



Skilled Trades and Apprenticeship Awareness and Perception Study Highlights

The *Skilled Trades and Apprenticeship Awareness and Perception Study* is based on two waves of research conducted in 2004 and 2005 by Ipsos-Reid for the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum – Forum canadien sur l'apprentissage (CAF-FCA) and Skills / Compétences Canada (S/CC) as part of their joint campaign called, "Skilled Trades: A Career You Can Build On," launched in September 2004.

This social marketing campaign was funded by the Government of Canada's Sector Council Program, through Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, which provided \$12 million to position skilled trades as a first choice career option. The campaign will continue until December 2006.

This is the first national umbrella campaign that addresses the need to change negative attitudes and promote skilled trades as a first career choice among young Canadians. This social-marketing campaign has two key objectives:

1. To reposition skilled trades from its current negative perception toward a more positive position, and eventually, as a first choice career option in the minds of Canadian youth and their influencers, such as parents and educators;
2. To further encourage employers to create expand and sustain career opportunities in the skilled trades for young Canadians.

The campaign includes television, radio, cinema and print ads as well as targeted collateral material and a website (www.careersintrades.ca) that provides further information to youth, parents, educators and employers.

About the Study

This pan-Canadian study sets out to identify the awareness, attitudes and perception of youth and their influencers towards skilled trades and apprenticeship throughout Canada. It also identifies the likelihood of Canadian youth to consider careers in skilled trades.

An initial benchmark wave of research was completed in the spring of 2004 prior to the launch of the advertising campaign, with a follow-up wave conducted in 2005 to validate those findings as well as to evaluate the effectiveness of the campaign advertisements to date.

The study outlines the results of the 2005 research and compares them to the benchmark research of 2004. Interviews for the first wave of research were completed between February 27th and March 7th, 2004, while interviews for the second wave were completed between May 25th and June 5th, 2005. Each wave included two separate surveys, one for youth aged 13-17, and one for adults

aged 25 years and older. For the latter group, variables to identify target parents (adults with at least one child between the ages of 13 and 24) and educators (adults who act as teachers, guidance counselors and coaches) were included to break the data into further subsets for analysis.

The 2004 survey is based on 605 youths producing a margin of error of $\pm 4.0\%$, and 1,055 adults producing a margin of error of $\pm 3.0\%$. The 2005 survey is based on 507 youths producing a margin of error of $\pm 4.4\%$, and 1,000 adults producing a margin of error of $\pm 3.1\%$. The final data set was weighted by age, gender and region to reflect the actual demographic composition of the population based on Statistics Canada census data.

Study Highlights

Taken as a whole, the research demonstrates that, in the eyes of both youth and parents, careers in skilled trades continue to take a backseat to careers that require a university education. This negative perception is especially prevalent among youth.

It also shows that the national social marketing campaign launched last year by CAF-FCA and S/CC has already been very effective in making viewers more interested in skilled trades careers. This has led the campaign partners to conclude that their campaign is on the right track and to be optimistic that, through repeated exposure to consistent messaging, society's negative attitudes and perceptions surrounding careers in skilled trades will continue to change.

This pan-Canadian study yielded a tremendous amount of helpful data around several major themes:

Behaviours & Comparisons

- Only 32% of youth surveyed in 2005 said they would be likely to consider a career in skilled trades, and only 22% have actually considered this option in the past year.
- 69% of target parents with children aged 13-24 say they would be likely to recommend careers in skilled trades to their children, yet only 28% of youth say their parents have encouraged them to pursue this option.
- Only 14% of youth indicated that their guidance counselors have recommended this career option.

Comparing Skilled Trades to University/Professional Positions

- 58% of youth and 53% of parents say university is their first choice over college or apprenticeships in skilled trades.
- Only 34% of youth agree that university is a much better option than going into skilled trades, while only 20% of parents feel that way.

Awareness and Information

- Only 25% of youth surveyed in 2005 say they are aware of all the career options available in skilled trades, compared to 36% of target parents.
- While a small majority (56%) of target parents say they understand the apprenticeship process and earning potential involved with careers in skilled trades, it remains that only a minority (30%) of youth has this same understanding.

