

Are Comprehensive Ranking System Factors Good Predictors of Labour Market Outcomes for Express Entry Immigrants?

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Introduction

Research questions

1. How do Express Entry (EE) economic immigrants perform in terms of:

- Employment income incidence, a proxy for employment rate
- Employment income levels

2. How does the labour market performance of EE immigrants vary by Comprehensive Ranking System (CRS) attributes, including:

- Core human capital factors: age, education, official language proficiency, and Canadian work experience
- Spouse-related factors: spouse's education level, official language proficiency, and Canadian work experience
- Additional CRS bonus points: arranged employment, PNP nomination, siblings in Canada, education in Canada, and French language proficiency

Objectives

Inform selection policy and program design: Evidence supports the development of immigration programs that admit candidates with strong potential for labour market success.

Support economic contribution and integration: Identifying which CRS attributes are linked to stronger outcomes helps ensure immigration contributes effectively to Canada's labour market and economy.

Data and Methodology

Data source: Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB), linking the Landing File, Express Entry File, and T1FF (personal income tax) file.

Target population:

- Principal applicants admitted via Express Entry between 2015 and 2022
- Includes Federal Skilled Workers (FSW), Federal Skilled Trades (FST), Canadian Experience Class (CEC), and Provincial Nominee programs (PNP).
- Excludes individuals with Quebec as their intended destination

Definitions:

- **Incidence of employment income:** A binary indicator (1 or 0) showing whether an individual had **positive employment income** in a calendar year
- **Employment income:** Includes wages, salaries, commissions, tips, gratuities, and other employment-related earnings

Econometric models: Two regression models are used to assess labour market outcomes for Express Entry immigrants:

- **Model 1:** Logistic regression estimating the **probability of having employment income**
- **Model 2:** Log-linear regression estimating the **level of employment income** among those with positive income
- Both models use the following independent variables: Core human capital factors, spouse factors, skill transferability factors, additional points factors, CRS rule change indicator, year of admission, immigration program, gender, intended destination province, source region, TEER skill level at admission, years since admission, and employment income as a temporary resident in Canada.
- Each model is estimated for the full sample and separately for immigration programs.

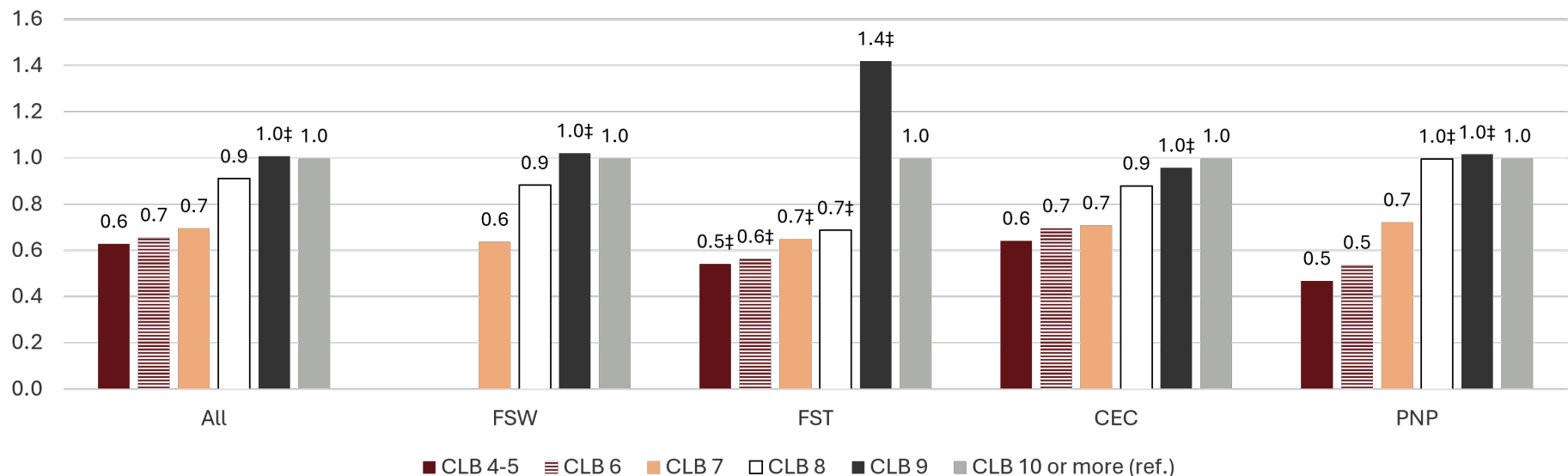
1. How do Express Entry immigrants differ in the incidence of employment income by key CRS attributes?

Official language proficiency

Higher Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) levels in the first official language are strongly linked to greater chances of earning employment income among EE immigrants.

- Across all EE programs, immigrants with CLB level above 6 in their first official language were consistently more likely to have employment income than those below CLB 6.
- The likelihood continues to rise with higher CLB levels, with CLB 9 and 10+ associated with the highest employment income incidence across all programs.

Figure 1: Odds ratios of having employment income after admission, by first official language proficiency



Note: ‡ indicates not statistically significant; all others are statistically significant at the 10% level or better.

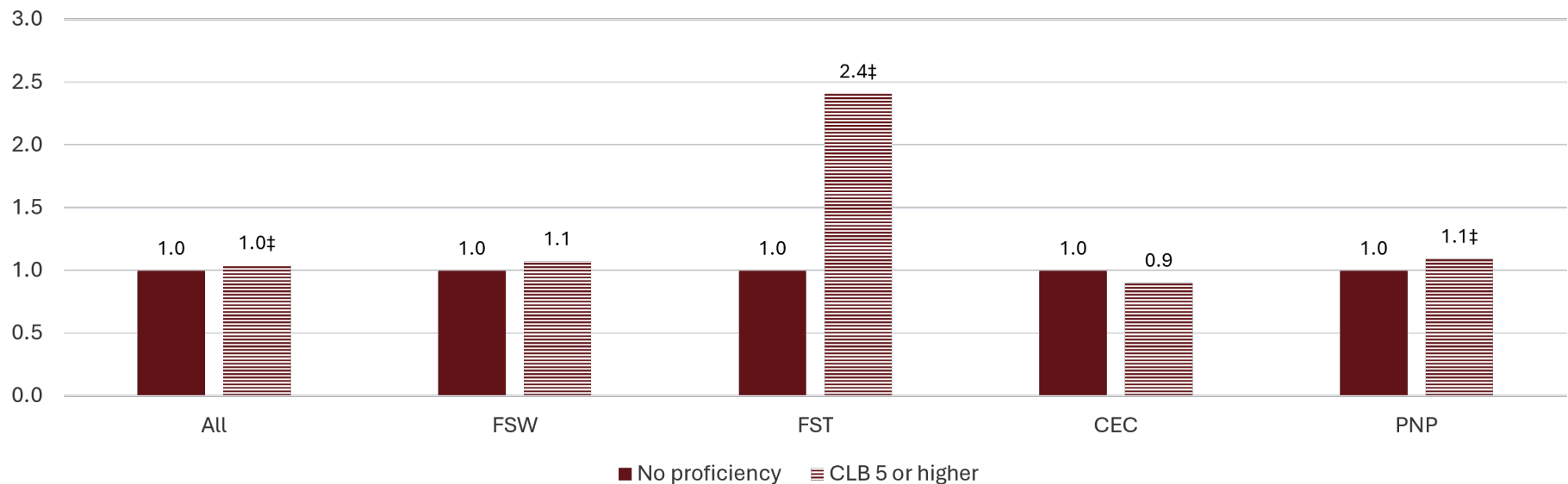
Second official language proficiency

Overall, second official language proficiency does not have a significant impact on employment income incidence among EE immigrants, but effects vary across immigration programs.

- The effect was slightly positive for FSW, slightly negative for PNP, and not statistically significant for CEC, after controlling for other factors.
- Among FST immigrants, those with second official language proficiency showed much higher odds of employment income, but the estimate is not statistically significant due to a small sample size.

Figure 2: Odds ratios of having employment income by second official language proficiency

Reference group: no proficiency (odds ratio = 1.0)



Note: ‡ indicates not statistically significant; all others are statistically significant at the 10% level or better.

