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# TRADING UP

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## WHY THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION IN CANADA MUST BE SKILLED

REPORT 2017/2018



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report and its complementary video series could not have been completed without funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). It was also possible to go “above and beyond” thanks to the generous financial support of the CWB Welding Foundation and the enthusiasm of its Executive Director, Deborah Mates.

The Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, led by Executive Director Sarah Watts-Rynard, provided staff hours to assist in developing the questionnaire and in encouraging their apprenticeship stakeholders to participate in our survey. Q.i. Value Systems CEO Ted Langschmidt also contributed many hours to designing the survey’s values-based approach to understanding Tradespeople.

Skills Canada Ontario provided tremendous assistance in the recruitment of interviewees who love their jobs in the Skilled Trades. Director of Programs Scott Verhoeve’s help and ongoing support resulted in the creation of a video series of workers in the Skilled Trades that will inspire students, parents, educators, and career-seekers for many years. As well, the Industry Liaison Office at George Brown College’s Centre for Construction and Engineering Technologies (CCET) and Georgian College provided us with both participants and essential background footage.

This study is the product of the combined organization, thoughtfulness, and analysis of Research Assistant Benjamin Millard and the vision, creativity, and expertise of Media Production Specialist Ahmed Said. Together, we’re an outstanding team.

Finally, thank you to my wife, Irina Callegher. It was our campfire conversation that started this all. Your support, friendship, love, and copy-editing are things I never take for granted. Here’s to the next big project.

*Jon Callegher, Ph.D.  
Project Director, George Brown College*



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# INTRODUCTION



## A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO A NECESSARY FIELD

Workers in the Skilled Trades build the things that allow our society to exist. Some literally build buildings, while others build circuits, or parks, or machines, and others repair and maintain them. All sectors and industries that employ Skilled Trades workers benefit from expertise that was created and advanced by generations of Tradespeople. As the long-term functioning and economic success of societies depend on the contributions of skilled sectors and industries, it is undeniable that we, as Canadians, rely heavily on workers in the Skilled Trades.

A 2005 Canadian Apprenticeship Forum (CAF) study<sup>1</sup> of students and parents established that a positive outlook of the Trades exists, with 88% of parents and 69% of youth believing that Tradespeople “contribute a great deal to the quality of life in our communities.” As well, 87% of parents and 68% of youth reported believing that Skilled Trade jobs will always be in demand.

However, even though careers in the Skilled Trades are generally perceived as valuable and in demand, employers and industry bodies still express great anxiety about the public’s appetite for working in these fields.<sup>2</sup> This begs the question:

Are Canadians taking the Skilled Trades for granted?

A 2017 Ontario Chamber of Commerce report<sup>3</sup> on the jobs of the future estimated that 40% of all new jobs in the next decade could require some kind of skills-based training. However, the same report indicates that less than a third of 13 to 24-year-olds are considering this kind of post-secondary education.







When it comes to existing jobs, the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS)<sup>4</sup> revealed an equally dire picture. In 2011, there were approximately 448,000 Skilled Trades workers aged 55 and over. This represents workers approaching retirement. At the same time, only about 269,000 15 to 24-year-olds had a Trades certificate, representing the new generation of workers. Therefore, as Tradespeople approach retirement, there will be a shortage of nearly 180,000 workers, even without considering new jobs being created by advancements in technology, new infrastructure projects, low-carbon and related green initiatives, and more.

The same year as the NHS survey, the CAF revealed that over 70% of Skilled Trades employers reported their concern about the future shortage of workers.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, for the tenth year running, the Skilled Trades are perceived as the hardest positions to fill in North America, according to ManPower.<sup>6</sup> Technical aptitude (hard skills) is cited as the top reason for this. In other words, not enough people are signing up to be adequately trained for work in the Trades.

When it comes to awareness, many occupations considered to be “Skilled Trades” are not well understood by Canadians. In 2005, the CAF<sup>7</sup> reported that only slightly more than a third of Canadian youth and parents were aware of the many job options available in the Skilled Trades.

Today, while many people have a basic sense of what Carpenters and Electricians do, and while other Trades, like Ironworker or Automotive Service Technician offer a hint in their titles, most Canadians do not fully understand the range of responsibilities and the set of skills required for each job.<sup>8</sup>

More troubling than a lack of awareness are some of the unfounded, yet persistent, attitudes held about Tradespeople. Fewer than half of the youth surveyed by the CAF<sup>9</sup> found Skilled Trades workers to be creative thinkers, while nearly 60% believed that these jobs involved hard physical labour. As a result, nearly 30% believed skilled jobs to be more suited for men than for women.





The lack of exposure to or experience with the Skilled Trades may be feeding the negative perceptions. In fact, the CAF conducted a 2013 follow up study<sup>10</sup> and discovered that youth were not being encouraged to find work in the Skilled Trades, neither by their parents, nor by guidance counselors. The majority of both parents and students identified university as a “first choice” over college or an apprenticeship.

In large part, the health of Canada’s social and economic future depends on getting more Canadians into Skilled Trades careers. However, at the end of the day, young people still see university as their “number one” choice, an attitude that is reinforced by parents, teachers, guidance counselors, and the media. As well, disinterest in Skilled Trades jobs increases among individuals with a bachelor’s degree or higher.<sup>11</sup>

In a 2014 national survey<sup>12</sup> by the CAF of educators across the country, only 57% agreed that “Skilled Tradespeople are respected in society.” Among the suggestions to challenge negative stereotypes were:

- Feature individual success stories of those who thrived in the Skilled Trades
- Portray Skilled Trades workers as intelligent, enterprising and respected people
- Re-brand the Skilled Trades by highlighting the important contributions Tradespeople make to society

As well, a 2018 CAF report<sup>13</sup> that explores ways to encourage diverse youth to think about the Trades recommends using social media, in addition to out-of-home advertising, as ways of creating awareness.

Given the seemingly unfavourable perception of the Skilled Trades and its workers, we believe it’s time for a new approach to recruitment, one that focuses more on the personal and emotional benefits of the work. This new approach would give career seekers a sense of the personal qualities of different kinds of Tradespeople, their feelings of fulfillment, their contributions to society, and their overall happiness on and off the job.



# GETTING IT DONE THROUGH TEAMWORK

This report has been made possible thanks to the passion and enthusiastic support of the following industry, education, and government partners.

## FINANCIAL SUPPORT



Social Sciences and Humanities  
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en  
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada

The Community and College Social Innovation Fund (CCSIF) is a pilot project to connect the talent, facilities and capabilities of Canada's colleges and polytechnics with the research needs of local community organizations. CCSIF is administered by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) to achieve the Council's goals of generating research that helps Canada adapt to an ever-changing world.

CCSIF funding was used to hire research, project-coordination, and media-production staff. The funding also enabled the research team to travel across Ontario, conduct in-depth survey research, interview passionate Tradespeople on camera, and produce this report and its complementary website and video series.



cwbwelding  
foundation  
building the future of welding in Canada

The CWB Foundation is a registered charity, supporting the Canadian welding industry through initiatives aimed at both education and advocacy. The CWB Foundation works to reduce barriers that keep Canadians from entering into the welding industry in addition to providing the resources necessary for Welders to reach their true career potential.

The CWB Foundation's generous financial support allowed the research team to produce a concurrent study of how the total Canadian working population views work, enabling a more effective comparison between Tradespeople and workers in other sectors.



## IN-KIND SUPPORT

This report and its accompanying video series would not have been possible without in-kind support from dedicated partners. Throughout the project, these partners provided invaluable contributions through research assistance and by connecting the research team with Skilled Trades communities across country.



The George Brown College (GBC) Office of Research and Innovation works to support industries and communities through problem-solving and excellence in applied research, commercialization, and scholarship. As a centralized resource for GBC's Schools and Centres, GBC Research and Innovation engages industry, faculty, students, and the community at-large by participating in research projects and partnerships that are both educationally and economically meaningful.

In addition to helping promote this project among the GBC community, the Office of Research and Innovation has provided project management, administrative, and major knowledge mobilization support.



The Canadian Apprenticeship Forum (CAF) is a non-profit organization that connects Canada's apprenticeship community. Participants work collaboratively to support vibrant and innovative apprenticeship systems and policies with a view to developing a highly-skilled, inclusive and mobile Skilled Trades workforce. Employers, unions, equity-seeking groups, educational institutions and their jurisdictions support CAF operations through membership.

The CAF provided the research team with helpful survey design feedback. As well, stakeholder trust in the CAF was essential to the research team's "cold" recruitment initiatives. The CAF also provided vital support in recruiting participants to our survey through their own national outreach.



Skills Canada Ontario is a province-wide charitable non-profit with a grassroots connection into the many communities they serve. It develops strategic partnerships to help draw more Canadian youth into the Skilled Trades. This done through in-school presentations, exciting workshops, and by hosting Canada's largest skills competition.

