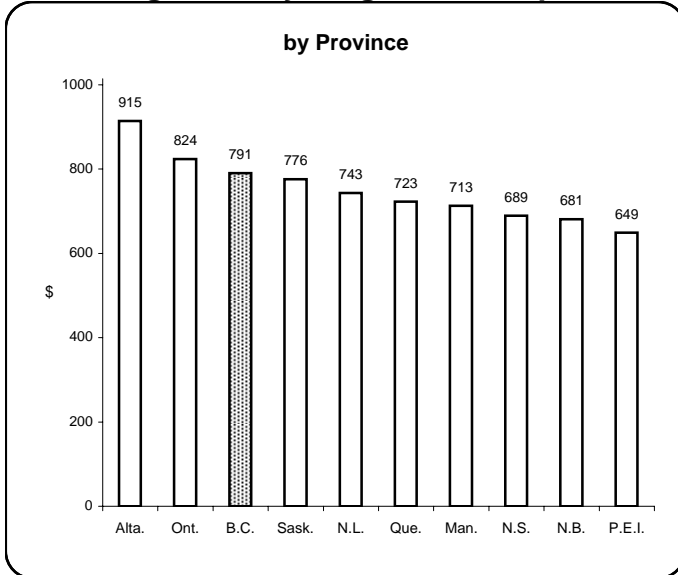
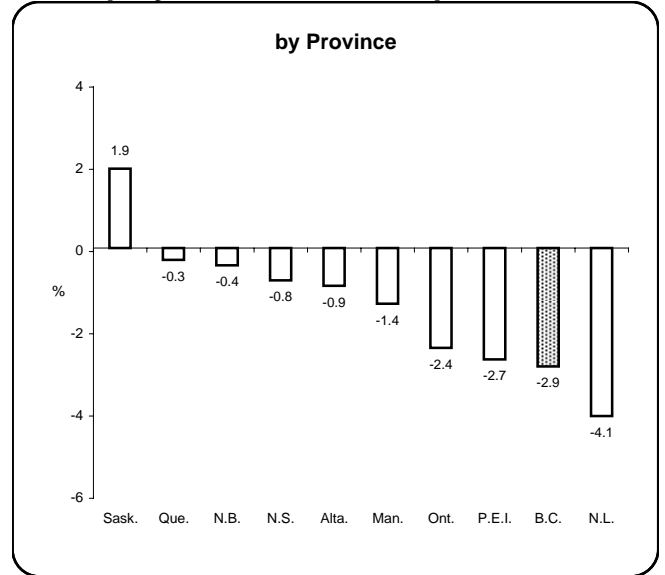


