

# Wage Outcomes of Economic Immigrants by Express Entry and Non-Express Entry Admission Streams and Comprehensive Ranking System Factors

IRCC-StatCan Joint Study

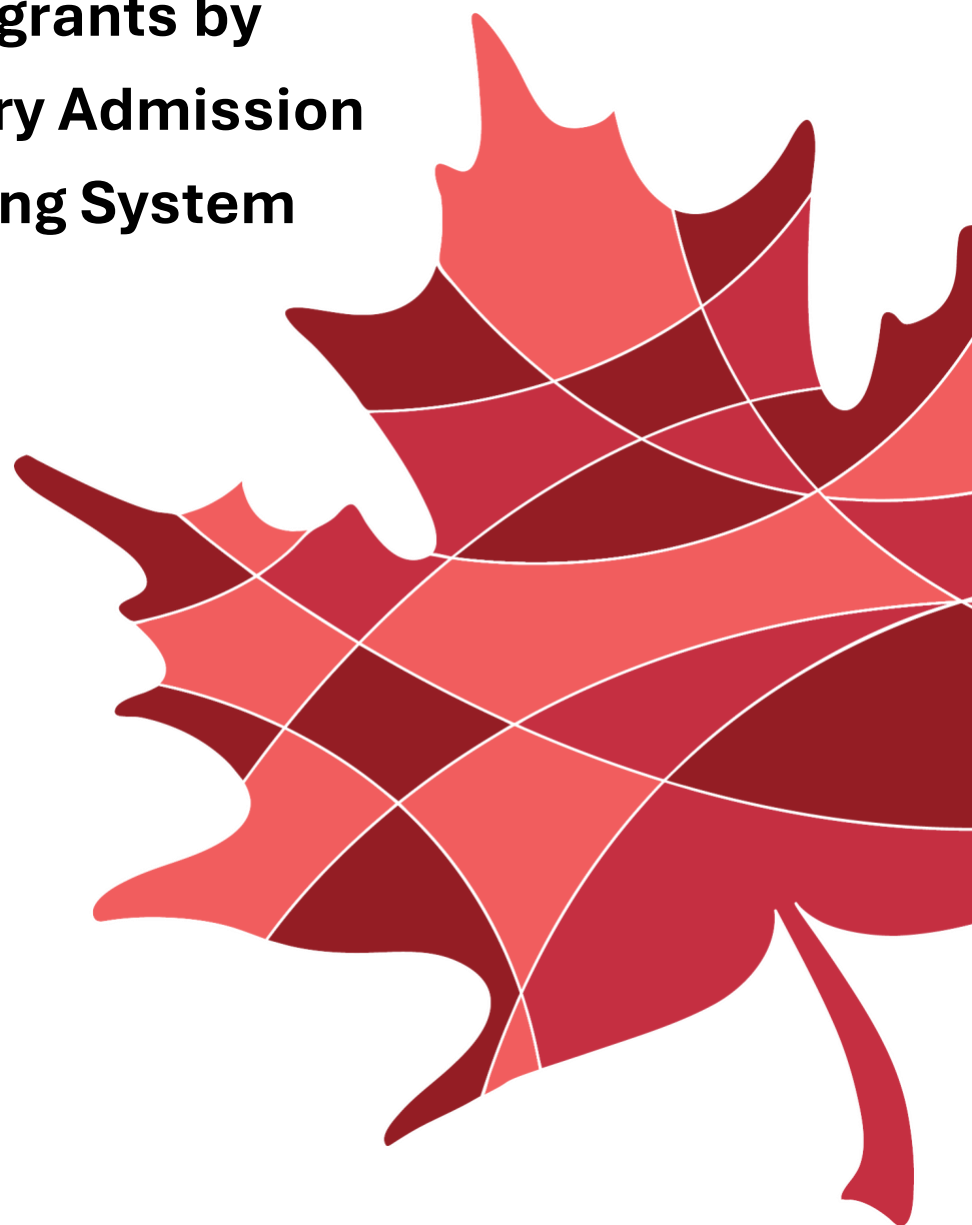
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# Table of contents

|                                                                                                                                  |    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Introduction.....                                                                                                                | 2  |
| Outline .....                                                                                                                    | 2  |
| Why focus on weekly wages? .....                                                                                                 | 2  |
| 1. How do weekly wages compare among economic immigrants admitted through EE and non-EE streams, and Canadian-born workers?..... | 3  |
| Years since admission .....                                                                                                      | 4  |
| Pre-admission TR employment income .....                                                                                         | 5  |
| Knowledge of official languages.....                                                                                             | 6  |
| Education .....                                                                                                                  | 7  |
| 2. How do wage outcomes of EE immigrants vary by CRS factors? .....                                                              | 8  |
| CRS education components .....                                                                                                   | 9  |
| Official language proficiency .....                                                                                              | 10 |
| Education-based skill transferability .....                                                                                      | 11 |
| Foreign experience-based skill transferability.....                                                                              | 12 |
| Conclusion and Discussion.....                                                                                                   | 13 |
| How do weekly wages compare among economic immigrants admitted through EE and non-EE streams and Canadian-born workers?.....     | 13 |
| How do wage outcomes of EE immigrants vary by CRS factors? .....                                                                 | 14 |

# Introduction

## Outline

The study uses linked data from the 2021 Census and the Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB), focusing on principal applicants in the economic class admitted between 2015 and 2020. The study examines the following questions:

1. How do weekly wages compare among economic immigrants admitted through EE and non-EE streams, and Canadian-born workers?
2. How do wage outcomes of EE immigrants vary by CRS factors?

