be outta luck out here for work.”

“It would be great for government to offer vehicle purchase incentives for trades[people] in new ‘off the beaten path’ construction.”

Some participants had worked in both rural and urban areas so they had unique insights into trying to find an employer-sponsor in both areas. These participants said rural small businesses were more supportive of apprentices than in urban areas. Certain employers in

rural areas were motivated to help apprentices because they did not want to lose them, according to the focus group participants. The employers offered more diverse training experiences than in the city. One apprentice perceived that a rural area was a good place to gain initial work experience because there was less time pressure. He eventually left though to work in the city because he could earn higher wages. To this participant, earning the higher wages was worth the switch, even though he had to pay higher accommodation costs. Another apprentice disagreed, saying being near his family and friends was more important than earning a few extra dollars on his wages. His plan was to stay in the rural area. As indicated in these comments, sometimes personal preference or lifestyle choice can be factors in where one chooses to work.

Other Challenges

To put participants' comments in perspective and context, it is important to mention that other challenges with apprenticeship training were discussed. These additional challenges included the unpredictability of fluctuations in the labour market, technical issues with online learning, communication and co-ordination among apprentices and technical training institutes, travel and accommodation when trying to complete technical training, and delays in receiving employment insurance. This report is specifically focused on finding an employer-sponsor, so it will not go into further detail on these issues. It is important, however, to acknowledge these issues were raised by the apprentices who participated.

3.5 Participants' Advice to Potential Apprentices Looking for Employer-Sponsors

As part of the focus groups, apprentices were asked to give advice to someone who was interested in finding a sponsor. There was a high degree of consensus among the participants regarding the steps to finding employer-sponsors:

1. Seek information from schools, career counsellors, and any other available resources.

Some participants mentioned that college tours were helpful because you can sit in on classes and get a feel for what it is like. Many apprentices were able to learn more about the trades through family members and friends. Some apprentices said finding out information on where the jobs are going to be in the future by seeing an employment counsellor can also be a useful option. Researching the trade and becoming familiar with its culture and environment can be especially important for women. According to the female participants, learning about attitudes a woman may encounter will help her be better prepared when approaching employers.

2. Decide upon a trade.

Participants all agreed that in order to provide oneself with some direction, it is necessary to research, evaluate, and make a decision about which trade to pursue. A high priority was placed by all participants on ensuring that the chosen trade is one that the individual is motivated to pursue.

3. Consider all your options.

Although calling up employers directly is an option, sometimes apprentices said gaining some prior work and technical training experiences can be helpful. Gaining work experience can be useful in building up your resumé and proving to employers you are willing to work. Some apprentices chose to work as labourers first. Some apprentices said that completing a pre-apprenticeship program⁷ is another option. Basic trade skills, theory, and safety measures can be taught at these programs. These skills are valued by employers, according to some of the focus group participants. These programs also provide connections with employers through work placements. Other participants said that getting onto the job site was, in their opinion, better than doing pre-apprenticeship because they were able to start gaining on-the-job work experience right away. Readers will recall that some apprentices' views on pre-apprenticeship were already discussed in an earlier section of this report.

4. Prepare a strong resumé and brush up on your interview skills.

Many participants emphasized the importance of making a good impression with employers. A resume that showcases one's accomplishments and skills and an in-person presentation that instills confidence in prospective employers was widely considered very important. According to apprentices, you can make yourself stand out by doing quality work, showing up on time, doing well at school, and proving you are responsible.

⁷ It is acknowledged that there are many different definitions of pre-apprenticeship depending on the jurisdiction and trade. The technical definitions were not discussed at the focus groups. Apprentices only referred to pre-apprenticeship in general.

"If you know someone that helps a great deal, but if you can sell yourself in the interview and make a good first impression you can have a good shot. How you present yourself to the employer can make a difference."

5. Network.

Apprentices emphasized the importance of networking. High school teachers and college instructors can be good contacts when looking for an employer.

"It would be nice if there networking events with employers like they have for IT professionals and accountants and such."

6. Apply for as many jobs with as many prospective employers as possible, and be persistent.

"Actually go out there and talk to companies where you might want a job."

"Walk in the door, phone them, fax them, email them, just go out there, don't be shy."

"Do not give up if you get refused by different employers, someone will take you in eventually...If you stick it out, it will be worth it in the end."

