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by Allison Leverage and Max Stick

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Abstract

This study compares the employment income trajectories of childhood immigrants (persons admitted to Canada at the age of 17 or younger) who became certified journeypersons through apprenticeship completion or trade qualifiers from 2008 to 2018 with the trajectories of their Canadian-born counterparts. Administrative data from the Longitudinal Immigration Database, the Registered Apprenticeship Information System and the T1 Family File were used to examine annual employment incomes at five time points: four and two years before certification, the year of certification, and two and four years after certification. Descriptive statistics show that childhood immigrants had lower incomes at all time points. The gap widened from approximately \$4,700 four years before certification to about \$8,500 in the year of certification, before narrowing modestly to roughly \$7,800 four years after certification. Trade-level analyses revealed substantial heterogeneity, with higher incomes observed for Canadian-born workers in several industrial and mechanical trades (e.g., heavy-duty equipment mechanics; construction millwrights and industrial mechanics; automotive service technicians, truck and bus mechanics and mechanical repairers; and heating, refrigeration and air conditioning mechanics). In contrast, median incomes were higher for childhood immigrants in selected construction trades (e.g., cabinetmakers, carpenters, painters and decorators, and roofers and shinglers). After accounting for sociodemographic, program, trade and employment characteristics, multivariate analyses show that childhood immigrants earned approximately 9% less four years before certification than Canadian-born journeypersons and about 6% to 7% less at subsequent time points. Multivariate analyses of income progression indicate that childhood immigrants had slightly lower earnings growth two years after certification relative to Canadian-born journeypersons; however, this difference was small and not statistically significant four years after certification. This study may inform policies aimed at supporting skilled trades training pathways, labour mobility and earnings equity with respect to population groups that may encounter challenges in accessing and advancing within the trades.

Keywords: childhood immigrants, journeypersons, trades, labour market, employment income

Authors

Allison Leanage is with the Health Analysis and Modelling Division and Max Stick is with the Economic and Social Analysis and Modelling Division, Analytical Studies and Modelling Branch, at Statistics Canada.

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Introduction

From 1980 to 2023, more than 2 million immigrants arrived in Canada before the age of 18 (henceforth, “childhood immigrants”), representing approximately 20% of the immigrant population (Statistics Canada, 2025a). Many childhood immigrants make considerable contributions to Canadian society and the economy over time, particularly through their educational attainment and labour market participation (Statistics Canada, 2021a). A substantial body of research indicates that childhood immigrants often surpass their Canadian-born counterparts in educational attainment and achieve comparable labour market outcomes overall (Abada et al., 2009; Boyd, 2009; Chen & Hou, 2019; Childs et al., 2017; Finnie & Mueller, 2010; Hou & Bonikowska, 2016; Picot & Hou, 2011, 2013; Picot et al., 2023; Turcotte, 2019). However, they were more likely to pursue university pathways than trade or college-based training (Picot et al., 2023).

In recent years, the Government of Canada has emphasized the importance of expanding career opportunities in the skilled trades (Prime Minister of Canada, 2025), a sector that supports key areas of the economy, such as construction, manufacturing and infrastructure development. While increased admissions of immigrants with skilled trades backgrounds occurred primarily in the late 2000s and early 2010s (Hou et al., 2021), demand for tradespeople has remained high, driven by workforce aging and, in turn, higher retirement rates. As a result, the federal government continues to promote apprenticeship training and participation in the skilled trades as part of its broader workforce development strategy (Government of Canada, 2025a).

Although research examining the labour market outcomes of immigrants in the skilled trades is emerging (Jin & Kopp, 2023; Paul et al., 2026), little is known about apprenticeship certification and earnings among immigrants who were admitted to Canada as children (before the age of 18 years), with recent exceptions (Leanage, 2026; Picot et al., 2023). Examining the economic outcomes of those employed in the skilled trades is vital for understanding workforce recruitment challenges and sustaining economic growth, especially given Canada’s housing crisis (Statistics Canada, 2022a; Government of Canada, 2024b).

There are two primary pathways to becoming a certified journeyperson in the skilled trades in Canada (Jin & Kopp, 2023). The first involves completing a formal apprenticeship program, which combines on-the-job training with technical instruction. The second pathway allows individuals to obtain certification by taking the qualification exam without completing a formal apprenticeship. These individuals are referred to as trade qualifiers.

Regional trends further underscore the importance of examining economic outcomes in the trades over time. Previous research indicates that completing an apprenticeship program can yield earnings comparable to a bachelor’s degree for men in British Columbia (Statistics Canada, 2017). For instance, two years after certification, journeypersons can earn higher median incomes than undergraduate degree holders (\$59,000 versus \$50,900); however, bachelor’s degree holders experience stronger long-term income growth—approximately 25% over five years compared with about 15% among the trades—and typically surpass journeypersons in median earnings over time (Zeman, 2023). In 2023, the median employment income of newly certified journeypersons reached \$58,090 one year after certification, which was the highest median income and year-over-year growth since 2008 (Statistics Canada, 2026). Similar findings were seen in 2022 (Statistics Canada, 2023a).

In this context, examining the labour market outcomes of childhood immigrants in skilled trades is essential for assessing their labour market experiences and for identifying potential barriers to progression, including earnings inequalities that would be captured over time. Because childhood immigrants typically complete their early education (kindergarten to Grade 12) within the Canadian education system, their labour market experiences may differ from those of adult immigrants. Specifically, childhood immigrants may be less likely to face challenges related to foreign credential recognition, as

they are more likely than adult immigrants to have completed secondary school in Canada,¹ and may have fewer language barriers, greater awareness of Canadian systems and stronger networks. Consequently, comparing childhood immigrants with Canadian-born apprentices can help reveal whether differences in earnings and career progression persist, independent of issues such as credential recognition that sometimes affect adult immigrants. Canadian immigration policy has primarily emphasized adult admissions in response to labour market needs associated with population aging and workforce demand (Government of Canada, 2025b). At the same time, recent demographic trends and changes to immigration planning levels have increased interest in the long-term labour market integration of individuals who arrived in Canada as children (Government of Canada, 2024b). By focusing on childhood immigrants, this study provides new evidence on how integration into the skilled trades unfolds over time and reveals distinct earnings trajectories relative to Canadian-born journeypersons. These findings may be used to inform research and policy discussions related to apprenticeship and skilled trades pathways, labour market integration, workforce inclusion, and earnings inequality.

Apprenticeship training in Canada is often perceived as “lower in status” than university education (Lehmann et al., 2014). However, less is known about childhood immigrant pathways in becoming journeypersons and subsequent economic trajectories. Previous work by Leanage (2026) has begun to address this knowledge gap. It found that childhood immigrants represented 4% to 5% of registered apprentices but were less likely to obtain certification and become journeypersons than their Canadian-born counterparts. This was the case both before and after accounting for sociodemographic, employment and trade-related characteristics. The analysis further identified immigrant-specific factors—such as age at arrival (those arriving as adolescents) and parental admission category (families admitted under family sponsorship or refugee programs)—associated with a lower likelihood of certification.

While earlier work by Leanage (2026) highlights disparities in certification, certification represents only one stage of childhood immigrants’ integration into skilled trades careers. Less is known about how childhood immigrants fare economically as they transition to journeyperson status and whether income disparities emerge, narrow or persist over time. Building on this research, the present study extends the literature on childhood immigrant integration in the labour market by examining longitudinal employment income throughout the transition to journeyperson status among childhood immigrants, compared with Canadian-born journeypersons. Using integrated administrative data, the study assesses earnings four and two years before certification, the year of certification, and two and four years after certification to examine differences in income levels and trajectories over time. It addresses two research questions:

1. How do median employment incomes before, at and after certification² compare between childhood immigrant and Canadian-born journeypersons? Do any differences persist after accounting for sociodemographic, program and employment characteristics?
2. How do individual earnings progressions compare between childhood immigrant and Canadian-born journeypersons? Do any differences persist after accounting for sociodemographic, program and employment characteristics?

