

A Profile of English-speaking Mature Workers Residing in the Greater Montreal Area

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BACKGROUND

Declining retirement earnings are inciting the mature sector of the population to search for viable options and return to the workforce. Considering that Quebec's English-speaking community is aging faster than the general population the employment struggles facing mature workers was identified by the Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation (CEDEC) as a priority in its 2008-2013 Strategic Plan.

Initiated in 2009, CEDEC's Mature Workers Initiative was created as a way to foster a pro-active dialogue between various stakeholders in different regions across the province with the aim to assist unemployed and underemployed English-speaking Quebecers aged 45 years and older to successfully integrate into the Quebec labour market. As a first step in 2009, in the region of Quebec Chaudière-Appalaches, a needs assessment was conducted resulting in a Strategy and Recommendations targeting the needs of mature workers in that region. Another study was conducted in the Outaouais region in 2011 with results still being tabulated while a third needs assessment was performed in the Greater Montreal Area in 2011. This report will highlight findings of the surveys conducted in the Greater Montreal Area.

In order to identify the specific employment needs and challenges, two separate studies were conducted in 2011 with a total of 684 respondents. The findings suggested that this is a complex group presenting numerous life situations and barriers who often feel frustrated because they face challenges they have little or no control over. Among the most prevalent obstacles to finding employment mentioned by the respondents were:

- Poor French language speaking and/or writing skills;
- Age discrimination, becoming most acute around the age of 50;
- Low level of computer skills;
- Recent immigrants face numerous challenges; they lack adequate French language skills, racial or religious discrimination, and are less likely to know about available resources for finding employment;
- Those living outside the City of Montreal, but within the Greater Montreal Area, tend to have a lower level of education, are less likely to have undergone some type of training program, are more likely to say their French language skills are an obstacle, and are less likely to know about available resources.

More encouragingly, many of these mature workers felt that their skills were very relevant to current labor conditions, but were very willing to undergo further training if it meant enhancing the possibility of gaining employment.

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

This report examines English-speaking unemployed and underemployed mature individuals (45+ years) residing in the Greater Montreal Area. Specifically, it looks at the characteristics of this population, their training and past work experiences, and the obstacles and challenges they face while seeking employment.

The current analysis summarizes the results of two studies. The first was done in the City of Montreal between January and March 2011; and the second was done in the Greater Montreal Area (GMA) between July and October 2011. The first study garnered a total of 205 respondents, and the second garnered 479 respondents.

The findings of both studies were merged together in this report for a total of 684 respondents. Only those who completed at least half of the questionnaire were considered in the analysis. In all, 629 of 684 respondents completed all the questions presented to them, or 92% of the sample.

Respondents were derived from numerous sources, using various venues of communication. Some of the sources included government departments, community organizations, professional associations, trade unions, universities, adult schools and businesses. Press releases appeared in newspapers and online media, and several interviews describing the study were conducted by various media outlets.

In terms of methodological limitations, it should be mentioned that the present research has a major response bias related to it, namely, the fact that respondents were self-selected. It is difficult to know whether any types of respondents were more or less likely to participate in the study, but the issue of self-selection is a common limitation associated with any survey that seeks to garner opinions from the public. On the other hand, the large sample size (n=684) somewhat compensated for this limitation.

Another bias relates to the “Halo Effect”, in which a respondent wishes to appear in a positive or favorable light. Because the survey assured anonymity (unless the respondent volunteered their contact information at the end of the survey) the Halo Effect was likely mitigated to a great extent. Indeed, the comments of respondents to open-ended questions suggested that they did not hold back in expressing their perceptions and opinions freely.

Finally, several variables were used to cross-tabulate the results, to determine whether certain demographic characteristics were related to certain responses. For instance, some of these grouping variables included: location of residence, age, gender, language fluency, place of birth, number of years residing in Canada, education level, and where their highest level of education was completed.

