

3 Promoting high-quality career guidance service provision in Canada

This chapter reviews survey evidence on how satisfied adult users of career guidance in Canada are with the services they received, to what extent services were tailored to their needs, and which outcomes they report. It then discusses three key policy measures to strengthen the career guidance sector and service provision: producing and using high-quality labour market information; holding providers accountable and monitoring outcomes; and standardising the training and qualifications of career guidance advisors.

Summary

Survey evidence suggests that a large majority of adults in Canada (81%) are satisfied with the career guidance services they have received, which is comparable to the OECD average (79%). Compared with other OECD countries, adults in Canada were also more likely to indicate that career guidance services were useful to achieving reported employment and training outcomes. At the same time, there is room to better tailor career guidance in Canada to adults' needs. There are a few ways provincial and territorial governments can continue to strengthen the career guidance sector, and promote high-quality service provision.

First, reliable labour market information (LMI) is a key component of a high-performing career guidance system. The Labour Market Information Council (LMIC) together with the provinces and territories are working on making LMI more granular and accessible to citizens and career guidance advisors. Particular emphasis should be put on making LMI easy to access and understand, and training career guidance advisors in its use and interpretation.

Second, systems to hold government-funded providers accountable and monitoring the outcomes of services can be conducive to high-quality service provision. Provinces and territories have different systems in place, which typically involve public procurement processes and outcome-based funding. While an overly narrow focus on job placements might be detrimental to the quality of career guidance, clearly defined outcome indicators are useful to measure and evaluate the success of career guidance programmes. This is particularly valuable when integrated into a larger policy strategy or framework.

Third, standardising the training and qualifications of career guidance advisors will help to further strengthen career guidance provision across the country. In Canada, as in other OECD countries, career guidance advisors are not a regulated occupation, except in Quebec. A common requirement to work in the field, however, is a relevant tertiary qualification. Canada is a frontrunner with respect to the existing competency framework for career guidance advisors in Canada, the voluntary certifications available in five provinces, and the current development of a pan-Canadian certification standard. Government co-ordination on the implementation of a voluntary, pan-Canadian certification is an important step towards reducing mobility barriers for career guidance advisors and increasing the consistency of service provision. More could be done to offer continuing training for career guidance advisors who work in publicly-funded services and might not hold a certification.

This chapter reviews survey data on satisfaction with career guidance services and outcomes of career guidance reported by adult users in Canada. It then explores different policy measures to promote high-quality career guidance service provision, with reference to international best practice examples.

3.1. Satisfaction rates and reported outcomes of career guidance in Canada

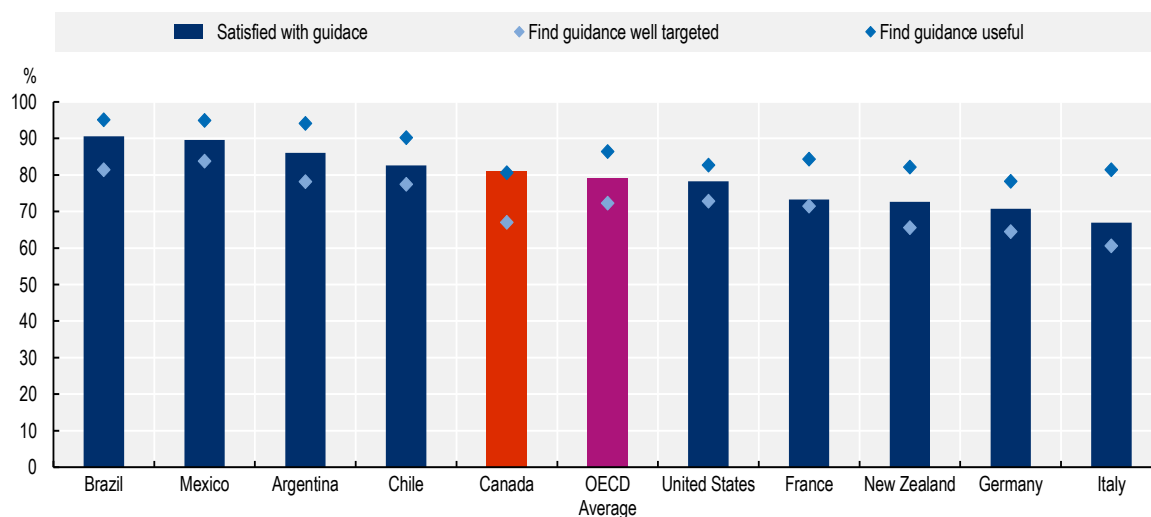
Career guidance for adults has the potential to improve employment, education and training outcomes for individuals, while mitigating skills shortages and facilitating job transitions on labour markets. Empirical literature suggests that career guidance is effective at improving learning outcomes and training participation among adults, and there is some evidence on positive employment outcomes (Box 3.1). This section provides insights from the Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA) into the experiences adults have with career guidance in Canada as well as the outcomes they report as a result of the service. It then discusses to what extent career guidance services are tailored to adults' needs, citing existing approaches by different provinces to personalise services.

3.1.1. Satisfaction with career guidance is relatively high in Canada, and adults report a range of positive employment, education or training outcomes

Most adults in Canada are satisfied with the career guidance services they have received, though there is variation across provinces and between sub-groups. Eighty-one per cent of adult users of career guidance in Canada report being very satisfied or satisfied with the services, which is just above the OECD average of 79% (see Figure 3.1). The same share (81%) find guidance useful, while a lower percentage (67%) of adults find guidance well targeted. As elsewhere, there is room for making guidance more targeted to individuals' needs (Figure 3.3). Satisfaction rates with services were lower for older adults (72%) and for adults living in rural areas (73%) in Canada, suggesting more could be done to improve services for these groups.¹ Satisfaction rates were highest in Quebec (83%), Ontario (82%), and British Columbia (82%) and a bit lower in the Prairies (76%) and the Atlantic provinces (76%).

Figure 3.1. User satisfaction and perception of career guidance

Share of adults who used career services in the past five years, by reported satisfaction/perception



Note: The OECD Average includes Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, France, Germany, Italy, Mexico, New Zealand and the United States. Data refer to the last time the respondent used career services (in the case of Canada) or spoke to a career guidance advisor (for all other countries). The categories reflect adults who are “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with guidance, find guidance “very well targeted” or “well targeted” and “very useful” or “useful”. For details on the methodology, see Annex B.

Source: OECD 2020/2021 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

Box 3.1. Evidence on the outcomes of career guidance for adults

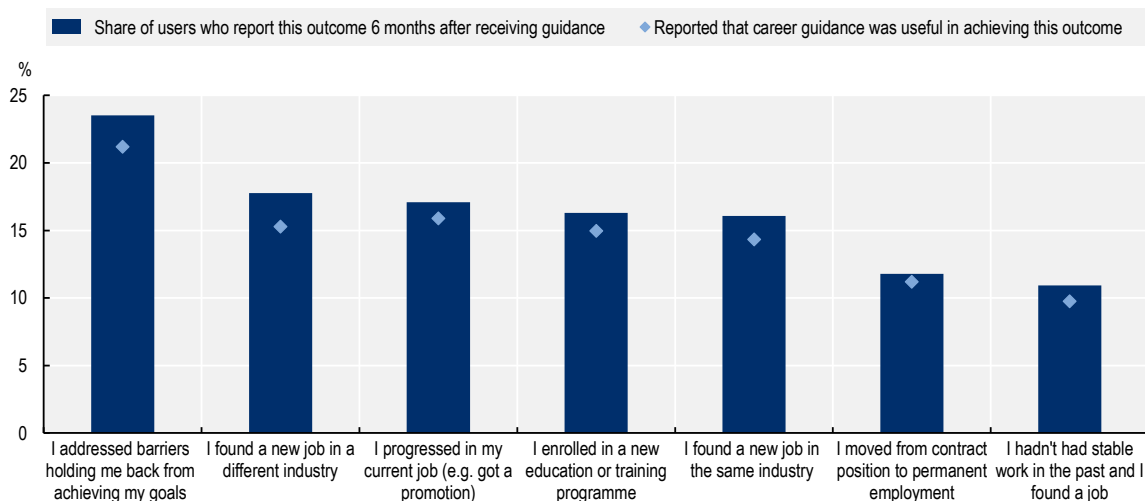
Theoretical research has argued that career guidance brings many benefits for individuals, companies and governments. Career guidance for adults provides a link between education, training and the labour market, facilitates a better matching of labour market supply and demand and supports labour market participation of vulnerable groups. Through these pathways, it can positively impact economic productivity as well as social equity and inclusion. For companies, career guidance might help to increase productivity and reduce staff turnover. On an individual level, career guidance along the life-course may support adults' transitions into and within the labour market, increase their wages and job satisfaction (Percy and Dodd, 2021^[1]; Barnes et al., 2020^[2]).