Skills Canada Ontario has provided ongoing support to the research team by offering industry-specific guidance and, most notably, by making critical connections with passionate workers in the Skilled Trades. These workers were interviewed on camera and are featured in a high-impact video series that is complementary to this report on [JobTalks.org](https://www.jobtalks.org)



GBC's Centre for Construction and Engineering Technologies (CCET) provides technical training to the next generation of Skilled Tradespeople in Canada. The CCET works closely with industry partners to ensure training is up-to-date and graduates are fully prepared for work on today's most challenging projects.

As a leading institution for Skilled Trades training, the CCET provided major assistance in recruiting alumni from across Canada, and lending credibility to recruitment initiatives with industry partners. The CCET also provided material support for the Job Talks video series.



Q.i. Value Systems is an innovative research firm specializing in measuring the “intangible” drivers of behaviour, including one's emotions, perceptions, and values. When paired with more rational, or tangible, factors, a more complete picture can be formed of what motivates an individual to behave in various ways. This method was applied to determine what motivates individuals to make various career-based decisions.

Q.i. Value Systems worked with the research team to uncover both the tangible and intangible reasons for pursuing a career in the Skilled Trades. They also provided support with survey design and analysis.



**National Association  
of Career Colleges** *Since 1896*  
**Association nationale des  
collèges de carrières** *Depuis 1896*

The National Association of Career Colleges (NACC) is the oldest post-secondary education association in Canada, representing 500 regulated career colleges across the country. NACC members offer vocational programs in a variety of industries, giving students the skills needed for modern careers in vital industries like Health Care, Business, and the Skilled Trades.

NACC provided support in recruiting participants for our national survey.



# METHODOLOGY



## HOW WE DID IT

### THE Q.i. APPROACH

The National Survey of Skilled Tradespeople was completed in Spring 2017 to gain a deep perspective on those who work in an essential area of the Canadian workforce. The online survey asked both closed-ended and open-ended questions in order to understand the motivating factors in each individual Tradesperson's career trajectory.

Participants responded to over 30 questions on a wide array of topics, including:

- Childhood experiences
- Personality and emotional assessment
- Identification of personal goals and values
- Attitudes towards work
- Opinions about the future of the Skilled Trades in Canada

The average completion time for the survey was 47 minutes. Upon completion of the survey, each participant was mailed a \$10 TimCard® as a show of thanks. Given that the participants are Tradespeople, many of whom are paid a high hourly wage, it is worth noting how willing they were to exchange such a large amount of their time for such a nominal incentive. To the research team, this in part suggests that participants believed in the value of this personal, in-depth survey approach.

In addition, a concurrent study of the general working population in Canada was conducted with Q.i. Value Systems to create a baseline of attitudes toward work. While this study of "working Canadians" will be published formally later this year in partnership with The Conference Board of Canada, some results will be referenced throughout this report as we compare them to the responses of Tradespeople.



# 986

PARTICIPANTS

# 30+

QUESTIONS

# 47<sup>Min</sup>

AVERAGE  
COMPLETION TIME

# \$10

TimCard® AS THANKS

## SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

The National Survey of Skilled Tradespeople closed in Spring 2017 with 986 completed questionnaires from workers in various occupations across Canada.

Classification of the Skilled Trades in Canada is a continuous process that results in variation from region to region. Statistics Canada (StatsCan) references 24 major trade groups.<sup>14</sup> However, standards and certifications are regulated by provincial and territorial governments. StatsCan's trade groups represent many fields and require diverse training, ranging from a formal apprenticeship, where most learning is done on-the-job, to college diplomas or university degrees for other fields like Early Childhood Education or Social Work. This diversity of occupations also represents a practical research challenge in generating sufficient sample sizes for each group.

For these reasons, the research team relied on the Red Seal Program as a basis for classifying jobs in the Skilled Trades in Canada. The Red Seal program provides inter-provincial certification for many of the occupations included in StatsCan's trade groups. The occupations marked as Red Seal Trades generally do not require a college or university degree for certification. Most learning is done through a formal apprenticeship or entirely on-the-job. As well, many of the Red Seal Trades are likely to work together directly or indirectly on projects in many different sectors.

To effectively compare major trade groups with this limited survey, occupations have been grouped into the following 7 categories:

### **Electricity & Power Specialists**

- 210 participants
- Responsible for the distribution of electrical power as well as the construction and maintenance of electrical equipment and systems (e.g. household wiring)
- Majority of workers are Electricians in Construction and/or Industrial capacities, varying by field of expertise, experience, and preference
- Also includes Powerline Technicians and Instrumentation Support Techs

### **Motor & Vehicle Specialists**

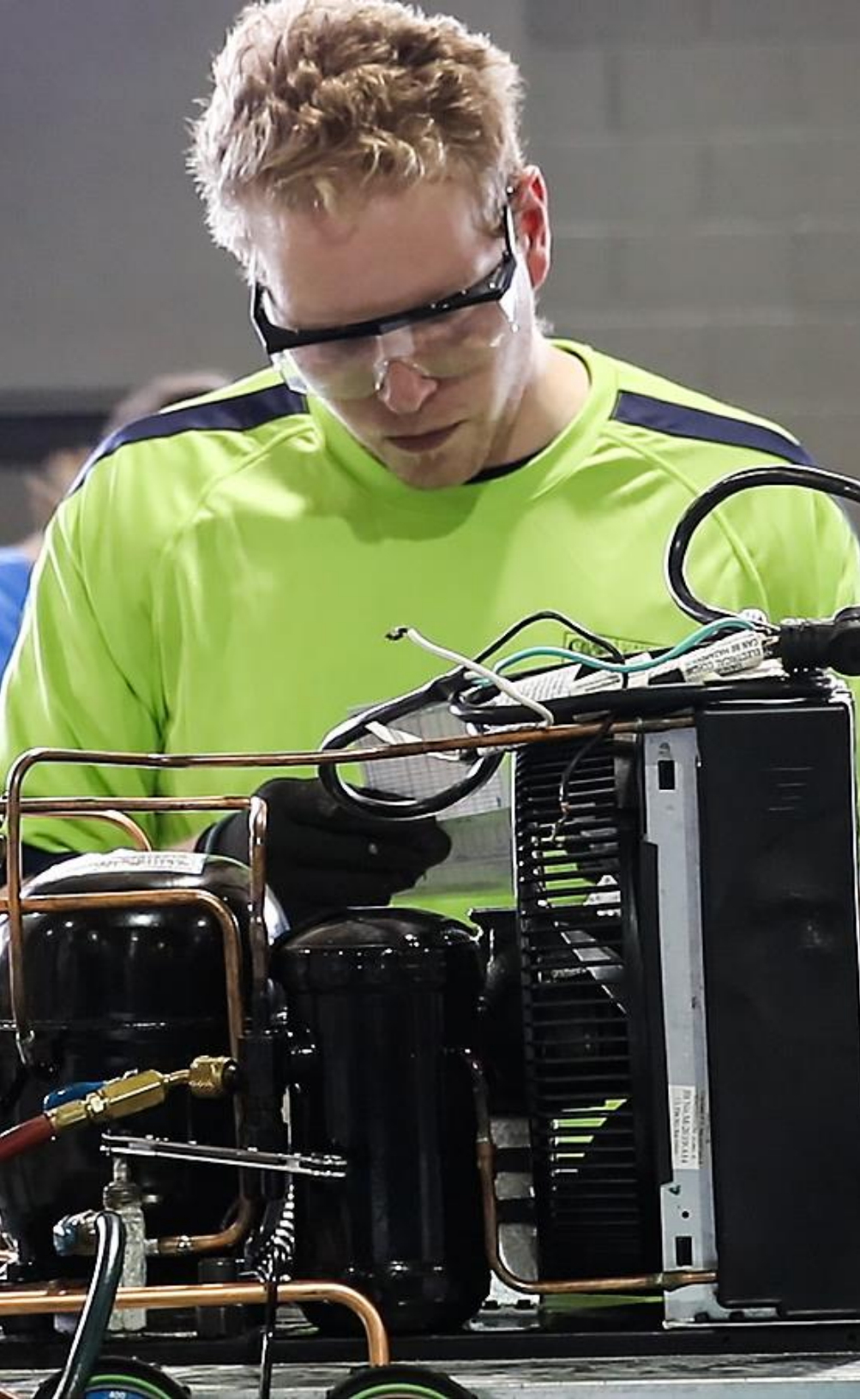
- 171 participants
- Responsible for operating and maintaining the motor systems of vehicles and machinery
- Majority of workers in this group are Automotive Service Technicians and Vehicle Mechanics (motorcycle, truck and transport)
- Also includes Heavy Equipment Operators & Technicians and others
- Services may be provided to the public (e.g. your local mechanic) as well as business-to-business (e.g. working on a fleet of vehicles for a shipping company)

