

Evaluation of the Global Skills Strategy (GSS)



July, 2022

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Executive Summary

Background

This report presents the findings of the evaluation of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada's (IRCC) Global Skills Strategy (GSS). The evaluation was conducted in fulfillment of requirements under the Treasury Board's Policy on Results and covered the period of June 2017 to February 2020.

The evaluation's primary focus was to assess the early implementation and outcomes of the GSS and report on the results story to date. The evaluation assessed the extent to which GSS has contributed to the attraction of global talent, the effectiveness of concurrent outreach and engagement activities, and, where feasible, the economic impact of the Strategy.

Summary of the findings

The evaluation found that GSS meets the needs of Canadian companies making a significant investment and wanting rapid entry into Canada for highly skilled foreign workers to remain competitive. While many competitor countries offer expedited processing of work/residence permits for highly skilled workers and their accompanying spouses and/or dependants, Canada's inclusion of short-term work permit exemptions, is relatively unique.

While IRCC does not currently collect information on the significant investments in Canada made by referred employers under the GSS, the evaluation was able to examine benefits related to the temporary workers and their dependants who were processed under the GSS.

In response to the evaluation findings, and to support continuous program improvement, three recommendations are proposed.

Recommendation 1: Support for GSS Referred Employers

The Dedicated Services Channel (DSC) had conducted many and diverse outreach events across Canada and efforts have been made in terms of promotion and outreach to employers. Those efforts promoted the value of the various features of the GSS. The evaluation revealed that referred employers (eligible for DSC) account manager services and support) tended to be more aware of the various features of the GSS relative to their non-referred counterparts. The evaluation revealed that while DSC services and support are useful in increasing awareness and understanding of immigration program options available for many referred employers, they may be underutilized and missing some employers who could benefit from them.

DSC services and support, while designed not only to provide assistance for work permits processed on an expedited basis under GSS but also to support other employer-based programs, are offered only to a subset of employers who have been referred on the expectation that they will make a significant investment in Canada. IRCC defines significant investment in very broad terms to allow for flexibility in its application. However, in the absence of clear metrics and monitoring by IRCC, it is difficult to measure what investments have been made and the associated benefits brought about by the GSS.

Recommendation 1: IRCC, in consultation with referral partners, should:

- a) Review the profile of referred employers under the GSS and ongoing employment sector needs to identify gaps and opportunities to optimize the reach of DSC services and support, as well as resource utilization; and
- b) Develop indicators and a monitoring strategy to capture information on the significant investments made by referred employers.

Recommendation 2: Implementation and Monitoring

Short-term work permit exemptions are generally perceived as useful by different stakeholders but, compared to other GSS features, awareness of the work permit exemptions was relatively low, even among Border Services Officer (BSO) who are responsible for assessing eligibility for these exemptions at Port of Entry (POE).

Also, these work permit exemptions are not systematically tracked making it difficult to fully measure their usefulness and benefits.

In addition, it is also important to note that for Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), the issuance of a visitor record with the necessary information is not mandatory. It is at the discretion of the BSO to issue it or not, and these inconsistencies are compounded by the lack of knowledge and/or training of POE staff regarding GSS work permit exemptions.

This poses an extra challenge for GSS, because for foreign nationals, it is important to obtain a visitor's record. Without a visitor record that clearly indicates that the foreign national is authorized to work without a work permit under GSS, it is impossible to obtain a Social Insurance Number and without that, to be paid by the employer. And, for IRCC, it is difficult to establish clear reports on foreign nationals who have used short-term work permit exemptions. In particular, Global Case Management System (GCMS) is not used as a tool to document who gets the exemptions, when, and where. The lack of metrics and information makes it difficult to report on the full impact and outcomes of GSS and to identify potential integrity issues.

Recommendation 2: IRCC should work with the CBSA, on promoting awareness of the work permit exemptions among BSOs, and on consistency in their administration at the POE (including issuance of the visitor record) to help strengthen client service, as well as monitoring and, reporting capacity.

Recommendation 3: Design

In terms of design, some emerging issues and opportunities were highlighted by the findings. The GSS was created following extensive consultations with Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) industry partners who wanted a fast-track work permit process for highly skilled workers (National Occupational Classification (NOC) 0 & A), which has led to a different interpretation of “highly skilled” compared to other IRCC programs and initiatives, such as Canadian Experience Class and Atlantic Immigration Pilot. This narrow interpretation is less aligned when looking at the overall Canadian economy and labour needs as some occupations (e.g.: the health sector) are excluded (NOC B). Targeting some NOC B occupations in certain sectors where there shortages would be helpful for employers in meeting their needs.

However, extending beyond NOC 0 & A would require consideration of resource needs, particularly in light of processing pressures in all IRCC business lines, and an updated assessment of the national and regional labour needs in Canada.

Also, while facilitating the transition to permanent residency is not a program objective, there is considerable interest among work permit holders in transitioning to permanent residency.

Recommendation 3: In order to maximize the benefits of the Strategy, IRCC should explore options and develop a plan to enhance the GSS that considers:

- a) Expanding GSS eligibility for expedited work permit processing to other skilled occupations in NOC B in sectors and regions where there are labour needs;
- b) Resource implications for potential expansion and better meeting the processing time commitment; and,
- c) Augmenting connections between GSS and permanent residence pathways as a means to further contribute to the recruitment and retention of highly skilled foreign talent.

Evaluation of Global Skills Strategy (GSS) – Management Response Action Plan (MRAP)

Support for GSS-Referred Employers

The Dedicated Services Channel (DSC) had conducted many and diverse outreach events across Canada and efforts have been made in terms of promotion and outreach to employers. Those efforts promoted the value of the various features of the GSS. The evaluation revealed that referred employers (eligible for DSC account manager services and support) tended to be more aware relative to their non-referred counterparts. The evaluation revealed that while DSC services and support are useful in increasing awareness and understanding of immigration program options available for many referred employers, they may be underutilized and missing some employers who could benefit from them.

DSC services and support, while designed not only to provide assistance for work permits processed on an expedite basis under GSS but also to support other employer-based programs, are offered only to a subset of employers who have been referred on the expectation that they will make a significant investment in Canada. IRCC defines significant investment in very broad terms to allow for flexibility in its application. However, in the absence of clear metrics and monitoring by IRCC, it is difficult to fully measure what investments have been made and the associated benefits brought about by the GSS.

Recommendation 1: IRCC, in consultation with referral partners, should:

- a) Review the profile of referred employers under the GSS and ongoing employment sector needs to identify gaps and opportunities to optimize the reach of DSC services and support, as well as resource utilization; and**
- b) Develop indicators and a monitoring strategy to capture information on the significant investments made by referred employers.**

IRCC agrees with this recommendation.

The definition of significant investment was developed to target employers that would make a significant investment in Canada, as well as publicly funded research chair holders who would conduct world-class research in Canada. The policy objective was not about targeting those who need DSC account manager service, but rather those that in principle should be supported by the Government of Canada because of their significant contribution to this country.

Looking forward, IRCC acknowledges that the DSC account manager service could also be beneficial towards other, new policy objectives such as supporting employment sectors with projected labour shortages and to support smaller employers.

To date, it has not been a condition of referral for employers to be willing to report on their progress or realization of significant investments. Employers often consider this sensitive information and are reluctant to release it. However, we acknowledge the Department needs a way to monitor whether the DSC pillar is contributing towards the ultimate expected outcome of the GSS, which is economic benefits to Canada from global talent.

Action	Accountability	Completion date
Action 1A: Undertake a review of significant investment definition and employment sector needs in consultation with relevant stakeholders.	Lead: Domestic Network (DN) Support: International Network (IN) and Immigration Branch (IB)	Q3 2022–2023
Action 1B: Undertake a review of referral criteria and assessment of optimal DSC resource utilization	Lead: DN Support: IN and IB	Q4 2022–2023

Action	Accountability	Completion date
Action 1C: Explore indicators and monitoring strategy to capture information on the significant investments made by referred employers, authorities to collect,	Lead: DN Support: IN and Centralized Network (CN)	Q1 2023–2024
Action 1D: Contingent on senior management approval and resources - develop and implement a plan for DSC services and support based on the outcome of previous action items,	Lead: DN Support: IN & IB	Q1 2023–2024

Implementation and Monitoring

Short-term work permit exemptions are generally perceived as useful by different stakeholders but, compared to other GSS features, awareness of the short-term work permit exemptions under the GSS, was relatively low, even among Border Services Officers (BSOs) who are responsible for assessing eligibility for these exemptions at Port of Entry (POE). Also, GSS work permit exemptions are not systematically tracked making it difficult to fully measure their usefulness and benefits.

In addition, it is also important to note that for Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), the issuance of a visitor record with the necessary information is not mandatory, it is at the discretion of the BSO to issue it or not, and these resulting inconsistencies are compounded by a reported lack of knowledge and/or experience of POE staff regarding GSS work permit exemptions.

This poses an extra challenge for foreign nationals as without a visitor record that clearly indicates that they are authorized to work without a work permit under GSS, it is impossible to obtain a Social Insurance Number (SIN) and without that, to be paid by the employer. For IRCC, it is difficult to track and develop meaningful reports on the number of foreign nationals who have used short-term work permit exemptions. In particular, Global Case Management System (GCMS) is not used as a tool to document who gets the exemptions, when, and where. The lack of metrics and information makes it difficult to report on the full impact and outcomes of GSS and to identify potential integrity issues.

Recommendation 2: IRCC should work with CBSA on promoting awareness of the work permit exemptions among BSOs, and on consistency in their administration at the POE (including issuance of the visitor record) to help strengthen client service, as well as monitoring and, reporting capacity.

IRCC agrees with this recommendation

IRCC has previously worked with CBSA to promote awareness of the GSS work permit exemption among Border Services Officers (BSO), including by strengthening Program Delivery Instructions and issuing Operational Reminders.

IRCC acknowledges we can build upon previous efforts with CBSA towards promoting greater awareness of the exemption among BSOs and increasing issuance of Visitor Records (VR) while it is not required to be monitor or track them. Addressing the recommendation is contingent on CBSA resource capacity (i.e., BSOs would need to issue the VR consistently to achieve client service as well as monitoring and reporting objectives).

IRCC, through GSS outreach activities and account manager services, regularly encourages referred employers to ensure their employees seeking to use the GSS work permit exemption have pertinent documentation on hand to present to BSOs at Port of Entry, as well as to request Visitor Records. IRCC can further enhance efforts to increase awareness about these practices.

Work permit exemptions are granted under existing regulation (R186, which itemizes the various situations where a work permit exemption is appropriate) or a public policy as is the case for the short term work permit exemptions under the GSS. However, GSS work permit-exempt clients who apply from a visa required country using the TR-eApp/IRCC Portal are captured; a code is automatically created in GCMS for this group. Whereas, clients from visa-exempt countries cannot be captured (travelers who need to submit an Electronic Travel Authorization (eTA) who arrive to Canada by air). Travellers do not need an eTA when arriving by land or sea (including a cruise ship), therefore it is currently impossible to collectively track GSS work permit-exempt clients (i.e. both visa and visa exempt foreign nationals)

When an exemption is granted by a BSO, the foreign national would be deemed to have met the criteria and no further documentation is required as those individuals are not entering the Canadian labour market. In select cases and as needed, a Visitor Record can be issued to facilitate the foreign national, e.g. short-term researchers under the GSS. The expediency and ease of entry is enabled by the work permit exemption while the trade-off is that work permit exemption data is not collected.

Action	Accountability	Completion date
<p>Action 2A: Explore, develop and implement a plan with CBSA to promote awareness of the GSS short-term work permit exemptions among BSOs to increase consistency in issuance of the visitor record at port of entry, where required. Also, further sensitize foreign workers to request a Visitor Record upon entry, with justification.</p> <p>To achieve this, Program Delivery Instruction for GSS will be made that includes language requesting Officers to issue VRs. Further, to track the exemption with the issuance of VRs, a GCMS Change Request will be made to capture these clients by adding a new case type to the system.</p>	<p>Lead: Immigration Program Guidance Branch (IPG) Support: CBSA and DN</p>	<p>Q4 2022–2023</p>
<p>Action 2B: Explore opportunities to promote more consistent application of GSS work permit exemptions to improve client service and monitoring,</p>	<p>Lead: IB Support: IPG</p>	<p>Q4 2022–2023</p>

Design

In terms of GSS design, some emerging issues and opportunities were highlighted by the findings. The GSS was created following extensive consultations with Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) industry partners who wanted a fast-track work permit process for highly skilled workers (National Occupational Classification (NOC) 0 & A). This has led to a different interpretation of “highly skilled” compared to other IRCC programs and initiatives, such as Express Entry, the Canadian Experience Class and Atlantic Immigration Program. This narrow interpretation is less aligned when looking at the overall Canadian economy and labour needs, as some occupations (e.g.: the health sector) are excluded (NOC B). Targeting some NOC B occupations in certain sectors where there are labour needs and interests would be helpful for employers.

However, extending beyond NOC 0 & A would require consideration of resource needs, particularly in light of processing pressures in all IRCC business lines, and an updated assessment of the national and regional labour needs in Canada.

Also, while facilitating the transition to permanent residency is not a program objective, the evaluation revealed a considerable interest among work permit holders in transitioning to permanent residency.

