

Barriers for Job Seekers Literature Review

Summary Document

Workforce WindsorEssex

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As part of our initiative focused on Barriers for Job Seekers, we completed a literature review in hopes of developing a deeper understanding of what barriers research has found to be in place. Our research was targeted to four populations: newcomers, refugees, recent graduates and persons on Ontario Works.

We have summarized our findings by population below.

Newcomers

Those who have recently arrived to Canada may find that they experience some of the following barriers when seeking employment:

- Pre-arrival information gap
 - Newcomers tend to rely on family and friends rather than settlement agencies for information
 - Newcomers may not be aware of the challenges that are involved with gaining employment
 - Newcomers may experience information overload upon arrival
- A lack of use of newcomer supports
 - This can be attributed to poor promotional methods, newcomers being unaware of reputable sources and a lack of immigration mentorship in their home country
- An overestimation of language ability by newcomers
- Lack of understanding of cultural norms
- Lack of Canadian work experience
 - Newcomers are unfamiliar with the workplace culture and may not have the necessary soft skills
 - Many newcomers participate in unpaid work options, but some employers do not count this as work experience
- Unconscious bias may result in employers not hiring newcomers
- Educational qualifications
- Poor assessment of candidates' current qualifications

- Being overqualified for potential employment opportunities
- Lack of credential recognition
- Resume and interview processes
- ESL classes
 - Some newcomers cannot afford the cost of education without gaining employment

Refugees

Refugees may find that they encounter some of the following barriers to employment:

- A lack of Canadian experience
- Inconsistent information between employment centres
- Poor language skills
- Lack of access to childcare
- Lack of credential recognition
 - Additionally, it can be difficult to validate credentials and experiences if the candidate's home country experienced destruction
- Lack of assistance from employment programs
- Cultural discrimination by potential employers
- Needing to choose between continuing language classes and finding work
- Lack of familiarity with the workplace culture
- Pressure to accept insecure employment
- Visa restrictions
- Difficulty having work experience in informal economy settings recognized (particularly for women)
- Lack of transportation
 - May include the lack of a vehicle and/or a license
- Limited self-employment opportunities due to financial restrictions
- Lack of professional network
- Mental health needs
- Older workers may require retraining and take a longer time to learn the language
- Lack of re-schooling opportunities
- Searching for housing can take time away from language training, therefore lengthening the time until they can gain employment
- Heightened challenges for single mothers, those with financially dependent family abroad and young adults who are too old for public schooling
- Limitations when accessing employment services because of their lack of permanent residency

- Refugee status can also limit their access to licensing which can also limit access to employment opportunities, bridging programs, and can limit opportunities for improving and updating skills
- Refugee youth may be serving as the head of the household and be responsible for attending work, school and representing their family in medical and government settings
- Lack of childcare
- Refugees often acquire manual, seasonal, marginalized or precarious employment
 - This results in the obtainment of lower wages and for many, this is de-skilled employment

Recent Graduates

Those who have recently completed their post-secondary education may come across some of the following barriers:

- Lack of experience
- Entry level positions requiring more qualifications
 - This places many highly educated candidates into competitive groups that are seeking limited opportunities
- Lack of experience recognition by those who have completed internships
- Lack of support for employment resources and guidance counselors
- Lesser participation of youth in networking opportunities
- Diminishing advantage of higher education
- Unwillingness of youth to relocate
- Stereotype from employers that youth are needy
- Lack of protection for new employees
- Location: rural and remote location difficulties
- Employers not as willing to train new employees
- Employers don't see the benefits of training new employees who may not stay with the company for a long period of time
- Lack of transferable skills being emphasized in school
- Lack of awareness of skills development
 - This may lead to grads being unable to communicate their qualifications and potential to employers

In the literature review we discovered a best practice that RBC implemented. RBC created temporary employment opportunities for recent graduates to gain work experience in a variety of settings in their company

- This program helps recent graduates gain the experience that employers are looking for and it allows employees to improve and develop new skills while increasing their professional network

Many authors had recommendations:

- Increase co-op opportunities during secondary school
- Provide the option for students to take vocational courses to increase skills and experience
- Educational institutions should coordinate with their jurisdictions to identify growing industries and ensure that programs provide skill development at the level needed for employment

Ontario Works

The following are barriers that people on Ontario Works may experience when searching for employment opportunities:

- Lack of transportation to access services
 - Involved a lack of licensing or a vehicle, as well as dependence on public transit
- Lack of communication between service providers
- Work readiness requirements
- Lack of on-the-job supports
- Health status
- Lack of training opportunities available
- Lack of education
- Lack of affordable and available child care options
- Poor language skills
- Stigma of being on social assistance
- Lack of support for non-traditional employment opportunities
- Lack of access to employment services online
- Lack of satellite offices for employment agencies
- Undiagnosed mental health issues
 - Some people may try to obtain employment before they are healthy
 - The chances of maintaining employment are low
- Loss of drug and dental benefits