

A close-up photograph of a man with a beard and glasses, wearing a yellow hard hat and a light-colored work shirt. He is looking down at a tablet computer he is holding in his hands. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be an industrial or construction setting.

WHAT WE HEARD:

Public Engagement on Skilled Trades Certification in British Columbia

January 2022

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Submitted to: Ministry of Advanced Education
and Skills Training Submitted by:



Message from Parliamentary Secretary

Andrew Mercier



As Parliamentary Secretary for Skills Training, I'm honoured to have the opportunity to contribute to what I think is one of the most important changes to British Columbia's skilled trades system in decades – Skilled Trades Certification.

Simply put, Skilled Trades Certification means all workers in designated trades need to be either a certified journeyperson or a registered apprentice. It's a change that ensures trades workers across the province meet the same high-quality standards and have the most up-to-date skills.

This is a significant priority because over the next decade our province will need thousands more trades people to build and maintain the services and infrastructure we all rely on every day, as well as apply new technologies and materials critical to a clean, green and sustainable B.C.

Skilled Trades Certification is part of the solution to meet this growing demand for a highly skilled trades workforce. It also addresses the fact that there are currently thousands of workers practicing their trade in B.C. without formal recognition of their skills and experience. It's a significant change, but one government is committed to implementing in a way that fully supports workers and employers to transition successfully.

This summer, I've had the pleasure of participating in a series of extensive, provincewide consultations with trades stakeholders, Indigenous partners and the wider public. Through face-to-face meetings, roundtable discussions and online surveys, I've had the opportunity to hear a broad range of perspectives on Skilled Trades Certification and how it should be implemented.

Throughout these engagements, I felt the pride and professionalism of British Columbians who are so clearly invested in advancing the trades as a career choice on par with other professions that require post-secondary credentialling. I also heard from workers and employers who generously shared their perspectives on how government can ensure vital supports are in place to make sure Skilled Trades Certification – and the trades training system as a whole – works for everyone.

I share this goal and believe that by working collaboratively with all our partners across B.C.'s trades training system, Skilled Trades Certification will deliver on its promise of better jobs and a highly-skilled workforce ready to meet the demands of our dynamic economy.

This is truly an exciting time for the skilled trades in B.C. On behalf of Anne Kang, Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Training, and myself, I would like to express my sincere thanks to everyone who took the time to engage with us this summer. Your contributions, reflected in this *What We Heard* report, will inform key policies, programs and services as government continues to develop and implement Skilled Trades Certification in the years ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Mercier'.

Andrew Mercier,
Parliamentary Secretary for Skills Training





Introduction

By 2031 B.C. can expect approximately 85,000 new job openings for workers in trades occupations.¹

To meet this demand, B.C. will need to attract many more workers to the skilled trades – which requires building a more diverse workforce that is welcoming and inclusive for marginalized workers, women, Indigenous people, marginalized individuals, and new Canadians.

In addition, B.C.'s Labour Market Outlook forecasts that nearly 80% of the more than 1,000,400¹ job openings over the next decade will require workers to have some level of post-secondary training, including apprenticeships. We are already seeing increasing levels of skills needed in the trades, with rapid technology changes, automation and new occupations being driven by emerging sectors, such as, the clean economy.

Finally, like many other sectors of our economy, the trades have struggled to recover in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, and many already vulnerable workers have lost their jobs. Evidence has shown that people who have post-secondary education or skills training are more resilient and remain attached to the labour market during economic downturns.

Skilled Trades Certification is an opportunity to begin addressing these issues and to support British Columbians to get the skills they need for the jobs that are opening up in our economy. By requiring workers in designated trades to be a certified journeyperson or registered apprentice, Skilled Trades Certification is also laying the foundation for the future trades workforce B.C. needs to ensure the province is ready meet the demands of a strong and agile economy.

As government, in partnership with the Industry Training Authority (ITA), begins implementing Skilled Trades Certification, it is vital that British Columbians who are most impacted have a say in what they need to be successful.

That's why throughout the summer of 2021, government engaged broadly with trades workers, employers, industry, training providers, Indigenous communities and other partners to better understand potential challenges and opportunities presented by Skilled Trades Certification. These engagement sessions also focused on what types of programs and services – existing and new – can best support workers and employers to overcome barriers to certification and enhance apprenticeship completion rates. This feedback will help government ensure this assistance is available and accessible to those that need it..

¹ Source: 'British Columbia Labour Market Outlook 2021-2031 Forecast'



Through a series of one-on-one meetings, virtual roundtable discussions and an online survey, a number of consistent themes emerged about how government can enhance our existing trades training system and make sure Skilled Trades Certification is effectively implemented. Workers, apprentices, training providers and employers told us they care about:

- Exploring more flexible learning options, such as, digital and remote instruction, as well as evening and weekend classes so that apprentices can continue to work and stay close to their families and communities while learning.
- Making sure there are enough training seats available to keep up with increased demand, and waitlists are kept to a minimum.
- Providing opportunities for early exposure to the trades so that more young people choose a career in the trades to replace retiring workers.
- Ensuring a range of supports are in place to help currently uncertified workers successfully challenge exams – especially for older workers and those who have a first language other than English.

- Enhancing outreach and education on available supports, so that workers and employers can easily get help with certification when and where they need it.
- Continuing to make trades education welcoming, inclusive and culturally relevant – particularly for marginalized individuals, Indigenous people, women, LGBTQ2+ persons, new Canadians and youth.

In total, more than 980 British Columbians from across the province participated.

This *What We Heard* report summarizes key themes derived from eight public roundtable discussions combined with results from the online survey. The opinions and suggestions shared via these engagements will help government ensure all workers and employers can realize the benefits of post-secondary skills training and credentialing, and that our economy prospers as a result.



Background

In June 2021, the B.C. government announced a shift to a new trades certification model to ensure B.C. trades workers are credentialed at the highest possible skill level. Known as Skilled Trades Certification, this change will require workers in designated trades to either be a certified journeyperson or registered as an apprentice to legally work in that trade.

Since 2003, B.C. has been the only province in Canada without some kind of mandatory trades certification. Without a recognized credential, it can be challenging for trades workers to transition between projects and industries, resulting in lost wages and fewer job opportunities – especially for women, Indigenous people, new Canadians and youth who already face greater barriers to employment in the trades.

Employers also lose out on the benefits and efficiencies that come with a highly-skilled workforce, particularly at a time when new technologies and construction materials are rapidly transforming the buildings we live and work in, and the way we travel.

In response, government developed a comprehensive business case to look at the potential benefits of introducing Skilled Trades Certification for certain trades. The business case determined that this approach would provide opportunities for more trades workers to benefit from post-secondary training and certification that leads to better jobs, higher wages and improved employment stability. It also showed significant potential to raise the skill level of B.C.'s trades workforce that in turn will help attract more people to trades careers and support strong and sustainable economic growth across the province.

Based on recommendations from a 16-member stakeholder advisory working group representing industry associations, labour groups, post-secondary institutions, Indigenous skills trainers and the ITA, government designated the following 10 initial trades for Skilled Trades Certification.



Mechanical: Gasfitter Class A and B, Steamfitter/Pipefitter, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Mechanic and Sheet Metal Worker;



Electrical: Powerline Technician, Industrial Electrician and Electrician (construction);



Automotive: Heavy-Duty Equipment Technician, Automotive Service Technician, and Autobody and Collision Technician.

To ensure high standards of supervision, safety and quality training for apprentices, government will also be working with industry stakeholders to introduce journeyperson-to-apprentice ratios for each of these 10 trades, as is done in every other province.

These changes will be phased in gradually over several years, allowing workers and employers ample time to access the information, programs and services they need to make a successful transition. Feedback obtained from stakeholders and partners from across the trades training system is and will continue to be critical to ensuring these supports are effective and accessible to all.





How we Engaged

The Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training contracted with two external partners to lead different aspects of engagement on Skilled Trades Certification. Argyle, an engagement and communications agency, coordinated all public-facing consultations which included a series of virtual roundtables and an online survey supported by govTogetherB.C. The remainder of this report summarizes the process and results of this public engagement.

As part of the ministry's overall engagement strategy, a separate but complementary Indigenous consultation process was facilitated by Pinna Sustainability to focus specifically on the impacts and supports needed for Indigenous communities and individuals during implementation of Skilled Trades Certification. A summary report of these engagements is available at: engage.gov.bc.ca/govtogetherbc/impact/bc-skilled-trades-certification-results

Summary of Public Engagement Approach

Due to the limitations on meeting in-person because of COVID-19, public engagement activities were conducted entirely online through virtual meeting platforms and an engagement website. Any personal information shared in the context of these engagements was collected and used in full accordance with the [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act \(FOIPPA\)](#) and other applicable legislation.

Leading up to public engagement, comprehensive stakeholder research and interviews were conducted to inform the structure and process for public engagement, including what discussion topics would best inform successful implementation of Skilled Trades Certification in B.C. In addition, community and industry leaders were consulted to understand how best to engage with participants in their respective communities and ensure representation from diverse voices.