Recommendation 3: In order to maximize the benefits of the Strategy, IRCC should explore options and develop a plan to enhance the GSS that considers:

- a) Expanding GSS eligibility for expedited work permit processing to other skilled occupations in NOC B in sectors and regions where there are labour needs;**
- b) Resource implications for potential expansion and better meeting the processing time commitment; and,**
- c) Augmenting connections between GSS and permanent residence pathways as a means to further contribute to the recruitment and retention of highly skilled foreign talent**

IRCC agrees with this recommendation

The two week processing pillar is the most recognizable feature of the GSS and made possible by deliberate focus on the most highly-skilled global talent (i.e. NOC 0 & A). NOC B holds the largest amount of applications globally, with many NOC B occupations already prioritised under special programs or priority processing groups (i.e. health care). However, given evolving labour market dynamics, IRCC agrees to examine this pillar, as it pertains to the feasibility of including certain in-demand NOC B occupations.

Shorter processing times and more focused service for the targeted group of clients were enabled by elements including selective eligibility criteria, special process design, and funding for resources. IRCC successfully met and surpassed the two week processing commitment when volumes were within funded levels; however, due to various challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic and increased application volumes, the Department has not met the commitment since early 2020. IRCC recognizes the need to first examine operations and explore the appropriate level of resources required to be able to deliver on current commitments, or else reprioritize commitments, before being able to assess the feasibility of expanding eligibility.

With regards to connections between GSS clients and permanent residents (PR), IRCC promotes the opportunity for a pathway to permanent residence in the current outreach on GSS, such as through the Canadian Experience Class and Federal Skilled Workers. Workers whose applications are processed under the GSS bring desirable skills to Canada, and the opportunity for workers to establish as PRs could be an attractive factor for foreign employers looking to invest in Canada longer-term. GSS clients are highly-skilled and highly mobile and while clear connections to PR can be explored for those who have expressed a desire to become permanent residents, there is currently no reliable benchmark for what a successful transition rate or goal could be.

Action	Accountability	Completion date
Action 3A: Action 3A: Explore feasibility of expanding criteria for expedited work permit processing in conjunction with a review of operations and resources.	Lead: IB & DN Support: CN, IN & IPG	Q1 2023–2024
Action 3B: Undertake assessment of resource implications stemming from 3A [i.e., expanding eligibility] vis-à-vis ongoing processing time commitment and implement selected approach.	Lead: CN, IN & IPG Support: IB & DN	Q1 2023–2024
Action 3C: Explore options to augment connections between GSS and pathways to permanent residency.	Lead: IB & DN Support: CN, IN, IPG	Q2 2023–2024 (Contingent on approach once 3A & 3B completed)

List of Acronyms

BSO	Border Services Officer
CBSA	Canada Border Services Agency
DSC	Dedicated Service Channel
ESDC	Employment and Social Development Canada
GCMS	Global Case Management System
GSS	Global Skills Strategy
GTS	Global Talent Stream
IRCC	Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
LMIA	Labour Market Impact Assessments
NOC	National Occupational Classification
PA	Principal Applicant
POE	Port of Entry
SIN	Social Insurance Number
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
TFW	Temporary Foreign Workers

Strategy Profile

Global Skills Strategy (GSS) description

The Global Skills Strategy (GSS) was launched in June 2017 to provide employers with a faster and more predictable immigration process. The intent of the Strategy is to:

- Secure an environment that attracts and competes for the “best and brightest” of global talent;
- Focus on filling employment gaps in managerial and professional (National Occupational Classification (NOC) 0, NOC A); and
- Ensure that temporary economic immigration provides a net benefit to Canada.

There were a total of 34,353 Labour Market Impact Assessments (LMIA) Exempt and 2,564 LMIA Required Principal Applicants (PA) who applied between June 2017 and February 2020¹.

The Strategy also supports the overall objectives of the Temporary Workers and Temporary Foreign Workers Programs, those being to avoid the displacement of Canadians who are able to do the same job, wherever possible, and to maintain public confidence in the immigration system.



GSS pillars

The GSS is co-led by the departments of Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), and consists of four pillars, three of which are led by IRCC:

1. Expedited, two-week processing of work permits and related visas for eligible applicants and their dependants;
2. Short-term work permit exemptions for short-duration high skilled work (up to 15 or 30 days per calendar year) and brief academic stays (up to 120 days per calendar year);
3. Personalized immigration support through a Dedicated Service Channel (DSC) to referred employers making significant investments in Canada looking to hire foreign talent; and
4. Expedited 10-business day processing of (LMIA) through the Global Talent Stream (led by ESDC).

¹ 2018 and 2019 are the only full years for data. 2017 includes June to December applications (based on received date). 2020 includes January to February applications (based on received date).

Evaluation Context and Background

Overview

This report presents the results of the Evaluation of the GSS.

The evaluation was conducted by IRCC's Evaluation and Performance Measurement Division between February 2020 and November 2021, to assess the early implementation and outcomes of the GSS with a view to reporting on the results story to date and informing future directions for the Strategy.

The design and approach to the evaluation were determined in consultation with IRCC branches involved in the design, management and delivery of this initiative. The terms of reference were approved by IRCC's Performance Measurement and Evaluation Committee in February 2020.

Evaluation focus

The evaluation assessed the extent to which GSS has contributed to the attraction of global talent, the effectiveness of concurrent outreach and engagement activities on educating employers on Canadian immigration pathways, and, the economic benefits related to the Strategy.

Evaluation scope

The evaluation covered the period from the launch of the Strategy in June 2017 up to the most current information available at the time of its conduct (expected partial 2020 data). The evaluation scope encompassed various components of the GSS, including program and client outcomes, Strategy design and implementation, partnership management and IRCC/DSC outreach and the impact on uptake. Where possible, results by the various pillars were disaggregated. The fourth pillar of the GSS, the Global Talent Stream, led by ESDC, was not in scope².

Evaluation questions

To what extent is the GSS responding to an identified need?

To what extent do two-week processing and short-term work permit exemptions contribute to Canada's attractiveness?

To what extent has the DSC contributed to an increased awareness and understanding of immigration program options for employers?

To what extent has the GSS been implemented effectively?

What have been the economic benefits to Canada thus far as a result of the GSS?



² ESDC will be responsible for evaluating this stream and LMIA's, which could be included in a broader TFW Program evaluation once the Global Talent Stream reaches maturity and steady state.

Methodology

The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach, where data was collected from a range of sources to ensure multiple lines of evidence when analyzing data and formulating findings. Four main methods were applied to conduct this evaluation:

Document review

The evaluation team conducted an in-depth review of literature and both internal and external documents relevant to the GSS. These included GSS foundational documents, program and policy documents, operational statistics and other departmental and stakeholder documentation. The evaluation also reviewed approaches adopted by other countries seeking to attract and retain global talent.

Key informant interviews

Interviews were conducted with 39 key informants between April and September 2020. They included representatives from IRCC (28), the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) (2), referral partners (6) and employers (3). Interviews were conducted by telephone or by videoconference using Microsoft Teams.

Administrative data review

The evaluation analyzed data from the Global Case Management System (GCMS) to develop applicant and employer profiles, as well as examine issuance of work permits for temporary workers and related permits (work and study) and visas for their dependants under the GSS. Data were based on applications received between June 2017 and February 2020 that were approved by March 2021.

Surveys

Four surveys were undertaken for this evaluation to obtain information from a diverse range of stakeholders. Surveys were available in English and French and administered online.

Survey of work permit applicants: Conducted between February and March 2021, respondents were approved LMIA-exempt work permit applicants under the GSS who applied between June 2017 and February 2020. Survey invitations were sent to 17,277 applicants with an email address³. There were a total of 3300 respondents, representing a response rate of about 19%⁴. Of these, 3064 respondents indicated using their work permit (93%) and 236 indicated not using their work permit (7%). Respondents who reported not using their work permit completed an abbreviated version of the survey. See Annex E for additional information on applicant survey respondents.

Survey of employers: Conducted in May 2021, respondents were employer representatives who supported an LMIA-exempt work permit application under the GSS and/or were referred to the DSC. Survey invitations were sent to 3933 employer representatives with an email address⁵. There were a total of 340 respondents, representing a response rate of approximately 9%⁶. Of these, 53 respondents were referred employers (16%), 217 respondents were not referred employers (64%), and 70 respondents did not know their organizational status (21%).

Survey of referral partners: Conducted Between September and October 2020, survey invitations were sent to 53 referral partners, identified by IRCC program representatives. There were a total of 19 respondents, representing a response rate of about 36%. Of these, 4 had made no referrals at the time of the survey (21%), 8 had made between 1 and 5 referrals (42%), 4 had made between 6 and 10 referrals (21%) and 3 had made more than 10 referrals (16%). See Annex G for additional information on referral partner respondents.

Survey of CBSA staff: Conducted between September and October 2020, survey invitations were sent to 5816 BSOs and Superintendents from across Canada, identified by CBSA⁷. There were a total of 616 respondents, representing a response rate of approximately 11%. Of these, 522 were BSOs (85%) and 94 were Superintendents (15%). See Annex F for additional information on CBSA staff survey respondents).

³ Data were cleaned to remove email addresses of employers and immigration consultants or lawyers, as well as duplicate email addresses.

⁴ Based on a population of 34353, the margin of error for the survey was $\pm 1.62\%$, with a confidence level of 95%.

⁵ Data were cleaned to remove email addresses of immigration consultants or lawyers, as well as duplicate email addresses.

⁶ Some employer representatives were from the same organization.

⁷ Based on a list provided by CBSA, as of July 2020.

Limitations and Considerations

Overall, the evaluation design employed complementary quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to reduce information gaps and produce integrated findings based on multiple lines of evidence. While some limitations were identified, the evaluation implemented a variety of mitigation strategies to ensure findings were reliable and could be used with confidence.

COVID-19 pandemic context

Data collection for the GSS evaluation coincided with the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic (March 2020). IRCC was deeply impacted by this situation. It affected both IRCC's client-facing and internal operations, leading to challenges and changes for delivering departmental programs, including work permit programs implicated under the GSS, as well as for its internal processes, workforce and workload. To mitigate issues caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the evaluation methodology and timelines were adjusted. Data and program requests were adjusted and sequenced to allow flexibility for program branches to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic situation. Data collection was adapted to a new virtual work environment, with interviews conducted by telephone and videoconference. Survey deadlines were extended, and some surveys incorporated additional questions and context to better understand the pre-pandemic results as well as pandemic impacts.⁸

Representativeness of surveys

To the extent possible, analyses were conducted to examine the representativeness of survey respondents relative to their respective populations. Based on these analyses, survey respondents cannot be considered representative of their corresponding populations. However, some level of consistency was found, with key areas of alignment and misalignment noted below. To this end, survey findings have been triangulated with other lines of evidence throughout the report to ensure that conclusions based on these findings are sufficiently supported.

⁸ See Annex H for more

⁹ Age, marital status and skill level were at time of application for their work permit under GSS.

¹⁰ Though still the highest percentage, Ontario region was underrepresented in the survey (-10%). Other regions were representative (within 5%).

Survey of Work Permit Applicants: Survey respondents were aligned with the population of LMIA exempt work permit holders under the GSS (percentage comparisons within 5%) in terms of application year, gender, age, marital status and skill level⁹. However, they were less aligned with the population in terms of provincial/territorial region of intended destination, citizenship, NOC and LMIA exemption categories. Of note, those destined to Ontario (though still the highest percentage) were underrepresented in the survey (-12%) and those destined to Quebec were overrepresented (+8%). In addition, those with Indian citizenship (-27%) and those under the C12 intra-company transferee LMIA exemption category (-25%) were underrepresented in the survey; however, they were still the highest percentages for survey respondents within these population dimensions. Lastly, those with NOC codes in technology sector occupations were generally underrepresented, while those with NOC codes in university sector occupations generally overrepresented (relative to the top 10 NOC codes for the population).

While information on the population dimensions for the other survey groups was limited, a few comparisons could be made.

For the **CBSA staff survey**, respondents were aligned with the population of CBSA staff (percentage comparisons within 5%) in terms of their job role (i.e., BSO versus superintendent), as well as mode of travel for which they were responsible (i.e., air, highway or marine), though somewhat misaligned in terms of regional representation.¹⁰

For the **referral partner survey**, respondents were overrepresented in terms of those making 6 to 10 referrals (+6%) and somewhat underrepresented in terms of those who had made no referrals (-5.4%). Survey respondents were also somewhat misaligned in terms of regional representation – overrepresented for Atlantic region (+6%) and underrepresented for Ontario region (-6%), though this was still the highest percentage for this population dimension.

For the **employer survey**, the exact population number could not be determined with certainty, so the evaluation was unable to examine the representativeness of survey respondents.¹¹

¹¹ The employer name is an open text field in GCMS. Thus, the same employer can be known under multiple variations of the same name. As such, the employer survey was sent to employer contacts based on unique email addresses, so the survey was sometimes sent to multiple contacts for the same employer when there were multiple unique email addresses on file.