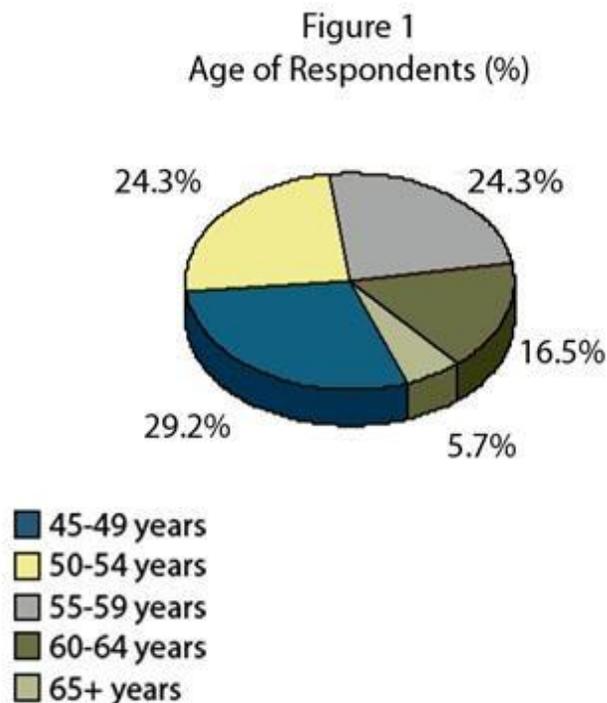
RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

Of the total 684 individuals who responded to the present survey, 312 (45.6%) were males and 372 (54.4%) were females. It is not clear whether women were more inclined to answer such a survey than men, or whether this in fact accurately represented the gender distribution for the target population.

In terms of age breakdowns, the sample was fairly evenly distributed across the specified age ranges, with slightly more representation in the youngest cohort. For instance, 29.2% were between 45-49 years, 24.3% between 50-54 years, 24.3% between 55-59 years, and 22.2% 60+ years (Figure 1). The study thus represents a good cross-section of ages.

However, at the older end of the distribution, only 5.7% of the sample was 65+ years of age. This is expected since there are much fewer individuals looking for work at retirement age.



The majority of the sample (56.9%) was born in the province of Quebec, 13.9% in the rest of Canada, and 28.2% were born outside Canada. In short, more than a quarter of the respondents were immigrants. The place of birth of 1% could not be clearly identified.

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Those who were born outside the province of Quebec were asked how many years they had lived here. The majority (58.9%) had lived here for at least 20 years, 19.3% for 10-19 years, and 21.9% for less than 10 years. A further analysis revealed that 13% were recent arrivals; that is, had come to Quebec within the last five years.

Respondents were asked to specify their current area of residence. Slightly more than half the sample (52.9%) lived in the City of Montreal, 20.7% lived on the West Island, 14.3% lived on the South Shore, 4.8% in Laval, 3.3% on the West Shore (Hudson, Vaudreuil, etc.), 1.2% on the North Shore (Mirabel, Pointe Calumet, etc.), and 2.7% resided outside the Greater Montreal Area, but still lived in its environs (Sutton, Knowlton, etc.).

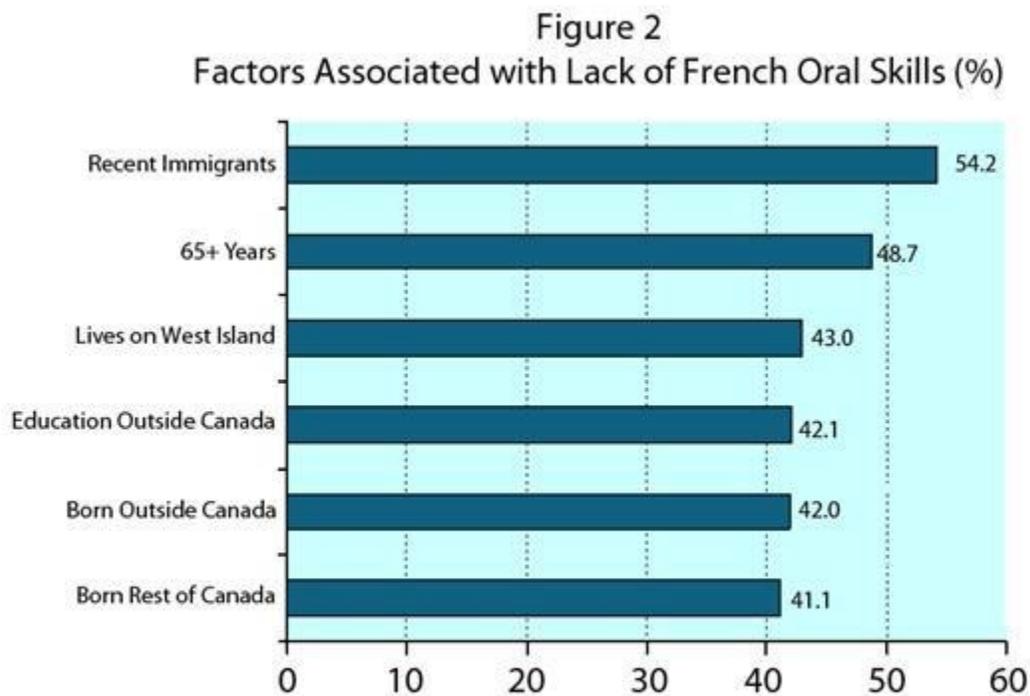
In terms of language usage, respondents were asked which of the two official languages they normally used. The great majority (90.9%) said English, a much smaller proportion (2.3%) said French, and 6.7% said both. In short, as expected, most respondents were primarily English-speaking.