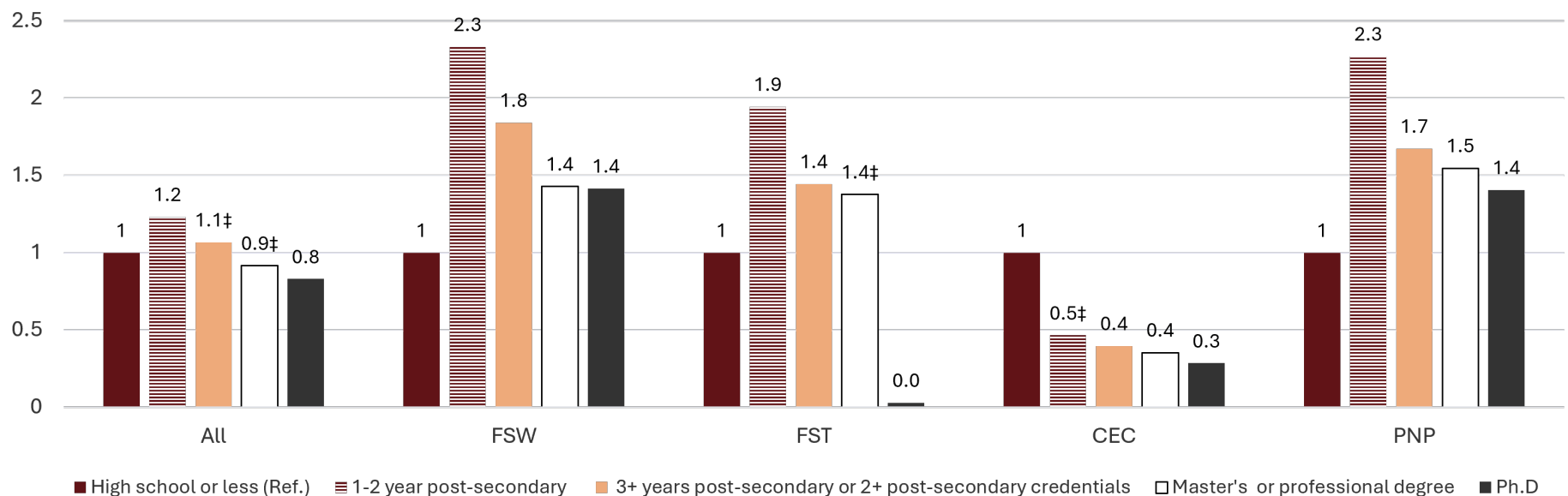
Education

Higher education is not consistently linked to higher employment income incidence among Express Entry immigrants.

- Overall, EE immigrants with 1–2 years of post-secondary education had the highest likelihood of having employment income, except in the CEC program.
- In the FSW and PNP programs, immigrants with graduate degrees were less likely to have employment income than those with shorter post-secondary education.
- In the CEC program, immigrants with high school or less education were most likely to have employment income, and likelihood declined with higher education levels.

Figure 3: Odds ratios of having employment income after admission, by education level

Reference group: High school or less (odds ratio = 1.0)



Notes: 1. ‡ indicates not statistically significant; all others are statistically significant at the 10% level or better. 2. The “high school or less” category also includes individuals who did not report their level of education.

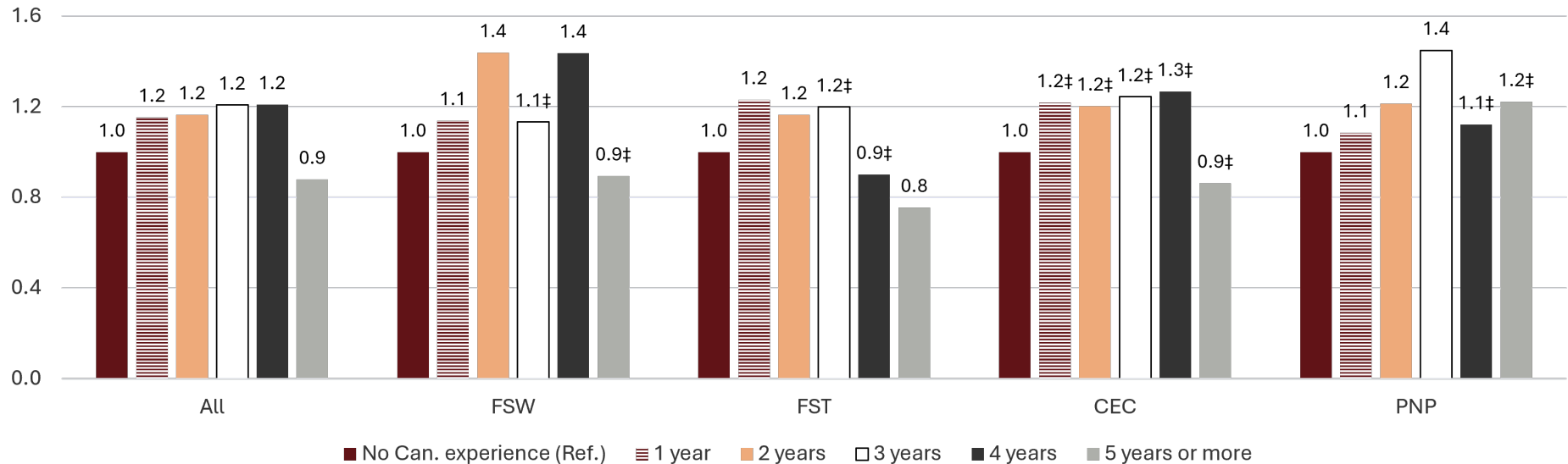
Canadian work experience

Pre-admission Canadian work experience boosts employment likelihood for EE immigrants, but the marginal gains shrink with additional years and become negative at five years or more.

Canadian work experience before admission has a positive impact on employment income incidence across most immigration programs, especially for 1 to 4 years of experience. However, the marginal benefit diminishes with more years, and 5 or more years of experience is no longer associated with a significant positive impact.

Figure 4: Odds ratios of having employment income by Canadian work experience

Reference group: No Canadian work experience (odds ratio = 1.0)



Note: # indicates not statistically significant; all others are statistically significant at the 10% level or better.

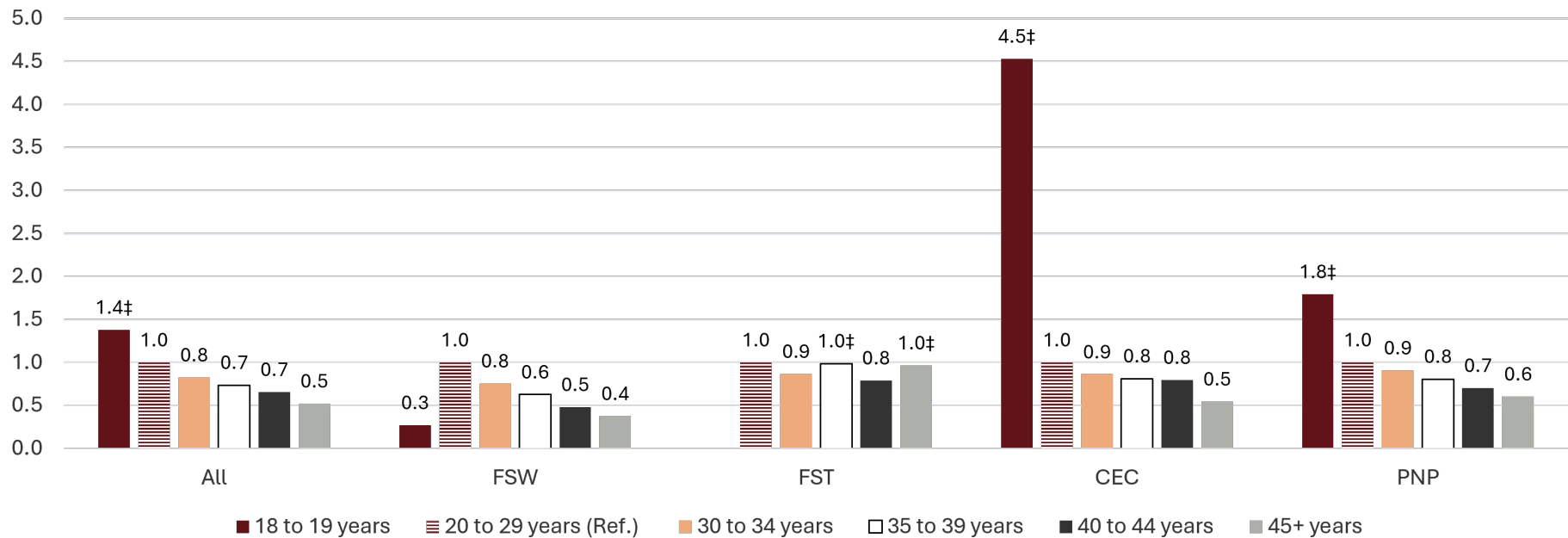
Age at selection

Express Entry immigrants selected at a younger age were generally more likely to have employment income after admission.

- In general, younger age at selection was associated with a higher likelihood of having employment income after admission across most EE programs.
- While some subgroups show variations (e.g., higher odds ratio in CEC at age 18–19), these estimates are often not statistically significant due to small population sizes.

Figure 5: Odds ratios of having employment income after admission, by age at selection

Reference group: 20 to 29 years of age (odds ratio = 1.0)



Note: ‡ indicates not statistically significant; all others are statistically significant at the 10% level or better.