This longitudinal analysis identifies when income disparities between groups arise and whether these differences decrease, remain stable or grow as individuals transition to journeyperson status. By focusing on childhood immigrants, the study provides insights into how their integration into the skilled trades unfolds over time, highlighting distinct earnings patterns compared with Canadian-born journeypersons.

1. Previous research suggests that approximately 92% of childhood immigrants complete high school in Canada (Chen & Hou, 2019; Turcotte, 2019). This distinction is important, as it suggests that childhood immigrants are more likely to complete their schooling within Canada, while adult immigrants may be more likely to have obtained their education abroad. This may be associated with differences in how educational credentials are recognized in the Canadian labour market.

2. Median employment incomes were calculated longitudinally at five points relative to certification for individuals certified in selected trades: four years before certification, two years before certification, the year of certification, two years after certification and four years after certification.

The findings contribute valuable information for researchers and policy makers interested in apprenticeship and skilled trades pathways, labour market integration, workforce inclusion, and earnings inequality.

Data

The Education and Labour Market Longitudinal Platform (ELMLP) is a secure data environment that integrates longitudinal administrative data. This study used data from the 2023 Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB) integrated with the 2023 Registered Apprenticeship Information System (RAIS) and tax information from the T1 Family File (T1FF). These datasets within the ELMLP environment allow researchers to examine past cohorts of students and apprentices to better understand their career trajectories over time (e.g., labour market outcomes such as employment income and interprovincial mobility).

The IMDB is an administrative database combining landing records (1980 to 2023) and T1 tax records (1980 to 2022) of immigrants. The main IMDB data files contain limited economic information on immigrant children given that the propensity to file taxes is lower among children in general. To partially address this gap, the 2023 IMDB Children Data module was developed, allowing researchers to examine how childhood socioeconomic conditions (specifically for children aged 17 or younger at the time of admission) affect economic outcomes later in life (Statistics Canada, 2024). For this analysis, the sample was restricted to children aged 17 or younger at the time of admission.³

The 2023 RAIS is an administrative dataset containing annual information on registered apprentices in Canada from 2008 to 2023.⁴ It provides information on apprentices who received training and obtained certification⁵ in a trade,⁶ as well as information on personal characteristics (e.g., sex,⁷ age and immigrant status). This study examines individuals who became certified from 2008 to 2018 in both apprenticeship and trade qualifier pathways, comparing their median employment incomes at five key stages relative to certification: (1) four years before certification, (2) two years before certification, (3) the year of certification, (4) two years after certification and (5) four years after certification.⁸ The trades of journeypersons were classified using five-digit 2021 National Occupational Classification (NOC) codes to identify the trade in which individuals were certified.⁹ While these codes capture the certified trade, they do not necessarily reflect the occupations from which employment earnings were derived at each time point. Analysis was further restricted to 19 trades in which certification was available across all

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3. Adult immigrants were excluded from the analysis because they may enter trades through economic immigration streams emphasizing pre-migration work experience and credentials—such as the Federal Skilled Worker Program—resulting in employment trajectories that differ from apprenticeship-based pathways completed in Canada (see Statistics Canada [2023c]).
 4. The RAIS annual reporting year is from January 1 to December 31.
 5. The process for obtaining journeyperson certification varies across Canada. According to Statistics Canada (2023a), “requirements for granting a certificate vary by jurisdiction in Canada. In most cases, apprentices are issued a certificate when they fulfill such requirements as supervised on-the-job training, technical training and passing one or more examinations. Trade qualifiers, meanwhile, become certified once they pass an examination.”
 6. Approximately 10% of individuals in the analytical sample obtained more than one certification from 2008 to 2018, including 6% within the same trade (five-digit 2021 National Occupational Classification code) and 4% across different trades. To ensure a consistent unit of analysis, individuals with multiple certifications were assigned their first observed certification within the study period.
 7. Sex refers to whether the apprentice is a male or female in the RAIS database.
 8. Cohorts of journeypersons who became certified from 2008 to 2018 were examined to maximize the use of the available data from 2008 to 2022, given that longitudinal employment and earnings outcomes are observed up to four years following certification.
 9. The NOC is a classification of occupations designed primarily for use in statistical programs to analyze and communicate information about occupations.

provinces and territories to ensure consistency across jurisdictions, according to the Ellis Chart (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2025). Journeypersons were grouped into six regions: Atlantic, Prairies, Quebec, Ontario, British Columbia and the territories.

Employment information was obtained by integrating the RAIS with the T1FF.¹⁰ Employment income was calculated as the sum of annual earnings reported on T4 slips, self-employment income, other employment income and Indian exempt employment income. Estimates include only individuals who filed taxes in all five corresponding tax years; individuals with missing income information at any time point were excluded (Statistics Canada, 2023b).^{11,12}

Following previous research emphasizing the role of working conditions during apprenticeship training—such as wages and access to employment-related benefits—in shaping apprenticeship outcomes (Jin et al., 2020), the analysis incorporates several employment-related characteristics. Union membership and workplace pension plan participation were coded as binary indicators at each time point—four and two years before certification, the year of certification, and two and four years after certification—based on any positive contribution amount in the corresponding year. Labour market attachment was measured by the number of industries in which individuals worked during the registration year, categorized as no industry reported, one industry, two industries, or three or more industries, based on employers' three-digit North American Industry Classification System codes.

To capture the longitudinal employment income outcomes of journeypersons, this study follows the standards outlined by Statistics Canada (2023b), the Canadian Apprenticeship Longitudinal Indicators public dashboard (Statistics Canada, 2025c) and other outputs (see Statistics Canada [2021b, 2025c]). While this study does not measure interprovincial mobility¹³ using the same time intervals as those in the dashboard (one and three years after certification), the same conceptual definition was applied to examine mobility two and four years after certification.

Methods

The study compares two groups of journeypersons: childhood immigrants and Canadian-born individuals. The results are presented in several stages. First, descriptive statistics summarizing sociodemographic, program and employment characteristics are shown in Table 1.¹⁴ Overall differences in median employment income between childhood immigrant and Canadian-born journeypersons were then examined across the certification trajectory—two and four years before certification, the year of certification, and two and four years after certification—in Chart 1, followed by a trade-specific median employment income comparison in Table 2.¹⁵ The progression of median employment income two and four years after certification is presented by immigrant status in Chart 2 and by trade in Table 3. Chart 3 reports interprovincial mobility rates among childhood immigrant and Canadian-born journeypersons

10. As Su & Jin (2023) have noted in their study, “data on income is based on reported tax returns, which do not include occupation or account for full-time or part-time status and is vulnerable to inaccurate or missing data due to incorrect reporting and non-filing.”

11. Approximately 95% of the population is matched to at least one year in the T1FF (Statistics Canada, 2025b).

12. Despite 95% of the population being matched to at least one record, the proportions of tax filers for all five years ranged from 71% to 81%, depending on the cohort (see Statistics Canada [2025c]).

13. Interprovincial mobility was analyzed by comparing the province of certification with the province of residence or employment reported in tax records at each time point (Statistics Canada, 2025c).

14. As this study uses administrative population data from the RAIS and the ELMLP, formal significance tests were not conducted for descriptive comparisons. Reported percentages represent population distributions rather than sample estimates. However, for all regression analyses, statistical significance was reported.

15. The trades reported throughout this study were based on the minimum count to be released.

following certification. Multivariate analyses are shown in Table 4,^{16,17} which reports ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models estimating differences in log annual earnings¹⁸ between childhood immigrant and Canadian-born journeypersons across the five time points relative to certification. These models estimate log annual earnings accounting for sociodemographic, program, trade and employment characteristics. Finally, Table 5 presents OLS regression models examining income changes two and four years after certification by childhood immigrant status before and after accounting for covariates.