Respondents were also asked, aside from English and French, which other languages they could speak. About a third (30.6%) said they could speak another language. Indeed, they specified a wide range of languages, with the most commonly mentioned being: Spanish (n=33), Italian (32), Polish (12), German (12), Greek (11), Russian (10) and Arabic (10).

Looking at the data more closely regarding French language skills, it was determined that 69% of the sample was able to speak French, and 31% was not able to speak it. Unfortunately, it was not possible to discern their precise level of spoken fluency, although it is clear that almost a third of the sample had difficulties with oral French.

What factors were associated with lack of French oral skills among mature English-speaking workers? Interestingly, the highest percentages of individuals who did not speak French were found among immigrants who have lived in Quebec for less than ten years (54.2%), those 65+ years of age (48.7%), those living on the West Island (43%), those who completed their highest education outside of Canada (42.1%), those who were born outside of Canada (42%), and those born in the rest of Canada (41.1%). (Figure 2)

In short, recent arrivals to Quebec are the least likely to have French oral skills. The lack of French oral fluency is very similar among those who were born in the rest of Canada compared to those born outside of Canada. Moreover, further analysis revealed that the level of highest education did not have a bearing on French oral skills, with those with university degrees/diplomas having similar levels of French oral fluency as those without such an education.



Education & Training

In terms of the highest education completed by respondents, 19% said high school, 7.3% said trade or vocational school, 21.9% said community college or CEGEP, 28.1% said a Bachelor's degree, 5.8% a graduate diploma, 12.4% a Master's degree, and 1.5% said a PhD. A small percentage (3.9%) completed other types of education not related to any of the above classifications.

In summary, almost half the sample (47.8%) had some type of university degree or diploma. Interestingly, those born outside the country were more likely to have some type of university degree / diploma (60.6%), than those born in the rest of Canada (52.6%), or in Quebec (40.4%). In short, it seems that the immigrants among the sample were quite a highly educated group.

Moreover, those living in the City of Montreal had a higher proportion of mature workers with university degrees / diplomas than those living in the rest of the Greater Montreal Area (52.9% and 37%, respectively).

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Where did respondents complete their highest level of education? More than two-thirds (68.7%) of the sample completed their education in Quebec, whereas 14% said elsewhere in Canada, 11.7% said their country of origin, and 5.6% said “other” (likely countries they lived or studied in before coming to Canada). It seems that even though 28.2% of the sample was not born in Canada, only 17.3% did not finish their education in this country.

Respondents were asked whether they felt the education they received outside Quebec had been recognized when they applied for a job. More than a third (36.8%) said it was recognized, but 30.3% said it was not recognized, and 33% did not know.

Some comments related to the recognition (or non-recognition) of the respondents’ education included: “Outside Quebec, my degree has been recognized as a PhD whereas Quebec persists in calling it a Masters solely due to the number of years of study”; “Not only Quebec, but the entire country is unaware and ignorant of other countries educational qualifications and usually will not even try to verify your degree”; “It is obvious that some people seem to have difficulties to accept that some people might be better qualified than them and this can be threatening. Some people do not welcome valid experience easily - you have to fit in and sometimes lower your own standards”; “My degree is somewhat recognized. But it is underestimated”.