Profile of Principal Applicants Overview

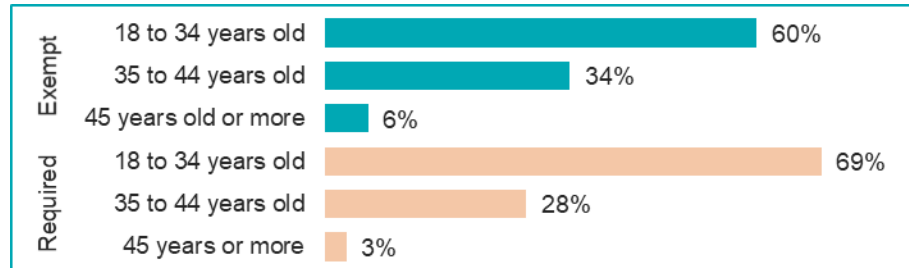
Overall

There were a total of 34,353 LMIA exempt and 2,564 LMIA required Principal Applicants (PA) who applied between June 2017 and February 2020¹² and were approved for a work permit under the GSS¹³. The approval rate for work permit applications under the GSS was very high during this period – overall, it was 92% in 2018 and 93% in 2019 for PAs under the GSS.¹⁴

Sociodemographic characteristic

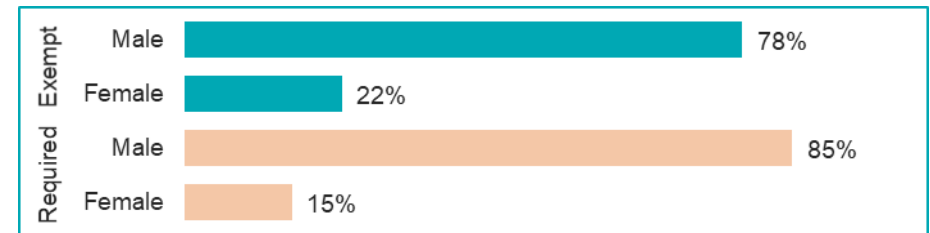
- A large percentage of PAs under the GSS were between 18 to 34 years of age at the time of application for their work permit.
- The majority of PAs under the GSS were male.
- About two-thirds of PAs under the GSS were married or common-law at the time of application for their work permit.
- A large percentage of PAs under the GSS originate from India.

Figure 1: Age of GSS LMIA exempt PAs vs LMIA required PAs



Source: GCMS

Figure 2: Gender of GSS LMIA exempt PAs vs LMIA required PAs



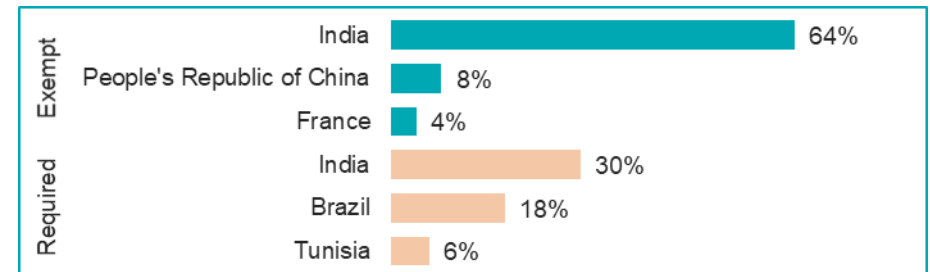
Source: GCMS

Figure 3: Marital status of GSS LMIA exempt PAs vs LMIA required PAs (married or common-law)



Source: GCMS

Figure 4: Top 3 countries of citizenship of GSS LMIA exempt PAs vs LMIA required PAs



Source: GCMS

¹² 2018 and 2019 are the only full years for data. 2017 includes June to December applications (based on received date). 2020 includes January to February applications (based on received date).

¹³ Numbers are based on work permit applications under the GSS received between June 2017 and February 2020 that received a final decision by March 2021.

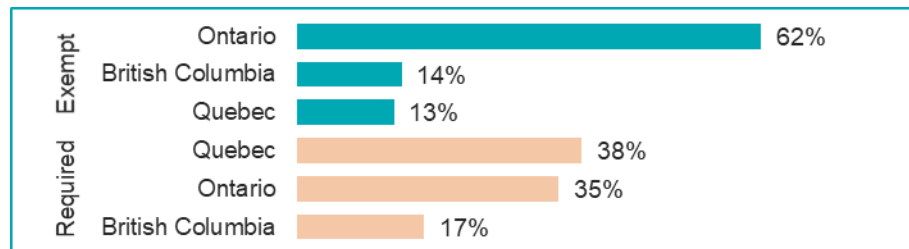
¹⁴ Source: OPP-BRIA GSS Summary Report – GCMS data as of December 8, 2021.

Profile of Principal Applicants – Destination in Canada and Occupation

Province of destination

A large percentage of **LMIA-exempt PAs** were destined to Ontario, while similar proportions of **LMIA-required PAs** were destined to Quebec and Ontario.

Figure 5: Province of destination of GSS – LMIA exempt PAs vs LMIA required PAs

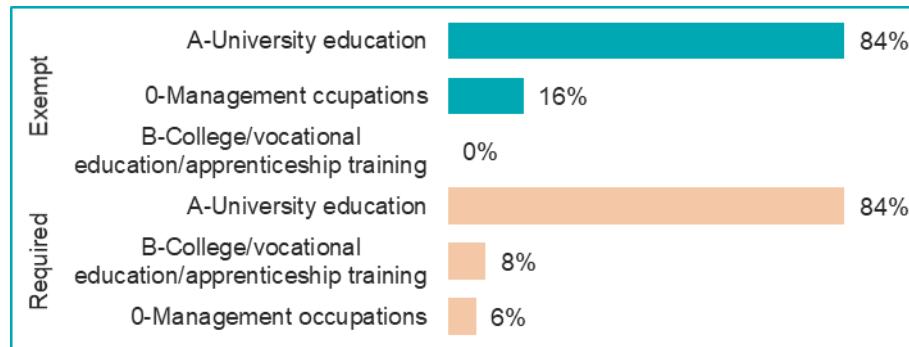


Source: GCMS

National Occupation Classification (NOC) skill level

PAs are university-educated.

Figure 6: NOC skill level – LMIA exempt PAs vs LMIA required PAs



Source: GCMS

Top 5 LMIA exemption categories

Overall, 93% of PAs during the reporting period for the evaluation were LMIA-exempt. The exemption for intra-company transferees (C12) accounted for 66% of all LMIA exemptions.

C12 Intra-company transferees (including GATS)	66%
C44 Post-doctoral Ph.D. fellows and award recipients	12%
C20 Reciprocal employment	7%
C22 Academic exchanges (professors, visiting lecturers)	3%
T13 Canada-provincial/territorial	3%

Top 10 National Occupation Classification codes

The Strategy was particularly beneficial to Canadian employers in the computer system design and information technology (IT) related fields. This is consistent with a broader need in Canada to recruit talent in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) domain.

Table 1: Top 10 National Occupation Classification codes – LMIA exempt PAs vs LMIA required PAs

Exempt	%	Required	%
Computer Programmers and Interactive Media Developers 2174	21%	Computer Programmers and Interactive Media Developers 2174	30%
Information Systems Analysts and Consultants 2171	18%	Software Engineers and Designers 2173	26%
Software Engineers and Designers 2173	14%	Information Systems Analysts and Consultants 2171	19%
University Professors And Lecturers 4011	10%	Graphic Designers and Illustrators 5241	6%
Computer and Information Systems Managers 0213	7%	Web Designers and Developers 2175	6%
Post-Secondary Teaching And Research Assistants 4012	4%	Computer and Information Systems Managers 0213	4%
Specialist Physicians 3111	2%	Database Analysts and Data Administrators 2172	2%
Professional Occupations in Business Services to Management 1122	2%	Computer Engineers 2147	2%
Financial Auditors and Accountants 1111	2%	Systems Testing Technicians 2283	1%
Database Analysts and Data Administrators 2172	1%	Senior Managers-financial, Communications 0013	0%

Source: GCMS

Profile of Employers

Overall

A list of the Top 50 employers was developed based on the number of approved work permit applicants (both LMIA exempt and required) under the GSS, received between June 2017 and February 2020. Refer to Annex B for the full list.¹⁵

- Cognizant, a Toronto-based technology firm, is the top ranked employer with an estimated 4552 (12%) work permits approved under the GSS.

Review of the emails frequently associated with applications for this employer showed consistent use of an immigration lawyer, as well as internal immigration-related capacity. Similar trends were also found for other employers on the Top 50 list (see Annex B).

Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services, Tech Mahindra Limited, and Capgemini rank second to fifth, respectively. These tech-based companies represent an estimated 22% of all work permit applications.

Universities are key beneficiaries, representing an estimated 38% of the top 50 employers. Common NOCs associated with universities were:

- University Professors and Lecturers (4011),
- Post-Secondary Teaching And Research Assistants (4012), and
- Specialist Physicians (3111).

Other firms, such as Amazon, Deloitte, Microsoft, Google, Skip the Dishes, and TELUS are also among the top 50.

Out of the top 50 employers, 20 (40%) also appear on the list of employers referred to the DSC. 15 of those employers (30%) are universities. Several of the larger, well-known companies listed above also appear on the list.

Table 2: Referred employers to the DSC who ranked among the top 50 employers, ranked by the number of approved work permit applicants they had under the GSS

Rank	Referred employers	Approved applicants
1	Cognizant	4,552
6	University of Toronto	782
9	Amazon	518
11	McGill University	512
12	University of Alberta	467
14	University of British Columbia	439
15	HCL Axon Technologies Inc.	390
23	University of Waterloo	256
24	Université Laval	227
25	Western University	213
26	Université du Québec	197
33	University of Ottawa	147
36	McMaster University	135
37	McKinsey Company Canada	128
38	York University	126
39	Université de Sherbrooke	123
40	SFU Academic Relations	122
41	Skip The Dishes	118
47	Huawei	100
48	Concordia University	96
49	Carleton University	93
50	University of Manitoba	92

Source: GCMS

¹⁵ Numbers of approved work permit applicants by employer name should be considered estimates, as the same employer can be known under multiple variations of the same name in

GCMS. While work was done to regroup the most frequent employer names supporting work permit applicants under the GSS, these efforts were not exhaustive.

Need for the GSS

Finding 1: There is a demonstrated and ongoing need for the GSS in light of current trends and an increasingly competitive global race for talent.

Need for the GSS

Technological innovation is expected to continue redefining the global economy, affecting the size and composition of labour demand in the future. Increasingly, jobs will require higher levels of skills, placing a premium on educated and highly-skilled workers. Traditional competitors, such as the United States and Australia, as well emerging competitors across the world, are implementing innovative and ambitious attraction and retention strategies to attract the world's best and brightest talent – particularly in STEM fields.

Administrative data and a document review show that work permit applicants under the GSS are educated, fill targeted labour market and skills shortages, contribute to innovation, and have the skills needed to quickly integrate and adapt to the Canadian labour market.

All interviewees noted the importance of the GSS in remaining competitive in this context. Pathways for quick entry to Canada for highly-skilled foreign workers reduce the risk of Canadian businesses

Furthermore, economic immigrants are a central pillar of Canada's COVID-19 economic recovery efforts: they are educated, fill targeted labour market and skills shortages, contribute to innovation, and have the skills needed to quickly integrate and adapt to the Canadian labour market. The GSS supports such efforts.

Labour market projections

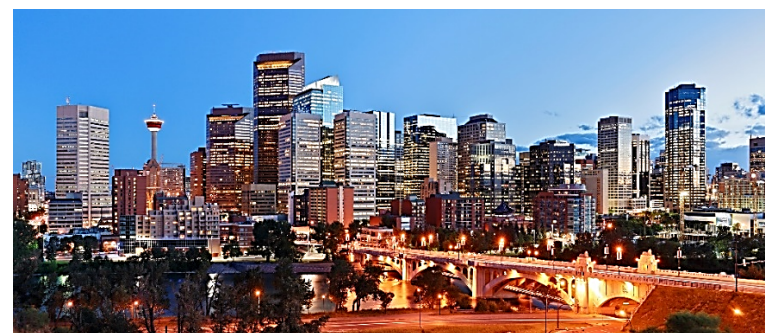
According to ESDC's Final Assessment of Projected Labour Market Conditions (2019–2028), shortages are projected for half of the top ten occupations that benefitted from the GSS over the evaluation period.

The Canadian Occupational Projection System (COPS) 2019 to 2028 projections indicate that the number of school leavers seeking employment in the top five occupations benefitting from the GSS is expected to remain relatively stable, despite increasing job vacancies. See Annex C for more information. Annual projections of new immigrants seeking jobs by occupation revealed similar trends, demonstrating a continued need for the key features of the GSS, and enhanced attraction and retention efforts at large.

Table 3: Projections for the top occupations under which foreign workers benefitted from the GSS (2019–2028)

Top occupation	Benefit
Computer programmers and interactive media developers (2174) (NOC A)	Shortage
Information systems analysts and consultants (2171) (NOC A)	Shortage
Software engineers and designers (2173) (NOC A)	Shortage
University professors and lecturers (4011) (NOC A)	Balance
Computer and information systems managers (0213) (NOC O)	Balance
Post-secondary teaching and research assistants (4012) (NOC A)	Balance
Specialist physicians (3111) (NOC A)	Shortage
Professional occupations in business services to management (1122) (NOC A)	Balance
Financial auditors and accountants (1111) (NOC A)	Balance
Database analysts and data administrators (2172) (NOC A)	Shortage

Sources: IRCC administrative data and the Canadian Occupational Projection System (COPS) 2019 to 2028 projections



Global Competitiveness

Finding 2: The GSS contributes to Canada's competitiveness in attracting highly-skilled temporary foreign workers. While some challenges with the work permit application process were noted, the two-week processing commitment under the GSS stood out as a particularly appealing feature for stakeholders.

Canada in the global context

Key features of the GSS are each seen to have contributed to Canada's competitiveness, though in varying degrees. Interviewees emphasized the benefits of faster processing times and predictability of outcomes when attracting and recruiting high-skilled Temporary Foreign Workers (TFW). Stakeholders suggest that delays in attraction and recruitment can hinder innovation, and limit market opportunities, sales growth, and job creation.