## Why focus on weekly wages?

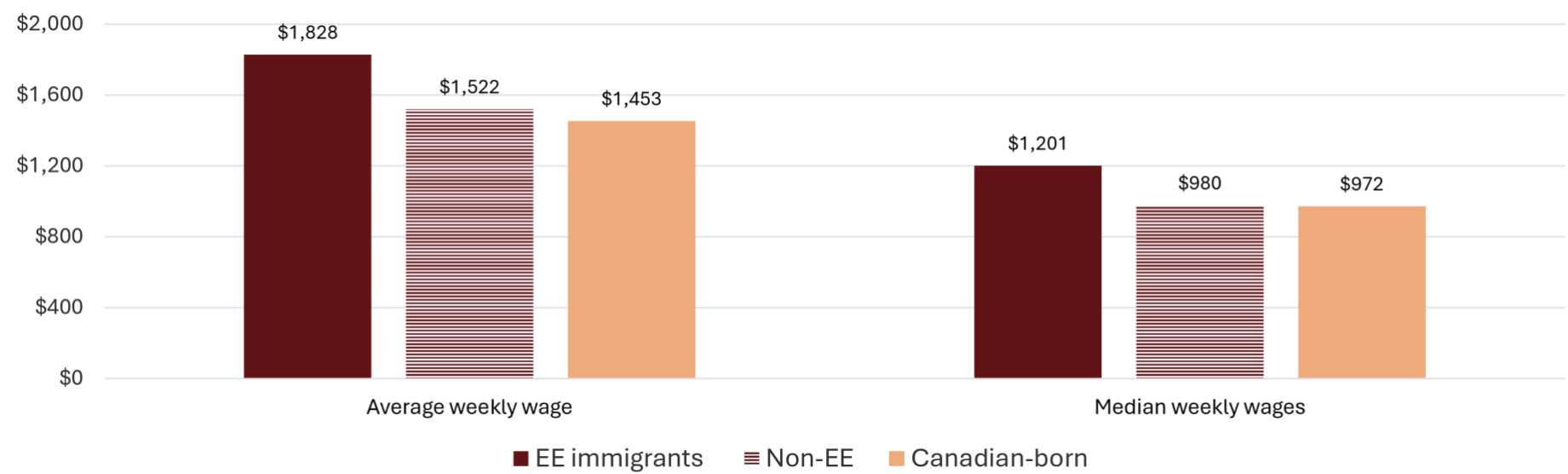
- Reflects wage level and productivity: Weekly wages serve as a practical proxy for relative wage levels and individual productivity, while partially accounting for variations in job intensity and quality, aligning with human capital and CRS-based assessments.
- Minimizes distortion from part-year work: Weekly wages are less affected by unemployment or underemployment, especially relevant for recent immigrants.
- Complements annual earnings: Helps distinguish whether earnings gaps are due to lower wages, fewer weeks worked, or both, offering a clearer view of integration.

# 1. How do weekly wages compare among economic immigrants admitted through EE and non-EE streams, and Canadian-born workers?

**EE immigrants earn higher weekly wages than non-EE immigrants and Canadian-born workers, both in terms of average and median wages.**

- In 2021, the average weekly wage for EE immigrants was \$1,828, which is 20% higher than non-EE immigrants (\$1,522) and 26% higher than Canadian-born workers (\$1,453).
- The median weekly wage for EE immigrants was \$1,201, 23% higher than non-EE immigrants (\$980) and 24% higher than Canadian-born workers (\$972), indicating consistent advantages across wage levels.

Figure 1: Weekly wage comparison: EE, Non-EE, and Canadian-born



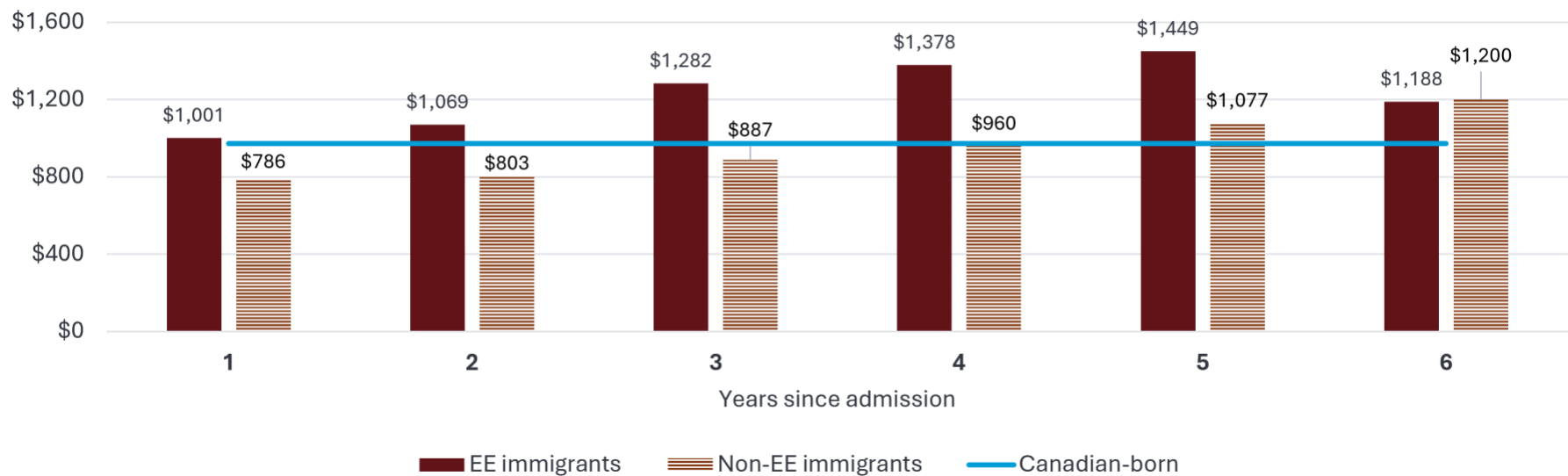
Source: Census 2021 linked to the Longitudinal Immigration Database

