

Social Impact and Return on Investment of the Canadian Cadet Organizations

March 2026



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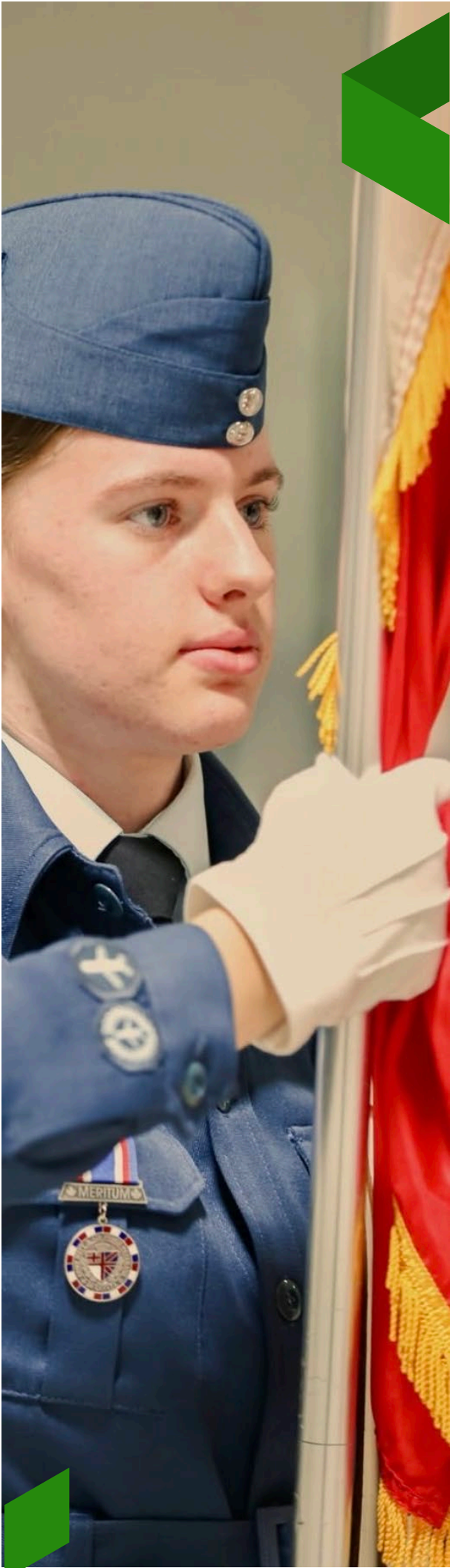
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A Note on Nomenclature in this Report

Throughout this report you will find use of the phrases: social impact, SROI, cadet, JCR, cadet/JCR, and CJCR Gp. These phrases are used with the following specific meanings.

Social impact: Changes experienced by individuals, communities, and society, including outcomes such as skills development, wellbeing, educational attainment, civic engagement, and community resilience.

Social Return on Investment (SROI): A way of measuring social impacts using a cost-benefit lens. Selected long-term outcomes of a program are monetized, and these monetized benefits are compared to the costs of the program.

Cadet: This is an individual or group of individuals that is currently or was formerly enrolled in one of the Cadet Programs, specifically the Royal Canadian Sea Cadets (Sea Cadets), Royal Canadian Army Cadets (Army Cadets), or Royal Canadian Air Cadets (Air Cadets).

JCR: This is an individual or group of individuals that is currently or was formerly enrolled in the Junior Canadian Rangers Program.

Cadets/JCRs: This refers to the combination of both cadets and JCRs.

CJCR Gp Programs: This is an umbrella term that refers to both the Cadet Program and the JCR Program.

Cadet Program: The Cadet Program refers to the three elemental programs which includes the Royal Canadian Sea Cadet, Royal Canadian Army Cadet, and Royal Canadian Air Cadet Programs.

JCR Program: This refers to the youth program conducted by the Canadian Army through the Canadian Rangers in remote, northern, coastal, and isolated communities.

As an example, the sentence “Former cadets/JCRs report leadership roles at work 69 percent of the time,” is referring to both cadets and JCRs.

If the sentence read “Former cadets report leadership roles at work 69 percent of the time,” that would only be referring to cadets and is excluding former JCRs.

The reverse is true if the sentence read, “Former JCRs report leadership roles at work 69 percent of the time,” in that this sentence includes former JCRs and excludes cadets.



Executive Summary

This report assesses the social impact and social return on investment (SROI) of the Cadet Program and the Junior Canadian Rangers (JCR) Program (jointly CJCR Gp Programs). It draws on CJCR Gp administrative and financial data, a national survey, and Canadian benchmark datasets. This report estimates the potential social value associated with participation in the Cadet and Junior Canadian Rangers Programs by comparing outcomes of former participants with those of comparable Canadians. These results reflect conservative, benchmark-based estimates of lifetime outcomes and should be interpreted as indicative of long term value rather than precise causal returns.

Key findings at a glance

- The Cadet Program has an annual social impact of \$21,900 per cadet (net of costs). The lifetime net benefits to society per cadet ranges from \$295,600 in the low scenario to \$630,500 in the high scenario.
- Each \$1 spent on the Cadet Program generates a lifetime SROI between \$19.85 (low scenario) and \$41.15 (high scenario).
- Program spending per Cadet Program participant averages \$3,400 per year.
- The average cadet takes part for 4.65 years.
- Eighty-nine percent of current cadets would recommend the program to their peers.
- The Junior Canadian Rangers Program appears to support both individual development and community resilience, fostering cultural continuity, land-based skills, and confidence among youth in remote, northern, and coastal communities.
- Leadership development ranks as the most common reason parents/guardians cite for enrolling their child in a CJCR Gp Program, with 79 percent of parents/guardians pointing to it as a factor. Community engagement follows at 68 percent, physical fitness at 54 percent, and interest in a future Canadian Armed Forces career at 47 percent.

Consistent with the quantitative social impact and SROI findings, across surveyed outcomes, current cadets/JCRs and former cadets/JCRs report life skill

patterns, habits, and behaviours that align with the CJCR Gp Program's theory of change: skills, leadership roles, civic engagement, and downstream positive outcomes in education, income, and justice interaction.

Total survey responses are comprised of 27,257 across current cadets/JCRs, former cadets/JCRs, parents/guardians, and program leaders. This is an outstanding number of responses to a survey of this kind. As a point of comparison, the most recent version of the Your Say Matters survey received approximately 4,700 responses from cadets and JCRs. Nationally representative public opinion surveys by major polling firms typically have 1,000 - 2,000 respondents.

Below we provide an overview of the results by category.

Social Return on Investment (SROI) and Value for Money

Using survey data, we evaluated the social return on investment (SROI) of the CJCR Gp Programs by measuring the impacts the CJCR Gp Programs have had on the lives of former participants. To generate an estimate of the CJCR Gp Programs' return on investment, we then monetize these impacts so that benefits can be stated in dollar terms and compared with program costs.

For this SROI analysis, we focused on former participants. Unfortunately, low survey response rates among JCRs mean that we are unable to draw quantitative results for the JCR Program. The results below therefore cover the impacts of the Cadet Program as experienced by former cadets.

We focused on measuring the impact on participants through four channels:

- Education: Are former cadets likely to achieve a higher level of education than other Canadians?
- Productivity: Do the skills and experiences gained through the Cadet Program lead to higher productivity among former cadets once they join the workforce, compared to other Canadians?



- Justice: Are former cadets less likely to be arrested or charged with an offence than other Canadians?
- Alcohol consumption: Do former cadets consume less alcohol than other Canadians?

SROI: Education

Former cadets report higher educational attainment than Canadian benchmarks across most levels. Three percent report no certificate, diploma, or degree, versus 16 percent nationally. Thirty-nine percent report a post-secondary credential below the bachelor level, versus 31 percent nationally. Twenty-six percent report a bachelor's degree, versus 18 percent nationally.

The analysis links these differences to an **average annual earnings premium of \$5,100 per former cadet** and a lifetime education value of \$62,500 to \$129,700 per cadet.

SROI: Productivity

Former cadets report higher employment income than expected after adjusting for age, gender, region, ethnicity, and education. The resulting estimated **average annual income premium is \$19,900 per former cadet**, equivalent to a 26% uplift over other Canadians with similar demographic characteristics. Over a cadet's working life, this equals \$244,800 to \$508,100, depending on duration of working life.

The higher employment income observed among former cadets reflects their higher likelihood of working full-time as well as their greater productivity in the workforce. This benefit is consistent with behavioural mechanisms documented in the qualitative findings, including early leadership opportunities, structured teamwork, and the development of transferable skills such as communication, responsibility, and conflict resolution. Former cadets report applying these skills across school, community, and workplace settings and

maintaining strong labour force attachment during early adulthood. Together, these patterns align with this report's theory of change linking youth leadership experiences to longer term productivity and employment outcomes.

SROI: Alcohol consumption

Former cadets reported their average weekly alcoholic beverage consumption. Compared to Canadians with similar demographic characteristics, former cadets drink at a lower rate, equivalent to 8.3 fewer drinks per week per cadet. The social harm for each individual drink is very small, at just \$0.14. This means that **the monetized value of lower alcohol consumption by former cadets provides a social value of approximately \$61 per year.**

SROI: Justice

Former cadets report fewer interactions with the justice system than expected based on their demographic characteristics.

Sixty-seven percent report no interaction since leaving the program. Four percent report an arrest or charge since joining, while 0.5 percent report more than one.

After annualizing lifetime responses and comparing to the Canadian Legal Problems Survey, this is equivalent to approximately **\$265 in avoided justice system costs annually per former cadet**, or \$3,300 to \$6,800 over a cadet's lifetime.

SROI: Overall social return on investment

Lifetime net benefits per cadet range from \$295,600 to \$630,500, depending on benefit duration. These ranges reflect different assumptions about how long observed outcome differences persist.

For each \$1 spent, lifetime social return ranges from \$19.85 to \$41.15.



Table 1. Lifetime Accrued Cost-Benefit and SROI of the Cadet Program

	Lifetime Impact per Cadet Registered (Net Present Value)		
	Low (15-year duration)	Medium (30-year duration)	High (46-year duration)
Estimated Benefits			
Education	\$62,500	\$102,600	\$129,700
Productivity	\$244,800	\$402,000	\$508,100
Justice System	\$3,300	\$5,300	\$6,800
Alcohol Consumption	\$700	\$1,200	\$1,600
Estimated Costs			
Average Program Spending	\$15,700	\$15,700	\$15,700
Lifetime Net Benefit	\$295,600	\$495,400	\$630,500
SROI Per \$1 in Program Expenditures	19.85	32.55	41.15

Note: Most results rounded to nearest \$100. Low scenario counts benefits from age 19 to 34. Medium scenario counts benefits from age 19 to 49. High scenario counts benefits from age 19 to 64.

Sources: Survey of former cadets, Department of National Defence, Statistics Canada, Deloitte analysis.

Taken together, the evidence suggests that participation in the Cadet Program is consistently associated with positive educational, employment, and civic outcomes. While causal attribution cannot be proven with the available data, the findings are directionally consistent with international research on comparable youth development programs and indicate strong potential value for money.

Financial and Economic Returns to the Canadian Armed Forces

The CJCR Gp Programs offer potential financial benefit by promoting careers in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). The CAF analyzed datasets of former cadets who participated in the Cadet Program between 2010 and 2025 and compared them with CAF personnel records from 2015 to 2025. The analysis found that 15% (28,980) of CAF personnel who served between 2019 and 2025 were former cadets. Based on historical CAF attraction costs, this representing a potential benefit worth \$341.6 million. This excludes individuals who joined the Cadet Program prior to 2010.

Other (Non-SROI) Outcome Results

In addition to the monetary SROI results reported above, survey respondents provided answers to many more questions which are more qualitative in nature. We summarize these additional results below. As with the SROI results, we are unable to give statistical results for current and former JCRs due to low response rates.

Current cadets report strong community involvement. Twenty-two percent report zero volunteer hours, and 62 percent report some volunteering in the past year.

Seventy-six percent report participation in community groups, sports, or clubs outside the program.

Former cadets report continued civic engagement. Forty-eight percent report volunteering time, and 52 percent report donating money in the past twelve months.

Current cadets report high physical activity and low substance use.

Cadets must leave the programs when they turn 19 years old, so very few are of legal drinking or smoking

age while they are still a cadet. Unsurprisingly, 95 percent report no alcohol use and 96 percent report never smoking or vaping. About 2 percent report current use.

Current cadets report confidence and peer conflict resolution skills. Fifty-two percent report taking on leadership roles within the program since joining.

Beyond the program, 61 percent report taking on leadership roles at school, and 40 percent report having held leadership roles in the community.

Former cadets report holding leadership roles at work at 69 percent and holding leadership roles in the community at 55 percent.

Leadership development ranks as the most common reason parents/guardians cite for enrolling their child in the CJCR Gp Programs, with 79 percent of parents/guardians pointing to it as a factor. Community engagement follows at 68 percent, physical fitness at 54 percent, and interest in a future CAF career at 47 percent.

Parents/guardians and leaders of cadets/JCRs report observed improvement in teamwork, confidence in speaking or leading, and communication skills. Parents/guardians similarly note that their children's teachers report improvement in behaviour and school performance.

Limitations

As with any large-scale quantitative assessment, the results should be interpreted in light of certain data limitations.

The analysis is cross-sectional and does not track individuals over time, meaning observed differences between former cadets and comparable Canadians should be understood as associations rather than definitive causal effects. Outcomes are based primarily on self-reported survey data, and restrictions on public opinion research limited the inclusion of qualitative or attitudinal evidence.

While these constraints are common in studies of this nature, they are addressed through the integration of multiple data sources, the application of demographic controls, and the use of conservative benchmarking and valuation methods grounded in the literature. Together, these choices support a cautious, transparent, and credible estimate of the CJCR Gp Programs' social impact within the bounds of available evidence.

The analysis is also bolstered by the outstanding survey response rate, offering a very large sample from which to draw inferences.





Section 1: Introduction and Study Context

1.1 Overview of the Canadian Cadet Organizations

The Canadian Cadet Organizations (CCO), also referred to in this report as the Cadet and Junior Canadian Rangers Group Programs (CJCR Gp Programs), form a nationally coordinated youth development initiative for youth aged 12 to 18.

Delivered on behalf of the Government of Canada by the Department of National Defence (DND) and the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), these Programs provide accessible programming at no cost to participants across Canada.

The CJCR Gp Programs help young people build confidence, develop leadership skills, stay physically active, and learn the importance of teamwork and responsible citizenship. While the Programs share common goals and national standards, they are designed to reflect the diversity of Canada's communities, culture, and geography.

The CJCR Gp Programs include four distinct elements:

- Royal Canadian Sea Cadets (Sea Cadets);
- Royal Canadian Army Cadets (Army Cadets);
- Royal Canadian Air Cadets (Air Cadets); and
- Junior Canadian Rangers (JCR).

Each program element offers unique experienced shaped and inspired by the environments of the CAF – on the water, on the land, in the air, or in remote, isolated and coastal communities – while contributing to a shared national purpose.

1.1.1 Canadian Cadet Organizations (CCO) Program Structure and Governance

The Sea, Army, and Air Cadet Programs are delivered through community-based groups known as corps and squadrons, and the JCR Program is delivered through community-based groups known as Patrols. These corps/squadrons/patrols are based in over 800 communities across Canada and serve as the primary

point of participation for cadets and JCRs. Training activities are inspired by maritime, land, or aviation settings and are delivered under the oversight of the CAF.

The JCR Program is a unique part of the CJCR Gp Programs. JCR patrols do not operate with civilian leagues; however they are closely tied to their communities through volunteer committees, and are closely linked to the Canadian Rangers, through the Canadian Army. While national standards guide the Program; JCR activities are tailored to local needs, priorities, and community traditions.

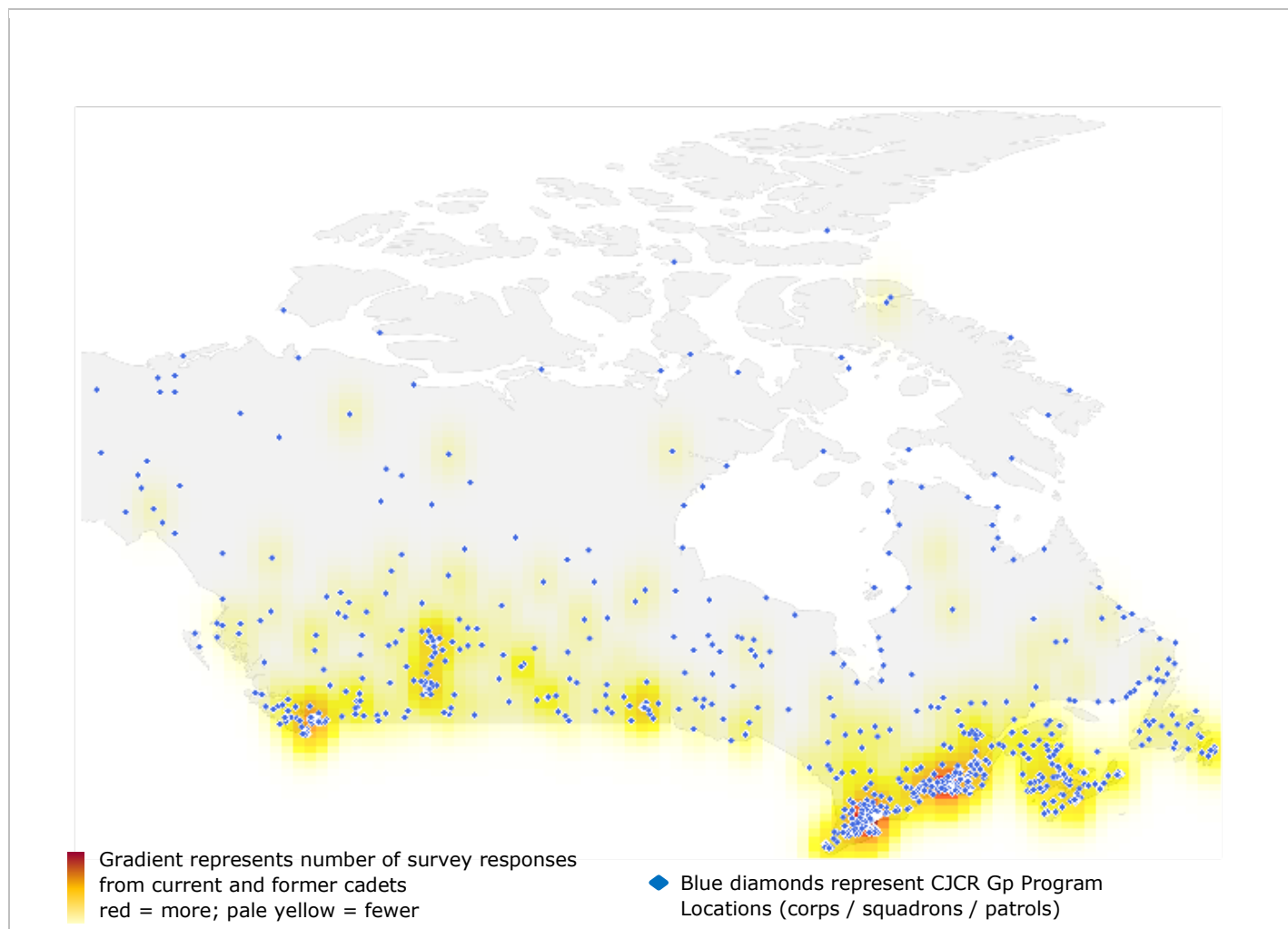
Across all four components of the CJCR Gp Programs, delivery is supported by CAF members – primarily from the Cadet Organizations Administration and Training Service (COATS) – alongside Canadian Rangers, volunteers and community members.

1.1.2 Geographic Reach and Accessibility

The CJCR Gp Programs operate in every province and territory, providing broad national coverage helping ensure equitable access to structured youth development opportunities across Canada. The Sea, Army, and Air Cadet Programs are primarily located in urban, suburban, and accessible rural communities. Corps and squadrons are commonly hosted in schools, armouries, community centres, or shared public facilities. This distribution supports regular participation and sustained engagement throughout the training year, particularly during the school calendar.

By contrast, the JCR Program is deliberately positioned in remote, northern, and coastal communities where access to other organized youth programming may be limited. JCR Patrols are concentrated in geographically isolated areas, including communities that may be accessible only by air or seasonal transportation routes.

Figure 1: CJCR Gp Program Locations Overlaid on Heatmap of Survey Respondents' Home Postal Codes



Sources: Current cadet survey, former cadet survey, Department of National Defence, Deloitte analysis.

1.1.3 Junior Canadian Rangers as a Distinct Program

The JCR Program is designed to respond to the specific needs of youth living in remote, northern, and coastal communities, many of which have strong Indigenous representation. Training activities are delivered through a combination of community-based instruction, seasonal group activities, and enhanced training opportunities, which may take place both within and beyond participants' home communities. Programming integrates leadership and teamwork development with practical life skills, outdoor competencies, and traditional knowledge, reflecting the environments and heritage of the communities served.

The JCR Program is delivered locally by the Canadian Rangers, with strong support from the surrounding community, including Elders, community leaders, and other local adults. This community-based delivery model ensures that programming remains relevant, culturally grounded, and responsive to local needs.

The active involvement of Canadian Rangers, Elders, and community members supports intergenerational knowledge sharing and strengthens community ownership of the JCR Program. This locally grounded approach distinguishes the JCR Program from the more standardized corps and squadron model used by the Sea, Army, and Air Cadet Programs, while remaining fully aligned with national program objectives.

1.1.4 Populations Served and Youth Development Focus

Across the CJCR Gp Programs, youth aged 12 to 18 are supported during important developmental years through structured experiences that build responsibility, confidence, and positive social behaviours. Participation is voluntary and inclusive, with no requirement for prior experience or any obligation to pursue future military service.

The Sea, Army, and Air Cadet Programs serve youth from diverse backgrounds and socio-economic circumstances in communities across Canada, delivering structured programming through established corps/squadrons. The JCR Program delivers the same youth development objectives through a delivery model specifically designed for remote, northern, and coastal communities, where geography and local context shape how programming is accessed and delivered.

Together, these complementary approaches allow the CJCR Gp Programs to remain inclusive and nationally consistent, while adapting delivery models to reflect Canada's geographic, cultural, and community diversity—helping ensure equitable access to meaningful youth development opportunities across the country.

1.1.5 Contribution to Communities and National Objectives

Taken together, the CJCR Gp Programs operate as community-based youth development whose benefits extend beyond individual participants. Through a sustained presence in communities across Canada, supported by volunteers and partnerships with local organizations, the CJCR Gp Programs contribute to skills development, civic participation and community connection.

While exposure to the CAF and its operational environments is a common feature across all, CJCR Gp Programs are designed first and foremost as developmental initiatives. Through their combined structure the Government of Canada, through the CAF invests in youth outcomes that contribute to long-term

social, economic, and community resilience across Canada's diverse regions.

1.2 Purpose and Scope of the Study

The purpose of this study is to assess and articulate the social and financial impacts of the DND's/CAF's ongoing investment in the CJCR Gp Programs, averaging approximately \$242 million per year.

The scope of the assessment is guided by six key evaluation questions, which collectively aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the CJCR Gp Programs' value and effectiveness.

