Upskill Canada's Economic Impact



Final Analysis Report

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Blueprint

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1. Introduction

Since its launch in 2023, and as of January 2026, Palette Skills' Upskill Canada initiative has provided sector-focused upskilling training to over 10,000 participants across Canada and supported more than 2,200 Canadian employer partners to connect with the talent they need to succeed. In May 2025, Palette Skills engaged Blueprint to review and analyze data from the first two years of Upskill Canada.

This report summarizes findings about who takes part in Upskill Canada programming and what outcomes they achieve. It also explores the impact that Upskill Canada has on the Canadian economy and provides recommendations for strengthening the measurement of Upskill Canada's economic impact for workers, employers, and the economy.

1.1. About Upskill Canada

Upskill Canada is a national talent initiative that supports Canadian businesses by rapidly upskilling workers, including people from underrepresented groups, and connecting them to in-demand roles in high-growth sectors. Delivered by Palette Skills with funding from the Government of Canada's Upskilling for Industry Initiative with an initial investment of $185 million, Upskill Canada has provided funding to 37 unique organizations, for a total 42 programs, which includes two internal programs, four coalitions, and 36 ultimate training partner programs. Programs are offered across all regions of the country and concentrate on six priority sectors: digital technology, cybersecurity, agricultural technology, advanced manufacturing, clean technology, and biomanufacturing. Programs range in duration from four to 16 weeks and include job placement support to help participants move into employment.

1.2. In this report

This report presents findings and insights from Blueprint's analysis of Upskill Canada participant data from **April 1, 2023** to **March 31, 2025**, inclusive. It is organized into three sections:

1. **Summary of findings** highlights the main implications of our findings.
2. **Our approach** outlines our research questions, data sources, methodological approach, and limitations.
3. **Findings** summarize Upskill Canada's reach and completion rates, participant outcomes, and potential longer-term impact on participants and employers.
4. **Discussion** presents directions for future research and analysis.

1.3. Summary of findings

1.3.1. Upskill Canada potentially creates large productivity impacts, experienced through both higher participant earnings and employer profits.

We find that Upskill Canada has the potential to generate up to **$523 million in economic productivity** over the course of its delivery window.

Analysis of the earnings changes of Upskill Canada participants who remain full-time employed with the same employer before and after training indicates that Upskill Canada has the potential to increase the annual productivity of participants by $1,649, experienced as $1,319 in increased earnings paid to participants and $330 accruing to their employer. Over the long term, this could represent $20,457 in additional productivity per participant.

In addition, participants who find new employment or change their hours worked after participating in Upskill Canada programming may experience additional productivity changes of $17,014 in the year following participation, associated with better deployment of their existing skills.

While further analysis is needed to rigorously estimate the true impacts of Upskill Canada programming, if they approach the potential impacts described here, they compare favourably to earnings impacts observed through rigorous evaluations of Canadian skills programming, such as the Skills Development programs funded by Canada's Labour Market Development Agreements (LMDAs).



We find that Upskill Canada has the potential to generate up to $523 million in economic productivity over the course of its delivery window.

1.3.2. Most Upskill Canada participants are early-to-mid-career immigrants with post-secondary credentials.

Three-quarters of all Upskill Canada participants (76%) are immigrants to Canada, 79% of participants are aged 25 to 44 at the point of enrolment, and 90% of participants have a college or university credential. When considering the intersection of these factors, 60% of Upskill Canada participants are immigrants to Canada with post-secondary credentials between the ages of 25 and 44.

1.3.3. Completion rates are high, though lower in training programs targeting some sectors.

On average, 85% of Upskill Canada participants complete programming. Higher proportions of participants in digital technology programs complete training (88%), while participants of programs such as clean technology and agricultural technology experience lower completion rates (65% and 74%, respectively).

1.3.4. Participant employment status improves significantly on a range of dimensions following training.

Within six months of completing programming, employment rates for Upskill Canada graduates increased by 29 percentage points, from 47% at enrolment to 76% at completion. Rates of full-time employment also increased by 27 percentage points, from 27% at enrolment to 55% at completion. While only one-third of Upskill Canada graduates were employed in their program's target sector at follow-up, this represents a notable increase from enrolment (20% to 34%, a 13-percentage point increase). Average annualized earnings for Upskill graduates increased by just over $17,000, from $23,360 to $40,459. This increase was largely driven by participants not employed at enrolment finding employment during the follow-up period. However, salaries for individuals who were employed at enrolment and at follow-up also increased on average by almost $3,000.



Within six months of completing programming, employment rates for Upskill Canada graduates increased by 29 percentage points, from 47% at enrolment to 76% at completion.

1.3.5. Employment outcomes are better for participants training in specific sectors and for participants who are women or newcomers.

Participants in digital technologies and advanced manufacturing programming saw the biggest improvements in employment rates and earnings before and after Upskill Canada, whereas participants in cybersecurity and clean technology saw the smallest improvements.

Gains in employment pre- and post-program were similar across genders, but women and gender-diverse participants saw larger post-program earnings growth than men. Newcomers who arrived in Canada fewer than five years before joining Upskill Canada also experienced better-than-average employment outcomes. While participants without post-secondary education were less likely to complete Upskill Canada programming, those who did complete experienced similar gains in labour market outcomes as participants who had completed college.

2. Our approach

2.1. Guiding questions

Our analysis seeks to answer four overarching questions:

1. **Who is participating in Upskill Canada?** What does the participant profile look like, and how does it compare to the broader Canadian workforce? What does this say about Upskill Canada's role in the workforce development ecosystem and labour market?
2. **Who completes programming?** What share of participants complete Upskill Canada programs, and how do completion rates vary by sector and participant characteristics?
3. **What changes after programming?** For those who are 'upskilled,' how do employment and earnings shift before and after the program? Which participant and program factors are linked to stronger outcomes?
4. **What are the potential longer-term impacts for participants and employers?** What are Upskill Canada's plausible long-term earnings impacts for participants? How might these translate into value for employers and the broader economy?

2.2. Data sources

Blueprint relied on two primary data sources to answer the guiding questions: Upskill Canada's participant tracker and the 2021 Statistics Canada Public Use Microdata File (PUMF).[1]

2.2.1. About the participant tracker

Upskill Canada's participant tracker includes enrolment records and participant data for all individuals who enrolled in an Upskill Canada program[2] from **April 1, 2023** to **March 31, 2025**, inclusive. Each record corresponds to one instance of an individual's participation in a specific cohort of an Upskill Canada program (i.e., multiple rows may exist for individuals with multiple enrolments). Participant data are collated from quarterly partner reports submitted to Palette Skills. Palette uses the dataset to monitor program delivery, reach, and short-term outcomes across all delivery partners and sectors.

Information captured in the participant tracker includes:

- **Demographics:** age category, gender, newcomer status, disability status, highest level of education, and Indigenous identity.
- **Program participation:** cohort start and end dates, training partner, province, target sector, and completion.
- **Pre-enrolment status and earnings:** employment status, employment in target sector, annualized earnings (self-reported to delivery partners), and intention to switch sectors (i.e., enrolment in an Upskill Canada program in a sector different from their current sector of employment).
- **Post-enrolment outcomes** (graduates only): employment status, job start date, employment in target sector, salary, on-target earnings (OTE, including base pay plus bonuses or commissions where applicable), and job search activity (if not yet employed).