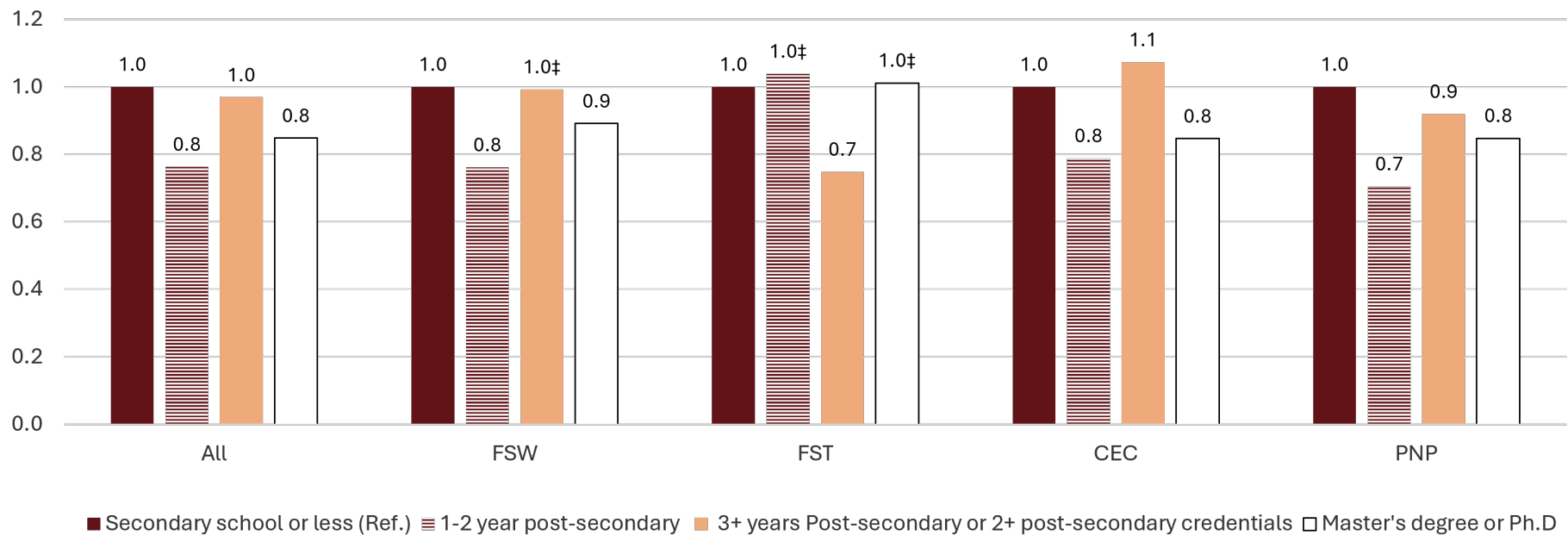
Spouse's education

Higher education of a spouse generally offers no employment advantage for EE immigrants and may even be associated with lower employment income incidence.

- EE immigrants with spouses holding 1–2 years of post-secondary education, a Master's, or Ph.D. are generally less likely to have employment income than those whose spouses have secondary school or less.
- The impact of spouses with 3 or more years of post-secondary education or multiple credentials is mixed, showing a slightly negative effect for PNP immigrants and a small positive effect for CEC immigrants

Figure 6: Odds ratios of having employment income by spouse's education level

Reference group: Spouse with secondary school or less (odds ratio = 1.0)



Note: ‡ indicates not statistically significant; all others are statistically significant at the 10% level or better. The “Secondary school or less” category also includes individuals who did not report their level of education.

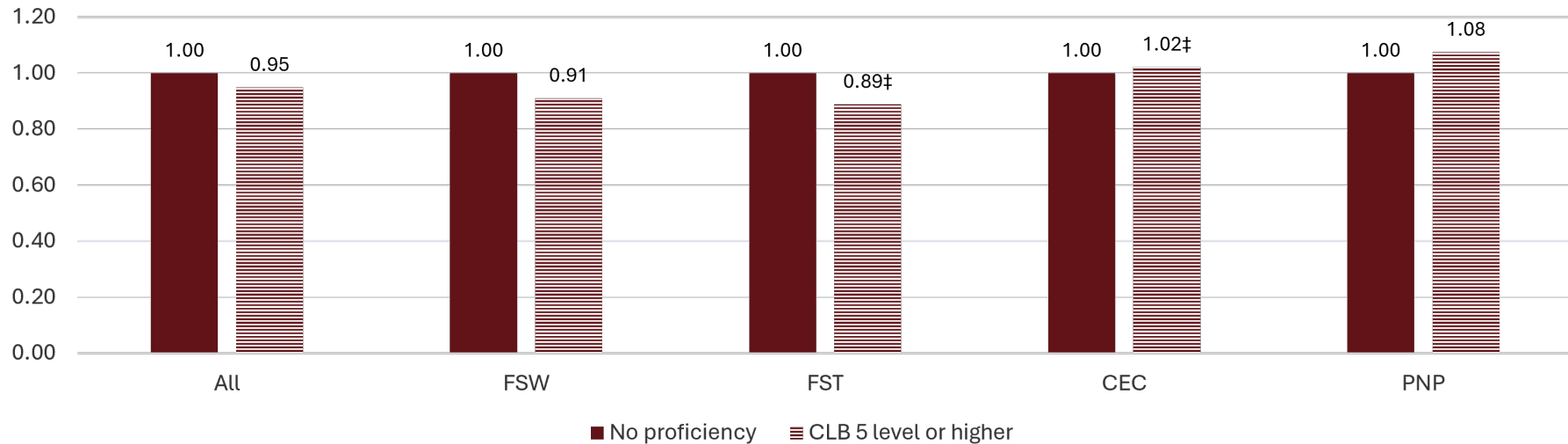
Spouse's official language proficiency

Spouse's official language proficiency has little to no impact on EE immigrants' likelihood of earning employment income.

For all EE immigrants, having a spouse with official language proficiency at CLB 5 or higher is associated with a small negative impact on employment income incidence. The effect is slightly negative for FSW, marginally positive for PNP, and not statistically significant for FST and CEC.

Figure 7: Odds ratios of having employment income by spouse's official language proficiency

Reference group: No proficiency (odds ratio = 1.0)



Note: ‡ indicates not statistically significant; all others are statistically significant at the 10% level or better.

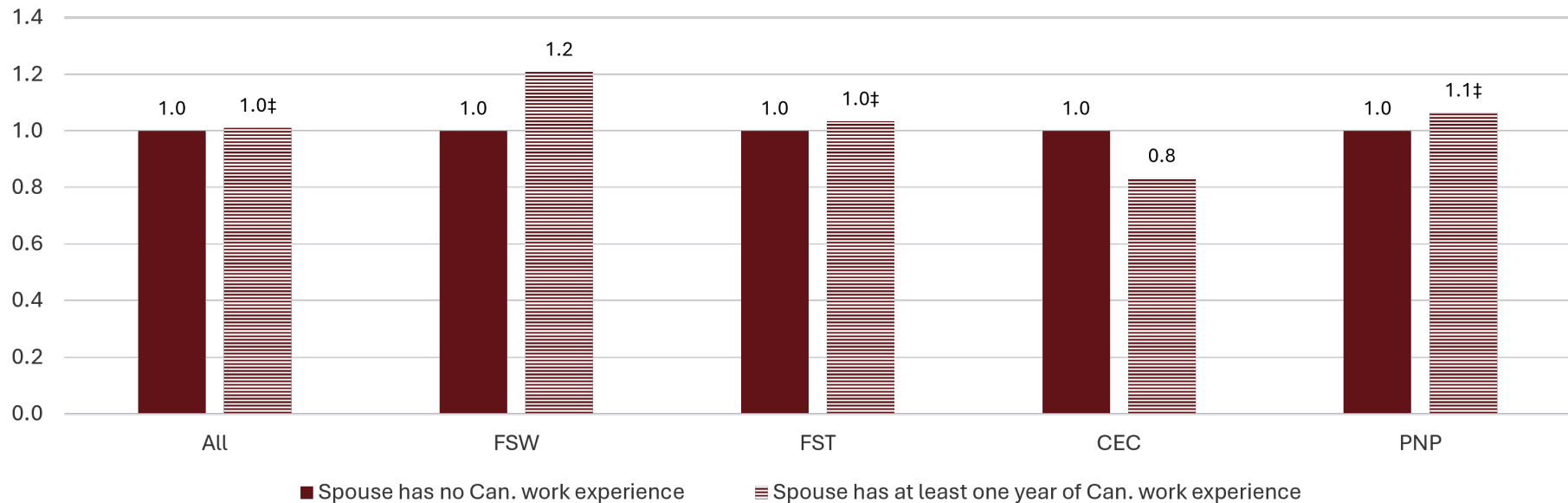
Spouse's Canadian work experience

Overall, Canadian work experience has very limited impact on EE immigrants' likelihood of employment, with small and mixed effects across immigration programs.

Having a spouse with at least one year of Canadian work experience shows no significant impact overall. A positive effect for FSW is offset by a negative effect for CEC, while the estimates for FST and PNP are not statistically significant.

Figure 8: Odds ratio of having employment income by spouse's Canadian work experience

Reference group: Spouse has no Canadian work experience (odds ratio = 1.0)



Note: ‡ indicates not statistically significant; all others are statistically significant at the 10% level or better.