A 2019 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report assessing the attractiveness of OECD countries to high-skilled migrant workers ranked Canada fifth out of 37 countries, behind Australia, Sweden, Switzerland, and New Zealand. While it was noted that the implementation of GSS provides simpler and faster procedures for some subgroups (NOC 0, A), the overall structure remains complex.

Interview data and document review noted links between Canada's attractiveness to high-skilled TFWs and the political climate in the United States. Whereas Canada launched new programs to facilitate the entry of highly-skilled workers, the United States adopted more restrictive immigration processes.

A high-level international comparison revealed that Canada's approach to attracting high-skilled TFWs is aligned with those of its competitors, including its emphasis on STEM occupations. Several of the countries reviewed offer highly-qualified workers expedited processing of their work/residence permits and appeal to accompanying spouses and/or dependants. However, Canada's inclusion of short-term work permit exemptions is relatively unique, though some countries do offer facilitated processes for short-term employment. See Annex D for more details.

Factors affecting decision-making to work in Canada

While the GSS creates conditions to help facilitate opportunities for work in Canada for high-skilled foreign nationals, there are many other individual considerations that affect their decision to do so. Applicants surveyed were asked to reflect on the factors that influenced their decision to work in Canada, and reported various factors. However, when asked to identify those that were most important, the following factors were indicated most frequently:

- My employer wanted me to work at the office in Canada (18%).
- To support my plans for becoming a permanent resident of Canada (17%).
- The quality of life in Canada (16%).
- Canada offers good opportunities for work (11%).
- My employer only has offices in Canada (6%).

Applicants surveyed were also asked if they had any other job offers from companies outside of Canada at the time that they applied for their Canadian work permit under the GSS. Though not entirely attributable to the GSS, 42% indicated that they also had other job offers from companies outside of Canada and still decided to work in Canada.

Global Competitiveness — Two-week Processing

Appeal of the two-week processing commitment

Relative to the other features, the two-week processing commitment emerged as a more compelling element of the GSS among applicants and employers surveyed.

- 80% of applicants surveyed found the two-week processing period to be appealing, while 71% found the possibility of bringing their spouse and/or children to Canada with them appealing.¹⁶
- When employers surveyed were asked about the usefulness of the GSS features to their organization in attracting high-skilled TFWs:
 - 83% felt that the two-week service standard for processing of work permit applications was useful;
 - 81% felt that the two-week service standard for processing permits and related visas for spouses and dependants was useful;
 - 56% felt that the short-term work permit exemptions for short-duration high skilled work (up to 15 or 30 days) were useful; and
 - 53% felt that the short-term work permit exemptions for brief academic stays (up to 120 days) were useful.¹⁷
 - 66% of referred employers¹⁸ felt that the DSC services and support were useful.¹⁹

While referral partners surveyed generally felt that the GSS features were useful to employers in attracting high-skilled TFWs at least to a moderate extent, the two-week commitment for processing work permit applications and for processing permits and related visas for spouses and dependants stood out as particularly useful in their view.

According to interviewees, the two-week commitment facilitates more effective human resource and mobility planning, and entices high-skilled TFWs to see Canada as a work destination of choice. Interviewees also reported that this feature is aligned with the current pace of business, allowing employers to recruit high-demand, low-availability talent in a more timely fashion and with greater certainty.

Processing times under the GSS

To be considered for two-week processing, the applicant must have submitted a complete e-application package on or after June 12, 2017, along with supporting documentation. If additional documents are required, the application is no longer eligible for expedited processing, and the processing time commitment does not apply.

In terms of results, the department met this commitment for PAs in the first two full years of the Strategy, processing 80% of cases²⁰ within 13 days in 2018 and within 10 days in 2019. However, there have been challenges with processing for dependants (with 80% of cases processed within 14 days in 2018 and within 16 days in 2019) and since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic which at the time of the evaluation continued to negatively affect IRCC operations.²¹

In addition, it was noted that the work permit caseload with its boutique programs is challenging operationally, and that during the pandemic, additional boutique programs have further eroded processing efficiencies. More time is spent parsing the caseload to find the cases that need to be prioritized for processing which would otherwise have been spent in straight processing.

Almost three-quarters of applicants surveyed (74%) were satisfied with the time it took IRCC to process their work permit application. However, employers surveyed were generally less satisfied, with 55% of those who had hired through the LMIA-exempt work permit process and 44% of those who had hired through the LMIA-required work permit process indicating satisfaction.²²

¹⁶ Includes those who reported the feature's appeal to a moderate or great extent.

¹⁷ Includes those who reported the feature's appeal to a moderate or great extent and excludes those who reported don't know.

¹⁸ Only a small subset of employers who are referred based on the expectation that they will make a significant investment in Canada are eligible for services and support from a DSC account manager.

¹⁹ Includes those who reported the feature's appeal to a moderate or great extent and excludes those who reported don't know.

²⁰ These were cases meeting the no additional document condition.

²¹ Source: OPP-BRIA GSS Summary Report – GCMS data as of December 8, 2021 – GSS Processing Times (Approved & Refused) - 80% Processed within X Days or Less.

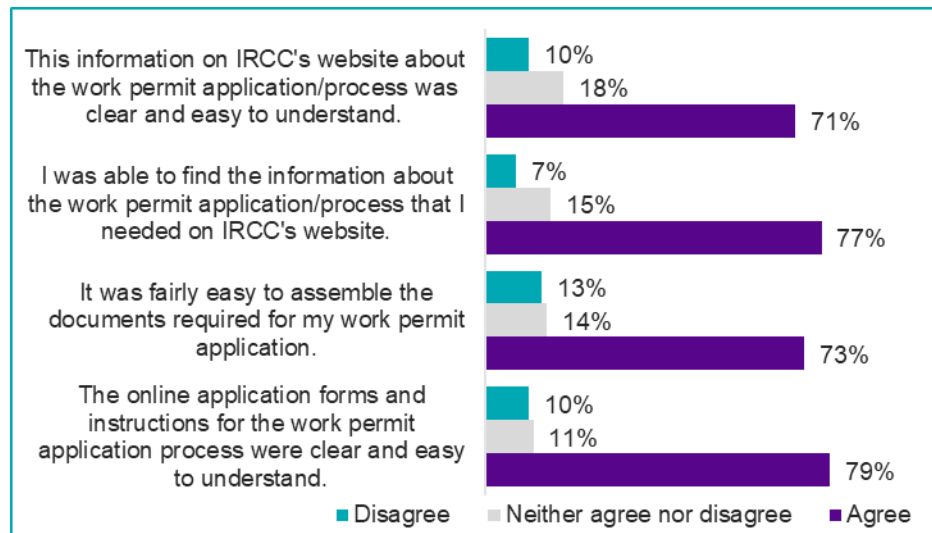
²² Includes those who reported being satisfied and very satisfied.

Global Competitiveness – Work Permit Application Process

Work permit application process

While some applicants surveyed reported receiving help to fill out their work permit applications (47%)²³, many generally agreed²⁴ that the information on IRCC’s website, as well as the application form and instructions for the work permit application process are clear and easy to understand.

Figure 7: Perceptions of applicant survey respondents on work permit application information and process



Source: Applicant Survey

The survey of applicants also requested feedback on how IRCC can improve the GSS work permit process moving forward. Respondents frequently expressed frustrations with the existing work permit renewal/extension process, and mentioned difficulties associated with the closed nature of their work permits.

Employers surveyed reported challenges getting information and updates from IRCC on skilled temporary foreign worker candidates being hired by their organization (55%), as well as with long IRCC work permit application processing times (66%).²⁵ While a little over half of employers surveyed (54%) agreed that eligibility requirements for expedited processing of GSS work permit applications are clear and easy to understand, while 19% disagreed.²⁶

Interview data and applicants surveyed mentioned the exclusion of in-Canada applicants from expedited processing and the rigidity surrounding work permit conditions as notable barriers to talent mobility within Canada. Moreover, it was felt that applicants falling outside of the two-week processing commitment, due to incomplete or complex files, do not receive adequate and timely updates on the status of their applications. Correspondingly, operational statistics showed that 22% in 2018 and 19% in 2019 of processed applications (approved and refused)²⁷ either required additional documents or were referred to International Network (IN), and were thus no longer eligible for expedited processing under the GSS.

²³ Of these, 52% indicated receiving help from the employer’s Human Resources (HR) department, and 48% from a lawyer/an immigration consultant.

²⁴ Includes those who agreed and strongly agreed.

²⁵ Includes those who reported the challenge to a moderate or great extent and excludes those who reported don’t know.

²⁶ Includes those who agreed and strongly agreed, and excludes those who reported don’t know.

²⁷ These statistics combine numbers for both principal applicants and dependants under the GSS (LMIA exempt and required).

Awareness of GSS – Employers and Applicants

Finding 3: Considerable efforts have been undertaken to promote the GSS. Nevertheless, gaps in awareness were found, particularly among non-referred employers.

Outreach and engagement activities

As of 2019, the DSC had conducted over 1,000 outreach events across Canada. Notably, outreach officers with the DSC represented IRCC at the 2019 Collision Conference in Toronto, which was the largest gathering of high-tech investors and entrepreneurs in North America.

According to program data, the annual number of GSS-related outreach and engagement activities has increased year-over-year since the Strategy's release – from 64 in 2017 to 422 in 2020. During this time period:

- Over a third (39%) of all activities targeted Canadian employers.
- Most (84%) were undertaken via three key modes of activity: in-person (43%), teleconference (23%), and telephone (18%).
- Nearly two thirds (63%) targeted stakeholders in BC and Ontario, primarily in urban agglomerations such as Vancouver, the Greater Toronto Area, and Ottawa.

During fiscal year 2018–19, IRCC issued 24 Twitter posts about GSS, which produced 131,124 impressions, 241 likes, 126 retweets and 2,148 total engagements. The department also issued 20 Facebook posts about GSS during this period which resulted in 430 shares and 3,419 total engagements.

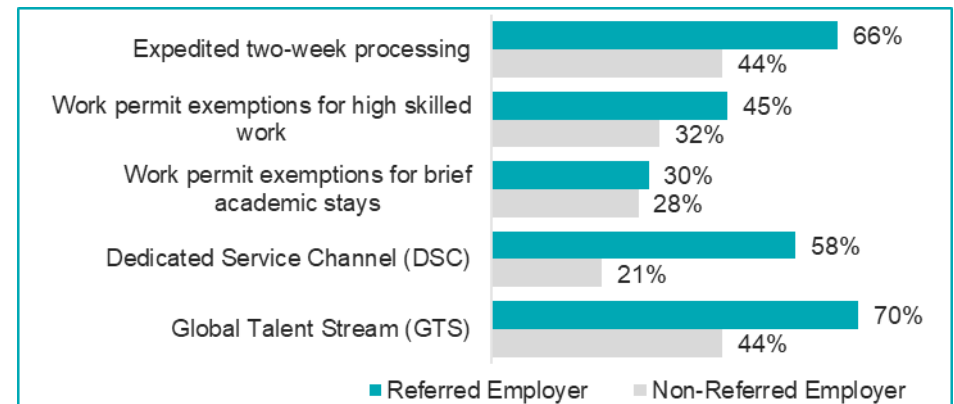
Only 14% of surveyed employers reported receiving information (through a presentation, meeting, email, phone call, etc.) from an IRCC outreach officer. Of these, 88% found that the information provided increased their understanding of the immigration program options available.²⁸

Employer and applicant awareness of the GSS

As eligibility for expedited processing of work permit applications under the GSS is determined administratively by IRCC, applicants and employers are not necessarily aware that their applications are benefitting from this initiative. Correspondingly, only 53% of applicants surveyed were aware that their work permit application was processed under the GSS.

Employers surveyed were also asked about their awareness of the various features of the GSS. Survey results revealed that referred employers tended to be more aware relative to their non-referred counterparts.²⁹ It was expected that referred employers would be more aware of the DSC services and support, as only they are eligible for DSC account manager services and support. Increased awareness among referred employers for the other features is more salient and suggests a positive contribution of the DSC for employer awareness overall.

Figure 8: Awareness of GSS features among employer survey respondents



Source: Employer Survey

²⁸ Includes those who reported this increase in understanding to a moderate or great extent.

²⁹ Differences in awareness between referred and non-referred employers were not statistically significant for the work permit exemptions.

Awareness of GSS – Short-Term Work Permit Exemptions

Finding 4: Compared to other GSS features, awareness of the work permit exemptions was relatively low, even among CBSA Border Services Officers who are responsible for assessing eligibility for these exemptions at Ports of Entry.

Awareness of among employers

While survey results showed differences in employer awareness of the work permit exemptions between referred and non-referred employers, these differences were not statistically significant for the work permit exemptions. In general, there was a lack of awareness of these exemptions among all employers surveyed.

- 34% of employer respondents were aware of the work permit exemptions for short-duration high-skilled work;
- 28% of employer respondents were aware of the work permit exemptions for brief academic stays; and
- 21% of employer respondents were aware of both exemptions.

As a result, some employers may not be using the work permit exemptions when they should or could be using them to bring in temporary workers for short periods of time, particularly those in the research and academic domains.

Awareness among BSOs

IRCC works with CBSA on the administration of short-term work permit exemptions. While IRCC is responsible for setting the policy, CBSA is responsible for the eligibility assessment of work permit exemptions at Ports of Entry (POE).

Interviews with CBSA suggested that while Program Delivery Instructions (PDI) are available and generally clear, there is a perceived lack of frontline experience and guidance on implementation.