## Years since admission

**Weekly wages generally rise with time since admission, for both EE and non-EE immigrants. EE immigrants consistently outperform Canadian-born workers in weekly wages, starting from the first year since admission.**

- Non-EE immigrants gradually catch up, closing a wage gap of \$186 below the Canadian-born median in year 1 to \$228 above by year 6 since admission.
- EE immigrants with six years since admission, corresponding to the 2015 cohort, show lower weekly wages than more recent cohorts. This may partly reflect early EE rules that awarded 600 CRS points for a qualifying job offer, resulting in a different cohort composition with generally lower human capital.

Figure 2: Median weekly wages in 2021 by years since admission



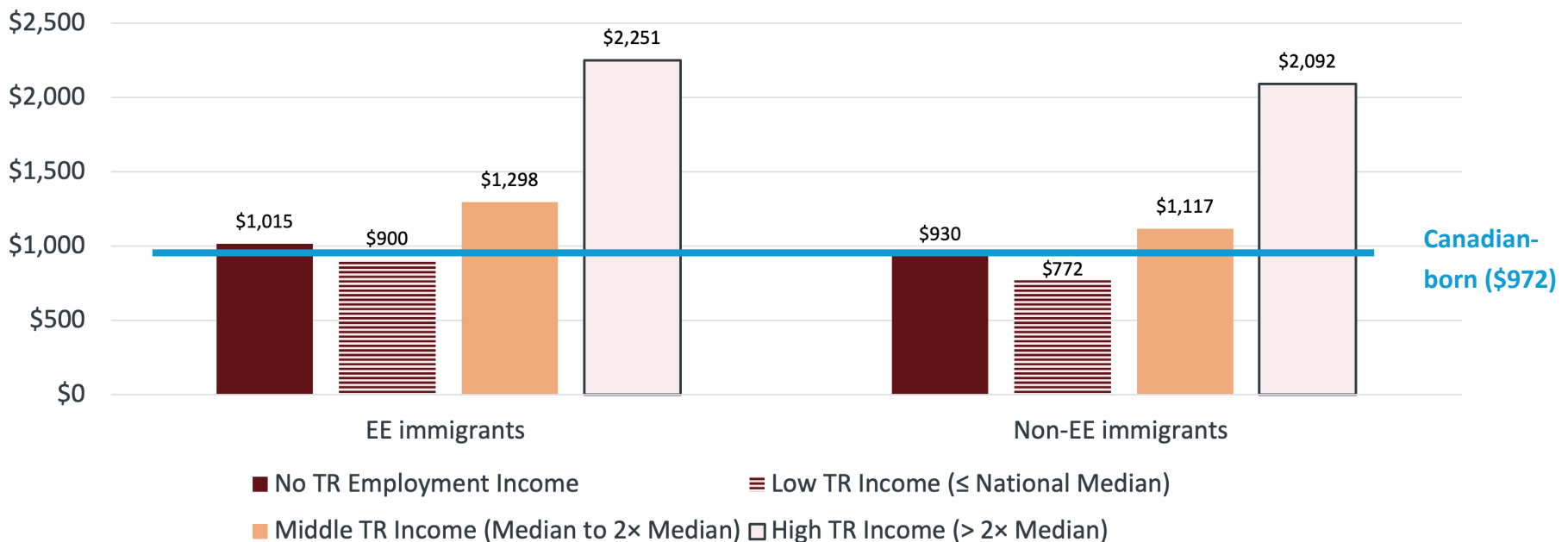
Source: Census 2021 linked to the Longitudinal Immigration Database

## Pre-admission TR employment income

EE immigrants consistently outperformed non-EE immigrants in post-admission earnings, regardless of pre-admission TR income. However, only those with TR income above the national median surpassed the Canadian-born median wage, underscoring the importance of strong pre-admission labour market attachment.

- In 2021, EE immigrants earned higher median weekly wages than non-EE immigrants across all levels of pre-admission TR employment income.
- For both EE and non-EE immigrants, only those with pre-admission TR income above the national median achieved post-admission weekly wages above the Canadian-born median (\$972).