Interestingly, of those who did their education elsewhere in Canada, 20.7% said it was not recognized, whereas 39.7% of those who did it outside the country said it was not recognized. It is obvious that it is more difficult to obtain recognition of education done outside the country, than of education completed within Canada (but outside Quebec).

Finally, respondents were asked whether they had requested a comparative evaluation of the studies they completed outside Quebec. About a quarter (23.8%) said that they had, 67% had not, and 9.2% did not know how to make such a request.

In terms of training, respondents were asked what type of training or development program they had enrolled in, in the province of Quebec. The largest proportion (12.3%) said they had enrolled in a language school, followed by 11.4% at a university, 8% at a community college or CEGEP, and 4.7% at a trade school. 13.7% said other types of training. All in all, 40.4% of respondents said they had enrolled in some type of training program.

Most inclined to have enrolled in a training program were individuals who completed their highest education outside Canada (50%), compared to those who completed it in the rest of Canada (46.9%), or in the province of Quebec (36.4%). Interestingly, respondents who lived in the City of Montreal were much more inclined to have undergone some type of training program compared to those who lived in the rest of the Greater Montreal Area (50.2% and 35.7%, respectively). A question is whether it was more difficult for the latter group to access such training.

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Regarding whether they have had a work placement (or an internship) with an organization or agency, 15.9% of respondents said they had, and 84.1% said they had not.

Those who had such a work placement were asked whether they felt it had helped their job search or better prepared them for today's job market. More than a quarter (27.3%) said that it "definitely" helped, 29.3% said it "probably" helped, 26.3% said it "probably did not" help, and 17.2% said it "definitely did not" help. In short, the reactions to these work placements or internships were quite variable.

Finally, would respondents be willing to enroll in further training to begin a new career, to upgrade their skills, or work towards having a certification recognized? Almost half of the sample (48.9%) said that they would "definitely" be willing, 29.3% said they would "probably" be willing, 16.8% said they would "probably not" be willing, and 4.9% said they would "definitely not" be willing. There appears to be a significant proportion (78.2%) of mature workers who are at least somewhat willing to enroll in further training.

Are there particular segments that are more open to enroll in further training than others? Those with no university degree or diploma were much more likely to "definitely" consider improving their skills with further training (55.6%), compared to those with a university degree or diploma (41.8%). This is not surprising given that those with a lower level of formal education are more likely to need an upgrading of skills.

Past Work and Volunteer Experience

Respondents were asked in what field or industry they had worked in. The field most often mentioned was manufacturing (28.1%), followed by retail trade (27.5%), customer services (24.3%), teaching services (18.3%), administrative or other support services (16.7%), corporation / company management (16.4%), community / non-profit sector (16.2%), finance / insurance (15.6%), professional / scientific / technical (15.4%), health care and social assistance services (13.6%), transportation / warehousing (13.5%), wholesale trade (11.5%), information / culture & leisure / entertainment (11.1%), and inside sales / telemarketing (10.8%).

Did respondents feel that their past work experience outside Quebec had been recognized here? A quarter of respondents (25.1%) said that it was recognized, 15.6% said it was not recognized, and 59.2% said the question did not apply.

More than half (59.4%) of respondents said that they had volunteered at some point, whereas 40.6% said they had not. Females were more inclined to volunteer than males as 66.7% of women volunteered compared to 50.6% of men; people who spoke French (63.3%) compared to those who didn't (50.5%); and people born in the rest of Canada (67.4%), compared to those born in Quebec (61.2%) or born outside the country (52.3%).

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Did this volunteer experience help them to find employment? More than a quarter (28.9%) said that it did, but more than half (54.6%) said it did not, and 16.5% said it did not apply to their situation.

Certain comments as to why the volunteer experience did not help respondents find employment included: “As I volunteered for RECLAIM whose goal it is to teach illiterate adults to read and write in ENGLISH, this has been of no help to me finding employment”; “Because it is volunteer work to produce a parade, no one feels that this is important. I have also worked on food baskets, but again, appears to be too common”; “Even if I am experienced in something, without French conversation companies don't want to see me”; “I used my work experience to help non-profits improve their organizations throughout my management career. My volunteer work over the years has not translated into finding employment at this stage of my life”.