Specifically, the study examines:

- (1) What is the overall social impact resulting from the CAF's investment in the CJCR Gp Programs?;
- (2) What is the financial and social return on investment generated for every dollar spent, using appropriate methodologies such as cost-benefit analysis and social return on investment (SROI)?;
- (3) What are the broader social impacts on Canadian society, including contributions through facilities, volunteers, partnerships, and community infrastructure?;
- (4) What are the long-term social and developmental impacts of CJCR Gp Program participation on individual youth, including leadership, confidence, and resilience?; and
- (5) What are the benefits associated with the qualifications and life skills provided through the CJCR Gp Programs, particularly in relation to employability, personal development, and long-term societal contributions?

To address these questions, the study adopts a data-driven approach that integrates quantitative and qualitative evidence, including primary research, survey data, and existing administrative and program data. The intended use of the study's findings is to support evidence-based decision-making by the CAF and key stakeholders. By clearly articulating both social and financial returns, as well as overall program

effectiveness, this assessment seeks to demonstrate the value of federal investments in youth development, inform resource allocation, and support program sustainability and growth.

1.3 Report Structure

The remainder of the report is structured as follows.

Section 2 presents the theoretical framework by which the CJCR Gp Programs are expected to produce positive social impacts and return on investment. This section explains the ‘theory of change,’ drawing a link between CJCR Gp Program activities, outcomes, and social benefits.

Section 3 outlines the study design and methodology for data collection and analysis. This section explains the design of the survey of Program participants as well as the modeling approach for quantifying the CJCR Gp Programs’ social return on investment.

Section 4 provides an overview of the demographics of the survey respondents. Due to a limited response rate among JCRs, the data presented is for the Cadet Program only.

Section 5 provides a deep dive into qualitative results from survey data. Results are grouped into themes, such as impacts on participants’ health and education or impacts on society and schools. Where appropriate, these detailed results are further broken down by different survey respondent groups such as current

cadets, former cadets, current JCRs, former JCRs, parents/guardians of cadets/JCRs, and cadet/JCR leaders.

Section 6 outlines the results of the social return on investment analysis. There are several different pathways quantified independently: education, productivity, justice, smoking/vaping, and alcohol consumption. Results focus on the Cadet Program due to the limited survey response rate of JCRs.

Section 7 provides recommendations for future program analysis.

Section 8 presents the key findings of the study and articulates the CJCR Gp Programs’ overall value proposition (with a particular focus on the Cadet Program). This section synthesizes evidence from both the survey analysis and the social return on investment modeling, and outlines recommendations and areas for future research.

Four appendices are provided with additional details for the interested reader. Appendix 1 provides an overview of existing program data and evaluations provided by the CAF. Appendix 2 provides a comparative overview of studies of similar programs in other countries and in Canada. Appendix 3 outlines best practices in the measurement of social impact and social return on investment. Appendix 4 provides a list of references used in the preparation of this report.





Section 2: Analytical Framework and Theory of Change

Having established the purpose, scope, and overall structure of the study, the report now turns to the conceptual foundation that underpins the analysis. Section 2 presents the theoretical framework guiding the evaluation of the CJCR Gp Programs, articulating how CJCR Gp Program activities are expected to generate measurable outcomes and broader societal benefits. This framework informs both the analytical approach and the interpretation of results presented in subsequent sections.

2.1 Conceptual Framework for Social Impact and ROI

This study is guided by a conceptual framework that explains how investments in the CJCR Gp Programs generate social impact and value for Canadian society.

In this context, **social impact** refers to the meaningful changes that occur for individuals, communities, and social systems because of participation in the CJCR Gp Programs. These changes extend beyond immediate outputs to include improvements such as higher educational attainment, stronger employment prospects, reduced lifetime reliance on health and social services, sustained civic engagement, strengthened community cohesion, and, specifically for JCR participants, a reinforced sense of cultural identity.

Social Return on Investment (SROI) captures the social value created through these outcomes relative to the annual investment in the CJCR Gp Programs expressed in monetary terms. This includes monetizable benefits such as avoided public expenditures, increased future earnings and tax contributions, positive contributions to the CAF, and broader societal gains that exceed the cost of program delivery.

This framework provides the analytical lens through which the study traces how program resources

translate into outputs, outcomes, and ultimately measurable social value.

2.2 Theory of Change

2.2.1 Theory of Change Overview

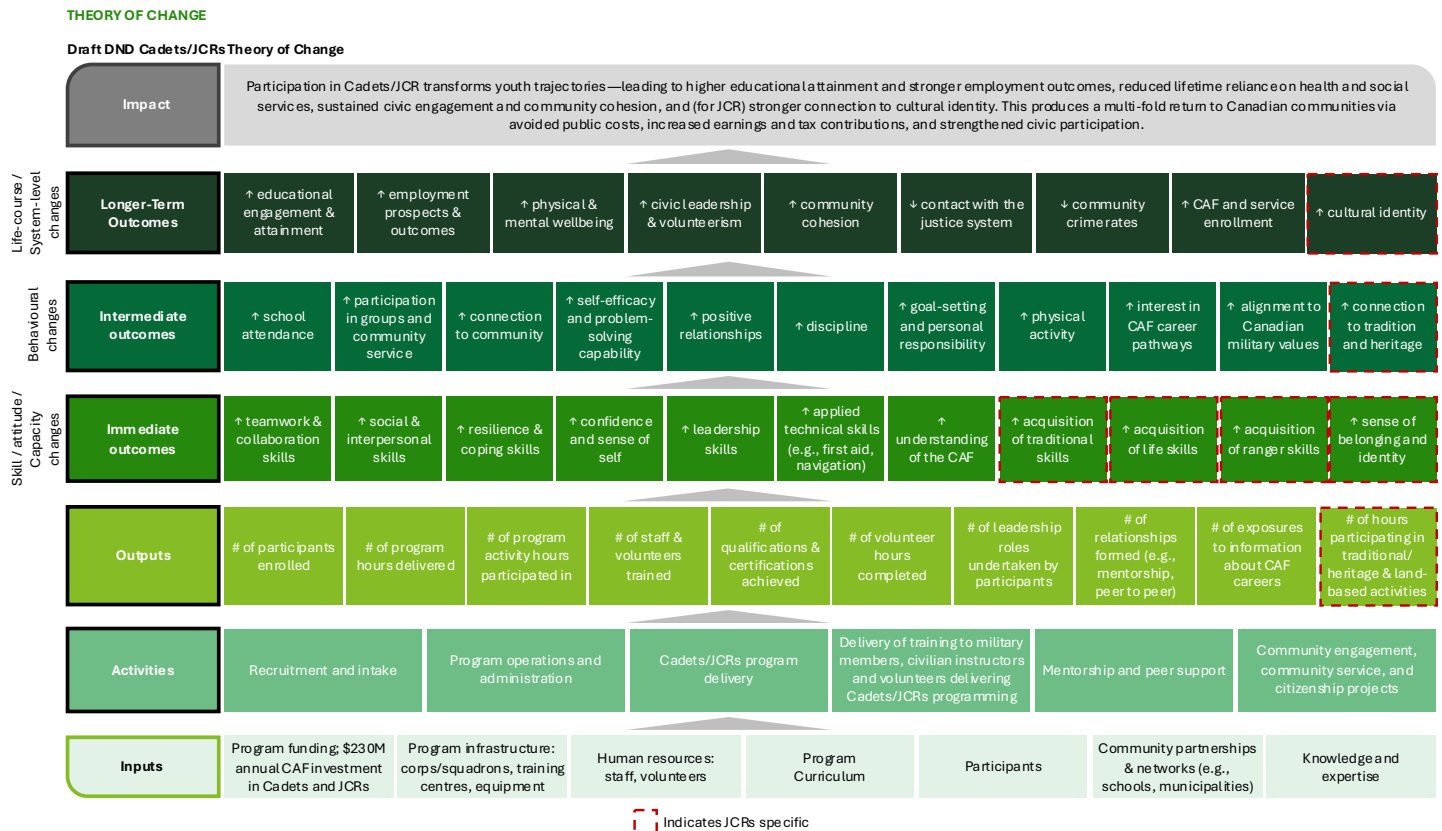
A Theory of Change is a comprehensive description of how and why a desired, long-term impact is expected to happen, mapping the connection between activities and ultimate goals. It outlines the causal links between resources, activities, outputs, and outcomes, while identifying underlying assumptions and contextual factors.¹

In this case, **Theory of Change** describes how the CJCR Gp Programs create impact. It outlines the pathways through which CAF investments enable structured youth development activities, which in turn produce outputs, such as participation hours, training completions, and leadership opportunities. These outputs lead to individual-level gains in skills, attitudes, and capabilities, which then contribute to behavioural changes that accumulate into long-term social and economic impacts.

Under this theory, participation in the CJCR Gp Programs is expected to positively shape youth trajectories. These shifts may include stronger educational and employment outcomes, reduced dependence on public services over the course of life, greater civic engagement, stronger community cohesion, and, for JCR youth, enhanced cultural connection. As these individual and community-level outcomes take hold, they generate broader societal returns through avoided public costs and increased productivity, earnings and tax revenues.

¹ For additional information on the theory of change, please see Center for Theory of Change. (n.d.). *What is Theory of Change?* Retrieved from <https://www.theoryofchange.org/what-is-theory-of-change/>, or Connell, J. P., & Kubisch, A. C. (1998). *Applying a Theory of Change Approach to the Evaluation of Comprehensive Community Initiatives: Progress, Prospects, and Problems*. In K. Fulbright-Anderson, A. C. Kubisch, & J. P. Connell (Eds.), *New Approaches to Evaluating Community Initiatives, Volume 2: Theory, Measurement, and Analysis* (pp. 15–44). Washington, DC: Aspen Institute.

Figure 2: CJCR Gp Programs Theory of Change



By clearly articulating these causal pathways, the Theory of Change forms the foundation for the SROI analysis. It supports the selection of outcome domains and indicators, clarifies key assumptions, and ensures that the valuation of benefits is grounded in a coherent, evidence-based chain of expected effects.

2.2.2 Theory of Change Assumptions

Underpinning the Theory of Change are assumptions that must be true for the theory to be valid. These include:

- 1) Resource availability: Sufficient funding, infrastructure, and partnerships enable the planned program activities to occur as designed.
- 2) Effective program delivery: Program delivery is effective, ensuring activities are implemented as planned.

- 3) Accessible program delivery: Program delivery is accessible to all participants who want to engage, from coast to coast to coast.
- 4) Individual outcomes drive community/societal level impact: Individual level changes aggregate to community-level impact and that these can be measured and attributed.
- 5) Causal effects may be seen over time: The impact of behavioural changes may not be seen in the short-term and instead come to fruition over time.
- 6) Distinct JCR Program elements: JCR Program elements are distinct and necessary for certain outcomes.

2.3 Domains and Indicators

A review of the CJCR Gp Program mandates, curriculum materials, and documented Program objectives informed the development of the Theory of Change and the metrics used to assess program

performance. This foundational review ensured that the Theory of Change accurately reflected how the CJCR Gp Programs are designed to operate, the outcomes they seek to influence, and the developmental pathways through which participation is expected to generate impact.

Building on this foundation, a targeted literature review was conducted, drawing on relevant studies (e.g., social impact and SROI evaluations of youth development, leadership, community-based, and culturally grounded programs). Insights from this evidence base were combined with subject-matter expertise in youth outcomes, public sector SROI, and social impact measurement to refine the Theory of Change, articulate research hypotheses, and identify the mechanisms through which CJCR Gp Program outcomes translate into longer-term social and economic value.

This iterative process also supported the identification of downstream impacts associated with each outcome in the Theory of Change. These include potential fiscal benefits (e.g., reduced reliance on health, social, and justice systems), economic contributions (e.g., increased earnings and tax revenue), and broader societal gains (e.g., strengthened community cohesion and cultural resilience). Together, these steps established the analytical basis for the SROI model and ensured that the metrics selected for valuation are evidence-informed, CJCR Gp Program-aligned, and grounded in a coherent causal logic.

2.3.1 Domain Definition, Metrics, and Impacts

A selection of long-term outcome metrics, tied to life-course and system-level changes, were identified as those for which participation in the CJCR Gp Programs should have a positive impact (through connection to the goals of the CJCR Gp Programs).

Educational engagement and attainment

Definition: The extent to which CJCR Gp Program participants and former participants actively participate in schooling and progress through formal academic or vocational education pathways.

Indicators: Behavioural indicators include school attendance, highest level of education completed or currently pursued, observed improvements in academic performance, expressed interest in post-secondary education or skilled trades, and increased ability to manage academic responsibilities independently (e.g., completing schoolwork, meeting deadlines, balancing commitments).

Impacts: Higher educational engagement and attainment are strongly associated with long-term economic and social benefits, including increased lifetime earnings, higher productivity, greater tax contributions, and reduced reliance on income support.

Employment Prospects and Outcomes

Definition: The extent to which CJCR Gp Program current and former participants develop the skills, behaviours, and experiences that support entry into the workforce and progression along employment pathways.

Indicators: Behavioural indicators include current employment status and labour-force participation, personal income, leadership roles at work, and taking on additional responsibilities across settings (work, school, home, community). Skills-linked behavioural indicators include participation in team projects outside the Programs, volunteering to speak or instruct in front of groups, and actively seeking added leadership or instructional opportunities.

Impacts: Increased employment prospects and outcomes are associated with higher wages and longer-term employment stability, reduced reliance on income support, and increased economic output and tax revenues.

Physical and Mental Wellbeing

Definition: The extent to which CJCR Gp Program participants and former participants develop and sustain positive physical and psychological health.



Indicators: Behavioural indicators include frequency of weekly physical activity, maintaining or improving physical health indicators (e.g., stamina/strength), changes in health-related behaviours (e.g., alcohol use, smoking), participation in activities that support mental well-being, and self-reported mental health challenges that affect daily functioning. Protective behavioural indicators include demonstrated emotion regulation, ability to calm after anxiety, confidence in self/abilities, and conflict resolution frequency; for JCR participants, additional indicators include engagement in culturally grounded activities and land-based competencies that support identity, belonging, and well-being.

Impacts: Improved physical and mental wellbeing are associated with long-term reductions in health care utilization (e.g., fewer emergency room visits, reduced need for mental health interventions), enhanced daily functioning, and increased productivity. These benefits translate into societal value through lower public health expenditures, improved quality of life, greater workforce participation, and reduced reliance on health and social services over the course of a cadet/JCR's life.

Civic Leadership and Volunteerism

Definition: The extent to which CJCR Gp Program participants and former participants demonstrate sustained engagement in civic life, including leadership roles, volunteer activities, and in kind and financial contributions to community organizations and public institutions.

Indicators: Behavioural indicators include participation in community groups, sports, or clubs outside of the CJCR Gp Program and whether involvement increased after joining; hours of volunteer or community service outside the CJCR Gp Programs; frequency of financial to charities/not-for-profits; and leadership roles taken on within the CJCR Gp Programs and in external settings (community, school, and work). Additional indicators include volunteering to speak or instruct, requesting additional leadership responsibilities, and

being entrusted with added responsibilities in community and school settings.

Impacts: Higher levels of civic leadership and volunteerism are associated with stronger democratic participation, increased social capital, and more resilient communities. At the system level, these outcomes contribute to reduced demand on public services, stronger local institutions, and increased community capacity to address social challenges collaboratively.

Community Cohesion

Definition: The extent to which CJCR Gp Program participation contributes to stronger social connections, trust, and collaboration within communities, particularly across diverse groups and generations.

Indicators: Behavioural indicators include development of new friendships and social connections through the CJCR Gp Programs, participation in community groups and activities outside of the CJCR Gp Programs, improved social integration and inclusion (e.g., “fitting in”, “feeling included”), and the ability to resolve conflicts with peers. Complementary behavioural indicators include observed improvements in teamwork, communication, and social interaction skills, as reported by parents/guardians and leaders, and increased engagement in group-based activities beyond the CJCR Gp Programs.

Impacts: Enhanced community cohesion is associated with improved collective efficacy, lower levels of social isolation, and increased community resilience. Over the long term, stronger social capital contributes to safer communities, improved mental well-being, and reduced reliance on formal social services, generating broader societal value.

Contact with the Justice System

Definition: The extent to which CJCR Gp Program participation is associated with reduced involvement in, or contact with, the justice system over the course of a cadet/JCR's life.



Indicators: Behavioural indicators include whether an individual has ever been arrested or charged, the frequency of arrests/charges, and the timing of justice contact relative to program participation. Protective behavioural indicators include improved emotion regulation, reduced conflict escalation (peer conflict resolution), and applying problem-solving skills to real-life situations outside the CJCR Gp Programs.

Impacts: Reduced contact with the justice system is associated with significant long-term social and economic benefits, including lower costs related to policing, courts, and corrections, improved life outcomes for individuals, and reduced intergenerational impacts of justice involvement. These outcomes also support safer communities and greater public trust in institutions.

Community Crime Rates and Public Safety

Definition: The extent to which CJCR Gp Program participation contributes, directly or indirectly, to lower levels of crime and improved perceptions of safety within communities.

Indicators: Behavioural indicators captured in the survey include individual-level justice system contact (arrests/charges and timing relative to participation), and leader observations regarding participation among youth facing justice involvement (as a risk-exposure and inclusion indicator).²

Impacts: Lower crime rates are associated with reduced public expenditures on policing and emergency services, improved quality of life for residents, and stronger economic and social stability. Preventive impacts linked to positive youth development generate long-term value by reducing downstream costs associated with crime and victimization.

Canadian Armed Forces and Service-Related Pathways

Definition: The extent to which CJCR Gp Program participation increases awareness of, interest in, and preparedness for service-related pathways, including enrolment in the CAF or other uniformed and public service roles.

Indicators: Behavioural indicators include considering applying for a CAF career, researching CAF opportunities, attending CAF career information sessions, speaking with a CAF recruiter or career counsellor, and completing activities or training modules focused on CAF career paths.

Impact: Participation in the CJCR Gp Programs contributes to a more informed, prepared, and motivated pool of potential applicants for the CAF, supporting attraction, retention, and force-generation requirements. At the system level, these outcomes are associated with improved ability to attract applicants, improved readiness and fit of applicants, and enhanced long-term workforce sustainability. More broadly, strengthened service-related pathways support national defence capacity, public service effectiveness, and institutional resilience.

Cultural Identity and Continuity (Junior Canadian Rangers)

Definition: The extent to which participation in the JCR Program supports the development, affirmation, and continuity of cultural identity, particularly for youth in Indigenous and remote communities.

Indicators: Behavioural indicators include participating in, sharing, or teaching traditional cultural activities during the JCR Program; participating in cultural events outside the JCR Program; and (for parents/guardians) observing participation in traditional/heritage activities, both within and outside the program, learned through the JCR Program. Skills-linked behavioural indicators include confidence in land-based and Canadian Ranger skill areas (e.g., navigation, shelter-building, water

² The surveys did not directly measure community crime rates or perceived public safety, so community-level crime outcomes would need to be assessed through external administrative or police-reported statistics rather than survey items.

sourcing, fire-starting, map/compass, hunting/fishing/trapping, knots and lashings).

Impacts: Strong cultural identity and continuity are associated with improved mental well-being,

resilience, and positive life trajectories for youth. At the community level, these outcomes support cultural preservation, intergenerational cohesion, and long-term community sustainability, while contributing to reduced social and health disparities over time.





Section 3: Methodology

With the expected impact pathways clearly defined, the report next outlines the methodological approach used to assess these relationships in practice. Section 3 describes the study design, data collection methods, and analytical framework applied to evaluate outcomes and estimate the CJCR Gp Programs' social return on investment.

3.1 Data Sources and Study Design

This study draws on multiple sources of administrative, financial, and survey data to assess the social impact and return on investment (SROI) of the CJCR Gp Programs.

First, we were provided with detailed program administrative data, including cadet/JCR registration numbers, participant demographics, qualifications achieved, and program participation statistics by the Department of National Defence project team. We also received ten years of financial information covering annual budgets and actual expenditures. These financial data points were inclusive of spending categories such as personnel costs (including fully loaded salary and benefits for full-time and part-time staff), facilities and leases, equipment (capital and consumables), depreciation schedules, transportation, training delivery, grants and transfers received, and other program support costs. This allowed us to develop the full cost profile of the CJCR Gp Program over time and ensure alignment between expenditures and reported program activities.

In addition to program data, we reviewed relevant secondary sources to contextualize findings and inform the analytical approach. These included prior research on the impact of different cadet programs, notably the UK Ministry of Defence–commissioned study *What is the Social Impact and Return on Investment Resulting from Expenditure on the Cadet Forces in the UK?* (University of Northampton Institute for Social Innovation and Impact, 2016–2020), as well as relevant Statistics Canada datasets and national benchmarks.

To measure outcomes directly, we designed and administered a national survey targeting four groups: current cadets/JCRs, former cadets/JCRs (alumni), parents/guardians of cadets/JCRs, and CJCR Gp Program staff/leaders. The survey was conducted from January 16, 2026 to February 9, 2026 (11:59 p.m. EST). It was distributed via email³ to:

	Alumni: 277,328
	Parents/Guardians: 95,726
	Current Cadets/JCR: 40,186
	Staff: 8,912

In total, 27,257 responses were received across all groups. This is an extraordinary number of responses to a survey. As a point of comparison, the most recent version of the Your Say Matters survey received approximately 4,700 responses from cadets and JCRs. Nationally representative public opinion surveys by major polling firms typically have 1,000 - 2,000 respondents.

For the purposes of this analysis, we assume that the survey sample is broadly representative of the overall CJCR Gp population.

3.2 Social Impact Measurement Approach

The survey was designed to capture a wide range of background characteristics and life outcomes associated with participation in the CJCR Gp Programs.

Respondents were asked background questions including CJCR Gp Program type, province/territory of residence, year of birth, gender, marital status, household composition, identity and ethnicity, and enrolment history. These demographic variables enabled us to align survey respondents with comparable populations in other national datasets.

³ The JCR survey was also distributed to JCR Program leaders at an in-person event in Winnipeg.

Life outcome questions covered multiple domains, including:

- Educational attainment and post-secondary aspirations
- Employment status and income
- Physical health and fitness
- Alcohol and smoking behaviours
- Mental health and well-being
- Leadership development and civic engagement
- Volunteerism and community service
- Interaction with the justice system
- Participation in and outcomes of JCR-specific training

The parent/guardian questionnaire focused on observed changes in their child's development, including leadership skills, physical activity, academic performance, social integration, participation in cultural and community activities, and interest in post-secondary education or careers in the CAF.

The leader/staff survey included questions on respondents' roles and tenure, as well as observed improvements among cadets/JCRs across similar domains (leadership, physical activity, school engagement, community participation, and cadets/JCR training outcomes).

Together, these instruments allowed us to capture both self-reported outcomes and third-party observations, providing a multi-perspective view of CJCR Gp Program impact.

3.3 Monetization and Valuation Methods

To quantify the social and economic impact of the CJCR Gp Program, we compared the survey outcomes reported by former cadets to benchmark data from Statistics Canada. Unfortunately, a low response rate meant that former JCRs could not be quantitatively evaluated in the same way. The SROI analysis is therefore limited to the Cadet Program only.

Based on available data and established literature, we focused on four key mechanisms through which the Cadet Program may generate social value:

01

Education

02

Income and employment

03

Justice system interaction

04

Alcohol consumption

For each of these domains, we compared the performance of former cadets to Canadians with similar characteristics, controlling for demographic factors such as age, gender, province, visible minority status, immigration status, and education where appropriate. Weighted survey techniques were used to align the survey sample with population benchmarks.