### **Piping & Metal Specialists**

- 172 participants
- Responsible for the creation and maintenance of plumbing, piping, and ventilation systems
- Majority of workers are Plumbers, Sheet Metal Workers, or Welders, with some holding certificates in multiple Trades
- Also includes Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Mechanics, Boilermakers, and Gasfitters
- Because many workers in this group use metal on a near-daily basis, welding is a crucial skill for this group

### **Building & Construction Specialists**

- 157 participants
- Responsible for the construction and maintenance of buildings (interior and exterior) and infrastructure
- Majority of workers in this group are Carpenters and allied finishing Trades, such as Cabinetmakers, Insulators, Roofers, and others
- Also includes Construction Craft Workers, Ironworkers, and others



### **Aesthetic Specialists**

- 101 participants
- Responsible for both beautification and aesthetic correction
- Workers are Hairstylists and Landscapers
- Grouped together because of visual/aesthetic nature of the work
- Services rely on a personal and subjective “eye” for style/beauty

### **Food Specialists**

- 92 participants
- Responsible for the preparation of food for commercial purposes
- Workers are Cooks, Chefs, and Bakers
- Services based on both artistic and technical culinary skills

### **Manufacturing & Machinery Specialists**

- 83 participants
- Responsible for the construction, installation, and repair of machinery, often large-scale and industrial
- Majority of workers are Industrial Mechanic-Millwrights
- Also includes Machinists, Tool & Die Makers, and Partspersons
- Separated from Motor & Vehicle Specialists because of the larger-scale and industrial nature of the work



## SAMPLE LIMITATIONS

Given the scope of research and the wide distribution of workers across sectors and geography, the following sample limitations should be considered when reading this report.

### **Self-Selected Participation**

The research team relied on compelling recruitment messages from various partners in order to recruit survey participants. The survey invitations centred on contributing to the body of knowledge for a given trade, and helping more Canadians (particularly youth) find meaningful employment. Therefore, respondents may have chosen to participate based on their strong positive or negative response to that invitation.

### **Non-Representative Sample Corrected through Weighting**

The sample is not entirely proportionate to the Canadian population of Tradespeople. Due to in-kind recruitment support, the research team relied on other organizations' contacts to reach individual Tradespeople. As such, certain trade groups or regions have greater representation in this study than among the total population of Skilled Trades workers in Canada. Statistical re-balancing has been performed where necessary.

## QUÉBÉCOIS REPRESENTATION

Regrettably, the research team was unable to find a French-language distribution partner for the study. Though the survey was translated and offered in French, only three participants were recorded from Quebec.





# CORE FINDINGS



# 1. TRADESPEOPLE ARE AMONG THE HAPPIEST WORKERS IN THE COUNTRY

In general, Canadians report feeling more positive than negative emotions. Similarly, most Canadians tend to report having more positive than negative personality traits. However, compared with the rest of working Canadians, Skilled Trades workers feel even more positive emotions than negative, and have a more favourable view of their personality. In fact, Tradespeople report feeling 2.5 times (259%) more positive emotions than the rest of working Canadians, and self-report over 3.5 times (366%) as many positive personality traits than negative ones. Workers in the Skilled Trades also have very positive attitudes toward work and a strong desire to advocate for one's trade.

In both our survey of Tradespeople and our concurrent study of working Canadians, participants were asked to rate their job according to two metrics. One is common in workplace surveys: satisfaction. The other, fulfillment, has been relatively unexamined. In rating fulfillment, participants were instructed to think of the concept as the degree to which their job made them *“feel like you are doing what you were meant to do.”*

Workers in the Skilled Trades rate themselves higher for both satisfaction and fulfillment compared to other working Canadians. The mean score for satisfaction among Tradespeople is 79, compared to 70 for the general population. The mean score for fulfillment is 76, compared to 66 for the general population.

These results are encouraging on the surface, but further analysis of what Skilled Tradespeople value most about their jobs reveals a greater depth of motivation for working in these occupations. Examining these values vividly illustrates that Skilled Trade workers are truly committed to and passionate about their work.

## TRADESPEOPLE FEEL A STRONGER SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT AND PURPOSE

Nearly two-thirds (64%) of Tradespeople reported having “*really accomplished something worthwhile*” through their work, compared with less than half of the general working population (47%). Workers in the trades are also more likely to report that their work gives them a “*sense of success and achievement*” (68% vs. 49%).

These factors may contribute to higher scores on satisfaction and fulfillment when compared with the total working population in Canada. Indeed, Skilled Trades workers are far more likely to report “*getting a lot of satisfaction*” out of their work than the rest of working Canadians (65% vs. 48%).

“*I make people’s dreams a reality.*”

## TRADESPEOPLE HAVE MORE FUN AT WORK

When it comes to actual day-to-day work, Tradespeople are more likely than the general working population to report that doing their job makes them “*truly happy*” (51% vs. 41%). In fact, 93% of Skilled Trades workers agree with this outlook to some extent, compared with 84% of the rest of working Canadians.

A contributing factor to this happiness is likely the “fun” that Tradespeople report having on the job. They are far more likely to report “*often having fun*” while working (60% vs. 43%). Skilled Trades workers are also more likely than the general population to feel that “*time flies*” while working (56% vs. 44%).

Speaking of fun, a major source of it for Tradespeople is the excitement they find in their work. 93% of Skilled Trades workers “*feel alive and energized*” while doing their jobs, compared with 83% of the general working population. An important factor is the personal interest that Tradespeople take in approaching new challenges and learning on the job. 56% of Skilled Trades workers find their work “*stimulating*” as a result of there being “*always something new and exciting*,” compared with only 35% of the general population. As a result, 60% of Tradespeople find their jobs “*cool*,” while only 34% of Canadians say the same.

Finally, Tradespeople are much more likely to associate their work with “*pleasure*” (58% vs. 43%) challenging the common belief that careers in the Trades are “just jobs.”

## TRADESPEOPLE CAN BE THEMSELVES AT WORK

Another major finding from this study is that 70% of Skilled Trades workers report that they can be themselves at work, compared with 56% of working Canadians. It may be that working in the Skilled Trades allows for freer expression of individuality.

When it comes to *“putting in an honest day’s work,”* 73% of Tradespeople completely agree with this claim, compared with 66% of the general working population. Indeed, a majority of Tradespeople (59%) reject the idea that they have *“compromised”* their personal values in their work.

This may indicate that the work in the Trades is believed to be personally gratifying, or non-exploitative, or involves simply doing what one is asked or instructed to do. It may also suggest that work in the Trades generally doesn’t involve misleading or upselling members of the public, contrary to popular stereotypes attributed to automotive service technicians and plumbers.

As well, Tradespeople are also more likely than the general working population to find *“peace of mind”* through their work (45% vs. 35%).

When asked to rank the top 3 traits to describe themselves, Skilled Trades workers chose:

1. *“Hard-working”*
2. *“Reliable”*
3. *“Trustworthy”*

Other top-ranked traits include *“Easy Going,” “Friendly,” “Loyal,”* and *“Down to earth.”*

Moreover, 70% of Tradespeople feel they *“work in the real world with real people”* and 89% *“feel a special bond with other people in my field.”*

Finally, workers in the Skilled Trades are more likely than other working Canadians to agree with the statement, *“My work is part of who I am”* (55% vs. 41%).



## TRADESPEOPLE CAN WORK ANYWHERE

Tradespeople have greater certainty about what they do for work, why they do it, and how long they'll be doing it for. They report feeling *"self-confident"* more often than the general working population (44% vs. 38%). Even more revealing is that Skilled Trades workers are less likely than other working Canadians to report often feeling *"worried"* (17% vs. 42%), *"helpless"* (5% vs. 19%), or *"regretful"* (13% vs. 18%). Tradespeople are less likely to have been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder (7% vs. 11%).

The greater job security found in the Skilled Trades is closely linked with lesser feelings of work-related stress and anxiety. That is, Tradespeople possess a unique skill set with clear and valuable real-world applications—and they know it. This insight comes through in responses to the question, *"What are the advantages or benefits of working in your trade?"*

- *"I have a special skill others don't have."*
- *"We will always need plumbers."*
- *"Knowing electricity will not go out of style."*
- *"There is always work to do."*

Confident in their own skills, many Skilled Tradespeople use the concept of "freedom" to describe some of the greatest benefits of working in their field. Integrated certifying bodies, like the Red Seal Secretariat, allow Skilled Trades workers to easily find work across Canada. Other trades, like welding, have recognition in other countries.

When skills are seen as universally applicable, a greater sense of confidence comes through:

- *"I can work anywhere in Canada with a Red Seal."*
- *"I can earn a living anywhere on the planet."*
- *"It's a skill I can take with me anywhere."*

Finally, a sense of long-term confidence, freedom, and security is felt in the face of technological changes. As one participant put it, *"A robot cannot do it!"*

## TRADESPEOPLE WERE GOOD KIDS WHO BECAME HELPERS AND PROTECTORS

Like most working Canadians, when reflecting on the popular question, “*Growing up, do you remember what you wanted to be when you were older?*” only half of all Tradespeople recalled an occupation. However, when offered to choose their own childhood aspirations from a list that ranged from real ones, like “Archaeologist,” “Pilot,” and “Veterinarian,” to fantasy ones, like “Prince/Princess,” “Superhero,” or “Wizard,” many Tradespeople selected occupations that involved helping, serving, and protecting others.