Empirical evidence shows that career guidance can have a positive impact on short-term learning outcomes of individuals, such as decision-making skills, self-awareness or job search skills (Bimrose and Barnes, 2008^[3]; Maguire, 2004^[4]; Kidd, Jackson and Hirsh, 2003^[5]; Hughes et al., 2002^[6]). Career guidance has also been found to strengthen confidence and motivation (Bimrose and Barnes, 2008^[3]), and improve adults' attitudes towards learning (European Commission, 2015^[7]). For instance, an evaluation conducted in Ontario finds that a career guidance programme for adults in the automotive sector increased participants' sense of job-related self-efficacy (Reavley, 2013^[8]).

Moreover, several impact evaluations have found a significant positive effect of career guidance on adults' participation in education or training (Lane et al., 2017^[9]; Tyers and Sinclair, 2005^[10]; Killeen and Kidd, 1991^[11]). Some evidence also shows that career guidance improves employment outcomes, in particular supporting the job placement of unemployed adults as part of active labour market programmes (Liu, Huang and Wang, 2014^[12]; Graversen and van Ours, 2008^[13]; Hughes et al., 2002^[6]). An impact evaluation from the United States finds that intensive employment services, including personalised career guidance and accompanying services, increased participants' earnings by 7 to 20 percent in the 30-month follow-up period (Fortson et al., 2017^[14]).

Figure 3.2. Employment, education and training outcomes of career guidance, Canada

Share of adults in Canada who used career services in the past five years, by reported outcome



Note: Respondents could choose more than one answer. Data refers to the last time the respondent used career services. Respondents were asked whether any of these outcomes occurred within six months of receiving career guidance.

Source: OECD 2020/2021 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

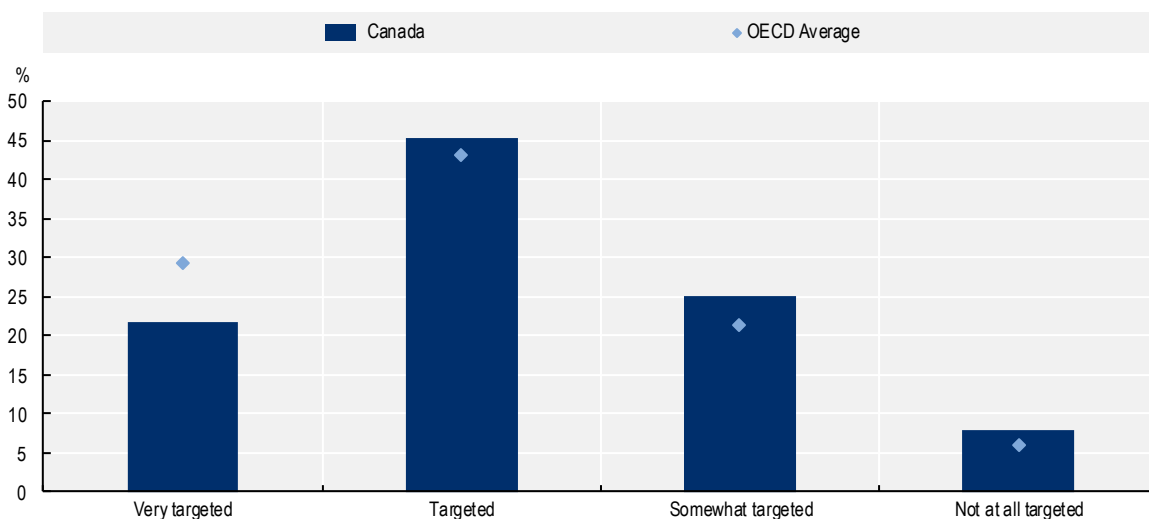
Nearly all users (99%) of career guidance in Canada reported at least one positive outcome related to employment, education or training six months after receiving a career guidance service (Figure 3.2). Almost a quarter (24%) of users reported that they addressed barriers that held them back from achieving their goals within half a year after receiving guidance. These goals included improved health, stable housing, stronger support network or greater clarity about what they want. In Canada, career guidance seems to support professional development, with a share of adults saying that they progressed in their current job (17%), or found a new job in the same industry (16%) after using the service. Sixteen per cent (16%) of adults who received career guidance services also reported to have enrolled in a new education or training programme afterwards. Compared to other OECD countries, adults in Canada were more likely to indicate that the career guidance services they received were useful to achieve the reported employment, education or training outcomes they experienced (Figure 3.2).

3.1.2. There is room to better tailor career guidance services in Canada to adults' needs

While high satisfaction rates and good outcomes from users indicate a relatively high quality of career guidance services in Canada, there is room to better tailor services to adults' needs. According to the SCGA, 67% of adults in Canada who have used career guidance services reported that services were very targeted or targeted to their personal needs. While this represents the majority of career guidance users, it falls below the OECD average of 73% (Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3. Tailoring career guidance services to individual needs

Share of adults who used career services the past five years, by degree to which they reported that the service targeted their individual needs



Note: The OECD average includes Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, France, Germany, Italy, Mexico, New Zealand and the United States. Data refer to the last time the respondent used a career service (in the case of Canada) or spoke to a career guidance advisor (in the case of other countries in the survey).

Source: OECD 2020/2021 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

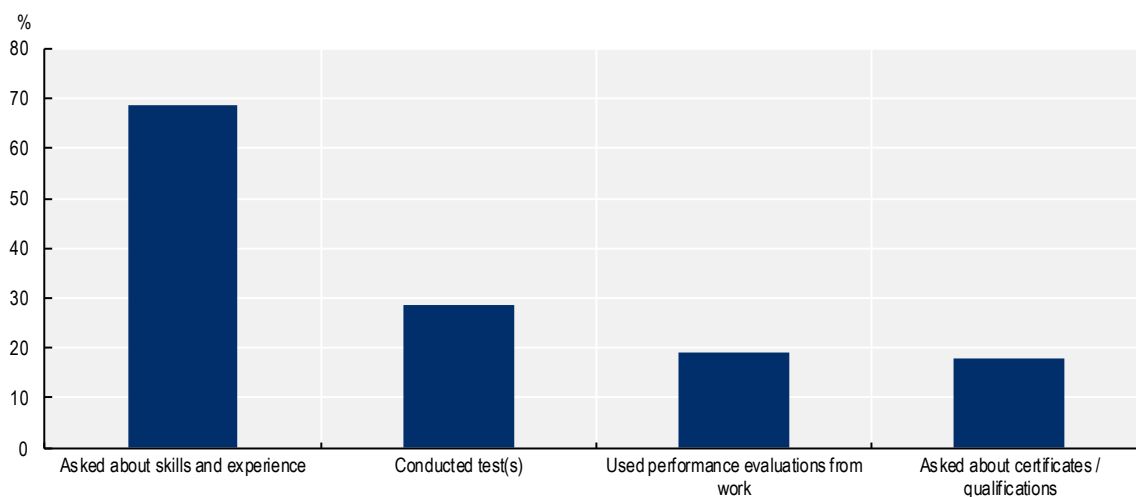
Tailoring career guidance services to adults' needs requires taking the time to understand clients' objectives and to assess their unique skills. Skills assessments, the recognition of prior learning, and individual career development roadmaps can be useful tools in doing so. If services are narrowly focused on matching jobseekers quickly with jobs, without considering the persistent and intersecting barriers adults experience in finding sustainable, high-quality employment, they can create a negative cycle in

which adults rotate back and forth between periods of employment in poorly fitting jobs and periods of unemployment.

Career guidance services in the provinces apply different types of skills assessments. Most commonly, adults who used career guidance services in Canada reported that they were interviewed about their skills and experience (69%). Twenty-nine per cent of career guidance users had their skills assessed through one or several tests, 19% were asked about performance evaluations from work, and 18% about their qualifications or certificates (see Figure 3.4). In Quebec, for instance, employment service providers conduct an initial skills assessment interview, which takes into account the profile and specific needs of individuals. This can lead to a recognition of prior learning (*reconnaissance des acquis et des compétences, RAC*) process that allows to offer targeted support for adults. For immigrants or refugees, the government of Ontario offers a Coordinated Language Assessment and Referral System (CLARS), which assesses their language skills through a network of language assessment centres that can be an entry point for further education and training.

Figure 3.4. Skills assessment as part of career guidance services

Share of adults in Canada reporting that their skills have been assessed by the career practitioner, by type of assessment



Note: Data refer to respondents who have used a career service in the last 5 years, and to the last time they did so.

