



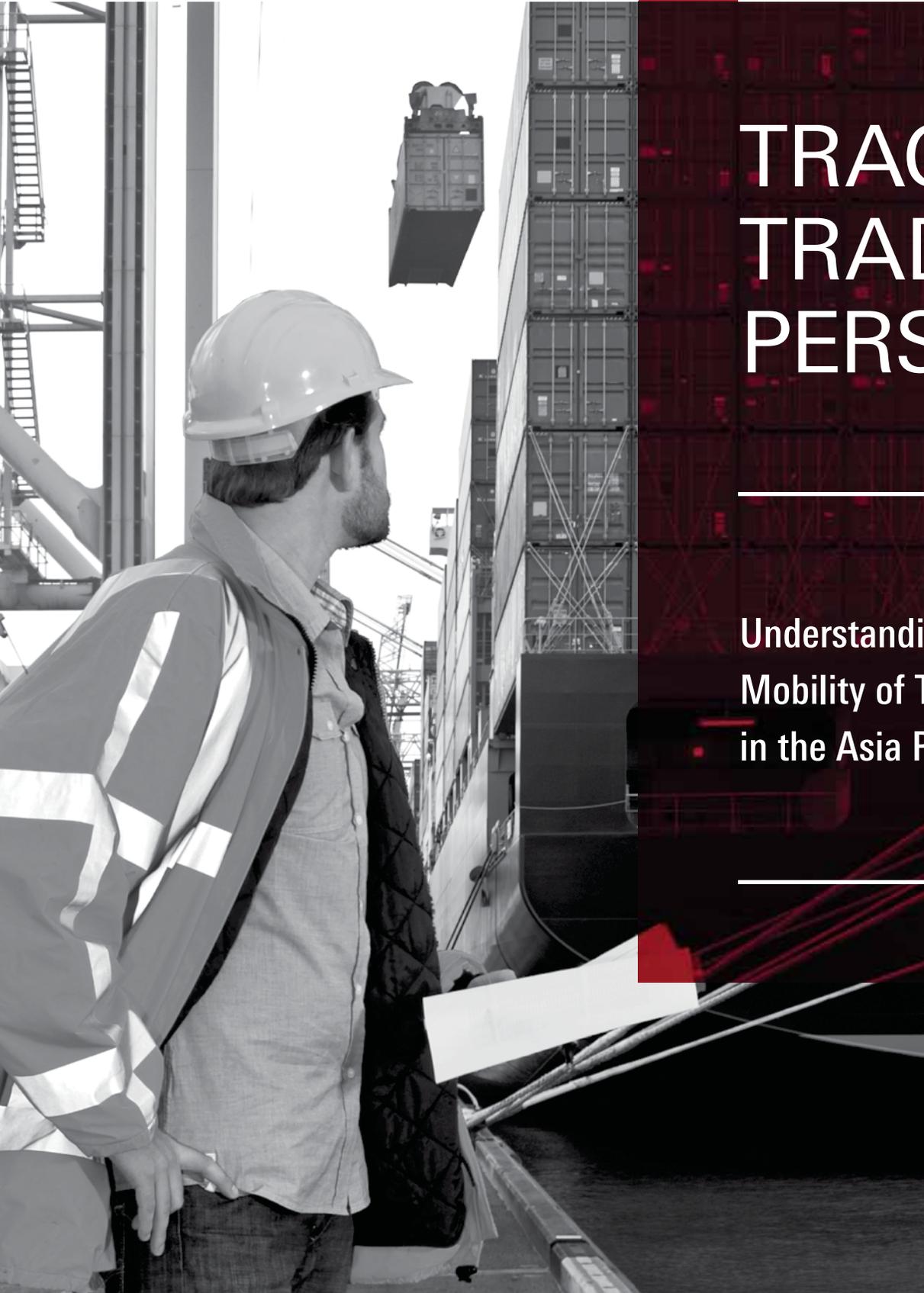
ASIA PACIFIC GATEWAY
SKILLS TABLE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TRACKING TRADES— PERSONS