Table 1a

Sociodemographic characteristics of journeypersons aged 18 to 54 who became certified from 2008 to 2018, by immigrant status (n=263,570)

	Immigrant status	
	Childhood immigrants	Canadian-born individuals
	percentage	
Immigrant status		
Total	3.2	96.9
Sociodemographic characteristics		
Sex		
Female	14.2	10.3
Male	85.8	89.7
Marital status		
Married	51.9	45.3
Other	48.1	54.7
Region		
Atlantic	F	7.1
Quebec	5.3	21.7
Ontario (reference category)	46.8	28.5
Prairies	26.9	29.1
British Columbia	20.1	13.4
Territories	F	0.3
	numeric	
Age at certification		
Median age	29	29

F too unreliable to be published

Sources: Statistics Canada, Longitudinal Immigration Database and Education and Labour Market Longitudinal Platform, 2023.

16. Using integrated administrative data, standard errors are clustered at the trade level to account for correlated income outcomes arising from shared wage-setting institutions and collective agreements within trades.

17. As a robustness check, the models were also estimated clustering standard errors at the provincial level. The substantive results remained unchanged.

18. Employment income was log-transformed because of the positively skewed distribution of income values. This helps reduce the influence of extreme values and improve model estimation.

Table 1b

Program, income and employment characteristics of journeypersons aged 18 to 54 who became certified from 2008 to 2018, by immigrant status (n=263,570)

	Immigrant status	
	Childhood immigrants	Canadian-born individuals
	percentage	
Program characteristics		
Received credits for pre-registration training		
Yes	57.8	64.7
No (reference category)	42.3	35.3
Program duration		
One year	5.6	3.7
Two years	15.8	9.6
Three years	12.3	22.8
Four years	50.8	49.8
Five years	15.4	14.1
Trade		
Auto body collision, refinishing and glass technicians and damage repair estimators	3.3	1.4
Automotive service technicians, truck and bus mechanics and mechanical repairers	25.7	10.6
Cabinetmakers	0.5	0.8
Carpenters	4.6	15.0
Electricians (except industrial and power system)	16.9	19.4
Cooks	6.8	3.7
Glaziers	0.4	0.7
Hairstylists and barbers	14.4	7.9
Heavy-duty equipment mechanics	2.9	4.9
Construction millwrights and industrial mechanics	3.3	6.0
Insulators	0.6	0.7
Machinists and machining and tooling inspectors	2.1	1.5
Painters and decorators (except interior decorators)	0.7	1.3
Plumbers	5.5	5.9
Heating, refrigeration and air conditioning mechanics	3.0	3.2
Roofers and shinglers	0.6	1.3
Sheet metal workers	1.3	2.6
Steamfitters, pipefitters and sprinkler system installers	2.9	6.0
Welders and related machine operators	4.3	7.3

F too unreliable to be published

Sources: Statistics Canada, Longitudinal Immigration Database and Education and Labour Market Longitudinal Platform, 2023.

Table 1b

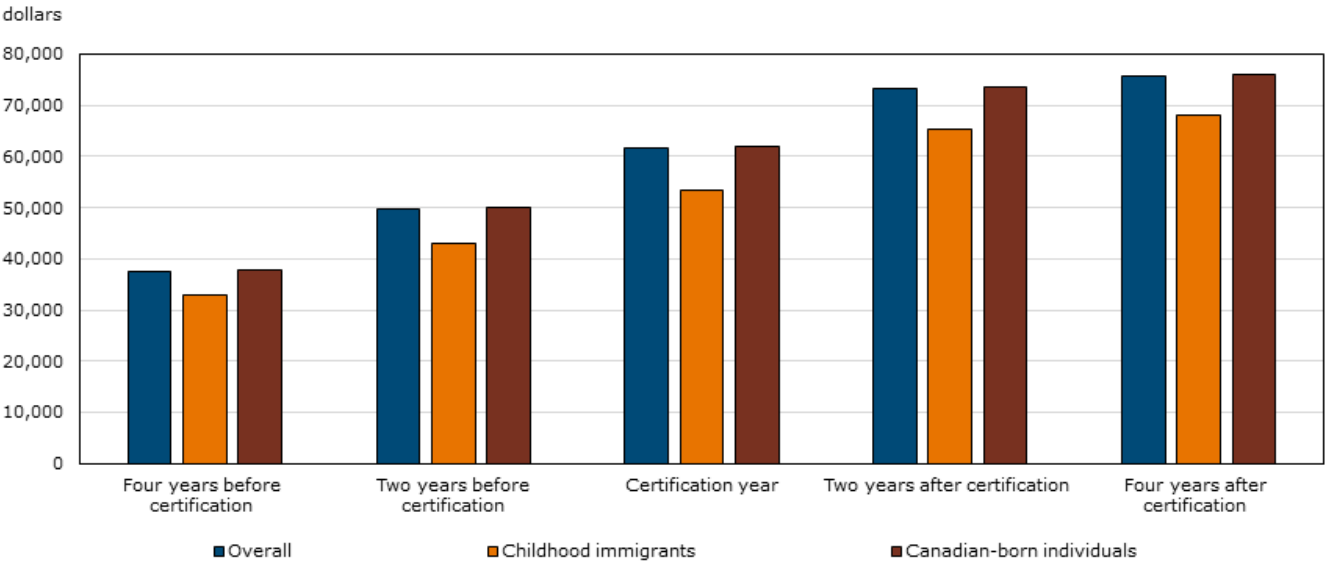
Program, income and employment characteristics of journeypersons aged 18 to 54 who became certified from 2008 to 2018, by immigrant status (n=263,570) (continued)

	Immigrant status	
	Childhood immigrants	Canadian-born individuals
	percentage	
Income and employment characteristics		
Union membership in registration year		
Yes	33.3	46.0
No	66.7	54.0
Number of industries worked in registration year		
No industries reported	11.5	8.2
One	68.4	69.6
Two	15.5	16.6
Three or more	4.7	5.7
Registered pension plan		
Yes	16.1	29.7
No	83.9	70.3
Interprovincial mobility		
Yes	4.0	5.6
No	96.0	94.4
Year of certification		
2008	7.1	8.3
2009	7.3	8.8
2010	9.2	9.4
2011	9.1	10.0
2012	9.3	9.5
2013	9.2	10.1
2014	9.1	9.0
2015	9.1	8.9
2016	9.8	8.7
2017	9.6	8.4
2018	11.2	9.0

F too unreliable to be published

Sources: Statistics Canada, Longitudinal Immigration Database and Education and Labour Market Longitudinal Platform, 2023.

Chart 1
Median employment incomes of journeypersons aged 18 to 54 years before, at and after certification, by immigrant status



Sources: Statistics Canada, Longitudinal Immigration Database and Education and Labour Market Longitudinal Platform, 2023.

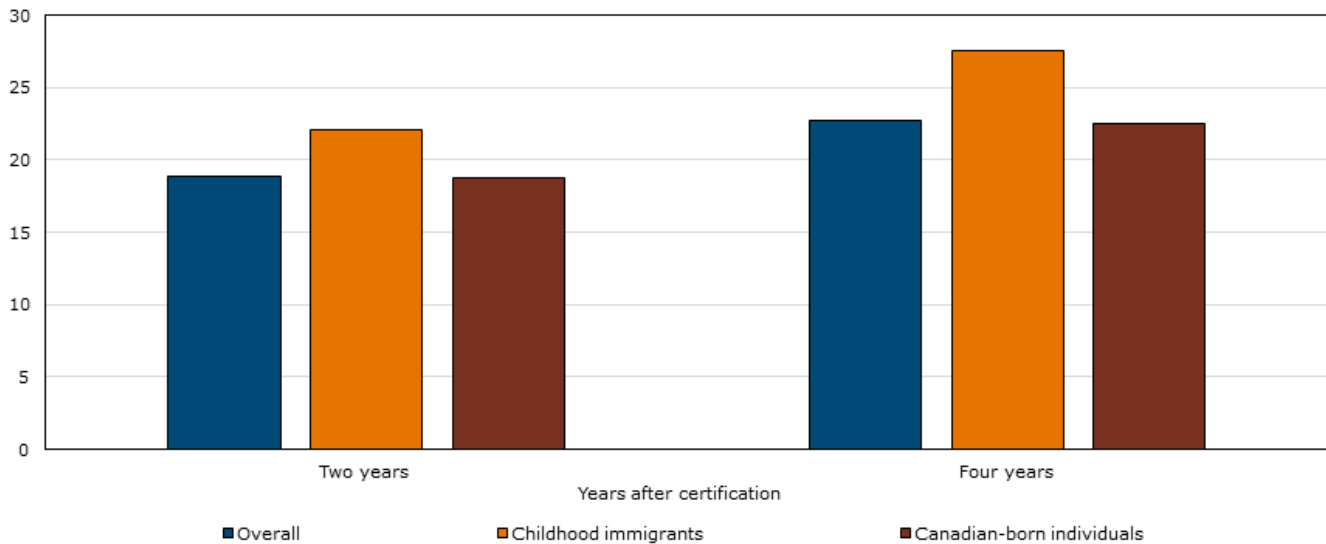
Table 2
Median employment income of journeypersons who became certified from 2008 to 2023 four years before, two years before, the year of, two years after and four years after certification, by immigrant status and trade