1 Statistics Canada. (2021). *Individuals file, census of population: Public use microdata files, census year 2021.* https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/catalogue/98M0001X2021001

2 While we expect that each participant will have enrolled in only one Upskill Canada program, we are unable to confirm this given that Participant Tracker data are anonymous. It is possible, albeit unlikely, that a participant may have enrolled in more than one Upskill Canada program.

The participant tracker data analyzed for this report includes all 10,081 enrolment records for the period between **April 1, 2023** and **March 31, 2025**, inclusive.

2.2.2. About the 2021 Census Public Use Microdata File

The 2021 Census PUMF is an anonymized, individual-level sample of Canadian residents drawn from the long-form census questionnaire. It provides nationally representative microdata with geographic detail limited to broad regions and selected metropolitan areas to protect confidentiality. We use the 2021 Census PUMF to benchmark participant demographic and labour market distributions against the working-age population of Canada.

2.3. Methodology

2.3.1. Analytical approach

To answer our overarching questions about Upskill Canada, we pursued the following analytical approach:

Descriptive analysis: Describe the population of participants in Upskill Canada, who form the sample from which we assess outcomes and potential impact. Identify any notable features of the participant population and any areas in which the participant population varies substantially from the working-age population overall.

Outcomes analysis: Describe the outcomes participants achieve, including program completion, employment rates, earnings levels, and employment transitions. In addition, we examine differences in these outcomes by demographic group, sector, and region.

Potential impact modelling: We outline a set of assumptions about the causal effect of Upskill Canada on participant and employer outcomes, then project what productivity impacts Upskill Canada would have for both participants and employers if these assumptions hold. We base these projections on both the changes in earnings for participants who stay full-time employed with the same employer following upskilling (suggesting their earnings changes are due to skill improvements) and for participants whose employment situation changes after upskilling (suggesting earnings changes due to employment that better matches their skills). For each of these potential impacts, we combine results over different time periods to estimate the total economic impact of Upskill Canada, both per participant and across the full group of participants.

Note on impact modelling limitations: Since this approach relies heavily upon a set of assumptions about the causal effects of Upskill Canada, it should be interpreted as projecting the *potential* impact of Upskill Canada on productivity, rather than as an estimate of the *actual* impact Upskill Canada has had to date. The following section outlines the necessary conditions for a rigorous estimate of actual productivity impacts.

2.3.2. Situating our approach

Estimating the causal effects of an initiative like Upskill Canada on the earnings of participants, the profits of employers, and ultimately, the productivity of workers is a critical but complex challenge. As indicated above, in this report we follow an approach that provides a framework for understanding the potential impact of Upskill Canada on these outcomes while working within the limits of the currently available data.

Ideally, we would estimate the productivity impacts of Upskill Canada by relying on administrative data linkage and a strong comparison group—two components that are not available for the present analysis.

1. **Administrative data linkage:** First, we would optimally track both participant-level earnings changes and firm-level outcomes over a longer time horizon following the training and hiring of Upskill participants. This approach would allow us to measure outcomes for both stakeholder groups and quantify them over a period that reflects the duration it may take for Upskill's effects to be fully realized.
2. **Comparison group:** Secondly, we would compare the outcomes of Upskill participants and their employers to similar comparison groups who did not participate, or did not employ Upskill graduates, either by randomizing participants or finding comparator participants and employers in administrative data. This would let us estimate Upskill's causal role in improving outcomes by allowing us to account for the influence of other factors on these outcomes.

These components were incorporated into Statistics Canada's analysis of the economic impact of Mitacs, a study that offers a strong template for a potential future analysis of Upskill's economic impact.

The current study considers Upskill Canada's economic impact without the benefit of either of these features. As a result, instead of rigorously estimating Upskill Canada's impacts, we focus on creating a clear understanding of the outcomes participants achieved and the potential impacts these outcomes could represent under a set of plausible assumptions.

2.3.3. Participant samples

We use five nested samples (see **Figure 1**, on the next page) of Participant Tracker data to answer questions about who is participating in Upskill Canada, what happens during programming, and what happens after programming:

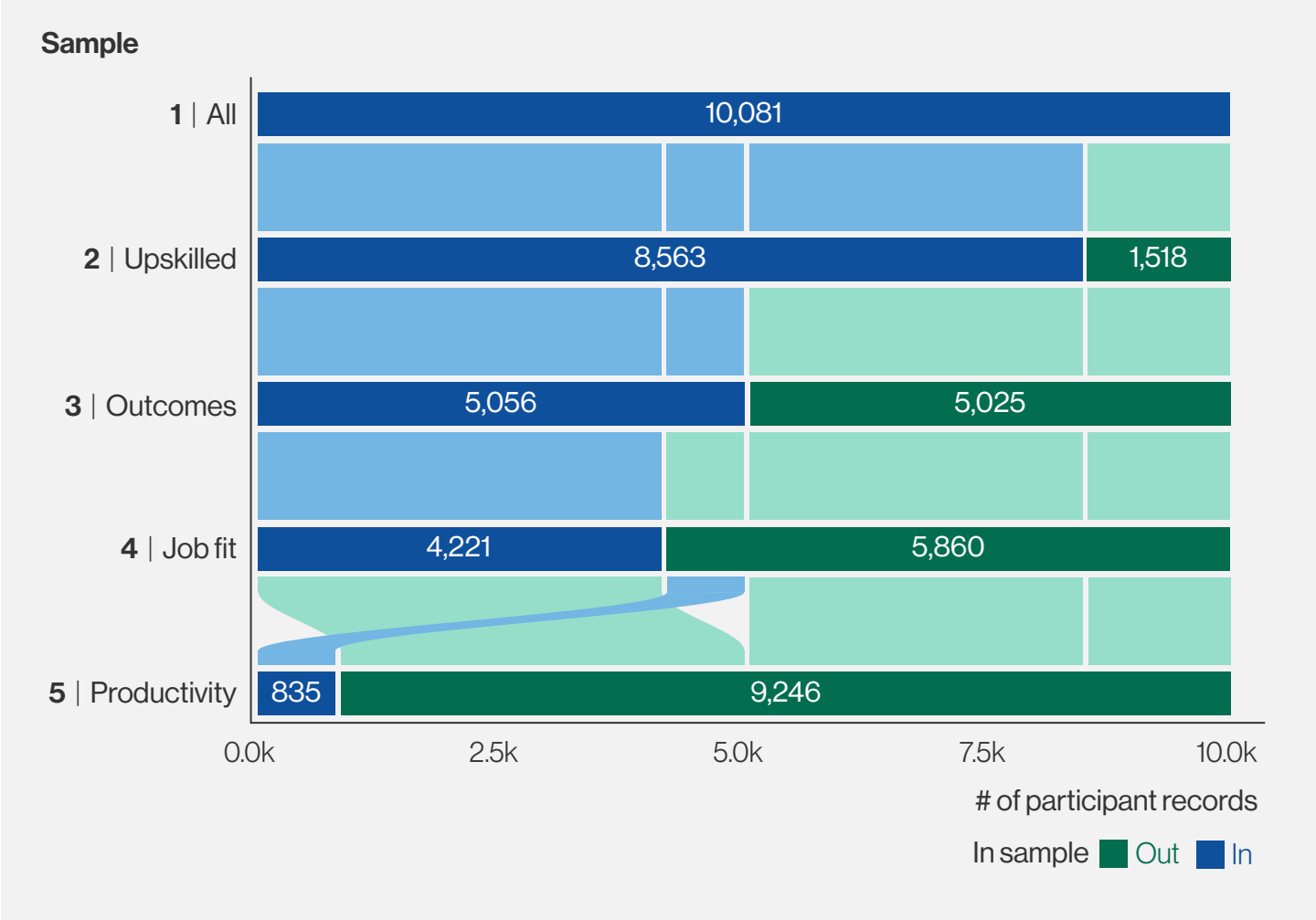
1. **All participants:** The full set of 10,081 Participant Tracker enrolment records for the period of **April 1, 2023** through **March 31, 2025**, inclusive. We use the sample to understand Upskill Canada's reach and overall completion rates. (Note: Upskill Canada is set to upskill over 18,000 participants by March 31, 2026).
2. **Upskilled:** The subset of all enrollees who *completed* Upskill Canada programming. We use the sample to understand patterns in program completion and to model pre-program employment earnings.
3. **Outcomes:** The subset of all graduates for whom we have data on *employment status six months after program completion* (i.e., individuals with a cohort end date on or before October 2, 2024), in addition to data on baseline employment status and complete baseline demographic data. We use the sample to assess changes in pre-and post-employment outcomes and earnings.