Understanding the Labour
Mobility of Tradespersons
in the Asia Pacific Gateway

JULY 2013



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The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study entitled *Understanding the Labour Mobility of Tradespersons in the Asia Pacific Gateway* was commissioned by the Asia Pacific Gateway Skills Table, in order to better understand the movement of tradespersons and the factors that affect mobility: demographics and other worker characteristics, personal motivations, ease of mobility, employer initiatives, transferable competencies, certification designation status, and national and provincial legislation.

It is hoped that this knowledge may assist stakeholders in developing more effective recruitment and retention strategies, providing a wider, deeper pool of qualified tradespersons for Asia Pacific Gateway stakeholders.

This study focuses specifically on eight trades:

- » Carpenter*
- » Construction electrician*
- » Diesel engine mechanic
- » Heavy duty equipment mechanic*
- » Heavy equipment operator*
- » Truck and transport mechanic*
- » Plumber and pipefitter*
- » Welder*



* Red Seal Certified

METHODOLOGY

The major components of the research included a review of past research, literature and other data, interviews with 43 key informants (stakeholders and selected experts), a survey of 312 employers of workers in the target trades and 200 experienced journeypersons in those trades, and mini-case studies to follow-up on common patterns of labour mobility.

The research attempted to answer the following questions and determine the overall implications for stakeholders:

- » What are the various forms of labour mobility?
- » To what extent does labour mobility occur?
- » Is labour mobility increasing or decreasing?
- » Who are the most mobile workers?
- » How do legislation and certification programs impact mobility?
- » What personal, environmental and economic factors motivate mobility?
- » How do employers and tradespeople connect with one another?

KEY FINDINGS

The executive summary provides condensed highlights of the Major Conclusions section of the report. Complete data from the literature review, informant interviews and survey are also available in the body of the report.

Types of Labour Mobility

The study identified four unique forms of labour mobility in the trades. Qualified tradespeople are moving:

- » To BC from another country (international migration)
- » To BC from another Canadian province or territory (interprovincial migration)
- » Between different regions in BC (intraprovincial migration)
- » Within different industry sectors (sectoral migration)

For the purpose of this study, geographic mobility is defined as a situation where a journey person:

- » Moved to a different residence at least a two-hour drive from their current residence;
- » Was employed or self-employed in the new region; and
- » Expected to stay in the new region or community for at least six months.

Sectoral mobility is defined as a situation where the journey person shifted employment between employers in different sectors, based on the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) 2012.

The Extent to Which Mobility Occurs in the Trades

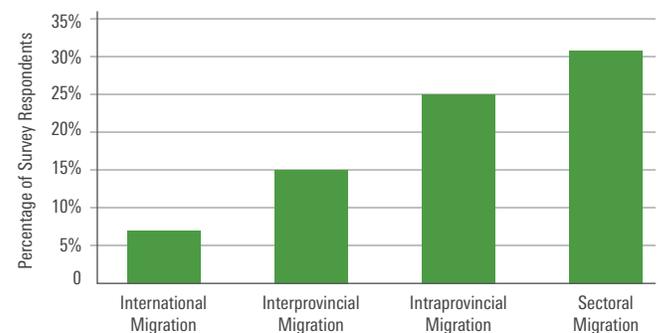
In a survey of journey persons who have had their credential for five years or more, nearly half of the respondents—46%—reported having moved geographically or changed sectors for their work. A total of 32% had worked in their trade in more than one industry sector, and 33% had moved geographically—either to BC or within BC.

BC does benefit from positive in-migration of tradespeople; for every 100 journey persons who come to the province to work, 25 end up staying permanently.