For education and income, we compared reported attainment and earnings to Statistics Canada labour force and income tables, constructing mirrored demographic groupings (province × age × gender × education × work activity) to ensure comparability. Differences in average and median income were used to estimate income-level changes associated with participation.

For justice system interaction, we compared reported arrest or police contact rates to national benchmarks derived from Statistics Canada's justice datasets. Differences in prevalence were monetized using average justice system cost estimates per incident.

For alcohol, we compared self-reported consumption patterns to national prevalence rates, using established per-unit social cost estimates to quantify reductions in health and productivity.

Where appropriate, survey weights were applied to calculate subgroup-level prevalence rates. The analysis estimated incremental differences between former cadets and comparable Canadians, rather than attributing outcomes solely to program participation. This conservative approach reduces the risk of overstating impact. In addition, care was taken to avoid

double counting across impact pathways. Where outcome domains may be interrelated (for example, education and income, or substance use and justice system interaction), impacts were modeled independently and applied using distinct valuation parameters to ensure that benefits were not counted more than once within the overall social return estimate.

Once the annual results have been calculated using the above approach, we calculate a lifetime impact per cadet. We know the annual benefits will be experienced over many years of a former cadet's life, but there is no standard rule that can be applied to determine how long this time horizon is. We therefore offer low, medium, and high scenarios where the benefits last for different periods of time.

For these lifetime benefits, we apply net present value (NPV) discounting to future benefits. Net present value discounting is a mathematical method of reducing the weight placed on returns further in the future. It is often used in studies of lifetime outcomes to reflect that a benefit today is of greater value than the same benefit obtained in several years' time. We use a real discount rate of 3%, meaning each future year's benefits are discounted by 3% compared to the prior year (after accounting for inflation).

To ensure that comparisons are like-for-like, all benefits and costs are reported in real (inflation-adjusted) 2025 dollars. For future benefits, that means the results reflect current-year incomes and public spending levels and do not count future increases in earnings or the cost of delivering public services. For costs, we calculate spending per using historical program spending from the past ten years. Because a dollar spent in 2015/16 could purchase more goods and services than a dollar spent today, we adjust past years' spending data to reflect the changes in purchasing power so that we are accurately measuring the level of spending in today's money required to support program activities.

3.3.1 Qualitative Findings

In addition to the monetized impact pathways described above, the study also documents a range of qualitative social impacts that are not currently amenable to quantitative analysis. While robust literature supports monetization in domains such as education, income, justice system interaction, smoking, and alcohol consumption, other important outcomes lack standardized cost estimates or causal parameters required for conservative financial modeling. As such, these impacts are presented qualitatively in Section 5.

These qualitative findings include reported differences in health outcomes, including mental health and levels of physical activity (including engagement in 30 minutes or more of daily activity); impacts on schools and communities, including levels of community engagement and volunteer or community service hours completed in the past 12 months outside the CJCR Gp Programs; peer endorsement of the CJCR Gp Programs; reported levels of self-confidence and ability to resolve peer conflicts; leadership roles and experiences undertaken since joining a CJCR Gp Program; and observed outcomes reported by parents/guardians and CJCR Gp Program leaders.

Impacts specific to the JCRs are also examined separately in Section 5. Together, these qualitative findings provide a broader understanding of the CJCR Gp Programs' social contributions beyond those captured in the quantified return on investment model.

3.4 Limitations and Data Gaps

As is the case with all robust quantitative analyses, it is important to note data limitations to help avoid misinterpreting the results.

First, a limited response rate among current and former JCRs limits our ability to analyze that program. All quantitative analysis, including the SROI and value for money results, are therefore restricted to the Cadet Program only. A qualitative discussion of JCR findings is provided in Section 5.4.



Second, the research design is cross-sectional and point-in-time in nature. This study does not track individuals longitudinally, and no pre- and post-intervention data were available for CJCR Gp Program participants or the general population. As a result, observed differences between former cadets and benchmark populations cannot be interpreted as causal proof of program impact. This analysis holds constant as many demographic variables allowed for by the data and then identifies correlations consistent with the Theory of Change.

Third, this analysis was not designed as a randomized controlled trial (RCT), and no true treatment and control groups exist. While demographic controls were applied to strengthen comparability, the absence of experimental or quasi-experimental design limits the ability to conduct advanced statistical or causal inference techniques.

Fourth, outcomes are based on self-reported survey data and were not independently verified through administrative data linkage. Although the survey instrument followed best practices in design and implementation, self-reporting may introduce recall bias or social desirability bias.

Fifth, the study did not include descriptive or opinion-based research components. Due to the absence of public opinion research authorization, focus groups, interviews, and opinion-based survey questions were

not permitted. As a result, attitudinal, perception-based, and experiential dimensions of impact were not captured. The lack of descriptive data limits the ability to contextualize quantitative findings and provide deeper insight into mechanisms of change.

Finally, while the survey sample is assumed to be broadly representative of the cadet/JCR population, response bias may remain. Individuals with particularly strong positive or negative experiences may have been more likely to participate, which could influence outcome estimates.

To help mitigate the impact of some of these constraints, the study integrates multiple data sources, applies demographic controls, and uses conservative benchmarking and monetization methods grounded in peer-reviewed literature. The analytical approach prioritizes transparency and conservative assumptions to provide a robust and credible estimate of social impact within the bounds of available data.

Additionally, the study's findings are bolstered by the outstanding survey response rate, which provides a very large sample size from which to draw inferences. To receive such a large volume of responses – more than 27,000 – for a study like this is unusual, and we are grateful to all survey participants for taking the time to share their experiences.





Section 4: Demographics of Cadet Program Participants

This section presents an overview of the demographic characteristics of survey respondents. This demographic overview helps contextualize the survey findings, which will be reported beginning in Section 5.

4.1 Demographics of Current Cadet Survey Respondents

This section describes the demographic characteristics of current Cadet Program participants who responded to the survey and situates the cohort within the Canadian context. It examines geography, gender identity, place of birth, household structure, language use, and ethnic background. Together, these factors define the social and demographic base of cadet participation.

Geographic and Gender Composition of Current Cadet Respondents

The geographic distribution of current cadets reflects population size and program presence across Canada. Participation concentrates in the most populous provinces. Ontario accounts for 42 percent of cadets, followed by Quebec at 16 percent and British Columbia at 15 percent; Alberta contributes a further 11 percent. Together, these four provinces account for over 80 percent of the current cadet cohort according to the survey results. Manitoba, the Atlantic provinces, and Saskatchewan each contribute smaller shares. Representation in the territories remains low, reflecting their small populations compared to the provinces. In northern regions, youth are also more likely to participate in the JCR Program, which is not included in these results.

Table 2. Geographic Location of Current Cadet Respondents

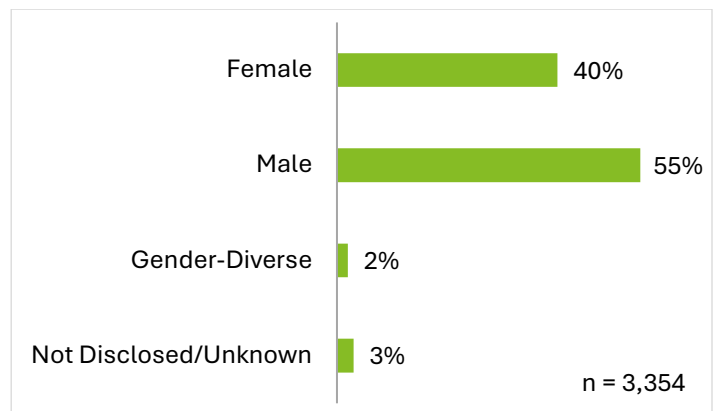
Province/Territory	Count	Percentage
Ontario	1,351	42%
Quebec	509	16%
British Columbia	485	15%
Alberta	354	11%

Province/Territory	Count	Percentage
Manitoba	139	4%
Nova Scotia	124	4%
New Brunswick	82	3%
Saskatchewan	75	2%
Newfoundland and Labrador	57	2%
Prince Edward Island	37	1%
Northwest Territories	2	0.1%
Yukon	2	0.1%
Nunavut	1	0.003%

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.
Source: Survey of current cadets.

Gender data show a mixed cohort. Male cadets account for 55 percent of respondents, while 40 percent identify as female. Two percent identify as gender-diverse and 3 percent did not disclose their gender identity.

Figure 3. Gender Identity Breakdown, Current Cadet Respondents



Source: Survey of current cadets.

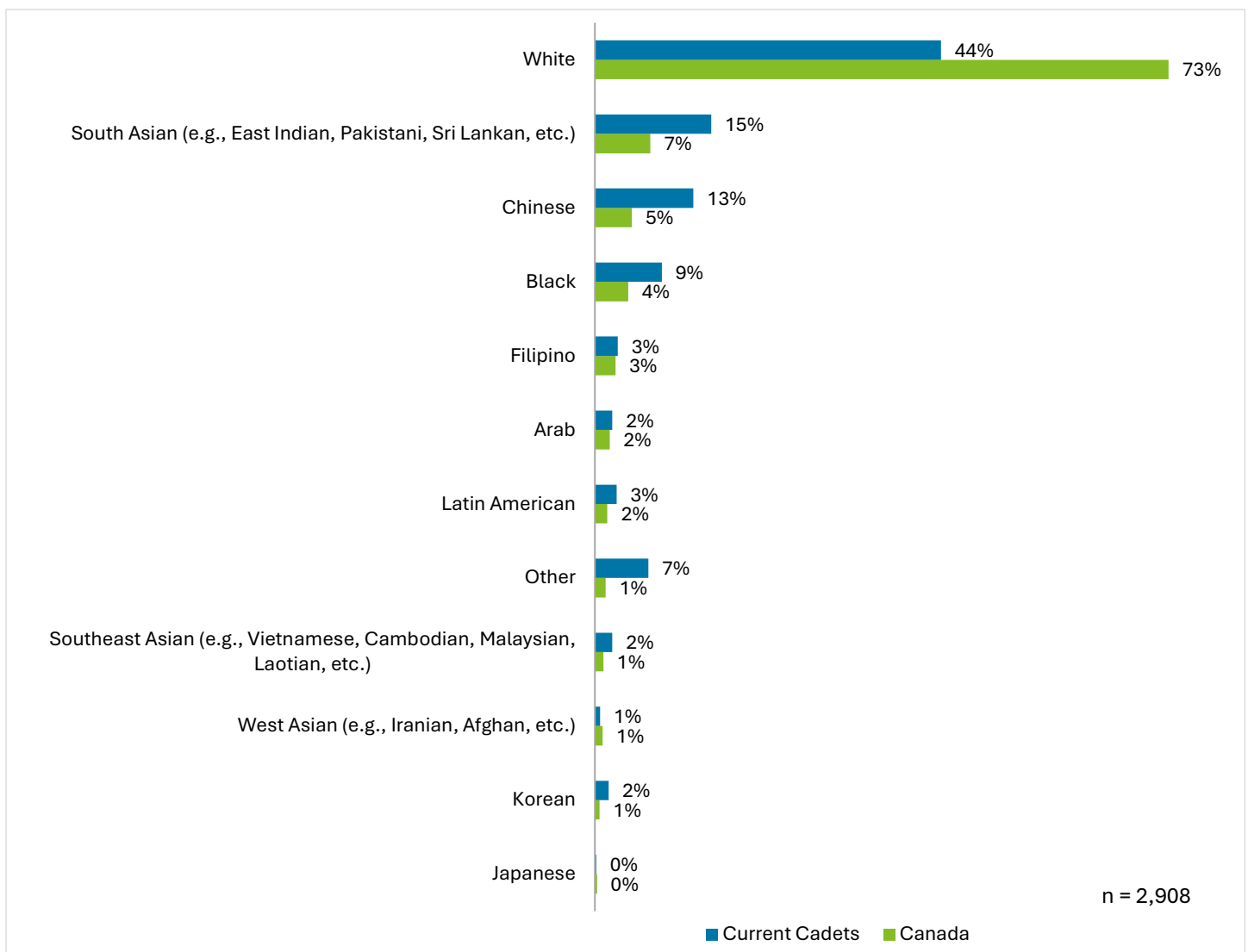
Taken together, the geographic and gender profiles show a cohort drawn largely from major population centres and spanning diverse gender identities. These characteristics provide important context for understanding who participates in the Cadet Program and how cadet experiences are shaped by the communities in which they are embedded.

Cultural Origins, Family Context, and Linguistic Diversity

Current cadets represent a diverse cohort. Thirty percent of cadets report birth outside Canada, compared with the general national average of 26 percent. This 4 percentage point difference signals slightly higher participation among newcomer youth. Among Canadian-born cadets, many report second- or third-generation backgrounds, indicating participation across different stages of the immigration experience.

Ethnic composition reflects this migration profile. White cadets account for 42 percent of the cohort, compared with 74 percent nationally. Racialized groups show higher representation. South Asian cadets comprise 14 percent versus 7 percent nationally. Chinese cadets account for 12 percent versus 5 percent nationally. Black cadets account for 8 percent versus 4 percent nationally. Filipino, Latin American, Southeast Asian, Korean, and Arab cadets also appear at or above national proportions.⁴

Figure 4. Ethnic Background, Current Cadet Respondents

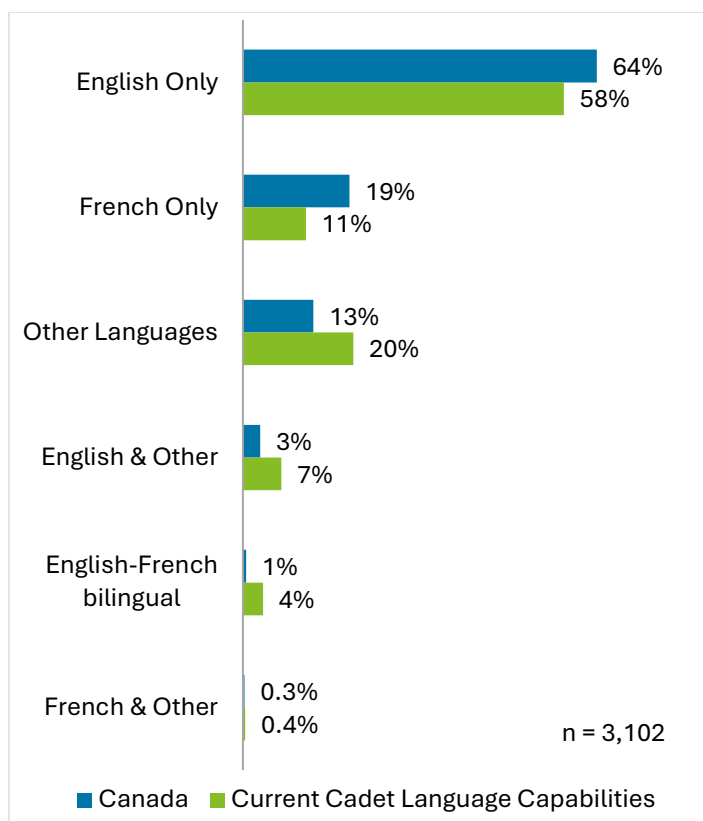


Source: Survey of current cadets, Statistics Canada.

⁴ Statistics Canada. Table 98-10-0351-01. Visible minority by gender and age: Canada, provinces and territories - <https://doi.org/10.25318/9810035101-eng>

Language use mirrors this ethnic diversity. Fifty-eight percent of cadets report speaking English only, compared with 64 percent nationally. Eleven percent report speaking French only, compared with 19 percent. Twenty percent speak languages other than English or French, seven points above the national average. Four percent report English/French bilingualism, which exceeds the national rate.⁵

Figure 5. Language Capabilities, Current Cadet Respondents



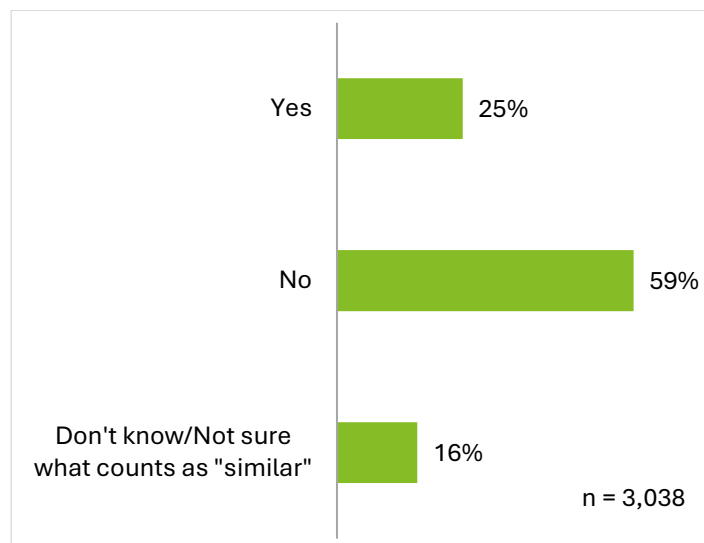
Source: Survey of current cadets, Statistics Canada.

Interestingly, most parents/guardians report no prior participation in similar youth programs. For many families, Cadet Program registration represents first contact with structured youth military programming rather than continuation of a family tradition.

These connected demographic patterns reveal the Cadet Program's particular appeal within Canada's

immigrant and multicultural communities. The combination of higher representation of youth born outside Canada, elevated ethnic diversity, and increased multilingualism suggests the program serves as both an integration pathway for newcomer families and a bridge between cultural heritage and Canadian civic participation. For families navigating settlement and integration, the Cadet Program appears to offer a no-cost, structured youth development opportunity that aligns with values around education, discipline, and community engagement while providing a space where cultural diversity is both present and accepted.

Figure 6. Parental or Guardian Participation in Similar Youth Programs Prior to Current Cadet Registration



Source: Survey of current cadets.

This demographic composition positions the program as a reflection of Canada's evolving multicultural society, where youth from diverse origins come together within a shared Canadian institutional framework.

⁵ Statistics Canada. Table 98-10-0226-01. Language spoken most often at home by age: Canada, provinces and territories - <https://doi.org/10.25318/9810022601-eng>

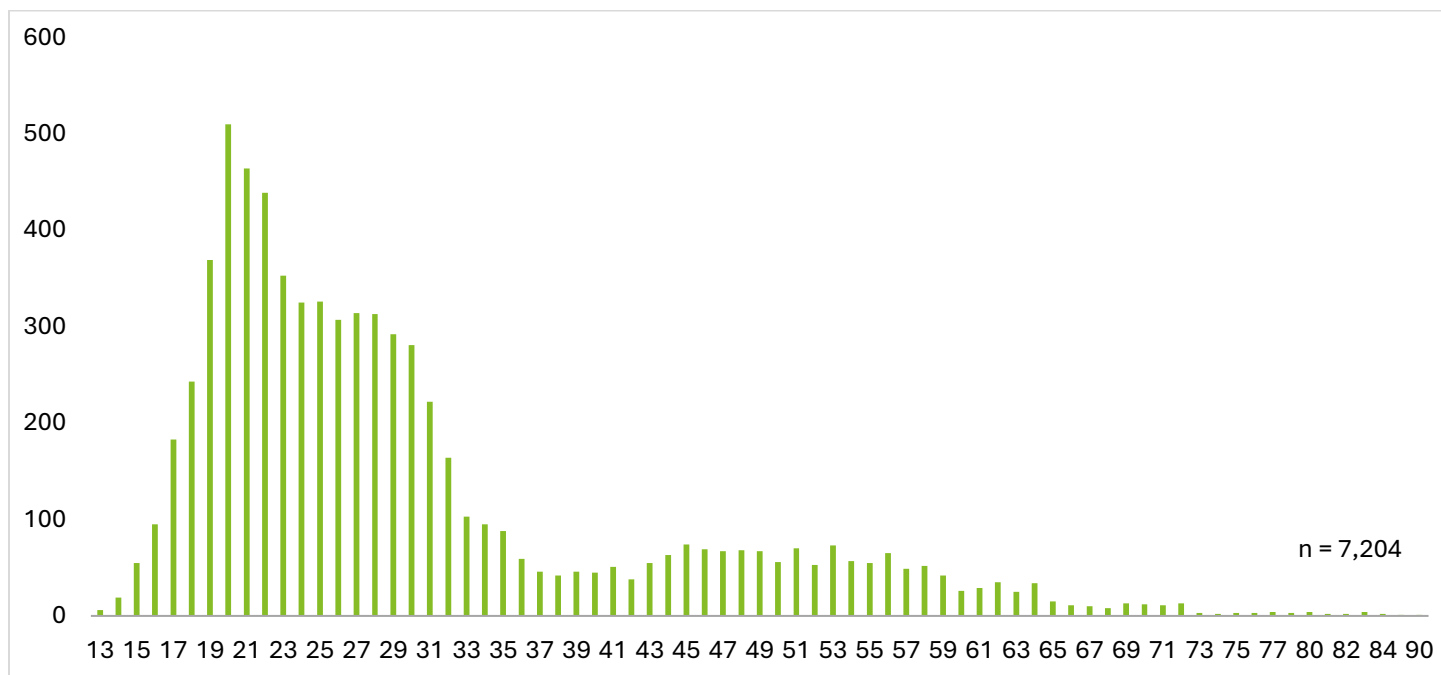
4.2 Demographics of Former Cadets

Age & Gender

The population of former cadets in our survey sample is concentrated in early adulthood, with just over half (51%) aged 20-29 years and 13 percent aged 15-19.⁶

This age profile reflects the group of former participants whose contact information is still available to the Department of National Defence, which has only been tracking this contact information in a centralized database for the past 17 years.

Figure 7. Age Distribution of Former Cadet Respondents

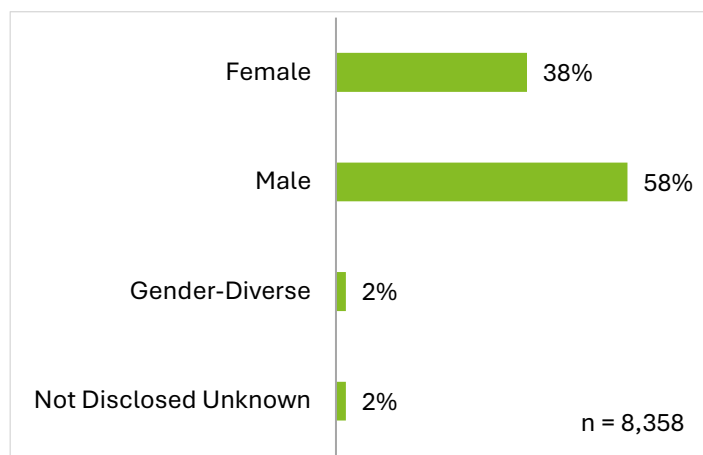


Source: Survey of former cadets.

The age profile of our respondent group helps explain education, employment, and transition patterns. Many former cadets remain in education, enter the labour market, or combine both. For respondents in their 20s, reported outcomes may therefore reflect a group early in their adult lives rather than settled outcomes.

Gender representation spans identities and is similar to the distribution in current cadets, though fewer former cadets identified as female, likely due to an increased female participation in the Cadet Program over time. Fifty eight percent of former cadets identify as male, and 38 percent identify as female. Two percent identify as gender diverse and the same percent did not disclose.

Figure 8. Gender Identity Breakdown, Former Cadet Respondents



⁶ For those aged 15-19, they either aged out of the CJCR Gp Program at 18 or withdrew between ages 15-17.

Source: Survey of former cadets.