The top 10 childhood dream jobs of the Tradespeople who participated in this survey are as follows:

- |                        |                                   |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Police Officer      | 6. Engineer / Architect           |
| 2. Mechanic            | 7. Father / Mother (Parent)       |
| 3. Firefighter         | 8. Business person / Entrepreneur |
| 4. Teacher / Professor | 9. Chef                           |
| 5. Pilot               | 10. Musician / Singer / DJ        |

Looking over these childhood career aspirations, one can see that two of them—Mechanic and Chef—are exactly the work of some Skilled Tradespeople today. Other jobs, like “Builder,” “Carpenter,” and “Electrician” round out the top 20.

More revealing is the fact that the top occupations—Police Officer, Firefighter, Teacher, Parent—are the ones that grown-ups often tell children to seek help from, to rely on, and to trust. These occupations are filled by people who are willing to take action, sometimes at personal risk, to help and protect others.

These “helper” and “protector” characteristics are further reflected in the way that many Tradespeople described their current jobs in their own words. For example:

- “*I help provide a necessity in one’s life.*” ~Plumber
- “*I help people with problems.*” ~Automotive Service Technician
- “*I help keep homes safe.*” ~Construction Electrician
- “*I prevent fatalities [when using fireproofing].*” ~Painter/Decorator
- “*I prevent future problems.*” ~Industrial Electrician
- “*I keep drivers safe.*” ~Automotive Service Technician
- “*I make double sure my co-workers and the public are safe.*” ~Roofer

The dream of being a Father or Mother stands out as an interesting selection because of the strong affinity many Tradespeople have for family values. When asked to select from a list of *“ideas, ideals, principles, and virtues”* that matter most to them personally, the top selections for Tradespeople are:

- |                |          |
|----------------|----------|
| 1. Family      | 4. Love  |
| 2. Honesty     | 5. Trust |
| 3. Being happy |          |

This suggests that, generally speaking, Tradespeople’s values are well-aligned with their own personality, and that close, trusting relationships matter a lot. In fact, when examining the goals that Tradespeople identify as having achieved or are working towards to achieving, the top selections are *“being happy”* (60%), *“becoming financially secure”* (60%), *“keeping my family safe and protected”* (53%), and *“having a warm, loving family life”* (52%).

As well, when asked which negative ideas and forces that Tradespeople would most like to remove from the world, their top responses again reveal their protective nature. The ideas and forces that most repulse Tradespeople are:

1. Child abuse / Child sex abuse
2. Sexual harassment / Abuse of women / Sexualizing of women
3. Crime / People who steal / Scammers
4. Bullying
5. Liars / Dishonest people

If being oneself means fulfilling one’s childhood aspirations and staying true to the things that one believes are important, then Skilled Trades workers are wholesomely consistent. It may also be the case that Tradespeople love their jobs because their skills allow them to help and protect the people who are important to them.



## 2. CONTRIBUTING TO SOCIETY: PROFILES OF SKILLED TRADES WORKERS

Now for a closer look at seven Skilled Trades categories and their workers. Each category profile is distinct, bringing together numerous factors, including childhood aspirations, self-assessments, and opinions about one's trade. For a closer look at each category, one specific trade is explored in greater detail.

The Tradespeople in each category knowingly contribute to society through their work, and they're proud of this. In some categories, their contributions are easy to see, like when Chefs prepare food for satisfied patrons or when a Hairstylist improves their client's appearance and self-confidence. Other categories contribute to our society's essential "bigger picture," such as the building of communities and cities, ensuring that they're safe and sustainable. In most cases, Tradespeople fully understand the impact of their work and that its results are being used and enjoyed by others.







## ELECTRICITY & POWER SPECIALISTS

### IN THEIR OWN WORDS...

*"I ensure the power is well-maintained and working for hospitals and universities."*

*"I correct bad wiring for long-term, sustainable, electrical dependability."*

*"I help make Canada's businesses and institutions modern and safe."*

*"I help to build the next generation of structures."*

*"I make sure all Canadians' homes get electricity without interruption."*

*"I make sure you have a plug for that coffee maker in the morning."*

*"I build electrical systems that my community uses."*

*"I keep thousands of people working at our production facility."*



Broadly speaking, Electricity & Power Specialists focus on all things to do with electricity. To the public, they are especially visible as Construction Electricians in the planning, maintenance, and operation of electrical systems on a smaller scale. They are seen installing circuit components, positioning wires, and ensuring that electrical systems are operating safely.

There are more occupations, though, as Electricity & Power Specialists manage high capacity electric systems and equipment on an industrial scale. They are involved in the complex operation of not only generating electricity, but also widely distributing the power we often take for granted.

### DREAM JOBS AS CHILDREN

Police Officer 23%

Firefighter 18%

Electrician 17%

Engineer | Architect 13%

Inventor & Pilot (tie) 12%

### HOW THEY SEE THEMSELVES TODAY

Leader & Builder (tie) 24%

Good Citizen 23%

Craftsman / Craftswoman 22%

Parent 22%

Teacher | Mentor | Guide 21%

**“ I help make Canada’s businesses and institutions modern and safe.”**

While many outside the trade assume the work to be dangerous, safety is a top-of-mind concern and so the job itself rarely puts Electricity & Power Specialists at risk. Because of the inherent danger in working with electricity, this category has some of the strictest certification standards. Those who work in Electricity & Power are the most likely of all Tradespeople who participated in this survey to complete the formal apprenticeship process.

Speaking of safety, as children, many Electricity & Power Specialists dreamed of jobs that involved protecting the well-being of others (Police Officer and Firefighter), which supports a “safety first” attitude toward work. When observing how these workers view themselves today, they maintain a desire to protect others, further enforcing a safety-oriented culture.

While Electricity & Power Specialists are less likely than other categories of Skilled Trades workers to see themselves as authoritative figures, like Teacher and Parent, many have come to see themselves as leading, guiding, and mentoring as they ensure that the rigorous standards of their trade are upheld.

## A CLOSER LOOK

## ELECTRICIANS

Many Electricians reported that their trade was a high-paying one that kept their minds sharp. Many feel good about providing a smooth and consistent flow of electricity to homes, offices and other public areas, and therefore see themselves as helpers and problem-solvers.



### REWARDS

#### Job Security

*"Never having to worry if you will be out of work."*

*"It's a compulsory trade so no 'Jack of all Trades' to compete against."*

*"It's a skill that makes me indispensable and empowers me."*

#### Mental and Physical Stimulation

*"It's a great way to challenge the brain."*

*"Every day is a new adventure in the electrical field. Whether it be fire alarms, blueprints or three phase motors."*

*"Mentally and physically challenging."*

## MYTHS

### **Anyone Can Do It**

*"All we do is pull wire."*

*"It's for older men going back to work later in life."*

### **Always Off Work**

*"Always going on EI [employment insurance]."*

*"Highly competitive for limited jobs."*

### **Electricity is Dangerous**

*"Getting electrocuted / getting shocked all the time."*

*"Lack of safety."*

## SELLING POINTS

### **Lifelong Learning**

*"Always learning new things."*

*"Constant improvement opportunities."*

### **Fulfillment**

*"Satisfaction of doing something important."*

*"The sense of pride you feel."*

### **Work Anywhere**

*"Canada-wide opportunities."*

*"Can work anywhere in the world."*





## PIPING & METAL SPECIALISTS

### IN THEIR OWN WORDS...

*"I am a protector of the water system and I keep people safe."*

*"I ensure that the parks' drinking fountains are in perfect shape."*

*"I ensure the safety of people when water and waste are concerned."*

*"I make sure the air keeps flowing in stores and factories."*

*"I help people remodel their houses."*

*"I make life less stressful for people."*

*"I make equipment for farm research."*

*"I help build our city's infrastructure, hospitals, office towers and auto plants."*



Piping & Metal Specialists are responsible for the installation and maintenance of piping systems and the fabrication of metal components that are often used in plumbing and ventilation installations. These workers ensure the high level of comfort that many of us enjoy via indoor plumbing and heating and cooling systems. Given the involvement with various metals, welding is a critical skill in this field. Many Piping & Metal Specialists hold dual (sometimes triple or quadruple) qualifications in order to perform their work.

Piping & Metal Specialists are selfishly selfless – they see value in doing the things that other people avoid doing themselves. This attribute connects well with the common childhood aspiration of Tradespeople to pursue careers that allow them to help and serve others. Given the top selections for childhood dream jobs, Piping & Metal Specialists are exemplary of Skilled Trades workers in this sense.