Survey and Census data indicates that of those who are mobile:

- » 7% worked in the trade previously in another country before coming to BC.
- » 15% worked in their trade in another province or territory prior moving to BC. Of those workers who come to BC from other parts of Canada, 25% remain permanently.
- » 25% changed regions within BC; and
- » 31% changed sectors, either within BC or after moving here from another part of Canada.

Extent of Tradesperson Participation in Different Forms of Mobility

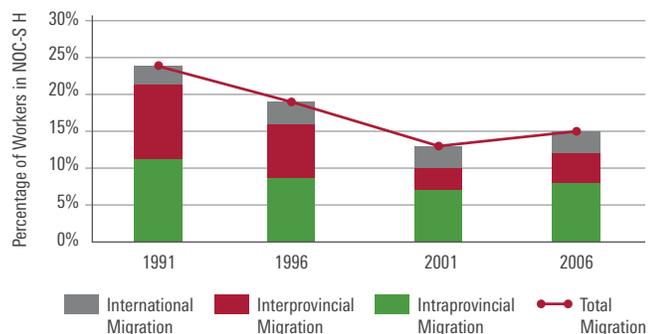


Are Tradespeople becoming More or Less Mobile?

According to Census data, the rate of geographic mobility slowed between 1986 and 2001. The five-year mobility of workers declined from 24% in 1991, to 19% in 1996, to 13% in 2001. Mobility began to increase again in 2006, rising to 15%.

While 2011 data is not yet available, the consensus of those interviewed for this report is that labour mobility rate has remained the same or increased over the past five years, and that this should continue for the next decade. Strong economic growth (and the resulting low unemployment rates and higher wages) in regions including Alberta, Saskatchewan and northern BC is seen as the primary driver of labour mobility.

Trends in Labour Mobility



Who is the Typical Mobile Worker?

Younger workers are more mobile workers, and geographic labour mobility tends to decline with age. Younger workers tend to have fewer employment opportunities locally relative to more experienced workers, have fewer ties in the community, and feel greater pressure to gain experience and become established in the occupation. Census data from 1991 to 2006 showed that 61% of mobile trades workers were between 20 and 28 years old.

Experience is also an important factor: The majority of employers surveyed indicated that workers hired from other regions and other sectors had 10 or more years of experience in their trades.

The available data also suggests that mobility tends to be somewhat higher for men than for women; however, the per cent of women surveyed from these trades is so low that it is not possible to draw a meaningful conclusion. Only two per cent of those surveyed in the eight trades were women.

In terms of industry sectors, those working in the transportation sector are the most likely to be mobile.

Do Legislation and Certification Programs Affect Mobility?

There are few regulatory barriers to worker mobility for the trades that were included in this study, the majority of which were Red Seal trades.

Both employers and other key informants agree that the Red Seal designation has facilitated labour mobility between provinces, and the survey indicated that journeypersons with a Red Seal designation are more likely to change regions than other journeypersons but are less likely to change sectors.

However, while employers agreed that the Red Seal program facilitates the movement of workers between jurisdictions, it is not necessarily a good indicator that a journeyperson has the skills and experience needed for the employer's position.

Neither employers nor key informants believe that the Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT) or the New West Partnership Trade Agreement (NWPTA) have had a significant impact on mobility, though many indicated that it is too early to tell conclusively.



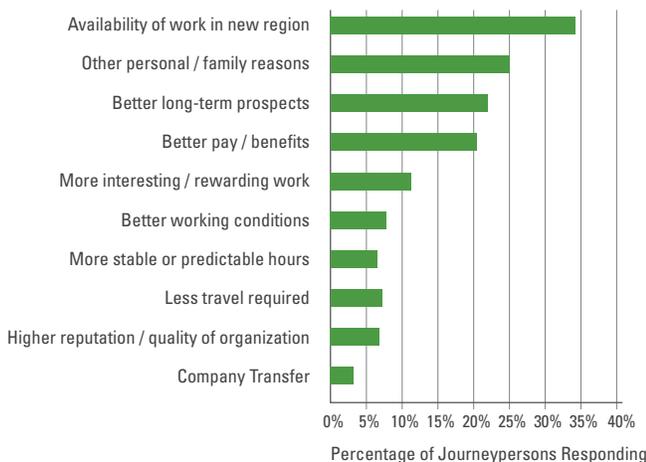
What Makes Tradespeople Move between Regions or Sectors?