The 'Outcomes' group is then split into two different samples: the 'Job fit' group and the 'Productivity' group.

4. **Job fit:** All individuals in the Outcomes sub-group except participants who remained employed full-time with the same employer after taking part in Upskill Canada programming. We use the sample to isolate changes in pre-post earnings that are associated with improvement in job match (e.g., due to a change in employment sector, employer, or hours worked).
5. **Productivity:** Individuals in the Outcomes sub-group who remained *employed full-time with the same employer after taking part in Upskill Canada programming*. We use the sample to estimate pre-post earnings gains that can be reasonably attributed to increased productivity (i.e., skill deepening).

By separating out participants who changed employers (or went from being unemployed to employed) from participants who remained employed with the same employer before and after programming, we can explore two reasons why pre-post earnings might change for a participant; that is, we can explore changes that occur due to improvements in job matching and job fit as well as changes that occur due to increased productivity with the same employer.

Figure 1 | Participant samples used in analysis



2.3.4. Metrics derived from participant data

Table 1 defines the metrics we derive from Participant Tracker records.

Table 1 | Metric definitions

Metric	Timepoint	Definition
% Upskilled	Exit	The percentage of participants upskilled
Employment rate	Pre, Post	The percentage of participants employed
Employment rate in-sector	Pre, Post	The percentage of participants employed in their program's focal sector
Full-time employment rate	Pre, Post	The percentage of participants employed full-time
Average salary	Pre, Post	Average annual salary for employed participants
Average annualized earnings	Pre, Post	Average annualized earnings across all participants, assuming employed participants earn their salaries, and that unemployed participants earn zero dollars

2.3.5. Potential impacts for participants and employers

Due to limitations in available data, our analytical approach does not include a comparison group, which would have allowed us to estimate Upskill Canada's *impact*—that is, the change in employment and earnings outcomes for participants that can be attributed to Upskill Canada rather than other factors (such as changes in the labour market). To understand the *potential* impact that Upskill Canada might have on participants, we analyze pre-post differences in participant employment status and earnings to determine the *upper bound* of Upskill Canada's impact—that is, the greatest possible impact that Upskill Canada might have.

In our recommendations, we outline high-level options for more rigorous estimation of Upskill Canada's impact, including identifying data sources to generate a strong comparison group. For the purposes of this report, any calculations outlining Upskill Canada's impact should be considered illustrations of its potential impact based on reasonable assumptions, as opposed to rigorous estimates.

2.3.6. Gaps in program completion data

The participant records we analyzed do not distinguish between participants in progress and participants who did not complete the program. While this may bias our "% Upskilled" figures slightly downward, it does not threaten the validity of comparisons between sectors or demographic groups because we have no reason to believe that this issue would affect programs in certain sectors or certain demographic groups differently.

2.3.7. Missing post-program employment outcomes

Post-program employment outcomes are effectively missing for participants who were employed at baseline and whose post-program labour force status did not amount to Upskill Canada's definition of a 'new or better job.' For these participants, a 'Job Outcome' of 'job searching' or 'non-active job seeker' could indicate that they maintained or left their baseline job. Our approach assumes that these participants maintain their baseline employment status and earnings post-program.

2.3.8. Missing salaries for employed participants

In some participants, the participant tracker indicates that the individual is employed but does not include salary data. To fill in these gaps, we used a statistical model that predicts salary based on patterns in the data we do have.

The model looks at:

- **Participant characteristics**, like age category, education level, gender, and how long they have lived in Canada.
- **Job details**, such as whether the participant was working full-time and whether their job was in the sector they trained for.
- **Program factors**, including the sector of training (like cybersecurity or clean tech), the year the participant graduated, and the delivery region.

By combining this information, the model estimates a reasonable salary for each participant based on what similar participants earned. This method helps us understand overall trends in employment and earnings, even when some data are missing. We chose to estimate missing salary data using this approach because it is the simplest approach that serves our purposes. Our analysis does not apply formal statistical tests, so we do not benefit from the robustness conferred by traditional approaches, like multiple imputation or full information maximum likelihood modelling—these alternatives for estimating missing data would facilitate statistical testing but would impose limitations on our ability to describe the distribution of estimated missing data (see **Appendix A**) without actually improving the accuracy of our predictions.

2.3.9. Net present value framework

To understand the long-term value of Upskill Canada for participants and employers, we use a standard economic method called **discounted cash flow analysis**. This helps us estimate the total value of future benefits in today's dollars.

We make several key assumptions under this approach:

- We assume that participants will work for **30 years** after graduating from Upskill Canada programs because the average participant is roughly 35 years of age at enrolment.
- We assume that the real (inflation-adjusted) value of **annual benefits**—like higher earnings for participants and increased productivity for employers—stays **the same each year**.
- We use a **7% discount rate**,[3] which reflects the idea that money received in the future is worth less than money received today.

Using these assumptions, we apply a standard formula to calculate the **net present value (NPV)** of benefits. This gives us a clear picture of how much Upskill Canada could be worth over time, both to the people who take part and to the businesses that hire them.

3 Canada's Cost-Benefit Analysis Guide for Regulatory Proposals recommends a 7% discount rate.

3. Findings

3.1. Who is participating in Upskill Canada?

Table 2 (on the next page) summarizes Upskill Canada's reach by age group, highest level of education, and immigration status.

3.1.1. Upskill Canada is reaching early- and mid-career workers.

Data indicate that Upskill Canada is reaching early and mid-career workers. Almost 80% of Upskill Canada enrollees starting programming are between 25 and 44 years of age. In comparison, 44% of working-age Canadians were between 25 and 44 years of age, according to the 2021 Census. Almost half (47%) of enrollees are between the ages of 25 and 34, 33% are between the ages of 35 and 44, and 13% are 45 years of age or older.