Women participants suggested that female apprentices seek out female sponsors if they are available because they will face less discrimination. As one female apprentice said, "I would say having a female sponsor was probably the best decision I made throughout my apprenticeship, because she knew exactly where I was coming from and we had a similar mind set, and we were always on the same page."

7. Always strive to learn more and seek knowledge and skills from all possible sources.

"It seems the best way to learn is be friendly with the oldest, most experienced person on a job site and pick their brain whenever possible!"

“As a woman, knowing something about the ‘culture’ of the shop you are going to work... whether it is a kitchen, a construction site, or a factory. What is the attitude towards women? Would you be working for a chef who thinks the only place for a woman is in the bake shop...? Is the foreman someone who doesn’t think women should be working outside the home? I don’t believe in generalizations, one tough welder I know is more open to women in the trades than most other people I have met.”

Where to go when looking for an employer-sponsor Apprentices who participated in the focus groups suggested that the following sources of information would be helpful for those looking for an employer-sponsor:

- Yellow Pages
- Job Bank
- Union Hall
- Networks
- Company Websites
- Red Seal website www.red-seal.ca.
- Service Canada
 - <http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/goc/apprenticeship.shtml>
 - http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/work_sharing/index.shtml

Tips from apprentices based on what they feel they did right

- talk to journeypersons,
- try to get work experience,
- work hard in technical training and get a reference letter from your instructor,
- improve your interview skills,
- look in the newspaper, and
- don’t stop looking until you find a sponsor!

“Check out future employment in that trade to see if it is needed, what your wages might look like, and what are the trends in the location you want to work in...”

What apprentices look for in an employer-sponsor

Participants said that it is easy to find an employer to hire you, but finding a supportive employer-sponsor can be tough. Apprentices said you have to be determined to pursue an apprenticeship and may have to go through several employers before you find the right one. Apprentices said they are seeking an employer who:

- envisions a career path for the apprentice, not just a job.
- offers diverse training experiences rather than repetitive work.
- stays on top of the administrative requirements.
- ensures apprentices complete technical training.
- ensures journeypersons are available to supervise and mentor apprentices.
- sets goals and encourages apprentices to progress through the program and to get their certificate.

Apprenticeship can be a way for employers to attract and retain valuable employees. Apprentices said they felt more loyalty to employers who supported them.

Some apprentices advise get certified and get your Red Seal!

Some apprentices said earning their certification with Red Seal endorsement was important to them. They noted individuals should look for sponsors who want apprentices to achieve this endorsement. They noted there were several advantages to trying to achieve this goal:

- personal sense of achievement,
- endorsement recognized by employers,
- enhances your ability to apply for better positions within your company advancing your career,
- provincial or territorial certification with the Red Seal endorsement can lead to better wages, and
- gives you an edge in a competitive market place.

Some apprentices noted that the Red Seal website, www.red-seal.ca, was a good source for information.

When asked why certification with a Red Seal endorsement was desired, one apprentice commented: “It’s something I’ve always wanted. I could work in industry and gain that experience, but to have [it to add to] my resume, it is something you’ve accomplished, it is a lot of hard work – you look more reliable to an employer, more confident.”

“Talk to people in the trades and ask what they like and dislike and about their experience.”

Where to go for career information

Before approaching employers, apprentices who participated in the focus groups suggested that an individual do research and investigate their options. This exploration will help them narrow their focus to one trade. The employer will take the individual more seriously when they apply for a job if they can show they have some interest and preliminary knowledge about the trade. Apprentices found a variety of services and sources of information useful:

Web Resources:

- Read college and government websites, including Service Canada.
- Go to the Red Seal website, www.redseal.org.