	Immigrant status									
	Four years before certification		Two years before certification		Certification year		Two years after certification		Four years after certification	
	Childhood immigrants	Canadian-born individuals	Childhood immigrants	Canadian-born individuals	Childhood immigrants	Canadian-born individuals	Childhood immigrants	Canadian-born individuals	Childhood immigrants	Canadian-born individuals
	dollars									
Trade										
Auto body collision, refinishing and glass technicians and damage repair estimators	34,300	34,800	43,800	43,300	54,800	53,000	63,200	63,900	69,200	67,400
Automotive service technicians, truck and bus mechanics and mechanical repairers	29,300	34,200	38,400	43,600	50,700	55,500	67,200	69,400	72,500	73,800
Cabinetmakers	36,500	34,200	42,500	38,900	47,000	42,700	56,200	46,400	53,100	49,400
Carpenters	38,300	34,500	47,900	44,900	57,300	55,800	66,800	63,500	69,900	66,300
Electricians (except industrial and power system)	39,500	39,200	51,800	52,800	66,700	69,300	83,900	85,500	86,900	86,800
Cooks	19,900	24,800	31,900	32,500	38,200	37,200	42,200	41,900	44,800	44,900
Glaziers	44,400	45,000	56,700	58,800	67,500	70,900	70,000	77,800	81,500	78,100
Hairstylists and barbers	13,600	12,600	17,600	17,000	22,900	24,500	21,700	24,300	21,200	23,600
Heavy-duty equipment mechanics	48,900	56,200	68,200	74,900	83,900	93,100	99,300	109,800	103,300	112,100
Construction millwrights and industrial mechanics	57,700	63,000	66,800	74,600	78,400	85,900	93,100	100,900	103,800	105,000
Insulators	45,500	48,000	60,600	63,500	76,500	84,200	89,800	93,100	94,500	91,200
Machinists and machining and tooling inspectors	42,600	43,500	50,900	53,200	63,800	61,600	75,100	72,400	75,300	75,400
Painters and decorators (except interior decorators)	34,800	32,000	44,200	41,300	56,500	51,400	59,800	56,000	61,800	58,100
Plumbers	39,300	40,200	51,400	51,600	64,600	64,600	76,600	78,800	78,200	80,300
Heating, refrigeration and air conditioning mechanics	43,000	45,700	59,700	61,500	71,000	78,200	87,400	90,800	90,500	92,100
Roofers and shinglers	35,700	31,300	44,900	40,500	53,800	51,100	67,400	56,500	60,700	58,600
Sheet metal workers	45,500	42,100	58,800	53,400	68,900	67,200	79,000	79,800	82,500	81,000
Steamfitters, pipefitters and sprinkler system installers	53,000	50,600	67,300	67,000	82,300	83,100	95,500	92,200	94,600	93,500
Welders and related machine operators	42,200	40,700	56,300	54,700	67,300	64,200	78,500	77,500	81,000	79,000

Sources: Statistics Canada, Longitudinal Immigration Database and Education and Labour Market Longitudinal Platform, 2023.

Chart 2**Progression of median employment income two and four years after certification, by immigrant status**

percent



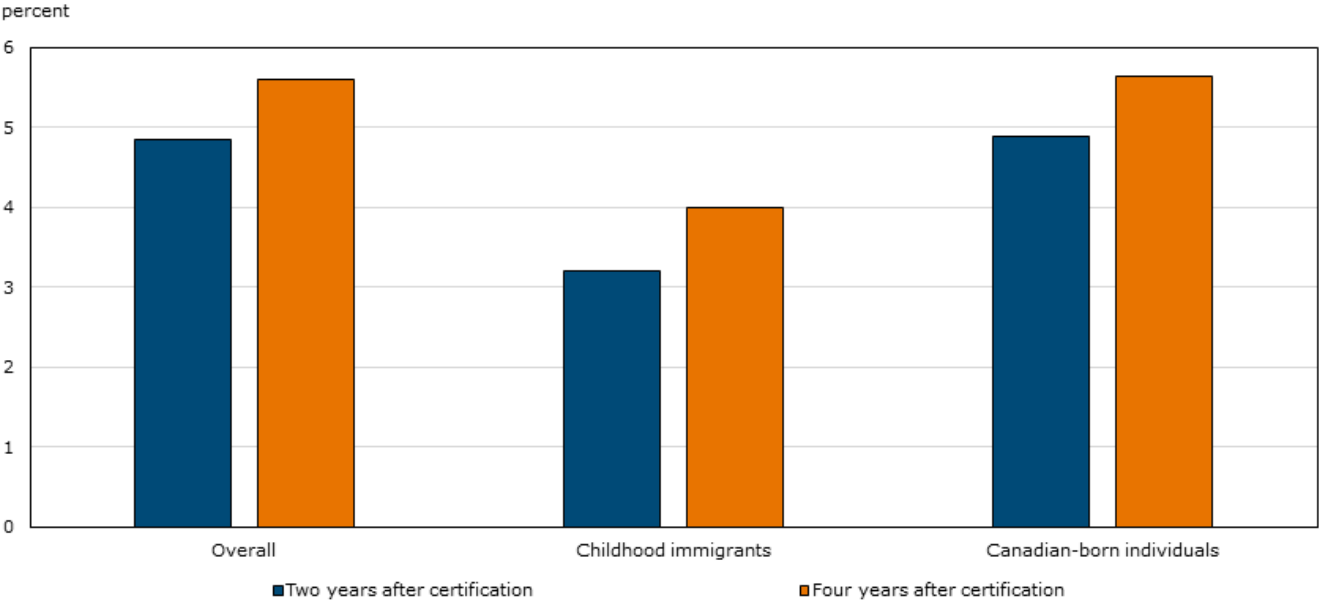
Sources: Statistics Canada, Longitudinal Immigration Database and Education and Labour Market Longitudinal Platform, 2023.

Table 3**Progression of median employment income two and four years after certification among journeypersons who became certified from 2008 to 2018, by immigrant status and trade**

	Progression of median employment income			
	Two years after certification		Four years after certification	
	Childhood immigrants	Canadian-born individuals	Childhood immigrants	Canadian-born individuals
	percentage			
Trade				
Auto body collision, refinishing and glass technicians and damage repair estimators	15.9	20.1	26.1	26.3
Automotive service technicians, truck and bus mechanics and mechanical repairers	32.5	24.7	42.8	32.5
Cabinetmakers	19.5	7.9	12.8	13.4
Carpenters	16.6	13.6	22.0	18.4
Electricians (except industrial and power system)	25.8	23.2	30.3	25.1
Cooks	10.6	12.0	17.2	19.3
Glaziers	3.7	9.7	20.8	10.0
Hairstylists and barbers	-5.1	-1.1	-7.5	-3.9
Heavy-duty equipment mechanics	18.3	17.7	23.0	20.1
Construction millwrights and industrial mechanics	18.8	17.3	32.4	21.7
Insulators	17.4	10.2	23.5	7.7
Machinists and machining and tooling inspectors	17.8	17.4	18.0	22.1
Painters and decorators (except interior decorators)	5.8	8.2	9.4	10.5
Plumbers	18.7	21.6	21.1	23.9
Heating, refrigeration and air conditioning mechanics	23.1	15.6	27.5	16.9
Roofers and shinglers	25.3	10.1	12.8	14.3
Sheet metal workers	14.6	18.5	19.7	20.3
Steamfitters, pipefitters and sprinkler system installers	16.0	10.5	15.0	11.6
Welders and related machine operators	16.6	20.3	20.3	22.5

Sources: Statistics Canada, Longitudinal Immigration Database and Education and Labour Market Longitudinal Platform, 2023.