3.1.2. Most enrollees have post-secondary credentials.

Ninety percent (90%) of all Upskill Canada enrollees have college or university credentials (14.6% and 75.8%, respectively). In comparison, only 41% of working-age Canadians had attained a post-secondary credential as of the 2021 Census.



Almost 80% of Upskill Canada enrollees starting programming are between 25 and 44 years of age.

3.1.3. Three-quarters of participants are immigrants to Canada and almost half are newcomers.

Three-quarters of all Upskill Canada participants (76%) are immigrants to Canada. Almost half of all Upskill Canada participants arrived in Canada within the five years prior to enrolment, nearly all of whom (96%) have post-secondary credentials (see **Table 2**). The rate of immigrant participation in Upskill Canada programming far exceeds the overall representation of immigrants in the Canadian labour force. As of 2024, 30% of the labour force in Canada were immigrants, and 35% of unemployed jobseekers were immigrants.[4]

Compared to those born in Canada, participants who immigrated to Canada are more likely to start programming with a university degree (84% vs. 50%) or any post-secondary credentials (95% vs. 77%).

Compared to enrolled men, enrolled women and gender-diverse persons are more likely to be immigrants (79% vs. 73%) and more likely to be recent newcomers who arrived within five years of enrolment (49% vs. 43%).

While the proportion of newcomers in Upskill is relatively high compared to the overall population, it may be in line with increases in the proportion of newcomers across other employment programming. For example, according to p. 258 of the Employment Insurance Monitoring and Assessment Report, newcomers made up 49% of Employment Ontario Integrated Employment Services clients in 2023-24 (35,280 newcomer clients out of a total of 72,000 total clients served). Since Upskill data cover a period of relatively high immigration to Canada, new labour market entrants may be disproportionately represented in training programs such as Upskill compared to the overall population.

4 Statistics Canada. (2026). *Labour force characteristics of immigrants, annual [Table 14-10-0472-01].* https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410047201

Table 2 | Level of education by length of time in Canada

Time in Canada	Any post-secondary credential(s) (%)	University (%)
Five years or fewer	96.3%	89.2%
Between six and 10 years	95.6%	81.5%
More than 10 years	90.1%	71.8%
Born in Canada	76.3%	49.3%

3.1.4. Enrolment across sectors varies by gender, age, education, and immigration status.

Enrolment patterns vary by demographic group. Immigrants are concentrated in digital technology (76% of enrollees are immigrants), cybersecurity (77%), and biomanufacturing (88%). Women and gender-diverse participants choose digital technology more often than men (78% of all women and gender-diverse participants enrolled in digital technology vs. 58% of all men), while men are more likely to enrol in advanced manufacturing (14% of all male participants enrolled in advanced manufacturing vs. 4% of all women and gender-diverse participants) and cybersecurity (16% of all male participants vs. 7% of all women and gender-diverse participants).

Younger participants also lean toward digital technology (73% of those under 25 vs. 53% of those aged 55–64). Among the small group without high school credentials, most (65%) entered clean technology. University graduates were more likely to choose digital technology (71%) than college or high school graduates (both under 60%). See **Appendix A** for more information about enrolment by sector and demographic characteristics.

3.2. Who completes programming?

Table 3 summarizes program completion rates by target sector for Upskill Canada enrollees. The fourth column of the table shows which sectors have an above-average program completion rate and which have a below-average rate.

While program completion is not a critical outcome of Upskill Canada, it is a key part of its theory of change in that we expect that participants who complete programming are much more likely to improve their skills and achieve better labour market outcomes. Therefore, we consider variation in completion rates as a short-term indicator of where this theory of change may be acting as expected due to high completion and where it may be constrained due to lower completion.

As **Table 3** (on the next page) shows, 85% of all Upskill Canada enrollees complete programming. Programs focused on digital technologies have the highest completion rate (88%), while those focused on the clean technology sector have the lowest (65%).



85% of all Upskill Canada enrollees complete programming.

Table 3 | Program completion rates by sector

Sector	# Enrolled	# Upskilled	% Upskilled	Difference from avg.
Advanced Manufacturing	924	773	83.7%	−1 ppt
Agricultural Technology	270	199	73.7%	−11 ppt
Biomanufacturing	361	292	80.9%	−4 ppt
Clean Technology	590	383	64.9%	−20 ppt
Cybersecurity	1,128	956	84.8%	0 ppt
Digital Technologies	6,808	5,960	87.5%	+3 ppt
All sectors	10,081	8,563	84.9%	0 ppt

Overall, completion rates are similar across demographic groups (see **Table 13** in **Appendix A**), with slightly higher rates among the groups from whom Upskill Canada attracts the most participants. Immigrant participants have above-average rates of program completion, while Canadian-born participants have slightly below average rates of completion. Recent newcomers (those who have been in Canada for five years or fewer) have the highest completion rate of any single subgroup (89%, +4 percentage points from the average). Participants with post-secondary credentials also complete at above-average rates (87%, +2 percentage points). Enrollees whose highest level of education is high school are close behind at 84% (−1 percentage point). The only group with a notably lower success rate is the very small share of enrollees with no formal credentials (less than 1% of the sample), whose completion rate is 58% (−27 percentage points).

As **Table 14** in **Appendix A** shows, completion rates for participants enrolled in Upskill Canada programs delivered in the Atlantic provinces are higher than average, with almost 95% of all enrollees completing programming. While completion rates are notably lower in the Yukon Territories, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut, programs in these regions represent less than 1% of all enrollees in Upskill Canada programs.

3.3. What changes after programming?

Table 4 presents labour market outcomes for all 5,056 Upskill Canada participants who completed programming on or before October 2, 2024 (six months before the April 2025 cut-off date for the participant tracker dataset). Post-program employment outcomes are captured during a six-month follow-up window.

Table 4 | Employment and earnings outcomes for program graduates

Measure	Pre-	Post-	Difference
Employment rate	46.91%	75.99%	+29.07 ppt
Employment rate in sector[5]	20.23%	33.60%	+13.37 ppt
Full-time employment rate[6]	27.20%	54.49%	+27.29 ppt
Average salary for employed participants[7]	$49,982.37	$52,880.55	+$2,898.18
Average salary for full-time employed participants[8]	$61,229.86	$58,532.52	–$2,697.34
Average annualized earnings, all participants[9]	$23,360.92	$40,459.46	+$17,098.54

3.3.1. Employment rates, including full-time employment and employment in one's sector of interest, increase pre- and post-program.

Employment rates for Upskill Canada graduates increased by 29 percentage points, from 47% at enrolment to 76% six-months post program. Rates of full-time employment also increased by 27 percentage points, from 27% at enrolment to 54% six-months post program. While only one-third of Upskill Canada graduates were employed in their program's target sector at follow-up, this represents a notable increase from enrolment (20% to 33%, a 13-percentage point increase).



Employment rates for Upskill Canada graduates increased by 29 percentage points, from 47% at enrolment to 76% six-months post program.

5 Participants who are unemployed and not in the labour force are included in the denominator.

6 Participants who are unemployed and not in the labour force are included in the denominator.

7 Excludes data for participants who are unemployed or not in the labour force, as well as participants for whom salary data are missing.