Changing Demographics Over Time

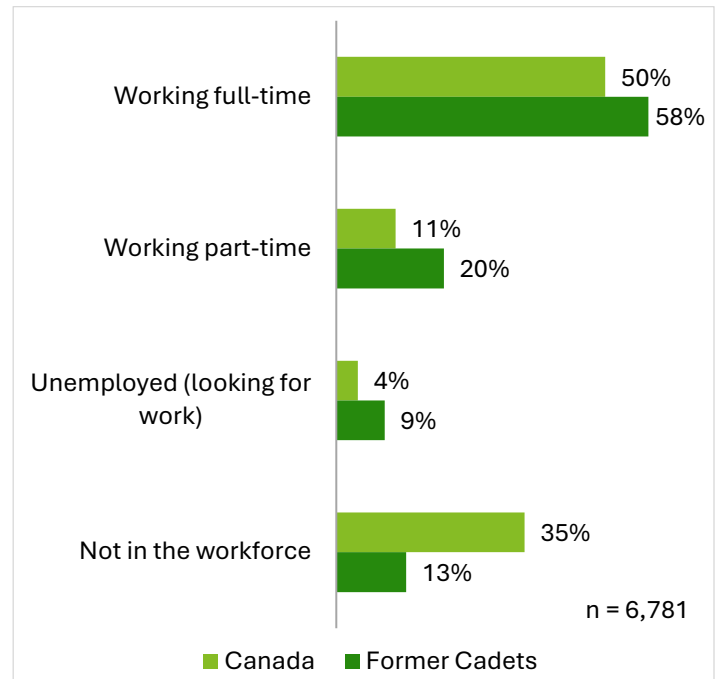
Place of birth shows a clear shift between the two cohorts. Among former cadets, 14 percent report being born outside Canada, compared to 30 percent among current cadets, a 16-percentage point difference. Third-generation Canadians make up the largest share of former cadets at 60 percent, while among current cadets that share falls to 37 percent, with second-generation Canadians and those born outside Canada together accounting for a notably larger portion of the current cohort. This shift suggests the program has increasingly reached newcomer families and immigrant communities in recent years, and that its reach has broadened to better reflect Canada's changing demographic makeup.

Parental exposure to similar youth programs is slightly lower among former cadets than among current cadets. Sixty-six percent of former cadets report that their parents did not participate in a similar program.

Labour Market Engagement

Employment patterns among former cadets reflect both age and sustained engagement with work and study. Eighty-seven percent of former cadets are in the labour force, whether working or actively looking for work, compared with around 65 percent nationally among Canadians aged fifteen and older. Former cadets are more likely to be working full-time, at around 58 percent, and part-time, at around 20 percent, than Canadians overall, where those figures sit at roughly 50 percent and 11 percent respectively. Unemployment is somewhat higher among former cadets at around 9 percent compared to the national figure of around 4 percent, which is consistent with the job search activity typical of early adulthood transitions.

Figure 9. Employment Status, Former Cadet Respondents



Source: Survey of former cadets, Statistics Canada.

A key distinction lies in overall workforce attachment. Former cadets are considerably less likely to be outside the labour force entirely, at around 13 percent, compared with roughly 35 percent of the broader Canadian population. This points to a cohort that remains actively engaged with employment and education well beyond their time in the Cadet Program.⁷

Program Impact and Transition Patterns

Two findings stand out when looking at the former cadet demographics. First, a comparison between former and current cohorts shows clear expansion into multicultural and newcomer communities.

Second, former cadets show continued engagement during early career transitions. Higher labour force participation and lower non-participation suggest ongoing orientation toward work and education.

⁷ Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey (LFS) - <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/250307/t001a-eng.htm>



Section 5: Qualitative Overview of Program Impacts

Section 5 explores outcomes reported by CJCR Gp Program participants. Section 5.1 covers responses by current cadets and former cadets across key thematic domains. Section 5.2 covers the perception of program outcomes from parents/guardians of current cadets/JCRs and CJCR Gp Program leaders. Section 5.3 covers outcomes among current and former JCRs.

5.1 Impacts on Current and Former Cadets

5.1.1 Education Outcomes

Former Cadets

Former cadets complete formal credentials at higher rates than national comparators. Even though some of the sample are still of high school age, high school completion bests the overall Canadian population: approximately 3 percent of former cadets report education below high school completion, against the national average of 16 percent. High school completion rates are broadly similar between the two groups, with 22 percent of former cadets reporting a high school diploma or equivalent as their highest credential, compared with 27 percent nationally.

Table 3. Education Attainment, Former Cadet Respondents Compared to All Canadians

	Former Cadets	Statistics Canada: All Canadians
No certificate, diploma or degree	3%	16%
High (secondary) school diploma or equivalency certificate	22%	27%
Postsecondary certificate or diploma below bachelor level	38%	31%
Bachelor's degree	26%	18%
University certificate, diploma or degree above bachelor level	10%	9%

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.
Source: Survey of former cadets, Statistics Canada.

More pronounced differences emerge at the postsecondary level. Approximately 38 percent of former cadets report college, collège d'enseignement général et professionnel (CEGEP), trades, or other non-university credentials as their highest qualification, compared to 31 percent nationally. Twenty-four percent hold college or non-university diplomas,

9 percent hold apprenticeship or trades certificates, and 5 percent hold university certificates or diplomas below bachelor's level. This distribution indicates that former cadets are more likely to pursue applied and vocational educational pathways than the general population.

At the bachelor's degree level, former cadets have a higher attainment rate at 26 percent, compared to 18 percent for the general population. This demonstrates that former cadets are more likely to pursue and successfully complete university-level education, suggesting the Cadet Program's positive influence in fostering academic achievement beyond high school.⁸

Overall, former cadets engage with education across multiple pathways and exit with credentials at higher rates than the general population. While direct attribution remains limited, the pattern aligns with broader evidence of sustained engagement during early adulthood.

5.1.2 Health Outcomes

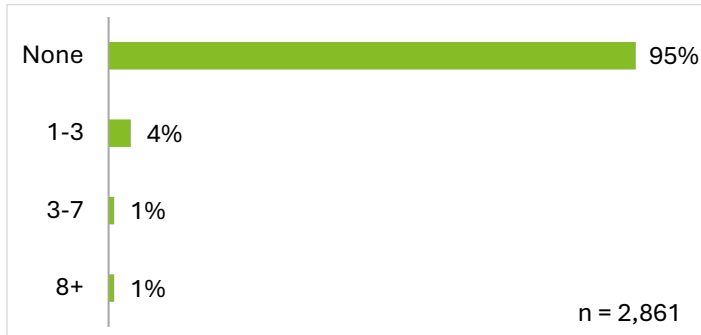
Current Cadets

The health profile of current cadets shows consistent routine and engagement. Most report regular physical activity. Nearly three-quarters are active on three or more days per week, and more than one-third report being active five to seven days per week.

Substance use remains rare. Most report no alcohol use, with 95 percent of current cadets reporting no use at all. Smoking and vaping are rarer still, with 96 having never smoked or vaped and only 2 percent reporting current use.

⁸ Statistics Canada- Highest level of education by geography: Canada, provinces and territories-
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=9810038601>

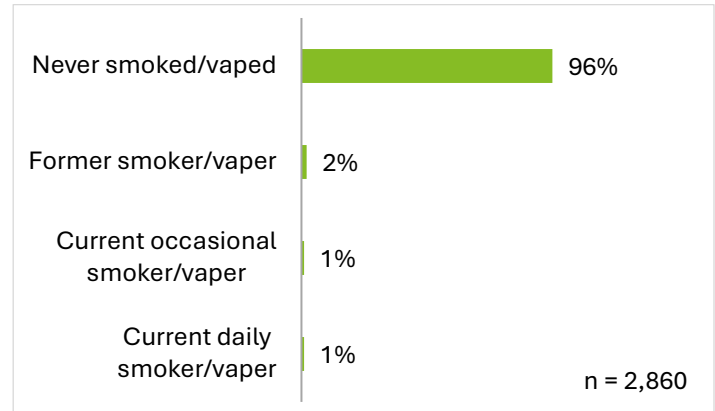
Figure 10. Average Weekly Alcohol Consumption Among Current Cadet Respondents



Source: Survey of current cadets.

As a point of comparison, Health Canada's Canadian Student Alcohol and Drug Survey shows that 37 percent of students in grades 7 to 12 had consumed alcohol in the past year, 21 percent had engaged in high-risk drinking, 15 percent had vaped in the past thirty days, and 4 percent had smoked cigarettes. Compared to these national averages, the levels of alcohol and tobacco use reported by current cadets are low.⁹

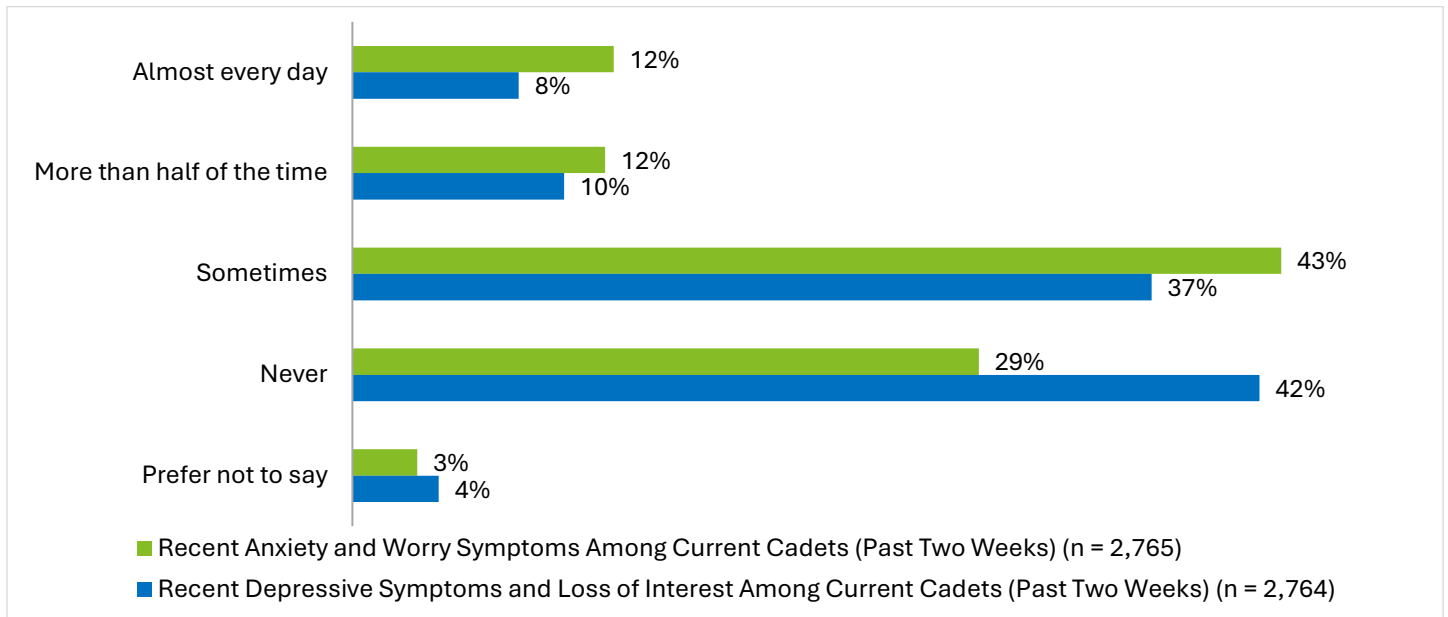
Figure 11. Smoking and Vaping Status Among Current Cadet Respondents



Source: Survey of current cadets.

Mental well-being among current cadets shows some variation. Most cadets report anxiety, worry, or low mood sometimes or not at all. A smaller group reports more frequent symptoms. At the same time, many report strong emotional control and an ability to calm themselves after stress.

Figure 12. Self-Reported Emotional States Among Current Cadet Respondents (Past Two Weeks)



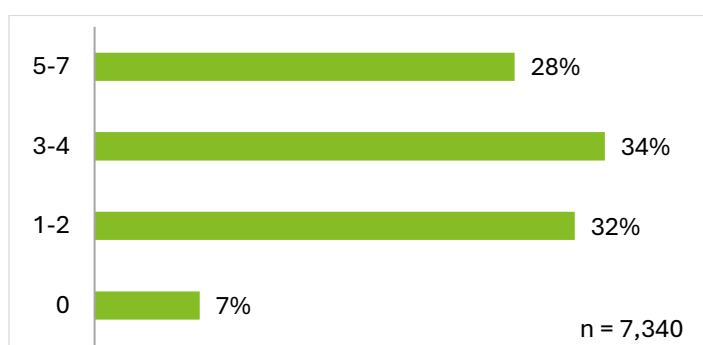
Source: Survey of current cadets.

⁹ Alcohol and Drug Use among Students in Canada, 2023–24 - <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/canadian-student-tobacco-alcohol-drugs-survey/2023-2024-key-findings.html>

Former Cadets

Health outcomes among former cadets vary more widely than for current cadets, likely reflecting age and life stage. Physical activity remains present but falls below that of current cadets. Over half of former cadets report being active on three or more days per week. More than one-quarter report activity on five to seven days per week.

Figure 13. Weekly Frequency of Physical Activity (30 Minutes or More per Day), Former Cadet Respondents



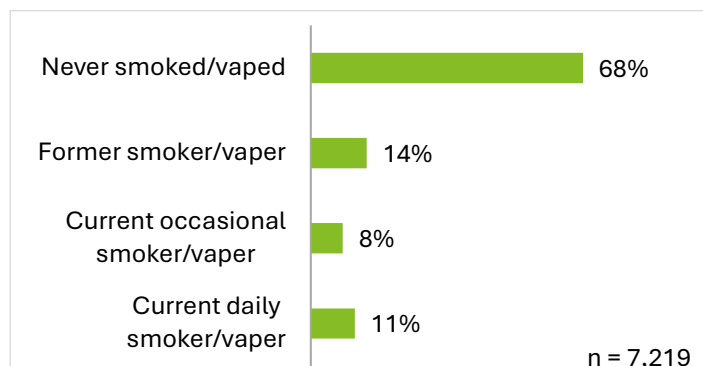
Source: Survey of former cadets.

When placed alongside national benchmarks for alcohol use, former cadets appear toward the lower end of typical use. National data indicate that roughly two thirds of Canadians aged 20 to 44 report alcohol use in the past month, and around 60 percent report at least one heavy drinking episode in the past year. By contrast, many former cadets report no alcohol use.

Around two-thirds of former cadets report never having smoked or vaped. Current daily use among this group remains similar to, or even slightly higher than, national benchmarks for young adults.¹⁰

Mental well-being follows a mixed pattern. Most former cadets report anxiety, worry, or low mood sometimes or not at all. A smaller share report frequent symptoms over the previous two weeks. This variation aligns with the broader range of life experiences represented in the group.

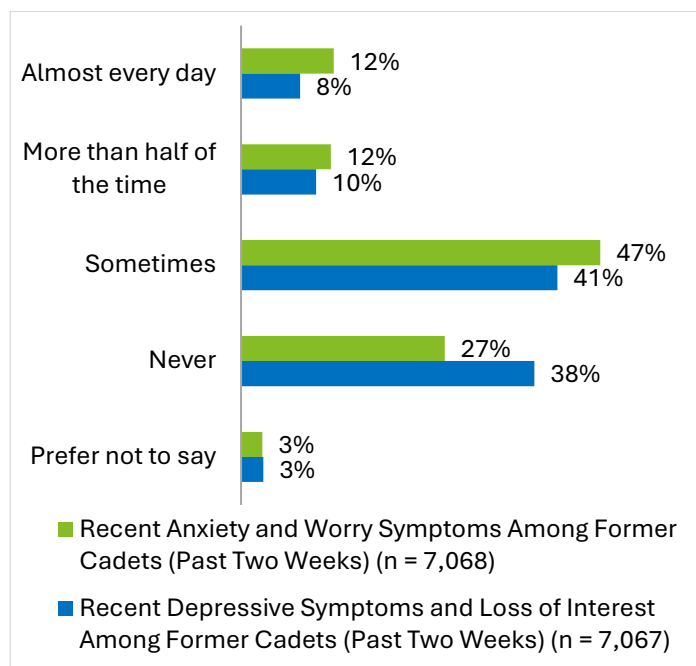
Figure 14. Smoking and Vaping Status, Former Cadet Respondents



Source: Survey of former cadets.

Emotional coping capacity remains a consistent strength. Most former cadets report the ability to control their emotions and calm themselves often or all of the time. This capacity persists even as other aspects of health diverge across age and circumstance.

Figure 15. Self-Reported Emotional States (Past Two Weeks), Former Cadet Respondents



Source: Survey of former cadets.

¹⁰ Canadian Tobacco and Nicotine Survey (CTNS): 2022 detailed tables

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/canadian-tobacco-nicotine-survey/2022-summary/2022-detailed-tables.html>

Overall, former cadets seem to carry forward many health-supporting habits developed during participation while adapting to adult responsibilities and environments.

5.1.3 Impacts on Schools and Communities

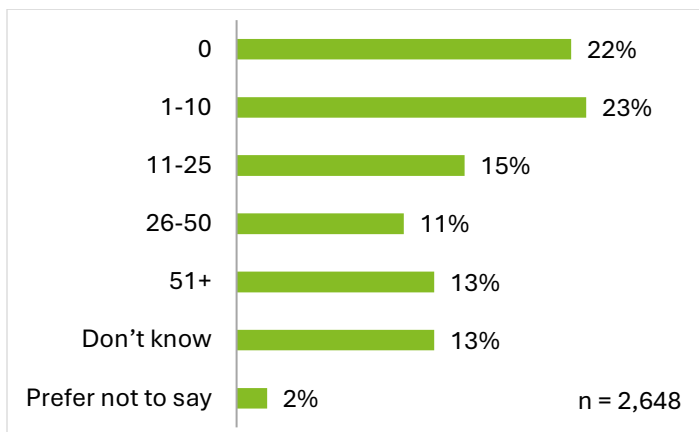
Participation in volunteering and community activity forms a key pathway through which the Cadet Program contribute beyond individual development. These activities support local organizations, strengthen community ties, and build habits of civic engagement.

Current Cadets

Most current cadets report meaningful community involvement. While 22 percent report no formal volunteer hours during the survey period, 62 percent report some volunteering over the past year.¹¹

Formal volunteer hours capture only part of this contribution. Seventy-six percent of current cadets report participating in community groups, sports, or clubs outside of the Cadet Program. These settings often involve informal contributions, such as assisting coaches, supporting younger participants, organizing activities, or helping run events. Such contributions rarely register as formal volunteering.

Figure 16. Hours of Volunteer or Community Service Completed Outside of Cadets in the Past 12 Months, Current Cadet Respondents



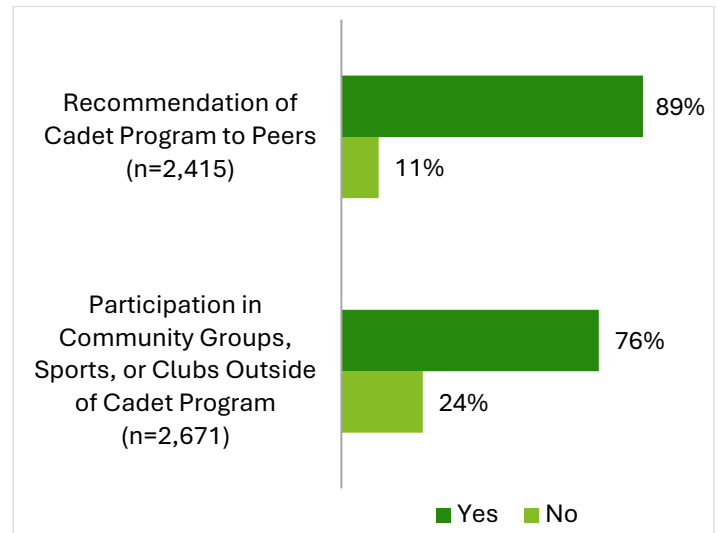
Source: Survey of former cadets.

¹¹ This is inclusive of any high school requirements regarding volunteer hours.

Peer endorsement reinforces this pattern. Eighty-nine percent of current cadets report that they would recommend cadets to their peers. This level of endorsement suggests that participation in the Cadet Program is generally positive, holds social value, and remains embedded in peer networks.

Taken together, current cadets engage in community and civic life in forms that match their age and stage. School schedules and extracurricular commitments shape how this engagement appears, but the underlying pattern remains strong.

Figure 17. Community Engagement and Peer Recommendation of Cadet Program, Current Cadet Respondents



Source: Survey of former cadets.

Former Cadets

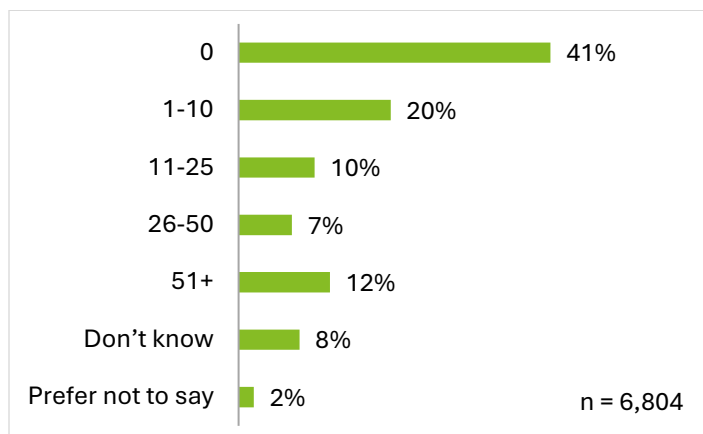
Volunteering patterns among former cadets reflect the constraints often found in adulthood. Compared with current cadets, more former cadets reported no volunteer hours, consistent with the demands of education, employment, family responsibilities, and mobility. Even so, 49 percent of former cadets report volunteering some amount of time in the past year. This share exceeds the proportion reporting no involvement at all.

Charitable giving provides a further lens on community and civic contribution. Just over half (52 percent) of former cadets report donating money in the past 12 months, indicating a strong level of engagement in charitable activities.

Together, these findings show that civic engagement among former cadets differs from that of current cadets in form, rather than disappearing altogether.

Structured participation during cadet years gives way to contributions shaped by adult responsibilities, while the underlying orientation toward community involvement persists.

Figure 18. Hours of Volunteer or Community Service in the Past 12 Months, Former Cadet Respondents



Source: Survey of former cadets.

5.2 Leadership

This section examines leadership outcomes among current and former cadets, with attention to confidence, conflict resolution, and leadership activity beyond the Cadet Program. These outcomes are significant because experiences during adolescence and early adulthood help shape lifetime skills linked to education, employment, and civic participation. Leadership development in the context of this study reflects not only individual gain, but wider benefit to schools, workplaces, and communities.