Figure 3: Median weekly wage by pre-admission TR employment income



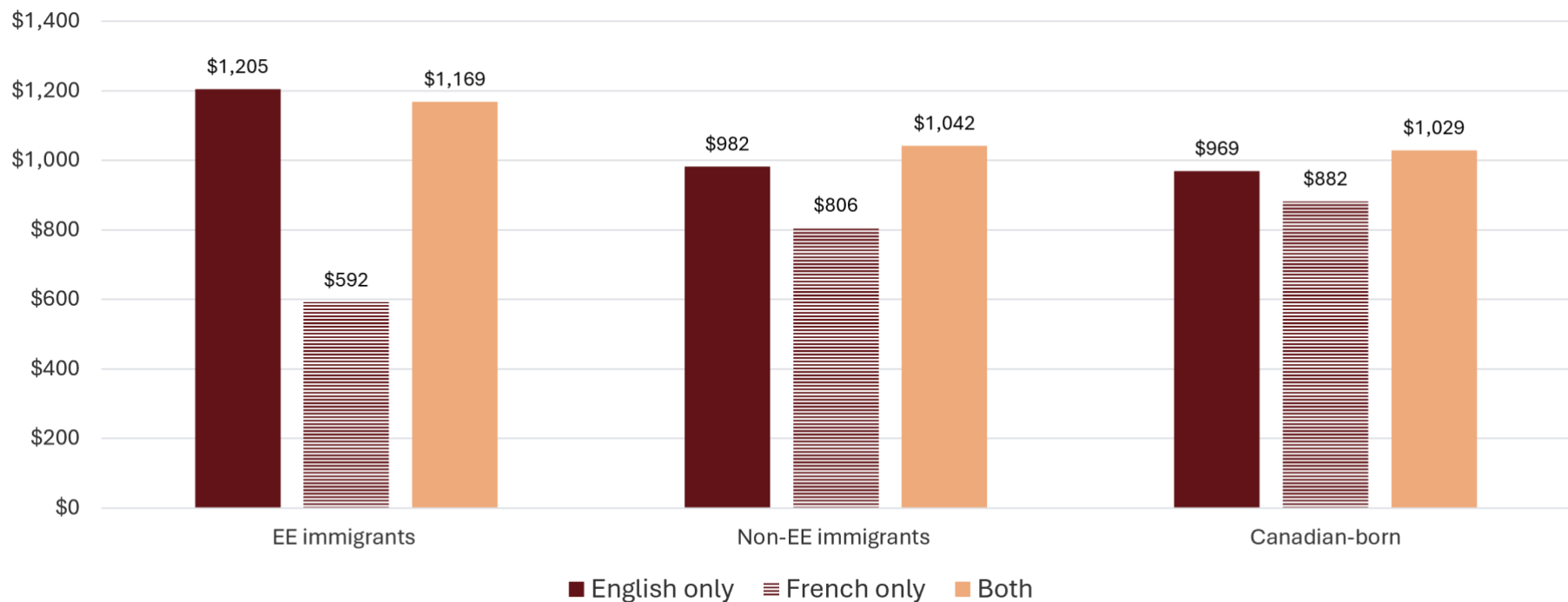
Source: Census 2021 linked to the Longitudinal Immigration Database

## Knowledge of official languages

EE immigrants earned higher median weekly wages than both non-EE immigrants and Canadian-born workers across every official-language group, except for those who had knowledge of only French, where Canadian-born workers led.

- EE immigrants' wage advantage is most pronounced among those with English only. Among individuals with knowledge of English only, EE immigrants earn a median weekly wage over \$220 higher than both non-EE immigrants and Canadian-born workers.

Figure 4: Median weekly wage by knowledge of official language in 2021



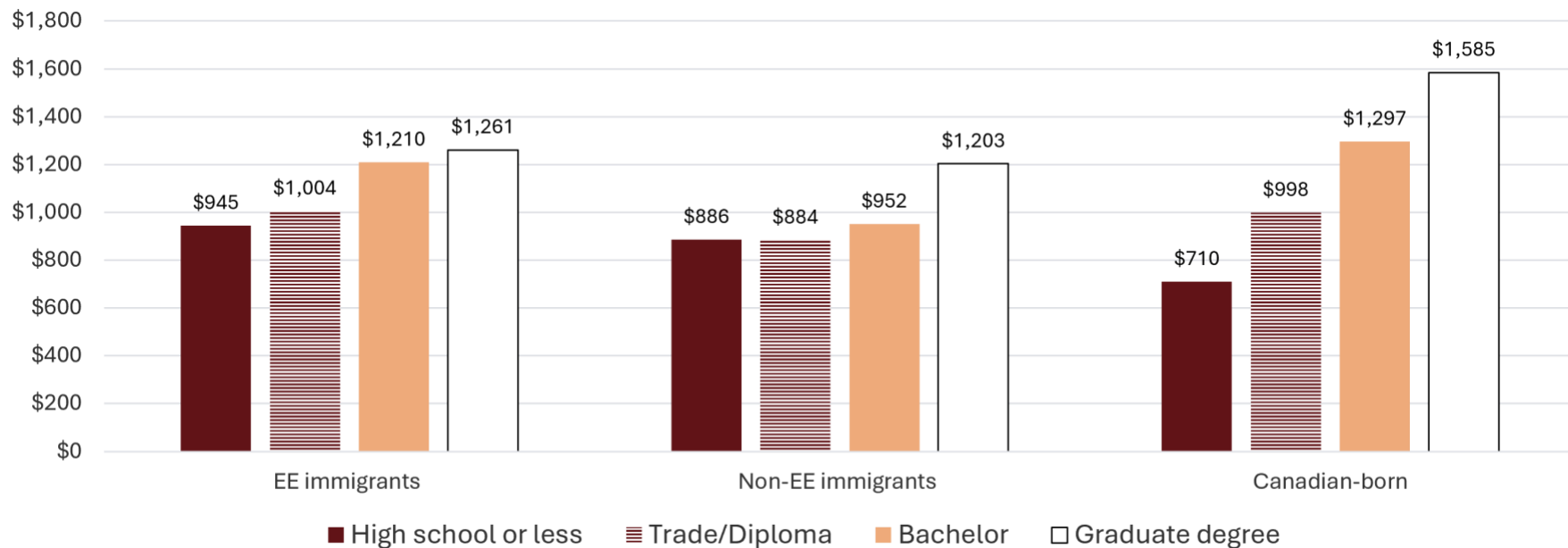
Source: Census 2021 linked to the Longitudinal Immigration Database

## Education

**Canadian-born workers experienced greater returns to higher education than immigrants, especially compared to non-EE immigrants, while lower-educated EE immigrants (with high school or less) outperformed both non-EE immigrants and Canadian-born workers with similar education levels.**

- Canadian-born workers with a bachelor's degree (\$1,297) or graduate degree (\$1,585) earned more than EE immigrants (\$1,210 and \$1,261) and non-EE immigrants (\$952 and \$1,203) with the same credentials.
- In contrast, EE immigrants with only high school education earned a median weekly wage of \$945, surpassing non-EE immigrants (\$886) and Canadian-born workers (\$710) with the same level of education.