8 Participants who became full-time employed during participation are included in the "Post" sample but not the "Pre" sample, so these two figures do not represent the same individuals.

9 Includes data for participants who are unemployed and not in the labour force (i.e., participants for whom salary is equal to $0); missing values for employed participants are imputed linearly.

3.3.2. On average, Upskill Canada graduates earn more after taking part in programming.

Average annualized earnings for Upskill graduates increased by $17,098, from $23,360 to $40,459. This increase was largely driven by participants who were unemployed or not in the labour force at enrolment and entering employment during the follow-up period. However, salaries for individuals who were employed at enrolment and at follow-up also increased, on average, by $2,898.



Average annualized earnings for Upskill graduates increased by $17,098, from $23,360 to $40,459.

3.3.3. Gains in labour market outcomes are unevenly distributed across sectors.

As shown in **Table 5** (below), participants in digital technologies and advanced manufacturing programs achieved the largest pre- to post- increases in labour market outcomes. Participants in digital technologies programs had the lowest average annualized earnings at enrolment and experienced the greatest absolute increases in average employment rate (an increase of 33 percentage points), employment in sector (an increase of 14 percentage points), full-time employment rate (an increase of 30 percentage points), and average annualized earnings (an increase of $18,700).

In contrast, participants in cybersecurity programs experienced the lowest increase in employment rate (an increase of 12 percentage points) and average annualized earnings (an increase of $8,563). For cybersecurity participants, average salary among employed participants actually decreases; however, average earnings increase overall since earnings calculations include individuals who were not employed (and therefore the new income of newly employed individuals more than offsets the small decrease in the amount each employed participant is earning).

Table 5 | Labour market outcomes by sector

Sector	Pre- to post- difference		
	Employment rate	Average salary	Average earnings
Advanced Manufacturing	+23 ppt	+$1,350	+$14,892
Agriculture Technology	+24 ppt	+$5,935	+$18,547
Biomanufacturing	+20 ppt	+$5,833	+$12,389
Clean Technology	+16 ppt	+$237	+$8,736
Cybersecurity	+12 ppt	−$177	+$8,563
Digital Technologies	+33 ppt	+$5,191	+$18,700

3.3.4. Upskill Canada graduates from underrepresented groups experience greater earnings increases.

Men, women, and gender-diverse participants experienced similar gains in employment pre- and post-program (see **Table 15** in **Appendix A**). However, women and gender-diverse persons experienced greater increases in average salary and average annualized earnings relative to men. Newcomers who arrived in Canada fewer than five years before joining Upskill Canada experienced greater than average gains across all labour market outcomes. While participants without post-secondary education were less likely to complete Upskill Canada programming, those who did complete experienced labour market outcomes similar to those of participants with college credentials.



Women and gender-diverse persons experienced greater increases in average salary and average annualized earnings relative to men.



Average annualized earnings for Upskill graduates increased by $17,098, from $23,360 to $40,459.

3.3.5. Participants in the Atlantic region experienced the greatest gains in labour market outcomes.

As **Table 6** shows, participants who completed Upskill Canada programming in the Atlantic provinces experienced the largest gains in labour market outcomes. The overall employment rate for participants in Atlantic Canada increased by 39 percentage points, and average salary and earnings increased by $7,050 and $19,235 post-program, respectively. Gains in labour market outcomes in the Central region, the West Coast, and the Prairies were positive but more modest related to the Atlantic region. Results are not available for Northern Canada due to the small sample size.

Table 6 | Labour market outcomes by delivery region

Region	Pre- to post- difference		
	Employment rate	Average salary	Average earnings
North (YT, NT, NU)[10]	n/a	n/a	n/a
Central (ON, QC)	+26 ppt	+$2,600	+$16,813
Atlantic (NB, NS, PEI, NL)	+39 ppt	+$7,050	+$19,235
West Coast (BC)	+30 ppt	+$6,364	+$16,807
Prairies (AB, SK, MB)	+34 ppt	+$2,216	+$17,861

10 There are insufficient records to make a realistic comparison. Of the 39 upskilled participants in the North, employment and earnings data are missing for all but two.

3.4. What are the potential impacts on upskilled participants and partner employers?

While the previous findings outline what labour market outcomes Upskill Canada participants achieve, they do not fully illustrate Upskill Canada's potential role in improving their productivity, and in turn, creating higher earnings for participants and better business outcomes for employers.

In this section, we consider two ways in which Upskill Canada may impact productivity: by directly increasing the hourly **productivity** of participant labour through improved skills, and by increasing the **utilization** of their existing skills. As noted in the **Methodology** section, all calculations in this section are intended to illustrate Upskill Canada's potential impact in each area based on plausible assumptions, rather than rigorously estimate it.

Table 7 (on the next page) outlines the potential impacts on participants and employers due to Upskill Canada participation. By helping participants develop skills that generate additional labour productivity, Upskill Canada could potentially create labour productivity on the order of **$1,649 per-year per-participant**, realized by participants as $1,319 in additional annual earnings and by their destination employers as $330 in surplus annual production. If those impacts are true, and they persist over the remainder of participant careers (30 years on average), the **total present value** (discounted at 7%) **of labour productivity created by Upskill Canada per-upskilled participant would be $20,457**: $16,366 in participant earnings and $4,091 in employer surplus.

In addition, by giving participants opportunities to bring their underutilized skills and expertise to market, Upskill Canada could potentially have an additional immediate impact on participant productivity and annualized earnings in the neighbourhood of **$17,014**. If that were the case, and the impact lasted only for the year following program completion, it would bring the total present value of benefits of the average upskilled participant to roughly **$33,736** (assuming that this utilization impact occurs for the 83.5% of participants who change employers or hours worked after upskilling).

Across the 8,563 upskilled participants in the sample, that potential net present value translates to lifetime productivity impacts of roughly $289 million if the observed 16.5% of participants maintain their current level of employment with their baseline employers. Extended to the 15,500 participants projected to be upskilled over the course of the program, that total rises to roughly $523 million.



By helping participants develop skills that generate additional labour productivity, Upskill Canada could potentially create labour productivity on the order of $1,649 per-year per-participant, realized by participants as $1,319 in additional annual earnings and by their destination employers as $330 in surplus annual production.

Table 7 | Overview of potential impacts for average upskilled participant

Type	Beneficiary	Timing	Potential Impact	
			Annual	NPV (7% discount rate)
Productivity	Participant	30 years	$1,319	$16,366
	Employer	30 years	$330	$4,091
Utilization (applies to 83.5% of participants)	Participant	1 year	$14,208 (17,016 * 83.5%)	$13,279 (15,903 * 83.5%)
Total	Combined	Combined	$15,857	$33,736

3.4.1. Mechanisms of impact

We expect that participants in Upskill Canada could improve their productivity through two primary mechanisms:

1. **Improving participant productivity per hour of labour that they work by building new workplace-relevant skills.** This mechanism is expected to apply to all Upskill Canada participants, though we calculate it based on the outcomes of the **productivity** subgroup (see **Figure 1** on p. 9) or participants who are full-time employed with the same employer both pre- and post-training.
2. **Working in jobs that better utilize their existing skills where they both work more hours and are paid more per hour by building new skills that allow them to access these jobs.** This mechanism is expected to apply to the **job fit** subgroup of participants, or those whose employment situation changes pre- and post-training, either by changing their hours worked or their employer.