Workers generally do not want to move geographically. They tend to do so when economic conditions in their current region are poor and they need to do so in order to find suitable employment, or when they believe re-locating will offer better long-term employment prospects than their current region. Some industry stakeholders have anecdotally noted that they believe some journeypersons may be more mobile once their children have grown and left home, or near the end of their careers when they are motivated to maximize their earning potential. This observation is not validated by either the survey results or Census data.

Availability of work in their new region was the reason given by 34% of mobile journeypersons, and lack of available work in the current region was identified by 25% of employers to explain why their journeypersons had moved. Better pay or benefits was mentioned by 20% of journeypersons and 11% of employers.

When moving to a new sector, availability of work in the new sector is still the main reason cited by journeypersons (37%), followed by better pay or benefits (33%). Better working conditions (33%) and more interesting/rewarding work (29%) also rank highly as reasons why journeypersons change sectors.

Journeyperson Reasons for Transferring Regions



Journeyperson Reasons for Changing Sectors



Employer Reasons Why Employees Left for Other Sectors



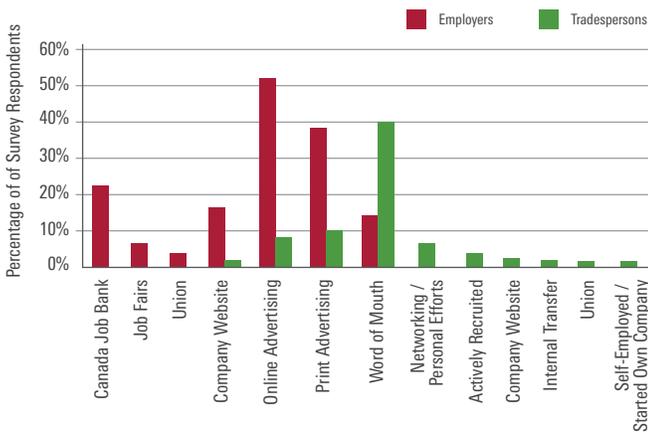
Employer Reasons Why Employees Left for Other Regions



How Are Workers and Employers Connecting?

There is a disconnect between employers' methods of advertising positions, and those that qualified tradespeople are relying on to identify opportunities. When asked how they promote their job openings, the majority of employer organizations identified online (51%) and print (38%) advertising. On the other hand, journeypersons who changed regions or sectors said they generally became aware of opportunities through word-of-mouth (40%), followed by print (10%) or online advertising (8%).

How Do Tradespeople Connect with Employers



Implications of Mobility for BC's Labour Market

Labour market conditions in BC are already tight. Studies and key informant interviews suggest that due to employment growth and demographic conditions, these conditions will get tighter, especially in Northern BC.

Thirty (30) per cent of employers who plan to hire in the next year say they find it very difficult to attract suitable candidates. Employers cannot rely on mobile labour to fully meet projected labour needs. There is increasing competition for these workers both within BC and from other regions. Alberta is reported to be the most common destination for mobile journeypersons leaving BC, though Census data indicates that the actual rate of departures may be lower than perceived. The loss of workers from BC is more of a looming threat than it is an actuality.

Ensuring that BC has sufficient trades labour to supply the Asia Pacific Gateway and other developments in BC will require a strategic approach to developing new tradespeople at home. A key component of that approach will be to expand and improve the apprenticeship system in the province. This highlights the importance of efforts by all stakeholders—including governments, industry, employers and training providers—to attract people into apprenticeships, support their development, and retain them.



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The Asia Pacific Gateway Skills Table

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