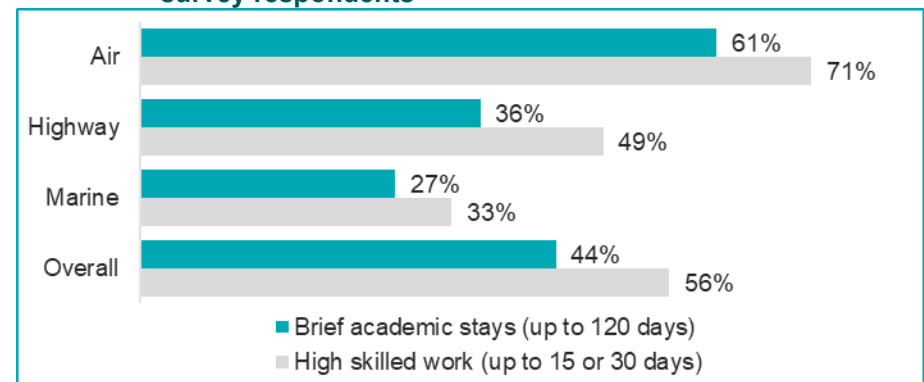
BSO survey results also suggested a lack of awareness of the GSS work permit exemptions among BSOs, with BSOs working in the air mode having more awareness of these exemptions than those working in the highway and marine modes.³⁰

- 56% of BSO respondents were aware of the work permit exemptions for short-duration high-skilled work;
- 44% of BSO respondents were aware of the work permit exemptions for brief academic stays; and
- 58% of BSO respondents were aware of both exemptions.

Of those surveyed who were aware of the exemptions, 59% were aware of related functional guidance – most had also consulted it and found it clear and useful to at least a moderate extent.

Some BSOs surveyed also reported having granted exemptions under the GSS; however, they also reported doing so with limited frequency. They reported granting work permit exemptions for short-duration high-skilled work more frequently (67%). However, of those granting them, 18% indicated that they did so almost never, 47% indicated doing so a few times per year, and 20% a few times per month.

Figure 9: Awareness of GSS work permit exemptions among BSO survey respondents



Source: BSO Survey

³⁰ Differences in awareness of the exemptions based on mode were statistically significant.

Work Permit Exemptions – Benefits and Challenges

Finding 5: Short-term work permit exemptions are generally perceived as useful. However, they are not being tracked in a systematic way which makes it difficult to assess the full extent to which they are used and are beneficial.

Benefits

Interview data and document review suggested that short-term work permit exemptions can provide Canadian firms with speedy access to the international talent they need. In particular, it was noted the exemptions fill a gap for highly skilled workers who do not fall neatly under Regulation 186 (Authorization to work without a work permit).

- Exemptions provide top talent from eligible occupations with the ability to come to Canada and start working quickly, reducing the administrative burden for short-term contracts and helping companies get their projects off the ground in a timely fashion.
- Work permit exemptions increase efficiency by reducing the number of applications IRCC has to process.

A little under half of BSOs surveyed who were aware of the work permit exemptions (46%) reported benefits associated with these tools. Of these:

- 73% indicated that they had facilitated the entry of foreign workers needed on an urgent basis; and
- 68% indicated that they provide a facilitative option for foreign workers and can be used as an interim measure if they qualify.³¹

Challenges

Stakeholders questioned the rationale behind the definition of short-term for each of the exemption categories, as well as the requirement that the maximum allotted time be used consecutively. Interviews suggested that a cumulative approach would better align with some industries' needs – namely, the tech sector.

The evaluation also found that short-term work permit exemptions are not being tracked or monitored in a systematic way. In particular, GCMS is not being used to document who benefits from the exemptions, when, and where. The lack of metrics and information makes it difficult to report on impact and results, as well as identify possible integrity issues.

While PDIs set out that BSOs should, where applicable, document GSS-related exemptions in the visible remarks of foreign nationals' visitor records, interview and survey data suggest that visitor records are not issued on a consistent basis at the POE. This was reported as creating challenges for both applicants and employers as visitor records are required for foreign nationals to obtain a social insurance number (SIN) and legally work in Canada.

About half of BSOs surveyed who were aware of the work permit exemptions reported challenges associated with these tools (51%). Of these:

- 83% indicated difficulty verifying the foreign worker's previous entry in Canada, including reasons for entry, to determine eligibility periods;
- 79% indicated a lack of knowledge and/or experience with GSS work permit exemptions among staff at POEs; and
- 79% indicated inconsistency in tracking GSS work permit exemptions in GCMS.

According to the interviews, the latter could result in candidates exceeding the maximum number of days they're permitted to work in Canada under the exemption.

³¹ For example, in cases where a foreign worker has not properly completed their work permit application or is not aware that they need a work permit.

DSC – Referrals and Significant Investment

Finding 6: The definition of “significant investment” allows flexibility for referral partners to identify employers that have potential to make such a contribution to Canada. However, the definition lacks specificity and the department does not currently monitor the significant investments made and the degree to which they materialize – making it difficult to ascertain the extent to which referrals are appropriate.

Referral process and definitions

Companies or Research Chairs are referred by designated Referral Partners to the DSC based on the expectation that they will make a significant investment in Canada. IRCC has 53 Memoranda of Understanding with Referral Partners, covering 17 sectors. Between June 2017 and August 2020, a total of 273 referrals were made.

For companies, a significant investment is a new endeavour in an existing firm’s operations, or the entrance of a firm that is beginning operations in Canada that will result in a substantial improvement to the Canadian, provincial/territorial, regional or local labour market or economy, without displacing jobs for Canadians. There are three broad referral categories³²:

- Category A – High value investment by a foreign or multinational company in Canada;
- Category B – High potential and high growth by a start-up company for which the recruitment of highly-skilled foreign talent is anticipated to positively impact the company’s growth; OR by a company with proven market acceptance and the capacity for accelerated growth that will have a significant impact on the Canadian economy; and
- Category C - Innovative by a firm operating in Canada, focused on innovation, willing to grow and seeking to scale up (same criteria as ESDC’s Global Talent Stream).

For researchers, the significant investment involves the recruitment of international academic talent through research chairs programs that support Canadian universities in their efforts to build on Canada’s growing reputation as a global leader in research and innovation.

Benefits and challenges

Key informants generally agreed that access to the DSC via referral partners is a solid design, noting that IRCC lacks the requisite expertise in the industry, investment, and regional landscapes to decide what constitutes a significant investment. All or most of referral partners surveyed felt that the definition and categories of significant investment are clear and relevant for their employers to at least a moderate extent.

IRCC’s definition of significant investment is very broad. For example, it is not clear what constitutes high value in Category A or high potential and high growth in Category B. Evidence suggests that this may contribute to a lack of clarity, neutrality, and consistency in the DSC referral process. It was mentioned in the interviews that:

- The vague definition leaves referral partners with a great deal of discretion with little oversight; and
- Some major employers of highly skilled talent in Canada do not have access to the DSC because of the significant investment aspect.

However, there was also a general consensus among interviewees that the definition cannot be too prescriptive as outcomes vary across industries and geographic regions.

Document review and interviews found a lack of mechanisms in place to monitor/follow up on the extent to which investments materialize and are of a significant nature, and it was noted in interviews that this hinders the department’s ability to assess outcomes and link the DSC to economic benefits in Canada. In contrast, it was noted that ESDC conducts check-ins with employers to monitor and assess outcomes.

Recognizing that there is variability, having some general metrics accompanied by appropriate targets for the referred employer, considering different maturity levels, regions of Canada and industries, should be useful to understanding the benefits of this key feature of the GSS.

³² Sources: DSC Referral Form Template for Referral Partners; DSC Outreach Deck – Global Skills Strategy – January 2019.

DSC – Services and Support

Finding 7: While DSC services and support are useful in increasing awareness and understanding of immigration program options available for many referred employers, they may be underutilized and missing some employers who could benefit most from them.

Use of DSC services and support

Survey results suggested that DSC services and support are useful, largely in terms of creating awareness and understanding of immigration-related options available to employers.

As noted earlier, referred employers surveyed tended to be more aware of GSS features, with the exception of the work permit exemptions.

Further, 36% of referred employers surveyed reported receiving services from a DSC account manager. Of these:

- 63% indicated that DSC services increased their understanding of the immigration program options available; whereas
- 47% indicated that DSC services helped them hire the global talent needed; and
- 21% indicated that they helped to promote Canada as a destination of choice to international job candidates.³³

Most referral partners surveyed also indicated that the DSC contributed to an increased awareness and understanding of economic immigration processes and programs among their referred employers to at least a moderate extent.

However, evidence highlighted some misunderstanding among employers with respect to the intended purpose of the DSC. Challenges with expectations were noted in the interviews – there can be a misconception that referred companies will benefit from special treatment, including expedited work permit processing.

Access to DSC services and support

Evidence suggests that some referred employers may not need the services and support of the DSC, and that providing services to these organizations might not be the optimal use of resources.

- The significant investment requirement is often associated with larger, more established firms and institutions, while smaller companies may have more difficulties understanding and navigating immigration options and systems.
- A review of IRCC's administrative data found that some of the referred companies and universities are consistently using immigration lawyers/consultants and/or have in-house immigration or other Human Resources support.³⁴ For example: 13 of the top 25 employers showed evidence of consistent use of an immigration consultant/lawyer; 12 showed evidence of internal immigration-related capacity; and 4 showed evidence of both.
- Evidence suggested a need for DSC services for some ineligible industries and employers (e.g., health authorities).

Further, differences in DSC eligibility under the GSS (e.g., the use of referral partners and the “significant investment” requirement) versus eligibility for economic immigration programs can result in confusion and frustration on the part of ineligible sectors.

³³ Includes those who reported these outcomes to a moderate or great extent.

³⁴ The evaluation conducted a review of the email addresses noted in GCMS frequently used for work permit applications under the GSS supported by the top 25 employers. Determination of the top 25 employers was based on the estimated number of approved work permit applications under the

GSS associated with their organization over the reporting period. The top 25 employers accounted for 57% of these applications during this period. Employers were categorized based on: consistent use of an immigration consultant/lawyer, internal immigration-related capacity and other HR support.

Roles and Responsibilities

Finding 8: Generally, roles and responsibilities for the GSS are clear and IRCC and OGDs are satisfied with communication and coordination mechanisms. However, there is some confusion on the part of employers regarding the roles of IRCC and ESDC.

Roles and responsibilities

Internally, the ongoing roles and responsibilities for the GSS are clearly articulated. Documents found ample evidence that the roles and responsibilities related to the DSC are clear, distinct, and adequately communicated to referral partners.

Interviews and document review highlighted that while no departmental committees focus solely on the GSS, a number of working-level committees, both internal and external, discuss issues of mutual concern, such as client service, and issues involving labour-related skills and talent. According to both IRCC and OGD stakeholders, this approach has been largely effective.

Challenges

Information on roles and responsibilities about participating departments – namely, ESDC, CBSA and Industry Canada – is dispersed, and not clearly delineated in any one specific document.

Moreover, in the absence of a formal inter-departmental governance structure, the evaluation team found it challenging to determine how decisions regarding the delivery of the Strategy were made.

Externally, there is confusion about the role of ESDC and IRCC. Employers know that both departments are involved in GSS, but there is a lack of clarity and they are confused. When an employer talks to an outreach officer, they ask about GTS. Outreach officers have noticed that even with referral partners, they are confused between what ESDC does and what IRCC does. More recently, IRCC has been conducting refresher trainings with referral partners.

Figure 10: Level of engagement on GSS-related matters (according to the survey of referral partners)



Source: Referral Partner Survey

Highly Skilled Workers

Finding 9: The limited access for NOC B occupations under the GSS was identified as a gap and a potential opportunity to maximize the benefits of the GSS for all skilled occupations.

Highly skilled workers

The evaluation noted some issues with the focus on "highly skilled" for the GSS.

Indeed, many interviewees noted that the use of NOC codes 0 and A as a basis for eligibility does not reflect regional needs or the reality of a changing labour market. In addition, the eligibility of NOC B occupations under the GSS differs between ESDC and IRCC, as some NOC B occupations have been included in the GTS pillar.

The exclusion of NOC B occupations from the GSS is not consistent with the approach/definition of skilled workers under IRCC's permanent residents programs (Canadian Experience Class (CEC) and Atlantic Canada Immigration Program (AIP)).

Having consistency and a common understanding of what is meant by "highly skilled" is important to ensuring immigration policies, programs and strategies are well coordinated and integrated. It also can help prevent confusion among partners.

NOC B opens the door to health professions where shortages have been identified, whereas, there is no shortage (current and projected) in NOC 0 occupations according to COPS.

In fact, an analysis of the 293 occupations included in the ESDC projections revealed that all NOC 0 occupations are expected to remain in balance for the 2019–2028 period. Shortages are projected in 32 percent of NOC A occupations, 11 percent of NOC B occupations, and 6 percent of NOC C occupations.

Recognizing that expanding GSS eligibility will have resource implications, targeting some NOC B occupations in certain sectors where there are shortages would be helpful for employers in meeting their needs.

Shortages projected for NOC B occupations for the period of 2019 to 2028

- Mechanical engineering technologists and technicians
- Transportation officers and controller's
- Medical laboratory technologist & Medical laboratory technicians and pathologists' assistants
- Respiratory therapists, clinical perfusionists and cardiopulmonary technologists; Medical radiation technologists & Medical sonographers
- Cardiology technologists and electrophysiological diagnostics technologists, n.e.c. & Other medical technologists and technicians (except dental health)
- Opticians
- Practitioners of natural healing; Massage therapists & Other technical occupations in therapy and assessment
- Licensed practical nurses
- Graphic designers and illustrators
- Interior designers and interior decorators
- Welders and related Machine operators
- Construction millwrights and industrial mechanics
- Heavy-duty equipment mechanics

Source: The Canadian Occupational Projection System (COPS) 2019 to 2028 projections.