We consider these two mechanisms since they align with two major patterns of outcomes for participants in Upskill Canada: some participants have the same full-time job at the beginning and end of training, which aligns with Mechanism 1, and a larger group of participants either find or change jobs, which aligns with Mechanism 2. **Table 8** (on the next page) outlines each mechanism in greater detail.

Table 8 | Mechanisms of impact

Mechanism 1: Increase in labour productivity	Mechanism 2: Better skill and labour utilization
1. An upskilled participant graduates with more skills. 2. Those skills increase the productivity of that participant's labour. 3. The participant experiences this productivity increase via an increase in their salary. 4. The employer experiences this productivity increase to the extent that the impact on their bottom line exceeds the increased salary they pay. 5. The total impact on labour productivity is the sum of benefits to the employer and the participant and can be calculated for both the short and long term.	1. An upskilled participant enrolls with skills and/or time that are not being fully utilized in their current occupation. 2. Graduating from Upskill Canada allows them to find a job that utilizes more of their pre-existing skills and/or more of their working time. 3. The participant is more productive at this new job since it uses skills they were not using at a previous job. 4. Participants experience this productivity increase via higher wages and more hours worked. 5. The total impact on labour productivity is equal to the benefits to the participant but can be calculated only for the short term due to uncertainty about the long-term persistence of impacts

3.4.2. Upskilling could increase graduate labour productivity, resulting in long-term financial benefits for themselves and employers (Mechanism 1).

Analytical approach

To estimate the potential hourly productivity impacts of Upskill Canada, we follow three steps:

1. Develop a plausible estimate for how much of a productivity increase employers may experience as accruing to their bottom line beyond what is paid out to the employee (the productivity multiplier).
2. Calculate annual potential productivity increase by measuring the observed increases in average earnings. Convert this increase to a potential impact of Upskill Canada by adjusting the result downward by the population average rate of earnings increase (a benchmark of how much individual salaries would increase without training).
3. Estimate the net present value of that potential impact over a participant's whole career.

Step 1: Identify a plausible value for productivity multiplier.

Economic literature on training interventions for working-age adults indicates that productivity impacts can vary greatly in the degree to which these impacts are experienced only by the trainee (in the form of higher wages) or by both the trainee and their employer (as both higher wages and higher profits).

In practice, we can define this split via a 'productivity multiplier,' or the total productivity gain of an employee divided by the total earnings increase they experience. Economic studies on training indicate that this productivity multiplier can range from a value of **1**, in cases where skills are highly transferable and all productivity benefits are accrued to the participant, to a value of **2**, in cases where skills are highly workplace-specific, and productivity benefits are split evenly between higher wages for workers and higher profits for employers.

We cannot directly measure the productivity multiplier for Upskill Canada programming, so we must assume a value between 1 and 2 based on the nature of the skills trained within the programming. For the purposes of this analysis, we assume a multiplier of **1.25**, or that for every additional $100 a participant earns, an additional $25 is also contributed to the employer's bottom line. This multiplier aligns with the assumption that Upskill Canada programming largely provides transferable skills, but that some skills participants learn in Upskill Canada programming are employer-specific and so confer some surplus productivity for the hiring employer.

Step 2: Calculate potential productivity impact.

Table 9 outlines our calculation for potential productivity impact realized by upskilled participants as increased earnings:

- The **observed** change in average earnings for participants in sample 5.
- The **benchmark** we subtract from that change: our assumption of how a full-time employee's earnings would increase without training (or, the amount of the change that we could not attribute to Upskill). We assume a 4% average annual increase (pro-rated to 2% to align with the six-month follow-up point) based on survey data on similar jobs from Normandin Beaudry.
- The **adjusted** earnings change after subtracting that population benchmark.
- The additional **annual employer impact** once we apply the productivity multiplier.
- The estimated **total change in annual productivity** that sums both changes.

Table 9 | Potential productivity impact (Mechanism 1, participants)

Difference in annual earnings			Potential annual impact		
Observed	**Benchmark**	**Adjusted**	**Participants**	**Employers**	**Total**
+$2,647	+$1,328	+$1,319	+$1,319	+$330	+$1,649

Of this total potential change in annual productivity, $1,319 could accrue to participants while $330 could accrue to employers.

Step 3: Estimate net present value.

Assuming that Upskill Canada participants will continue to work for 30 years after training, and assuming a 7% annual discount rate, this potential impact would translate to a lifetime value of $16,366 accruing to each participant, and $4,091 accruing to their employer(s) (see **Table 11** in **Appendix A**).

3.4.3. Upskilling could increase graduate productivity in the short run by allowing them to find work that utilizes more of their skills and/or time (Mechanism 2).

Analytical approach

In addition to improving the hourly productivity of participants, Upskill Canada may increase participant earnings by giving them access to work that utilizes more of their skills, more of their labour, or both. To estimate this potential impact, we can examine the average earnings gains for participants who found a new job, increased their hours, or were unemployed, and subtract out our estimate of the per-hour productivity impact as well as our benchmark of the average earnings gain individuals experience without training.

When considering the potential productivity impacts from Mechanism 2, we highlight two important differences from Mechanism 1:

- First, we assume a productivity multiplier of **1.0** for this calculation. Unlike the labour productivity *created* by upskilling (Mechanism 1), we assume that for these participants, employers are paying market rates for their pre-existing skills when hiring them into new jobs or positions. While these participants may still positively impact employers' bottom line by giving them access to higher-quality candidates, the current data do not allow us to estimate the magnitude of this effect, so we do not include any employer benefits in the calculation.
- Second, we treat this potential impact as a single-year increase in labour productivity. We can reasonably assume that the labour productivity *created* by upskilling (Mechanism 1) persists over the remainder of the upskilled participant's career. We cannot make the same assumption about the labour productivity unlocked by better utilization of upskilled participants' existing skills and time since it is possible that a similar proportion would find employment that utilizes more of their skills and time without the benefit of Upskill Canada participation.

Calculating potential impact from better skill and labour utilization

Table 10, on the following page, outlines our calculation for potential productivity impacts from better skill and labour utilization, specifically:

- **Pre-** and **post-** training earnings for individuals who changed employment situations pre- and post-training, either by changing hours worked or employers, as well as the associated observed change in earnings.
- The **benchmark** we subtract from that change: our assumption of how a full-time employee's earnings would increase without training (or, the amount of the change that we could not attribute to Upskill Canada). We assume a 4% average annual increase (pro-rated to 2% to align with the six-month follow-up point) based on survey data on similar jobs from Normandin Beaudry.
- The **productivity** increase we estimate from Mechanism 1 occurring due to changes in hourly productivity, which we subtract from the observed difference. This change is assumed to still occur for these individuals, but we attribute it to Mechanism 1 instead of Mechanism 2, so subtract it here.
- The **adjusted** total earnings and productivity change after subtracting the population benchmark and productivity change attributable to Mechanism 1.

After adjusting for increased earnings associated with Upskill Canada's potential impact on participant labour productivity, benchmark salary increase, and the representation of Sample 4, Upskill Canada's potential impact on skill and labour utilization is $17,014 per-participant in the year following the program.