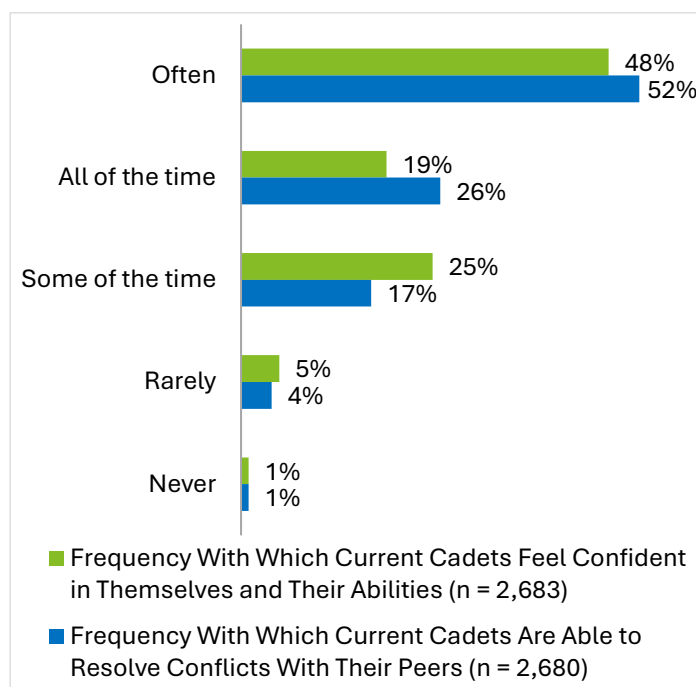
Current Cadets

Leadership outcomes among current cadets show high levels of self-reported confidence and peer conflict resolution. Most current cadets report feeling confident in themselves and their abilities often or all the time. Only small proportions report low confidence.

Self-confidence carries practical weight. It shapes willingness to participate, take responsibility, and persist through challenge. These behaviours support learning, teamwork, and social development during adolescence.

Conflict resolution shows a similar pattern. A clear majority of cadets report being able to resolve conflicts with peers often or all the time. Very few report that they rarely or never do so. For adolescents, this skill supports stable peer relationships and reduces escalation that can disrupt school or community participation.

Figure 19. Percent Reporting Levels of Self-Confidence and Ability to Resolve Peer Conflicts, Current Cadet Respondents

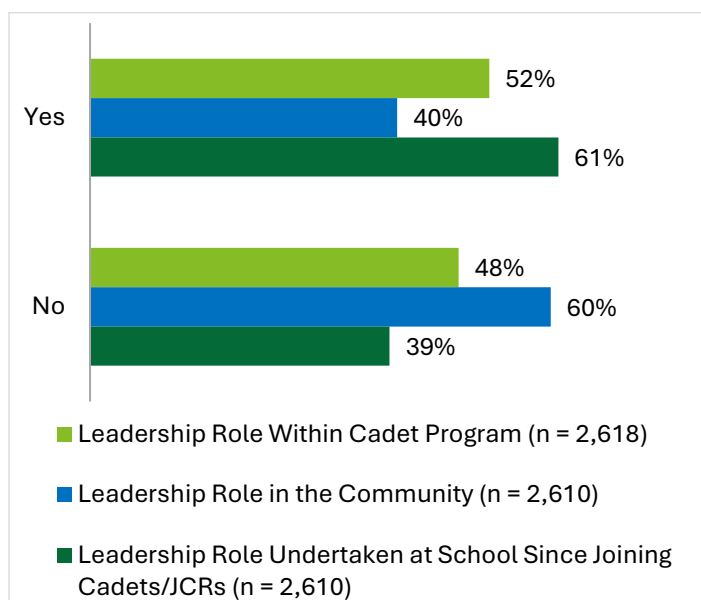


Source: Survey of former cadets.

These capacities translate into leadership activity. Just over half of current cadets report having held a leadership role within the Cadet Program since joining. Beyond the program, 61 percent report leadership roles at school, and 40 percent report leadership roles in the community.

This distribution shows that leadership practice does not remain confined to the Cadet Program. Cadets apply these skills in classrooms, peer groups, and local organizations.

Figure 20. Leadership Roles Undertaken Since Joining Cadet Program, Current Cadet Respondents



Source: Survey of current cadets.

Peer endorsement reinforces this finding. As reported earlier, 89 percent of current cadets would recommend the program to their peers. In a youth program context, this level of endorsement signals credibility and positive perceived value. Cadets recognize leadership and social development outcomes in their own experience.

Taken together, the survey of current cadets show a cohort with strong confidence, conflict-resolution capacity, and active leadership across multiple settings. These outcomes reflect transferable skills that support positive youth development and strengthen the environments cadets occupy.

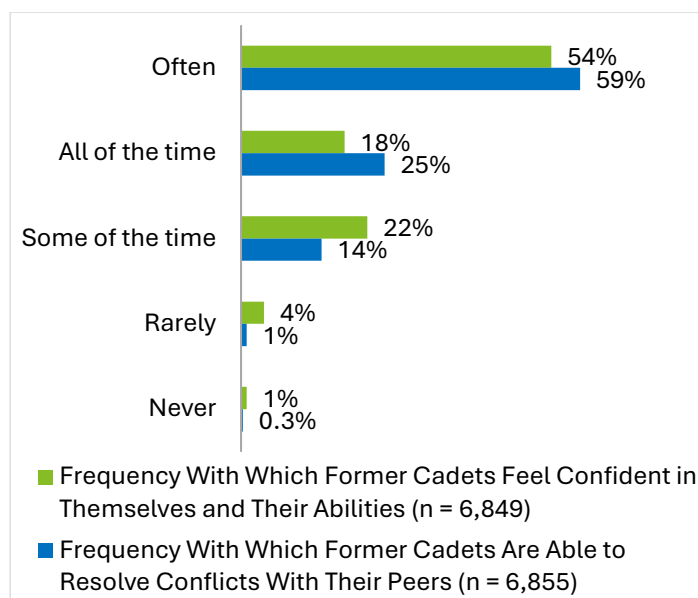
Former Cadets

Leadership outcomes among former cadets show persistence beyond program participation. Most former cadets report feeling confident in themselves and their abilities often or all the time. Only small shares report low confidence.

In adulthood, confidence is generally connected to workplace performance, willingness to assume responsibility, and civic participation. The reported levels of confidence among former cadets suggest these traits endure beyond adolescence.

Conflict resolution remains a clear strength. A large majority of former cadets report being able to resolve conflicts often or all of the time. Very few report difficulty in this area. In adult contexts, this capacity supports collaboration, reduces interpersonal friction, and enables constructive disagreement in workplaces and communities.

Figure 21. Percent Reporting Levels of Self-Confidence and Ability to Resolve Peer Conflicts, Former Cadet Respondents

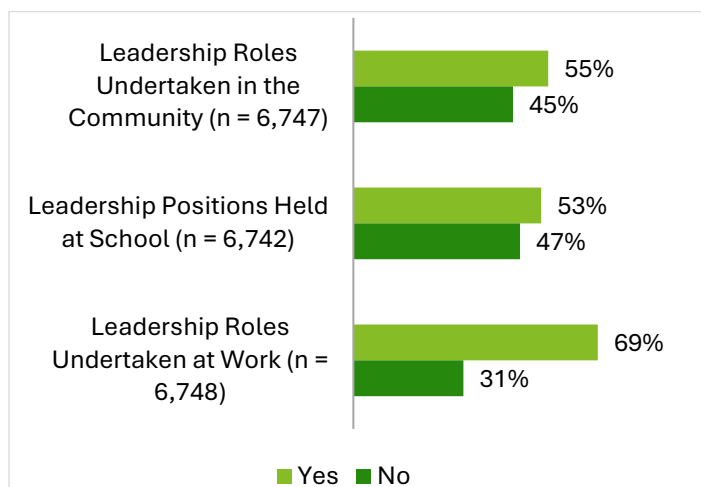


Source: Survey of former cadets.

Leadership activity extends across adult settings. Around half of former cadets report leadership roles in the community and in education settings and 69

percent report leadership roles at work. This pattern suggests that leadership experience gained through the Cadet Program continues to surface where former cadets spend most of their time.

Figure 22. Leadership Experiences, Former Cadet Respondents

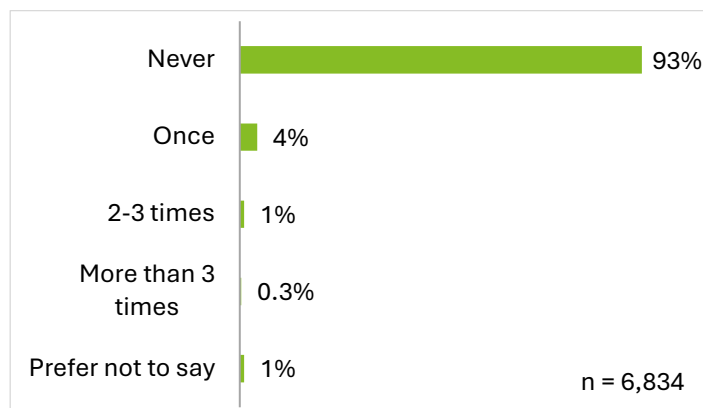


Source: Survey of former cadets.

Alongside leadership outcomes, former cadets report low levels of contact with the criminal justice system. The vast majority, 93 percent, report never having been charged with a crime, with only small proportions reporting one charge or more. Read alongside leadership and conflict-resolution outcomes, the low prevalence of charges forms part of a broader pattern of positive social functioning.

Overall, the former cadet findings show leadership and social competencies that persist across adulthood and express themselves in work, community, and civic life. These outcomes point to long-term value in the skills developed through participation in the Cadet Program.

Figure 23. Number of Interactions With the Justice System, Former Cadet Respondents



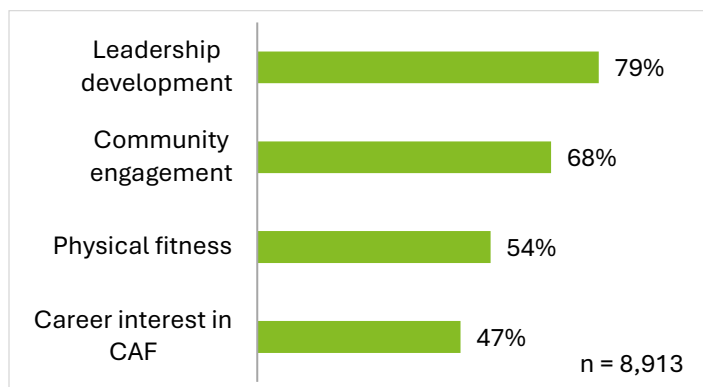
Source: Survey of former cadets.

5.3 Outcomes Observed by Parents/Guardians and Leaders

Parents/guardians and leaders provide two distinct perspectives on CJCR Gp Program outcomes. Parents/guardians observe change at home through daily behaviour, routine, and attitude. Leaders observe change within training, group activity, and formal responsibility. Taken together, parent and leader responses describe a consistent pattern of development for CJCR Gp Program participants. (Note that this section includes responses of parents/guardians and leaders from both the Cadet Program and the JCR Program, as there was a sufficient response rate from these groups).

Leadership development ranks as the most common reason parents/guardians cite for enrolling their child in a CJCR Gp Program at 79 percent. Community engagement follows at 68 percent, physical fitness at 54 percent, and interest in a future CAF career at 47 percent.

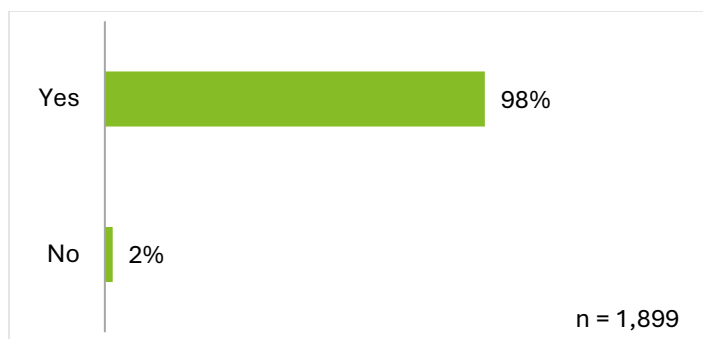
Figure 24. Reasons Parents/Guardians Enrolled Their Child in CJCR Gp Programs (Select All That Apply)



Source: Survey of parents/guardians.

Parent/guardian observations align with these motivations. Forty-seven percent report seeing their child take on leadership roles and close to 60 percent report increased physical activity. This alignment suggests that, from the parent/guardian perspective, the CJCR Gp Programs deliver on their core aims.

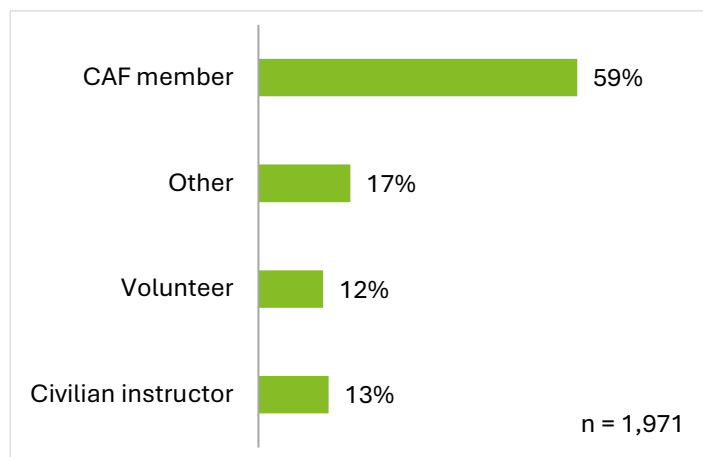
Figure 25. Leaders Recommendation of CJCR Gp Programs to Other Youth or Families



Source: Survey of CJCR leaders.

Leaders bring a different kind of familiarity and perspective with the CJCR Gp Programs. Fifty-nine percent identify as CAF members, with the remainder split among civilian instructors, volunteers, and others.

Figure 26. Leaders Current Role

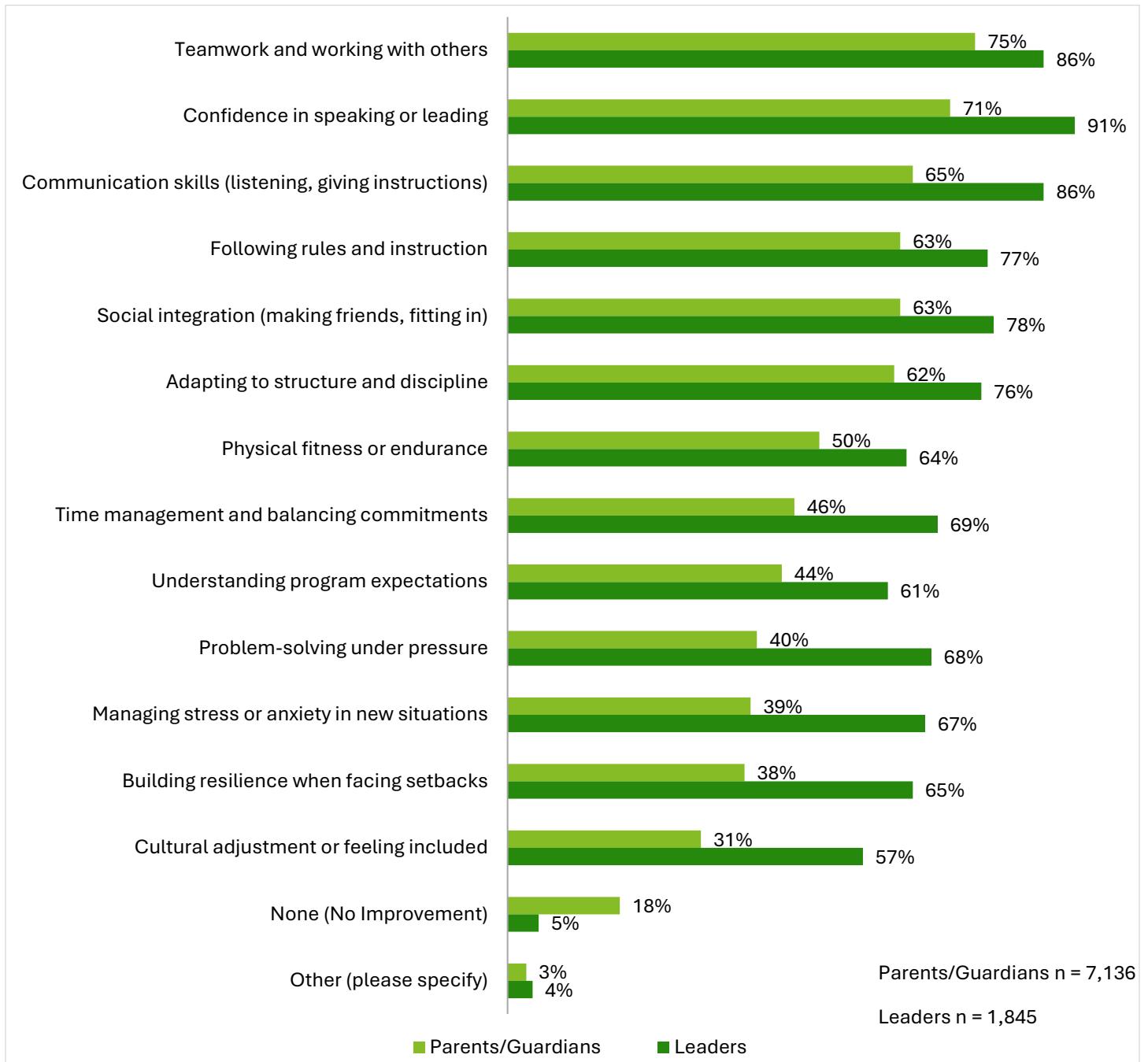


Source: Survey of CJCR leaders.

When examining observed improvement, responses draw from parents/guardians and leaders who reported improvement. Eighty-two percent of parents/guardians report seeing improvement in their children, while 95 percent of leaders report the same. Across all domains, leaders report higher levels of observed improvement than parents/guardians. This pattern likely reflects leaders' proximity to training and evaluation settings.

Interpersonal skills show the strongest concentration of observed change. Increases in teamwork and working with others were observed by 75 percent of parents/guardians and 86 percent of leaders. Increased confidence in speaking or leading was observed by 71 percent of parents/guardians and 91 percent of leaders. Increased communication skills were observed by 65 percent of parents/guardians and 86 percent of leaders.

Figure 27. Areas Where Parents/Guardians and Leaders Observed an Improvement Since Joining CJCR Gp Programs



Source: Survey of parents/guardians and CJCR leaders.

Adherence to structure shows a similar pattern. Parents/guardians report improvement in following rules and instruction at 63 percent and adapting to structure and discipline at 62 percent. Leaders report these areas at 77 percent and 76 percent respectively.

Parents/guardians tend to observe these changes through behaviour at home. Leaders see them during training events, periods of instruction, and leadership taskings.

Increases in self-management skills are not as strong but are still significant. Increased time management was observed by 46 percent of parents/guardians and 69 percent of leaders. Increased ability to manage stress or anxiety in new situations was reported by 39 percent of parents/guardians and 67 percent of leaders. Resilience in the face of setbacks was reported by 38 percent of parents/guardians and 65 percent of leaders.

The smaller improvements appear in inclusion and social integration. Cultural adjustment or feeling included was reported by 31 percent of parents/guardians and 57 percent of leaders. Social integration was reported by 63 percent of parents/guardians and 78 percent of leaders.

Problem-solving under pressure and understanding program expectations follow the same pattern. Parents/guardians report improvements in these at 40 percent and 44 percent, respectively. Leaders report improvements in them at 68 and 61 percent.

Across both parents/guardians and leaders, observed improvement concentrates in teamwork, confidence, communication, and adherence to structure. Leaders report higher levels across every area, likely due to frequent exposure to performance contexts. Parents/guardians observe the same changes carried into home and community life.

An additional perspective is offered by parents'/guardians' reports of feedback from their children's teachers. Forty percent of parents/guardians said their children's teachers report improvement in behaviour since the child joined the CJCR Gp Programs. Thirty-eight percent of parents/guardians say their children's teachers report improvements in school performance.

The changes at school reported by parents/guardians by flow across both behaviour and academic performance. This pattern suggests linked effects between participation in the CJCR Gp Programs and improvement in classroom settings.

Table 4. Parent/Guardian-Reported Improvements at School Since Joining CJCR Gp Programs

	Yes	No
Behaviour (n=8,680)	40%	60%
School Performance (n=8,678)	38%	62%

Source: Survey of parents/guardians and CJCR leaders.

5.4 Impacts on Junior Canadian Rangers

Current Junior Canadian Rangers

Survey results allow for a separate view of current JCRs. A small sample size of responses means it is not appropriate to conduct a statistical analysis of the JCR group. Instead, we summarize this group descriptively below.

JCRs are drawn from remote, northern, and coastal communities across Canada, with British Columbia and Quebec accounting for the largest share of survey respondents. First Nations youth make up the largest proportion of the cohort, with Métis and Inuit youth represented to a lesser degree, and self-identified males outnumbering self-identified females within the group.

Most respondents report sharing or teaching traditional cultural activities during their time as JCRs. These activities include art, music, dance, and drumming, alongside hunting, fishing, traditional sports, trades such as carpentry and cooking, and crafts such as beadwork. Local languages and community history, often shared by Elders and leaders, form part of this practice.

Land-based skills further anchor this experience in the JCR Program. Significant majorities of survey respondents report confidence in core survival skills, including finding safe drinking water, building shelter from available materials, and starting and maintaining fire. Smaller shares report navigation without GPS and comfort moving across unfamiliar terrain. Knots, lashings, and harvesting practices appear to be mastered by fewer JCRs than the other skills.

The passing on of land-based skills and cultural teachings means the JCR Program has effects beyond individual participants. In remote, northern, and coastal communities, where transmission of traditional knowledge faces pressure, a structured program that supports this exchange can help not only with individual skills development but also cultural resiliency.

Former Junior Canadian Rangers

Former JCRs in the survey also represent a small sample size and are drawn primarily from Quebec, with male respondents outnumbering female and very few identifying outside those two categories. Most hold a high school diploma or a college, CEGEP, or trades and apprenticeship credential, with a smaller number having completed a bachelor's degree. The majority are working full-time, consistent with a cohort that has moved into stable adult life.

That stability extends into how former JCR Program participants report their health. Most describe their physical fitness as having improved or held steady, alcohol consumption tends toward low or none, and non-smoking is the most common status, with some describing themselves as former rather than current smokers. These patterns point to a group that, overall, has carried healthy habits into adulthood.

Leadership is also consistent with the above. Many former JCR Program participants describe having taken on leadership roles at work, in their communities, and in everyday situations, suggesting that the habits developed during the JCR Program have been maintained. A portion of respondents also describe having explored or considered a career in the CAF, though this is one of several directions the cohort has taken rather than a defining outcome.

What the data reflects, across employment, health, and community involvement, is a cohort that appears to have settled into active, productive adult lives, with leadership experience woven through much of it.





Section 6: Value for Money, Return on Investment, and Economic Value

The outcome patterns described above provide evidence of differences across multiple domains. Section 6 builds on these findings by translating selected outcome differences into quantified terms. Using a structured and conservative modeling framework, this section estimates impacts across education, productivity, justice system interaction, and alcohol consumption pathways.

Unfortunately, due to low survey response rates, we are unable to provide quantitative analysis of JCR Program outcomes. This section therefore focuses only on the impact and social return on investment of the Cadet Program.

6.1 Broader Economic and Fiscal Returns to Society

6.1.1 Education

As already discussed in section 5.1.1, former cadets demonstrate higher levels of educational attainment than the general Canadian population. In this section, we expand the analysis by controlling for observable demographic characteristics to determine how former cadets' education levels differ from other Canadians with similar demographic characteristics.

Using survey data from former cadets, and adjusting for key demographic factors such as age, gender, and province or territory, we estimated the average level of educational attainment among former cadets across standardized education categories. We then compared these results to Statistics Canada data on educational attainment for Canadians with similar demographic profiles.¹²

This comparison allowed us to estimate the incremental difference in educational outcomes associated with former cadets, (i.e. the additional education attained relative to what would be expected for comparable individuals in the general population).