Figure 5: Median weekly wages by educational attainment in 2021



Source: Census 2021 linked to the Longitudinal Immigration Database

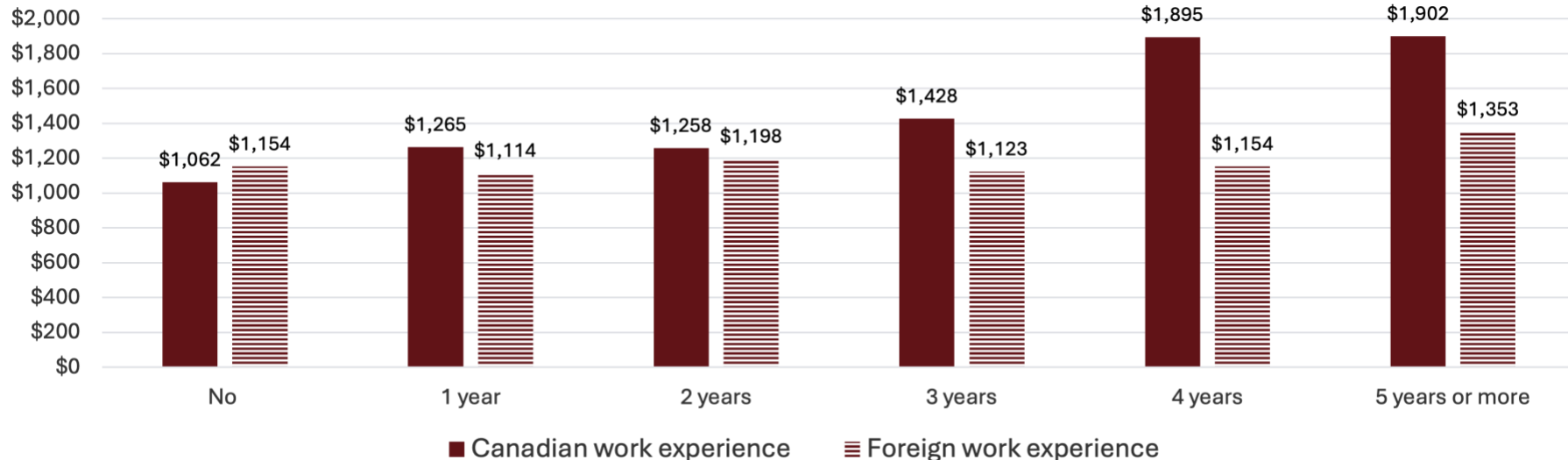
## 2. How do wage outcomes of EE immigrants vary by CRS factors?

Note: The results in this section focus solely on immigrants admitted through EE and are broken down by different CRS score factors.

**Pre-admission Canadian work experience is a strong predictor of higher post-admission earnings for EE immigrants. While foreign work experience of less than four years offers limited wage advantages, Canadian experience consistently leads to significantly higher median weekly wages.**

- As the number of years of Canadian work experience prior to admission increases, post-admission median weekly wages rise consistently.
- In contrast, EE immigrants with less than four years of foreign work experience tend to earn similar or lower wages than those with no foreign work experience.
- At four or more years, the wage gap between Canadian and foreign experience becomes especially wide, with Canadian experience leading to wages over \$700 higher than foreign experience.

Figure 6: Median weekly wages of EE immigrants by years of Canadian and foreign work experience



Note: Canadian work experience refers to qualifying work experience used for CEC eligibility and CRS Canadian work experience points, rather than all employment experience in Canada.