Table 10 | Potential impact of skill and labour utilization

Pre-	Post-	Difference			
		Observed	Benchmark	Productivity	Adjusted
$14,849	$34,806	+$19,957	- $297	- $2,647	+$17,014

3.5. How do Upskill Canada's potential impacts compare to those of other Canadian programs?

Upskill Canada has the potential to create substantial productivity impacts, experienced by both participants and employers, by building skills that allow participants to be more productive per hour worked and by allowing them to connect to jobs that allow them to better deploy their existing skills.

While we cannot confirm the magnitude of these impacts at this time, if Upskill Canada is achieving impacts close to these potential impact levels, then it compares favourably to Canadian publicly funded LMDA skills programming.

Canada's LMDAs are a set of bilateral agreements between Canada and each province and territory used to fund a standard set of employment and skills training programs administered by the provinces and territories. ESDC's recent horizontal evaluation of LMDA programming estimates that participants in this programming earn an annual average of **$2,508** more than non-participants while participating in intensive Skills Development programming, and from **$1,208** to **$1,648** more than non-participants after completing less-intensive Job Creation Partnership or Targeted Wage Subsidy programming (respectively).

4. Recommendations for consideration

4.1. Explore opportunities to tailor training to participant needs.

There is an opportunity for Palette to consider the different profiles of participants Upskill Canada is currently reaching and explore how programming can best meet their distinct needs. Many participants today are early- to mid-career immigrants with college or university education. This creates an opportunity for Upskill Canada to explore how their programming aligns with existing models for skilled immigrants, such as bridging programs.

At the same time, about 10% of Upskill Canada participants have no post-secondary education and roughly 15% have a college credential. These learners may benefit more from building new, job-ready skills and clear pathways into their new roles. Our analysis also suggests that additional retention supports for participants without post-secondary education may be needed to increase program completion rates.

Our analysis shows that both segments of participants are experiencing gains in employment outcomes, but they likely need different training approaches. Upskill Canada could conduct additional qualitative and secondary research to better understand the needs of the different segments of participants (and the employers with whom they work) and ensure programming aligns with promising evidence of what works for these distinct population groups.

Upskill Canada may also wish to consider whether they are reaching their intended audience and whether there are Canadians who may benefit from upskilling but are not currently being reached. For example, Upskill Canada could further explore whether and how to increase outreach to individuals who have not completed post-secondary education.

4.2. Investigate the scalability of promising sectors and improvement options for other sectors.

Participant outcomes differ by training sector. Areas like digital technologies and advanced manufacturing show strong gains in jobs and/or earnings while others show little change.

For the sectors where participants experience large gains in labour market outcomes, Palette should rigorously establish Upskill Canada's effectiveness within these sectors (see the following recommendation). Palette should then explore whether these models are scalable. Can the training be replicated at new sites? Is there enough employer demand to absorb more graduates?



Upskill Canada has the potential to create substantial productivity impacts, experienced by both participants and employers, by building skills that allow participants to be more productive per hour worked and by allowing them to connect to jobs that allow them to better deploy their existing skills.

For sectors with smaller gains, Palette should further explore why this is the case. Does it take participants more time to achieve outcomes? Is the training misaligned with what learners or employers need? Is local demand in the sector weak? Answering these questions will help Palette adjust training models or right-size the scale of programming. Focusing on these strengths and gaps provides a pathway for Upskill Canada to scale its impact and ensure that its portfolio of models best supports both participant success and economic growth.

4.3. Pursue further data collection and data linkage to more rigorously measure impact and strengthen the Upskill Canada model.

Upskill Canada is showing promising outcomes, but current evidence mostly compares participants before and after the program and does not rigorously measure Upskill Canada's *impact*, or what changes in participant outcomes can be attributed directly to Upskill Canada.

To strengthen the evidence, Palette should continue to collect comprehensive and consistent participant and outcomes data. They could also consider:

- conducting qualitative research with participants and employers to better understand needs and program fit for different segments of participants (and their potential employers);
- working with government partners to securely link program records to administrative data (e.g., tax files) to precisely track the long-term labour market outcomes of participants, clearly estimate the effects on employers after hiring Upskill Canada graduates, and help create comparison groups to rigorously estimate effectiveness; and
- including randomization as part of the recruitment process (e.g., via a transparent lottery to determine who takes part in Upskill Canada programming) where programs are oversubscribed in order to create a natural comparison group, rigorously evaluate program impact, and test adaptations to the model.

Appendix A:
Additional data tables

Table 11 | Share of salaries imputed at pre- and post-

Status	Pre-	Post-
Not employed (earnings = 0)	2,593	1,785
Salary observed	2,160 (96.6%)	2,437 (80.0%)
Salary imputed	77 (3.4%)	610 (20.0%)