To translate these differences into monetary-based value, we applied Statistics Canada data for average employment income by age group and highest certificate, diploma, or degree.¹³ By linking higher levels of education to corresponding average earnings, we estimated the income premium associated with the additional education-level observed among former cadets.

Based on this approach, we estimate that the higher levels of education achieved by former cadets are associated with an average annual earnings premium of approximately **\$5,100 per former cadet**.

Projecting these additional earnings over a working-age lifetime results in an estimated lifetime economic benefit ranging from **\$62,500 to \$129,700 per former cadet** attributable to the Cadet Program's association with higher educational attainment.

6.1.2 Productivity

Former cadets report significantly higher employment incomes than would be expected based on their observable demographic characteristics.

Using survey data from former cadets we estimated the average employment income among former cadets who are in the workforce. We then compared these results to Statistics Canada data on average income for working Canadians with similar demographic profiles.¹⁴ We adjusted the comparison data to control for key demographic factors among our survey group: age, gender, ethnicity, highest level of education attained, and region.

This comparison enabled us to estimate the incremental income difference associated with former cadets relative to comparable individuals in the general population. Based on this approach, we estimate that former cadets earn, on average, approximately **\$19,900 more per year** than would be expected given their demographic characteristics. (Note that because we

¹² Statistics Canada. Table: 98-10-0641-01. Highest level of education by visible minority, selected sociodemographic characteristics and the census year: Canada, geographical regions of Canada, provinces and territories and census metropolitan areas with parts

¹³ Statistics Canada. Table: 37-10-0152-01. Average earnings or employment income, by age group and highest certificate, diploma or degree

¹⁴ Statistics Canada. Table: 98-10-0599-01. Employment income statistics by industry groups, visible minority, highest level of education, work activity during the reference year, age and gender: Canada, provinces and territories

have controlled for education in deriving this number, this productivity benefit is *in addition to* the benefits attributed to education in section 6.1.1.).

When projected over a typical working lifetime¹⁵, this annual income premium translates into an estimated lifetime economic benefit ranging from **\$244,800 to \$508,100 per former cadet**.

These higher incomes reflect increased productivity in the workplace as well as cadets' higher propensity to be employed full-time. While our analysis measures the benefit accruing directly to former cadets in the form of higher wages, greater productivity and labour force attachment also generates broader social and economic value benefiting families, communities, employers, and the Canadian economy.

6.1.3 Justice

Former cadets report fewer interactions with the police and the justice system than would be expected based on their observable demographic characteristics.

Among former cadets in our survey, 67 percent reported having no interaction with the justice system since leaving the Cadet Program. Approximately 4 percent reported having been arrested or charged with an offence during or after their time in the Cadet Program, and only 0.5 percent reported more than one such interaction.

To estimate the Cadet Program's impact, we used survey responses and adjusted for key demographic characteristics, including age, gender, and region. Because the survey question captured lifetime police interactions, we converted these responses into annualized estimates. This was done by first calculating the number of years between respondents' current age and age twelve, representing the period

during which such interactions could have occurred. For example, a respondent aged thirty-five would be considered to have twenty-three years during which such interactions could have occurred (thirty-five minus twelve). Self-reported lifetime police interactions were then divided by this time-period difference to estimate comparable annual rates of police interaction across respondents by age, gender, and region.

We then compared these annualized rates to benchmark data from the Canadian Legal Problems Survey (CLPS)¹⁶ for Canadians with similar demographic profiles.¹⁷

Based on this comparison, former cadets are slightly less likely to be arrested or charged than would be expected given their demographic characteristics. Using Public Safety Canada's cost estimate of \$20,457 per arrest,¹⁸ this reduction in arrests equates to an estimated annual cost saving of approximately **\$265 per former cadet**.

Projected over a typical working lifetime, this reduction in justice system interaction corresponds to an estimated lifetime social benefit ranging from approximately **\$3,300 to \$6,800 per former cadet** in reduced justice system costs.

6.1.4 Alcohol

Former cadets report lower levels of alcohol consumption than would be expected based on their demographic characteristics.

Among former cadets in our survey, 48 percent reported consuming no alcohol in a typical week over the past twelve months. A further 39 percent reported consuming between one and three drinks per week, 9 percent reported four to seven drinks per week, and 4

¹⁵ Lifetime estimates are calculated by applying the estimated annual social benefit over illustrative working-life horizons. The lower-bound estimate assumes fifteen years of impact, the midpoint assumes thirty years, and the upper-bound estimate assumes forty-six years, corresponding to the period between ages eighteen and sixty-four.

¹⁶ In 2021, Statistics Canada conducted the Canadian Legal Problems Survey to examine the types of serious legal issues individuals experience, the steps they take to address them, and the effects these challenges have on their lives.

¹⁷ In the 2021 Canadian Legal Problems Survey (CLPS), respondents were asked to report interactions with the justice system that had occurred since 2018. To ensure comparability with our annualized estimates, we converted these cumulative responses into annual rates by dividing the reported figures by three, reflecting the three-year reference period covered by the survey.

¹⁸ Public Safety Canada (2016). Costs of Crime and Criminal Justice Responses 2015-r022-en.pdf

percent reported consuming eight or more drinks per week on average.

Using survey data from former cadets participants and adjusting for key demographic factors, including age, gender, and region, we estimated average weekly alcohol consumption over the past year. We then compared these results to benchmark data from the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) ¹⁹ for Canadians with similar demographic profiles.

Because the CCHS reports drinking frequency (number of drinking occasions) rather than the number of drinks consumed, we applied published estimates from Sherk and Levesque ²⁰ on average weekly alcohol consumption among drinkers aged 15 and older to convert drinking occasions into comparable estimates of weekly drinks.

This comparison allowed us to estimate the incremental difference in alcohol consumption associated with former cadets (i.e. the reduction in alcohol consumption relative to what would be expected for comparable Canadians). Based on this approach, we estimate that former cadets consume **approximately 3.1 million fewer drinks annually than expected.**

To quantify the social value of this reduction, we applied the estimated public net social cost of alcohol consumption from Sherk, ²¹ which places the net public deficit (excluding criminal justice costs) at \$0.144 per standard drink in 2025 dollars. At this rate, the observed reduction in alcohol consumption corresponds to approximately \$61 in annual social cost savings per cadet.

Projected over a lifetime, the associated lifetime social benefit is negligible, ranging from approximately **\$700 to \$1,600 per former cadet.**

6.2 Cadet Program Spending and Participation

6.2.1 Spending and Participation in Recent Years

The table below shows overall spending on the Cadet Program over the past decade. These figures include ongoing operations spending, such as facilities, equipment, transportation, and program delivery; compensation for public servants involved in the Cadet Program; capital spending; grants and contributions to the Cadet Leagues; and compensation costs associated with CAF members who are employed in the delivery of the Cadet Program. For clarity, these spending figures do not include spending on the JCR Program because the benefits calculated in Section 6.1 only cover the Cadet Program.

In real (inflation-adjusted) dollars, program spending has remained relatively steady over the past decade. Spending fell considerably in 2020/21 and 2021/22 owing to the disruption of Cadet Program activities during the COVID-19 pandemic but has since rebounded to slightly below pre-pandemic levels.

¹⁹ The Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) is a cross-sectional survey that gathers information on the health status of Canadians, their use of health care services, and the factors that influence health outcomes.

²⁰ Sherk and Levesque (2025). Alcohol Consumption and Adherence to Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health.

²¹ Sherk (2024). Canada's Alcohol Deficit, 2007-2020: Social Cost, Public Revenue, Magnitudes of Alcohol Use, and the Per-Drink Net Deficit for a Fourteen-Year Period – PubMed.

Table 5. Department Spending and Participation for the Cadet Program

Fiscal Year	Total Department Spending (real 2025 \$)	Number of Cadets Participating During Fiscal Year	Spending Per Participant (real 2025 \$)
2015/16	\$254,089,579	65,756	\$3,864
2016/17	\$249,677,131	66,636	\$3,747
2017/18	\$265,191,455	67,796	\$3,912
2018/19	\$261,561,066	68,387	\$3,825
2019/20	\$266,923,604	68,516	\$3,896
2020/21	\$176,170,227	57,573	\$3,060
2021/22	\$164,777,348	57,592	\$2,861
2022/23	\$198,007,424	60,872	\$3,253
2023/24	\$219,451,781	68,275	\$3,214
2024/25	\$221,329,147	75,326	\$2,938

Note: For comparability with spending data, the “Number of Youth Participating During Fiscal Year” column in the table above counts the number of youth who participated for at least 7 weeks during the indicated fiscal year (April 1 to March 31). Because the fiscal year does not align with the CJCR Gp Program year (which begins in mid-September), these figures will differ from the Programs’ official annual participation numbers. Participant count is based on number of unique individuals who attended for at least 7 weeks during the fiscal year. Department spending is adjusted for inflation using government consumption price deflator, which measures inflation specifically for government spending. Department spending does not include JCR Program.

Source: Department of National Defence, Deloitte analysis.

Over the same period, total participation (the number of people who are registered in the Cadet Program during the fiscal year) has climbed. During the pre-pandemic period, annual participation was in the range of 65,000 to 70,000. Post-pandemic, participation levels now exceed 75,000 per year. The mild decline in overall spending combined with the increase in participation means that program spending per participant has fallen in real terms: from \$3,864 per participant in fiscal 2015/16 to \$2,938 per participant in fiscal 2024/25. Spending per participant is budgeted at \$2,718 for fiscal 2025/26.

Excluding the pandemic-disrupted years and excluding 2025/26 because these figures are budgeted rather than actuals, real spending per participant has averaged approximately \$3,400 since 2015/16.

6.2.2 Total Historical Participation

The Cadet Program has been operating in Canada for many decades, and over this time many Canadians have had an opportunity to take part in the Program.

According to an estimate provided by the DND, 4-5 percent of the Canadian population today - approximately 1.7 million people - have participated in the Cadet Program at some point in their lives. Out of this total, DND estimates that 1.0 million people are of working age and took part in the Cadet Program for at least one year.

6.3 Overall Cost-Benefit and SROI Results

By combining the quantified impact results reported in section 6.1 with details on the costs and participation reported in section 6.2, we can calculate the overall cost-benefit and social return on investment (SROI) of the Cadet Program.

The table below shows the results on an annual basis. The left column shows the results on a per-cadet basis. The benefits in this column align with the per-cadet benefits reported in section 6.1. The program expenditures per cadet reflect an average over the past decade as outlined in section 6.2.

In the right column, we scale the annual benefits up to reflect the 1.0 million former cadets of working age in Canada today. In this column, Cadet Program

expenditures reflect the average annual spending on the program over the past decade, as outlined in section 6.2.

Table 6. Annual Costs and Benefits of the Cadet Program

	Per Cadet Registered	Total All Former Cadets Aged <65
Estimated Benefits		
Education	\$5,100	\$5.1 B
Productivity	\$19,900	\$20.1 B
Justice System	\$265	\$267 M
Alcohol Consumption	\$61	\$61 M
Estimated Costs		
Average Program Spending	\$3,400	\$242 M
Annual Net Benefit	\$22,100	\$25.3 B

Note: Most results rounded to nearest \$100.

Source: Survey of former cadets, Department of National Defence, Statistics Canada, Deloitte analysis.

At the individual cadet level, the annual ongoing benefits outweigh annual program spending per cadet: **we estimate that the annual net benefits at \$25.3 billion.** As a point of comparison, **this is similar to the GDP of Windsor, Ontario.** ²²

This very large benefit is a reflection of a particular dynamic: every year, costs reflect registration that can be measured in the tens of thousands, whereas benefits reflect a pool of former cadets than numbers more than one million. At most, a participant can take part in the Cadet Program from ages 12 to 18. Costs are therefore capped at a maximum of six years per cadet. However, the benefits can potentially accrue over a former cadet's entire working lives, estimated at a maximum length of 46 years (from when they turn 19 to when they retire at 65) in this analysis.

Counting the impacts in this way is an accurate reflection of how those costs and benefits flow through Canadian society in any given year. However,

comparing annual benefits to annual costs in this way may not fully reflect the return on investment of the Cadet Program. Because former participants have already gone through the Cadet Program, they will continue to experience the benefits of their experience regardless of current program funding levels. To calculate a return on investment, we need to more directly link the benefits to the costs incurred to obtain those benefits.

In the table below we take a lifetime perspective on the Cadet Program's benefits and costs. For benefits, we estimate low, medium, and high scenarios based on the number of years over which we count the benefits. At the low end, we use a 15-year duration for benefits to reflect the fact that most of our former cadet survey respondents have graduated from their respective program within the last 15 years. At the high end, we use a 46-year duration to reflect the maximum length of a working life over which the largest benefits –

²² Statistics Canada. Table: 36-10-0468-01. Gross domestic product (GDP) at basic prices, by census metropolitan area (CMA).

education and productivity – could be expected to accrue.

For these lifetime benefits, we apply net present value (NPV) discounting to future benefits. Net present value discounting is a mathematical method of reducing the weight placed on returns further in the future. It is often used in studies of lifetime outcomes to reflect that a benefit today is of greater value than the same benefit obtained in several years' time. We use a real discount rate of 3%, meaning each future year's benefits are discounted by 3% compared to the prior year (after accounting for inflation).

For costs, we multiply the average annual program expenditure per cadet by the average number of years

of participation among our survey respondents: 4.65 years.

Lifetime net benefits per cadet range from \$295,600 in the low scenario to \$630,500 in the high scenario. **Each \$1 spent on the Cadet Program generates a social return on investment between \$19.85 (low scenario) and \$41.15 (high scenario).**

These results demonstrate the deep and long-term social returns on investment the Cadet Program is generating for Canada through their ongoing investments in Canadian youth.

Table 7. Lifetime Accrued Cost-Benefit and SROI of the Cadet Program

	Lifetime Impact per Cadet Registered (Net Present Value)		
	Low (15-year duration)	Medium (30-year duration)	High (46-year duration)
Estimated Benefits			
Education	\$62,500	\$102,600	\$129,700
Productivity	\$244,800	\$402,000	\$508,100
Justice System	\$3,300	\$5,300	\$6,800
Alcohol Consumption	\$700	\$1,200	\$1,600
Estimated Costs			
Average Program Spending	\$15,700	\$15,700	\$15,700
Lifetime Net Benefit	\$295,600	\$495,400	\$630,500
SROI Per \$1 in Program Expenditures	19.85	32.55	41.15

Note: Most results have been rounded to nearest \$100. Low scenario counts benefits from age 19 to 34. Medium scenario counts benefits from age 19 to 49. High scenario counts benefits from age 19 to 64.

Sources: Survey of former cadets, Department of National Defence, Statistics Canada, Deloitte analysis.

6.4 Financial and Economic Returns to the Canadian Armed Forces

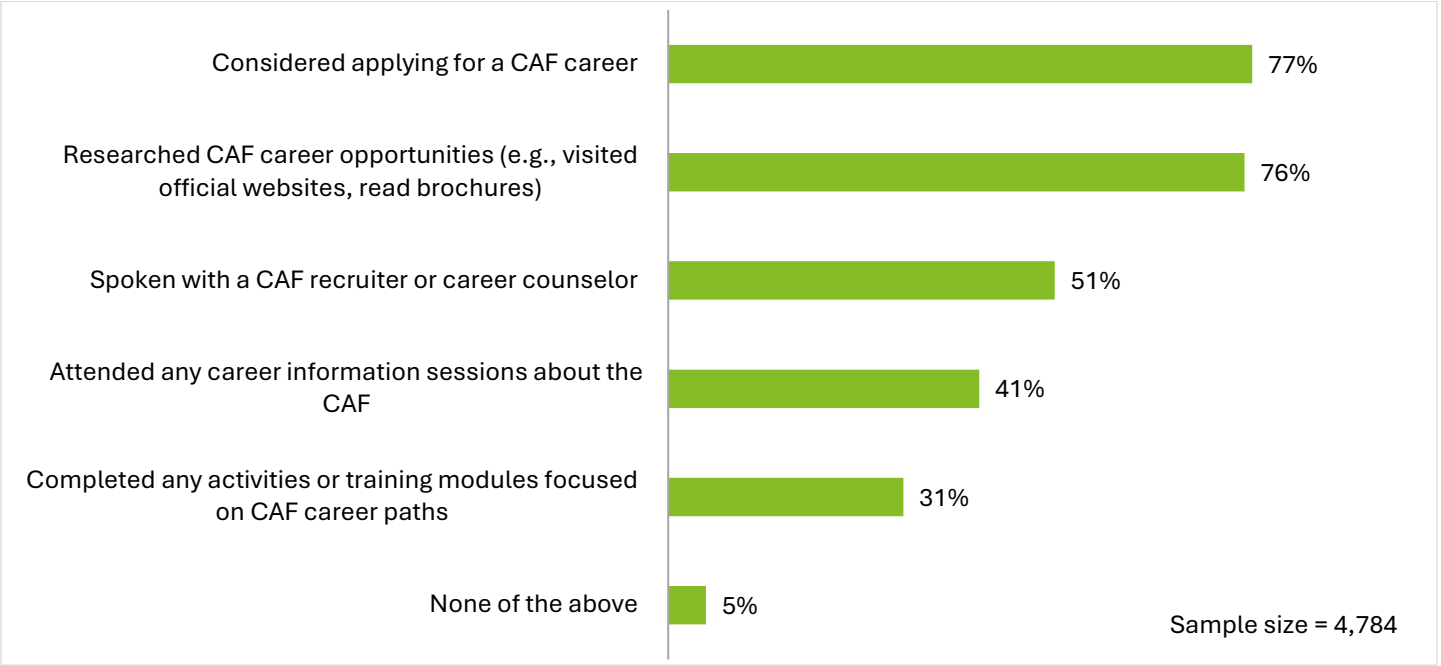
One additional mechanism through which the CJCR Gp Programs provides benefits is by providing a pathway for attraction into the CAF. Although this is not a primary goal of the CJCR Gp Programs, many cadets/JCRs do end up going on to service with the CAF. Survey responses show that a significant majority of former cadets and JCRs have taken part in activities which could lead towards employment in the CAF.

When a cadet or JCR transitions from the CJCR Gp Programs to CAF service, the financial value of this attraction pathway is through reducing the amount that the CAF needs to spend on attracting outside talent. Every year, the CAF spends funds to attract outside talent to CAF service. While there is a lack of recent, publicly available data on these costs, we were able to use the Department of National Defence’s “Evaluation of Recruiting and Basic Military Training” report that

provides figures for fiscal year 2011/12.²³ According to this report, the cost per candidate recruited into the regular and reserve forces had averaged \$8,052 over the prior three years. This spending level is equivalent to \$11,787 per recruit in 2025 dollars. This spending does not include the cost of training the recruits once they join the CAF.

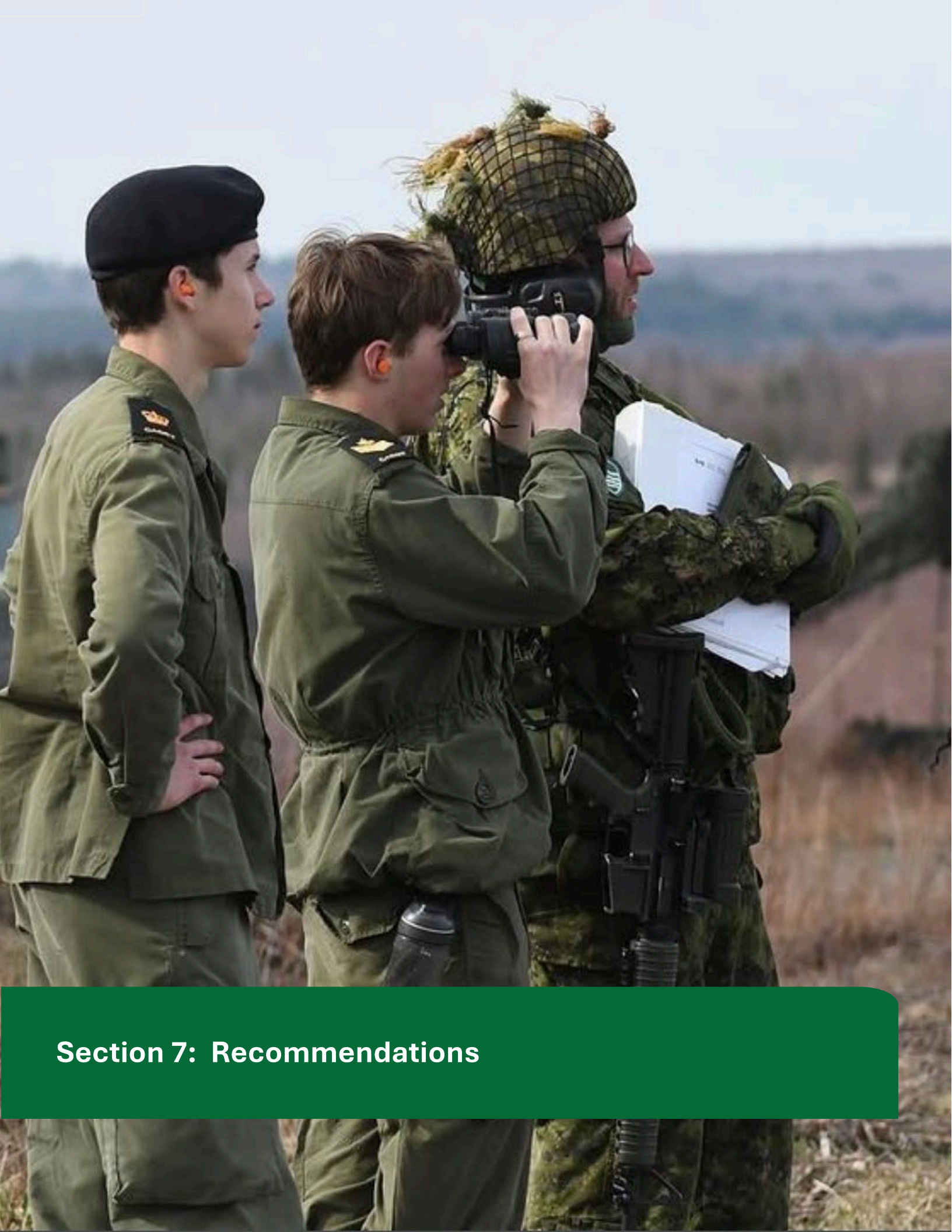
The CAF analyzed datasets of former cadets who participated in the Cadet Program between 2010 and 2025 and compared them with CAF personnel records from 2015 to 2025. The analysis found that 15% (28,980) of CAF personnel who served between 2019 and 2025 were former cadets. This level of attraction represents a benefit valued at \$341.6 million to the CAF. (This estimate excludes individuals who joined the Cadet Program prior to 2010; it also does not include JCRs as similar data is not available for them).

Figure 28: CAF Career Activities Completed by Former Cadets/JCRs



Source: Survey of former cadets, survey of former JCRs.

²³ Department of National Defence, *Evaluation of Recruitment and Basic Military Training* (November 2012).



Section 7: Recommendations

This section builds directly on the preceding discussion of value for money, return on investment, and economic value. The results presented in Section 6 earlier provide a strong indication that the Cadet Program generates meaningful lasting value relative to the resources invested. This section offers recommendations to strengthen future research and evaluation.

Given the very strong, positive SROI results produced by the analysis in Section 6, the Department of National Defence should continue investing in the Cadet Program and in further research to understand the CJCR Gp Programs' benefits to society.

For future research, there are three specific recommendations focusing on data collection:

Longitudinal alumni tracking and linked administrative data

The mechanism and magnitude of the CJCR Gp Programs' benefits could be better understood if the Department of National Defence could collect longitudinal data on outcomes for program participants, and if administrative program data could be linked with this outcomes data.