Earnings & Employment Trends ♦ April 2009

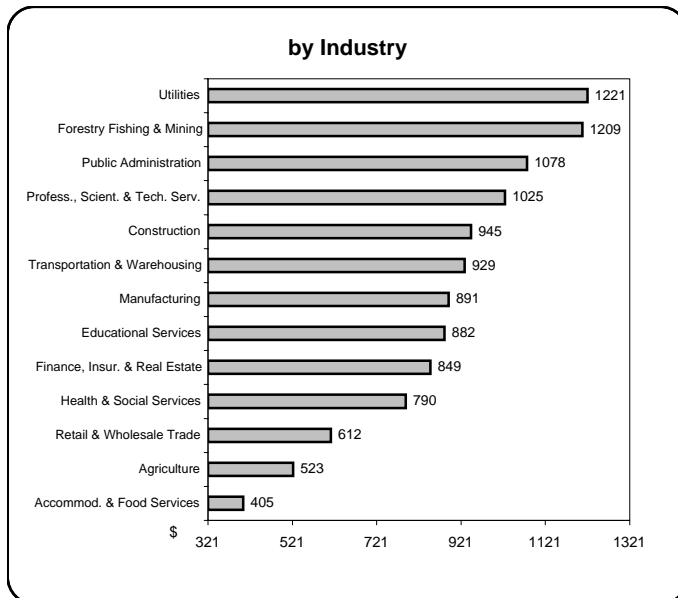
Average Weekly Wage Rate* - April 2009



Employment Growth* - April 2009

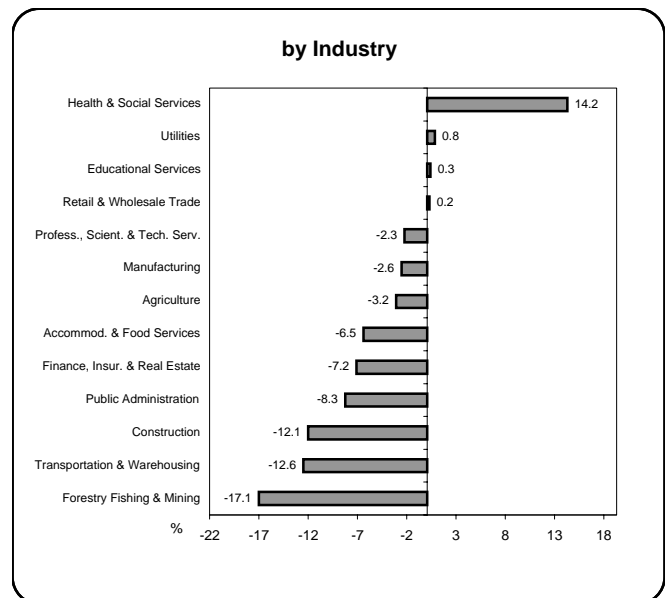


by Industry



* Latest 12 month average

by Industry



* Month over same month previous year (unadjusted)

Prepared by: BC Stats

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey

Feature Article: Lifelong Learners in British Columbia: Does more education lead to better employment outcomes?

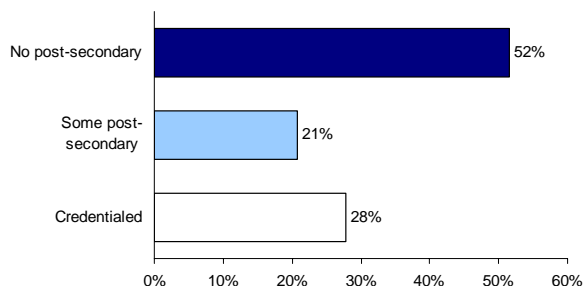
Lifelong Learners in British Columbia: Does more education lead to better employment outcomes?

The BC Diploma, Associate Degree, and Certificate Student Outcomes (DACSO) Survey shows that a high percentage of former post-secondary students had completed some previous post-secondary studies, or even a credential, before enrolling in their recent post-secondary program. This article looks at these former students who return to post-secondary studies to explore questions about who pursues additional education, why they return to school, and how they benefit from their further studies.¹

Entering post-secondary with previous credentials

Using data from the 2007 DACSO survey, this article compares the experiences of three groups of respondents—those with no post-secondary studies prior to enrolling (52%), those who had some post-secondary studies (21%), and those who had earned a credential prior to enrolling (28%).

Distribution of 2007 DACSO survey respondents by the three respondent groups: no post-secondary, some post-secondary and credentialed



¹ Refer to the section entitled About the Survey on page 4 for more information about the former students surveyed.

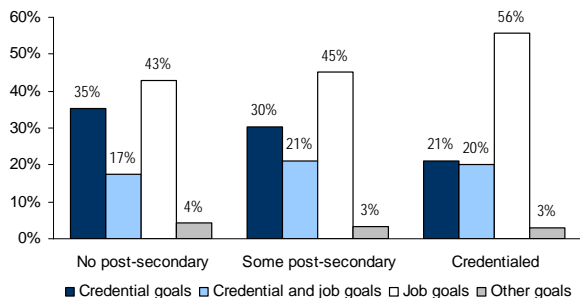
Who are the students who return to post-secondary?

It takes time to participate in post-secondary studies, so it is not surprising that the credentialed group of former students was older, on average, than either of the other two groups. Almost three-quarters of those without previous post-secondary education were under the age of 25, compared with about half of those with some post-secondary and only about 14 percent of those with a previous credential. Over 60 percent of the credentialed group was 30 or older.