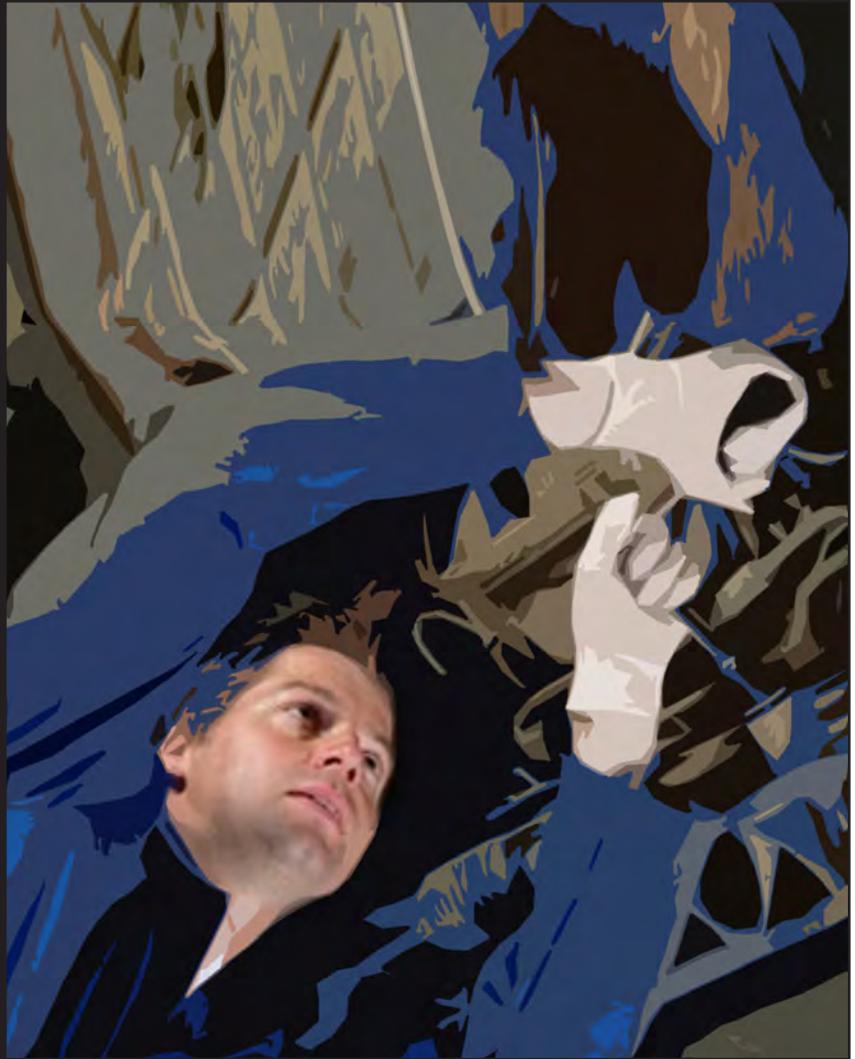
Interestingly, the apprentices who participated in the focus groups did not know about many of the additional websites available and sometimes noted that the information they were looking for was hard to find. For career information, another very useful resource for potential apprentices would be

sector-specific career information. See the Alliance of Sector Councils' website: <http://www.councils.org/sector-councils/list-of-canadas-sector-councils/> for more information. Individual councils have information on careers in specific sectors geared towards youth. The Alliance of Sector Councils is also creating "Gateway Potential," a multi-lingual career information portal in fourteen different languages.

People Resources:

- Go to the union hall.
- Talk to instructors or journeypersons in the trade.
- Learn from the experiences of friends and family.
- Speak to the apprenticeship branch officials in your province or territory.
- Employment insurance counsellors can provide information on the labour market and careers.
- At Career Drive you can assess what you have an aptitude for. Counsellors will help you write a resumé.

PART 4: RECOMMEN- DATIONS AND OBSERVATIONS



4.1 Recommendations by Apprentices who Participated in the Focus Groups

Focus group participants were asked what could be done to make the process of finding sponsors easier. They made the following recommendations based on their experiences:

Continue to support career awareness programs and pre-apprenticeship programs for individuals interested in exploring careers in the trades.

According to the focus group findings, participants did find career awareness programs at high schools and colleges helpful. College tours and pre-apprenticeship programs, particularly those with work terms, were mentioned as a useful way for potential apprentices to gain exposure to the trade, to learn about safety regulations, and to complete work experience with an employer. For some apprentices, the work term connected them to the employer who eventually sponsored them.

Create a list of employers who are interested in hiring apprentices.

Although it can be easy to find a job in general, some apprentices noted it can be difficult and time consuming to find an employer who is interested in taking on an apprentice. Some apprentices noted they had to work with several employers before they found one that would sponsor them. Rather than cold calling employers in the yellow pages, a list of employers who are interested in hiring apprentices might make the process more efficient.

Communicate the value of apprenticeship to employers.