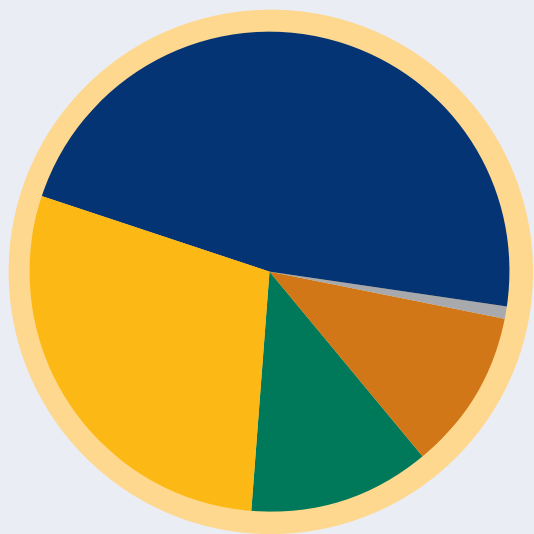
This included working with organizations focused on supporting women, newcomers, youth and immigrants in trades, including the B.C. Centre for Women in Trades, and local and provincial settlement organizations such as Progressive Intercultural Community Services Society (PICS), MOSAIC, and Immigrant Services Society of B.C. Multiple language interpretation services were also provided to support specific virtual engagement activities.

To encourage participation, a flexible approach was used to schedule roundtables during times outside of working hours for trades workers, and during working hours for some employer-focused conversations. As an acknowledgment of their input and time, cash honorariums were offered to all roundtable participants.

More than 860 responses were received through the online survey, and there were 113 total roundtable respondents. The graphic on the next page provides a breakdown of participant categories.



What best describes you?



- **47.1%** A worker
- **29.1%** Employer/business
- **12.2%** Industry – Organization, representing trades workers, or representing employers that hire trades workers (trade, non-union, union, community)
- **10.8%** Public – Member of the public not currently participating in the trades
- **0.7%** No answer

Virtual Roundtables

A series of eight virtual public roundtables were convened throughout the month of July 2021. These sessions were grouped mainly by trade sector, but also included sessions focused specifically on other audiences uniquely impacted by Skilled Trades Certification such as women and newcomers working in the trades.

Each two-hour roundtable conversation was arranged to maximize time for participants to provide input in multiple ways while also providing access to ministry leadership and ITA staff to address any questions or concerns. Roundtables included a broad cross-section of participants from throughout B.C. with an emphasis on voices from the electrical, automotive and mechanical industries directly impacted through initial Skilled Trades Certification implementation. A summary of participants at all roundtables sessions be found in Appendix B.

Online survey

All B.C. residents were welcome to complete a widely promoted online survey. The purpose of this survey was to provide an opportunity for quantitative input on the Skilled Trades Certification process and rollout. The survey was open from June 11-September 17 and included multiple choice questions as well as open-ended responses.

The survey sought perspectives from workers (certified, uncertified, and registered apprentices), employers and businesses, industry organizations and the general public. Questions focused on understanding barriers to becoming certified in skilled trades, impacts that Skilled Trades Certification will have on workers and industry, and supports that could help make the transition process smooth for everyone.





What we Heard

In both the roundtables and the online survey, input was requested on the challenges, barriers, and concerns that stakeholders currently experience within B.C.'s trades training system as well as concerns with moving to a Skilled Trades Certification environment. We also asked about what opportunities this policy will bring to the trades and what supports are needed to successfully roll out implementation. Based on these conversations, several common themes emerged which are summarized below.

Skilled Trades Certification is strongly supported by the majority of respondents and participants.

While some employers expressed concerns about how Skilled Trades Certification might impact productivity by making it difficult to find and retain journeypersons, most respondents from both the online survey and roundtables expressed strong support for the idea of Skilled Trades Certification and believe it will provide more rigour and credibility to the trades from a career, consumer safety and confidence perspective.

75% of public respondents believe properly trained workers will improve workplace safety, quality of work and consumer confidence –Online survey

We heard from workers and employers that Skilled Trades Certification will provide better trained and more productive workers leading to a higher quality of work. Respondents said this will in turn help employers and consumers to better distinguish between certified workers and those who have not completed a formal training program, which will increase consumer confidence.

“ **Higher standards in training instills confidence and motivation in apprentices. They will be more sought after in their industry.** ”

– Roundtable participant

These sentiments were echoed in the online survey, where more than three-quarters of respondents from the general public shared that ensuring workers are properly trained will improve workplace safety and quality of their work, boosting consumer confidence.



Additionally, employers and workers stressed the need to ensure compliance with standards and certification requirements in the trades, and that monitoring and enforcing journey-person-to-apprentice ratios was an important part of providing high quality apprentice training, safety and oversight.

Skilled Trades Certification provides an opportunity to adapt post-secondary trades training to be more accessible and reflective of student needs.

Skilled Trades Certification was identified as an opportunity to make the trades training system more adaptable to a broader range of student and employer needs. For example, class scheduling was identified as needing more flexibility to accommodate students with childcare and family obligations, as well as the seasonality of some trades work. Participants believed that having training courses that work better with trade workers' schedules (i.e., evenings and weekends) and seasonal demand would be an important support.

Other participants, expressed concerns with how Skilled Trades Certification might impact existing waitlists, including, higher levels of apprenticeship technical training, noting that a lack of training seats for some schools in some programs can be a barrier to completing an apprenticeship and achieving certification. Ensuring sufficient training seats in designated trades to accommodate increased demand was seen as critical.

“**Create more training options with geography in mind. This is particularly important for Indigenous trades people.**”

– Roundtable participant

Some roundtable participants mentioned discrepancies in access to training facilities, with rural and remote communities having fewer training options than urban areas of the province. This was identified as a particularly relevant issue for Indigenous communities.

“**Offer practical, hands-on assessments for demonstrating learned competencies rather than written book tests.**”

– Online survey respondent

Having more opportunities for training based on diverse regional needs, such as hybrid online and on-the-job learning was identified as desirable to address access gaps. For online survey respondents who identified as not currently certified, we heard that more hands-on learning rather than book-learning was favoured as a top support that could help achieve certification.

Participants also frequently highlighted the importance of providing training materials that are suitable for people with different language abilities, especially newcomers and immigrants. We also heard that there needs to be more alternative training delivery methods for those with non-traditional learning styles, including the need for in-person versus classroom training, especially for students with disabilities or those who face anxiety with school and exams.

Program improvements identified included diversifying or changing assessment methods to better demonstrate learned competencies rather than written exams.



The majority of uncertified workers felt confident that they could successfully challenge the Certificate of Qualification exam to become certified, however a significant number of respondents felt that writing an exam was a significant barrier to continuing to work in the trades.

The option to challenge the Certificate of Qualification as an alternative to completing a full apprenticeship was identified as a key pathway to certification, but also as a potential barrier for some. Roundtable participants who have successfully worked in a trade for a number of years said that writing a challenge exam may be viewed by some as a barrier to continuing to work.

Employers who participated in the roundtables also said they were worried that workers who are more advanced in their career may not be willing to do any training or challenge exams and would instead choose to retire or leave the trades.

This was supported by findings from the online survey where approximately 35% of online survey respondents noted they are unlikely or very unlikely to write the challenge exam.

“There are lots of knowledgeable and skilled people [working in the trades] but we may need to test their skill level by other means than a multiple-choice exam.”

– Roundtable participant

For those respondents open to writing a challenge exam, a more practical, hands-on approach to earning certification (such as physically demonstrating a skill) was identified as a more desirable approach for those that may struggle with academic, text-based exams – particularly for older workers long out of school and for those newcomers to Canada who may not speak English as their first language.

Participants stressed that strong supports will need to be in place to overcome concerns with writing the challenge exam to avoid worker attrition.

Improving awareness of, and access to, financial supports during training is viewed as a key support for uncertified workers to enter and complete an apprenticeship.

Many participants suggested that costs associated with classroom training and living expenses while learning were a primary barrier to achieving certification. Seventy-five percent of uncertified respondents identified the need for more financial supports such as grants and student loans (with flexible repayment options) and easier/faster access to EI to help offset these expenses.

“The ITA has an excellent support system, but people aren’t aware of the supports available.”

– Online survey respondent

Others expressed a desire for grants/incentives to cover the cost of certification, tools and/or equipment – particularly for those working in trades requiring costly equipment (e.g., automotive workers and heavy-duty technicians).

Conversely, a number of roundtable participants said they felt many excellent provincial and federal government funding and training supports already exist but that some workers and employers are just unaware of them.²

They stressed that more awareness and education about these supports was needed, in addition to more assistance to access them. Enhancing outreach and awareness on this issue was seen as a key opportunity for the ITA. It should be noted however that participants were often not aware of – and often never introduced to – the network of supports that currently exist.

While employer participants acknowledged the benefits of a more highly-skilled workforce, we heard that one of their primary concerns regarding Skilled Trades Certification was the scheduling complexity associated with releasing valuable workers for in-class training during peak demand times in a tight labour market.

“How can we deal with the lost productivity and the ability for shops to finance the development of apprentices?”

– Employer roundtable participant

² A full list of existing Apprenticeship supports can be found in Appendix A.





Employers want additional financial incentives to make sponsoring and supporting apprentices easier and more attractive, particularly for smaller business.

Some employers also expressed concern that workers leave a job once they have completed training, so there is less incentive to encourage workers to become certified. Business owners expressed organizational challenges when an apprentice has to leave for in-classroom training.

Employers identified tax incentives and grants as one main support needed to help ease the transition to Skilled Trades Certification and assist their workers to become certified. Employers seemed largely aware of existing provincial and federal training credits and grants,³ but felt that some of these supports could be expanded or modified to better meet the needs of individual employers or industries.