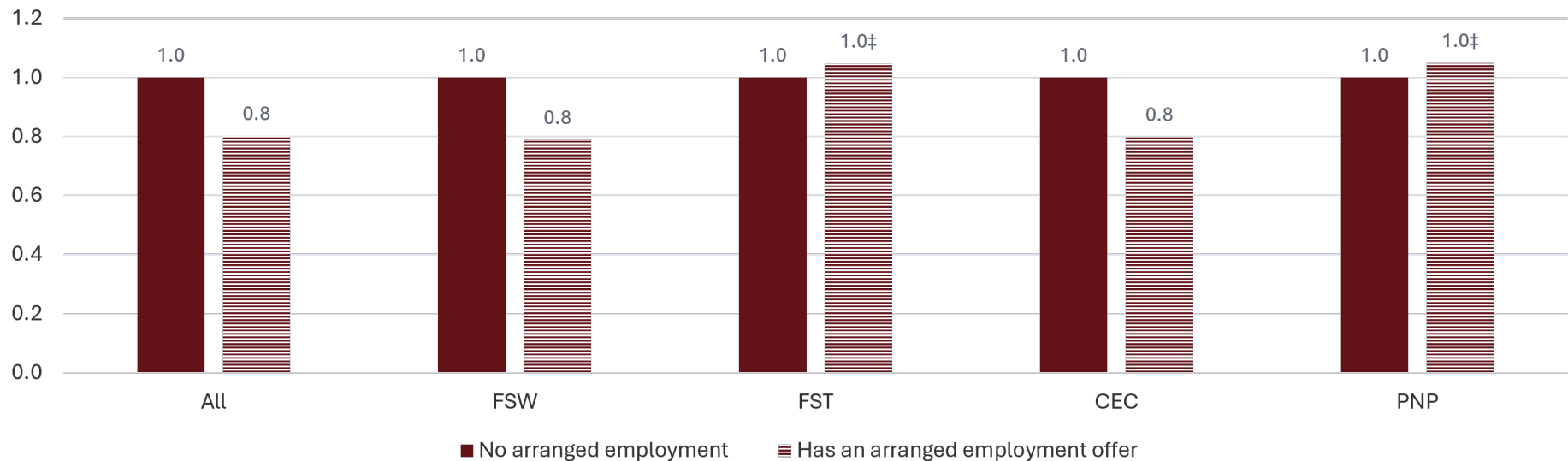
Arranged employment offer

Arranged employment offers do not increase the likelihood of employment income for EE immigrants after controlling for official-language proficiency, education, and other individual characteristics.

- FSW and CEC immigrants with an arranged employment offer had a lower likelihood of having employment income after admission.
- For FST and PNP immigrants, the difference between those with and without an arranged employment offer was not statistically significant.
- After controlling for other individual factors, EE immigrants with arranged employment offers were less likely to have employment income than those without, both before November 2016 and after the June 2017 CRS rule change; however, among those selected between the two rule changes, the difference was not statistically significant.

Figure 9: Odds ratio of having employment income by arranged employment offer

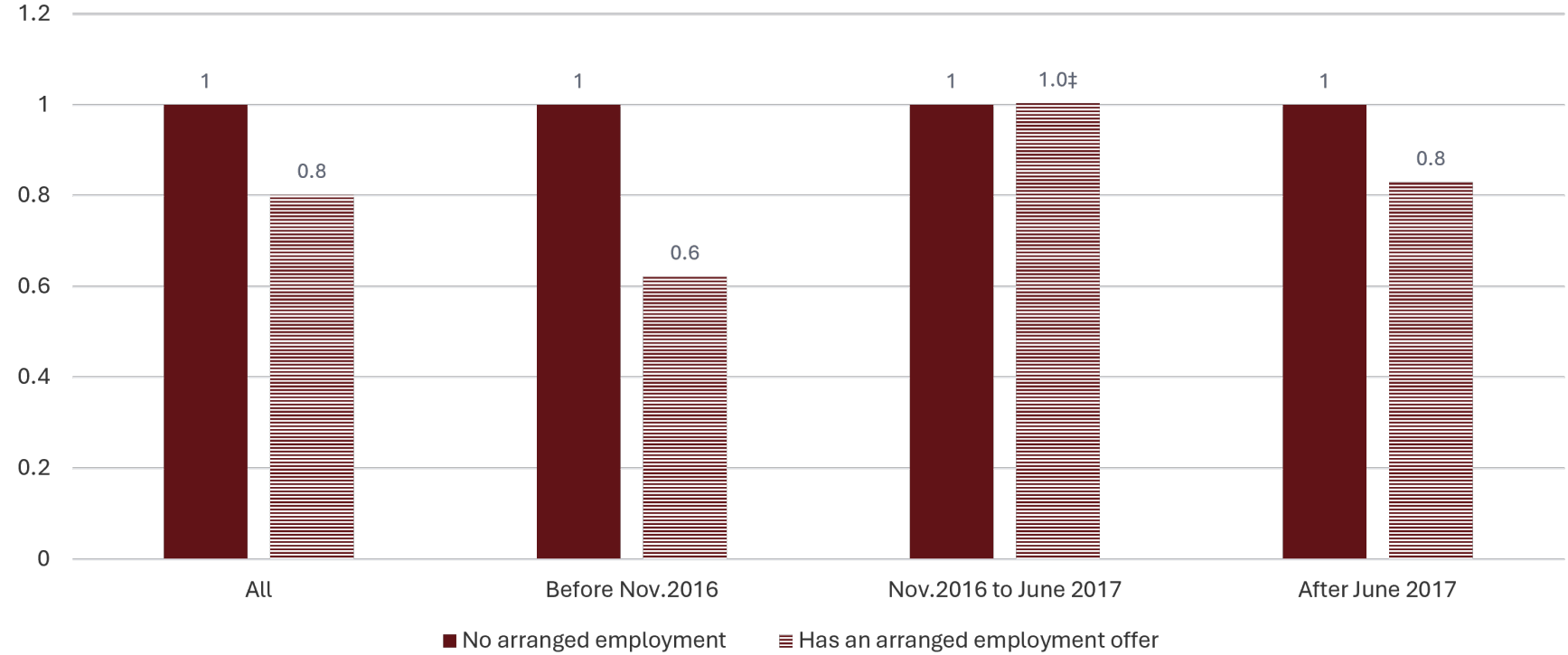
(Reference group: No arranged employment = 1.0)



Note: ‡ indicates not statistically significant; all others are statistically significant at the 10% level or better.

Figure 10: Odds ratio of having employment income by arranged employment offer and CRS rule period

(Reference group: No arranged employment = 1.0)



Note: § indicates not statistically significant; all others are statistically significant at the 10% level or better.

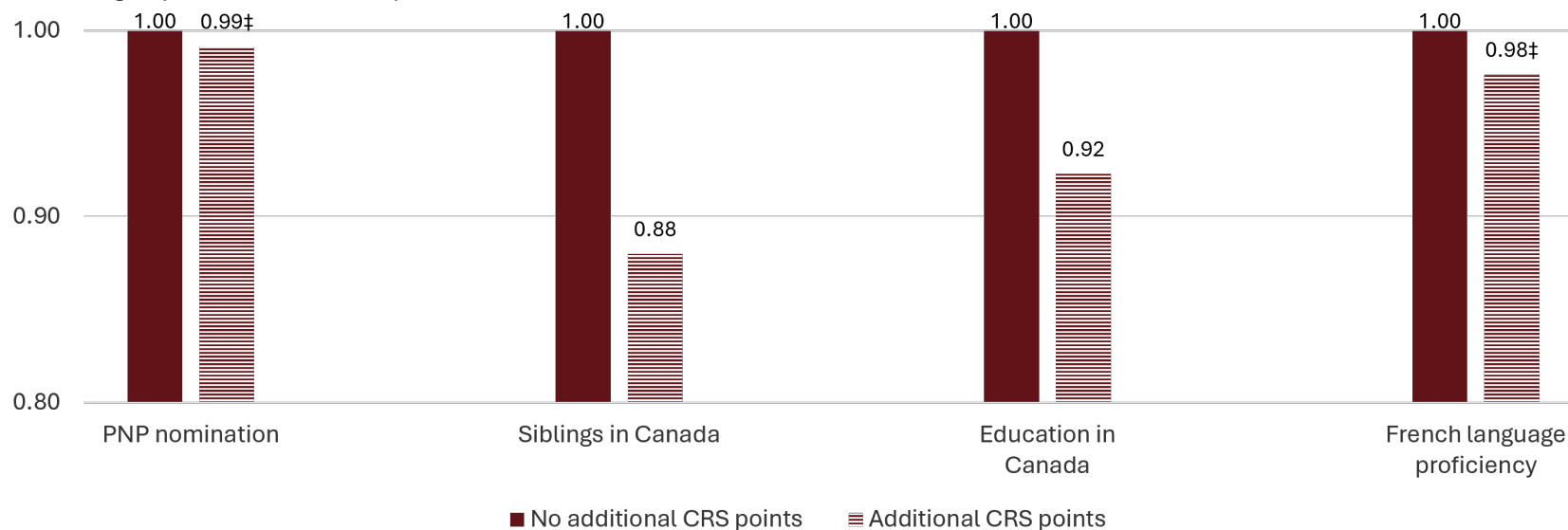
Bonus point attributes

CRS bonus points for PNP, siblings, education in Canada, or French proficiency offer no employment advantage, and may even slightly reduce employment income incidence.

- EE immigrants who received CRS bonus points for PNP nomination or French language proficiency showed no significant difference in employment income incidence compared to those who did not.
- Those with siblings in Canada or education in Canada had a slightly lower likelihood of having employment income after admission.

Figure 11: Odds ratio of employment income incidence by CRS attributes for additional points

Reference group: No additional CRS points=1



Note: # indicates not statistically significant; all others are statistically significant at the 10% level or better.