Apprentices spoke very positively about employer-sponsors who encouraged them to complete their technical training and to pursue their certification and Red Seal endorsement. These employers also stayed on top of the administrative aspects of the apprenticeship and offered apprentices diverse on-the-job experiences. Some apprentices, however, said that they had to go through several employers before they found a supportive sponsor, indicating communication about the value of apprenticeship is still necessary.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The working group for this project also made some observations:

Sharing promising practices is helpful

- What are some promising practices for ensuring employers know about the value of apprenticeship training? As an example, the province of Manitoba has an advertising campaign designed to reach out to employers. Other jurisdictions may have completed similar activities. As was done in the past, there may be value in continuing to share promising practices and outcomes with other jurisdictions.
- It is acknowledged that across the country there are interesting practices and programs available to help connect employers and apprentices. What are provinces and territories doing to connect employers and apprentices? Have Ontario and Nova Scotia share promising practices around apprenticeship search.com and Building Futures for Youth (see Appendix A) with other jurisdictions. Consider replicating these programs in other areas if appropriate.

Reaching out to employers who currently do not hire apprentices is helpful

- In the trades where the employer was “unwilling to train or pay the apprentice,” according to the NAS data, perhaps there are opportunities to work with the industry associations to promote the advantages of training employees as apprentices.

PART 5: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RESEARCH



This section provides an overview of some of the main findings from this report.

5.1 Sources Used in Report

- The study was approached using two distinct quantitative and qualitative methodologies: statistics and focus groups.
- Firstly, statistical trends were examined based on Statistics Canada NAS data. The questions in the survey relating to employer sponsorship were identified and a trade, provincial/territorial, and equity group data breakdown was received from Statistics Canada. The respondents to the survey were individuals who had completed their apprenticeship training, those who were still continuing, or those who had stopped their training.
- Secondly, to understand apprentices' viewpoints, thirteen focus groups were completed with more than one hundred apprentices from across the country. The apprentices talked about their experiences in finding an individual employer-sponsor. This group consisted of current apprentices in their first, second, and third levels. It should be noted this group is distinct from

the respondents to the NAS, some of whom had already completed or stopped their training.

- When the respondents and current apprentices were looking for employers, employment was increasing in general, a fact that suggests the individuals may have had an easier time finding a sponsor than those looking during a more severe economic downturn.

5.2 Report Highlights

Opportunities

- CAF-FCA's previous work suggests there are opportunities to connect employers and apprentices more effectively.
- CAF-FCA has some quantitative evidence indicating the search times for apprentices. Two CAF-FCA surveys encompassing more than 2,200 apprentices enrolled at public and private training providers found that roughly 37 per cent of apprentices had to search for between four and twenty-four months before finding an employer-sponsor, with an average search period of seven months.¹

1 CAF-FCA, "Apprentices Enrolled at Publicly Funded Canadian Colleges and Institutes: Profiles, Investments, and Perceptions," (Ottawa: PrintWest, December 2007), 2, 12. CAF-FCA, "Apprentices Enrolled at Private Training Providers in Canada: A Comparative Analysis with the Experience of Apprentices at Publicly Funded Colleges and Institutes," (Ottawa: PrintWest, December 2007), 13. Readers should note that although the CAF-FCA survey with apprentices asked respondents to estimate the approximate time it took for them to find a sponsor, the National Apprenticeship Survey did not ask this question, so additional national data on this issue could not be obtained.

- In a recent CAF-FCA survey with employers, 14 per cent of employers indicated that they would be willing to hire an apprentice, but perceived that there were few or no apprentices applying to their organization.²
- Employers were also asked whether anything could be done to change their minds about hiring an apprentice. About half of the employers answered yes, there was something that could be done. Thirty per cent of employers indicated that they would hire apprentices if they could find them.³

Relevant findings from the National Apprenticeship Survey

- Approximately 83 per cent of respondents to the National Apprenticeship Survey did not report having challenges when trying to find an employer-sponsor.⁴
- Approximately 17 per cent of respondents reported having challenges.⁵
- Within the 17 per cent that identified difficulty, a more specific trade breakdown was obtained.

2 CAF-FCA, "It pays to hire an apprentice: Calculating the Return on Training Investment for Employers-A Study of 16 Trades Executive Summary." (Ottawa: PrintWest, September 2009).

3 *Ibid.*

4 Marinka Menard, Frank Menezes, Cindy K.Y. Chan and Merv Walker, "National Apprenticeship Survey: Canada Overview Report 2007," Catalogue No. 81-598-XX No. 001, (Ottawa: Culture, Tourism and the Centre for Education Statistics Division, Statistics Canada, Ministry of Industry, 2008), 21.