We also heard from employers that there is a desire for wage subsidies programs tied to workers achieving training benchmarks. Many employers felt this would encourage workers to pursue training and meet standards, while assisting employers to reward this achievement through higher wages.

Workers want more on-the-job mentoring and support to help them to enter an apprenticeship and progress to full certification.

Over and above financial supports, participants identified a number of other areas where more support is needed to encourage workers to enter an apprenticeship and achieve certification. For example, participants who identified as a worker without a trades certificate or qualification and/or not currently registered as an apprentice shared that they are concerned about not being able to find an employer willing to sponsor them as an apprentice.

Other respondents who identified as already being an apprentice felt their employers were not supporting their training progression to avoid increasing their wages. In some cases, we heard that apprentices chose not to proceed with completing their program because of low pay or that they were able to find a better job elsewhere.

“ I would like to see a formal mentoring system put together for making sure apprentices complete – they need someone to talk to outside of their employer/supervisors that they can get advice and support from. ”

– Online survey respondent

³ A list of employer training supports can be found in Appendix A



Participants shared that having more and better mentors and role models in the trades to help them navigate through training and career progression process would be fundamental to success. We also heard that providing training to sponsors on how to mentor and support apprentices is a valuable tool for encouraging workers to reach certification, giving them exposure to other components of the job and advancing in their careers.

This was supported in the online survey by those respondents identifying as industry organization representatives who noted that both businesses and workers would benefit from better mentorship opportunities.

Participants also identified ITA apprentice advisors as a valuable support and felt that having more access to these advisors would be very helpful in supporting apprentices towards completion. They noted that while ITA has improved its programs and services in this area, it could provide more proactive outreach to apprentices and employers and increase their worksite presence.

Skilled Trades Certification provides an opportunity to attract more British Columbians, including under-represented groups, to the trades by enhancing public perception of the trades as a skilled profession.

A common theme we heard was a need for more awareness and promotion of the skilled trades, especially to young people, women and diverse communities to ensure the trades are top of mind for people deciding on a career path. Skilled Trades Certification was clearly seen by many respondents as a positive step toward increasing the professionalism and prestige of the trades, thereby providing a path for more British Columbians to consider a trades career.

75% of respondents identifying as parents would encourage their child to pursue a career in the trades because of Skilled Trades Certification.

–Online survey

An important finding of the online survey indicated strong parental support for promoting the trades as a valued career option based on the requirement for post-secondary credentialling, especially for youth exiting high school. They felt that Skilled Trades Certification would encourage more high school youth to make a deliberate choice for trades as a successful, prestigious career path and should be promoted more in the school system.

Almost two-thirds of parent respondents said that the requirement to achieve Red Seal certification made them view the trades as a skilled profession that they would encourage their child to consider. Some also shared that financial stability, strong demand for workers and access to high quality education and training make the trades increasingly attractive, and that Skilled Trades Certification will help enhance these benefits.

Participants also noted that developing culturally relevant outreach initiatives and materials to promote Skilled Trades Certification and the skilled trades (starting from elementary school) would help diverse individuals see themselves reflected in the skilled trades.

“**Start at the elementary school level introducing the trades as a viable, exciting and professional way to earn a living. Have construction worker role models from a diverse background.**”

– Online survey respondent

This issue was specifically highlighted via Indigenous engagement sessions⁴ where the topic of youth engagement and recruitment was prevalent. Participants shared strategies to make trades careers more appealing to Indigenous youth, which include sharing stories of Indigenous peoples’ success in the trades, strengthening mentorship programs and involving Elders in recruitment.

⁴ A full report on Indigenous engagement regarding Skilled Trades Certification can be found at engage.gov.bc.ca/govtogetherbc/impact/bc-skilled-trades-certification-results



A comprehensive, system-wide approach is needed to make the trades more diverse and inclusive for women, newcomers, Indigenous and other racialized workers.

The need to increase diversity in the trades was a common theme in both the roundtables and online survey. Participants saw this as one of the principal ways to address labour shortages but were also vocal about the inherent benefits that diversity brings to workplace culture in terms of new skills and alternative leadership styles. Participants also perceived Skilled Trades Certification as one way to begin leveling the employment playing field by ensuring that all workers are certified at the same level.

There was strong consensus that there is further work to do to make the trades more welcoming, and systemic barriers that impact under-represented and equity-seeking groups need to be tackled right across the trades training system – from the classroom to the worksite. These barriers were seen as very different depending on the group being discussed, and that efforts to create change should be developed accordingly.

“...include diversity training as part of apprenticeship trades training curriculum. Make it trade specific and included in all levels.”

– Online survey respondent





Encourage more young women to get into the trades while still in school. Make sensitivity training a part of apprenticeships and also required for all journey persons in the trade. Kind of like WHMIS.
– Online survey respondent

Women in the Trades

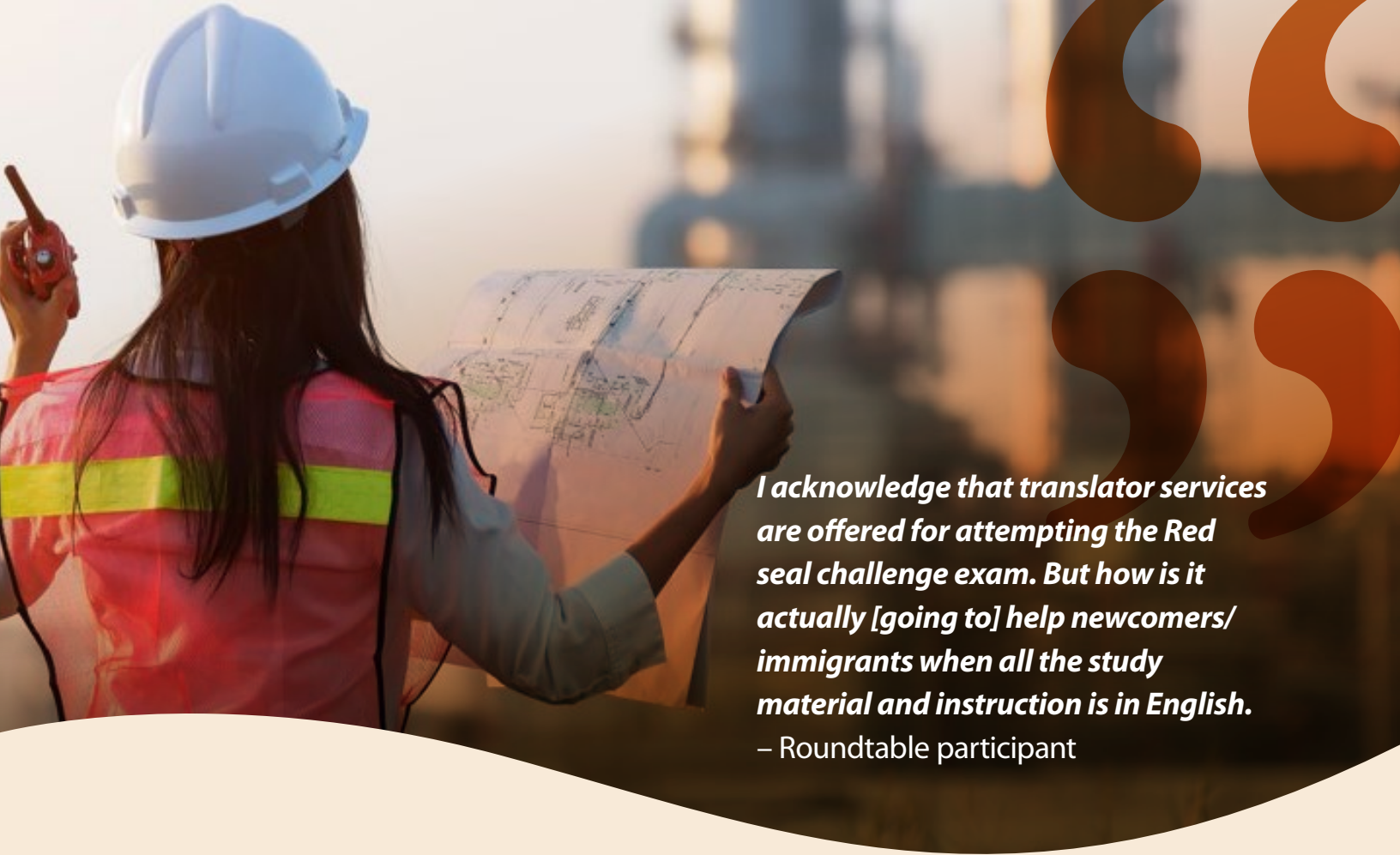
Female participants frequently shared personal experiences of sexism and harassment that continue to happen in the workplace, as well as discrimination when it came to getting jobs and promotions or accessing training opportunities. Many women also shared stories of not feeling welcome on work sites due to sometimes outdated work cultures, lack of proper washroom facilities, and a lack of equipment and uniforms suitable for women.

Childcare was also seen as an on-going challenge that disproportionately impacts women. Lack of childcare spaces and opening times that don't fit with work schedules was frequently cited as a barrier. Participants also mentioned that block training or the requirement to leave their communities to attend classes was unrealistic for someone with a family – and nearly impossible for single mothers. Having more weekend and night classes was seen as a partial solution as well as employers supporting more flexible hours on the worksite.