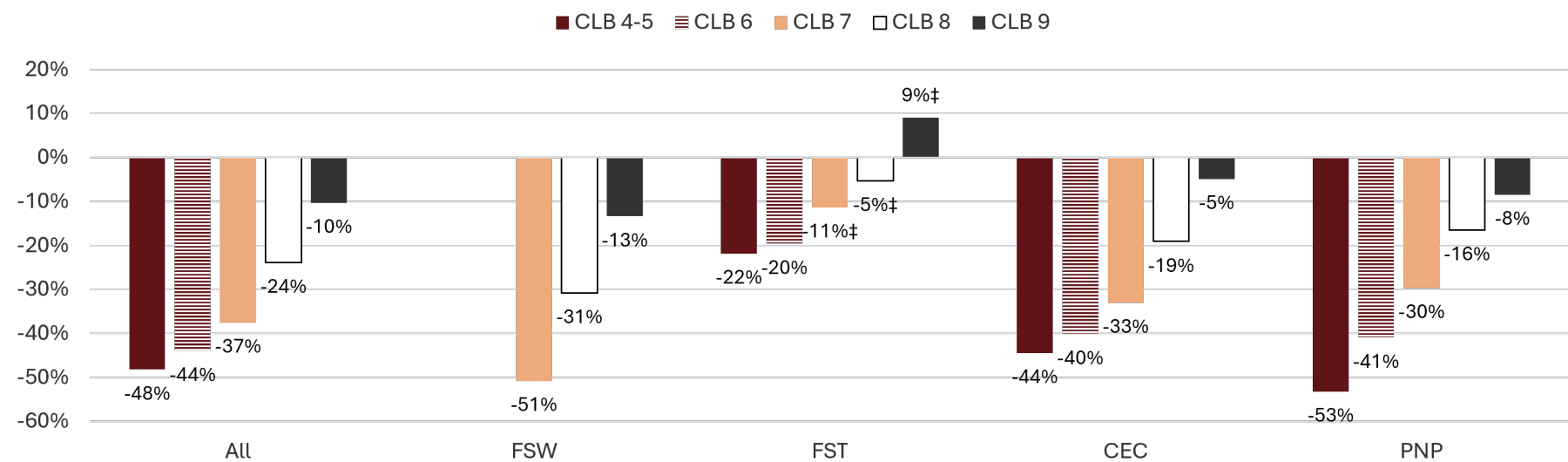
2. How does post-admission employment income vary among EE immigrants by key CRS attributes?

First official language proficiency

First official language proficiency is a strong predictor of post-admission employment income among EE immigrants, with higher proficiency linked to higher earnings.

Overall, immigrants with CLB levels 9, 8, 7, and 6 earned 10%, 24%, 37%, and 44% less, respectively, than those with CLB 10 or higher. This positive correlation between CLB level and post-admission earnings generally holds across immigration programs. One exception is the FST category, where the earnings differences between those with CLB levels 7 to 9 and those with CLB 10 or higher are not statistically significant.

Figure 12: Percentage difference in post-admission employment income by first official language proficiency (relative to reference group: CLB 10 or more)



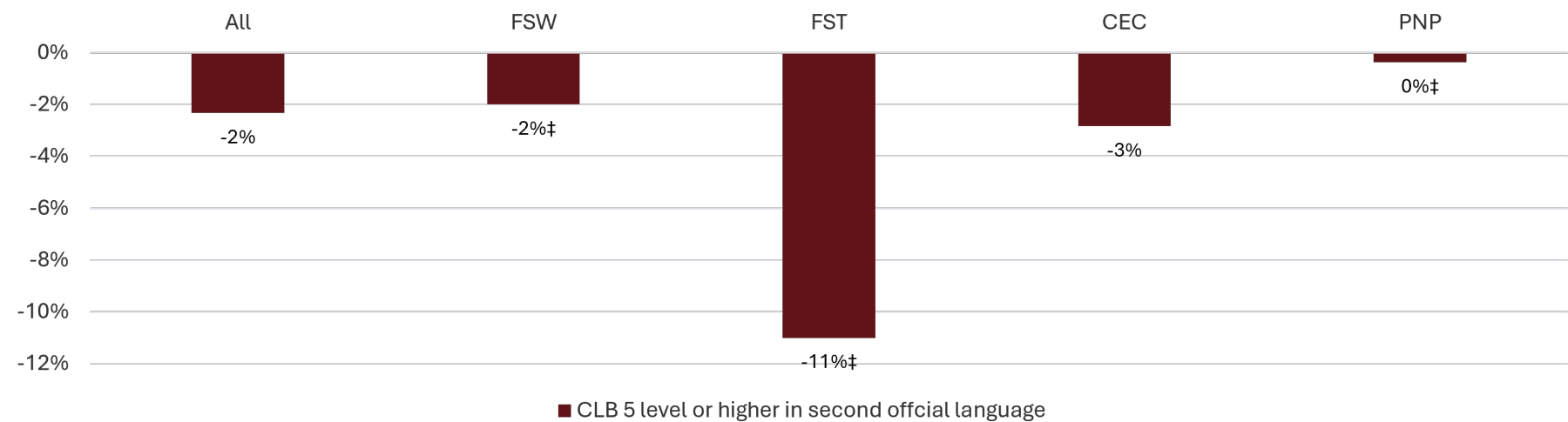
Note: ‡ indicates not statistically significant; all others are statistically significant at the 10% level or better.

Second official language proficiency

Second official language proficiency does not boost post-admission income and is slightly negatively associated with EE immigrants’ earnings overall.

Having second official language proficiency (CLB 5 or higher) was associated with 2% lower post-admission employment income among all EE immigrants. The negative relationship was most pronounced for CEC immigrants (-3%), but was not statistically significant for other immigration categories, after controlling for other factors.

Figure 13: Percentage difference in post-admission employment income by second official language proficiency (relative to reference group: No second official language proficiency)



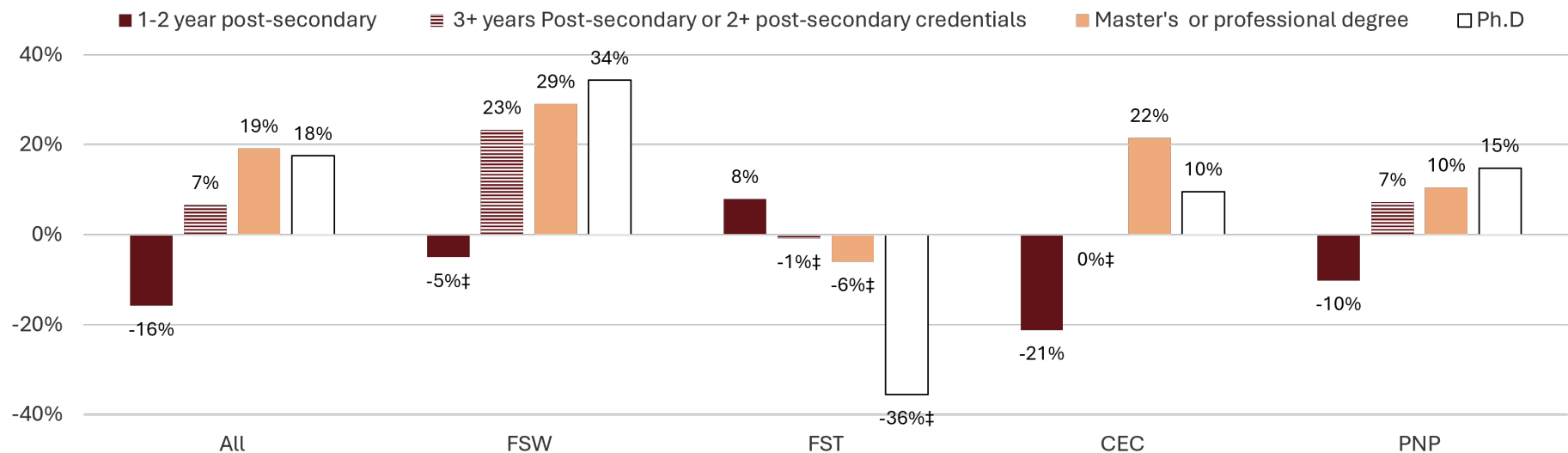
Note: ‡ indicates not statistically significant; all others are statistically significant at the 10% level or better.

Education

EE immigrants with higher education generally earn more after admission, with the highest returns observed for those holding a master's degree.

- One to two years of post-secondary education was associated with lower post-admission employment income compared to high school or less across most immigration programs.
- In contrast, EE immigrants with 3 or more years of post-secondary education, a master's, or a Ph.D. generally had higher income than those with only high school or less, except for FST immigrants, for whom the pattern was not consistent.