Source: OECD 2020/2021 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

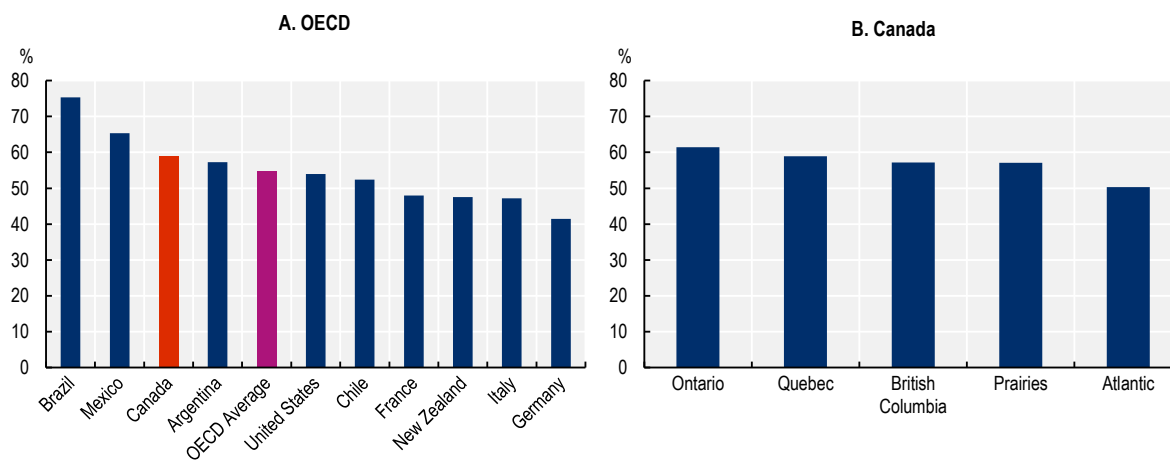
The particular tools career guidance advisors apply to assess adults' skills and competences vary across service providers and province or territory. Some service providers in Canada have adopted the PRIME Employability Dimensions framework (Box 3.7). They use PRIME as the basis for the initial assessment of adults' skills and employment readiness when the adult first enters career guidance services, and subsequently measure progressive change along these employability dimensions during and after the adult has received the service. ESDC's Skills for Success model is another conceptual framework used to measure adults' skills. On their website, ESDC provides a range of tools for individuals to assess and develop their skills (ESDC, 2021^[15]).

Following assessment, the recognition of prior learning is a more formal type of skills validation, which can be an important part of career guidance services. It can help to make the skills adults already have visible, especially if they were acquired through non-formal learning on the job, or as part of a foreign qualification by immigrants or refugees. Formally recognising the skills and competences adults have shortens their upskilling pathways, thus accelerating transitions to new jobs or sectors. The government of Ontario, for example, requires school boards to provide a Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) process to mature students who seek to complete high school education. This is mandated by a specific policy memorandum and includes an individualised assessment of adults' skills, experience and prior learning or education as part of a formal evaluation process. Adults may obtain credits for prior learning that count towards their diploma (Government of Ontario, 2003^[16]). In Quebec, a network of services called SARCA (*services d'accueil, de référence, de conseil et d'accompagnement*) is offered in adult education centres and vocational training centres. SARCA provides career guidance and career information to adults, and accompanies them in a recognition of prior learning process (*reconnaissance des acquis et des compétences, RAC*) to obtain a secondary school or a vocational diploma. Some OECD countries have established systems for the recognition of prior learning that are linked with career guidance. In Portugal, for instance, more than 300 *Qualifica* centres across the country combine career guidance services with the recognition of prior learning, primarily targeting adults with low qualifications, the unemployed and young people.

Personalised career development roadmaps are individual action or training plans that adults co-develop with career guidance advisors. They have shown to be powerful tools that can motivate adults to take action towards reaching their employment and learning goals. According to the SCGA, 59% of adult users of career guidance in Canada receive such a personalised career development roadmap, which is above the OECD average of 55%. In Ontario, the Creating Pathways to Success Programme encourages the use of an online Individual Pathways Plan for secondary students, including adult learners. Other services with a career guidance component in Ontario also have a focus on developing an individualised career or learning pathway: the Bridge Training programme for skilled immigrants and refugees, the Literacy and Basic skills programme, and employment services. Use of personalised career development roadmaps is highest in Ontario and Quebec and lowest in the Atlantic provinces (Figure 3.5), suggesting room for improvement in this region.

Figure 3.5. Personalised career development roadmaps as part of career guidance services

Share of adults who report receiving a personalised career development roadmap as part of career guidance services, by country and region



Notes: The OECD Average includes Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, France, Germany, Italy, Mexico, New Zealand and the United States. Data refer to the last time the respondent spoke to a career guidance advisor. In Canada, data refer to the last time the adults used career services. The Atlantic region includes Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. The Prairie region includes Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. Sample sizes in the territories were too low to be included.

Source: OECD 2020/2021 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

The findings of the SCGA, as well as stakeholder interviews suggest that existing services in Canada are of high-quality, and strategic policy can help to maintain this performance and bring about greater consistency in service provision across provinces and territories. Responses from policy questionnaires sent out for this project suggest that there is room to improve consistency in career guidance service delivery within and across provinces and territories. Findings from the SCGA confirm these regional differences in the use of career guidance among adults in Canada, both across and within provinces. The following sections describe three key policy measures to strengthen the career guidance system in Canada and promote high-quality and consistent service provision: producing and using high-quality labour market information, holding providers accountable and monitoring outcomes and standardising training and qualifications of career guidance advisors.

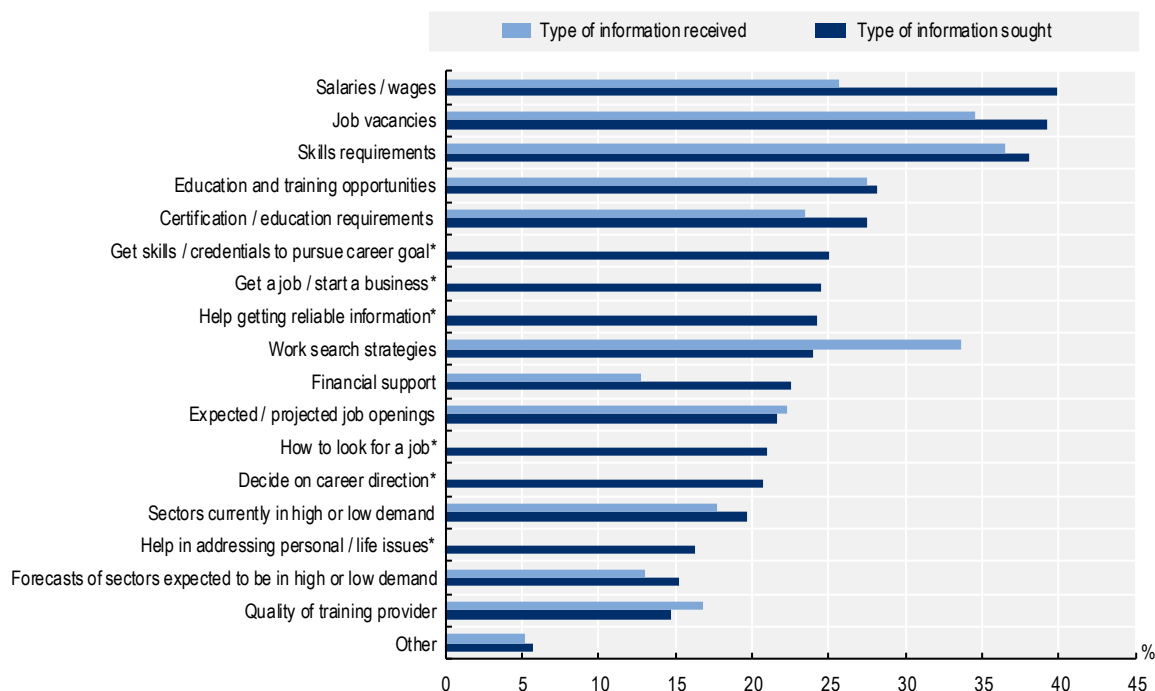
3.2. Producing and using high-quality labour market information

An important component of effective career guidance is labour market information (LMI) that is objective, timely, sufficiently granular, fit-for-purpose, and well-co-ordinated (OECD, 2016_[17]). High-quality LMI is important for career guidance advisors to provide their clients with accurate advice on current and future labour markets. On an aggregate level, good LMI can help to promote the development of skills which are in high demand on the labour market, by motivating adults to invest in those skills.

Those adults in Canada who participate in career guidance services receive much of the information they are looking for, with some exceptions (Figure 3.6). According to the SCGA, users most often receive information on skills requirements (37% of users), job vacancies (35%), wages (26%), and projected future job openings (22%). By contrast, the type of LMI which adults in Canada most frequently demand is information on wages (40% of adults), job vacancies (39%) as well as skills and education requirement of jobs (38% and 27%, respectively). Figure 3.6 suggests that adults would like to receive certain types of information more than they currently do: salaries and wages, financial support, and certification and education requirements.