### DREAM JOBS AS CHILDREN

Firefighter	22%
Police Officer	21%
Pilot	14%
Engineer   Architect	13%
Mechanic & Parent (tie)	12%

### HOW THEY SEE THEMSELVES TODAY

Builder	31%
Leader	27%
Parent	27%
Good Citizen	26%
Craftsman   Craftswoman	25%

However, while workers in the Piping & Metal Specialists category are the most satisfied of all trade groups, they are least likely to remember wanting to do their current work as children. In other words, few children grow up dreaming of being a plumber or a welder. Therefore, getting youth to try Piping & Metal Trades is likely the key to success in shifting perceptions. Hands-on training from enthusiastic mentors is essential to showing young people just how wrong the stereotypes of both the work and the workers are.

**“ I am a protector of the water system and I keep people safe.”**

## A CLOSER LOOK

## WELDERS

Welders enjoy working with their hands, fusing metals together while studying and adhering to blueprints. Their expertise is needed across industries, from nuclear facilities to aircrafts, as they help build Canada's infrastructure. Welding is a skillset that enables one to work in a variety of Skilled Trades careers.



### REWARDS

#### **Job Security**

*"The most job security out of most Trades."*

*"The world will always need welding."*

#### **Fulfillment**

*"The sense of accomplishment."*

*"A certain amount of pride is involved, to make the best welds possible."*

#### **Immediate Results**

*"You get to make something from nothing."*

*"Being able to see your progress."*

## MYTHS

### Unintelligent Work

*"That most welders are lower than average intelligence."*

*"That it is mindless, robotic work."*

### Laziness

*"People say we are lazy."*

*"That we just sit back and weld steel all day."*

### Dirty Trade

*"That the job is always dirty."*

## SELLING POINTS

### Career Growth

*"Lots of growth opportunity."*

*"There are many different paths you can take in welding."*

*"Many other skills can start from a welding background."*

### Challenging Work

*"Building big projects like being a structural welder is very rewarding."*

*"It is a very challenging profession."*

*"If you enjoy building things, welding is a great way to do it."*



## MOTOR & VEHICLE SPECIALISTS

### IN THEIR OWN WORDS...

*"I help keep jets flying and aircrew safe."*

*"I build engines for the Canadian and U.S. military."*

*"I fix locomotives that help deliver goods to everyone."*

*"I make sure that school buses are 100% safe for the children riding them."*

*"I make sure deliveries can happen each day."*

*"I ensure mechanical systems are functioning properly for the safety of myself, my co-workers, and the general public."*

*"I fix things that could have caused a derailment if I hadn't fixed them."*

*"I maintain people's second largest purchase so that they can get the most life out of their vehicle."*



Motor & Vehicle Specialists literally keep the wheels turning by operating and maintaining vehicles. Many are Service Technicians or Mechanics who are seen by the public working on cars, trucks, and motorcycles. Others work in a commercial or industrial garage, servicing aircrafts, buses, trains, and fleets of corporate vehicles.

There are also those Motor & Vehicle Specialists who work with very large vehicles, like Heavy Equipment Technicians, Agricultural Equipment Technicians, and Crane Operators. These workers have specialized knowledge and are more likely to work in commercial, construction, industrial, or agricultural environments.

### DREAM JOBS AS CHILDREN

Mechanic	33%
Police Officer	18%
Pilot	15%
Engineer/Architect	13%
Racecar Driver	13%

### HOW THEY SEE THEMSELVES TODAY

Craftsman   Craftswoman	33%
Teacher   Mentor   Guide	18%
Builder & Good Samaritan (tie)	15%
Leader & Average Joe (tie)	13%
Listener   Helper	13%

“I make sure that school buses are 100% safe for the children riding them.”

Work in the Motor & Vehicle category can also include autobody and paint work. As well, it's quickly becoming essential to have knowledge of electronics, computer systems, and lithium-ion technology.

Motor & Vehicle Specialists were more likely than any other trade category to complete high school and immediately begin training in their field. Even as kids, many wanted to be around engines (Mechanic, Pilot, Racecar Driver), with one participant recalling wanting to be “*Batman*” because “*he had the coolest cars!*”

Motor & Vehicle Specialists also expressed interest in being teachers and inventors. Today, they see themselves as Craftspeople and Mentors, again keeping the wheels turning by training the next generation.

Many Motor & Vehicle Specialists also view themselves in a way that may seem contradictory – as Leaders and as Average Joes. It may be that they understand the important contributions they're making to society, but they don't let this fact go to their heads.

Finally, to build and to fix is to be a good person. In this way, Motor & Vehicle Specialists see themselves as Builders and Good Samaritans.



## A CLOSER LOOK

## AUTOMOTIVE SERVICE TECHNICIANS

Automotive Service Technicians are problem-solvers that ensure that people get to their destinations safely. They diagnose complaints, prepare estimates, and perform repairs. They also prepare invoices, manage inventory, attend auctions, maintain shop equipment, and more. Many Automotive Service Technicians are also automotive enthusiasts who collect and repair cars in their free time. Compared with other Tradespeople, they are more likely to “take their work home” as a hobby.

### REWARDS

#### Independence

*“It is so easy to fix my own car now. I’m not dependent on any other person.”*

*“Doing things for myself.”*

#### Job Security

*“Never be out of work.”*

*“Being able to work anywhere.”*

#### Flexibility

*“I enjoy my time with family and friends. This is due to the flexibility of the profession.”*

*“I can work according to my own schedule.”*



## MYTHS

### **Not for Intelligent People**

*"That it doesn't require much intelligence, when in fact the technology in automotive rivals any high-tech industry out there."*

*"That it's not for those who find school hard."*

*"That it's for people that can't go to university."*

### **"Grease Monkeys"**

*"People don't understand that a modern automobile is more electronic than mechanical."*

*"They don't realize what it takes to keep up with technology. They think we're just 'grease monkeys' with a wrench."*

### **Not Challenging**

*"I don't know what's wrong with your car the moment I look at it. Sometimes it takes longer to figure out."*

*"Just because I'm a mechanic doesn't mean I automatically know the problem."*

## SELLING POINTS

### **Work Anywhere**

*"You can market yourself anywhere worldwide."*

*"You will always get a job and you are guaranteed to work anywhere."*

*"Development of a skill set that is transferable to other occupations."*

### **Know How the World Works**

*"Once you understand mechanical systems, you understand more of the world around you."*

*"You develop lifelong skills."*

*"You get the satisfaction of taking something broken and making it work again."*



## BUILDING & CONSTRUCTION SPECIALISTS

### IN THEIR OWN WORDS...

*"I build hospitals, schools, water treatment facilities, and other commercial buildings."*

*"I add to the fabric of reality. What was once not there now is because of me."*

*"I make people's dreams a reality."*

*"I make sure homes have a good foundation."*

*"I ensure low income families have decent living conditions."*

*"I change the landscape and provide a better built environment."*

*"I play a small part in expanding my community."*

*"I build custom homes, repair buildings, and create connections with my community."*



Building & Construction Specialists are responsible for creating the spaces where we gather, work, and live. They work on construction and infrastructure projects and build the furniture and fixtures within them. They craft all kinds of materials, ranging from wood and stone to metals and plastics. As a result, many Building & Construction Specialists are familiar with the techniques used in other trade groups. That said, these workers also rely on other Tradespeople, like Piping & Metal Specialists and Electricity & Power Specialists, to bring their projects to completion.

## DREAM JOBS AS CHILDREN

Builder	18%
Firefighter	17%
Carpenter & Police Officer (tie)	15%
Mechanic & Pilot (tie)	15%
Engineer   Architect & Businessperson   Entrepreneur & Musician   Singer   DJ (3-way tie)	14%

## HOW THEY SEE THEMSELVES TODAY

Builder	39%
Craftsman   Craftswoman	28%
Leader	26%
Teacher   Mentor   Guide	25%
Good Neighbour	24%

Building & Construction Specialists' skills also include décor and design (Painters, Cabinetmakers). They also require engineering knowledge as they ensure our buildings and public works are both beautiful and safe. They have a strong sense of a project's "big picture."

Building & Construction Specialists are more likely to learn on the job than through a formal apprenticeship. They are likely to have worked in a variety of fields or report working "odd jobs" prior to their current trade. While this trade group is the most likely to have not completed high school, the likelihood of this decreases with age and the vast majority of young Tradespeople have completed high school or its equivalent.

**“I add to the fabric of reality. What was once not there now is because of me.”**

As children, it may not be surprising that Building & Construction Specialists enjoyed constructing and construction. Some played with Lego® and construction toys, while others enjoyed replicas of construction equipment, and others were fascinated by real-life construction projects in their community. Today, Building & Construction Specialists view themselves as Builders in a literal sense, but also as community builders. They teach others and care for those around them, just as a Good Neighbour might do.

## A CLOSER LOOK

## CARPENTERS

Carpenters use wood and other materials to build new structures and change existing ones. From intricate trim work to concrete forming, Carpenters work both individually and in groups to bring blueprints to life. In addition to the physical nature of the trade, Carpenters must have excellent organizational skills. This includes planning out one's day by reviewing blueprints, ordering and performing tasks, and ensuring work sites are kept clean and safe.