Chart 3
Interprovincial mobility two and four years after certification, by immigrant status



Sources: Statistics Canada, Longitudinal Immigration Database and Education and Labour Market Longitudinal Platform, 2023.

Table 4
Ordinary least squares regression of log earnings among journeypersons who became certified from 2008 to 2018

	Four years before certification		Two years before certification		Certification year		Two years after certification		Four years after certification	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
	coefficient	coefficient	coefficient	coefficient	coefficient	coefficient	coefficient	coefficient	coefficient	coefficient
Immigrant status										
Childhood immigrants	-0.18 **	-0.09 **	-0.17 **	-0.06 *	-0.16 **	-0.06 ***	-0.15 *	-0.07 ***	-0.13	-0.06 ***
Sociodemographic characteristics										
Age										
Age	...	0.15 ***	...	0.04 **	...	0.01	...	0.00	...	0.00
Age squared	...	0.00 ***	...	0.00 **	...	0.00 *	...	0.00	...	0.00
Sex										
Female	...	-0.24 ***	...	-0.22 ***	...	-0.20 ***	...	-0.29 ***	...	-0.33 ***
Male (reference category)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Marital status										
Married (reference category)	...	-0.01	...	0.02	...	0.03	...	0.03	...	0.04
Other	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Region										
Atlantic	...	-0.18 ***	...	-0.06	...	-0.06	...	-0.04	...	-0.05
Quebec	...	-0.30 ***	...	-0.20 **	...	-0.12 *	...	-0.20 **	...	-0.21 **
Ontario (reference category)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Prairies	...	0.25 ***	...	0.24 ***	...	0.26 ***	...	0.23 ***	...	0.17 ***
British Columbia	...	0.04	...	0.09 *	...	0.14 **	...	0.12 **	...	0.13 **
Territories	...	0.32 ***	...	0.35 ***	...	0.34 ***	...	0.34 ***	...	0.31 ***
Program characteristics										
Received credits for pre-registration training										
Yes	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
No (reference category)	...	0.01	...	0.04 **	...	-0.01	...	-0.01	...	-0.01
Program duration										
One year	...	-0.07	...	-0.14	...	-0.14	...	-0.12	...	-0.12
Two years	...	0.03	...	0.01	...	0.03	...	-0.04	...	-0.01
Three years	...	0.00	...	0.03	...	0.02	...	-0.04	...	-0.06
Four years (reference category)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Five years	...	0.07	...	0.04	...	0.05	...	0.07	...	0.07

... not applicable

* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)

** significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.01$)

*** significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.001$)

Notes: Controls for the year of certification are not shown. The top 5% of income earners were excluded from the analysis, along with individuals with incomes of zero or less.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Longitudinal Immigration Database and Education and Labour Market Longitudinal Platform, 2023.

Table 4
Ordinary least squares regression of log earnings among journeypersons who became certified from 2008 to 2018 (continued)

	Four years before certification		Two years before certification		Certification year		Two years after certification		Four years after certification	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
	coefficient	coefficient	coefficient	coefficient	coefficient	coefficient	coefficient	coefficient	coefficient	coefficient
Trade										
Auto body collision, refinishing and glass technicians and damage repair estimators	...	-0.09 *	...	-0.11 ***	...	-0.13 ***	...	-0.13 ***	...	-0.08 **
Automotive service technicians, truck and bus mechanics and mechanical repairers	...	-0.05 *	...	-0.06 **	...	-0.07 ***	...	-0.06 **	...	-0.03
Cabinetmakers	...	-0.04	...	-0.13 ***	...	-0.26 ***	...	-0.27 ***	...	-0.23 ***
Carpenters	...	-0.05 *	...	-0.10 ***	...	-0.18 ***	...	-0.17 ***	...	-0.14 ***
Electricians (except industrial and power system)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Cooks	...	-0.32 ***	...	-0.33 ***	...	-0.43 ***	...	-0.44 ***	...	-0.38 ***
Glaziers	...	0.07 *	...	0.07 **	...	0.01	...	-0.04	...	-0.04
Hairstylists and barbers	...	-0.69 ***	...	-0.82 ***	...	-0.71 ***	...	-0.69 ***	...	-0.65 ***
Heavy-duty equipment mechanics	...	0.27 ***	...	0.30 ***	...	0.27 ***	...	0.23 ***	...	0.23 ***
Construction millwrights and industrial mechanics	...	0.25 ***	...	0.28 ***	...	0.20 ***	...	0.18 ***	...	0.20 ***
Insulators	...	0.11 ***	...	0.15 ***	...	0.21 ***	...	0.10 ***	...	0.10 ***
Machinists and machining and tooling inspectors	...	0.08 ***	...	0.09 ***	...	0.00	...	-0.03 **	...	0.00
Painters and decorators (except interior decorators)	...	-0.21 ***	...	-0.23 ***	...	-0.23 ***	...	-0.25 ***	...	-0.22 ***
Plumbers	...	-0.01	...	-0.02	...	-0.05 ***	...	-0.06 ***	...	-0.04 ***
Heating, refrigeration and air conditioning mechanics	...	0.08 ***	...	0.15 ***	...	0.16 ***	...	0.14 ***	...	0.14 ***
Roofers and shinglers	...	-0.07	...	-0.12 *	...	-0.21 ***	...	-0.26 ***	...	-0.24 ***
Sheet metal workers	...	0.04 *	...	0.02	...	-0.01	...	-0.02	...	-0.02
Steamfitters, pipefitters and sprinkler system installers	...	0.17 ***	...	0.18 ***	...	0.13 ***	...	0.06 ***	...	0.06 ***
Welders and related machine operators	...	-0.01	...	-0.01	...	-0.06	...	-0.02	...	0.01
Income and employment characteristics										
Union membership in registration year										
Yes	...	0.17 ***	...	0.19 ***	...	0.17 ***	...	0.20 ***	...	0.19 ***
No (reference category)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Number of industries worked in registration year										
No industries reported (reference category)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
One	...	0.69 ***	...	0.72 ***	...	0.91 ***	...	1.06 ***	...	1.12 ***
Two	...	0.64 ***	...	0.68 ***	...	0.86 ***	...	1.01 ***	...	1.08 ***
Three or more	...	0.63 ***	...	0.64 ***	...	0.85 ***	...	0.99 ***	...	1.06 ***
Registered pension plan										
Yes	...	0.20 ***	...	0.14 ***	...	0.18 ***	...	0.17 ***	...	0.19 ***
No (reference category)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...

... not applicable

* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)

** significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.01$)

*** significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.001$)

Notes: Controls for the year of certification are not shown. The top 5% of income earners were excluded from the analysis, along with individuals with incomes of zero or less.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Longitudinal Immigration Database and Education and Labour Market Longitudinal Platform, 2023.