Figure 3.6. Type of information sought and received during career guidance, Canada

Share of adults who used career services in the past five years, by type of information they received; and share of adults by type of information they will seek the next time they use career information or guidance services



Note: Respondents could choose more than one answer. Data refers to the last time the respondent used career services. Some answer responses were not available for the question on 'type of information' received, and are marked with an asterisk.

Source: OECD 2020/2021 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

In Canada, the responsibility for the production and dissemination of LMI is shared among the different levels of government. As part of these responsibilities, the federal, provincial and territorial governments have created and funded since 2017 the Labour Market Information Council (LMIC) to improve the reliability and availability of LMI, and to close gaps in the data collection, analysis and dissemination of skills-related data (LMIC, 2021^[18]). The LMIC is a pan-Canadian not-for-profit led by a Board of Directors composed of senior government officials from federal, provincial and territorial governments and Statistics Canada. According to its first strategic plan, LMIC focuses on developing local, granular data, a better understanding of current and future skill demands as well as the disseminating LMI for a diversity of users (LMIC, 2018^[19]).

Besides making high-quality LMI available, career guidance advisors also need to feel comfortable using it. A workshop with career guidance advisors hosted by LMIC showed that a key challenge is advisors' limited time and ability to extract meaningful insights from technical or lengthy reports. This underscores the need for tools and resources that are easy to use, free to access, and conducive to help practitioners to navigate LMI (LMIC, 2021^[20]).

One way to make better use of LMI is to train career guidance advisors in locating and interpreting it. A recent LMIC survey found that only three out of five practitioners surveyed (60%) think labour market information is easy to understand, and fewer than half (43%) say they have received training to help them access or make sense of the data (LMIC, 2019^[21]). Several OECD countries have programmes to train career guidance advisors in using LMI, including the *Cités des Métiers* centres in Belgium. Their staff participate in weekly LMI sessions delivered by an expert. In France, career guidance advisors working for the Conseil en Évolution Professionnelle (CEP), a network of service providers dedicated to career

guidance for employed adults, receive training sessions to stay up-to-date about government reforms, economic changes, labour market cycles, innovations and digital transformations affecting the labour market.

3.2.1. Labour market information is disseminated through online portals across Canada

Online portals are a common way to make LMI available for individuals and career guidance advisors across Canada. The Canadian Job Bank (Box 3.2) is an example of an accessible platform that aggregates online job vacancies from across Canada in a single platform. This is rare in international comparison. In addition to this federal-level online portal, each of the provinces and the Northwest Territories maintain their own online portals. Most of these feature regional LMI, and some also have information particularly for disadvantaged groups (see Table 3.1). Few, however, offer skills assessments or skills gap analysis, which would allow an adult to identify the skills, certificates or qualifications they would need to pursue a given occupation. Box 3.3 shares examples of an online career guidance portal used in France that exploits artificial intelligence to provide tailored employment and training suggestions for adults based on existing LMI.

Box 3.2. Job Bank as a federal-level online portal

Job Bank is a job search tool and online employment resource run by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) in collaboration with the provincial and territorial governments. It provides a free platform across Canada that connects individuals looking for employment with firms that want to hire. Approximately 5 million users visit the website every month.

A variety of LMI and tools are made available by Job Bank. Users can browse job postings by region, and set up job alerts. Career guidance resources and labour market information can be searched by region, sector, occupation, wages and by economic outlook. Companies, in turn, can access information about how to recruit, manage and train employees. Job Bank also provides a range of self-assessment tools, such as personality, interests and skills tests. Some are specifically targeted to Indigenous people, persons with disabilities, visible minorities, young people and veterans.

Job Bank is designed to support employment insurance policies and labour market objectives. As such, it has played an important role during the pandemic, both with respect to connecting laid off workers to vacant positions, and as a resource to inform them about available emergency benefit schemes. The website is an accessible, secure and unified platform used across Canada.

An evaluation found that between 2018 and 2019, over 1.2 million job opportunities were posted on Job Bank. Low-educated individuals (i.e. those with a high school degree or less) were overrepresented among users, while the age of users corresponded roughly to the age distribution of the Canadian labour market. The evaluation concluded that a majority of job seekers (60%) were satisfied with the job matching service of Job Board; however, employers and partners were more critical about its value-added, citing poor quality of job matches as a reason (Government of Canada, 2021^[22]).

Source: Government of Canada (2021^[23]), Job Bank, <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/home>; Government of Canada (2021^[22]), *Evaluation of the Job Match Service connecting Job Seekers to Canadian Employers. Final Report.*, <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/esdc-edsc/documents/corporate/reports/evaluations/job-match-connecting-job-seekers-employers/jobMatchReport-en.pdf>; OECD 2021 Policy Questionnaire 'Career Guidance for Adults in Canada', Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC).

Table 3.1. Online portals developed by the provinces and territories

Province	Name of website	Web address	LMI	Skills assessment	Job search advice	Job board	Information for disadvantaged groups
Alberta	Alis Alberta	https://alis.alberta.ca	x	x	x	x	x
British Columbia	WorkBC	https://www.workbc.ca/	x		x	x	x
Manitoba	Manitoba Career Development	http://www.manitobacareerdevelopment.ca/			x		x
	Manitoba Career Prospects	https://manitobacareerprospects.ca/					x
New Brunswick	NBJobs	https://www.nbjobs.ca/	x			x	x
Newfoundland and Labrador	Immigration, Population Growth and Skills	https://www.gov.nl.ca/ipgs/employ-support/for-individuals/				x	x
		https://www.gov.nl.ca/labourmarketinformation	x				
Northwest Territories	Career, Employment and Training Services	https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/en/services/career-and-employment	x				
Nova Scotia	Explore Careers	https://explorecareers.novascotia.ca/	x				
		https://novascotiaworks.ca/nsdc	x		x	x	
Ontario	Choose a career	https://www.ontario.ca/page/choose-career	x				
Prince Edward Island	Career Development Services	https://cdspei.ca/			x	x	
Quebec	Emploi-Québec	https://www.quebec.ca/emploi/	x		x	x	
	Emplois d'Avenir	https://www.emploisdavenir.gouv.qc.ca/	x				
Saskatchewan	SaskJobs – Career Services	https://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/jobs-working-and-training/saskjobs-career-services	x			x	

Source: Author's own compilation.

Box 3.3. Using innovative technology in career guidance services

Bob is an online career guidance tool used by the **French** public employment service, *Pole Emploi*. It leverages artificial intelligence (AI) to support people navigate their job search. Bob provides a tailored action plan and coaching, which aims to help adults overcome their barriers to employment. Users are asked to answer questions about their career aspirations, expected wage, experience or education level. On this basis, the tool proposes next steps users may want to take in order to reach their goals, for instance, to participate in training. Suggestions are based on different sources of data, including existing job classifications, vacancy data, data on job seeker pathways and employment outcomes.

SkillLab, a startup software company based in the **Netherlands**, has developed a mobile application that uses artificial intelligence to help individuals identify their skills, explore careers and apply for jobs. In particular, it allows a granular skills assessment that aims to capture adults' prior learning and employment experience and identifies skill gaps as well as relevant local training and employment opportunities. The application is available in different languages and particularly targeted at disadvantaged job seekers, such as refugees and migrants. It is designed to support career guidance advisors to personalise their services and better support their clients. The benefit of AI applications is that they are easily scalable and able to provide tailored suggestions for adults based on existing labour market information.

CareerLabsVR is a career guidance tool developed with support of the government of **Ontario** under the lead of the Employment and Education Centre, a partner of Employment Ontario. It allows young people and job seekers to explore career pathways through virtual reality (VR). Users can run simulations where they experience different professional roles in an interactive 3D environment. The initial simulation modules are designed to promote learning about in-demand careers in the steel and aluminium industries, for instance, including robotics technicians, process engineers, or construction welders. Further modules are developed for skilled trades and agricultural jobs. In the future, the virtual reality modules can be used by employment service providers across the province.

Source: Verhagen (2021^[24]), Opportunities and challenges of using AI for training, <https://doi.org/10.1787/22729bd6-en>; <https://www.bob-emploi.fr/>; <https://skilllab.io/en-us>; <https://careerlabsvr.com/>.