Many of the outcomes that matter most for public value - such as educational attainment, employment pathways, civic engagement, and longer-term well-being - tend to emerge over time rather than at a single point of observation. For youth programs like the CJCR Gp Programs, which can be expected to teach participants skills they will use for their entire lives, a longitudinal approach provides a more natural and informative way to understand how participation translates into lasting social and economic outcomes.

Evidence from cadet-style and structured youth development programs illustrates what becomes possible when longitudinal designs and linked administrative data are available. Similar work in the United Kingdom has combined qualitative evidence, survey data, and linked administrative records to

strengthen attribution and reduce reliance on self-report alone, including multi-year studies of the social impact and social return on investment of UK Cadet Forces that explicitly adopt a longitudinal perspective.²⁴ These studies highlight that many benefits particularly those associated with qualifications, confidence, and wider life outcomes are cumulative and become clearer over time rather than at a single point of observation.

Broader youth development research reinforces this conclusion. Longitudinal studies of organized activities consistently find that the duration and intensity of participation are linked to later educational, civic, and occupational outcomes. Research on volunteering and civic engagement during adolescence similarly shows associations with later income, education, and health outcomes when analyses are designed to account for selection effects. Though these findings are not directly related to cadet-like programs, this wider evidence base demonstrates that many forms of public return are time-dependent and best demonstrated through longitudinal observation.

Junior Canadian Ranger data collection

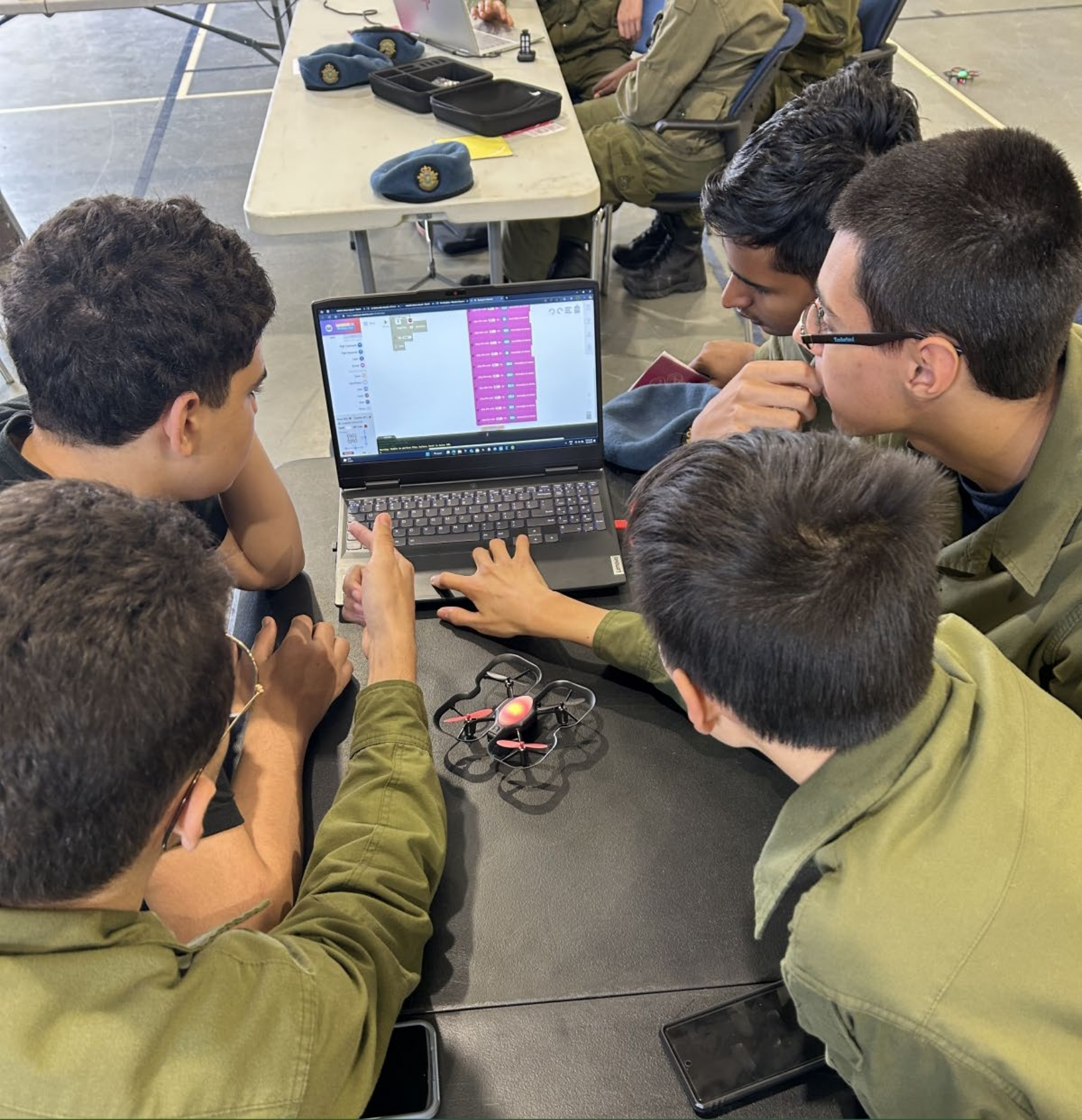
As already discussed earlier in the report, the survey response rate among JCRs was too low to support quantitative analysis of their program experiences and outcomes.

Given the geographic, cultural, and programmatic differences between the JCR and Cadet Programs, it is unlikely that Cadet Program impacts calculated in Section 6 can be extended to JCRs. Further data collection is therefore recommended to be able to provide JCR-specific analysis.

In light of the low response rate to the online survey, future JCR-specific research should focus on other forms of data collection, such as in-person interviews or observation, that may be more effective for this distinct group.

²⁴ University of Northampton, The Social Impact and SROI of Cadet Forces, 2020.





Section 8: Conclusion

This report assesses the social impact and social return on investment of the CJCR Gp Programs using program data, a national survey, and Canadian benchmark comparisons. This data allows for a quantitative analysis of the social return on investment of the Cadet Program, as well as qualitative commentary on the impacts of the JCR Program.

Overall, **the Junior Canadian Rangers Program** appears to support both individual development and community resilience, fostering cultural continuity, land-based skills, and confidence among youth in remote, northern, and coastal communities. Former

participants report carrying these benefits into adulthood through healthy lifestyles, stable employment, and sustained leadership roles, suggesting lasting positive impacts beyond the program period. Unfortunately, a low response rate to the survey means we are unable to quantify the SROI of the JCR Program.

For **the Cadet Program**, the estimated lifetime SROI ranges from \$19.85 to \$41.15 per dollar spent. The largest SROI benefits are found in productivity, followed by education as the second largest contributor.

Table 8. Lifetime Accrued Cost-Benefit and SROI of the Cadet Program

	Lifetime Impact per Cadet Registered (Net Present Value)		
	Low (15-year duration)	Medium (30-year duration)	High (46-year duration)
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Note: Most results have been rounded to nearest \$100. Low scenario counts benefits from age 19 to 34. Medium scenario counts benefits from age 19 to 49. High scenario counts benefits from age 19 to 64.

Sources: Survey of former cadets, Department of National Defence, Statistics Canada, Deloitte analysis.

Former cadets report higher employment income than expected after demographic adjustment. The analysis estimates **this productivity uplift averages \$19,900 more per year per cadet**, with a lifetime social impact in the range of \$244,800 to \$508,100 per cadet.

Former cadets also report higher educational attainment than national benchmarks. **This higher education attainment is worth \$5,100 annually per former cadet in the form of higher earnings**, resulting

in a lifetime social impact benefit in the range of \$62,500 to \$129,700 per cadet.

Justice system interaction shows a lower reported rate among former cadets than expected under benchmark comparisons. **The analysis estimates that former cadets are less likely to be arrested or charged with an offence, and values that difference at \$265 annually per former cadet**, resulting in a social impact benefit of \$3,300 to \$6,800 per cadet over a lifetime.

Health and wellbeing results vary by cohort and measure. Current cadets report high physical activity and low reported alcohol use.

Former cadets report lower alcohol consumption than expected under benchmark conversion, with **the lower level of alcohol consumption worth \$61 per year per cadet**, with a lifetime social impact in the range of \$700 to \$1,600 per cadet.

The qualitative results of the survey demonstrate additional social impacts, such as strong civic and leadership patterns. Current cadets report high participation in community groups and high recommendation rates. Former cadets report volunteering and donating at substantial rates.

Leadership indicators also show positive social impacts across settings. Current cadets report leadership roles inside the program, at school, and in the community. Former cadets report leadership roles at work, in the community, and in education settings.

Parents/guardians and leaders report observed improvement across interpersonal skills, confidence, communication, and adherence to structure, with higher observed rates among leaders. Parents/guardians report that their children's teachers report smaller shares of observed change in behaviour and school performance.

As noted above, the lifetime net benefits per cadet range from \$295,600 in the low scenario to \$630,500 in the high scenario. **Each \$1 spent on the Cadet Program generates a social return on investment between \$19.85 (low scenario) and \$41.15 (high scenario).**

The combined qualitative social impacts and quantitative SROI results jointly demonstrate the deep and long-term social returns on investment the Cadet Program is generating for Canada through their ongoing investments in Canadian youth.





Appendices

A.1 Review of Existing Program Data and Evaluations

Integrated Analysis and Synthesis of Findings

Evidence-Based and Analytical Approach

This analysis draws on multiple CJCR Gp Program and CAF data sources, including administrative participation and staffing data, national surveys, and research. Key sources include CJCR Gp administrative reporting (placemat data), CAF and CJCR Gp workforce surveys, the 2021 Former Cadet Survey, results from the *Your Say Matters* Defence Team Well-Being Survey, and findings from Project Horizon. Together, these sources provide complementary perspectives on participation trends, program outcomes, and workforce sustainability, allowing for a robust synthesis of what the evidence collectively indicates.

Integrated Evidence Overview

Overall, the data indicate that the CJCR Gp Programs are delivering their core youth development objectives and generating enduring benefits for participants and communities.

Three mechanisms emerge repeatedly as central to CJCR Gp Program impact: social belonging, experiential learning, and leadership development. Long-term participation trends reflected in CJCR Gp administrative data are characterized by strong pre-pandemic participation, a sharp decline during periods of disrupted in-person programming, and steady recovery as regular activities resumed align closely with these mechanisms. Conversely, challenges related to workload, administrative burden, and support structures for Cadet Organizations Administration and Training Service (COATS) members consistently emerge as the most significant risks to maintaining delivery capacity over time. The sections that follow examine these themes in greater detail.

Synthesis of Program Evidence: Key Themes

1) Social Belonging and Interpersonal Relationships

Across all qualitative, survey-based, and evaluative evidence, social belonging emerges as the most influential factor shaping participation, engagement, and retention within the CJCR Gp Programs. Youth consistently describe the programs as a social community, emphasizing friendships, peer networks, mentorship from senior cadets/JCRs, and a shared sense of identity as central to their experience. These interpersonal relationships are repeatedly cited as primary reasons for continued participation.

This pattern is reinforced by participation data. National participation levels declined markedly during periods when shared, in-person activities were constrained, with total cadet/JCR registration falling from pre-pandemic levels exceeding 70,000 into the 50,000 range. The post-pandemic has seen participation exceed its previous peaks, coinciding with the restoration of regular training, group activities, and summer programming.

Similar dynamics are evident among COATS members. CAF and CJCR Gp workforce survey data consistently show that unit cohesion, interpersonal relationships, and emotional attachment to the mission of supporting youth are among the strongest predictors of satisfaction and intentions to remain. Even where respondents report high workload or administrative pressures, commitment to colleagues and to youth development frequently offsets attrition risk. Taken together, the evidence indicates that social belonging is not a secondary benefit of the program; it is a foundational mechanism through which both youth and adult engagement is achieved.

2) Experiential Learning and Program Relevance

Experiential learning is consistently identified as central to the perceived relevance and effectiveness of the CJCR Gp Programs. Youth place the greatest value on hands-on activities such as field training, expeditions, travel, summer training, and applied leadership roles, experiences that are distinct from classroom-based learning and not readily available through other youth programs. Conversely, reduced access to these experiences is frequently associated

with disengagement, particularly among older cadets/JCRs facing competing demands from school, employment, or other activities.

For COATS members, experiential relevance is similarly important. Workforce surveys and Project Horizon findings highlight that access to meaningful training and the ability to deliver high-quality, engaging programming are closely linked to satisfaction and retention. Where administrative complexity or resource constraints limit delivery flexibility, member satisfaction declines, even when commitment to the program's mission remains high.

3) Leadership Development and Transferable Skills

Leadership development is one of the most consistently documented outcomes across the evidence base. Cadets/JCRs value opportunities to assume responsibility, mentor peers, and progress into senior roles, and these opportunities are strongly associated with continued participation. Administrative data showing higher retention among senior cadet/JCR cohorts during periods of robust programming further support the importance of leadership pathways.

The 2021 Former Cadet Survey provides particularly strong evidence of enduring leadership and civic outcomes. Compared with age-matched Canadians, former cadets demonstrate substantially higher levels of proactive citizenship, including formal volunteering, civic engagement, and leadership-oriented community involvement. These differences persist across age cohorts, suggesting that the effects of Cadet Program participation extend well beyond the period of active involvement.

Former cadets also exhibit strong outcomes across a range of socio-economic indicators, including education, employment, and income, particularly among older cohorts. While the youngest cohort shows transitional patterns consistent with ongoing education and early career stages, older cohorts demonstrate higher rates of post-secondary attainment, full-time employment, and higher income brackets relative to age-matched peers. Collectively, these findings indicate that leadership and transferable skills

developed through Cadet Program participation have durable impacts that translate into broader life outcomes.

4) Structural and Administrative Pressures Affecting Sustainability

In contrast to the consistency of youth-level outcomes, structural and administrative pressures affecting COATS members are identified across all sources as the most significant risk to long-term sustainability. Workforce surveys and Project Horizon findings consistently highlight unpaid workload, administrative burden, access to training, career progression, recognition, and work-life balance as key drivers of dissatisfaction and attrition risk.

CJCR Gp administrative data provides important context. Despite fluctuations in cadet/JCR participation, national staffing levels and geographic coverage have remained relatively stable over time. This stability appears to have been achieved largely through increased individual workload rather than structural adjustment, aligning with survey findings that point to strain on delivery capacity. Across surveys, COATS members consistently express strong commitment to youth and to program objectives, suggesting that sustainability challenges are systemic rather than motivational.

5) Equity, Access, and Contextual Variation

The evidence also highlights the importance of context and equity in program delivery. Administrative data show persistent regional variation in participation levels, corps/squadron/patrol density, and market penetration, reflecting differences in population distribution, community infrastructure, and local capacity. The JCR Program plays a particularly critical role in remote, northern, and coastal communities, where it provides culturally relevant programming and fills gaps left by the absence of alternative youth development opportunities.

Survey findings indicate relatively stable gender representation and, in some areas, higher satisfaction among female COATS members, while also pointing to



structural factors that influence advancement and retention. Collectively, these findings reinforce that one-size-fits-all approaches are unlikely to be effective, and that flexibility and context-sensitive delivery are essential to sustaining impact.

Summary

Taken together, the evidence from CJCR Gp and CAF data sources presents a coherent and internally consistent picture. The CJCR Gp Programs are delivering meaningful and enduring youth development outcomes, driven primarily by social belonging, experiential learning, and leadership development.

At the same time, structural and administrative pressures affecting the adult workforce appear to be the most significant risk to sustaining program impact over time. Addressing these pressures is therefore central not to improving program relevance, which the evidence shows is already strong, but to preserving the conditions that allow these outcomes to continue to be achieved at scale.



A.2 Comparative and Benchmark Studies

International Jurisdictional Scan of Cadet and Comparable Youth Development Programs

To complement Canadian program data and evaluation findings, a comparative scan was undertaken of cadet and cadet-like youth programs (and closely related youth-development interventions) in peer jurisdictions. The scan is designed to inform outcome selection, evaluation design, and valuation choices for assessing social impact and SROI for CJCR Gp.

Below is a summary of the different relevant reports and analyses for the following jurisdictions:

- United Kingdom
- United States
- Australia
- New Zealand
- Canada

Common themes found across this jurisdictional scan include:

- A lack of the type of data needed to establish causal links between the various programs and social impact or an SROI analysis.
- Generally positive attributions between participation in a youth cadet program (or similar) with increased performance in education, emotional regulation, confidence, and future employability, though not always quantified.
- Participation in a youth cadet program is related to increased interest in a future career in military service.
- More structured cadet programs tend to be related to more positive youth outcomes.
- The longer a person is in the cadet program the more likely they are to experience positive impacts.

United Kingdom



The United Kingdom operates one of the most mature national cadet systems, delivered through both community units and a substantial school-based model. This structure is a close comparator for Canada because it combines structured training, adult leadership, and community contribution with optional service-related pathways, while also producing cadet-specific evidence written for senior policy audiences.

A consistent theme in recent UK reporting is that school-based cadet units are used to widen access to structured youth development opportunities, including in schools serving disadvantaged communities. The University of Northampton's school-based cadet report notes significant growth in school-based units following the Cadet Expansion Program launched in 2012, with nearly 60 percent of school cadet units now in the state sector, often in disadvantaged areas.²⁵

*1) What is the Social Impact and Return on Investment Resulting from Expenditure on the Cadet Forces in the UK? (University of Northampton / ISII, 2021)*²⁶

This report provides an extensive assessment of the social impact and value of the UK Cadet Forces for young people, adult volunteers, and wider society. It was commissioned by the Ministry of Defence and conducted over multiple years, involving engagement with Cadets, adult volunteers, and other stakeholders. It is also supported publicly through government communications that present Cadets as a youth development intervention with broader benefits beyond defence awareness.²⁷

The report itself is structured with a dedicated methodology section and an explicit limitations section. Public government communication about the

²⁵ Denny, S., Hazenberg, R., & Paterson-Young, C. The Impact and Value of School-Based Cadet Forces in the UK (University of Northampton / ISII, March 2025). Available at: <https://www.northampton.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/institute-for-social-innovation-and-impact-cadets-report-2025.pdf>

²⁶ University of Northampton / Institute for Social Innovation and Impact. What is the social impact and return on investment resulting from expenditure on the Cadet Forces in the UK? (Final report, May 2021). Available at: <https://www.northampton.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/social-impact-cadet-forces-uk-2020.pdf>

²⁷ UK Ministry of Defence. Independent report celebrates positive impact of cadet forces (press release, 27 May 2021). Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/independent-report-celebrates-positive-impact-of-cadet-forces>

same body of research describes a four-year university study based on extensive evidence

The report finds improvements in communication and leadership skills, personal resilience, confidence, and the ability to work effectively with a diverse range of people among Cadets and adult volunteers. The same communications link participation to increased social mobility, improved educational outcomes, greater employability, and improved mental and physical wellbeing, with particularly strong community links for those who experience economic or other disadvantages.

The most transferable contribution is the cadet-specific outcome map and valuation logic, rather than any single headline ratio. The UK evidence illustrates how a cadet system can describe outcomes in a structured way that is legible to senior audiences and can be measured year-over-year, while being explicit about assumptions and limitations. This also reinforces a practical standard for defensibility: the stronger the evidence base for an outcome (for example, administrative indicators for education engagement), the easier it is to defend impact and value claims.

*2) The Impact and Value of School-Based Cadet Forces in the UK (University of Northampton / ISII, 2025)*²⁸

This report focuses specifically on school-based Cadet forces and is useful because it treats school-based Cadets as a distinct delivery model rather than assuming the same participation patterns as community units.

The report describes research commissioned by government and Cadet stakeholders and includes evidence gathered from schools and Cadet detachments in school settings. It is designed to inform school leaders and policy audiences about how Cadet

units relate to education and youth development outcomes.

The report states that participation in school-based Cadets can help develop self-confidence, teamwork, leadership, and resilience. It also describes school staff reporting that Cadet units help improve staff–pupil relationships and support student belonging to both school and wider community. UK government communication announcing the report further states that pupils who join Cadets do better at school, have improved attendance and behaviour, and are more likely to go to university, and notes that head teachers surveyed reported positive impacts on pupil resilience.

School-based delivery can increase the feasibility of tracking education outcomes because schools already collect relevant data (attendance, behaviour incidents, completion). This creates clearer options for measurement and interpretation than stand-alone surveys alone. The report also makes a delivery-context point that matters for Canadian reporting: access, retention, and intensity can differ between school-based and community models, so results are clearer when analysed and reported separately, where feasible.

*3) Sea Cadets Impact Report 2023/24 (Marine Society & Sea Cadets, 2023/24)*²⁹

This report provides a practical example of annual impact reporting for a large, distributed youth organisation. It explicitly aims to summarise evidence on how Sea Cadets enhances young people’s lives and to support program improvement and external accountability.

The report describes a regular impact survey completed in winter 2023/24 by 2,324 Cadets, 1,898 volunteers, and 2,184 parents/carers, and it includes a methodology appendix. It also explicitly references the use of validated scales, signalling an effort to measure

²⁸ Denny, S., Hazenberg, R., & Paterson-Young, C. The Impact and Value of School-Based Cadet Forces in the UK (University of Northampton / ISII, March 2025). Available at: <https://www.northampton.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/institute-for-social-innovation-and-impact-cadets-report-2025.pdf>

²⁹ Marine Society & Sea Cadets. Sea Cadets Impact Report 2023/2024 (Impact Survey report). Available at: <https://www.sea-cadets.org/userfiles/files/2025/Sea%20Cadets%20Impact%20Report%202023-24.pdf>

well-being and related constructs using established instruments rather than only ad-hoc questions.

The report states that, in line with previous surveys, Cadets, volunteers, and parents/carers report a wide range of positive impacts, and that results are broadly consistent with the prior year's impact survey. The report is organised into outcome areas including wellbeing, formal education, future prospects, social action, values, and personal development, which provides a useful example of outcome architecture for annual reporting.

While this type of evidence does not establish causal attribution on its own, it demonstrates what “credible annual reporting” can look like when a program is delivered across many sites: stable indicators, clear constructs, transparent limitations, and repeatability over time. These features make annual survey evidence useful for governance and program improvement, particularly where administrative linkage is not feasible in every location.

United States



The United States operates a wide range of Cadet and Cadet-adjacent programs, including large school-based Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) programs, themed Cadet organisations (including maritime programs), and high-intensity re-engagement initiatives for disengaged youth. This diversity provides evidence on both youth development outcomes and education/pathway outcomes that can be measured using administrative data.

*1) The Impact of Army JROTC Participation on School and Career Outcomes (RAND Corporation, 2023)*³⁰

The RAND study was designed to better understand the relationship between participation in Army JROTC and longer-term outcomes, recognising that little was

known about associations between participation and outcomes of importance to schools and the military.

The study combines several evidence inputs: a review of relevant policies and regulations, development of a logic model, interviews with JROTC and school stakeholders, and analysis of individual-level data from programs in Texas and Hawaii. The report explicitly notes that Army JROTC serves more economically disadvantaged schools and students, meaning simple comparisons can be misleading; it therefore uses matched comparisons to account for baseline differences.

Once accounting for differences, the report finds that Cadets who participate in all four years are more likely to graduate, have higher attendance, and have lower suspension rates than matched peers. After high school, these Cadets are less likely to immediately enrol in college and more likely to plan to join the military. The report also states that participation does not “crowd out” STEM electives, with Cadets and non-Cadets enrolling in a similar number of high-school STEM courses.