Permanent Residence

Finding 10: While GSS was not designed to facilitate a pathway to permanent residence, evidence showed considerable interest among work permit holders in transitioning to permanent residence.

Transition to permanent residence

Recent immigration pilot programs and public policies were designed to provide temporary residents with economic potential pathways to permanent residence. This includes the Atlantic Immigration Pilot, the temporary resident to permanent resident pathway, and permanent residence pathways for Hong Kong residents.

While transitioning to permanent residence is not a program objective, evidence suggests that there is a demand for permanent residence among GSS foreign workers. As of April 12, 2021, 10%³⁵ of clients who submitted a GSS-related application (PAs and dependants) between June 2017 and February 2020 were issued a Confirmation of Permanent Residence (COPR).

According to applicant survey data:

- 15% of respondents were permanent residents;
- 34% had applied for permanent residence, and;
- 62% intended to apply for permanent residence.

Express Entry and GSS have similar target audiences. While there are pathways where GSS permit holders can apply for permanent residence through the economic programs under Express Entry, there are currently no formalized links between the GSS and these permanent residence pathways.



Several jurisdictions with programs or strategies targeting high-skilled temporary foreign workers, including Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and UK, use transitional pathways as a tool to attract and retain global talent. These, and other, jurisdictions also offer simplified processes for extending/renewing temporary status as a retention tool.

The GSS, by contrast, excludes in-Canada applicants from expedited work permit processing and is perceived as having difficult processes for permit renewals.



³⁵ This is unique clients and not applicants, as a small percentage of clients had more than one application during the reporting period.

Economic Benefits

Finding 11: Evidence showed economic benefits to Canada of temporary workers processed under the GSS. However, it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which these benefits can be attributed to the GSS.

Economic benefits

While the department does not currently collect information on the significant investments in Canada made by referred employers under the GSS, the evaluation was able to examine benefits related to the temporary workers who were processed under the GSS.

A total of 36,917 principal applicants (PAs) who applied between June 2017 and February, 2020 were approved for a work permit under the GSS. The median duration for these work permits was 24 months.

While administrative data on whether they used their permit to work in Canada was not available for the evaluation, applicant survey findings suggests that many did work:

- 93% of applicant survey respondents indicated working with their work permit.
- The median annual income declared by surveyed applicants (excluding millionaires) was \$75,000.³⁶
- 76% also reported filing taxes in Canada for their income earned.

Administrative data also showed a total of 23,097 dependants during the same period – 40% obtained work permits and 25% obtained study permits. Similarly, applicant survey findings showed that:

- 60% of applicant survey respondents indicated that they had a spouse or common-law partner – 83% indicated that they came with them to Canada while they worked. Of these, 50% also worked.
- 40% applicant survey respondents also reported having a child or children – 84% indicated that they came with them to Canada while they worked. Of these, 75% studied in Canada.

Distribution and attribution of benefits

Administrative data showed that benefits of the GSS have been unevenly distributed across male and female applicants and regions of Canada.

- 78% of all LMIA-exempt and 85% of LMIA-required PAs were male. While, this is consistent with trends for other temporary worker initiatives, it is still very high, and suggests that female applicants are missing out on the benefits related to the GSS.
- Canadian employers in three provinces—Ontario, British Columbia and Quebec – were the top beneficiaries of the GSS, representing 88% of all PAs.

While regionally-specific eligibility criteria are in place to reflect unique regional needs and realities when accessing certain GSS-related services, applications under the GSS were still low in most Canadian provinces.

Finally, administrative data showed that the vast majority of PAs (93%) obtained their work permits through the LMIA-exempt process. Of these, 66% benefited from the C12 – Intra-company transferee exemption, making it difficult to determine if the GSS or this LMIA exemption facilitated the employment for the majority of workers under the GSS. As the GSS is only one initiative in IRCC suite of policies, programs and strategies working together to support employers' hiring of temporary workers, it is difficult to isolate its contribution to these economic benefits for Canada.

³⁶ Note: Employment earning amounts were extrapolated from survey questions to derive an annual income. 67% of respondents who worked completed the earnings-related questions. Generally, respondents and non-respondents on these questions were aligned in terms of gender and skill level

(NOC 0 and A). However, there was some misalignment in reporting based on age – those 45 and older were somewhat underrepresented relative to other age groups (i.e. 18 to 34 and 35 to 44).

COVID-19 Pandemic Context

Current Considerations: As previously noted, the evaluation of the GSS coincided with the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. While not in scope, data collection activities did highlight some impacts of the pandemic on application processing, employers and work permit applicants under the GSS.

Application processing

The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on IRCC operations overall – an impact that equally affected work permit processing under the GSS. For example, at the beginning of the pandemic, it took time to roll out IT packages and get everyone set up and working from home.

Moreover, during the early onset, the GSS was not a priority, and resources were directed to extensions. This contributed to the development of a backlog inventory for the GSS during this period.

Lastly, a relatively large proportion of the GSS inventory was “unworkable” during the first part of the pandemic period, mainly due to COVID-related restrictions and Visa Application Center (VAC) closures (thus, biometrics could not be completed). As VACs and travel later started re-opening, this inventory eventually became “workable” and added to the Case Processing Officer queues in a rapid manner.

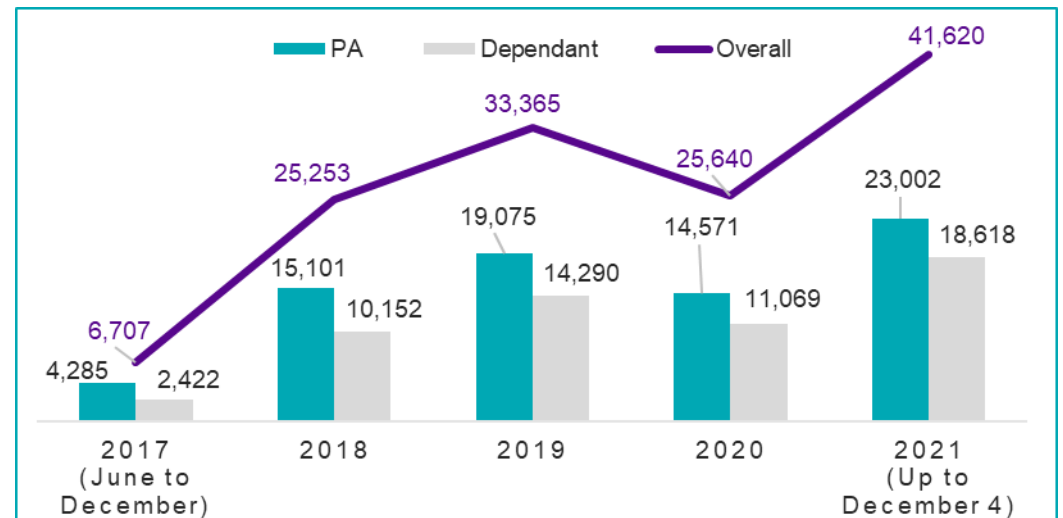
Program stakeholders also highlighted that with a larger and slower moving inventory, the amount of client/representative/partner enquiries increased proportionately as well. IRCC staff had to be allocated to action the enquiries and more and more applications were being prioritized which had a negative impact on the general inventory/processing days.

Operational statistics indicated that processing times were negatively affected during the pandemic timeframe, but also highlighted progress towards recovery with improvements noted between 2020 and 2021.³⁷

- For PAs: 80% of work permit applications were processed within 92 days in 2020, and within 31 days in 2021.
- Processing times were even more impacted for dependants: 80% of applications (study or work permits and/or related visas) were processed within 110 days in 2020 and within 50 days in 2021.

At the same time, application intake under the GSS has increased substantially. Between 2018 and 2021³⁸, intake grew by about 65% overall. According to program stakeholders, each month from March to December 2021 set consecutive new records for intake since the creation of GSS. While a small increase over 2020 levels could have been predicted due to the gradual easing of travel restrictions, the actual increase was more than expected. Program stakeholders noted that the baseline funding model can no longer support the actual intake volumes.

Figure 11: Application intake under the GSS



³⁷ Processing times are based on applications processed by the Centralized Network, when no additional documents were required. Source: OPP-BRIA GSS

Summary Report – GCMS data as of December 8, 2021 – GSS Processing Times (Approved & Refused) - 80% Processed within X Days or Less.

³⁸ Includes data up until December 4, 2021.

Employer experiences

The COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on recruitment activities under the GSS for some employers.

Almost half of employers surveyed (48%) reported having hired or tried to hire temporary workers under the GSS since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic (March 2020) through the LMIA-exempt and/or LMIA-required work permit processes.³⁹ Of these, 57% reported experiencing challenges related to hiring. The most frequently reported challenges were:

- Long IRCC work permit processing times (84%);
- Temporary worker candidates who had their work permit approved being delayed in coming to Canada (60%); and
- Challenges getting information and updates from IRCC on temporary worker candidates being hired (54%).

Some other challenges mentioned in the open-ended survey remarks, included challenges with getting biometrics and closed VACs, changing travel restrictions, approved temporary workers having issues at the border with CBSA, and not being able to access work permit exemptions.

Work permit applicant experiences

The COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on the job situation for some work permit applicants under the GSS. While most applicants surveyed indicated working in Canada with their work permit under the GSS, 7% indicated not working. Of these, 30% attributed the reason for this to the COVID-19 pandemic. Travel concerns, challenges and restrictions were often cited in this regard.

For those working in Canada with their work permit under the GSS, 25% indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic had had an impact on their job situation in Canada with their employer.⁴⁰ Of these, about 20% reported having to telework, work from home, work remotely or online at least part of the time as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴¹

In terms of negative effects, about 10% of those reporting COVID-19 impacts indicated losing their job as a result of the pandemic, many permanently. Of those who indicated losing their job, 77% reported that this job loss was permanent. In addition, about 12% reported a reduction in their salary or wages, and 19% indicated reduced hours of work.⁴²

Some also reported negative impacts on the nature of their work or the work environment and/or difficulties or delays in doing their work (about 17%). Some examples included: lack of or limited access to the lab, or inability to do parts of their research as planned; reduced ability to collaborate, interact, communicate, consult with supervisors or colleagues; cancelled conferences; reduced business activities or lower sales; reduced productivity.

Lastly, a small percentage noted an increased workload, increased hours of work, or variable or shift work (about 3%).⁴³

³⁹ N=163.

⁴⁰ N=758. Note: Applicant survey respondents considered in the analysis applied between June 2017 and February 2020. As such, the work experience for some may have predated the COVID-19 pandemic (beginning in March 2020).

⁴¹ Based on an analysis of open-ended responses to the question on nature of COVID-19 impacts on their job situation.

⁴² Applicant survey respondents were able to indicate more than one impact.

⁴³ These other negative impacts were based on an analysis of open-ended responses to the question on nature of COVID-19 impacts on their job situation.

Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

The objective of the evaluation was to determine the extent to which GSS has contributed to attracting international highly skilled talent, the effectiveness of the concurrent outreach and engagement activities, and, to the extent possible, the economic benefits associated the Strategy.

The evaluation found that in today's environment where technological innovation is redefining the economy, GSS meets the needs of Canadian companies making a significant investment and wanting rapid entry into Canada for highly skilled foreign workers to remain competitive. While many competitor countries offer expedited processing of work/residence permits for highly skilled workers and their accompanying spouses and/or dependants, Canada's focus on short-term work permit exemptions, is relatively unique.

While IRCC does not currently collect information on the significant investments in Canada made by referred employers under the GSS, the evaluation was able to examine benefits related to the temporary workers (mainly Intra-company transferee) and their dependants who were processed under the GSS. In response to the evaluation findings, and to support continuous program improvement, three recommendations are proposed.

Recommendation 1: Support for GSS Referred Employers

Considerable effort is made in terms of promotion and outreach to employers and those who benefit from it appreciated the various features of the GSS. The evaluation revealed that referred employers (eligible for DSC services and support) tended to be more aware relative to their non-referred counterparts. The evaluation revealed that while DSC services and support are useful in increasing awareness and understanding of immigration program options available for many referred employers, they may be underutilized and missing some employers who could benefits from them.

DSC services and support, while designed not only to provide assistance under GSS but also to support other employer-based programs, are offered only to a subset of employers who have been referred on the expectation that they will make a significant investment in Canada. IRCC defines significant investment in very broad terms to allow for flexibility in its application. However, in the absence of clear metrics and monitoring by IRCC, it is difficult to measure what investments have been made, and the associated benefits brought about by the GSS.

Recommendation 1: IRCC, in consultation with referral partners, should:

- a) Review the profile of referred employers under the GSS and ongoing employment sector needs to identify gaps and opportunities to optimize the reach of DSC services and support, as well as resource utilization; and
- b) Develop indicators and a monitoring strategy to capture information on the significant investments made by referred employers.



Recommendation 2: Implementation and Monitoring

Short-term work permit exemptions are generally perceived as useful by different stakeholders but, compared to other GSS features, awareness of the work permit exemptions was relatively low, even among BSO who are responsible for assessing eligibility for these exemptions at POE.

Also, these work permit exemptions are not systematically tracked making it difficult to fully measure their usefulness and benefits.