3.3. Holding providers accountable and monitoring outcomes

Governments have an interest in holding providers of publicly-funded career guidance accountable and monitoring the outcomes of services, to ensure high-quality services for citizens. Especially when contracting third-party service providers, governments want to ensure that funding is used for effective services that are in line with larger policy targets. Contracting out employment services, including career guidance offers many potential benefits: increased flexibility to scale capacity according to need, cost-effectiveness, and a better tailoring of services through specialised service providers (Langenbacher and Vodopivec, 2022^[25]). Achieving these benefits depends on the actual design and monitoring of the contracting arrangements that are put in place. The following section discusses two mechanisms that most provincial governments in Canada have in place to manage third-party provision of career guidance that is delivered as part of government-funded employment services: public procurement and outcome-based funding.

3.3.1. Provinces have public procurement processes to ensure the quality of career guidance

A common mechanism by the provinces to hold third-party providers of career guidance to account are public procurement processes. Contracted services often follow an application-based public tender, with an open call for proposals by third-party providers that are in line with particular policy objectives and programme requirements. Contracts spell out certain target outcomes and determine the type of reporting or monitoring mechanisms in place for a specified period of time, usually between 1 and 3 years. If third-party providers do not meet the target outcomes or their contractual responsibilities, they might not be selected in the next cycle of public procurement. In Nova Scotia, for instance, qualified organisations can apply to the NS Employment Assistance Program through a call for proposals. This programme sets out the specific requirements for service delivery, such as regular reporting on targets and activities, and the adherence to certain service standards. In Alberta, the accountability mechanism with third-party providers is particularly comprehensive, specifying clear roles and responsibilities (Box 3.4). Outcome-based contract management is also applied in Saskatchewan and Ontario.

Box 3.4. Procurement of career guidance service providers in Alberta

The Government of Alberta offers career guidance services through employment and training programmes delivered by contracted third-party providers. The Government posts a public request for proposals online. In the case of Workforce Partnership programs, which are set up in response to consultations with key stakeholders, the procurement process allows the Government of Alberta to react rather flexibly to a pressing labour market need.

If successful in the competition, service providers provide the defined service over a specified time period according to the terms and conditions specified in the contract. The Income and Employment Supports Policy Manual provides a framework of accountability and quality, determining the roles and responsibilities for external service providers in Alberta. If providers do not deliver the desired quality of service, their chances to be selected in the next round of public procurement are lower.

To measure the performance of service providers after the procurement process, the Government of Alberta conducts periodic evaluations, measuring the entry into employment or education and training by individuals who participated in the respective programme. Other indicators that are monitored include participation, completion and satisfaction of adults in the programmes.

Source: OECD 2021 Policy Questionnaire 'Career Guidance for Adults in Canada'; Government of Alberta (2021^[26]), *Income and Employment Supports Policy Manual*, <http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/AWOnline/3813.html> (accessed 16 September 2021).

While procurement processes and outcome-based contract management are valuable to ensure the accountability and quality of third-party service providers, their design matters. Unintentionally, these mechanisms can establish a culture of competition rather than collaboration and impose a significant administrative burden on third-party service providers. If resources of third-party providers are overly limited as a result, this may ultimately be to the detriment of service quality, and contribute to organisational instability and high staff turnover. A recent OECD working paper highlights the need to carefully consider questions related to the design and implementation of outcome-based contract management: fostering competition amongst potential providers, setting appropriate minimum service requirements and prices for different client groups, and ensuring the accountability of providers through monitoring and evaluations (Langenbucher and Vodopivec, 2022^[25]). Procurement and accountability mechanisms for third-party providers can be very positive interventions if they are linked to appropriate outcome measures that do not put an overly limited focus on rapid, and potentially temporary job placements.

Two in five OECD countries partially or fully subcontract public employment services, often including career guidance, to third-party providers. Examples from Australia and Belgium illustrate innovative design features that are possible for contracted employment and career guidance services (Box 3.5).

Box 3.5. Third-party provision of employment and career guidance services in the OECD

Outsourcing career guidance through vouchers in Flanders (Belgium)

The public employment services of the Belgian region of Flanders, called *Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding* (VDAB) has been outsourcing intensive coaching and mediation services for jobseekers, and issuing career guidance vouchers to employed individuals. Public procurement is linked to quality requirements and minimal service descriptions. Individuals have the right of up to two vouchers every six years, and each voucher offers four hours of subsidised career guidance. Clients can choose the provider they prefer. While the satisfaction rate with services is very high, one concern is that the vouchers do not reach vulnerable groups such as low-skilled workers.

The New Employment Services Trial in Australia

Australia has piloted a new model of service provision in Adelaide South in South Australia and the Mid North Coast in New South Wales between 2019 and 2021. The New Employment Services Trial (NEST) is in preparation to be launched mid-2022 across the country. Key aspects of the new service model are a focus on digital services on a comprehensive online platform, a payment model that considers the intensity of barriers to employment clients face when reimbursing third-party providers, as well as a new IT system.

Source: Langenbucher and Vodopivec (2022^[25]), Paying for results: Contracting out employment services through outcome-based payment schemes in OECD countries, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/c6392a59-en>; Department of Education Skills and Employment (2021^[27]), “NESA National Conference: The New Employment Services Trial and the OES the DESE and Provider Experience”, <https://www.dese.gov.au/collections/new-employment-service-trial-nest-guidelines> (accessed 23 January 2022).

In some OECD countries, providers are only eligible to provide publicly-funded career guidance if they hold a given certification or meet certain quality standards (OECD, 2021^[28]). The benefit of these approaches is an additional layer of quality assurance, often guaranteed by external review. In Austria, for example, providers of the country’s free career guidance programme must be certified by the special IBOBB (Information, Counselling and Orientation for Education and Career) certification. In France, career guidance advisors who participate in the national career guidance programme (*Conseil en évolution professionnelle, CEP*) have to conform to quality requirements (*cahier de charges*), which specify objectives, beneficiary groups, service provision, methods, and the skill requirements of advisors. In Korea, service providers that carry out the Employment Success Package Programme (ESPP) need to pass a comprehensive yearly performance evaluation by the government in order to participate in the programme the following year.

3.3.2. Monitoring the outcomes of career guidance services is increasingly linked to funding

Responses to the OECD 2021 Policy Questionnaire ‘Career Guidance for Adults in Canada’ indicate a general trend towards outcome-based funding. While many provinces specify target outcomes in contracts with third-party providers of career guidance services, only some directly link outcome measurements to funding. For some programmes in British Columbia, funding is directly tied to performance. That is, service providers receive payments when they meet certain predefined outcomes. In British Columbia’s Skills Training for Employment programme targeted at vulnerable and underrepresented populations, payments

are made on a per-participant basis at various progress markers (project initiation, completion, employment, and sustained employment).

In principle, outcome-based funding can have a strong steering function to incentivise high-quality services; however, attention needs to be paid to which particular indicators are tied to funding. Incentives to reduce time spent with individual clients and quickly place them into jobs might be unsustainable and more costly in the long run. For the most part, outcome-based funding is tied to hard outcomes, such as employment status, income levels or participation in education and training. Though harder to measure, tying funding to more subjective soft outcomes of career guidance - such as health and well-being, self-efficacy, social integration, or attitudinal changes - is a promising way to incentivise high-quality services.

One way to use funding to incentivise high-quality services is to provide extra funding as a reward for excellent performance. This is implemented in Nova Scotia, where a performance-related top-up of the base funding encourages third-party providers to improve and innovate their services (Box 3.6).

Box 3.6. Performance-related funding for employment services in Nova Scotia

In Nova Scotia, all adults can access employment assistance services, which include career guidance. These services are delivered by a network of third-party service providers under a common brand called Nova Scotia Works, which consists of 16 community-based employment service providers across the province. At the base of this service system is the Nova Scotia Works Accountability Framework, which is part of an ongoing policy process for strategic planning and outcome monitoring.

Service providers that are associated with the Nova Scotia Works network receive top-up performance achievement funding when their clients achieve outcome targets towards sustained labour force attachment. Key performance indicators are monitored and if certain outcomes are met, this results in additional funding to reward the achievement of certain outcomes. These indicators include, for example, the job placement of underrepresented clients, or sustained labour force attachment (employed after 24 weeks, employed after 52 weeks). Providers receive these payments as an additional grant to the base funding that covers programme and administrative costs. All payments are per-client / per-outcome payments.

The performance-related revenue allows employment service providers to fund activities outside of direct service provision, for instance, community capacity building, and investment in project innovation or quality improvement.

Source: OECD 2021 Policy Questionnaire 'Career Guidance for Adults in Canada'; Employment Nova Scotia (2019^[29]), Nova Scotia Works Accountability Framework Strategic Plan; Employment Nova Scotia (2021^[30]), Nova Scotia Employment Assistance Services Policy.