### REWARDS

#### Hands-on Expertise

*"Working with your hands and mind."*

*"I get to work with my hands."*

#### Practical Skills

*"I can build my own projects without hiring other people."*

*"Being able to do work on your own house."*

#### Staying in Shape

*"Keeping physically active."*

*"Stay healthy through physical work."*



## MYTHS

### **It's Mostly Seasonal**

*"Not a long-term career choice."*

*"Work is intermittent."*

### **Single Tasked**

*"We're constantly in a workshop."*

*"That we only work with wood."*

*"We spend all our time building houses."*

### **Anyone Can Do It**

*"It's mindless grunt work."*

*"We're just labourers."*

## SELLING POINTS

### **Instant Gratification**

*"You get to see the results of your work immediately."*

*"You build monuments of your work."*

*"If you take pride in your work and like to work with your hands, maybe carpentry is for you."*

### **Work Outdoors**

*"Enjoy the outdoors!"*

*"It's great working outside."*

*"The opportunity to travel for work."*



## AESTHETIC SPECIALISTS

### IN THEIR OWN WORDS...

*"I make people feel good about themselves."*

*"I use creativity to bring more beauty into the industry through my clients."*

*"I bring joy to many people who are out walking our city parks."*

*"I make positive connections with people."*

*"I help transform the city into a greener and brighter environment."*

*"I make people feel new and refreshed."*

*"I beautify spaces in a way that is functional and ethical."*

*"I create lasting beauty for everyone to enjoy."*



Aesthetic Specialists are Hairstylists and Landscapers. While these occupations may seem too distinct to be grouped together, they share the common experience of working with clients to create something visually pleasing. Aesthetic Specialists also rely on a variety of tools, substances, and techniques that work together to create often other-worldly displays. This frequently involves the practical applications of chemistry, physics, and math. Yet, many Aesthetic Specialists feel they are not credited enough for the depth of knowledge they must apply on a daily basis.

More than any other trade category, as children Aesthetic Specialists aspired to be Veterinarians and Farmers/Gardeners. They also dreamed of being Teachers and Parents. These aspirations are fulfilled today in how Aesthetic Specialists see themselves as Best Friends and Helpers.

### DREAM JOBS AS CHILDREN

Teacher | Professor 21%

Parent 21%

Veterinarian 20%

Farmer | Gardener 19%

Artist | Designer 18%

### HOW THEY SEE THEMSELVES TODAY

Best Friend & Listener | Helper (tie) 26%

Teacher | Mentor | Guide 25%

Parent 21%

Entrepreneur 21%

Traveler 20%

“ I help transform the city into a greener and brighter environment.”

Aesthetic Specialists also value independence, based on their interest in travel and entrepreneurship. Many are self-employed or maintain their own roster of clientele. Though independent themselves, Aesthetic Specialists appreciate the value of relationships and teamwork in a work environment, further supported by their view of themselves as Best Friends, Listeners, and Guides. In this way, while Aesthetic Specialists rely on their clients, they do not feel dependent on them.

## A CLOSER LOOK

### HAIRSTYLISTS

Hairstylists see their career as a way of instilling confidence in their clients, which is rewarding for both parties. Hairstylists enjoy the dynamic nature of the job, along with being able to apply their creativity every day. Trends are always changing and one must always be learning to remain current. As well, since most people need someone to style and cut their hair, hairstylists will always be in demand.

#### REWARDS

##### Strong Relationships

*“Bringing smiles to people’s faces.”*

*“Building a clientele that loves you.”*

*“Building relationships with many types of people.”*

##### Career Growth

*“There are many opportunities in the hairstyling industry.”*

*“We have so many routes. You don’t just have to stand behind the chair.”*



## MYTHS

### **It's Easy**

*"People think that it is 'easy work', 'anyone can do it', or 'I can do that at home'."*

*"Not everyone is cut out to deal with the different people."*

### **Low Intelligence**

*"The only reason people become hairstylists is because they aren't smart enough for a 'regular job'."*

*"We're too dumb to get into any other career."*

*"Some people regard you as stupid for being a hairstylist."*

### **Not a Real Profession**

*"Hairstylists are not professionals."*

*"It's not actually a 'good job'."*

## SELLING POINTS

### **Creative Freedom**

*"A chance to be creative in your work."*

*"If you're a creative and artistic person, hairstyling is something you would enjoy."*

*"If you like working with people and perfecting your craft, this job is for you."*

### **Daily Satisfaction**

*"You make others feel good which in return makes you feel good."*

*"The sense of helping someone is amazing."*





## FOOD SPECIALISTS

### IN THEIR OWN WORDS...

*"I fill people's stomachs, and hopefully their souls, as I give mine to my work."*

*"I make sure people have the energy they need to do daily tasks."*

*"I put smiles on people's faces."*

*"I give people a visual and taste experience."*

*"I provide an experience to customers, hoping to make a lasting impression."*

*"I make people healthier and happier."*

*"I make sure I contribute to the wellness of the community."*

*"I feed hungry, growing children."*



Food Specialists work hard to balance the creative and artistic aspects of food preparation with the practical realities of working in a kitchen environment. Though many in this category work in a restaurant or commercial bakery, there are many areas of the trade that are often not thought of by the public. These include large-scale food preparation, food service inspection, training future Chefs and amateur cooks, working as a personal or private Chef, and more.

While taste is a critical sense for Food Specialists, they also need a designer's eye to present dishes in the most desirable way. Many Food Specialists that work in a restaurant or food-retail environment also participate in the design of their spaces, where they can further use their ability to blend function and style.

### DREAM JOBS AS CHILDREN

Chef 29%

Artist | Designer 24%

Teacher | Professor 13%

Pilot 12%

Doctor 10%

### HOW THEY SEE THEMSELVES TODAY

Best Friend & Traveler (tie) 29%

Leader 24%

Dreamer 22%

Listener | Helper 21%

Manager | Organizer 19%

“ I make sure I contribute to the wellness of the community.”

The most successful Food Specialists blend their creative talents with managing the entire food preparation process. They are also highly collaborative. It's impossible for one person to prepare and serve food at the scale of many restaurants, so Food Specialists often rely on each other for help. This arrangement fits well with their traits of being highly social.

Among all trade categories, Food Specialists are also the most likely to travel overseas and associate their travel with work. Since they value experiences, particularly those related to tastes and smells, Food Specialists' trips are both practical and indulgent. They travel to relax and unwind and also to discover new flavours and techniques.

Above all, Food Specialists understand their value in nourishing others, preparing food in a way that excites and delights. They take seriously the idea that *“a way to a person's heart is through their stomach.”* As they see themselves as Best Friends above all else, it's no wonder they want to get through to people's hearts.

## A CLOSER LOOK

### CHEFS

Chefs do whatever it takes to get the job done. It's not just about cooking, but also about respecting the ingredients they use and cultivating strong relationships with suppliers, employees, and customers. Whether as a corporate chef, private chef, or even a YouTube chef, they reach people emotionally through food.

#### REWARDS

##### **Making People Happy**

*"I like that other people can enjoy my work."*

*"Getting to see people smile."*

*"It's fulfilling to make people happy."*

##### **World Travel**

*"Can travel around the globe and discover different cuisines and cultures."*

*"Easy to find a job everywhere."*

*"Opportunities to travel."*



## MYTHS

### Anyone Can Do It

*“Becoming a Chef” is just as bogus as saying ‘becoming a CEO.’ It takes a long time to become a Chef.”*

*“They think this is easier than most of the other jobs.”*

*“That it’s an easy life -- it’s not!”*

### Arrogance

*“Not open minded.”*

*“Rude to colleagues.”*

*“We only like fancy food.”*

### It’s Just Cooking

*“All we do is cook.”*

*“Being a Cook and being a Chef are two different jobs.”*

## SELLING POINTS

### Creative Expression

*“Keeps the creative juices flowing!”*

*“You can be creative and try new things every day.”*

*“It’s a great creative outlet.”*

### Freedom to be Passionate

*“Freedom to be who you are and do what you love.”*

*“If you feel passionate about cooking, give it a shot.”*

*“If you’d like a fast-paced job, this is it.”*



## MANUFACTURING & MACHINERY SPECIALISTS

### IN THEIR OWN WORDS...

*"I am a machine doctor."*

*"I keep my fellow workers safe and employed."*

*"I keep the dams running so Manitobans have power."*

*"I make sure equipment runs properly to keep drinking water clean and safe."*

*"I help my company stay competitive by reducing downtime."*

*"I help maintain equipment that saves lives in the auto industry."*

*"I ensure our machines produce good products that make life easier."*

*"I keep the mechanical side of equipment running smoothly."*



Compared to the other categories, Manufacturing & Machinery Specialists is the most obscure. Most people would find it difficult to explain what a Millwright or a Machinist actual does. As a result, this group often gets lumped in with the general concept of "blue collar," "industrial," or "factory" work.