5 *Ibid.*

- A significant percentage of respondents from the following trades had difficulty:
 - automotive service technician,
 - millwright,
 - industrial mechanic,
 - machinist,
 - heavy equipment technician, and
 - truck and coach technician.
- Within the 17 per cent that identified difficulty, a more specific equity group breakdown revealed the following:
 - Most of the groups, except women and Aboriginal peoples, had a higher probability of experiencing difficulties compared to their respective reference group.
 - Visible minority respondents were more likely than non-visible minorities to identify “lack of work experience/employer wanted licensed or qualified apprentice or journeyman/employer unwilling to train or pay apprentice” as a reason for difficulty.
 - “Discrimination” was more of an issue for visible minority respondents and women than for their reference groups.
 - More women than men and more foreign-born persons than Canadian-born persons identified “other” as a reason for difficulty.

5.3 Summary of Focus Group Findings

- Overall, thirteen focus groups were conducted with 113 apprentices from across the country. Efforts were made to recruit all types of apprentices across the country.
- Most of the participants were from the carpentry and electrical trades. Most of the participants were from British Columbia. Across the various focus groups, apprentices identified some common challenges when looking for sponsors. There was a strong degree of consensus in the groups on the types of challenges faced:
 - finding a supportive employer,
 - lack of networking opportunities,
 - lack of experience,
 - sector specific conditions, and
 - discrimination.
- Most of the female participants perceived that they were discriminated against because of their gender when trying to find an employer-sponsor.
- Although it was acknowledged that racism still exists, fewer visible minority participants identified discrimination as an issue when trying to find an employer-sponsor.
- Transportation to potential employers’ businesses or work sites was an issue for rural participants when trying to find an employer-sponsor.

5.4 Participants' Advice to Potential Apprentices Looking for Sponsors

As a part of the focus groups, apprentices were asked to give advice to someone who was interested in finding a sponsor. There was a high degree of consensus among the participants regarding the steps to finding an employer-sponsor:

- Seek information from schools, career counsellors, and any other available resources.
- Decide upon a trade. Participants all agreed that in order to provide oneself with some direction, it is necessary to research, evaluate, and make a decision about which trade to pursue. A high priority was placed by all participants on ensuring that the chosen trade is one that the individual is motivated to pursue.
- Participants entered into apprenticeships many different ways. They said it is important to consider all of the options. Although calling up employers directly is an option, sometimes apprentices said gaining some prior work experiences can be helpful. Gaining work experience can be helpful in building up your resumé and proving to employers you are willing to work. Some apprentices chose to work as labourers first. Apprentices said that completing a pre-apprenticeship program is another option.
- Prepare a strong resumé and brush up on your interview skills.
- Network. Apprentices emphasized the importance of networking.

- Apply for as many jobs with as many prospective employers as possible, and be persistent.
- Always strive to learn more and seek knowledge and skills from all possible sources.

5.5 Moving Forward

Evidence suggests some apprentices and employers may be struggling to connect with each other. Apprentices and employers could benefit from making more timely connections. A more efficient approach would ensure apprentices do not get discouraged and potentially change occupations. At the same time, employers would be able access the talent they need, thus saving time and money. This research has provided broad statistical data on this issue and the opinions of apprentices who have gone through the process. Moving forward, apprentices in the trades that identified difficulty may benefit from targeted programs and communication activities to share tips on how to find an employer-sponsor. Sharing information on the business case for diversity with employers may also create greater awareness and reduce the difficulties faced by under-represented groups. Overall, it is hoped that both the data on those identifying challenges and the feedback from apprentices will potentially reinforce and shape successful policies and programs that will help Canadians find sponsors in a more efficient manner.

APPENDIX A: PROMISING OR INTERESTING PRACTICES THAT CONNECT APPRENTICES AND EMPLOYERS

It is acknowledged that jurisdictions and trades across the country are doing innovative and interesting things to try and connect employers and potential apprentices. Although this is by no means a comprehensive list, these are some promising or interesting practices that were gathered during the research process:

Thinking Outside the Box

One approach some employers in rural areas are taking in an attempt to retain apprentices is to work with the local college to share sponsorship. In order to keep apprentices, employers involved in the automotive apprenticeship program at the Truro Campus at the Nova Scotia Community College have established a program where they pre-screen candidates and then hire them on a rotating basis. There is a commitment to train apprentices the whole way through and to offer them a diverse set of training experiences.