While some provinces and service providers only collect minimum information on the outcomes of career guidance services, others employ a more sophisticated range of indicators and measurement tools. Standard indicators are the participation and completion rates of programmes, as well as the employment outcomes of adults after having participated in a programme. To support transparent contracting of third-party service providers, for instance, Saskatchewan has adopted the PRIME tool for skills and employability assessment, reporting and analysis (Box 3.7), and Newfoundland and Labrador, in collaboration with community partners, is in the process of doing so. In Alberta, career and employment services that are funded under the Career and Employment Information Services (CEIS) Grant have an internal dashboard of key performance indicators (KPIs). These are used to monitor service provision and client outcomes and are updated quarterly. KPIs include, for instance, the total number of clients who participated in CEIS (overall and by service type), the share of former

CEIS clients who found employment after participation, and the average and median monthly incomes of former CEIS client who found employment after participating in CEIS.

As outcomes of services are already measured in many parts of Canada, there is potential to establish a better evidence base through evaluations. Rather than using outcome measurements as a mere reporting tool, they can be used to establish a rich evidence base about the impact of career guidance. Evaluations help identify good practice as well as areas for improvement in the system of career guidance service delivery. Where career guidance is offered as part of more general employment services, it might be hard to single out its impact. Experiences from other OECD countries show that external bodies can provide unbiased monitoring and a systematic evaluation of services, including quality audits of providers and impact evaluations of career guidance programmes (OECD, 2021^[28]). A prior OECD study recommended that the Future Skills Centre could establish quality standards to improve the impact evaluation culture in Canada (2020^[31]).

Box 3.7. The PRIME Employability Assessment Tool

The Performance Recording Instrument for Meaningful Evaluation (PRIME) is an employability assessment tool used to assess individuals' employability strengths and needs and to measure the effect of services. It was developed by the Canadian Career Development Foundation (CCDF) in co-operation with provincial career guidance service providers. PRIME functions as a data management software that allows to track, report and analyse participant data and outcomes. It has been adopted to support service provision and an evaluation of the impact of career guidance in Saskatchewan.

PRIME allows career guidance advisors to collect data on employment and training outcomes, but also the quality of job matches and incremental progress towards employability. PRIME uses an Employability Dimensions Framework which maps broad categories of adults' needs and strengths, for instance, practical barriers to employment or indicators around skills needs. By measuring progress along a continuum, rather than only focusing on whether or not someone became employed or entered a training programme, it captures a richer picture of the impact of career guidance services.

What sets PRIME apart from other outcome measurement systems is that it not only provides meaningful insights for the funders of career guidance services, but is also designed to be a user-friendly tool that is used on a daily basis by practitioners to inform their practice, as well as for the clients themselves to see the progress they have made.

Source: OECD stakeholder interviews.

3.4. Standardising training and qualifications of career guidance advisors

The training and qualifications of career guidance advisors are perhaps the most essential ingredient to high-quality services. The following section discusses the requirements and regulations Canadian provinces and territories have in place for the practice of career guidance. It compares them to other OECD countries and deliberates on possible steps towards greater professionalisation, including a federal-level certification for career guidance advisors, called Career Development Practitioners (CDPs) in Canada.

3.4.1. Career guidance advisors are not a legally regulated occupation in Canada, except in Quebec

Career guidance advisors in Canada are generally required to hold tertiary qualifications in a related field, including psychology, education or social sciences, but do not need specialised education or training in career guidance. A 2019 CERIC survey of 1 350 career guidance advisors across Canada found that 41% held a Bachelor's degree, 35% a Master's degree and 18% a College certificate or diploma (CERIC, 2019^[32]). In Quebec, guidance counsellors belong to a regulated occupational group and are required to hold a specialised diploma and a license to practice (Box 3.8).

There are exceptions in Canada where employers require career guidance advisors to have certain minimum level education, or a specific type of education or training. Usually, this depends on the specific service provider, or professional role in question. For instance, secondary school guidance counsellors in Ontario require specific advanced qualifications and must take part in ongoing professional development. In New Brunswick, the minimum level of education for a career guidance role is high school graduation plus 6 years of relevant work experience; however, the majority of applicants hold a Bachelor's degree. In British Columbia, each government-funded programme has its own set of criteria for funding, which can include requirements for career guidance advisors' training and qualification. The Government of Alberta does not require career practitioners to be certified to work within government services, but some employers prefer to hire certified career development practitioners.

Five provinces offer a voluntary professional certification (Alberta, British Columbia, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Ontario) for career guidance advisors. Practitioners can acquire the certification through a recognition of prior learning procedure, and are then allowed to carry the title of Certified Career Development Practitioner (CCDP) (for further detail, see Table 3.2).

There is a separate process of certification for *career counsellors*, which is a related but distinct profession from career development practitioners (CDPs) in Canada. The approach that career counsellors take might be considered more therapeutic, with a particular consideration of mental health issues. While there is overlap in the roles of career development practitioners and career counsellors, the scope of practice, the required competencies and road to certification are distinct. The following sections focus on certification for career development practitioners, who “help individuals navigate learning and employment transitions across the lifespan” (Canadian Career Development Foundation and Canadian Council for Career Development, 2021^[33]).

Quebec's hybrid model is an outlier in the regulatory landscape for career guidance advisors in Canada. Guidance counsellors, called *conseillers et conseillères d'orientation*, are a legally regulated professional group subject to specific occupational entry requirements (Box 3.8). While their areas of practice are similar to career counsellors in the rest of Canada, guidance counsellors play an important role in public service provision in Quebec, where the practice of all career guidance-related activities are reserved for them. All other career guidance advisors, including employment counsellors (*conseillers et conseillères en emploi*), are not subject to regulation in Quebec.

Box 3.8. The hybrid model of occupational regulation of career guidance in Quebec

In Quebec, guidance counsellors (*conseillers et conseillères d'orientation, C.O.*) are a professional group with a history of regulation through the occupational code of Quebec. The regulatory body is the *Ordre des conseillers et conseillères d'orientation du Québec (OCCOQ)*. OCCOQ sets entry requirements and also monitors the practice of its members according to the duties, obligations, values and ethics the law foresees for the occupation. In contrast to the other provinces, guidance counsellors are regulated by the occupational code of Quebec. In 2021, the OCCOQ had 2 619 members, of whom 48% worked in the educational sector, 16% in employment services and 14% in private consultancies.

Graduates with a relevant Master's degree in guidance counselling, career counselling, counselling psychology or *sciences de l'orientation* are automatically admitted to the profession, while those with a different educational background are subject to an application for admission by equivalence. Once admitted, members of the OCCOQ receive a licence that entitles them to carry the occupational title of C.O., and to exercise activities that are restricted to the profession. Their core services consist of counselling, guidance and career development for people of all ages and backgrounds, in particular for clients with mental or neuropsychological disorders, and physical or cognitive disabilities. In this respect, they are similar to *career counsellors* in the rest of Canada.

In Quebec, C.O.s are considered a separate occupational group from career guidance advisors who offer more general employment and career development services. Employment counsellors (*conseillers et conseillères en emploi*) and other career guidance advisors are not subject to an occupational license and can have a variety of degrees and educational backgrounds. While these professional groups do not currently have access to a certification, the recently founded *Association Québécoise des Professionnels du Développement de Carrière* (Quebec Association of Career Development Professionals) aims to increase their recognition.

Source: OCCOQ (2021^[34]), Ordre des conseillers et conseillères d'orientation du Québec, <https://www.orientation.qc.ca/> (accessed 5 August 2021); OCCOQ (2021^[35]), Rapport Annuel 2020/2021, <https://www.orientation.qc.ca/medias/iw/Rapport-annuel-OCCOQ-2020-2021.pdf> (accessed 22 September 2021); <https://www.aqpdcc.com/> (accessed 18 October 2021).

Box 3.9. The federal-level Competency Profile for Career Development Practitioners

The Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners (S&Gs) were launched in 2001, following a comprehensive process of stakeholder consultation, and have been updated several times since. The federal government, through Human Resources Development Canada, funded their development as a voluntary competence framework in the field of career guidance. Being the first country to introduce such a framework, the Canadian S&Gs also formed the basis of an international competency framework by the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG).

The S&Gs have been a widely used competence framework that has underpinned most career guidance training programmes as well as the available provincial certifications across Canada, with the exception of Quebec. In Nova Scotia, for instance, the S&Gs are the foundation of what is known as the 'Nova Scotia Profile', the competency profile against which individuals are assessed for certification. Beyond training and certifications, some employers in certain fields use the S&Gs for job postings and the identification of training needs.

Respondents to the OECD policy questionnaire reported that the S&Gs have been inconsistently applied across organisations, and that there is scope to make them more accessible, relevant, and better known among career guidance advisors. This is the aim of the most recent initiative to develop a new Competency Profile for Career Development Professionals and to develop a pan-Canadian certification model. Building on consultations across Canada, the new Code of Ethics and Competency Profile for Career Development Professionals will underpin the establishment of a federal-level certification standard. It remains to be seen how they will be implemented across Canada.