Table 5
Ordinary least squares regression of log income progression among journeypersons who became certified from 2008 to 2018

	Two years after certification				Four years after certification			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 1		Model 2	
	regression coefficient	standard error	regression coefficient	standard error	regression coefficient	standard error	regression coefficient	standard error
Immigrant status								
Childhood immigrants	0.01	0.02	-0.01 *	0.00	0.03	0.02	-0.01	0.01
Sociodemographic characteristics								
Age								
Age	...	...	-0.01 *	0.00	...	...	-0.01 *	0.00
Age squared	...	...	0.00	0.00	...	...	0.00	0.00
Sex								
Female	...	...	-0.11 **	0.02	...	...	-0.15 ***	0.02
Male (reference category)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Marital status								
Married (reference category)	...	...	-0.02 **	0.01	...	...	-0.02 **	0.01
Other	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Region								
Atlantic	...	...	0.03 **	0.01	...	...	0.03 *	0.01
Quebec	...	...	-0.05 **	0.01	...	...	-0.04 **	0.01
Ontario (reference category)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Prairies	...	...	0.01 **	0.01	...	...	-0.10 ***	0.02
British Columbia	...	...	0.01	0.01	...	...	-0.01	0.01
Territories	...	...	0.02	0.02	...	...	-0.08 *	0.03
Program characteristics								
Received credits for pre-registration training								
Yes	...	...	0.00	0.01	...	...	0.00	0.01
No (reference category)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Program duration								
One year	...	...	0.01	0.03	...	...	0.02	0.04
Two years	...	...	-0.07 *	0.03	...	...	-0.04	0.03
Three years	...	...	-0.05 **	0.01	...	...	-0.07 **	0.02
Four years (reference category)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Five years	...	...	0.03 *	0.01	...	...	0.08 **	0.16

... not applicable

* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)

** significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.01$)

*** significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.001$)

Notes: Controls for the year of certification are not shown. The top 5% of income earners were excluded from the analysis, along with individuals with incomes of zero or less.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Longitudinal Immigration Database and Education and Labour Market Longitudinal Platform, 2023.

Table 5

Ordinary least squares regression of log income progression among journeypersons who became certified from 2008 to 2018 (continued)

	Two years after certification				Four years after certification			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 1		Model 2	
	regression coefficient	standard error	regression coefficient	standard error	regression coefficient	standard error	regression coefficient	standard error
Trade								
Auto body collision, refinishing and glass technicians and damage repair estimators	...	...	-0.04 ***	0.01	...	...	0.00	0.01
Automotive service technicians, truck and bus mechanics and mechanical repairers	...	...	-0.01	0.01	...	...	0.02 **	0.01
Cabinetmakers	...	...	-0.09 ***	0.01	...	...	-0.05 ***	0.01
Carpenters	...	...	-0.04 ***	0.01	...	...	-0.02 *	0.01
Electricians (except industrial and power system)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Cooks	...	...	-0.05 ***	-0.05	...	...	0.01	0.02
Glaziers	...	...	-0.08 ***	-0.08	...	...	-0.07 ***	0.01
Hairstylists and barbers	...	...	-0.10 **	-0.10	...	...	-0.12 **	0.03
Heavy-duty equipment mechanics	...	...	-0.02 ***	-0.02	...	...	0.00	0.01
Construction millwrights and industrial mechanics	...	...	0.01 **	0.01	...	...	0.05 ***	0.00
Insulators	...	...	-0.11 ***	-0.11	...	...	-0.11 ***	0.01
Machinists and machining and tooling inspectors	...	...	-0.06 ***	-0.06	...	...	-0.02 **	0.01
Painters and decorators (except interior decorators)	...	...	-0.05 ***	-0.05	...	...	-0.01	0.01
Plumbers	...	...	-0.05 ***	-0.05	...	...	-0.05 ***	0.00
Heating, refrigeration and air conditioning mechanics	...	...	-0.04 ***	-0.04	...	...	-0.04 ***	0.00
Roofers and shinglers	...	...	-0.08 ***	-0.08	...	...	-0.08 ***	0.02
Sheet metal workers	...	...	-0.02 ***	-0.02	...	...	-0.03 ***	0.00
Steamfitters, pipefitters and sprinkler system installers	...	...	-0.07 ***	-0.07	...	...	-0.06 ***	0.01
Welders and related machine operators	...	...	0.01	0.01	...	...	0.05 *	0.02
Income and employment characteristics								
Union membership in registration year								
Yes	...	...	-0.01	0.01	...	...	-0.04 **	0.01
No (reference category)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Number of industries worked in registration year								
No industries reported (reference category)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
One	...	...	-0.32 ***	0.04	...	...	-0.39 ***	0.05
Two	...	...	-0.28 ***	0.04	...	...	-0.35 ***	0.05
Three or more	...	...	-0.28 ***	0.05	...	...	-0.35 ***	0.05
Registered pension plan								
Yes	...	...	-0.07 ***	0.01	...	...	-0.08 ***	0.01
No (reference category)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...

... not applicable

* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)** significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.01$)*** significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.001$)**Notes:** Controls for the year of certification are not shown. The top 5% of income earners were excluded from the analysis, along with individuals with incomes of zero or less.**Sources:** Statistics Canada, Longitudinal Immigration Database and Education and Labour Market Longitudinal Platform, 2023.

Results

Tables 1a and 1b present the characteristics of journeypersons aged 18 to 54 who became certified from 2008 to 2018 by immigrant status. Among certified journeypersons, 3% were childhood immigrants, and the remaining 97% were born in Canada.

There were some notable sociodemographic differences between childhood immigrant and Canadian-born journeypersons. Women comprised a larger share of childhood immigrant journeypersons (14%) than of Canadian-born journeypersons (10%). Childhood immigrants were also more likely to be married at the time of certification (52% versus 45%). In terms of geographic distribution, childhood immigrants were more likely to be residing in Ontario (47%) and British Columbia (20%), whereas Canadian-born journeypersons were more likely to be distributed across other regions, with larger shares in Quebec (22%) and Atlantic Canada (7%).

There were also some notable differences in program characteristics. Among journeypersons, childhood immigrants were less likely than Canadian-born individuals to have received credits for pre-registration training (58% versus 65%). Program duration varied across both groups, with childhood immigrants more likely to complete two-year programs (16% versus 10%) and less likely to complete three-year programs (12% versus 23%), while completion of four- and five-year programs was similar between groups. Childhood immigrants were more likely to be in several service and automotive-related trades, including

automotive service technicians, truck and bus mechanics and mechanical repairers (26% versus 11%); hairstylists and barbers (14% versus 8%); and cooks (7% versus 4%). In contrast, Canadian-born journeypersons were more concentrated in construction and industrial trades such as carpenters (15% versus 5%), welders and related machine operators (7% versus 4%), construction millwrights and industrial mechanics (6% versus 3%), and heavy-duty equipment mechanics (5% versus 3%).

Differences were also evident in employment characteristics between childhood immigrant and Canadian-born journeypersons. Childhood immigrants were less likely to be in unionized jobs (33% versus 46%) and substantially less likely to have a workplace pension plan (16% versus 30%).¹⁹ Patterns of labour market attachment were broadly similar, although childhood immigrants were slightly more likely to report no industry attachment in the registration year (12% versus 8%). Interprovincial mobility was uncommon for both groups, although marginally lower among childhood immigrants (4% versus 6%).

Chart 1 presents median employment income for childhood immigrant and Canadian-born journeypersons at four and two years before certification, the year of certification, and two and four years after certification. At every stage, childhood immigrants had lower median employment incomes than their Canadian-born counterparts. Before certification, the gap between the two groups widened steadily—from approximately \$4,700 four years before certification to about \$6,800 two years prior—reaching a peak difference of roughly \$8,500 in the year of certification. Although the difference decreased somewhat after certification, childhood immigrants continued to earn less, on average, than their Canadian-born counterparts at all five time points, with the largest gap observed in the year of certification.

Table 2 presents the same information as Chart 1 but disaggregated by certified trade and reported median income. However, the certified trade may not necessarily reflect individuals' occupation at each observed time point.²⁰ Across the five points, income trajectories varied considerably by trade, revealing distinct patterns between Canadian-born and childhood immigrant journeypersons. In several trades—including automotive service technicians, truck and bus mechanics and mechanical repairers; heavy-duty equipment mechanics; construction millwrights and industrial mechanics; and heating, refrigeration and air conditioning mechanics—Canadian-born individuals consistently had higher median employment incomes than childhood immigrants. The largest and most persistent gap was observed among heavy-duty equipment mechanics, where Canadian-born journeypersons earned approximately \$6,700 to \$10,500 more than childhood immigrants across all time points. In contrast, childhood immigrants consistently had higher median employment incomes in other trades, including cabinetmakers, carpenters, painters and decorators (except interior decorators), roofers and shinglers, and welders and related machine operators, with income advantages observed before and after certification. The largest median employment income gaps for childhood immigrants were observed among roofers and shinglers (approximately \$2,000 to \$11,000) and cabinetmakers (about \$2,200 to \$9,800), followed by welders and related machine operators (roughly \$4,800 to \$9,900). These results are important, as the aggregate income gap observed in Chart 1 masks considerable trade-level heterogeneity, highlighting that income disparities are driven by specific trades rather than reflecting uniform differences.