Figure 2 | Distributions of imputed and observed salaries

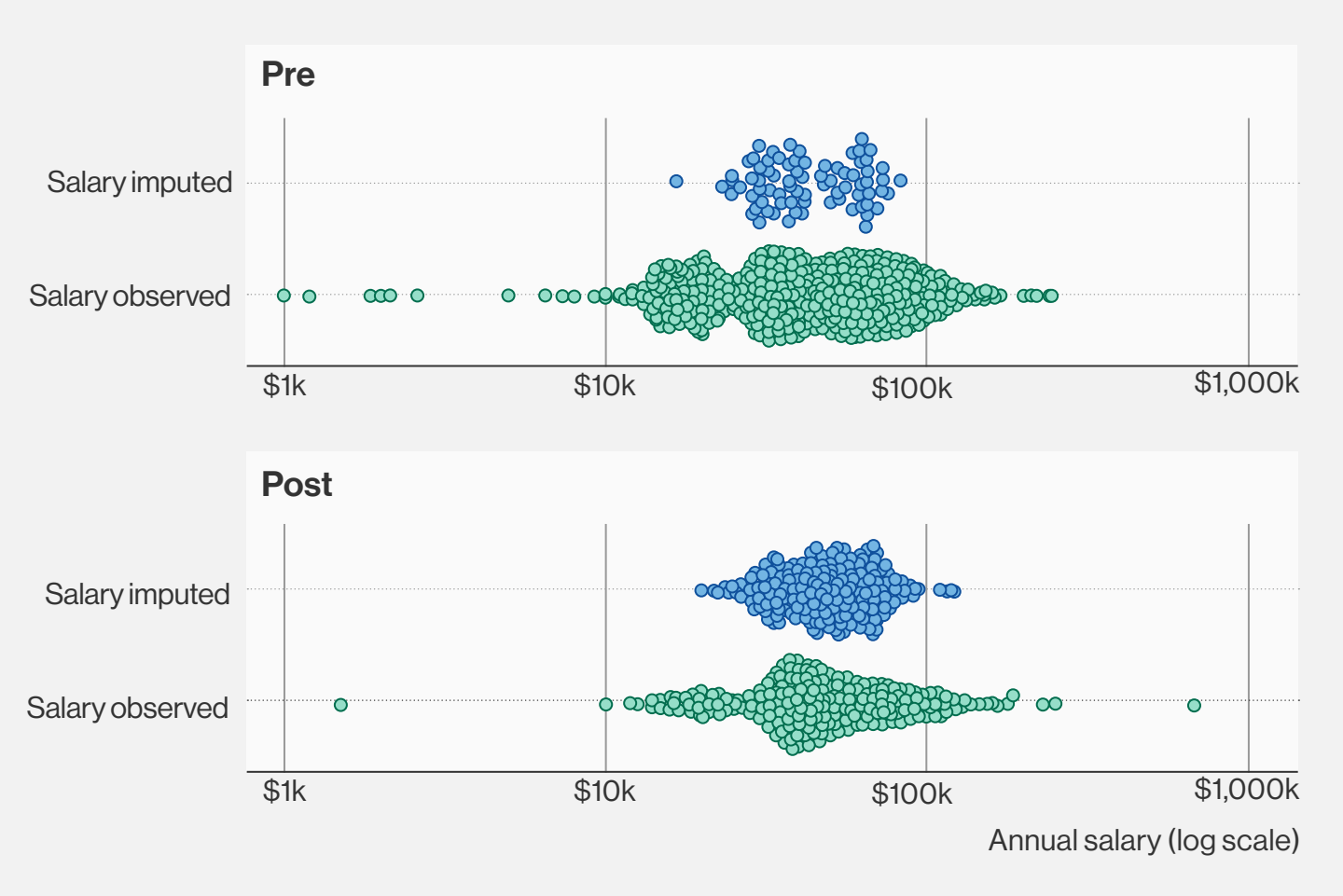


Table 12 | Pre-program demographic characteristics of Upskill Canada participants

		All participants	Women and gender diverse	Men
Age	<25	7.4%	7.8%	6.9%
	25–34	46.3%	50.8%	41.3%
	35–44	33.1%	31.0%	35.6%
	45–54	10.4%	8.4%	12.7%
	55–64	2.5%	1.9%	3.3%
	>64	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%
Highest level of education	None	0.6%	0.4%	0.7%
	High school	9.1%	7.3%	11.2%
	College	14.6%	13.6%	15.7%
	University	75.8%	78.7%	72.5%
Immigration status	Five years or fewer	46.2%	43.3%	49.4%
	Between six and 10 years	13.5%	13.4%	13.7%
	More than 10 years	15.9%	16.0%	15.8%
	Born in Canada	24.4%	27.2%	21.1%

Table 13 | Program completion rates by demographic characteristic

		# Enrolled	% Upskilled	Difference from average
Age	<25	712	83.1%	−4 ppt
	25–34	4,504	86.9%	0 ppt
	35–44	3,219	87.9%	+1 ppt
	45–54	1,019	85.7%	−1 ppt
	55–64	246	85.0%	−2 ppt
	>64	16	81.2%	−5 ppt
Gender	Women and gender diverse	5,116	86.2%	−1 ppt
	Men	4,533	87.3%	+1 ppt
Highest level of education	None	72	58.3%	−28 ppt
	High school	873	83.8%	−2 ppt
	College	1,377	86.6%	0 ppt
	University	7,136	86.8%	+1 ppt
	Five years or fewer	4,227	88.9%	+2 ppt
Immigration status	Between six and 10 years	1,241	86.0%	−1 ppt
	More than 10 years	1,463	87.6%	0 ppt
	Born in Canada	2,255	84.4%	−3 ppt

Table 14 | Program completion rates by delivery region

	# Enrolled	# Upskilled	% Upskilled	Difference from average
North (YT, NT, NU)	90	39	43.3%	−42 ppt
Central (ON, QC)	6,102	5,124	84.0%	−1 ppt
Atlantic (NB, NS, PEI, NL)	453	428	94.5%	+10 ppt
West Coast (BC)	2,041	1,791	87.8%	+3 ppt
Prairies (AB, SK, MB)	1,384	1,172	84.7%	0 ppt

Table 15 | Labour market outcomes by demographic characteristic

Demographic subgroup		Pre- to post- difference		
		Employment rate	Average salary	Average earnings
Age	<25	+22 ppt	+$8,634	+$14,139
	25–34	+31 ppt	+$2,742	+$17,765
	35–44	+29 ppt	+$1,615	+$16,955
	45–54	+27 ppt	+$4,313	+$18,566
	55–64	+17 ppt	+$634	+$9,693
	>64	+17 ppt	−$5,312	+$12,292
Gender	Women and gender diverse persons	+30 ppt	+$4,466	+$17,962
	Men	+28 ppt	+1,486	+16,204
Highest level of education	None	0 ppt	+$549	+$473
	High school	+28 ppt	+$1,315	+$13,371
	College	+24 ppt	+$1,416	+$13,134
	University	+31 ppt	+$3,452	+$18,750
Immigration status	Five years or fewer	+36 ppt	+$5,737	+$19,071
	Between six and 10 years	+22 ppt	+$1,942	+$14,694
	More than 10 years	+24 ppt	+$3,356	+$16,775
	Born in Canada	+21 ppt	+$2,313	+$14,019

Table 16 | Program sector choice by demographic segment

		#	% of segment enrolled in sector					
			Advanced manufacturing	Agriculture Tech	Bio-manufacturing	Clean Tech	Cyber-security	Digital Tech
All participants		10,081	9.2%	2.7%	3.6%	5.9%	11.2%	67.5%
Age	<25	712	6.5%	1.0%	3.2%	8.4%	8.0%	72.9%
	25–34	4504	6.7%	1.4%	2.8%	3.5%	11.5%	74.0%
	35–44	3219	9.5%	3.6%	4.4%	6.0%	11.6%	64.8%
	45–54	1019	14.3%	4.3%	2.8%	9.7%	12.9%	55.9%
	55–64	246	15.4%	8.5%	2.4%	6.5%	14.2%	52.8%
	>64	16	6.2%	25.0%	0.0%	12.5%	12.5%	43.8%
Gender	Women and gender diverse persons	5116	3.6%	2.1%	3.8%	5.6%	6.8%	78.1%
	Men	4533	14.3%	3.2%	3.1%	5.7%	16.2%	57.5%
	None	72	25.0%	1.4%	0.0%	65.3%	1.4%	6.9%
Highest level of education	High school	873	15.3%	2.5%	1.4%	12.3%	11.0%	57.5%
	College	1377	14.7%	1.7%	1.7%	6.8%	15.1%	59.9%
	University	7136	6.8%	2.1%	4.2%	4.4%	11.5%	71.1%
Immigration status	Five years or fewer	4227	8.4%	2.3%	3.6%	5.1%	7.9%	72.6%
	Between six and 10 years	1241	7.0%	1.9%	3.7%	5.1%	16.9%	65.4%
	More than 10 years	1463	7.4%	2.6%	2.3%	5.2%	18.2%	64.3%
	Born in Canada	2255	11.5%	3.0%	1.5%	7.7%	10.8%	65.5%

Blueprint

About Blueprint

Blueprint is a nonprofit that helps leaders use data and evidence to tackle complex public policy challenges across Canada.

We partner with government, community, philanthropic, and industry leaders to strengthen public systems and deliver better outcomes. We bring together policy analysts, evaluators, economists, data scientists, and implementation experts—people who know how to turn insight into action. Our work is grounded in deep subject-matter expertise, rigorous methods, and a real-world understanding of how systems operate and evolve. More than just an advisor, we're also partners in change. We provide key support at every stage of the policy and program lifecycle: from early strategy and design to implementation, evaluation, and continuous improvement.

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