Manufacturing & Machinery Specialists are experts in fixed motor systems. They are often part of the industrial sector, ensuring that the massive engines within factories are installed correctly and continue running. They also use machines themselves, particularly Tool & Die Makers and Machinists, to produce components for other Manufacturing & Machinery Specialists to use in their installations and repairs.



### DREAM JOBS AS CHILDREN

Mechanic & Engineer  
| Architect (tie) 20%

Teacher | Professor  
& Businessperson |  
Entrepreneur &  
Astronaut (tie) 14%

Police Officer &  
Firefighter & Doctor  
& Inventor 13%

### HOW THEY SEE THEMSELVES TODAY

Leader 37%

Teacher | Mentor |  
Guide & Craftsman |  
Craftswoman (tie) 31%

Parent 30%

Good Neighbour 28%

Good Citizen 27%

“ I ensure our machines produce good products that make life easier.”

Outside of the sector, Manufacturing & Machinery Specialists are often maintenance and repair workers that may be part of a corporate department or hired on contract for a particular job. They must be able to work with other trade categories by communicating problems and potential solutions when they encounter a situation beyond their own area of expertise.

Many Manufacturing & Machinery Specialists have had a mechanical aptitude or curiosity for motors/machines in childhood. They like variety and are a strong example of Tradespeople enjoying their jobs because they get to “*do something new every day.*”

Many see themselves as Leaders or fulfilling a supervisory role. When the installation or repair is beyond their area of expertise, they are responsible for managing other specialists to complete the job. Manufacturing & Machinery Specialist also view themselves as Good Neighbours and Good Citizens, indicating a sense of humility.

## A CLOSER LOOK

## MILLWRIGHT

Millwrights are versatile problem-solvers. They understand the fundamentals of a machine's components, whether they're fixing a roller coaster or a CNC precision machine. They have a working knowledge of hydraulics and pneumatics, along with how to read and draw blueprints. They also have experience in welding, electrical work, motor controls, plumbing, and more. Through both reactive and preventative maintenance, Millwrights identify problems in order to ensure that the machines that societies depend on continue to operate smoothly.



### REWARDS

#### Always Learning

*"Having knowledge in many fields."*

*"Always learning something new."*

*"Using my brain more."*

#### New Challenges

*"Being able to think out a problem."*

*"Become skilled in a variety of trade-related skills."*

*"Rarely the same thing twice."*

## MYTHS

### Utter Confusion

*"Ignorance about what the job entails."*

*"People don't know that we fix a bunch of different things."*

*"Before I started this path, I thought a Millwright was a glorified blacksmith."*

### Last Resort Job

*"Blue collar work is for people who aren't smart."*

*"All high school drop-outs."*

*"They underestimate how valuable we are."*

### Lazy Trade

*"That we just push buttons on a CNC machine."*

*"We sit around and wait for things to break."*

## SELLING POINTS

### Ability to Fix Anything

*"Being able to fix almost anything."*

*"Can apply knowledge to home life, fixing my car, etc."*

### Job Security

*"Most industries need millwrights."*

*"You're in high demand. Never be out of a job."*



### 3. PROMOTING THE JOBS OF THE FUTURE

While current strategies for promoting the Skilled Trades to youth are having some positive effects, a bold shift is needed to heighten curiosity about these jobs and create the desire to try them out. The current strategy promotes the Skilled Trades as surprisingly profitable jobs for those who don't have or don't wish to earn a college diploma or university degree. While this happens to be true, the approach has the unintended outcome of positioning the Skilled Trades as a secondary option. As a result, many talented youth are discouraged from exploring their options in the Skilled Trades before they can even get interested.

The motivation behind this study has been to generate new strategies to overcome the apathy and negative stereotypes around the Skilled Trades and inspire a fresh interest in these jobs among Canadians. Participants were therefore asked to explain what they would say to encourage young people to pursue a career in the Trades. As Tradespeople, they have experienced the work firsthand and are best-positioned to explain what the work is really like.

As described in the previous section, many Tradespeople see themselves as Teachers, Mentors, or Guides. Not surprisingly, they offered multiple, detailed responses that were overwhelmingly positive.

So, why do Tradespeople think youth should pursue a career in the Skilled Trades?

**“People will always need you.”**





Tradespeople recommend their jobs to youth because there are many opportunities to find work. Working in the Skilled Trades relies on an established skill set, or “hard skills,” that often have multiple applications, and Tradespeople are aware of the value of being versatile. As one participant put it, training in the Skilled Trades provides **“valuable skills that have wide implications.”**

Combined with the idea of versatility is the understanding of how essential the Skilled Trades are to Canada and to Canadians. Tradespeople see themselves as **“part of society’s infrastructure”** because their work is essential to the lives of others. Even those who don’t work in the Skilled Trades know that when the lights are out or the water won’t run, seeking help from a Tradesperson is a must.

Nowadays, when it’s common for Canadians to change their career path several times before retirement, Skilled Trades workers value the idea of a **“lifetime career.”**

“  
***A feeling of accomplishment every day.***  
”

Tradespeople recognize that their jobs fulfill personal desires that go beyond financial security. They acknowledge having a genuine sense of fulfillment at work. For some Tradespeople, a sense of pride and accomplishment is found in completing the job. These Tradespeople recommend their jobs because **“you can stand back and look at what you’ve done and built each day.”** Having an appreciation for the effort that goes into a project means **“you can be proud of what you achieve after a day’s work,”** compared to other jobs where the outcomes are not as well-defined.



Another added benefit is being able to **“fix your own stuff”** and be **“useful at home.”** In other words, working in the Skilled Trades allows one to apply their skills on personally interesting and engaging projects, and feel accomplished not only at work, but also at home.

“**It’s never boring.**”

As many Tradespeople discovered, their skills training has enabled them to **“look at the world in a new and different way.”** At work, they **“don’t get bored”** because many of them find their jobs to be **“really cool,”** an expression of personal interest in the tasks performed.

Tradespeople also explain being able to **“do your own thing”** and **“be autonomous”** through self-employment. Their work is a **“healthy balance of the physical and the mental.”** It’s **“fun”** and **“exciting, fast-paced work.”**

“**Many disciplines to follow.**”

Tradespeople see a lot of potential in the Skilled Trades, even beyond their own trade of choice. Many participants list the personal growth they achieved through the apprenticeship process, mentioning benefits like **“building confidence,” “building self-worth,”** and **“feeling powerful and positive.”**

Tradespeople recommend work in the Skilled Trades generally because there are **“a lot of options to specialize in a great career.”** Some like that it’s **“smart work”** while others enjoy that the work **“brings out your creative side.”** There are also **“good prospects for the future”** as workers transition into supervisory and management roles.

“**The pay and rewards are great.**”

Finally, Tradespeople point to the **“financial security”** that their job affords. **“Good pension and health benefits”** are also strong incentives. They’re proud of being able to make **“a wage to raise a family on”** rather than a salary to enrich themselves. These workers strive for comfort and stability, not extravagance and wealth. One participant summed up this realistic view by rhetorically asking: **“Want to be middle class? Get a Skilled Trade!”**



# RECOMMENDATIONS



## RE-BRANDING THE SKILLED TRADES

Compared to the general working population, Tradespeople are happier, more satisfied and more fulfilled. They know how their job makes a meaningful contribution to society. They have greater autonomy and flexibility. And despite the stereotypical or non-existent portrayal of the Trades in the mainstream media, they're doing work that enables them to follow their passions and be true to themselves.

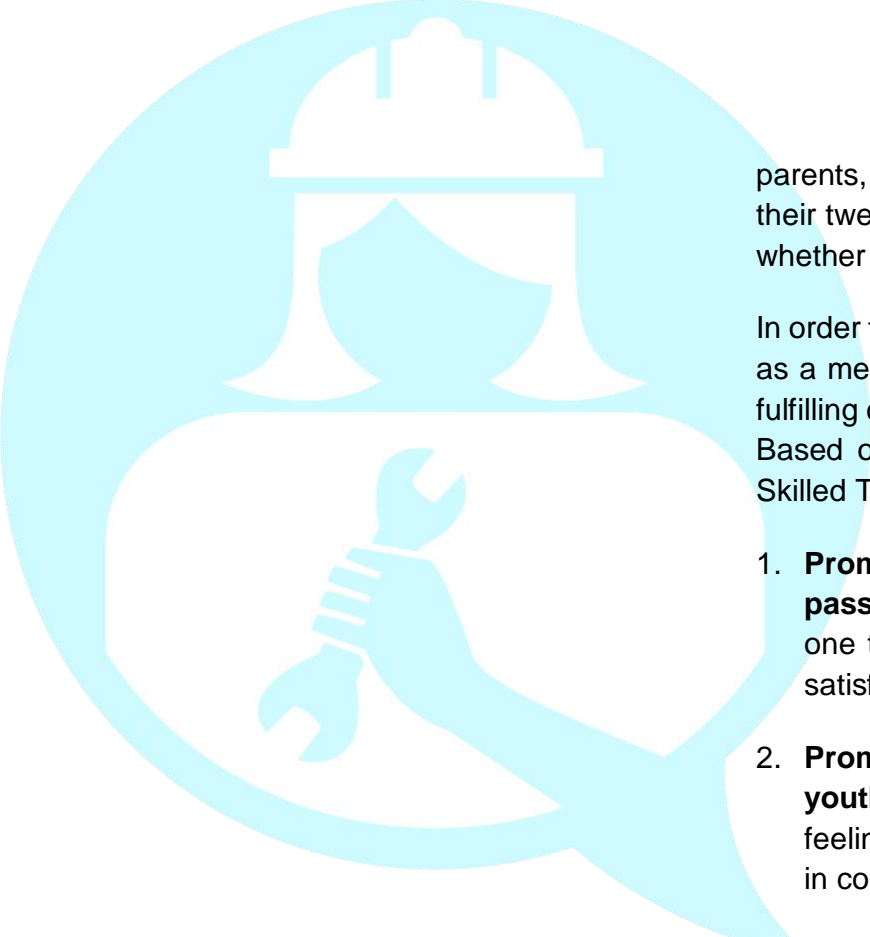
Tradespeople also have a more functional understanding of the world around us. They not only know how the things that most of us take for granted actually work, but also how to make them and how to fix them. They are confident and creative problem-solvers with practical skills that go well beyond the usage of a word processor.