In addition, it is also important to note that for CBSA, the issuance of a visitor record with the necessary information is not mandatory, it is at the discretion of the BSO to issue it or not, and these inconsistencies are compounded by the lack of knowledge and/or experience of POE staff regarding GSS work permit exemptions.

This poses a double challenge for GSS, because for foreign nationals, it is important to obtain a visitor's record, because without one, it is impossible to obtain a SIN and without a SIN, to be paid by the employer. And, for the IRCC, it is difficult to establish clear reports on foreign nationals who have used short-term work permit exemptions. In particular, GCMS is not used as a tool to document who gets the exemptions, when, and where. The lack of metrics and information makes it difficult to report on the full impact and outcomes of GSS and to identify potential integrity issues.

Recommendation 2: IRCC should work with CBSA on promoting awareness of the work permit exemptions among BSOs, and on consistency in their administration at the POE (including issuance of the visitor record) to help strengthen client service, as well as monitoring and reporting capacity.

Recommendation 3: Design

In terms of design, some emerging issues and opportunities were highlighted by the findings. The GSS was created following extensive consultations with STEM industry partners (NOC 0 & A) who wanted a fast-track work permit process for these highly skilled workers, which has led to a different interpretation of “highly skilled” compared to other IRCC programs and initiatives, such as Express Entry Canadian Experience Class and Atlantic Immigration Pilot. This narrow interpretation is less aligned when looking at the overall Canadian economy and labour needs as some occupations in the health sector are excluded (NOC B).

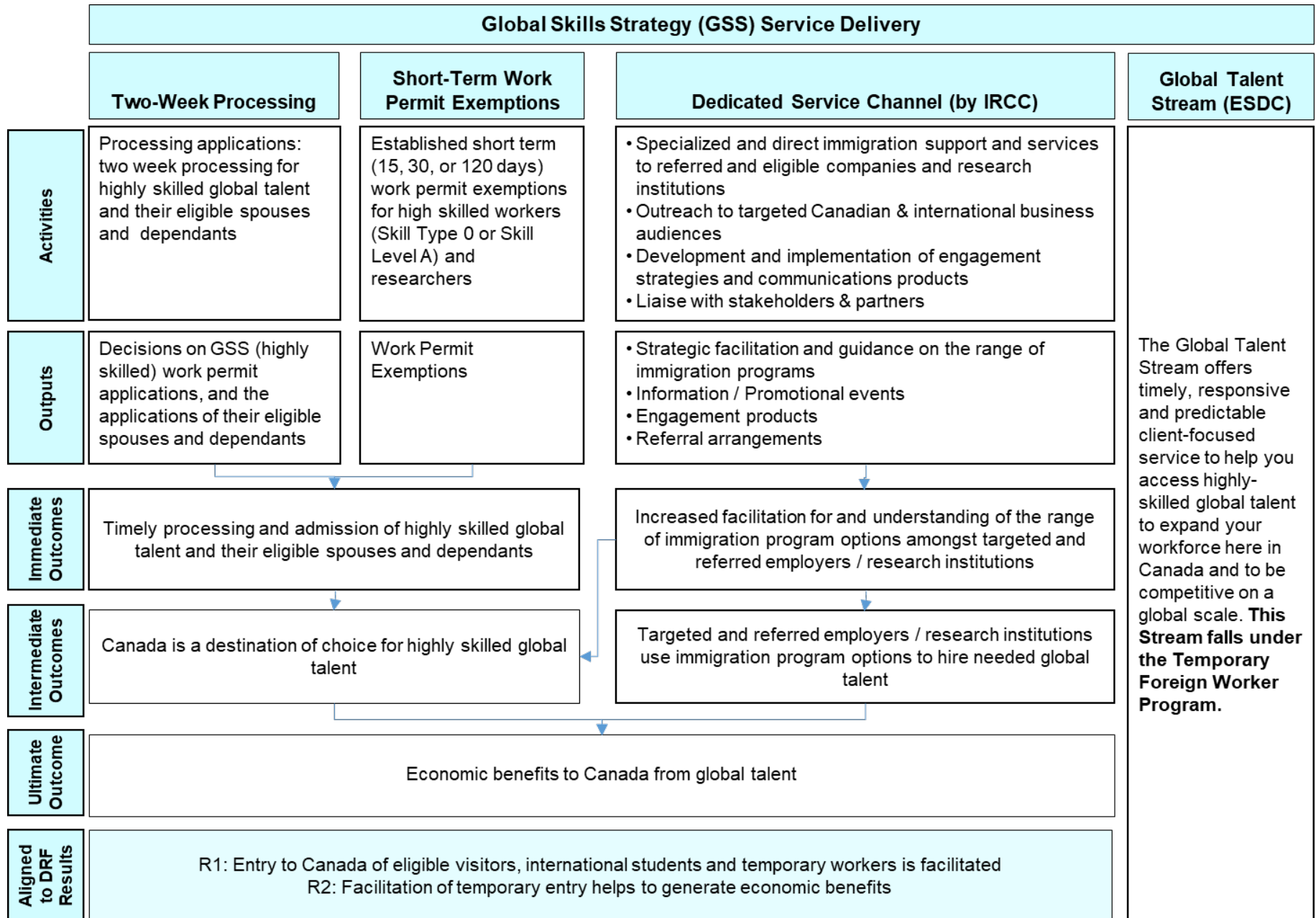
However, extending beyond NOC 0 & A would require consideration of resource needs, particularly in light of processing pressures in all IRCC business lines.

Recommendation 3: In order to maximize the benefits of the Strategy, IRCC should explore options and develop a plan to enhance the GSS that considers:

- a) Expanding GSS eligibility for expedited work permit processing to other skilled occupations in NOC B in sectors and regions where there are labour needs; and
- b) Resource implications for potential expansion and better meeting the processing time commitment; and
- c) Augmenting connections between GSS and permanent residence pathways as a means to further contribute to the recruitment and retention of highly skilled foreign talent.

Annex A: Logic model

Figure 12: Logic model



Logic model – accessible text version

The Global Skills Strategy Logic Model illustrates the linkages between the Strategy's activities, the outputs those activities are expected to produce, and how those outputs contribute to the expected outcomes of the Strategy, the Department, and the Government of Canada.

The logic depicted in the diagram aligns with the policy objectives of the Global Skills Strategy, which are to:

- Secure an environment that attracts the “best and brightest” of global talent;
- Focus on filling employment gaps in managerial and professional occupations; and
- Ensure that temporary economic immigration provides a net benefit to Canada.

Generally, the Strategy also supports the overall objectives of IRCC's temporary worker immigration program, those being to avoid the displacement of Canadians who are able to do the same job, wherever possible, and to maintain public confidence in the immigration system..

Activities and outputs

As identified in the Global Skills Strategy Logic Model (see section 3.0), the activities of the Strategy consist of three distinct pillars, each with their respective outputs:

- Two-week processing, which applies to GSS work permit applications of highly-skilled global talent, and the applications of their eligible spouses and dependants;
- Short-term work permit exemptions for short-duration, high-skilled work; and a
- Dedicated Service Channel providing personalized and specialized immigration support and guidance to eligible companies and research institutions. Concurrent outreach and engagement activities are also conducted with various external stakeholders (targeted employers and referral partners) to promote and advance the Global Skills Strategy.

Collectively, the activities and outputs for each pillar facilitate the realization of identified outcomes.

Expected Outcomes

Immediate Outcomes

Timely processing and admission of highly skilled global talent and their eligible spouses and dependants:

- In too many cases, long processing times for work permits make it difficult for Canadian businesses to attract the talent they need to succeed in their operations and the global economy. The two-week processing and short-term work permit exemption pillars assist Canadian businesses to access sought-after global talent sooner by ensuring the timely processing and admission of highly skilled global talent and their eligible spouses and dependants.

Increased understanding of the range of immigration program options amongst targeted and referred employers / research institutions:

- Through the GSS's creation of a Dedicated Service Channel, it is expected that IRCC will increase awareness and understanding of the range of immigration programs amongst targeted and referred employers/research institutions making significant investments in Canada. This is done through the implementation of concurrent outreach and engagement strategies, conducted by the Domestic Network, which is expected to complement and contribute to this immediate outcome by promoting the Global Skills Strategy in general, and the Dedicated Service Channel in particular, to various business audiences and Canadian research institutions.

Intermediate Outcomes

Canada is a destination of choice for highly skilled global talent:

- By facilitating the timely admission of highly skilled global talent, and offering a Dedicated Service Channel to referred employers, it is expected that Canada will be a destination of choice for top global talent. The two-week processing pillar provides Canadian employers and foreign nationals with greater predictability in work permit processing, which can often be a factor in both investment and employment decisions. The short-term work permit exemption pillar further reduces the bureaucratic process for essential, high-skilled work performed in short durations (i.e. 15, 30 or 120 days).
- This timely admission is complemented by the support offered by the Dedicated Service Channel, as designated account managers help employers determine their immigration options, answer questions, and provide guidance, all of which assists in reducing delays in application research, preparation, and submission, thereby helping referred employers get the talent they need in Canada sooner.

Targeted and referred employers / research institutions use immigration options provided to hire needed global talent:

- It is expected that the personalized and specialized immigration service provided by the Dedicated Service Channel empowers referred employers to hire foreign nationals to fill their labour and skill shortages by making use of the immigration options provided to hire the needed global talent to succeed in their operations.
- Complementary GSS outreach activities conducted by the Domestic Network, target employer audiences across Canada who may have a need for highly skilled global talent, and may be eligible to benefit from any of the four GSS pillars. These audiences are informed of the GSS, with an added emphasis on the unique and specialized services provided by the Dedicated Service Channel. It is expected that this targeted outreach will further assist employers (including research institutions) to use the immigration options provided during the outreach sessions, or during a subsequent referral to the Dedicated Service Channel, in order to hire the needed global talent.

Ultimate Outcome

Economic benefits to Canada from global talent:

- By facilitating the timely admission of foreign nationals to live and work temporarily in Canada; and providing employers making significant investments in Canada with the knowledge and tools they need to bring in global talent and succeed in their operations, temporary workers ultimately contribute economically to Canada.
- Temporary GSS workers are a diverse group of individuals. Some come to Canada for brief periods, such as short-duration work and brief academic stays, while others remain in Canada for years. However, all temporary workers have something in common: they provide needed labour to the Canada marketplace, they purchase goods and services while in Canada, and they pay taxes. In addition, the companies/organizations that they work for continue to operate in Canada as opposed to relocating to other countries, allowing the Canadian economy to profit from their knowledge, skills, and potential for job creation.
- Aside from companies and organizations already operating within Canada, the Dedicated Service Channel also provides personalized and specialized immigration support to foreign companies who are considering transferring their operations to Canada, or setting up a new subsidiary in Canada. The two-week service standard and work permit exemptions also provide these foreign companies with the incentive to establish their business within Canada and bring the foreign talent they need on a temporary basis. This service is an enabler to the Government of Canada who encourage foreign direct investment.

Annex B: Employers

Top 50 employers by number of approved work permit applicants under GSS (both LMIA exempt and required)

Table 4: Top 1–25

Rank	Employer	Applicants
1	Cognizant	4,552
2	Infosys	3,129
3	Tata Consultancy Services	2,119
4	Tech Mahindra Limited	1,465
5	Capgemini	1,304
6	University of Toronto	782
7	Accenture	685
8	Microsoft	676
9	Amazon	518
10	Deloitte	518
11	McGill University	512
12	University of Alberta	467
13	CGI	465
14	University of British Columbia	439
15	HCL Axon Technologies Inc	390
16	Wipro Limited	354
17	Larsen & Toubro Infotech	352
18	PWC	349
19	Ernst and Young LLP	288
20	SAP Canada Inc	277
21	Université de Montréal	276
22	University of Calgary	271
23	University of Waterloo	256
24	Université Laval	227
25	Western University	213

Table 5: Top 26–50

Rank	Employer	Applicants
26	Université du Québec	197
27	Ericsson	188
28	KPMG	188
29	IBM Canada	177
30	NTT Data Canada	161
31	Virtusa Consulting & Services	158
32	Sapient Canada Inc	150
33	University of Ottawa	147
34	Google Canada Corporation	142
35	Technicolor Canada	138
36	McMaster University	135
37	McKinsey Company Canada	128
38	York University	126
39	Université de Sherbrooke	123
40	SFU Academic Relations	122
41	Skip The Dishes	118
42	Oracle	117
43	Telus	115
44	Netcracker Technology Corporation	113
45	Syntel Canada Inc	113
46	University health Network	101
47	Huawei	100
48	Concordia University	96
49	Carleton University	93
50	University of Manitoba	92