Increasing the number of female role models, mentors and instructors in the trades was seen by participants as one of the most powerful ways to attract and keep women in the trades. Participants felt that it was very important to expose girls to these role models while still in high school or sooner, as low female participation in trades classes is already evident at this age.

Developing leadership skills for women in the trades was also cited as an important step in helping to counteract sexism and discrimination in the trades. Participants felt this training would be most helpful for female journeypersons and third and fourth year apprentices to develop the confidence to speak up and take decisive action against sexism and harassment in both the classroom and the workplace. In addition, providing comprehensive, standardized training to employers and instructors to help them promote diversity, recognize unconscious bias and stop harassment was also seen as an effective means of culture change.





I acknowledge that translator services are offered for attempting the Red seal challenge exam. But how is it actually [going to] help newcomers/immigrants when all the study material and instruction is in English.
– Roundtable participant

Newcomers and Immigrants

For newcomers and immigrants, discrimination, bullying and harassment were mentioned as ongoing struggles in some workplaces as newcomers experience these behaviours based on language challenges and/or racism.

Some respondents shared their challenges with having their existing credentials recognized in Canada, as well as their concerns about Skilled Traders Certification pushing them out of their current jobs because they felt they would have difficulty passing the challenge exam. Having all training materials and exams in English was specifically identified as a key challenge – even with available translation services. In addition, newcomers and immigrants are also often the least aware of potential funding or support available to them due to language or literacy barriers.

These issues were identified as a key area to address by employers, who stressed the importance of encouraging newcomers to consider trades careers as one solution to existing labour shortages. Employers felt that older immigrants with considerable on-the-job experience might avoid training or challenging the Certificate of Qualification exam under Skilled Trades Certification.

We heard that more targeted cultural and financial supports which meet the specific needs of newcomers and immigrants, in addition to increased assistance to navigate the trades training system will be critical for successfully implementing Skilled Trades Certification for this group.





***Creating culturally safe environments with cultural mentors
- Elders assigned to the program reduces impacts of systemic racism
...Bring employers into this.
– Roundtable participant***

Indigenous people

As part of a separate engagement conducted with Indigenous partners,⁵ many participants also shared their experiences of systemic racism in the workplace and in many other aspects of their lives. These experiences, coupled with the unique histories of First Nations and Métis peoples in B.C., must be understood to ensure successful implementation of Skilled Trades Certification.

Many suggestions were made to ensure culturally-safe workplaces and learning environments are created for Indigenous apprentices. Industry and employers need to continue to better understand and respect the unique cultures and histories of Indigenous Peoples and provide safer learning environments for racialized people. Cultural safety training was shared as a foundational solution; however, this needs to be in conjunction with building meaningful relationships with local Indigenous communities. Culturally appropriate supports including advisors are needed at educational institutions and the ITA to mentor and provide assistance to Indigenous apprentices.

Participants also shared that having Elders, Knowledge Keepers and Indigenous ceremonies as part of their training programs greatly supported the success of Indigenous students. Funding needs to be flexible and multi-year to allow for stability and inclusion of these cultural components, including cultural coordinators.

Overall, participants stressed that the trades system must recognize that diversity is not a box to check. Rather, it is a larger commitment to understanding diverse needs and implementing measures to respond to those needs, from recruitment, to training support, to mentorship. Participants felt that with appropriate training and supports, the onus was on employers to model this change and ensure that people who face barriers in the skilled trades feel welcome and supported at work – and feel that there is a place for them.

⁵ A full report on Indigenous engagement regarding Skilled Trades Certification can be found at engage.gov.bc.ca/govtogetherbc/impact/bc-skilled-trades-certification-results



Conclusion

This public engagement has provided a wide range of opinions on Skilled Trades Certification. While respondents expressed support for the policy, people also expressed concerns about what Skilled Trades Certification might mean for their own jobs, businesses, families and communities.

We clearly heard from British Columbians that Implementing Skilled Trades Certification should not be a one-size-fits-all approach. Helping workers and employers to successfully transition to better paying, long-term jobs means being responsive to a range of individual and regional economic, social and cultural contexts. We also heard that world of work is changing, and post-secondary institutions need to adapt new and innovative approaches to learning to ensure all students can succeed.

In the same way, industry and employers must embrace their role in developing the trades workforce of the future by promoting mentorship, inclusion and life-long learning on the job.

Government, in partnership with the ITA, also has a clear role in supporting and promoting these changes while ensuring that all aspects of B.C.'s trades system are working collaboratively towards common goals.

The Government of British Columbia deeply appreciates the views and comments received during this public engagement process. This input has provided a strong foundation for long-term change that will ensure a strong, adaptable and effective trades training system in B.C. Government is committed to continuing this dialogue with all partners and stakeholders in the months and years ahead to ensure Skilled Trades Certification achieves its objectives and contributes to a trades workforce with the right skills to build a better, stronger B.C.



APPENDIX A

List of Existing Supports Available to Apprentices and Employers

Apprentices in British Columbia have access to many different financial and service-based supports to reduce barriers to accessing trades certification. Available supports are outlined below and help to cover costs such as tuition, travel, living away from home, childcare costs and loss of wages.

Additional ancillary supports not listed here may be available to apprentices and employers through WorkBC Employment Service Centres, Service Canada, trainers, and various other government or community-based support organizations.

Financial Supports for Employers

Apprenticeship Job Creation Tax Credit

Employers who hire apprentices registered in Red Seal programs are eligible to claim 10% of wages up to a maximum of \$2,000 per year for each apprentice, for the first 24 months of registration (max of \$4,000 total over two years).

B.C. Apprentice Employer Tax Credit

Employers who hire apprentices registered in non-Red Seal programs are eligible to claim 20% of wages up to a maximum of \$4,000 per year for each apprentice, for the first 24 months of registration (\$8,000 over two years). An additional \$4,000 may be claimed by employers (\$2,000 per year) for the first two years if employing Indigenous apprentices or Persons with Disabilities (PWD).

B.C. Employer Completion Tax Credit

B.C. provides eligible employers of both Red Seal and non-Red Seal apprentices with up to 15% of eligible salary (up to \$5,500 per year) in tax credits during the final two years of the apprenticeship, with an additional \$2,750 for Indigenous apprentices or PWD.

B.C. Employer Training Grant

The *B.C. Employer Training Grant*, under the Foundational Training Stream, reimburses eligible employers for up to \$10,000 per employee to gain essential, transferable and certified skills to obtain good-paying jobs and increase long-term job security. Employers are eligible to receive up to \$300,000 per fiscal year (April 1 – March 31). All costs are to be paid for in full by the employer before applying for reimbursements through this program. To be eligible, employees must be either apprentices, low-skilled workers, or working in a must occupation.

Eligible training costs for reimbursement includes essential skills training (e.g., literacy, communication skills, digital skills, soft skills, and Adult Basic Education), apprenticeship training, occupation certification (e.g., Early Childhood Certification), or industry related training (e.g., FoodSafe, WHMIS, and First Aid).



Financial Supports for Apprentices

B.C. Youth Work in Trades Scholarship

The *B.C. Youth Work in Trades Scholarship* (\$1,000) is available to secondary school students upon graduation and completion of the Youth Work in Trades program. The scholarship is designed to encourage secondary school graduates to enter a trades training foundation program and apprenticeship.

B.C. Access Grant

The *B.C. Access Grant* provides eligible low- and middle-income student enrolled in a pre-apprenticeship (foundation) program with a grant of up to \$4,000. The grant is provided by the Province of British Columbia and administered through StudentAid BC.

Provincial Tax Credits

Provincial training tax credits provide refundable income tax credits for apprentices registered in Industry Training Authority (ITA) Red Seal and non-Red Seal apprenticeship programs. Enhanced tax credits provide additional tax credit funds and are available for ITA-registered apprentices who are Indigenous or who are living with disabilities.

- The *Training Tax Credit for Apprentices* provides up to \$2,000 in tax credits within the first two years of a Non-Red Seal apprenticeship, with an additional \$1,000 for Indigenous apprentices or PWD.
- The *Apprentice Tax Credit for Completion* provides Red Seal and non-Red Seal apprentices with up to \$4,500 in tax credits in the final two years of their apprenticeship, with an additional \$2,250 available to Indigenous apprentices or PWD.

Federal Tax Credits

The *Federal Exam Tax Credit* provides eligible exam takers with tax credits to offset the costs associated with taking an exam.

The *Federal Tools Deduction* provides up to \$500 in tax credits per year to help with the purchasing of new tools needed for trades related work. Non-apprentices are also eligible to receive this tax deduction.

Apprenticeship Incentive Grant (AIG)

The *Apprenticeship Incentive Grant* is an annual taxable cash grant of \$1,000 a year for the first two years of an apprenticeship, up to a maximum of \$2,000 per person.

The *Apprenticeship Incentive Grant for Women* provides up to \$6,000 in cash grants to women in a Red Seal apprenticeship within the first two years of apprenticeship.

Apprenticeship Completion Grant

Apprenticeship Completion Grant (ACG) is a one-time taxable cash grant of \$2,000 provided upon completion of the apprenticeship program.

Canada Apprenticeship Loan

The *Canada Apprenticeship Loan*, offered by the Federal Government, provides interest-free loans over the course of their apprenticeship to help registered apprentices with the cost of their training. Apprentices in a Red Seal trade can apply for the Canada Apprenticeship Loan and receive up to \$4,000 in interest-free loans per period of technical (in-class) training (regular B.C./Canada student loans are only available for foundation/pre-apprenticeship training). Repayment of the Canada Apprentice Loan does not begin until after the loan recipient has either completed or terminated their apprenticeship.