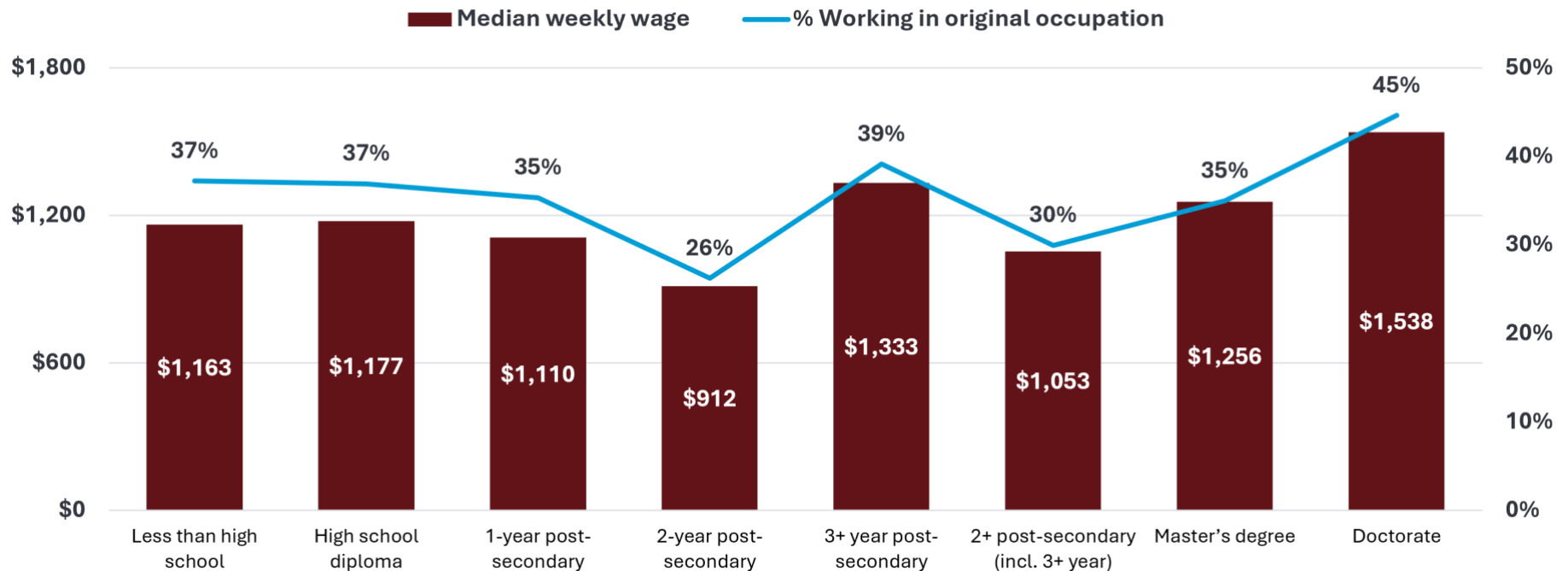
Source: Census 2021 linked to the Longitudinal Immigration Database

## CRS education components

EE immigrants with Doctorate or 3+ year post-secondary degrees had the highest median weekly wages and the highest percentage working in their original occupations at admission, while those with shorter-duration post-secondary credentials showed weaker wage outcomes and lower occupational retention.

- Immigrants with doctorate and 3+ year post-secondary degrees earned the highest median weekly wages (\$1,538 and \$1,333) and had strongest occupational retention (45% and 39%), reflecting better job matching and labour market returns.
- By contrast, those with 2-year post-secondary credentials had the lowest wage (\$912) and lowest occupational alignment (26%), pointing to challenges in securing well-matched or higher-paying employment.

Figure 7: Median weekly wage by education



Note: The "Master's" category includes professional degrees.

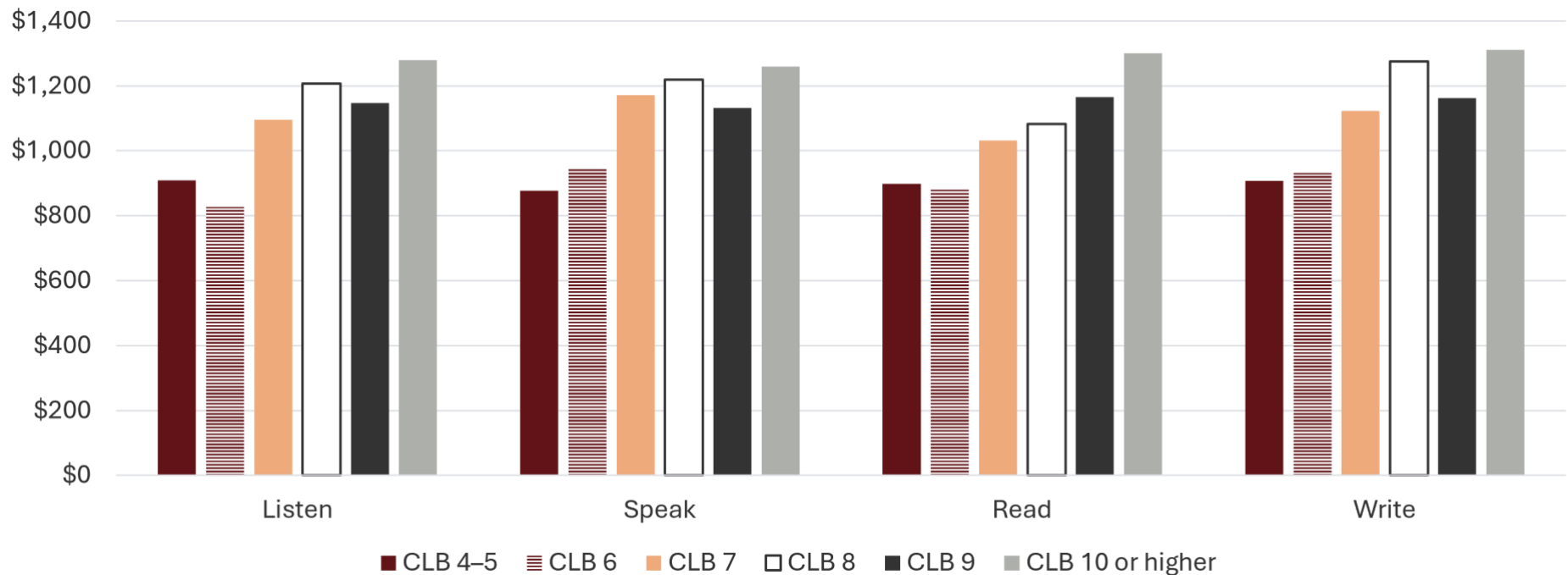
Source: Census 2021 linked to the Longitudinal Immigration Database

## Official language proficiency

Wage differences are substantial between those above CLB 6 and those at or below it, reinforcing that CLB 6 is a key threshold for official language proficiency with significant implications for post-admission labour market outcomes.