Figure 14: Percentage difference in post-admission employment income by education level (relative to reference group: High school or less)



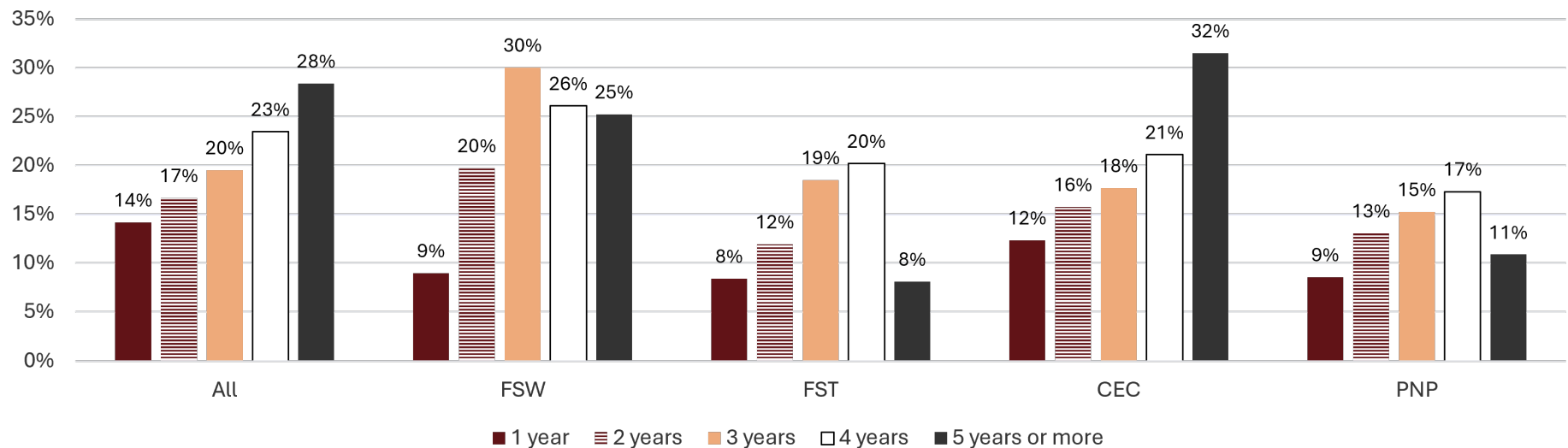
Notes: ‡ indicates not statistically significant; all others are statistically significant at the 10% level or better. 2. The “high school or less” category also includes individuals who did not report their level of education.

Canadian work experience

Post-admission employment income increases with pre-admission Canadian work experience overall, but additional gains taper off after 4 years for most immigrant categories, except for CEC.

- Among CEC immigrants, post-admission employment income increases steadily with more years of pre-admission Canadian work experience.
- In other programs (FSW, FST, PNP), although pre-admission Canadian work experience is consistently associated with higher income, the gains level off after 4 years, with no further increase for those with 5 years or more.

Figure 15: Percentage difference in post-admission employment income by Canadian work experience (relative to reference group: No Canadian work experience)



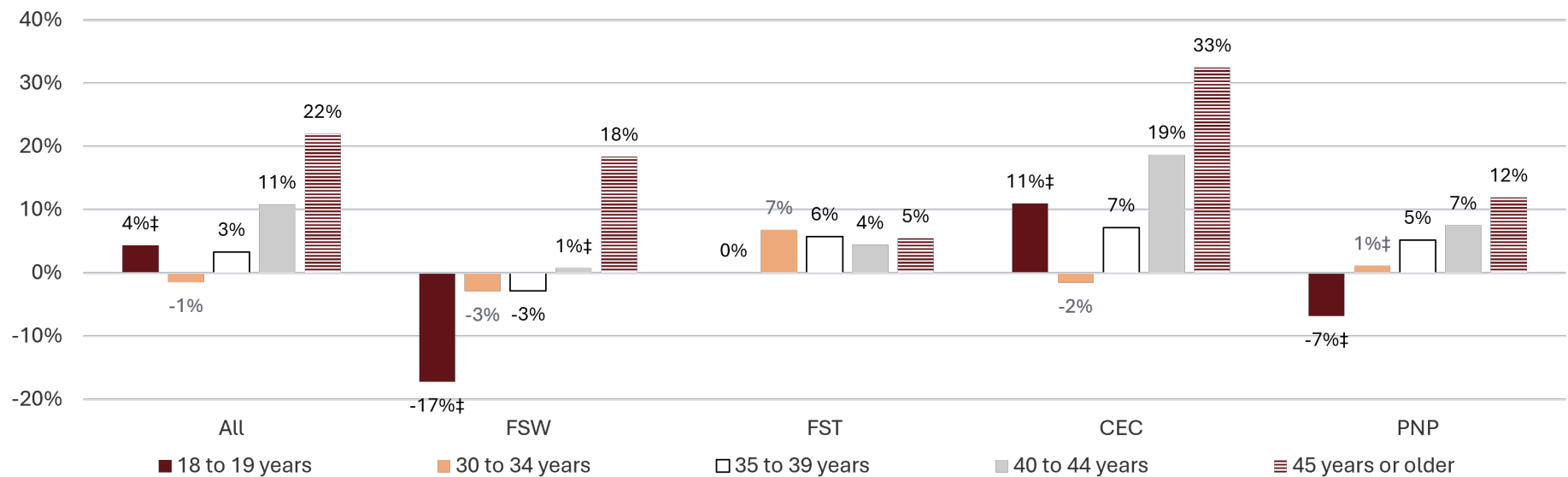
Note: All estimates are statistically significant at the 10% level or better.

Age at selection

Among EE immigrants selected at age 30 or older, post-admission employment income generally increases with age at selection, as they are closer to their career peak

The highest employment income was observed among immigrants who were selected at age 45 or older, while the lowest income was recorded for those selected under age 30.

Figure 16: Percentage difference in post-admission employment income by age at selection (relative to reference group: 20 to 29 years of age)



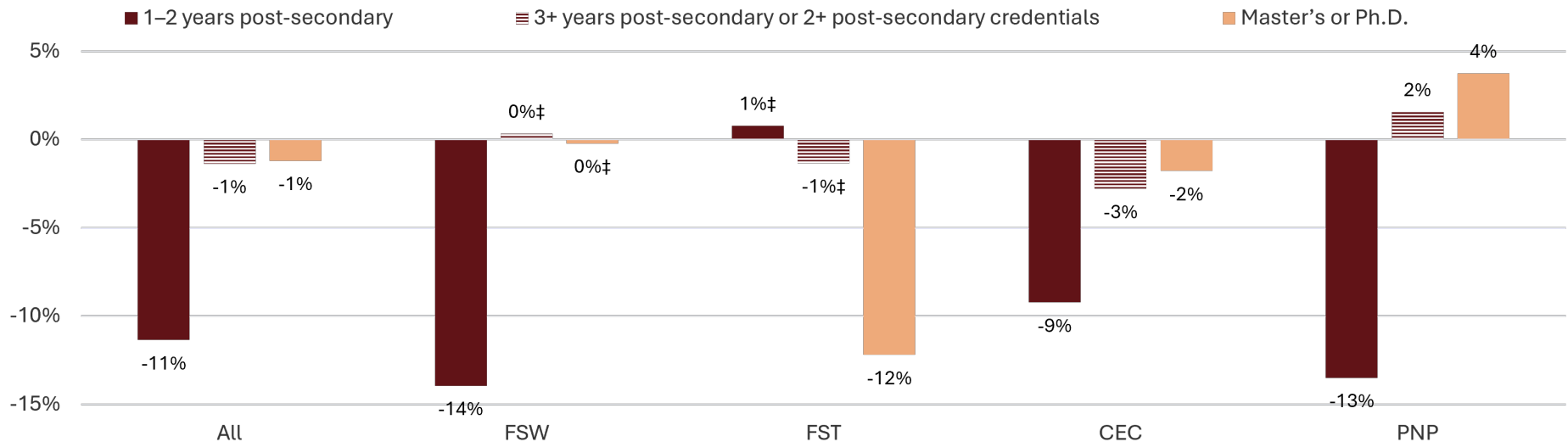
Note: ‡ indicates not statistically significant; all others are statistically significant at the 10% level or better.

Spouse's education level

A spouse's higher level of education is generally not associated with higher post-admission income for EE immigrants and often shows a small negative effect.

- EE immigrants whose spouse has 1–2 years of post-secondary education earn 11% less than those whose spouse has secondary school or less.
- A spouse's higher education level (3+ years, master's, or Ph.D.) generally shows no impact or a slight negative impact on employment income, except for PNP immigrants, who experience a small gain.

Figure 17: Percentage difference in post-admission employment income by spouse's level of education (relative to reference group: Secondary school or less)



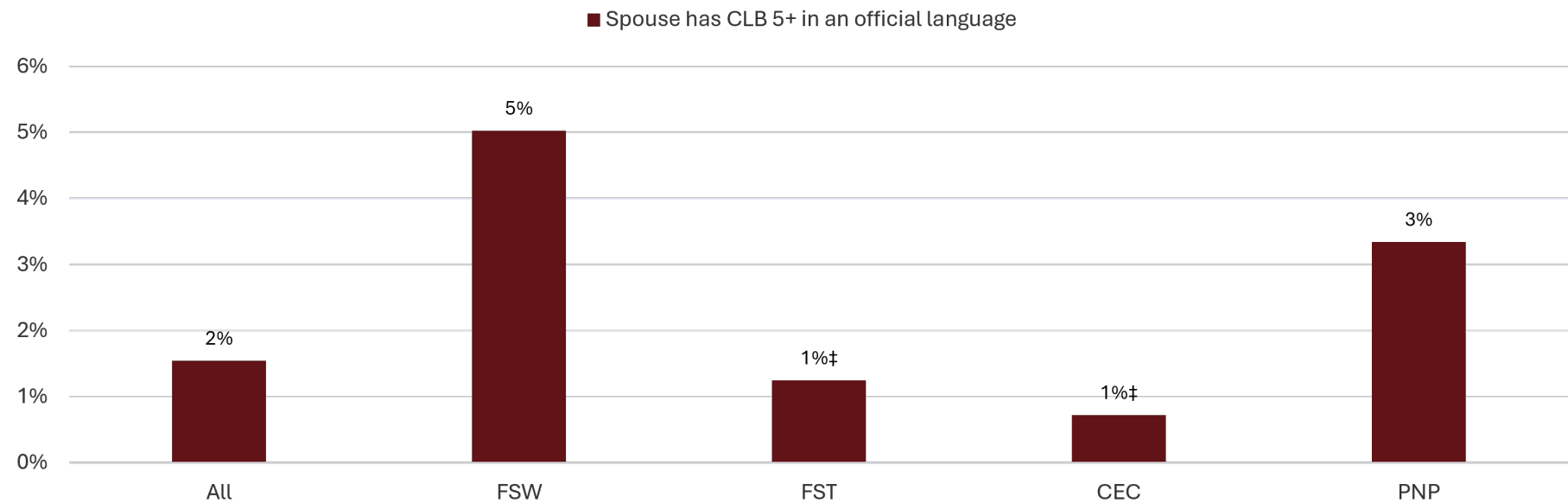
Notes: 1. ‡ indicates not statistically significant; all others are statistically significant at the 10% level or better. 2. The “Secondary school or less” category also includes individuals who did not report their level of education.