Employment Insurance (E.I.) Supports

Employment Insurance (E.I.) Part I & Part II is available to support apprentices during their in-classroom technical training. Apprentices registered with ITA may be eligible for temporary financial supports while they attend approved training for their apprenticeship.

- *Part I Financial Supports* are typically income replacement and are provided through Service Canada. Part I may help replace lost income while away from work to complete the required in-class technical training components of an apprenticeship.
- *Part II Financial Supports* are known as *WorkB.C. Apprentice Training* ("wrap around") supports and often include basic expenses for living away from home, including dependent care, daily commuting, and other ancillary costs while completing in-class technical training.



Non-Financial Supports for Employers and Apprentices

The ITA has a comprehensive support system to help workers and employers navigate through the trades training process. Supports and services include trades training program information, employer guidebooks, targeted initiatives (e.g., Women in Trades), exam supports, customer service team, apprenticeship advisors, apprenticeship completions team, and an industry relations team.

Apprenticeship Advisors & Customer Support

The ITA has 20 apprenticeship advisors located in all regions of the province. Advisors are a key part of the ITA's ability to support apprentices and maintain strong working relationships with trainers, employers, and the broader trades training community. Advisors have many years of experience in B.C.'s trades training system and are there to help guide apprentices through their apprenticeship to completion.

The ITA also has a customer support and call centre team who are available to hear from and support apprentices, employers, and the public.

To further support apprentices and foundation students, the ITA and WorkBC launched a new innovative online Apprentice Job Match tool which will better connect British Columbian apprentices looking for on-the-job training they need to boost their skills and achieve certification in their chosen trade.

Completions Team

The ITA's Apprentice Completions Team provides individualized support to apprentices while working proactively to address barriers and challenges when apprentices are at risk of not completing and assist apprentices and trade qualifiers who reach out for support.

Challenge Exam & Supports

Trades workers with extensive experience working in a trade but have never been certified in Canada may be eligible to challenge the certification exam to receive a recognized credential in their trade. The ITA offers exam challengers a variety of supports and services to help them successfully pass the exam, including refresher courses and study materials, translator/ interpreter services for ESL exam takers, and accommodations for individuals living with a disability (e.g., extra exam writing time).

Visit www.itabc.ca for more information on available supports and services.



APPENDIX B

Roundtable participation

Table 1:
Summary of roundtable participation

Date	Trade or audience group	Number of participants
July 6	Electrical trades (included workers and employers)	4 employers 11 workers 15 total
July 7	Electrical trades (included workers and employers)	3 employers 7 workers 1 training org/instructor 11 total
July 13	Automotive trades (employers)	17 employers 17 total
July 13	Automotive trades (workers)	8 workers 8 total
July 19	Mechanical trades (included workers and employers)	3 employers 10 workers 3 training org/instructor 15 total
July 20	Mechanical trades (included workers and employers)	7 employers 5 workers 1 training org/instructor 13 total
July 21	Immigrants and newcomers in trades	18 total
July 22	Women in trades	16 total

Total roundtable participants 113

Note: Several individuals participated in two roundtables as they sought to provide input for trade-specific and audience-specific conversations (i.e. electrical and women in trades)

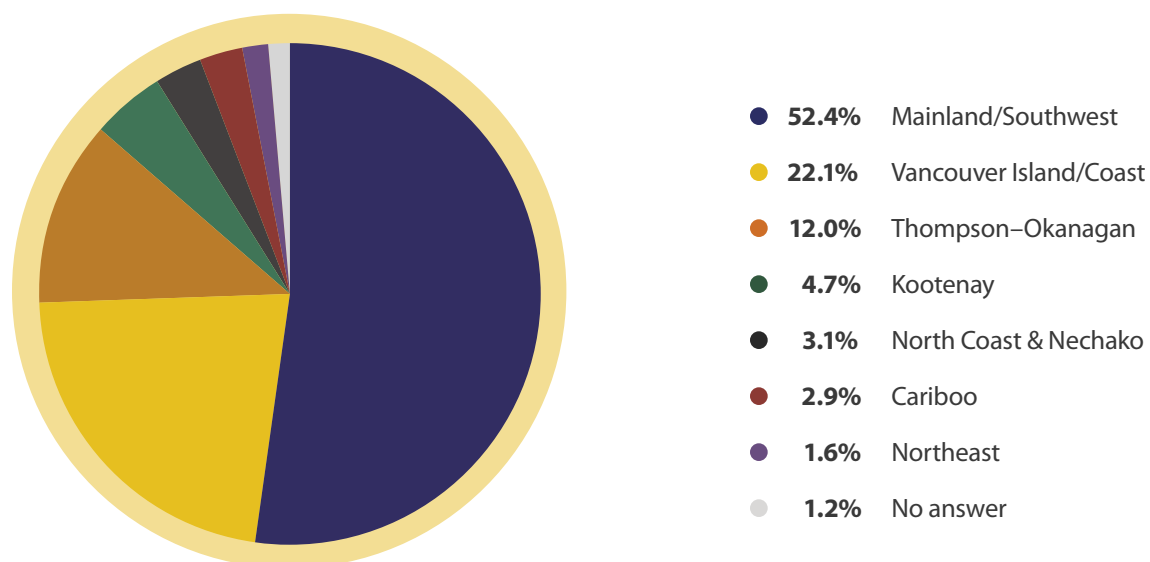


APPENDIX C

Survey: Who we heard from

Question 5.1: All respondents

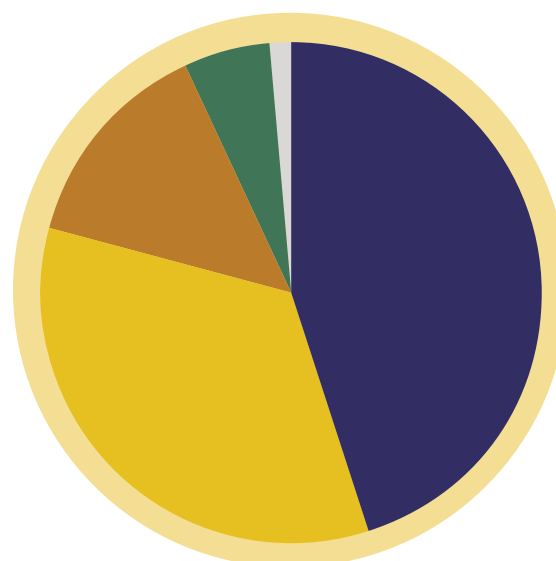
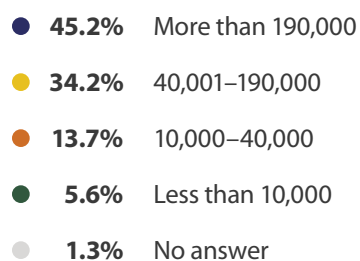
Which region do you regularly live in?



n=868

Question 5.2: All respondents

What is the population of the community you regularly live in?

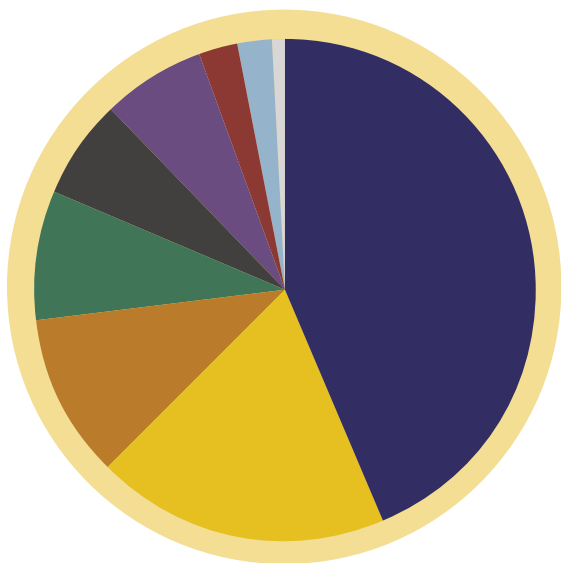


n=868



Question 5.3: All respondents

Level of education

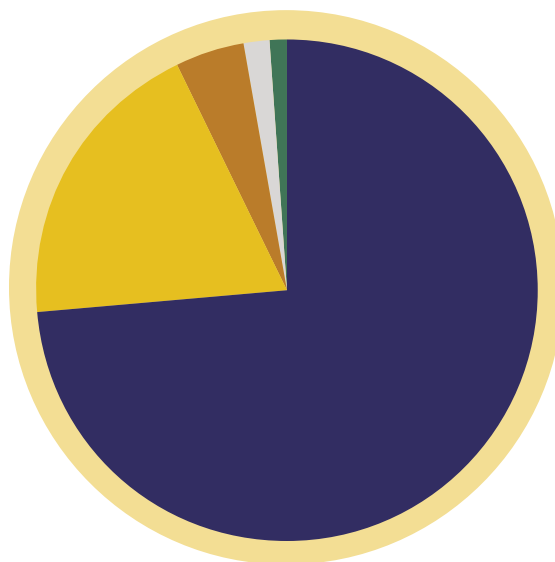


- 43.7% Apprenticeship/Certificate of Qualification/Red Seal Trade
- 18.9% University degree
- 10.8% College or other non-university certificate or diploma
- 8.1% Some post-secondary training
- 6.6% University certificate of diploma
- 6.5% High school diploma or equivalent
- 2.6% Prefer not to answer
- 2.1% Less than high school completion
- 0.8% No answer