19. This finding aligns with research showing that the average value of immigrants' registered pension plans is lower than that of the Canadian-born population (Schimmele et al., 2026)

20. Although childhood immigrants represent a smaller share of workers in some trades, the number of observations within each trade remains sufficiently large to support reliable estimates.

Chart 2 shows the progression of median employment income²¹ for childhood immigrant and Canadian-born journeypersons two and four years after certification. Two years after certification, median employment income growth was 17% for childhood immigrants, compared with 15% for Canadian-born individuals. Four years after certification, median employment income growth was 21% for childhood immigrants and 19% for Canadian-born individuals. Median employment income growth was modestly higher among childhood immigrants in both post-certification periods. However, as shown in Table 2, these results vary by immigrant status and trade.

Table 3 presents the same information as Chart 2 but disaggregated by certified trade and reported median income progression. The progression of median employment income generally increased across most trades following certification. An exception was observed among hairstylists and barbers, where childhood immigrants experienced negative income progression at both time points, while Canadian-born journeypersons experienced modest growth two years after certification, followed by a slight decline four years after certification. Post-certification income progression varied substantially by trade and immigrant status. In several trades, childhood immigrants experienced stronger employment income growth than Canadian-born individuals two and four years after certification. These included automotive service technicians, truck and bus mechanics and mechanical repairers; cabinetmakers; carpenters; electricians (except industrial and power system); cooks; construction millwrights and industrial mechanics; insulators; heating, refrigeration and air conditioning mechanics; and steamfitters, pipefitters and sprinkler system installers. The largest differences in median employment income progression between childhood immigrant and Canadian-born journeypersons were observed among insulators; cabinetmakers; and automotive service technicians, truck and bus mechanics and mechanical repairers. In these trades, childhood immigrants showed gains that were approximately 7% to 8% higher two years after certification and 10% to 15% higher four years after certification. In contrast, Canadian-born journeypersons experienced greater median employment income progression in trades such as auto body collision, refinishing and glass technicians and damage repair estimators; sheet metal workers; painters and decorators (except interior decorators); plumbers; and welders and related machine operators. The widest gaps were observed among painters and decorators (except interior decorators), plumbers, and welders and related machine operators, ranging from approximately 3% to 4% two years after certification and from approximately 1% to 3% four years after certification.

Some trades showed different patterns of income growth after certification depending on whether journeypersons were childhood immigrants or Canadian-born individuals. For example, among roofers and shinglers, and among steamfitters, pipefitters and sprinkler system installers, childhood immigrants initially experienced higher income growth two years after certification, but Canadian-born journeypersons saw relatively stronger income growth four years after certification. Similar patterns were observed among glaziers, and among auto body collision, refinishing and glass technicians and damage repair estimators,²² where the relative income growth advantage changed from Canadian-born to childhood immigrant journeypersons between the two- and four-year post-certification periods. This shift suggests that early post-certification employment income gains did not persist uniformly over time in certain trades.

Overall, these results indicate that post-certification income progression is highly trade-specific and dynamic over time. While aggregate trends suggest differences in income growth by immigrant status

21. The progression of median employment income, as described in the technical guide (Statistics Canada, 2023b), was calculated at two and four years after certification as the percentage change in median employment income relative to the median employment income in the year of certification. For each group, the median employment income at the post-certification time point was divided by the median employment income in the year of certification, minus one, and multiplied by 100. This measure reflects changes in median income progression over time rather than individual-level earnings growth (Statistics Canada, 2023b). Additional analyses (not shown) using median employment income progression produced patterns consistent with those presented in Chart 2.

22. To ensure sufficient observations within each trade, certification cohorts from 2008 to 2018 were pooled for the analysis.

(see Chart 2), the direction and magnitude of these differences vary across trades and time after certification, underscoring the importance of trade-level analyses when examining earnings trajectories among journeypersons.

Chart 3 presents the proportion of journeypersons who moved to another province or territory following certification. Among all journeypersons, approximately 5% moved to another province or territory two years after certification.²³ This interprovincial mobility rate increased to about 6% four years after certification. Interprovincial mobility was more prevalent among Canadian-born individuals than childhood immigrants. Around 5% of Canadian-born journeypersons moved to another province or territory two years following certification, with this rate increasing to approximately 6% four years after certification. The interprovincial mobility rates two and four years after certification for childhood immigrant journeypersons were roughly 3% and 4%, respectively.

Table 4 presents OLS regression estimates of annual earnings among journeypersons who became certified from 2008 to 2018.^{24,25} In baseline models accounting only for the certification year (Model 1 columns), childhood immigrants earned significantly less than Canadian-born individuals across most time points in the certification trajectory. Four years before certification, childhood immigrants earned about 18% less than their Canadian-born counterparts. This gap remained similar two years before certification (17% lower earnings) and the year of certification (16% lower earnings). Although the earnings difference narrowed following certification, childhood immigrants continued to earn significantly less two years after certification (15% lower earnings). By four years after certification, the estimated earnings gap had decreased to about 13%, and the difference was no longer statistically significant.

In the models that accounted for sociodemographic, program, trade and employment characteristics (Model 2 columns),^{26,27,28} the earnings differences between childhood immigrant and Canadian-born journeypersons were reduced but remained evident across the certification trajectory. Relative to Canadian-born individuals, childhood immigrants earned approximately 9% less four years before certification, 6% less two years before certification, 6% less in the year of certification, 7% less two years after certification and 6% less four years after certification. These results indicate a persistent earnings disadvantage for childhood immigrants throughout the certification pathway, even after accounting for observable differences in characteristics.

23. Despite using different time points to assess interprovincial mobility, the findings in this study are aligned with the results of previous research (see Statistics Canada [2023a]).

24. Percentage differences in earnings are calculated by transforming the estimated log coefficients using the formula $(e^{\beta} - 1) \times 100$, where β represents the estimated coefficient from the log earnings regression.

25. Trade qualifiers were included in the analytical sample. Childhood immigrant and Canadian-born journeypersons had similar distributions across certification pathways, with approximately 17% certifying as trade qualifiers and 83% completing apprenticeship training. Additional analyses (not shown) that included an indicator for the certification pathway produced substantively similar estimates for the comparison between childhood immigrant and Canadian-born journeypersons, indicating that the inclusion of trade qualifiers did not materially alter the estimated earnings gap between the two groups. In these models, trade qualifiers had significantly higher earnings four and two years before certification, while differences were not statistically significant in the year of certification or in the years following certification.

26. As shown in tables 2 and 3 for trade-level differences, standard errors are clustered at the trade level to account for potential correlation in earnings among workers within the same trade. Previous research shows that wages and skill accumulation are strongly occupation-specific, implying shared earnings structures within occupations (Altonji et al., 2016; Böhm et al., 2024; Kambourov & Manovskii, 2009).

27. Sensitivity analyses using the integrated Postsecondary Student Information System (analysis not shown) revealed that approximately 90% of certified journeypersons were not observed in postsecondary education data. Among those observed, most enrolment was concentrated in trade-related programs (7% to 11%), while less than 1% were enrolled in other postsecondary programs. Given the limited prevalence and minimal variation in non-trade postsecondary enrolment, postsecondary education was excluded from the main models.

28. Approximately 35% of individuals experienced at least one marital status change over the observation period. Among those who experienced a change, 74% transitioned from being married or living common law to not being married, while the remaining 26% primarily consisted of transitions from not being married to being married or living common law.