*2) The Impact of the High School Junior ROTC Program: Does Treatment Timing and Intensity Matter? (Pema & Mehay, 2010)*³¹

This study asks a practical participation question: whether outcomes differ depending on when students join JROTC and how long they remain involved. It describes JROTC as a high school program that combines classroom teaching with extracurricular activities, located primarily in inner-city schools and serving at-risk students, with multidimensional goals that include military preparation and improving academic achievement.

Using High School and Beyond data, the study examines timing and intensity of participation rather than treating participation as a single binary exposure.

³⁰ Zaber, M. A., Lewis, M. W., Wrabel, S. L., et al. The Impact of Army JROTC Participation on School and Career Outcomes (RAND, 2023). Available at: https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1577-1.html

³¹ Pema, E., & Mehay, S. L. The Impact of the High School Junior ROTC Program: Does Treatment Timing and Intensity Matter? (Defence and Peace Economics, 2010). Available at: <https://calhoun.nps.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/5ee186d3-05cc-403d-ae83-9b26c57096ff/content>

The study finds that test scores, graduation rates, and enlistments are higher for students who participate early in high school and for those who persist in the program. It reports few effects for students participating in the last two years of high school.

*3) School-Based Leadership Talent Development: An Examination of Junior ROTC Participation and Postsecondary Plans (Meyer & Rinn, 2022)*³²

This study examines leadership talent development in JROTC and the postsecondary paths participants chose.

The study is qualitative and is based on a self-report survey distributed to graduating seniors enrolled in JROTC in Texas public high schools. The findings highlight themes about leadership development experiences in JROTC and report that students benefitted from opportunities for career-related identity exploration, a culture that supported leadership development, and psychosocial skills coaching.

*4) Annual Cadet Survey 2024 Summary Report (Civil Air Patrol, 2024)*³³

This report summarises the annual Cadet survey and aims to help the program understand its current status and how to improve effectiveness.

The survey is collected exclusively online with invitations via email and ran from 11–31 March 2024. Invited and respondent counts are reported for Cadets aged 13 and above, parents, and adult leaders (4,229 Cadets; 2,607 parents; 1,215 adult leaders). The report also notes that due to age restrictions, about 10 percent of the Cadet corps was excluded, skewing the sample toward older and higher-ranking Cadets.

The report provides descriptive findings on overall satisfaction, participation and interests, and program

implementation topics, and reports survey population characteristics and limitations. This provides a practical template for annual survey reporting: a stable set of questions, transparent documentation of who responded, and clear statement of limitations so results are not over-interpreted.

*5) U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps 2023 Annual Report (U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps, 2023)*³⁴

The annual report describes Sea Cadets as a youth development program that provides leadership development and training opportunities, supported by U.S. sea services.

The report is descriptive program reporting, organised around scale, training opportunities, program narrative, and organisational updates. The report describes the program's mission to build leaders of character and lists training domains (e.g., seamanship, aviation, robotics, medical, culinary, trades, security, international exchange). It notes an ambition to grow beyond “nearly 8,000” Cadets served annually.

*6) A Cost-Benefit Analysis of the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program (RAND Corporation, 2012)*³⁵

This study evaluates the costs and benefits of a residential program coupled with post-residential mentoring aimed at altering the life course of high school dropouts aged 16–18. RAND reports a cost-benefit analysis using effectiveness estimates from a random assignment evaluation and long-horizon modelling.

RAND reports that every dollar invested yields \$2.66 in social benefits and estimates \$25,549 (2010 dollars) in social benefits per admittee. Benefits are projected to accrue mostly as higher lifetime earnings attributable to increased educational attainment.

³² Meyer, M. S., & Rinn, A. N. School-Based Leadership Talent Development: An Examination of Junior ROTC Participation and Postsecondary Plans (Journal for the Education of the Gifted, 2022). Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/01623532211063937>

³³ Civil Air Patrol. Annual Cadet Survey 2024 Summary Report (May 2024). Available at: https://www.gocivilairpatrol.com/media/cms/Annual_Cadet_Survey_24_Summary_Report_ff622d59b9d94.pdf

³⁴ U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps. 2023 Annual Report (Uniquely Prepared). Available at: https://www.dealeydivision.org/uploads/1/3/4/5/134551552/2023_sea_cadets_annual_report.pdf

³⁵ Perez-Arce, F., Constant, L., Loughran, D. S., & Karoly, L. A. A Cost-Benefit Analysis of the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program (RAND, 2012). Available at: https://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/TR1193.html

7) *Social Return on Investment of 401Kids* (Constellation Fund, 2024) ³⁶

This analysis provides preliminary projections for a universal children's savings account approach, framed as a social return on investment exercise.

The analysis states it uses the best available evidence from academic research to estimate prospective economic returns and monetised benefits. It reports that for every dollar invested, society would receive at least \$2.61 in benefits, associated with increased income, improved health, additional tax revenues, and savings to other government sectors, and emphasises that this is conservative because many potential benefits are excluded.

Australia



Australia provides a useful comparator because it combines a national defence Cadet system with a comparatively rich evidence base on outdoor and experiential youth programs. Many outdoor program mechanisms overlap with Cadet activities (structured challenge, teamwork, leadership roles, and physical activity), allowing triangulation for wellbeing and socio-emotional outcomes.

1) *Impacts of Participating in the Australian Defence Force Cadets* (O'Keeffe, 2022) ³⁷

This study examines whether ADF Cadets participation influences Defence Force recruitment efficiency and readiness.

It is a mixed-method approach combining a literature review, policy analysis, and secondary data from Defence recruitment and Cadet participation records,

including comparative analysis of Cadet versus non-Cadet recruits.

It reports that Cadet alumni are more likely to enlist than non-Cadets and that participation may reduce recruitment costs by improving candidate preparedness and lowering attrition during training, while noting that exact dollar figures are not fully quantified. It also states that the work does not directly measure mental, physical, or cognitive health outcomes; youth development benefits such as confidence and resilience are discussed qualitatively rather than through clinical or longitudinal health data.

2) *Department of Defence Annual Report 2019–20 (ADF Cadets)* ³⁸

This is an official performance and accountability report that presents program-level metrics rather than a research study. It draws on administrative records from ADF Cadet units and workforce/youth engagement statistics.

It reports over 26,000 Cadets enrolled nationally across Navy, Army, and Air Force branches and describes emphasis on leadership, teamwork, and resilience, alongside increased participation from regional and Indigenous communities. It also notes that direct health outcome data are not provided, while suggesting indirect links through leadership training and outdoor/adventure activities.

3) *Outdoor Youth Programs Research Alliance – Research Findings Summary* (OYPRA, 2018) ³⁹

This summary synthesises findings from a multi-year outdoor youth research program relevant to Cadet-like activity structures.

³⁶ Diaz, J. Social Return on Investment of 401Kids: Preliminary Projections (Constellation Fund). Available at: https://beatty.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/beatty.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/social_return_constellation_fund_analysis_of_401kids.pdf

³⁷ O'Keeffe, T. Impacts of participating in the Australian Defence Force Cadets on recruiting and retention outcomes (Naval Postgraduate School, 2022). Available at: <https://calhoun.nps.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/7084870d-e7e1-4ab1-a120-c4d96458dce2/content>

³⁸ Australian Department of Defence. Department of Defence Annual Report 2019–20 (ADF Cadets section). Available at: <https://www.transparency.gov.au/publications/defence/departement-of-defence/departement-of-defence-annual-report-2019-20/chapter-6---strategic-workforce-management/adf-cadets>

³⁹ Outdoor Youth Programs Research Alliance. Research findings summary (Outdoors Victoria, 2018). Available at: <https://www.outdoorsvictoria.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/311018-Outdoor-Youth-Programs-Research-Alliance-Research-Findings-Summary.pdf>

It describes a large-scale, multi-year mixed-method approach using quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, with pre- and post-program measurement and longitudinal follow-up. It lists measures including psychological resilience, self-esteem, life satisfaction, activity levels, fitness indicators, teamwork, problem-solving, and leadership skills.

The summary reports improvements in resilience, confidence, and emotional regulation; reduced anxiety and stress; increased physical activity and fitness; enhanced problem-solving and decision-making; and effects that persisted months after program completion.

New Zealand



New Zealand operates the New Zealand Cadet Forces (NZCF) supported by the New Zealand Defence Force and positions youth programs within a broader youth development ecosystem. The evidence base is useful because it combines system-level framing (how defence-supported youth programs fit alongside other youth services) with a Cadet-specific example of social value measurement.

*1) Youth Programs Companion Study to the Defence Review 2009 (New Zealand Ministry of Defence, 2010)*⁴⁰

This study situates defence-supported youth programs within the wider youth development ecosystem and examines the role and contribution of NZDF-supported youth programs, including NZCF.

It is a desk-based review and policy analysis focused on objectives, delivery, and options for strengthening programs.

The companion study reports that youth programs contribute to life skills, resilience, employability, and

personal development, and identifies opportunities to strengthen delivery and expand effective programs.

*2) NZ Cadet Forces Annual Training Program – GoodMeasure Social Impact Assessment (ImpactLab, 2023)*⁴¹

This assessment applies a structured social impact and SROI approach to NZCF annual training. It combines administrative data, academic literature, and financial proxies within an SROI framework. It reports outcomes including confidence, resilience, leadership capability, teamwork, and community engagement and reports a social return of approximately \$2.10 for every dollar invested. This provides a close analogue for Cadet SROI work under data constraints: define outcomes clearly, use mixed sources of evidence, and apply conservative proxies with transparent assumptions.

Canada (non-Cadet, youth focus)



Canadian sources are included to support interpretation and valuation choices in a Canadian policy and socio-economic context. These studies are not Cadet-specific impact evaluations; they are most useful as Canadian anchors for outcome pathways and valuation logic.

*1) Failure to Launch: The Economic and Social Costs of Youth Unemployment and their Long-term Impacts (The King's Trust Canada / Deloitte, 2024)*⁴²

This report provides a socio-economic analysis of youth underemployment and unemployment in Canada and estimates the potential economic and fiscal benefit of improving youth labour-market attachment.

It uses a structural macroeconomic model and is explicit that it is not a program-level cost-benefit

⁴⁰ New Zealand Ministry of Defence. Youth programmes companion study to the Defence Review 2009 (2010). Available at: <https://www.defence.govt.nz/assets/publications/defence-review-2009-released-youth-programmes-companion-study.pdf>

⁴¹ ImpactLab. GoodMeasure social impact assessment: New Zealand Cadet Forces annual training programme (2023). Available at: https://www.cadetnet.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/GoodMeasure_Report_DIGITAL.pdf

⁴² The King's Trust Canada & Deloitte. Failure to Launch: The Economic and Social Costs of Youth Unemployment and their Long-term Impacts (November 2024). Available at: <https://www.kingstrust.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/TKTC-Deloitte-Report-Failure-to-Launch-Final-1.pdf>

analysis; instead, it models economy-wide impacts under a counterfactual scenario.

The executive summary reports that youth unemployment (15–24) reached 14.2 percent in July 2024 and highlights wage scarring as a long-term consequence of early unemployment. It also reports that over 850,000 youth aged 15–29 are neither employed nor in education or training (NEET). Under the modelled scenario, real GDP could increase by \$18.5B by 2034 and add 228,000 jobs, alongside increases in wages/salaries and government revenues.

*2) Social Return on Investment Study (Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada / Boston Consulting Group, 2013/2014)*⁴³

This study was designed to estimate the social return to society from BBBS mentoring, using a comparison group approach and monetised value channels.

It compared life outcomes of 500 former program participants (“Littles”) with a control group of individuals from similar family and economic backgrounds without a mentor relationship. It then estimated the monetary value of differences across employment, philanthropy, life skills, and wellbeing.

The study reports that former participants are projected to earn \$315,000 more over their working lives on average than the comparison group. It reports an average SROI of \$18 per \$1 invested, rising to \$23 per \$1 for the most economically disadvantaged participants. It also reports differences in employment, salaries, volunteering, and charitable giving.

Summary

Across jurisdictions, the strongest results occur when the needed data is available to connect goals, activities, outcomes, and long-term impact. Education and pathway outcomes (for example, attendance, graduation, suspensions, or transitions after school) are most reliably assessed using administrative records that schools and programs already collect.

Development outcomes (for example, leadership, confidence, belonging, resilience, and wellbeing) are more appropriately captured through repeatable youth surveys, meaning the same clearly defined questions are asked over time so results can be compared from year to year. In the few studies that estimate social value or return on investment, the analysis depends on clearly explaining (i) how participation is linked to outcomes and (ii) how selected outcomes are translated into economic value.

A recurring design lesson across the evidence base is that results often vary by the duration and intensity of participation. Short or partial exposure can dilute observable effects, while sustained participation especially where young people progress into leadership roles tends to be associated with clearer and more durable outcomes. This makes it important to track participation over time (years involved, progression, leadership responsibilities, and training milestones) alongside outcomes.

⁴³ Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada & Boston Consulting Group. Social Return on Investment Study (PDF). Available at: <https://bbbscalgary.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/SocialReturnonInvestmentStudy.pdf>

A.3 Best Practices in Measuring Social Impact and Return on Investment

Social return on investment (SROI) is a type of cost–benefit analysis (CBA) applied to social outcomes. It uses the same core logic as any economic appraisal: define scope, measure costs, measure benefits, value benefits, and compare the two.

The challenge with an SROI is not the arithmetic, it is clearly defining and measuring benefits in monetary terms, especially when outcomes sit outside markets (confidence, belonging, resilience, cultural connection) and when program impacts unfold over time.⁴⁴

A.3.1 Foundations: CBA logic and the basic calculation

A robust SROI follows the same logic as any CBA. Analysts identify program costs, identify benefits that occur because of the program, monetize benefits where defensible, discount future values, and compare benefits to costs.⁴⁵

Core metrics include:

- Net Present Value (NPV) equals the present value of benefits minus the present value of costs.
- Benefit-Cost Ratio equals the present value of benefits divided by the present value of costs.
- Many reports present the Benefit-Cost Ratio as the “SROI per \$1 spent.”

Because youth program benefits can accrue over many years, best practice discounts future costs and benefits using a stated discount rate and time horizon, then tests sensitivity to plausible alternatives.⁴⁶

A high-level approach to calculating these results could involve the following steps:⁴⁷

1. Define scope and perspective
2. Identify costs
3. Identify outcome pathways
4. Quantify outcome change
5. Monetize outcomes with unit values (ensuring no double-counting)
6. Apply a discount rate to future benefits
7. Compute NPV or Benefit-Cost Ratio as appropriate
8. Run sensitivity and scenario tests

A.3.2 Theory of change and hypotheses

Best practice starts with a clear theory of change. This maps how inputs and activities plausibly produce short-term outcomes, intermediate outcomes, and long-run impacts, and it states the assumptions required for those links.⁴⁸

From the theory of change, the evaluation should state testable hypotheses that specify the outcome, expected direction, time window, target group, and measurement approach.

A.3.3 Selecting outcomes and indicators

Measure outcomes, not only inputs and outputs. Participation counts and activity logs describe implementation. They do not, on their own, establish impact.⁴⁹

Consider impacts across a variety of domains.⁵⁰ Youth programs may affect education and skills, employment and income, physical and mental wellbeing, risky health behaviours, civic participation, leadership and social skills, and safety and justice contact.

Use validated measures where feasible. For subjective outcomes, best practice uses validated scales or structured recipient-reported outcome measures

⁴⁴ NeuroArts Blueprint Initiative & Deloitte, *NEA Creative Arts Therapies Cost-Benefit Analysis Playbook* (2025).

⁴⁵ NeuroArts Blueprint Initiative & Deloitte, *NEA Creative Arts Therapies Cost-Benefit Analysis Playbook* (2025).

⁴⁶ Deloitte UK, *The shift to prevention: Realising the socio-economic potential* (2025).

⁴⁷ NeuroArts Blueprint Initiative & Deloitte, *NEA Creative Arts Therapies Cost-Benefit Analysis Playbook* (2025).

⁴⁸ Sopact Inc. & Asia Pacific Social Impact Centre, *Actionable Impact Management* (2017).

⁴⁹ Howard Grenville, J., *ESG Impact Is Hard To Measure – But It’s Not Impossible* (2021).

⁵⁰ OECD, *Measuring the Social Performance of Firms Through the Lens of the OECD Well-being Framework* (2021).

developed through testing and psychometric validation.⁵¹

Measure distribution, not only averages. Disaggregate outcomes across relevant groups to assess equity and heterogeneous effects.⁵²

A.3.4 Data requirements: costs and benefits

A defensible SROI requires robust data for both costs and benefits.⁵³

Costs should include direct delivery costs, indirect and overhead costs, and optional in-kind inputs such as volunteer time when the analysis perspective includes them.

Benefits data should align to the theory of change. Where possible, use administrative records or linked datasets⁵⁴ for endpoints such as education, earnings, health utilization, and justice contact. Use surveys to measure outcomes that administrative data do not capture, such as wellbeing and belonging.⁵⁵

A.3.5 Attribution and counterfactuals

The central question in SROI is causal: what changed because of the program relative to what would have happened without it. Best practice uses the strongest feasible design and reports limitations.

Attribution design options form a hierarchy, from most desirable to least desirable:

1. Randomized trials
2. Quasi-experimental designs⁵⁶ such as difference-in-differences, natural experiments, and instrumental variables
3. Matched comparison groups⁵⁷

4. Theory-based contribution analysis when stronger designs are not feasible⁵⁸

Quasi-experimental best practice includes validity checks such as covariate balance, pre-trend tests, and clear discussion of threats such as spillovers and selection.

When attribution adjustments rely on assumptions—deadweight, displacement, attribution to other actors, and drop-off—best practice states assumptions clearly and tests sensitivity.⁵⁹

A.3.6 Monetization and valuation of non-market outcomes

Monetization converts outcome change into monetary value. Best practice uses a tiered approach that starts with defensible endpoints.

Tier 1 relies on market outcomes and avoided public expenditures, such as earnings, reduced health utilization, and avoided justice system costs.

Tier 2 uses shadow prices and proxies, such as the value of volunteer time or caregiver time, with transparent pricing rules.

Tier 3 covers non-market wellbeing valuation using metrics such as QALYs (quality-adjusted life year) or willingness-to-pay and revealed-preference approaches, applied conservatively with clear evidence chains.

Best practice avoids over-precision when measurement bundles behaviours or when benchmarks do not align exactly with survey constructs.^{60, 61}

⁵¹ Kaplan, R. S., & Spitzer, C., *A Better Way to Measure Social Impact* (2024).

⁵² OECD, *Measuring the Social Performance of Firms Through the Lens of the OECD Well-being Framework* (2021).

⁵³ NeuroArts Blueprint Initiative & Deloitte, *NEA Creative Arts Therapies Cost-Benefit Analysis Playbook* (2025).

⁵⁴ Sodini, van Nieuwerburgh, Vestman and von Lilienfeld-Toal, *Identifying the Benefits from Homeownership: A Swedish Experiment* (2023).

⁵⁵ Kaplan, R. S., & Spitzer, C., *A Better Way to Measure Social Impact* (2024).

⁵⁶ Sodini, van Nieuwerburgh, Vestman and von Lilienfeld-Toal, *Identifying the Benefits from Homeownership: A Swedish Experiment* (2023).

⁵⁷ Steele, *How to Measure the Impact of Employee Volunteering* (n.d.).

⁵⁸ Sopact Inc. & Asia Pacific Social Impact Centre, *Actionable Impact Management* (2017).

⁵⁹ Howard Grenville, J., *ESG Impact Is Hard To Measure – But It's Not Impossible* (2021).

⁶⁰ Canadian Institute for Social Prescribing, *A Healthier Canada: An Analysis of the Potential Economic and Social Impacts of Social Prescribing* (2024).

⁶¹ NeuroArts Blueprint Initiative & Deloitte, *NEA Creative Arts Therapies Cost-Benefit Analysis Playbook* (2025).

A.3.7 Double counting and overlap management

Double counting is a primary risk in multi-pathway models. It occurs when the same underlying change is monetized more than once across pathways.

Best practice controls overlap through a causal map, a valuation hierarchy that prioritizes terminal endpoints, and explicit overlap rules that net out shared components.^{62, 63}

A.3.8 Uncertainty, sensitivity, and scenario analysis

SROI results depend on assumptions about effect size, duration, uptake, and unit values. Best practice treats SROI as an estimate with uncertainty.⁶⁴

Recommendations include sensitivity tests for key parameters, scenario ranges (low, medium, high), and clear statements of what the model excludes.⁶⁵

A.3.9 Reporting standards: transparency, replicability, and credibility

A defensible SROI is transparent and replicable.⁶⁶ Readers should be able to identify what data were used, how outcomes were defined, how the counterfactual was estimated, and how monetary values were applied.⁶⁷

Common issues with an SROI analysis include focusing on what is easy to measure, setting narrow system boundaries, and collapsing multi-dimensional outcomes into a single score without transparency. Best practice works to mitigate or avoid these issues altogether.⁶⁸

Self-reported outcome measures reduce blind spots and improve relevance. Best practice develops these measures through recipient interviews, field testing, and psychometric validation.⁶⁹

Credible reports present positive, null, and negative findings and describe limitations and uncertainty.

A.3.10 Summary

Best practice in youth-program SROI treats monetization as the final step. It begins with a clear theory of change, uses outcome measures that match participant experience, applies credible attribution methods, monetizes only what the evidence supports, manages overlap, and reports uncertainty transparently.

⁶² Deloitte Canada, *Alzheimer's Disease & Music Engagement: Quality of Life Economic Impact Analysis* (2025).

⁶³ NeuroArts Blueprint Initiative & Deloitte, *NEA Creative Arts Therapies Cost-Benefit Analysis Playbook* (2025).

⁶⁴ NeuroArts Blueprint Initiative & Deloitte, *NEA Creative Arts Therapies Cost-Benefit Analysis Playbook* (2025).

⁶⁵ Deloitte UK, *The shift to prevention: Realising the socio-economic potential* (2025).

⁶⁶ Sopact Inc. & Asia Pacific Social Impact Centre, *Actionable Impact Management* (2017).

⁶⁷ NeuroArts Blueprint Initiative & Deloitte, *NEA Creative Arts Therapies Cost-Benefit Analysis Playbook* (2025).

⁶⁸ Howard Grenville, J., *ESG Impact Is Hard To Measure – But It's Not Impossible* (2021).

⁶⁹ OECD, *Measuring the Social Performance of Firms Through the Lens of the OECD Well-being Framework* (2021).

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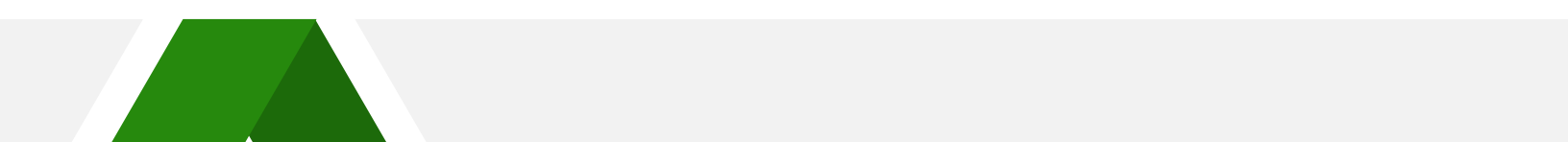
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