The Building Futures for Youth Program in Nova Scotia

Apprenticeship Training Nova Scotia is involved in a collaborative partnership with the Construction Association of Nova Scotia (CANS), the department of education, and the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC). The Building Futures for Youth program is designed to help address the labour market needs of the construction industry while also promoting career awareness and creating a clear pathway for high school students interested in a career in the trades. A select number of youth are provided with the opportunity to gain course credit, obtain workplace health and safety training, connect with employers through summer work placements, and potentially enter into a youth apprenticeship. To learn more about this program visit <http://www.buildingfutures.ca>.

Connecting Employers and Potential Apprentices in Ontario

Apprenticesearch.com

The Halton Industry Education Council in partnership with Human Resources and Skills Development Canada spearheaded the development of [apprenticesearch.com](http://www.apprenticesearch.com). The website is designed to help connect apprentices and employers. Employers can post job ads and apprentices can post resumé on the site. See the website for more information: <http://www.apprenticesearch.com/halton.asp>.

For success stories from employers and apprentices check out the following links:

<http://www.apprenticesearch.com/Employer-ProfileTandet.asp>;

<http://www.apprenticesearch.com/employer-winner.asp>;

<http://www.apprenticesearch.com/ipodwinner3.asp>;

<http://www.apprenticesearch.com/images/uploadimage/link/pages.asp?pageid=196&Title=AJobOnTheRocks>

Connecting Employers and Equity Groups

There are programs out there that seek to connect employers to individuals from equity groups who want to work in the skilled trades. These programs may lead to registering as an apprentice for some individuals.

Aboriginal training advisors associated with the VanAsep Training Society in British Columbia provide access to apprenticeship training, tools, and employers for Aboriginal peoples interested in careers in construction. Employers can access potential employees by contacting Aboriginal training advisors. See <http://www.vanasep.ca>.

The Skilled Trades Employment Program (STEP) for Women is a program geared towards helping employers in British Columbia get the skilled workers they need by matching them up with women who have some experience or who want to start a career in the trades. STEP for Women is a program developed by the British Columbia Construction Association and currently funded through the Industry Training Authority of BC's Women's Trades Training Initiative. See <http://www.stepforwomen.com/>.

Connecting Employers and Potential Apprentices in Manitoba

The following are tips for apprentices provided by Apprenticeship Manitoba Labour Market Skills Division Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade

Network, network, network!

- Discover the “hidden” job market by going around to businesses that are in the trades of your interest.
- Ask your career counsellor for advice. Consult with joint labour/management training and trade associations to see if they know any employers who are looking for an apprentice.
- Tell everyone you know and everyone you meet that you are looking for a job.
- Carry a resumé with you everywhere.
- Get the names and phone numbers of the employers and managers or supervisors that you contacted. Follow up with them after a couple of weeks.
- Scan the classified ads in the newspapers or the internet.

See http://www.gov.mb.ca/tce/apprent/future/find_employer.html

The Government of Manitoba also provides a wide range of websites on labour market information, career planning and job hunting, general trades and industry training information, training providers, professional associations, Manitoba government contacts, and federal government contacts, all of which provide further industry training information and resources.

Information can also be obtained from the Labour Market Information Unit “Job Futures.” <http://mb.jobfutures.org/home.cfm?lang=en&site=graphic>.

For more information see <http://www.gov.mb.ca/tce/apprent/links.html>

APPENDIX B: MODERATOR'S GUIDE WITH QUESTIONS ASKED AT FOCUS GROUPS

Introduction (5 Minutes)

- Moderator introduction:
 - Name
 - Occupation – researcher / moderator
 - Work for Ipsos Reid
- Length of the session (2 hours)
- Audio/video recording of the session
- One-way mirror and colleagues observing from the back room
- Discussion and results are confidential; reported in aggregate; individuals not identified
- Participation is voluntary
- Role of participants:
 - To actively participate
 - To speak openly and frankly about opinions
 - Not expected to be experts
 - No right/wrong answers and no need to reach consensus
 - To be respectful and to speak one-at-a-time

- Role of moderator:
 - To ask questions
 - Not an expert in the subject matter
 - To remain objective and unbiased, with no vested interest
 - To ensure that all material is covered within the given timeframe
- Participant introductions
 - Name
 - Type of apprenticeship / skilled trade
 - What they like best about their chosen trade

Set Up and Warm Up (20 Minutes)

As you've probably noticed, all of you in this group today are registered apprentices. We've asked you to participate in this group because we would like to know more about your experience in getting to this stage of your career as an apprentice. Our discussion is going to focus on how you got to be an apprentice, and some of the challenges you may have faced throughout that process.