Question 5.4: All respondents

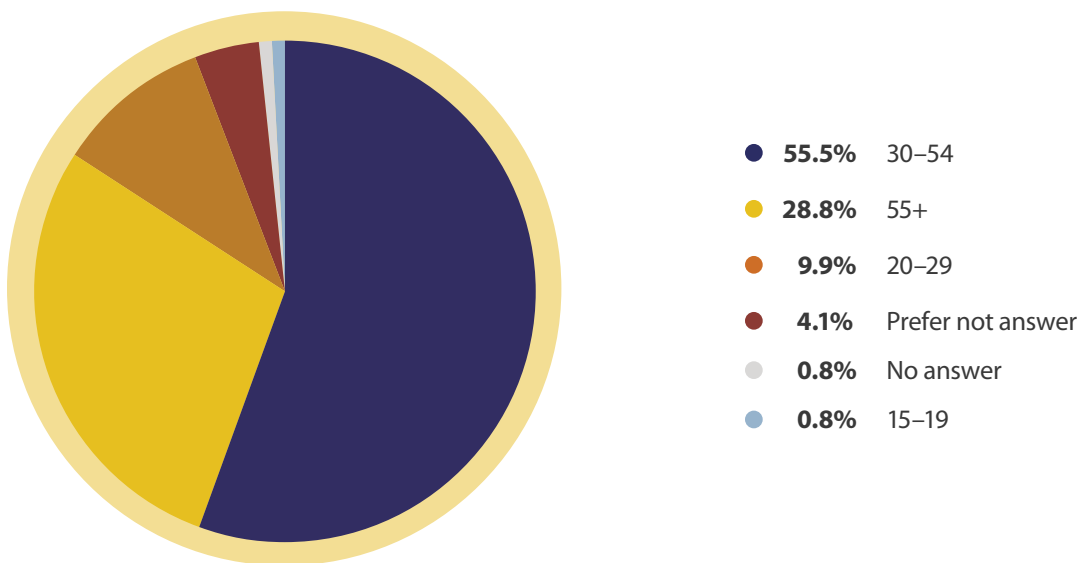
What is your gender?

- 73.7% Male
- 19.2% Female
- 4.5% Prefer not to answer
- 1.5% No answer
- 1.0% Gender diverse



Question 5.5: All respondents

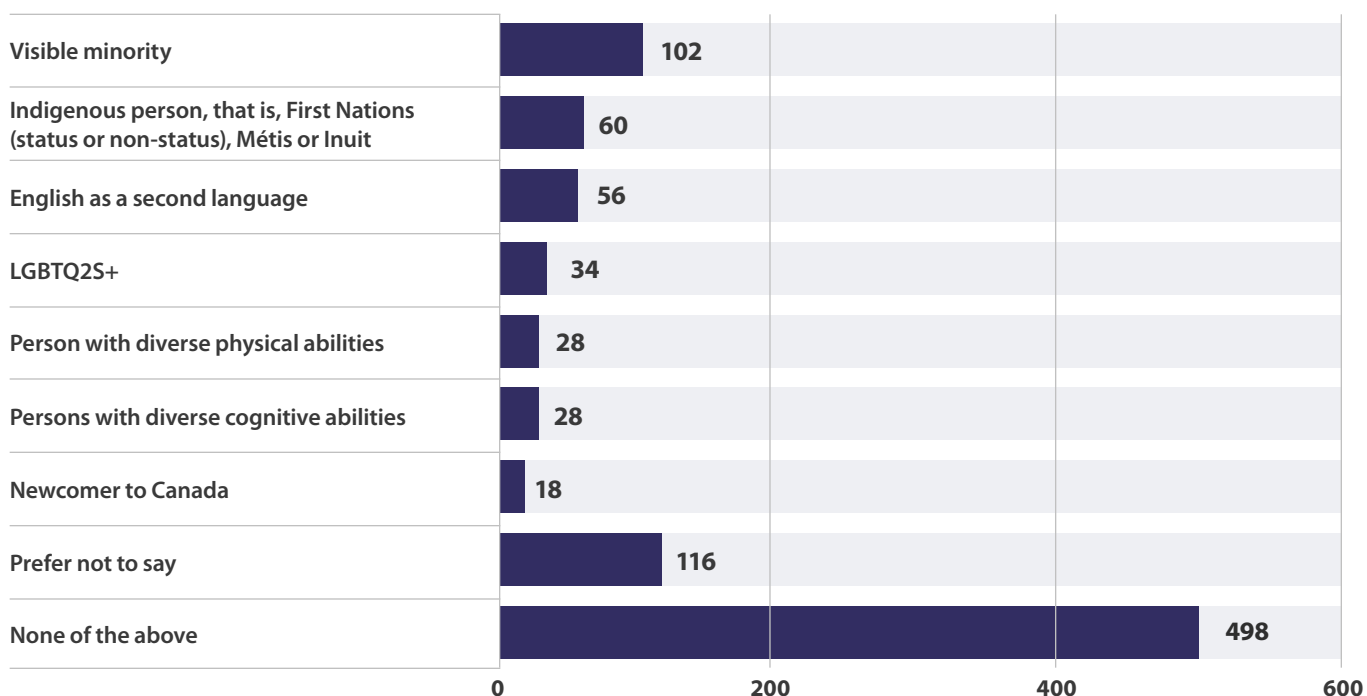
What is your age group?



n=868

Question 5.6: All respondents

With which (if any) of the following groups do you identify? (Select all that apply)

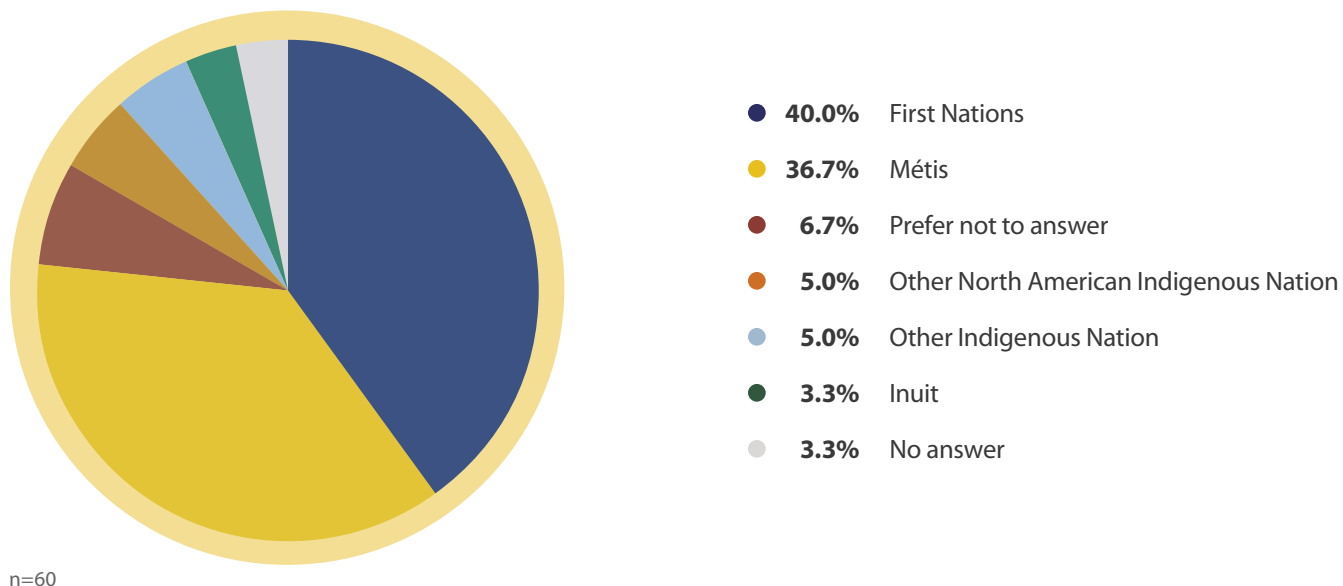


n=868



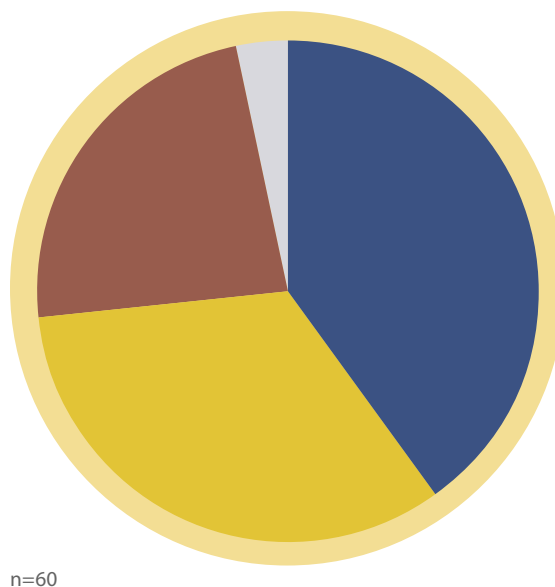
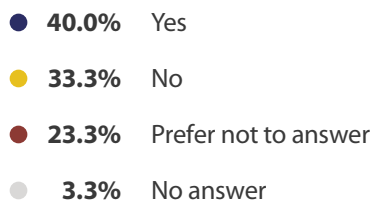
Question 5.7: Indigenous identified respondents

As you identified as an Indigenous person, are you?