- EE immigrants with CLB 10+ have the highest wage levels in every language proficiency group, while those with CLB 4–6 tend to have the lowest wages.

Figure 8: Median weekly wage of EE/CRS Immigrants by first official language proficiency



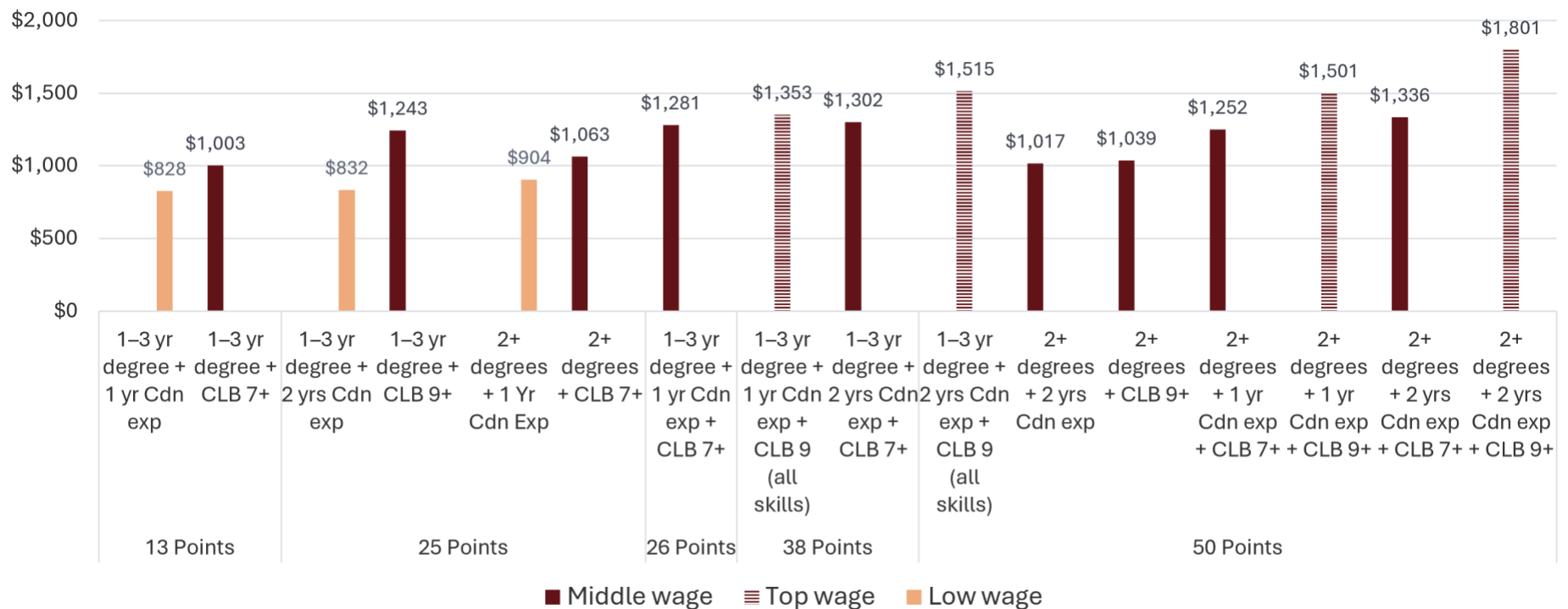
Source: Census 2021 linked to the Longitudinal Immigration Database

# Education-based skill transferability

**Strong official language proficiency enhances the value of other qualifications, such as education and Canadian work experience, by making them more transferable and effective in the Canadian labour market.**

- The four top-wage groups (striped burgundy bars) combine post-secondary education, Canadian work experience, and strong official language proficiency (CLB 9+), highlighting the value of all three CRS components, especially language skills.
- In contrast, the three lowest-wage groups (orange bars), despite having education and Canadian experience, lack strong language proficiency, reinforcing critical role of official language proficiency in wage outcomes.

Figure 9: Median weekly wage by education-based skill transferability under the comprehensive ranking system



Note: The point values shown below each group reflect the CRS points allocated for education-based skill transferability factors.