Spouse’s official language proficiency

Spouse’s official language proficiency has little or no impact on EE immigrants’ post-admission employment income

- EE immigrants with a spouse who has CLB 5 or higher in an official language saw only modest gains in post-admission employment income, 2 percent overall, 5 percent for FSW, and 3 percent for PNP.
- These effects were small and not statistically significant for FST and CEC, reinforcing that spouse language proficiency has minimal impact on the principal applicant’s earnings.

Figure 18: Percentage difference in post-admission employment income by spouse’s official language proficiency (compared to reference group: No official language proficiency)



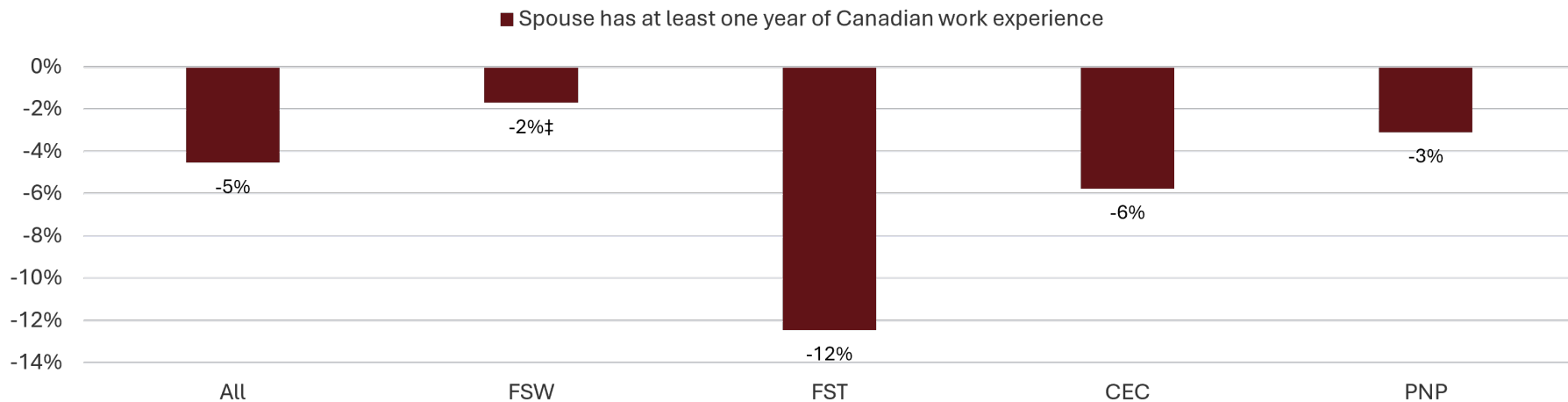
Note: ‡ indicates not statistically significant; all others are statistically significant at the 10% level or better.

Spouse's Canadian work experience

Spouse's Canadian work experience is associated with lower post-admission income for EE immigrants across all programs.

- EE immigrants with a spouse who has at least one year of Canadian work experience earned 5 percent less in post-admission employment income compared to those whose spouse had no Canadian experience.
- This suggests that spouse Canadian work experience may not translate into economic gains for the principal applicant and could reflect a redistribution of labour market effort within the household, resulting in lower individual earnings.

Figure 19: Percentage difference in post-admission employment income by spouse's Canadian work experience (relative to reference group: No Canadian work experience)

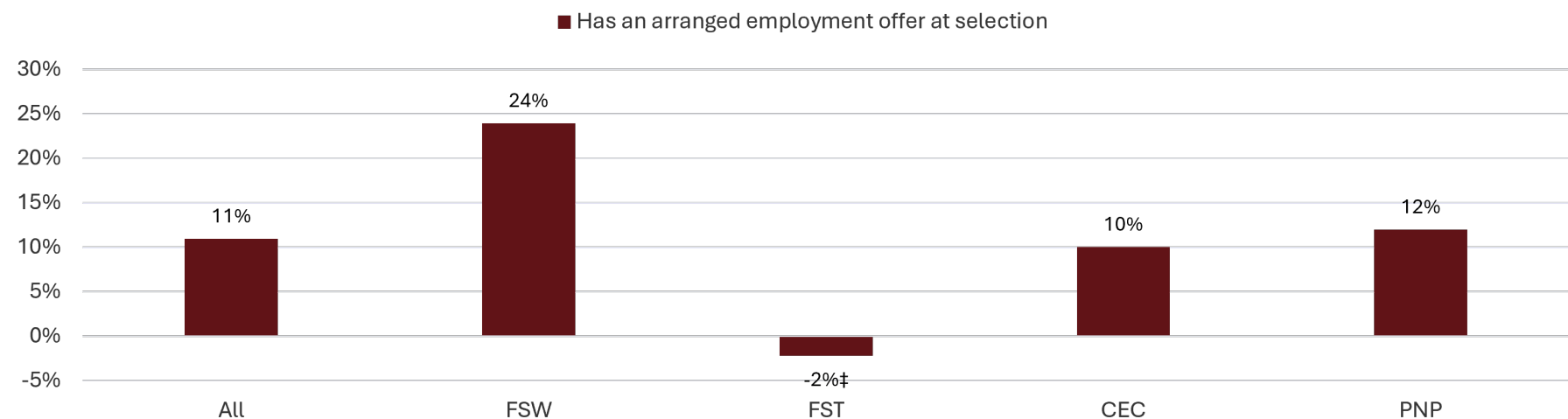


Note: † indicates not statistically significant; all others are statistically significant at the 10% level or better.

Arranged employment offer

EE immigrants with an arranged employment offer had higher post-admission employment income overall and across most immigrant programs, except FST, and the gap widened after CRS rule changes.

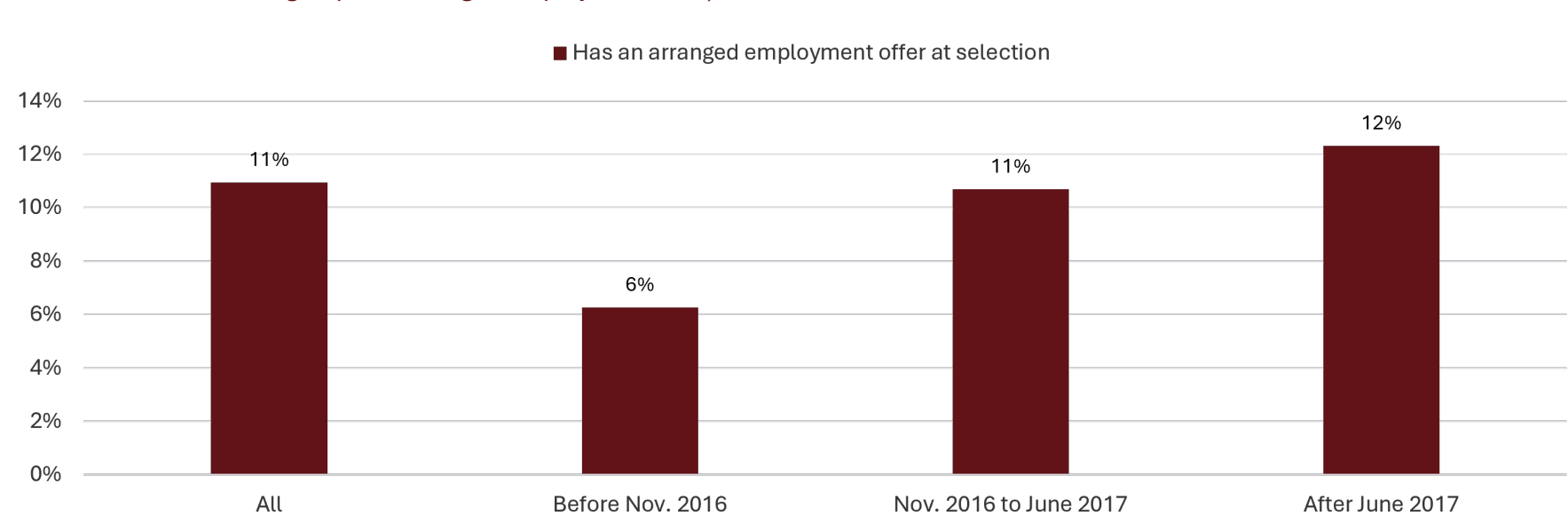
Figure 20: Percentage difference in post-admission employment income by arranged employment offer (relative to reference group: No arranged employment offer)



Note: ‡ indicates not statistically significant; all others are statistically significant at the 10% level or better.