Question 5.8: Indigenous identified respondents

Do you identify as urban Indigenous?



APPENDIX D

Key survey question responses

The following section includes results from key survey questions mentioned in the report.

Question 2.1.1: Workers

If certification and apprenticeship registration is required in your trade, how likely are you to write the challenge exam to be certified, register as an apprentice, and/or look for a different job?

	Not likely at all	Unlikely	Likely	Very Likely	Don't Know	No answer
Write the challenge exam to be certified	25.9%	10.8%	14.7%	33.7%	10.8%	4.2%
Register as an apprentice	27.1%	3.9%	11.0%	42.5%	8.3%	7.1%
Look for a different job	49.1%	20.0%	7.3%	3.9%	12.2%	7.3%

n=409



Question 2.1.2: Workers

Which of the following best describes challenges you may face in registering as an apprentice or challenging the Certificate of Qualification (C of Q) exam?

	Count	Percentage
I don't think I could do the training	2	0.5%
My training and/or certification are from outside of Canada	7	1.7%
I won't have the basic skills to complete in-classroom training for apprenticeship (i.e., math, document reading, computer use, writing, etc.)	15	3.7%
English is my second language	17	4.2%
I don't think I could pass an exam	18	4.4%
I have a learning disability so it would be hard to do training or pass an exam	19	4.6%
I do not have enough work experience to challenge the C of Q exam	22	5.4%
I won't be able to get all of the on-the-job training I need from my current employer to complete an apprenticeship	27	6.6%
My employer would not support me leaving the work site to attend in-classroom training	28	6.8%
There is no training available near me	29	7.1%
I don't think I am ready to pass the C of Q exam yet	31	7.6%
It's been too long since I was in school	39	9.5%
I won't be able to find an employer willing to sponsor me as an apprentice	42	10.3%
I can't afford to attend in-classroom training	51	12.5%
I have no concerns with challenging the C of Q exam	148	36.2%
I have no concerns with registering as an apprentice	195	47.7%

n=409



Question 2.1.3: Workers

Which supports would be the most helpful in registering as an apprentice or challenging the C of Q exam?

Helpfulness	Support	Not at all helpful	Unhelpful	Helpful	Very helpful	Prefer not to answer or don't know	No answer
Most helpful	Doing training in person	3.7%	3.7%	18.3%	57.9%	4.6%	11.7%
	Someone paying for or helping me with the costs of training	5.9%	2.4%	27.9%	45.5%	6.8%	11.5%
	Finding an employer sponsor to register me as an apprentice	6.1%	2.2%	23.5%	40.3%	15.2%	12.7%
	Help with writing exams (e.g., tutors, extra time, readers)	7.8%	7.1%	34.7%	27.4%	9.8%	13.2%
Somewhat helpful	Training in basic skills (i.e., math, document reading, computer use, writing, etc.)	11.0%	7.8%	37.4%	21.8%	8.1%	13.9%
	Ways to recognize my training and/or credentials from outside of Canada	14.2%	5.6%	21.3%	31.3%	13.7%	13.9%
	Different ways of training based on my needs (e.g., learning disabilities)	13.7%	6.6%	32.0%	19.8%	13.9%	13.9%
	Doing training online	10.3%	20.0%	32.0%	18.3%	6.6%	12.7%
Helpful for certain groups	Not having to do training or pass an exam based on years of experience working in the trade	17.8%	20.8%	17.8%	19.6%	11.2%	12.7%
	Help with English as a second language, (e.g., translation)	27.4%	6.8%	18.6%	11.7%	21.0%	14.4%

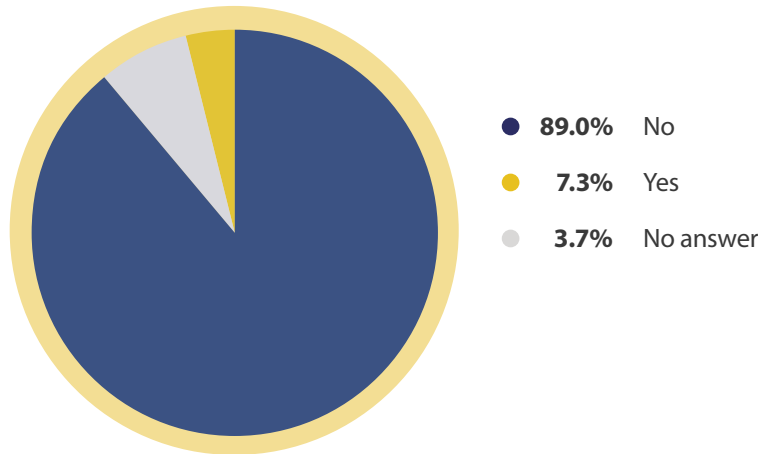
n=409

Of those who answered 'other' to this question, many suggested more accessible opportunities to join training programs, whether that is through funding opportunities, more training facilities in various locations, or quicker training options. Others said that there should be no additional supports. And finally, there was the suggestion that there should be more personal help such as mentorship, tutoring and help registering.



Question 2.1.4: Workers

Are you a worker who began an apprenticeship but chose not to complete your training program? If yes, please tell us why you did not complete.



n=30

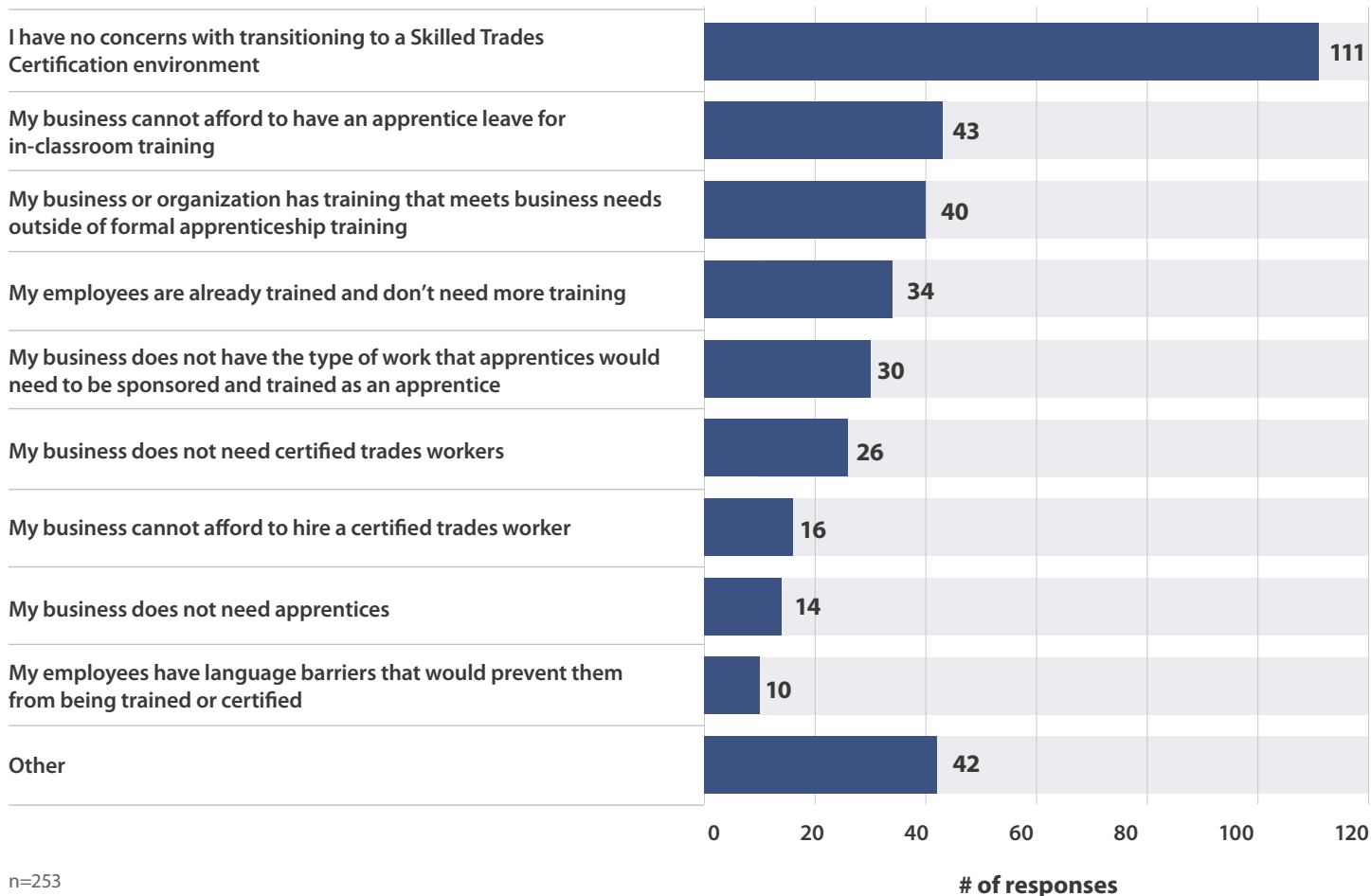
If yes, reasons for not completing	Count	Percentage
Family/other personal commitments	1	3.3%
Illness or injury	4	13.3%
Returned to school to take training unrelated to my apprenticeship	2	6.7%
Job instability (lack of work, layoff, etc.)	12	40.0%
Pay/income was too low	7	23.3%
Found a better job/changed jobs	5	16.7%
Didn't like the work or changed my mind about the career	3	10.0%
Lack of employer support to participate in classroom training or complete my apprenticeship	4	13.3%
Didn't need more training or certification to work in the occupation	3	10.0%
Experienced harassment or discrimination	4	13.3%
Completed all the levels I wanted	2	6.7%
Disappointed in the quality of training	3	10.0%
Couldn't get training in my region/community	2	6.7%
Failed the certification exam	4	13.3%
Wait lists/courses not available when I needed the training	3	10.0%
Training was too hard	2	6.7%
Other	6	20.0%
N/A	2	6.7%