To start us off, I'd like to ask: how did you find out about the option to pursue a career in the skilled trades?

[IF NECESSARY, PROBE FOR KEY ISSUES, SUCH AS:]

- How did you first learn about the option of pursuing a career as a skilled tradesperson?
- Who helped you make the decision to become an apprentice?
- Did anyone guide you through the decision making process? How did they help?
- What were the sources of information you relied on in researching the skilled trades, apprenticeship programs, and the process of becoming an apprentice?

Now, I'd like to go around the table and ask each of you to share the aspects of your experience of becoming an apprentice that you found to be the most challenging. Don't feel that you need to be original – if someone else mentions challenges that you experienced, I'm still interested to know if you feel those were key challenges for you. What was the biggest challenge?

[IF NECESSARY, PROBE FOR:]

- Finding an employer-sponsor
- Applying to apprenticeship programs
- Financial challenges
- Travel and living arrangements
- The labour market and the availability of jobs
- Access to daycare

[ITEMIZE CHALLENGES ON THE FLIP CHART.]

Now, I'd like us to do a quick activity to rank these challenges in terms of how much of an obstacle they posed for you in the process of becoming an apprentice.

[DISTRIBUTE 3 STICKERS TO EACH PARTICIPANT AND HAVE PARTICIPANTS PLACE THEIR STICKERS, IN THE PROPORTIONS THEY SEE FIT, NEXT TO ITEMS ON THE FLIP CHART IN ORDER TO INDICATE THOSE ITEMS THAT THEY FOUND MOST CHALLENGING.]

The Challenge of Finding an Employer-Sponsor (40 Minutes)

For the rest of our discussion today, I'd like us to focus on just one of the challenges that you've identified: namely, the challenge of finding an employer-sponsor. I'm curious to know as much as possible about what made this such a challenge?

The first thing I'd like to do is have each of you rate how big of a challenge you personally faced in finding your employer-sponsor. On the sheet of paper in front of you, please write down the number that best expresses how challenging it was for you to find your employer-sponsor, using a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is very easy and 10 is very difficult.

Just keep those numbers in front of you for now – we'll get back to them in just a moment.

Right now, I'd like to open the floor to your stories about trying to find an employer sponsor:

[ENCOURAGE EACH PARTICIPANT TO CONTRIBUTE. THIS SHOULD BE AN OPEN DISCUSSION, RATHER THAN PARTICIPANTS FORMALLY TAKING TURNS. PROMPT WITH QUESTIONS BELOW.]

[BEFORE EACH PARTICIPANT SPEAKS FOR THE FIRST TIME, ASK THEM WHAT NUMBER THEY WROTE DOWN TO INDICATE THE LEVEL OF CHALLENGE THAT THEY FACED IN FINDING THEIR EMPLOYER-SPONSOR.]

- How long did it take you to find your employer-sponsor?
- How many employers did you approach before you found your employer-sponsor?
- What were the specific challenges that you faced?

[IF NECESSARY, PROBE FOR:]

- Practical challenges (e.g., financial, transportation, living arrangements, etc.)
- Informational challenges (e.g., where to apply, who to contact, types of programs/employers, etc.)
- Skills challenges (e.g., missing prerequisites, lacking basic skills, etc.)
- Networking challenges (e.g., no personal contacts, etc.)
- Labour market challenges (e.g., availability of jobs, etc.)
- Discrimination (e.g., gender, ethnicity, visible minority, etc.)
- Did you expect to face these kinds of challenges? Were you prepared to deal with them?

- Why do you think you were faced with these challenges?

[IF NECESSARY, PROBE FOR:]

- Generational differences between employers and prospective apprentices
- Not knowing how to present oneself to prospective employer-sponsors (soft skills)
- Employers' lack of understanding concerning tax credits
- Geographical location
- Discrimination (e.g., gender, ethnicity, visible minority, etc.)

[ITEMIZE SPECIFIC CHALLENGES ON THE FLIP CHART AS THEY EMERGE IN THE DISCUSSION.]