Profile of employers

Table 6: Top 25 employers

Employer	# Approved WP Applicants (estimate)	# LMIA Required	Main NOC	P/T of Destination	Use of immigration consultant/ lawyer*	Internal immigration-related capacity*	Other human resources*	Referred
Cognizant	4,552	None	2174 (63%), 0213 (14%), 2173 (12%)	Ont. (98%)	Yes	Yes	—	Yes
Infosys	3,129	None	2173 (40%), 2174 (25%), 2171 (21%)	Ont. (72%), B.C. (20%), Que. (5%)	—	Yes	—	—
Tata Consultancy Services	2,119	1	2171 (51%), 2174 (26%), 2173 (12%)	Ont. (78%), Que. (9%), Alta. (7%)	Yes	—	Yes	—
Tech Mahindra Limited	1,465	None	2174 (56%), 2171 (19%), 2173 (9%)	Ont. (86%), B.C. (7%), Alta. (5%)	Yes	Yes	—	—
Capgemini	1,304	2	2174 (53%), 2171 (34%), 0213 (7%)	Ont. (83%), Que. (10%), Man. (3%)	Yes	—	—	—
University of Toronto	782	1	4011 (55%), 3111 (39%), 4012 (5%)	Ont. (100%)	—	—	Yes	Yes
Accenture	685	22	2171 (50%), 2174 (34%), 0125 (8%)	Ont. (62%), Que. (18%), B.C. (10%)	Yes	Yes	—	—
Microsoft	676	1	2173 (75%), 0213 (8%), 2171 (8%)	B.C. (90%)	Yes	—	—	—
Amazon	518	107	2173 (70%), 0213 (15%), 0714 (3%)	B.C. (79%), Ont. (20%), Alta. (1%)	Yes	—	—	Yes
Deloitte	518	9	2171 (48%), 1111 (14%), 0213 (14%)	Ont. (55%), Que. (15%), Alta. (14%)	Yes	Yes	—	—
McGill University	512	None	4011 (55%), 4012 (31%), 3111 (12%)	Alta. (100%)	—	Yes	—	Yes
University of Alberta	467	None	4011 (51%), 4012 (42%), 3111 (7%)	Alta. (100%)	—	Yes	—	Yes
CGI	465	183	2171 (51%), 2174 (34%), 2172 (5%)	Alta. (53%), Ont. (43%), Sask. (1%)	Yes	—	—	—
University of British Columbia	439	None	4011 (77%), 3111 (18%), 4012 (2%)	B.C. (100%)	—	—	Yes	Yes
HCL Axon Technologies	390	None	2173 (45%), 2171 (23%), 0213 (22%)	Ont. (60%), N.B. (16%), Alta. (11%)	Yes	—	—	Yes
Wipro Limited	354	None	2174 (35%), 0213 (31%), 2171 (17%)	Ont. (67%), B.C. (13%), Alta. (12%)	Yes	—	—	—
Larsen & Toubro Infotech	352	1	2171 (70%), 2173 (15%), 2174 (10%)	Ont. (95%)	Yes	—	Yes	—
PWC	349	1	1111 (65%), 1122 (18%), 2171 (9%)	Ont. (68%), Alta. (14%), B.C. (8%)	—	Yes	—	—
Ernst and Young LLP	288	None	1111 (33%), 2171 (29%), 1122 (28%)	Ont. (57%), Alta. (15%), Que. (11%)	—	Yes	—	—
SAP Canada	277	None	2171 (88%), 2174 (4%), 0213 (3%)	Ont. (47%), Alta. (17%), B.C. (16%)	Yes	—	—	—
Université de Montréal	276	1	4011 (63%), 2173 (20%), 4012 (10%)	Que. (100%)	—	—	—	—
University of Calgary	271	None	4011 (82%), 3111 (13%), 4012 (4%)	Alta. (100%)	—	Yes	—	—
University of Waterloo	256	None	4011 (77%), 4012 (23%)	Ont. (100%)	—	Yes	—	Yes
Université Laval	227	None	4011 (58%), 4012 (23%), 3111 (11%)	Que. (100%)	—	—	—	Yes
Western University	213	None	4011 (55%), 4012 (28%), 3111 (17%)	Ont. (100%)	—	Yes	—	—

* Note: Categories were determined based on a review of the email addresses frequently used for the WP applications supported by a particular employer. (Examples of Internal immigration-related capacity included having an immigration consultant or lawyer, or a Global or People mobility manager, on staff.)

Annex C: Key features of select countries reviewed

Australia

Through the Global Talent Employer Sponsored program:

- Trusted employers are not restricted to occupation lists for the Temporary Work Visa (TSS) streams.
- There are 2 streams – Established business and Start-ups.
- Trusted employers can negotiate variations on the standard TSS visa requirements.
- The visa is valid for up to 4 years and allows access to a permanent residence pathway.
- Priority processing of GTES agreements – 6-11 business days (for complete applications).

The Netherlands

Permits for highly skilled migrants:

- Only recognised employers can submit visa applications on behalf of highly skilled migrants.
- Recognised companies qualify for the fast-track procedure (2 weeks).
- Residence permits are granted for the same duration as employment contracts, with a maximum of 5 years.
- The 30% facility scheme allows employers to offer skilled migrants a tax-free payment of at most 30% of their salary to cover extraterritorial costs.

United States

H-1B Designed and issued for professional workers on specialized careers:

- Designed and issued for professional workers on specialized careers.
- Allows to travel to work and live in the U.S. permanently for a certain period of time.
- Spouses and minor children of H-1B visa holders are eligible for H-4 visas.
- It can take from 2 to 6 months to be process.
- It is possible to change your worker visa status and apply for a Green Card through employment in the United States.

Singapore

The Tech Pass allows holders to:

- Start and operate one or more tech companies.
- Be an employee in one or more Singapore-based companies at any time.
- Transit between employers or to an entrepreneur.
- Be a consultant or mentor, lecture in local institutions of higher learning, or be an investor and director in one or more Singapore based companies.
- Renew for 2 years following the initial visa maximum of 2 years, upon meeting renewal criteria.
- Tech Pass applications are generally processed within 8 weeks.

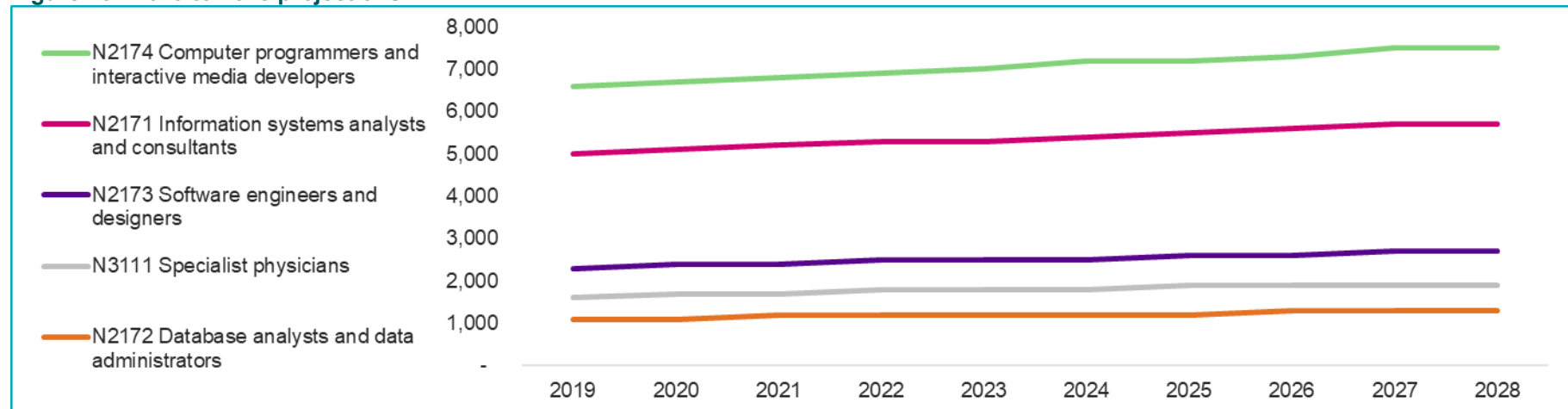
Annex D: The Canadian Occupational Projection System (COPS)

Table 7: 2019 to 2028 projections

Occupation types	Benefit
Computer programmers and interactive media developers (2174) (NOC A)	Shortage
Information systems analysts and consultants (2171) (NOC A)	Shortage
Software engineers and designers (2173) (NOC A)	Shortage
University professors and lecturers (4011) (NOC A)	Balance
Computer and information systems managers (0213) (NOC O)	Balance
Post-secondary teaching and research assistants (4012) (NOC A)	Balance
Specialist physicians (3111) (NOC A)	Shortage
Professional occupations in business services to management (1122) (NOC A)	Balance
Financial auditors and accountants (1111) (NOC A)	Balance
Database analysts and data administrators (2172) (NOC A)	Shortage

Sources: IRCC administrative data and the Canadian Occupational Projection System (COPS) 2019 to 2028 projections

Figure 13: 2019 to 2028 projections



Sources: The Canadian Occupational Projection System (COPS) 2019 to 2028 projections

Annex E: Comparison of applicant survey respondents to the LMIA-exempt work permit applicant population under the GSS

Table 8: Profile of applicant survey respondents vs population

Socio-demographic overview		Population n=34353	Survey respondents (overall) n=3300	Survey respondents (worked only) n=3064
Application year	2017 (June to December)	10.4%	11.8%	11.9%
	2018	36.6%	39.3%	40.0%
	2019	45.5%	44.8%	44.7%
	2020 (January to February)	7.4%	4.0%	3.4%
Gender	Male	78.1%	74.6%	74.4%
	Female	21.9%	25.4%	25.6%
Age at application	18 to 34	60.3%	59.6%	60.2%
	35 to 44	34.2%	32.0%	31.6%
	45 or older	5.5%	8.3%	8.2%
Marital status at application	Married/common law	68.6%	63.5%	63.2%
	Single	29.9%	34.6%	35.0%
	Separated/divorced/widowed	1.5%	1.9%	1.8%
Intended province and territory region of destination	British Columbia	14.0%	13.3%	13.5%
	Prairies	8.7%	12.5%	12.8%
	Ontario	62.2%	49.8%	49.1%
	Quebec	12.8%	20.4%	20.6%
	Atlantic	2.1%	3.7%	3.8%
	Territories	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%
Country of citizenship – top 10 (based on population)	India	63.6%	36.5%	35.2%
	People's Republic of China	7.6%	6.2%	6.3%
	France	4.0%	9.1%	9.5%
	Brazil	2.6%	6.2%	6.4%
	Iran	2.3%	7.5%	7.2%
	Korea, Republic of	1.3%	1.7%	1.8%
	British Citizen (includes England and British National Overseas)	1.0%	1.5%	1.6%
	Federal Republic of Germany	1.0%	1.9%	2.0%
	Republic of South Africa	1.0%	1.1%	1.1%
	Japan	0.9%	1.6%	1.6%
	Other countries of citizenship	14.8%	26.7%	27.4%

Source: GCMS

Table 9: Profile of applicant survey respondents vs population (continued)

Skill level, NOC and LMIA exemptions		Population n=34353	Survey respondents (overall) n=3300	Survey respondents (worked only) n=3064
Skill level	A University education	84.2%	83.7%	83.5%
	0 Management occupations	15.5%	15.9%	16.1%
	Other	0.3%	0.4%	0.5%
Intended NOC – top 10 (based on population)	2174.0 Computer programmers and interactive media developers	21.1%	8.6%	8.1%
	2171.0 Information systems analysts and consultants	18.4%	10.3%	10.2%
	2173.0 Software engineers and designers	13.9%	10.5%	10.3%
	4011.0 University professors and lecturers	10.4%	25.5%	26.1%
	0213.0 Computer and information systems managers	6.9%	5.1%	4.8%
	4012.0 Post-secondary teaching and research assistants	3.7%	8.2%	8.0%
	3111.0 Specialist physicians	2.3%	4.0%	4.1%
	1122.0 Professional occupations in business services to management	1.9%	1.5%	1.5%
	1111.0 Financial auditors and accountants	1.8%	1.1%	1.1%
	2172.0 Database analysts and data administrators	1.2%	0.7%	0.7%
	Other occupation NOCs	18.5%	24.6%	25.2%
LMIA exemption codes – top 10 (based on population)	C12 Intra-company transferees (including GATS)	66.1%	41.0%	39.9%
	C44 Post-doctoral Ph.D. fellows and award recipients	11.8%	28.7%	29.6%
	C20 Reciprocal employment	7.1%	4.7%	4.7%
	C22 Academic exchanges (professors, visiting lecturers)	3.2%	6.8%	6.4%
	T13 Canada-provincial/territorial	2.7%	4.0%	4.2%
	C45 Medical residents and fellows	2.4%	3.8%	4.0%
	C16 Francophone mobility	2.0%	3.8%	3.9%
	T23 Professional/technician (FTA)	1.0%	1.6%	1.7%
	C10 Significant benefit	0.9%	1.3%	1.4%
	C11 Entrepreneurs	0.5%	0.5%	0.6%
Other exemptions	2.1%	3.7%	3.7%	

Source: GCMS

Annex F: Comparison of CBSA Staff survey respondents to the population (BSOs and superintendents) as of July 1, 2020

Table 10: Profile of CBSA staff survey respondents vs the BSOs and superintendents

	Characteristics	Population (n=5816)	Survey Respondents (n=616)
Substantive job title	Border Services Officer	88.5%	84.7%
	Superintendent	11.5%	15.3%
Mode of Travel	Air	35.4%	34.3%
	Highway	56.4%	58.4%
	Marine	8.3%	7.3%
Region	Atlantic	8.4%	9.9%
	Ontario	44.5%	34.9%
	Pacific	18.5%	19.2%
	Prairies	11.0%	13.6%
	Quebec	17.6%	22.4%

Source: GCMS

Annex G: Comparison of referral partner survey respondents to the population at time of survey

Table 11: Profile of referral partner survey respondents vs population

	Characteristics	Population (n=53)	Survey Respondents (n=19)
Number of Referrals	None	26.4%	21.1%
	1 to 5	43.4%	42.1%
	6 to 10	15.1%	21.1%
	More than 10	15.1%	15.8%
Region	National/International	18.9%	21.1%
	Atlantic	15.1%	21.1%
	Prairies	11.3%	10.5%
	British Columbia	13.2%	10.5%
	Ontario	32.1%	26.3%
	Quebec	9.4%	10.5%

Source: GCMS