Source: Bezanson, Hopkins and Neault (2016^[36]), "Career guidance and counselling in Canada: Still changing after all these years", *Canadian Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy*, 50(3), <https://cjc-rcc.ucalgary.ca/article/view/61123/pdf>; Canadian Career Development Foundation and Canadian Council for Career Development (2021^[33]), *The Canadian Standards & Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners (S&Gs)*, <https://career-dev-guidelines.org/> (accessed 18 October 2021); <http://ccdp-pcdc.ca> (accessed 20 October 2021); OECD 2021 Policy Questionnaire 'Career guidance for adults in Canada'.

3.4.2. Voluntary provincial certifications are competency-based and follow a recognition of prior learning process

Five provinces have voluntary certifications for career guidance advisors available: Alberta, British Columbia, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Ontario. The certifying bodies are the professional associations of career guidance advisors in the respective province. The criteria for certification and re-certification vary slightly from province to province but are grounded consistently in the Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners (Box 3.9). There is a mobility agreement and harmonised practices across these five bodies, so that Certified Career Development Practitioners (CCDPs) can move to another province without having to re-certify. In some provinces where certification is not yet available, including Saskatchewan and Manitoba, the professional associations have agreements for their practitioners to be certified in another province. Table 3.2 provides an overview of the existing certifications of career development practitioners in the different provinces.

The certification process in all five provinces is competency-based and follows a recognition of prior learning model. In practice, this means that a mix of relevant formal education and prior experience in the field is required. For practitioners with a Master's degree in an area related to career development, usually around one year of work experience is required in a career development role. For practitioners

with very short or no formal education in a relevant field, a longer period of work experience in career development is required (up to 5 years of experience). Relevant formal education could be degrees and coursework in psychology, sociology, education, adult education and training, human resource management, labour economics, immigrant settlement, counselling or social work. While the precise requirements differ, voluntary certifications follow a similar approach across all five provinces.

As part of the recognition of prior learning approach to receive a professional certification, individuals must show documentation of previous work experience and education in career development. Often, career development associations ask applicants for a C.V. and job description from the current employer, as well as professional references. Applicants also have to demonstrate that they fulfil the competences outlined in the federal-level Competency Profile and show that they completed courses on ethics and professional conduct (usually 10 hours or coursework) as well as career development theories (usually 20 hours of coursework). In some cases, an evaluative assignment is required.

As certifications are organised and granted by provincial professional associations of career guidance, continuing membership with the respective association is also generally required. This includes a yearly membership fee and comes with opportunities for professional exchange and development. Generally, Certified Career Development Practitioners (CCDPs) need to renew their certification every 3 years. Professional associations of career guidance demand a minimum of 30 to 100 hours of continuing professional development, usually every 3 years, in order to keep the certification status.

Table 3.2. Certifications for career development practitioners across Canada

Province or territory	Assessment	Re-certification and mandatory professional development	Membership, Certification and Re-certification fees	Certifying body
Alberta (including the Northwest Territories)	Based on application and completion of 2 courses in career development (40h)	Every 3 years, minimum 60 hours of professional development per three year period	CAD 138 Yearly membership CAD 150 Certification fee CAD 100 Re-certification	https://www.careerdevelopment.ab.ca
British Columbia (including Yukon)	Based on application and completion of 2 courses in career development (30h)	No re-certification necessary, minimum of 25 hours of professional development every year	CAD 130 Yearly membership CAD 158 Certification fee	https://www.bccda.org
New Brunswick	Based on application and evaluation of 4 completed courses in career development (80h)	Every 3 years, minimum 30 hours of professional development per three year period	CAD 50 Yearly membership CAD 150 Certification fee CAD 75 Re-certification	http://www.nbcda-g-qadcnb.ca
Nova Scotia	Based on application, work experience assessment, structured interview, and multiple-choice exam	Every 3 years, minimum of 60 hours of professional development per three year period	CAD 150 Yearly membership CAD 500 Certification fee CAD 250 Re-certification	https://nscda.ca/
Ontario	Based on application and completion of 2 courses in career development (30h)	Every 3 years, minimum of 60 hours professional development per three year period	CAD 50 Yearly membership CAD 225 Certification fee	https://cdpcbo.org

Source: OECD Policy questionnaire 'Career guidance for adults in Canada' and information by the Canadian Career Development Foundation (CCDF).

The certification is not a legal requirement to work in the profession in any province. Nevertheless, governments or employers may ask their staff or those of their third-party service providers to acquire the certification or prefer to hire certified practitioners for particular roles. This is the case in public employment services in Nova Scotia, for instance, where the government mandates the certification for certain positions in the Nova Scotia Works Centers through their funding program policies for employment assistance services. The Alberta government does not require its career guidance staff to be certified to work within the public employment service, but some employers prefer to hire Certified Career Development Practitioners. Albertan service providers are generally encouraged to have staff with specialised career guidance experience and training. In Quebec, where the system is a bit different as described in Box 3.8, some career guidance roles in the PES are restricted to advisors who have the C.O. license.

3.4.3. Occupational regulation of the career guidance field is uncommon in the OECD, but continuing training for practitioners can help improve service consistency

OECD countries generally do not regulate career guidance advisors as a distinct occupational group (OECD, 2021^[28]). Although not determined in legislation, countries often define minimum training and qualifications for career guidance advisors in specific programmes. Generally, a relevant tertiary degree is required for adult career guidance advisors. Furthermore, advocacy by professional associations towards more regulation and professionalisation of the practice is an ongoing process in many countries (Gough and Neary, 2021^[37]). Professionalisation could involve mandatory certifications (a license) or establishing voluntary certifications. Both could serve to give greater status to the profession, though evidence on the impact on quality is ambiguous (Box 3.10).

Increasingly across the OECD, specialised degrees on career guidance are available. In Germany, for example, dedicated bachelor's and master's degrees are offered by the German Federal Employment Agency through the University of Applied Labour Sciences (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2021^[38]). Most employed career guidance specialists with the German Federal Employment Agency have obtained this qualification. Similarly, different educational institutions in Australia offer specialised degrees or certificates for career guidance, such as a certificate, graduate diploma or masters in career development (Career Development Association of Australia, 2021^[39]). Other countries that have developed specialised academic degrees in career guidance include the Netherlands, Finland, Poland, Iceland, the UK, Switzerland or the United States (Cedefop, 2009^[40]). In Canada, a career guidance degree does not currently exist outside Quebec. Creating one could enrich the landscape of training opportunities for career guidance advisors.

As in Canada, some OECD countries have competence frameworks in combination with voluntary certifications in place, as a way to make service provision more consistent. The rationale for regulating the practice of career guidance in this way is that the skills and qualifications of career guidance advisors are key for the success of adults in employment and learning. An example is the European Career Guidance Certificate (ECGC). Career guidance advisors in the United Kingdom can be registered by the United Kingdom Career Development Institute (CDI). Applicants have to show that they have a minimum qualification in career guidance, adhere to the CDI's Code of Ethics and undertake a minimum of 25 hours of professional development every year.

Box 3.10. Evidence on the effects of occupational regulation

Evidence from other occupations across OECD countries indicates that occupational regulations (voluntary certifications or mandatory licenses) have an ambiguous impact. More stringent occupational regulation of a professional group has shown to have an upward effect on wages within the profession. They also tend to increase prices for customers or clients and can lead to lower employment, productivity and labour mobility in the respective occupations (Bambalaite, Nicoletti and von Rueden, 2020^[41]; Hermansen, 2019^[42]; Koumenta and Pagliero, 2017^[43]).

There is little empirical evidence demonstrating a positive link between the stringency of occupational regulations and the quality of services (Carroll and Gaston, 1981^[44]; Kleiner and Kudrle, 2000^[45]; Powell and Vorotnikov, 2011^[46]; Kleiner, 2017^[47]; Koumenta, Pagliero and Rostam-Afschar, 2019^[48]). A historical analysis from the United States found that the introduction of licenses for midwives between 1900 and 1940 reduced maternal mortality by 6 to 7 percent, suggesting improvements in the quality of care (Anderson et al., 2016^[49]). A study commissioned by the European Commission, however, suggests the opposite: the relaxation of entry requirements to legal occupations in Poland, for instance, showed little effect on the overall quality of legal services as measured through client surveys, while it led to an increase in the number of practicing lawyers. At the same time, an increase in educational requirements for driving instructors in the UK was linked to higher prices for driving lessons, worse student performance in driving tests and a decrease in the availability of the service (Koumenta, Pagliero and Rostam-Afschar, 2019^[48]).