- Awareness of how much money individuals can make in skilled trades is not prevalent among youth (32%), though higher among target parents (58%).

Attitudes Towards Skilled Trades

- While 63% of youth agree skilled trades require formal studies and training, fewer agree that skilled trades offer valued careers, that skilled trades are careers and not just jobs, or that skilled trades are challenging and fun. This contrasts to target parents who consistently view skilled trades as a valuable career that would be challenging, interesting and fun to pursue.
- A strong majority of 87% of target parents say careers in skilled trades will always be in demand, compared to 68% of youth.
- A strong majority of 77% of target parents say skilled trades are valued careers, compared to 58% of youth.
- A solid majority of 66% of target parents say you can easily achieve an above average lifestyle working in skilled trades, compared to only 47% of youth.
- Only 11% of target parents say that skilled trades are typically low-paying positions, compared to 16% of youth.

Perceptions of Skilled Tradespersons

- A strong majority of 88% of target parents say people in skilled trades contribute a great deal to the quality of life in our communities, compared to 69% of youth.
- 47% of youth say skilled tradespersons are respected in society, compared to 57% of target parents.
- 46% of youth say skilled tradespersons are creative thinkers, compared to 67% of target parents.
- 58% of youth agreed with the statement that positions in skilled trades involve a lot of hard physical labour, compared to 46% of target parents.
- Almost one-third (29%) of youth agree that skilled trades are more for males than females.

Perceptions of Advertising Campaign

As discussed above, the follow-up study in 2005 had an additional research component that included the advertising recall and assessment of the three campaign commercials, including "Jessica," "Jason," and "Proud Dad".

This part of the research shows that the ads have already had a positive impact, despite their recent launch. The study reveals that the advertisements have been successful in making viewers more interested in skilled trades and teaching youth something new about skilled trades. For example:

- Almost two-in-three youth agree the ads have made them more interested in skilled trades (61%), versus only 39% who disagree with this statement.
- Additionally, youth respondents who have not yet decided on a career path are even more likely to agree with the statement "that they learned something new about skilled trades" (73%) than those who have already made their decision on their career path (43%). This pattern holds true with adults. Agreement with this statement ranges from a high of 64% among all adults, to a low of 55% among educators.

Concluding remarks

Overall, both 2004 and 2005 research suggests that there are still significant stereotypes and barriers to overcome to shift the attitudes and behaviours of youth and their influencers to perceive skilled trades as a first-choice career option. While the commercials developed under the “Skilled Trades: A Career You Can Build On” have not yet caused a significant shift of attitudes, this was to be expected. Rarely will one campaign of advertising result in a major switch in attitudes towards a product, service or occupation. Shifts in attitudes require repeated exposure to consistent messaging that is successful in teaching viewers something new about the issue in question. Because the Jessica, Jason and Proud Dad ads have been successful in doing this, one can assume that repeated long-term exposure to these commercials and other similar ads should be successful in eventually changing attitudes towards skilled trades.

In sum, the research suggests that viewers are noticing the ads and reacting to them very positively, particularly when compared to other social marketing campaigns that have been tracked by Ipsos-Reid (which include campaigns surrounding workplace safety and the dangers of drinking and driving, among others). Indeed, Ipsos-Reid found that the recall of the ads is about twice what might have been expected, and that other research on social marketing campaigns normally shows much lower advertising recall (i.e. people tuning out the message). In addition to these positive recall levels, Ipsos-Reid found that impressions of the advertisements are extremely positive and again trump the results typically found in social marketing campaigns.

Ipsos-Reid noted that social marketing campaigns rarely register with respondents so quickly and so well, adding that the advertising campaign promoting skilled trades should be considered a success. CAF and S/CC are emboldened by these results and look forward to continuing, the advertising portion of the campaign in the months and years to come in a bid to continue changing the attitudes and perception that youths and adults have of skilled trades.

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