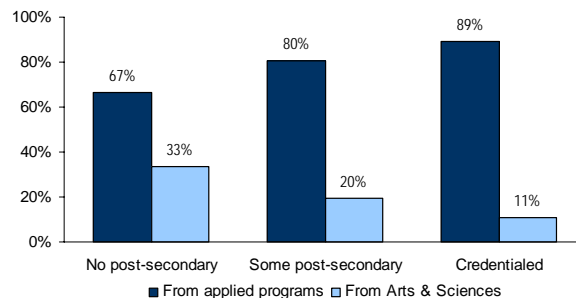
Why did they return?

Students may return to learning to acquire employment skills and advance their careers or for academic reasons, such as earning a credential or transferring to university. The primary reason reported by more than half of the credentialed group was to achieve job-related goals—such as improving existing job skills, learning new ones, or deciding on a career. Of the students with no previous post-secondary or some previous post-secondary, over 30 percent enrolled to complete the requirements for a credential or to prepare to transfer to another post-secondary institution or program.

Credentialed respondents were more likely to report job-related goals for enrolling than were their counterparts in the some post-secondary and no post-secondary groups.



Respondents from the credentialed and some post-secondary groups were more likely to have taken applied programs than those in the no post-secondary group.



What programs did they take?

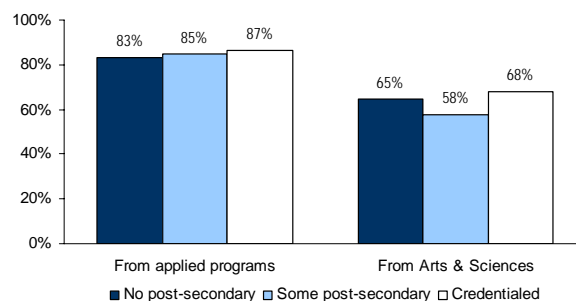
Given their emphasis on job-related goals, it is not surprising that the credentialed group was the most likely of all the groups to have enrolled in applied programs, as opposed to Arts and Sciences programs.² With their focus on relatively short, applied programs, students with a prior credential tended to select post-secondary institutions in the Lower Mainland, which may have a greater selection of the specialized programs these students are seeking. When selecting the institution at which they would study, a higher proportion of the credentialed group considered the reputation of the institution and the availability of a particular program than did the other groups.

Leaving post-secondary study

What are their employment outcomes?

Credentialed respondents were the most likely to be employed at the time of the survey—85 percent, compared with 79 percent of the some post-secondary group and 77 percent of the no post-secondary group.

Credentialed respondents from applied and Arts and Sciences programs were the most likely to be employed.



However, the higher rate of employment for the credentialed group reflects their concentration in applied programs and their age. After controlling for these factors, there is little difference in the employment rates of the three groups. There are also no significant differences, after accounting for program of study and age, in the percentages of former students employed full-time in their main job,

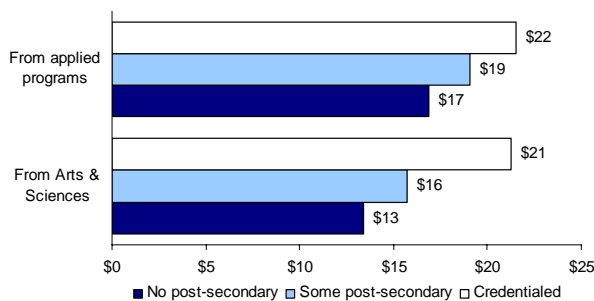
² Applied programs are designed to lead to employment in specific fields, while Arts and Sciences programs most often lead to further education.

employed in a permanent job, or the percentages who are self-employed.

How do wages differ across the groups?

In terms of hourly wage, having a previous credential makes a difference. Credentialed respondents in almost every age group earn significantly more, on average, than the no post-secondary group, and often earn significantly more than the some post-secondary group as well.

Former students with previous education reported higher hourly wages in 2007.



Getting a job

Having previous studies appears to be particularly useful to younger former students in getting and performing their jobs, but less so for their older counterparts.