Recent OECD work (2020^[50]) recommends considering whether occupational entry regulations are applied in a way that is proportional to the end they are supposed to achieve. The findings suggest that the focus of regulatory approaches should be shifted from the quality of inputs to the quality of outcomes. In the realm of career guidance, this means that instead of prioritising mandatory qualification requirements for practitioners, the focus should be on whether the outcomes of services have the desired quality and are in line with long-term policy goals. Another key area of policy action recommended by the OECD (2020^[50]) is to extend mutual recognition of occupational regulations across jurisdictions. Recognition of career guidance certifications across provinces and territories could prevent artificial mobility restrictions for practitioners. The creation of a federal-level certification standard in Canada is an important step in this direction.

Independent of the certification for practitioners, continuing professional development is available in most province for those providing career guidance. Training programmes are generally in line with the federal-level Competency Profile (Box 3.9). Provincial professional associations of career guidance and professional organisations operating at a federal level, such as CCDF, CERIC or Career Professionals Canada (CPC), form an active network of associations, hosting numerous conferences, webinars and trainings. Most opportunities for continuing professional development are open to members and non-members alike, including external service providers or Indigenous practitioners. In New Brunswick, the participation in training courses is mandatory for government staff in some career guidance roles, and all approved training courses for certification are based on the federal-level Competency Profile. In Prince Edward Island, the provincial career guidance association receives government funding to provide workplace training for external service providers.

Standardising continuing professional development and making it more available is one way to professionalise and improve the practice of career guidance in Canada. Continuing education and training enables practitioners to keep up to date with developments in the field. For those who hold a provincial certification, some degree of continuing professional development is mandatory. But more could be done to make career guidance training available for a broader group of career and

employment service providers. Many career and employment service providers in the OECD offer regular training opportunities to professionalise their staff. The Employment Service of Slovenia offers an annual catalogue of internal professional courses and trainings (in person or e-learning) and there is budget available to refer counsellors to external professional courses, trainings, conferences, study visits, and seminars. In Estonia, Eesti Töötukassa (the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund) organises training sessions and provides guidelines and information materials for advisors, and pays for the education of their employees who want to pursue a professional qualification as career counsellors (OECD, 2021^[28]).

Provincial and territorial governments could strengthen and systematise continuing education and training for advisors who provide career guidance, in particular for those working in publicly-funded services. Ideally, they do so in co-operation with professional associations and organisations in the field of career guidance, and building on the Competency Profile for Career Development Professionals (Box 3.9). The updated federal-level Competency Profile can be used to benchmark advisor's skills to a common standard, and identify training needs in specific areas. An important aspect of continuing training is the use and interpretation of labour market information (see Section 3.2), which is also among the key skills outlined by the Competency Profile. A voluntary, pan-Canadian certification for career guidance can set a common competence standard and improve labour mobility for practitioners

The Canadian government has funded the first part of an initiative to develop a voluntary pan-Canadian certification for career development practitioners (CDPs) that would be available across all provinces and territories. This certification is based on the updated national Competence Framework for Career Development Professionals. The Canadian Career Development Foundation (CCDF) is leading the initiative, in tandem with several federal-level committees. The first project phase aimed at defining the career guidance profession, updating the existing competence framework for career development practitioners (the S&Gs) and developing a pan-Canadian professional certification programme (Canadian Career Development Foundation and Canadian Council for Career Development, 2021^[33]). In doing so, the initiative relied on wide stakeholder engagement across the country with more than 1000 participants, in particular aiming at involving groups that were not part of previous S&G consultations. A policy questionnaire completed by members of the Canadian National Certification Committee sheds light on possible benefits and limitations of a pan-Canadian certification for career development practitioners (Box 3.11).

The second phase of the project focuses on implementation. Currently, a pan-Canadian certification programme is under development, in parallel to the development of a certifying body at the federal level. Together, these developments could provide the necessary infrastructure to support sustainable implementation of a pan-Canadian certification. Continuity in funding would also be essential.

Box 3.11. Benefits and limitations of a pan-Canadian certification for career development practitioners

Responses to the OECD 2021 Policy Questionnaire ‘Certification for career development practitioners in Canada’ provide insights into the perceived benefits and limitations of a pan-Canadian certification.

Most stakeholders are convinced that it would strengthen the profession by creating a consistent, recognisable standard for the competences of career development practitioners (CDPs). For CDPs, a pan-Canadian certification could align professional competences across provinces and territories, strengthen their professional identity, and improve job mobility across Canada. The professional community as a whole expects to see more public recognition and higher trust in career guidance, and a simplified, central system to regulate the practice, for instance, to resolve grievances. A federal-level certification might particularly benefit smaller provinces or territories which currently do not have the resources to implement their own certification programme. For clients or users of career guidance, a pan-Canadian certification programme promises higher consistency and quality of services.

There are also perceived limitations of a pan-Canadian certification for career development practitioners. First, experts were concerned there may not be sufficient resources to fully implement and administer the programme. Also, there might be limited interest and funding by employers or provider organisations to adopt certification as a requirement for their staff, as it could increase costs for services. Although not mentioned in the questionnaire responses, establishing the certification as a requirement might also create entry barriers, potentially limiting the supply of practitioners in the field. Generally, occupational regulation is a provincial responsibility, which means that the adherence to a pan-Canadian certification needs to remain on a voluntary basis.

Consistent with previous OECD research (2020^[50]), the stringency and scope of application of a pan-Canadian certification should be proportional to the end of achieving high-quality, inclusive services for adults in Canada. Establishing a pan-Canadian certification that remains voluntary might provide a foundation to improve consistency in service delivery, while avoiding undue barriers to entry and loss of flexibility.

Note: The Policy Questionnaire was sent to all members of the National Certification Steering Committee.

Source: OECD 2021 Policy Questionnaire ‘Certification for career development practitioners in Canada.’

Assessment and recommendations

Monitoring outcomes supports oversight of service quality by provincial and territorial governments, and could be done in a more systematic way. Monitoring outcomes also helps private providers to document and track their performance. Evidence-based digital tools such as PRIME are promising to help improve outcome monitoring. Outcome-based contract management with third-party providers has many advantages, although its particular design and implementation matters for incentivising sustainable, high-quality service provision.

At present, there is not a strong enough link between the outcomes that providers monitor and more long-term policy objectives within provinces and territories. Career guidance policy goals can be part of an overarching framework for employment or skills development of adults. A good example is the framework that is being developed for Nova Scotia Works, where career guidance is part of a larger employment strategy.

- Provinces and territories should systematically monitor the outcomes of publicly-funded career guidance services in line with long-term policy objectives.

Continuous learning matters for those who provide career guidance as much as it matters for their clients. Continuing professional development for career guidance advisors allows them to stay informed about recent labour market developments, as well as about recent developments in the field. While continuing professional development is a requirement for those who are certified or licensed (in the case of Quebec), more could be done to offer training for advisors who work in publicly-funded services. In order to reinforce a common standard of service provision, training should be underpinned by the federal-level Competence Profile for career development.

- Provinces and territories should strengthen training for advisors providing career guidance in publicly-funded services, especially on the use of labour market information.

Requirements for the training and qualifications of career guidance advisors vary across Canada, which contributes to inconsistency in service delivery across and within provinces and territories. At the same time, Canada is a front-runner in many ways: in creating the first competence framework for practitioners; establishing a federal-level certification initiative; and maintaining an active professional community through career guidance associations and other stakeholder organisations. While making certifications a requirement to work in the career guidance field could have unintended negative effects and create entry barriers, a voluntary, pan-Canadian certification can remove mobility barriers for practitioners and help to establish a common standard of practice.

- Federal, provincial and territorial governments should in co-ordination support and fund the implementation of a voluntary, pan-Canadian certification for career development practitioners.

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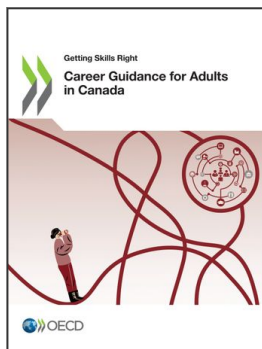
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Note

¹ Among the survey respondents who received career guidance services and were satisfied or very satisfied with them, 1 469 were living in urban, and 135 in rural areas. Similarly, 1 436 respondents in this group were classified as “prime age” (age 25-54), and 169 as “older” (above age 54). Further details about sample sizes and methodology can be found at the end of the report in Annex B.



From:
Career Guidance for Adults in Canada

Access the complete publication at:
<https://doi.org/10.1787/0e596882-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2022), “Promoting high-quality career guidance service provision in Canada”, in *Career Guidance for Adults in Canada*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/bbc117d4-en>

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