Several other factors were strongly associated with earnings outcomes across the certification trajectory. Controlling for other characteristics, female journeypersons earned approximately 20% to 28% less than male journeypersons across the different time points, indicating persistent sex differences within the trades. Age effects were evident in the pre-certification and certification periods but were no longer statistically significant in the post-certification period.

Substantial trade-based earnings stratification was evident relative to electricians (except industrial and power system), the reference trade. Journeypersons in several service and selected construction trades—including cooks, hairstylists and barbers, painters and decorators (except interior decorators), and roofers and shinglers—earned considerably less across the certification trajectory.²⁹ For example, cooks earned approximately 29% to 36% less than electricians (except industrial and power system), while hairstylists and barbers earned about 48% to 56% less. Similarly, painters and decorators (except interior decorators) earned roughly 19% to 22% less, and roofers and shinglers earned about 7% to 23% less. In contrast, workers in industrial and mechanical trades had higher earnings. Heavy-duty equipment mechanics earned approximately 26% to 36% more than electricians (except industrial and power system), while construction millwrights and industrial mechanics earned about 20% to 32% more. Heating, refrigeration and air conditioning mechanics also earned more, with earnings approximately 9% to 18% higher than those of electricians (except industrial and power system).

Employment characteristics were also strongly associated with earnings outcomes.³⁰ Union membership was consistently linked to higher earnings across the certification trajectory. After accounting for other characteristics, journeypersons with union membership earned approximately 19% to 22% more than their counterparts without union membership. Similarly, working across multiple industries in the registration year was associated with substantially higher earnings. Relative to journeypersons reporting no industry attachment in the registration year, those working in one industry earned approximately 100% to 207% more, those working in two industries earned about 89% to 198% more, and those working in three or more industries earned roughly 88% to 189% more. In addition, having a registered pension plan was positively associated with earnings, with journeypersons covered by a workplace pension plan earning approximately 15% to 22% more than those without pension coverage.

Overall, the results indicate that childhood immigrant journeypersons experience consistently lower earnings before, at and after certification, compared with Canadian-born journeypersons. Although the magnitude of these differences decreases once sociodemographic, program, trade and employment characteristics are accounted for, an earnings gap remains throughout the certification trajectory. After adjustment, childhood immigrant journeypersons earned approximately 6% to 9% less than Canadian-born journeypersons across the different stages relative to certification, indicating a persistent earnings difference.

Further analyses (not shown) indicate that about one-third (roughly 28% to 38%) of the overall difference in annual earnings between childhood immigrant and Canadian-born journeypersons is explained by observed sociodemographic, program, trade and employment characteristics. Among these, regional differences reduce the gap by roughly 25% to 30%, while registered pension plan participation explains about 13% to 18% of the gap, union coverage about 13% to 16%, trade composition about 9% to 12% and sex about 10% to 12%.

29. Some trades examined, such as hairstylists and barbers, and painters and decorators (except interior decorators), may be more closely associated with lower wages, part-time employment or self-employment in some jurisdictions, and this may contribute to lower or more variable employment income (see Government of Canada [2026]).

30. Bivariate results in Chart 3 indicate differences in interprovincial mobility by immigrant status. Interprovincial mobility was excluded from the multivariable models, as it is measured only two and four years after certification (Statistics Canada, 2025c), and supplementary analyses including this variable at those time points showed no statistically significant association and no substantive change in the results and yielded similar percentages.

Table 5 presents results from a regression model where the outcome is the change in earnings two and four years after certification relative to the year of certification.³¹ This specification captures post-certification income progression by comparing earnings in the post-certification period with earnings in the certification year. Covariates were measured in the certification year to account for baseline sociodemographic, program, trade and employment characteristics.

After accounting for these characteristics, childhood immigrant journeypersons experienced slightly slower income growth two years after certification, with earnings growth approximately 1% lower than that of Canadian-born journeypersons, relative to the certification year. However, no statistically significant differences in income growth were observed four years after certification, suggesting that the short-term difference in earnings progression between childhood immigrant and Canadian-born journeypersons does not persist over time. Taken with the results in Table 4, these findings suggest that although childhood immigrant journeypersons have lower earnings levels before, at and after certification, their post-certification earnings growth follows a similar trajectory to that of Canadian-born journeypersons.

Conclusion

This study contributes to better understanding how childhood immigrants integrate into skilled trades pathways by examining their employment income before, at and after certification. Bivariate results indicate that among journeypersons, childhood immigrants consistently had lower median employment incomes than their Canadian-born counterparts at multiple stages relative to the certification year. Multivariate analyses further show that, after accounting for sociodemographic, program, trade and employment characteristics, childhood immigrants continued to have significantly lower earnings than Canadian-born individuals. Additionally, regression results indicate a small difference in income progression two years after certification, with childhood immigrants experiencing slightly lower earnings growth than Canadian-born individuals. However, this difference was no longer statistically significant four years after certification, indicating similar longer-term income progression for both groups.

Trade-level analyses show that aggregate differences mask substantial heterogeneity across occupations. Among journeypersons in several industrial and mechanical trades—such as heavy-duty equipment mechanics; construction millwrights and industrial mechanics; and heating, refrigeration and air conditioning mechanics—Canadian-born individuals consistently had higher median incomes than childhood immigrants. In contrast, childhood immigrants had comparable or higher median incomes in selected construction trades, including cabinetmakers, carpenters, painters and decorators (except interior decorators), and roofers and shinglers. Post-certification income growth also varied by trade and immigrant status, with childhood immigrants experiencing stronger income growth in some trades and Canadian-born individuals experiencing stronger growth in others. Even after accounting for sociodemographic, program, trade and employment characteristics, childhood immigrants had significantly lower earnings than their Canadian-born counterparts before, at and after certification. Institutional and employment factors were strongly associated with income: union membership and workplace pension plan coverage were each linked to substantially higher annual earnings.

One possible explanation for these differences across trades is the level of demand. Research indicates that when occupations are in high demand, employers have less flexibility in decisions regarding hiring and pay (Grodsky & Pager, 2001; Lu & Hou, 2020). Put differently, in trades where workers are in high demand, differences in pay between childhood immigrant and Canadian-born journeypersons may be

31. Covariates included in the models (e.g., union membership and registered pension plan coverage) were measured in the certification year, representing the initial level in the earnings progression analysis.

smaller than in trades with a large supply of workers. For instance, in the growing field of data science, where entry requirements are relatively high and workers are in high demand, only a minimal gap in earnings is seen between immigrants who have been in Canada two to five years and the Canadian-born population (Stick et al., 2025).

This study had some limitations. The analysis was restricted to individuals with complete tax records across all observation periods, and this may exclude those with intermittent labour market attachment. Postsecondary participation was excluded from the main models because the majority of journeypersons were not enrolled in postsecondary education, and the small proportion who were enrolled were concentrated in trade-related programs, offering limited explanatory variation beyond apprenticeship training itself. Sample size constraints also limit full disaggregation by sex across trades and time points, and this is important given the persistent male dominance in the trades examined in this study (Leanage & Mehdi, 2026). However, a complementary multivariate analysis examining overall sex differences in earnings outcomes among journeypersons is presented in the recently released study by Leanage and Stick (2026). Another limitation was the reliance on median income levels and annual earnings measures, as well as the absence of information on job-level characteristics, including occupation, full- or part-time status, and whether individuals worked for the full year or part of the year, and firm-level characteristics, such as workplace practices, informal hiring networks, and access to overtime or higher-paying assignments. This may limit the ability to fully explain observed income differences.

Future research could build on these findings by examining trade-specific and institutional mechanisms shaping earnings among childhood immigrants, including wage-setting arrangements, union coverage, firm size, regional labour market conditions and social networks. Following childhood immigrant journeypersons beyond four years after certification would provide further insights on whether income gaps narrow, persist or widen over time, while qualitative or mixed-methods approaches could shed light on workplace practices, hiring processes, social networks (informal and formal) and access to higher-paying assignments that are not observable in administrative data.

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