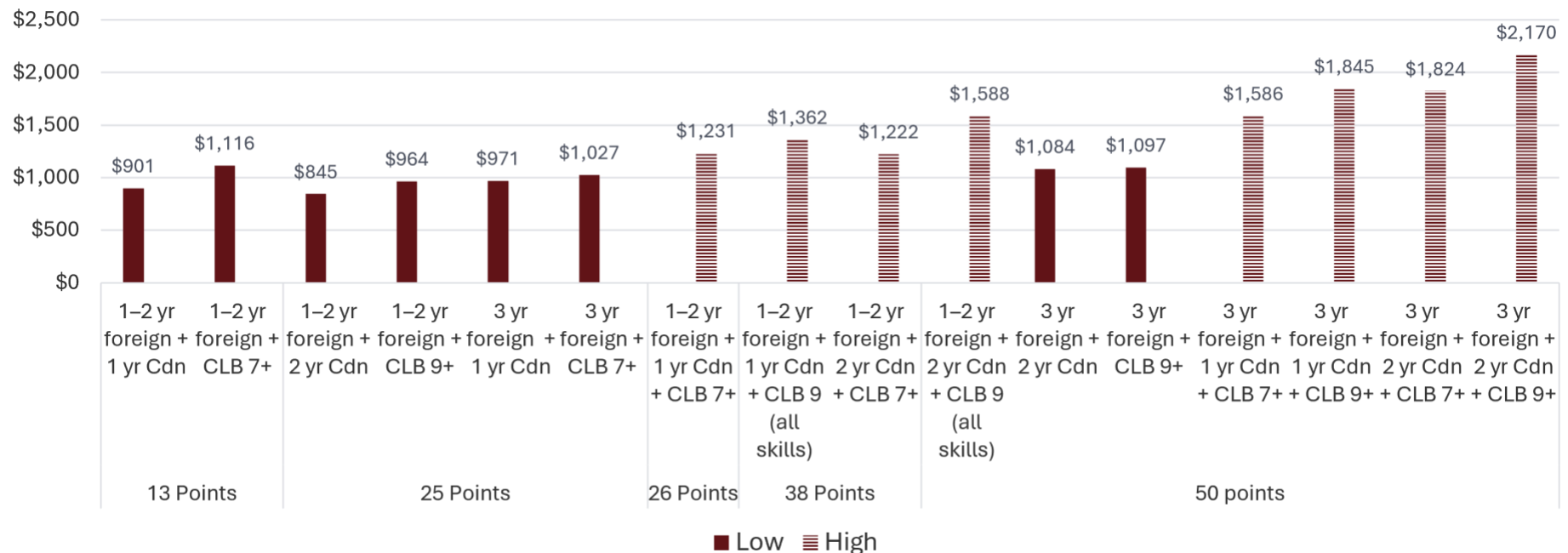
Source: Census 2021 linked to the Longitudinal Immigration Database

## Foreign experience-based skill transferability

**Strong official-language skills and Canadian work experience make foreign work experience more transferable and effective in the Canadian labour market, enabling better wage outcomes for immigrants.**

- Among immigrants with foreign work experience, those who possess only one of the two additional qualifications, Canadian work experience or strong official language proficiency, tend to have lower weekly wages (burgundy bars).
- In contrast, the highest-earning groups (striped burgundy bars) combine foreign experience with both Canadian work experience and strong official language proficiency, underscoring the potential value of these combined qualifications for successful labour market integration.

Figure 10: Median weekly wage by foreign experience-based skill transferability under the comprehensive ranking system



Note: The point values shown below each group reflect the CRS points allocated for education-based skill transferability factors.

Source: Census 2021 linked to the Longitudinal Immigration Database

# Conclusion and Discussion

## How do weekly wages compare among economic immigrants admitted through EE and non-EE streams and Canadian-born workers?

### Key findings

- EE immigrants earn over 20% more in both average and median weekly wages than non-EE immigrants and Canadian-born workers.
- Wage gains for EE immigrants begin in the first year after admission and continue to grow with time in Canada.
- Immigrants with low pre-admission TR income tend to have lower post-admission wages than those with no TR income at all, while higher TR income is associated with stronger wage outcomes after admission.
- EE immigrants have stronger outcomes than non-EE immigrants across nearly all education and language categories.
- Canadian-born workers receive greater wage returns to higher education than both EE and non-EE immigrants, while lower-educated EE immigrants outperform similarly educated Canadian-born peers.

### Discussion

- Results generally affirm that the EE/CRS system is effective in selecting immigrants with strong wage outcomes.
- However, some findings suggest areas that could potentially benefit from further policy reflection:
- Low pre-admission TR earnings are not associated with strong post-admission wage performance. This may suggest the value of exploring whether greater weight could be placed on higher TR income, while exercising caution in treating low TR earnings as a positive signal.
- The overall wage advantage of EE immigrants appears largely due to a higher proportion holding advanced degrees. However, they still earn less than similarly educated Canadian-born workers, suggesting possible skills underutilization. Further exploration of how job alignment is supported post-admission could help enhance long-term outcomes.

# How do wage outcomes of EE immigrants vary by CRS factors?

## Key Findings

- Pre-admission Canadian work experience is a stronger predictor of successful post-admission wages than foreign work experience. Wage gains increase steadily with more years of Canadian experience, while foreign experience below 4 years provides little advantage.
- Higher education credentials (Doctorate or 3+ year post-secondary degrees) are linked with higher wages and better job alignment.
- Wage differences are substantial between those above and below CLB 6, highlighting the strong association between first official language proficiency and post-admission wage performance.
- The strongest wage outcomes are observed when all three CRS components (higher education, Canadian work experience, and strong official language proficiency) are present.
- Foreign work experience alone is not sufficient: successful wage outcomes depend on also having strong official language proficiency and Canadian work experience.

## Discussion

- The findings broadly support the CRS framework, particularly its emphasis on Canadian work experience and official language proficiency as key predictors of wage success.
- Canadian work experience tends to yield stronger wage outcomes than foreign experience, suggesting potential value in prioritizing applicants with meaningful Canadian experience prior to admission.
- The substantial wage gap between those above and below CLB 6 underscores the potential benefits of selecting applicants with stronger language proficiency and expanding language training supports.
- Wage returns to education are highest among those with advanced degrees combined with strong language proficiency and Canadian work experience, reinforcing the value of selecting for both qualifications together. This also supports policies that prioritize applicants with the combined qualifications, such as selecting from the Post-Graduation Work Permit holders.
- Foreign work experience alone appears less predictive of strong wage outcomes. Its value rises when combined with Canadian experience and strong language proficiency, suggesting the need to assess how foreign experience translates into the Canadian labour market.