As you can see, I've tried to list the specific challenges that you've all helped to identify. Is this list complete? Is there anything missing from this list?

Since all of you ultimately succeeded in finding an employer-sponsor, you must have found ways to address and overcome these challenges:

- How did you address and overcome these challenges?
- Ultimately, how were you able to find your employer-sponsor?

[IF NECESSARY, PROBE FOR ROLE OF:]

- Internet
- Skilled trades college
- Family member(s)
- Friend(s)
- School counsellor(s)

- Advertising (including signs at construction sites, etc.)
- Coop or work placements
- Business listings (e.g., through the phone book)
- Did anyone help you with finding an employer-sponsor?
- What do you think made it easier/harder for you to find an employer-sponsor, compared to others?

Now, I'd like us to repeat the ranking activity that we did earlier using the stickers. Please rank the specific challenges you've identified in terms of how much of an obstacle they posed for you in the process of finding and employer-sponsor .

[DISTRIBUTE 3 STICKERS TO EACH PARTICIPANT AND HAVE PARTICIPANTS PLACE THEIR STICKERS, IN THE PROPORTIONS THEY SEE FIT, ON THE FLIP CHART IN ORDER TO INDICATE THOSE ITEMS THAT THEY FOUND MOST CHALLENGING.]

I'm also interested to know: what do you think might have helped you to find an employer sponsor? Based on your experience, are there any recommendations that you would offer to someone who is looking for an employer-sponsor?

Finding an Employer-Sponsor: Scenarios (40 Minutes)

We've now talked about your experiences of finding an employer-sponsor. I now want you to think about the advice you would give to someone else who is becoming an apprentice and is looking to find an employer-sponsor.

I'm going to give out the story of [NAME], who's trying to find an employer-sponsor. You are going to work as two separate teams to think about the advice you would give to them and how you would advise them to go about finding an employer-sponsor.

In particular, I'm interested to know:

- What are the main challenges they would face in finding a sponsor?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages he/she has in trying to become an apprentice and find an employer-sponsor?
- What advice would you give for strategies they could use to overcome the challenges he/she would face?

[SPLIT GROUP INTO TWO TEAMS, DISTRIBUTE SCENARIO SHEETS, AND VERBALLY REVIEW THE SCENARIO, WHICH INCLUDES THE FICTIONAL PERSON'S:]

- [Photo]
- Name
- Age
- Current activities (e.g., in school, working, etc.)
- Available sources of information about skilled trades (including short list of contacts, e.g., a teacher, family member, etc.)
- List of 3 or 4 skilled trades of interest

Take about 15 minutes, in each of your respective teams, to discuss [NAME'S] story and prepare a story for them that includes as much detail as possible about the experiences that this person would have in the process of becoming an apprentice and finding an employer-sponsor. Later on, I'm going to ask each team to present back how you would advise [NAME] to find a sponsor.

Remember: what you're trying to do is tell a story about this person's experiences, including as much detail as possible:

- What is this person thinking and feeling at each stage?
- What options does this person consider at each step, and which do they choose? Why? In each case, does he/she make the right choice?

[WHEN TEAMS ARE READY, HAVE EACH TEAM PRESENT ITS STORYLINE. PROBE ON KEY ISSUES AS THEY ARISE, WITH A FOCUS ON THE ISSUE OF FINDING AN EMPLOYER-SPONSOR.]

[IF NECESSARY, PROBE:]

- Would your view on the situation change if [NAME] was:
 - A woman/man
 - A member of a visible minority (or not)
 - An immigrant (or not)
 - Persons with disabilities (or not)
 - An aboriginal person (or not)
 - Older/Younger
 - From a rural/urban area
- Why?

Conclusion (15 Minutes)

Do you have any final comments regarding what we've discussed this evening?

Thinking about everything we've discussed, what's the single most important thing that you would want me to include in my report to the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum?

We have a few minutes remaining. In that time, I'd like to ask you to fill out an evaluation form regarding tonight's focus group session. Please don't write your name on this form – your responses will be treated entirely anonymously.

[DISTRIBUTE EVALUATION FORMS.]

[COLLECT COMPLETED EVALUATION FORMS.]

That's all the time we have together this evening.

Thanks to all of you for your participation and contributions, and for cooperating so well in answering my many questions.

(I'd like to ask you please to not speak about the things we've discussed here today as you leave the premises. There is another group waiting just outside to begin their session and it's important that they don't overhear what we've discussed.)