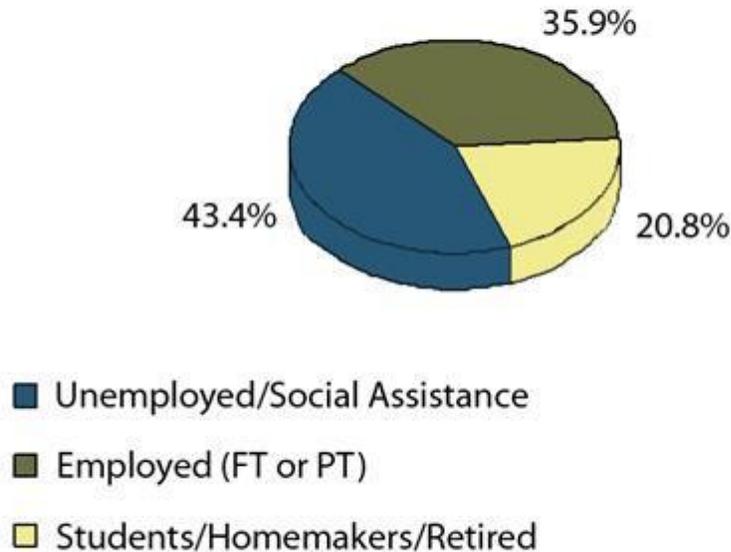
Current Work Situation

There were numerous categories that respondents used to describe their current status, suggesting that their experiences and situations were quite varied. For instance, 17.4% were Employment Insurance claimants, 13% considered themselves to be self-employed, 12.7% were working full-time, 12.3% were unemployed and collecting no benefits, 11.7% were getting social assistance, 10.2% were working part-time, 10.1% were homemakers or caregivers, 4.1% were retired or semi-retired, 2% were SAAQ or CSST claimants, and 2% were full- or part-time students. Also, 4.6% classified their status as “other”, such as being on-call for work, seasonally employed, or getting occasional contract work.

The above breakdown suggests that the situations of mature workers are diverse, to the point where it is difficult to generalize about their status. Their status is likely impacted by the amount of time that they have been looking for work, and their socio-economic condition. For instance, some of the respondents indicated that they were “forced” to retire because they could not find a job, whereas others were “forced” to go back to school to upgrade their skills or change careers.

In total, 43.4% of the sample were unemployed (with or without EI) or on social assistance, 35.9% of the sample considered themselves to be employed (full- or part-time or self-employed), and 20.8% were students, homemakers, retirees, or other. (Figure 3)

Figure 3
Current Status of Respondents (%)



Respondents were asked whether they were currently looking for work in the Montreal area. More than two-thirds (68.4%) said that they were, 16.8% were not (but were considering changing their career path in the near future), and 14.8% were not at all.

How long were respondents looking for employment? About a quarter of respondents (25.4%) had been looking for 0-3 months, 12.5% for 4-6 months, 13.4% for 7-11 months, 27.3% for 1-2 years, and 21.4% for more than 2 years. In short, about half the sample (48.7%) had been looking for work for at least a year.

Which segments of the sample were most likely to be looking for employment for at least one year; that is, who had the most difficulty securing employment? This is a critical question. Interestingly, gender seemed to be a significant factor related to long-term unemployment, with males being more likely to be looking for work for over a year than females (54.7% and 43.2%, respectively).

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Perhaps surprisingly, respondents with university degrees / diplomas were more likely to be unemployed for over a year than those with no university degrees or diplomas (55.9% and 42.6%, respectively). A possible explanation of this finding may be that the former is looking for higher level jobs, for which there is more competition and less positions available. It may also be that those without a university degree or diploma are willing to settle for lower paying jobs.

In what fields are respondents interested in finding employment? Most often mentioned was customer service (18%), followed by outside sales (17.5%), administrative or other support services (17.3%), healthcare and social assistance services (15.6%), information / culture / leisure / entertainment (15.5%), professional / scientific / technical (14.5%), teaching services (14.3%), corporation / company management (13.5%), manufacturing (13.3%), and working for the federal government (12.1%).

Obstacles and Challenges

Did respondents consider their level of French an obstacle to finding employment? A significant proportion (42.6%) said they “very much” did, 40.2% said they “somewhat” did, and 17.2% said “not at all”. In short, 82.8% of the sample said their level of French was at least somewhat an obstacle to finding employment. This is one of the most striking findings of the report.