- FSW immigrants with an arranged employment offer had the largest post-admission income advantage compared to those without, followed by PNP and CEC immigrants.
- For FST immigrants, the difference was not statistically significant.
- The advantage of arranged employment became more pronounced after each CRS rule change, with income gains increasing over time.

Figure 21: Percentage difference in post-admission employment income by arranged employment offer and CRS rule period (relative to reference group: No arranged employment offer)



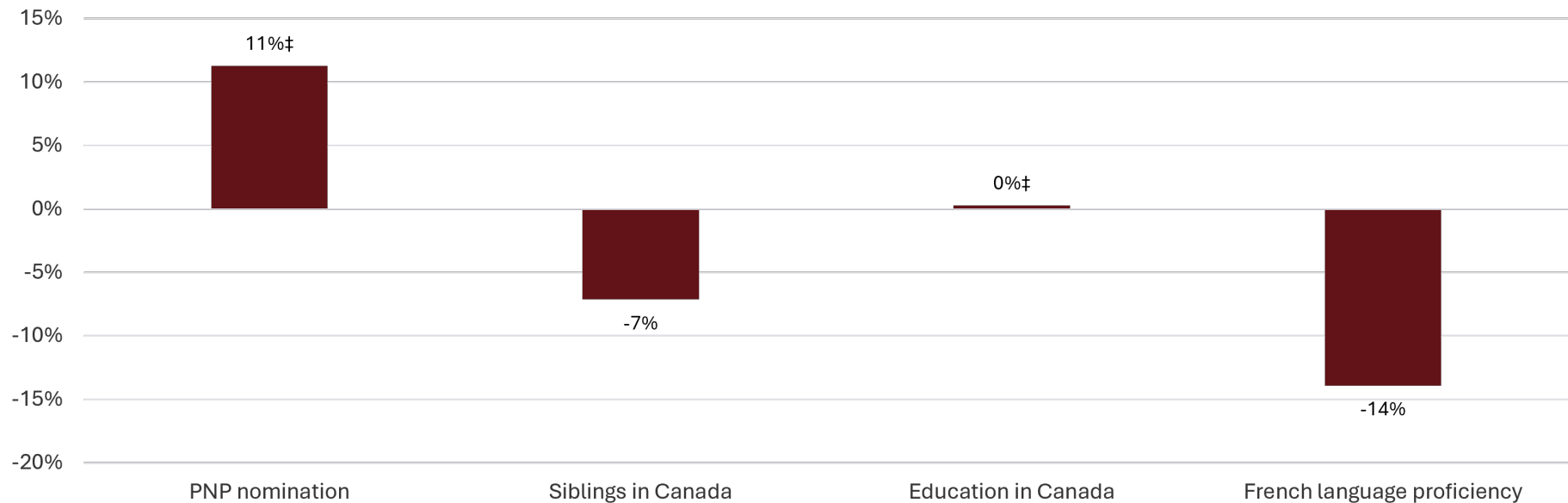
Notes: 1. ‡ indicates not statistically significant; all others are statistically significant at the 10% level or better. 2. Annex A provides more details on the CRS rule changes over time.

Bonus point attributes

EE immigrants with CRS bonus points from PNP or education in Canada show no clear earnings advantage after admission, while those with points for siblings in Canada or French proficiency tend to have lower post-admission income.

- EE immigrants with bonus points from PNP nomination earned 11% more, but the difference was not statistically significant.
- Those with bonus points for siblings in Canada earned 7% less post-admission employment income, while those with bonus points for French language proficiency earned 14% less.
- Bonus points from education in Canada were associated with no difference in post-admission employment income.

Figure 22: Percentage difference in post-admission employment income by CRS bonus point (compared to those without the specific bonus point)



Note: ‡ indicates not statistically significant; all others are statistically significant at the 10% level or better.

Conclusion and Discussion

1. Core human capital factors

a. Official language proficiency

- Proficiency in the first official language is one of the most powerful predictors of labour market success for EE immigrants. Higher CLB scores are consistently linked to a greater likelihood of having employment income and to earning more after admission, across all immigration categories.
- Second official language proficiency, by contrast, offers little added value. It does not meaningfully improve the chances of employment or increase earnings post-admission.

Discussion

These findings reinforce the importance of prioritizing first official language proficiency in CRS selection. Second language ability appears to have limited relevance for short- to medium-term economic integration and may warrant less emphasis in selection scoring.

b. Education level

- **More education does not always mean better chances of employment.** Immigrants with master's or PhD degrees are no more likely to be employed than those with lower levels of education, and in some cases, slightly less so.
- **However, when employed, those with higher education earn more.** The strongest returns are seen for individuals with a master's degree.

Discussion

While higher education boosts earnings, it does not reliably improve short-term employability. This disconnect suggests that education alone may not be a strong indicator of immediate labour market readiness. Complementary signals, like Canadian work experience, recognized credentials, or strong language skills, may be better predictors of early employment success.

c. Pre-admission Canadian work experience

- Pre-admission Canadian work experience improves both the likelihood of having employment income and the level of earnings after admission.
- However, the marginal benefit declines with additional years of experience and becomes much smaller, potentially even negative, after five years or more.

Discussion

While Canadian work experience is a valuable indicator of labour market readiness, its return diminishes beyond a certain point. Selection policies may benefit from emphasizing the presence of some Canadian experience (e.g., 1–4 years) rather than favouring longer durations.

d. Age at selection

- Age at selection significantly influences both employment incidence and earnings among EE immigrants. Younger immigrants, particularly those under 30, are more likely to have employment income after admission, likely due to greater adaptability and longer time horizons for integration.
- In contrast, immigrants selected at age 30 or older tend to earn more post-admission, as they are closer to their career peak.

Discussion

These results align with broader evidence that younger immigrants integrate more easily and have greater long-term potential. Meanwhile, older immigrants may earn more in the short term due to their career stage but contribute for a shorter period. Selection policies should consider both immediate earnings potential and longer-term integration trajectories when assessing age-related advantages.

2. Spouse factors

Key findings

- Spouse-related factors, including education level, official language proficiency, and Canadian work experience, have limited or no positive impact on EE immigrants' post-admission labour market outcomes.
- A spouse's higher education level is often associated with lower employment income incidence and earnings for the principal applicant.
- Spouse's language proficiency shows a slightly negative effect on employment incidence and negligible positive effects on income levels.
- Spouse's Canadian work experience has no impact on employment incidence and is linked to slightly lower post-admission income.

Discussion

- Spousal human capital appears to be a very weak predictor of EE principal applicants' labour market outcomes and does not enhance their economic performance. These patterns may reflect household-level labour allocation or shared responsibilities, where stronger spousal human capital leads to reduced labour market engagement or earnings for the principal applicant.
- From a policy standpoint, this raises questions about the current weighting of spousal factors in the CRS. While spousal attributes may positively contribute to the spouse's own integration, they appear less relevant for predicting short-term economic outcomes for the principal applicant.

3. Arranged employment and other bonus point attributes

Key findings

- Arranged employment offers do not increase the likelihood of having employment income post-admission. However, they are associated with higher post-admission earnings among those who are employed.

- Other CRS bonus point attributes, including PNP nomination, siblings in Canada, French proficiency, and education in Canada, show no statistically significant or even small negative impact on EE immigrants' labour market outcomes.

Discussion

- The lower employment incidence among those with arranged employment offers is unexpected. For those who do find employment, however, these offers may still signal access to higher-paying positions.
- In contrast, most other CRS bonus point attributes provide limited or even negative economic signals, suggesting they are weak predictors of short-term labour market success.
- These findings underscore the need to reassess both the relevance and value of bonus point components in the CRS. Selection criteria should place greater emphasis on attributes that consistently predict stronger post-admission employment and earnings outcomes.

Annex A: CRS rule changes

November 19, 2016: 1st CRS change – To ensure a fairer and responsive system that addresses emerging needs and long-term economic growth, the following targeted improvements were made:

1. Reducing the number of additional points awarded for job offers from 600 to 50 points to candidates with a valid job offer in a National Occupational Classification (NOC) 0, A or B occupation and 200 points to candidates with a valid job offer in a NOC 00 occupation (that is, senior executives)
2. Awarding points for a job offer to certain candidates already in Canada on Labour Market Impact Assessment exempt work permits
3. Changing the job offer requirement from indeterminate to one year
4. Awarding points for Canadian study
5. Providing 90 days, instead of the previous 60 days, to candidates to complete their application for permanent residence

June 6, 2017: 2nd CRS change

1. French-language proficiency points granted to candidates who score 7 or higher on Niveaux de compétence linguistique canadiens for all 4 of their French language skills.
2. Sibling in Canada points are granted If the candidate, or if the candidate's accompanying spouse or common-law partner, has a sibling who is living in Canada
3. Job bank registration became voluntary for all candidates.
4. A new-tie breaking rule is introduced.