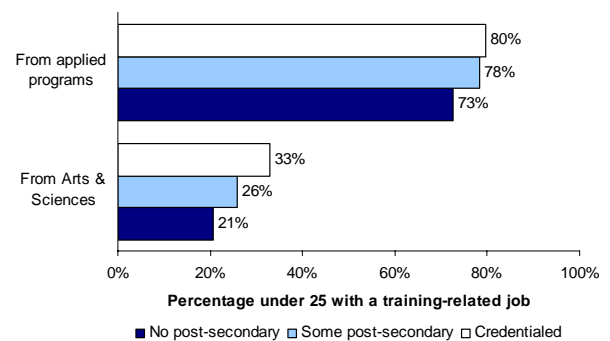
Employed former students who did not have the same job during their studies were asked how useful their program was in getting their job. Differences in responses between the three groups were significant for those from the youngest two age groups who took applied programs. In the under 25 age group, 61 percent of the credentialed and 63 percent of the some post-secondary groups said their studies were very useful to them in getting a job, compared with 56 percent for the no post-secondary group. In the 25 to 29 age group, 70 percent of credentialed employees said their

education was very useful, compared with 62 percent for the other two groups.

Getting a training-related job

It appears that having a credential or some previous post-secondary studies makes a difference with respect to the likelihood of securing a job related to one’s training; 86 percent of credentialed respondents from applied programs had training-related jobs, compared with 82 percent of some post-secondary and 77 percent of no post-secondary. However, after controlling for age, it is only in the youngest age group of both applied and Arts and Sciences programs where the difference in the proportion of those who have a job related to their training, and those who do not, is significant. This suggests that academic credentials are important to those under 25 years of age in securing training-related work, but other factors may be more important for older workers, such as experience in the labour force.

Former students under 25 years of age who had a credential or some previous studies were more likely to find a training-related job than their no post-secondary counterparts.

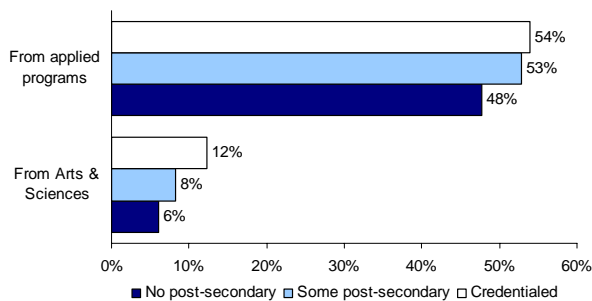


Performing the job

Former students who were employed were asked to assess the usefulness of their post-secondary education in performing their jobs.

Significant differences between the three groups were observed only for the youngest respondents. Credentialed respondents under age 25 were the most likely to say the knowledge and skills they gained were very useful to them in performing their duties, regardless of the type of program they took.

Younger credentialed respondents were the most likely to say their education was very useful to them in performing their jobs.³



Conclusion

Students who returned to learning after already completing a post-secondary credential did so primarily to advance their careers and achieve job goals or a combination of job and credential goals. These respondents tended to enrol in relatively short, applied programs and, when selecting their programs, placed a greater emphasis on institution reputation and the availability of unique programs than did the other groups.

Survey respondents who had prior credentials tended to have better employment outcomes than respondents who had previous post-secondary experience without a credential or who had no previous post-secondary education; however, those who had prior post-

³ Note that the relatively low percentage of Arts and Sciences students reporting that their program was “very useful” to them in performing their jobs relates to the fact that Arts and Sciences programs are not intended to provide students with job skills.

secondary tended to be older and to have taken applied programs. After accounting for these factors, the main employment outcome that was significantly different was wage, with those having previous credentials earning more.

For some labour market variables, such as having a job related to training and the usefulness of training in getting and performing a job, differences among the three groups were significant for respondents in their twenties. With less time to acquire valuable work experience, it follows that educational experience and credentials are relatively more important to the labour market outcomes of the youngest respondents.

About the Survey

The Diploma, Associate Degree, and Certificate Student Outcomes (DACSO) Survey (formerly called the BC College and Institute Student Outcomes Survey) is an annual province-wide survey of former students from B.C.’s public post-secondary institutions who have taken diploma, certificate, or associate degree (university transfer) programs. It is conducted with funding from the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development and from the institutions themselves. The British Columbia Outcomes Working Group (OWG) oversees the survey project.

This article draws on the 2007 DACSO survey, which contacted 16,339 former students 9 to 20 months after they completed (or nearly completed) their program of study. The survey asked respondents about their educational experience and their subsequent employment outcomes, further education, and personal development.

For more information on the DACSO project, please see <http://outcomes.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/>.