Which segment of respondents was most likely to find French an obstacle to finding employment? Looking only at those who said it was “very much” an obstacle: 37.8% of those born in Quebec said it was “very much” an obstacle, compared to 59.6% who were born in the rest of Canada, and 43% born outside Canada.

Recent immigrants (who arrived 0-9 years ago) were more likely to say it was “very much” an obstacle (57.1%), compared to those who had been here 10-19 years (48.1%) or 20+ years (46.5%).

Finally, those living outside the City of Montreal were more likely to say it was “very much” an obstacle (49.3%) compared to those living in the City of Montreal proper (32.9%). In fact, respondents from the West Island were the most likely to say their French language skills were “very much” an obstacle (54.2%).

Respondents were also asked whether they felt that their level of computer skills was an obstacle to finding employment. Only 5.9% said “very much”, 31% said “somewhat” and 63.1% said “not at all”. In short, a very small percentage felt that lack of computer skills was a serious impediment in their job search, but about a third (36.9%) said it was at least somewhat of an obstacle.

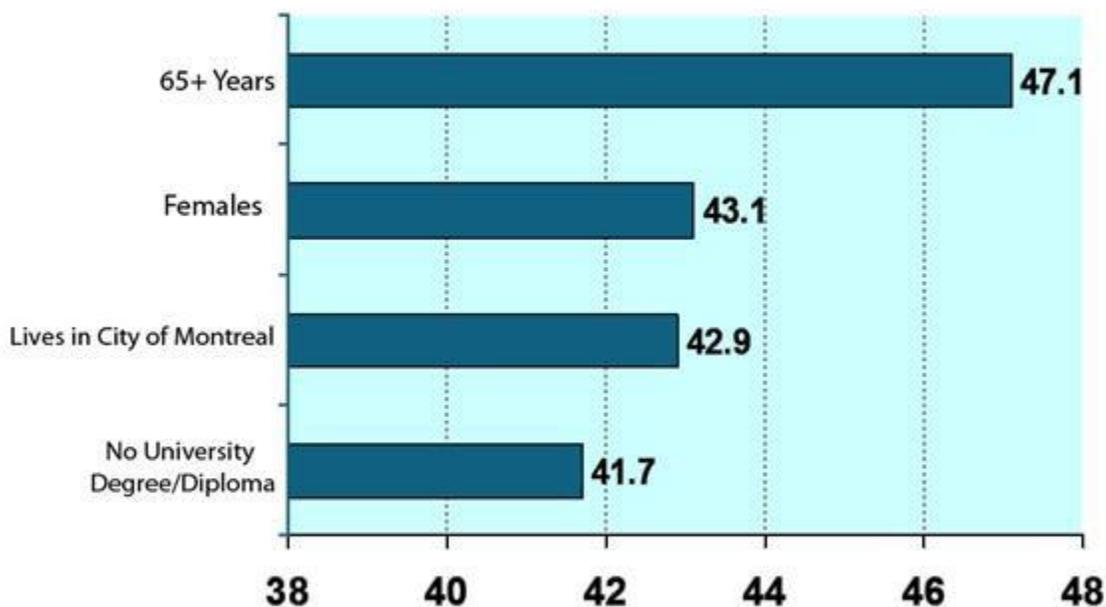
RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Which groups of mature workers were most likely to consider lack of computer skills as “very much” or “somewhat” of an obstacle (Figure 4)? The widest discrepancy related to gender, with females much more likely to consider their computer skills an obstacle compared to males (43.1% and 29.7%, respectively).

Age was also a factor, with the oldest group of 65+ years much more likely to say it is an obstacle than the youngest group between 45-49 years (47.1% and 32%, respectively). In fact, the relationship between age and computer skills was almost linear, with computer skills becoming more of an obstacle as one progressed up the age distribution.

Those without a university diploma or degree were more likely to find their computer skills an obstacle than those who had one (41.7% and 31.7%, respectively). Finally, those living in the City of Montreal were more likely to say that their computer skills were a problem compared to those living in the rest of the GMA (42.9% and 32.5%, respectively). It is not clear why those living in the City of Montreal were more likely to think that their level of computer skills was an obstacle compared to those living in the rest of the GMA.