Question 2.3.1: Employers/Businesses

**Thinking about Skilled Trades Certification, are there reasons why your business might not be able to register apprentices or certify trades workers?
(Select all that apply.)**

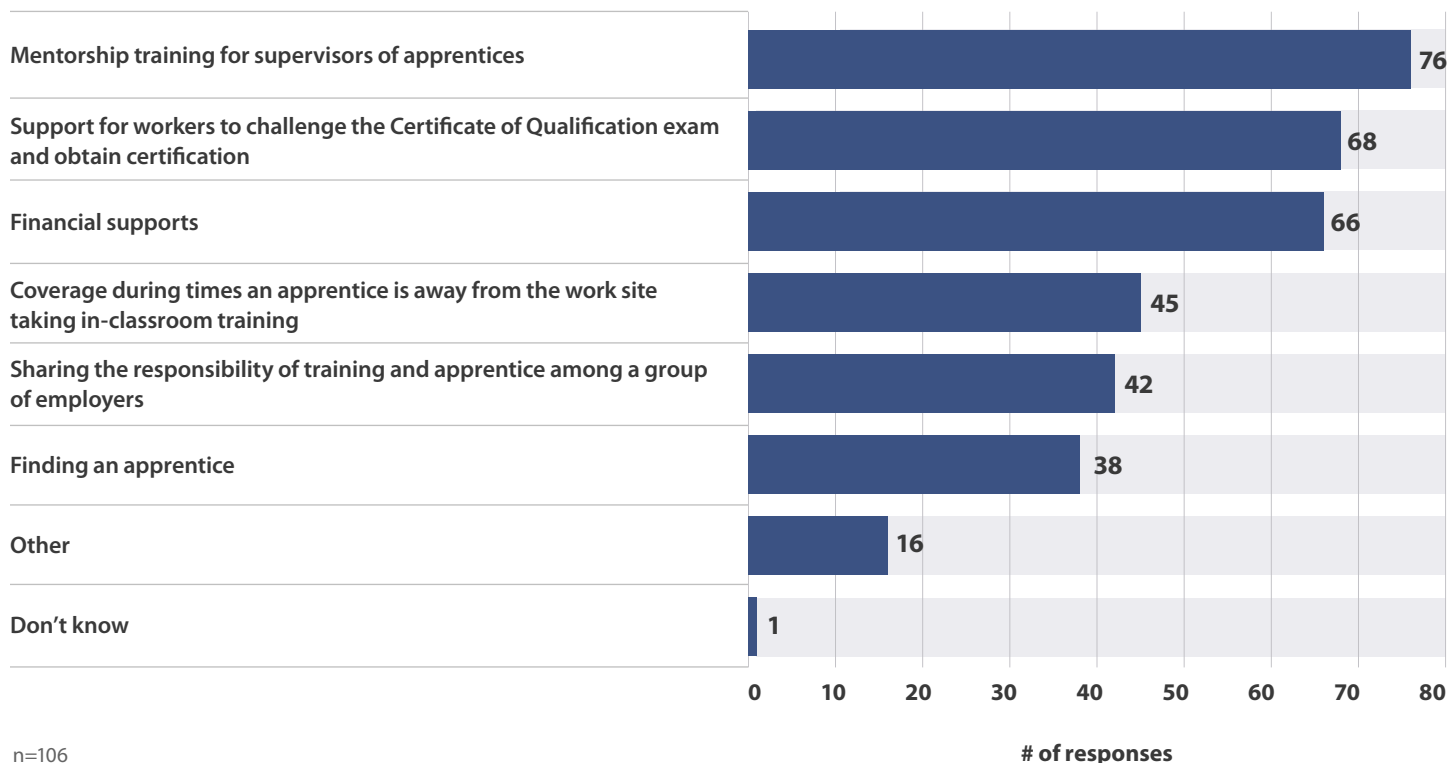
Reasons



Question 2.4.2: Industry

Which of the following supports would help your members meet Skilled Trades Certification trade requirements? (Select all that apply.)

Supports



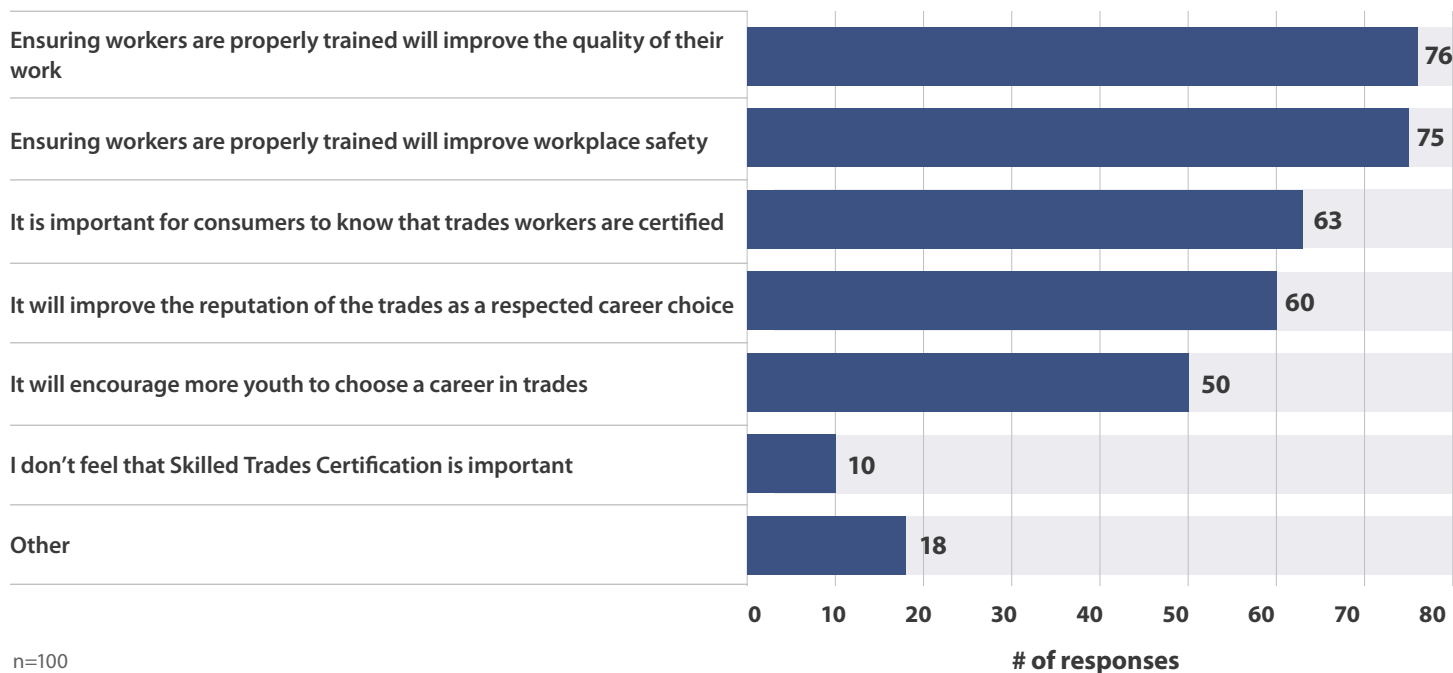
Respondents who chose to answer 'other' offered additional ways that they could be supported. Several respondents shared the need for **more accessible certification processes, including more language resources in consideration of skilled newcomers and immigrants, as well as disability assistance, childcare, and updated training curriculum**. Some also specifically mentioned the need for more support materials for challengers to receive their C of Q.



Question 3.2: General Public

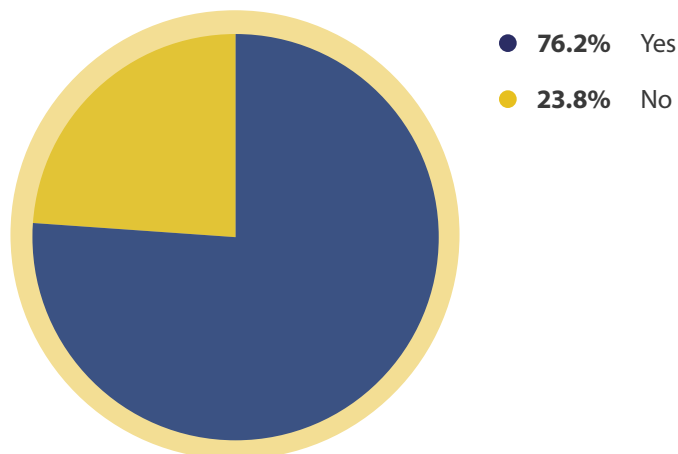
Why do you feel that Skilled Trades Certification is important? (Select all that apply.)

Reasons



Question 3.4: General Public

Would Skilled Trades Certification make you more likely to encourage your child to pursue a career in the trades?



n=63