Yet, as industry stakeholders and advocates work hard to entice young people to consider careers in the Trades, most recruitment campaigns tend to focus on the financial reward.

The messaging suggests that career-seekers can make more money as a Plumber than as an Accountant, or that they'll be twenty-two years old with a brand new car, or that they will already be homeowners while their peers are still in classes. The strategy seems to be an attempt to overturn negative stereotypes about the Skilled Trades by linking one's earning potential to material symbols of success.

But it's not working.

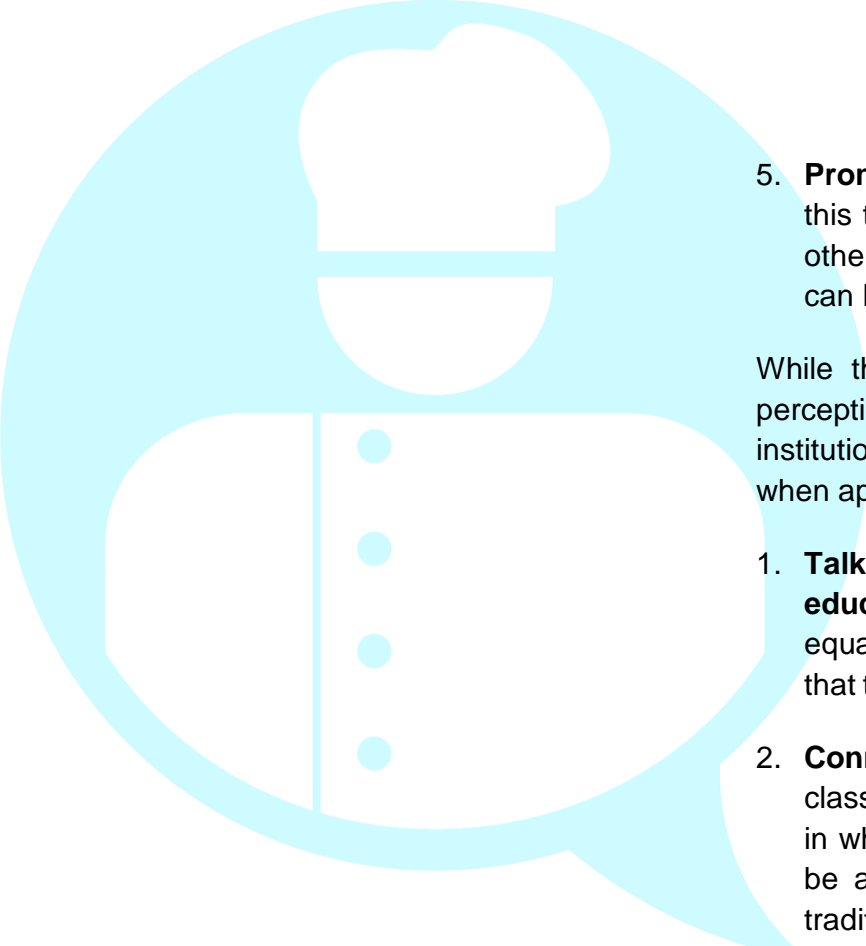
While it's true that there is a lot of money to be made in the Trades, the message has not proven to be powerful enough to attract the interest of today's young people, their parents, and their educators. Dollar signs do not resonate well in an age that encourages self-actualization, self-expression, new experiences, exploration, diversity, and creativity. Money is, paradoxically in light of the economic climate, a nice-to-have for today's youth. This perspective is also increasingly supported by today's younger



parents, who are increasingly understanding of their children living at home well into their twenties, allowing their kids the time needed to both secure a job and determine whether it's the right one for them.

In order to reach young people today, the focus must shift away from the Skilled Trades as a means to buy property and things. Instead, the Trades should be positioned as fulfilling careers that meet the subjective aspirations of young people and their parents. Based on this study's findings, here are five recommendations for re-branding the Skilled Trades.

1. **Promote how the Skilled Trades enable young people to pursue their passions and be true to themselves.** Focus on the opportunities in the Trades for one to be creative and expressive (i.e. "be yourself"), and show just how happy, satisfied, and fulfilled workers in the Skilled Trades actually are.
2. **Promote the meaningful and practical contributions to one's community that youth will be able to claim through a Skilled Trades career.** Emphasize the feeling of accomplishment and achievement that comes from working in the Trades in contrast to pursuing a 4-year degree that may not be put to use in everyday life.
3. **Promote the freedom that the Skilled Trades affords its workers compared to other sectors of work.** In many cases, this includes the freedom to work where, how, and when one decides, all while still getting ahead. It also includes the freedom to work as a full-time employee, as an entrepreneur with a growing list of clients, or to pursue other passions while working part-time or on contract.
4. **Promote the brilliant minds in the Skilled Trades workforce by allowing them to be heard.** Topple the myth that the most intelligent people in our society are those with jobs that primarily involve talking. Underline that working in the Skilled Trades requires "brain work" and is an excellent choice for high-achievers, critical-thinkers, and problem-solvers.

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5. **Promote the security and the stability of a job in the Skilled Trades.** Compare this to the high levels of job-hopping and its related stresses that are common in other industries. For those who dream of owning a home and raising a family, they can have greater confidence in being able to thrive during uncertain times.

While these promotion strategies will be useful in re-positioning the image and perception of the Skilled Trades in the minds of youth and their parents, the education institutions in Canada can also play a critical role. Here are 3 simple suggestions that, when applied among educators across the country, will make a powerful difference.

1. **Talk about the Skilled Trades as a pillar—not the third pillar—in all higher education conversations.** When educators, counsellors, and administrators give equal time and attention to Trades, University, and College programs, the message that they are all respected and valuable options will spread to students and parents.
2. **Connect the concept of higher education to real-world contributions.** Through class assignments like papers and videos, encourage students to explain the ways in which their earned credential will enable them to contribute to society. This will be a challenging exercise for hundreds of thousands of Canadian students in traditional academic programs. The point is not to discourage them, but to help them develop an appreciation for students and workers in the Skilled Trades, and a deeper appreciation for the value of their own studies.
3. **Encourage educators and guidance counselors to learn what it's actually like to work in the Skilled Trades.** Allow insiders with a deep understanding of the Trades to correct misperceptions and explain why it's a viable first choice. This can be achieved by hosting Q&A sessions with guest speakers and alumni who are passionate about their job in the Trades, or by simply embedding Job Talks (and similar) videos in regular faculty newsletters.

To view this report's complementary video series, please visit [www.jobtalks.org](http://www.jobtalks.org)





## Job Talks

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## The research team would like to thank the following people and organisations for their support:

Adam Melnick  
Anne Janes  
Caitlyn Janicki and Eli Millard  
Dawn Davidson  
Eva Aboagye  
George Brown College Alumni Relations  
George Brown College Centre for Hospitality and Culinary Arts  
Georgian College Midland Campus Faculty and Administration  
Grazie Ristorante  
Ironworkers Local 721  
Jennifer Heathfield  
Jules Lewis  
Larry Hudson Chevrolet-Buick-GMC  
Lynn Mackinlay  
Maryl Eva  
Maureen Loweth  
Mazz Salon  
Peter Widdis  
Robert Luke  
Sandra Marshall and her Spring 2017 Marketing Research Class  
Stoltz Sales & Service  
Vale Mining

Finally, our sincerest thanks to each one of our interviewees for their passion and willingness to participate and promote this project's message.

## THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS



Social Sciences and Humanities  
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en  
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada



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# ENDNOTES

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