Figure 4
Segments Most Likely to Consider Lack of Computer Skills an Obstacle (%)



RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

In terms of whether respondents had ever experienced racial or religious discrimination when looking for employment, a quarter of the sample (25.5%) said that they had, and 74.5% said they had not. This represents a significant minority who has experienced some form of discrimination.

The segments most likely to experience racial or religious discrimination were recent immigrants who had been here under 10 years (42.9%), compared to those who had been here 10-19 years (20%) or 20+ years (23.4%). In short, almost half of recent immigrants had experienced racial or religious discrimination when looking for a job.

Males were much more likely to experience racial or religious prejudice than females (32.3% and 19.6%, respectively). Those with a university degree / diploma were more likely to experience such discrimination than those without one (30.2% and 21.1%, respectively). Finally, those living in the City of Montreal were more likely to experience such discrimination than those living in the rest of the GMA (28.6% and 16.9%, respectively).

Did respondents feel that their skills were current enough for today's job market? Almost half (47%) said that they "very much" felt that their skills were current enough, whereas 41.3% "somewhat" felt this way. Only 11.8% felt that their skills were "not at all" current enough for today's job market. In short, the great majority of respondents (88.3%) felt that their skills were at least somewhat relevant to current labour requirements. This is a positive finding in the sense that, at least in the eyes of the respondents themselves, their skills are generally job-worthy, although there is some room for skills enhancement.

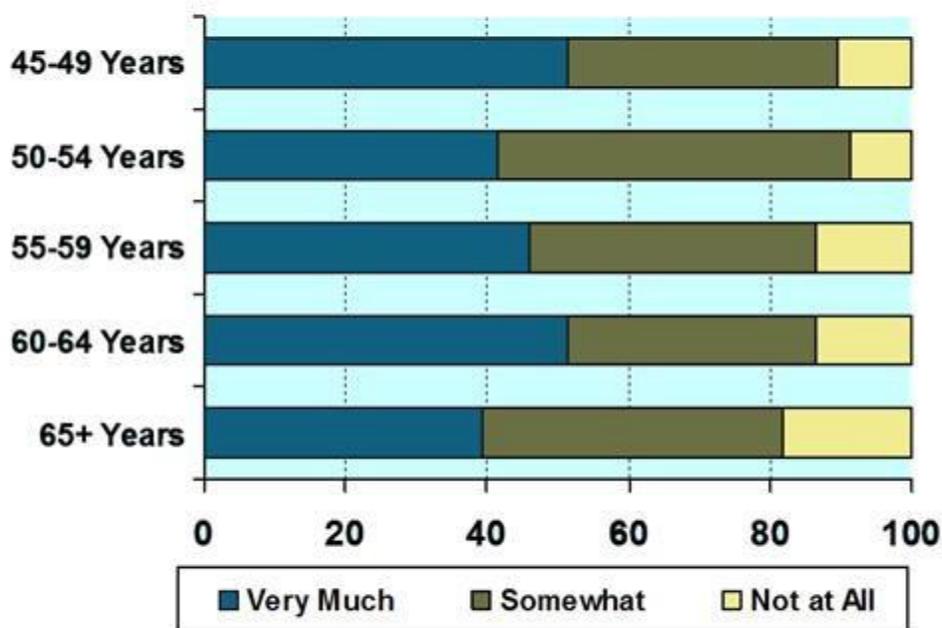
Which groups of respondents were most likely to feel that their skills were not at all current enough? Not surprisingly, respondents 65 years and older were most likely to feel this way (18.2%), compared to those 45-54 years (9.7%), and those 55-64 years (13.6%). (Figure 5)

Were respondents aware of the available resources in their area for finding employment? About a quarter (26.6%) said they were "very much" aware, 52.5% were "somewhat" aware, and 21% were "not at all" aware.

Which groups of respondents were most likely not to be aware of available resources? Those living within the GMA but outside the City of Montreal were most likely not to know about available resources (26.3%), compared to those living in the City of Montreal (14.2%). Those who only spoke English (not French) were more likely not to know (22.2%) than bilingual respondents (6.7%).

Also, more likely not to be aware of available resources were immigrants who arrived in Quebec 0-9 years ago (21.4%), compared to those who had been here for 10-19 years (9.8%) or 20+ years (14.8%).

Figure 5
Whether Respondents Felt Skills Were Current Enough
Across Age Groups

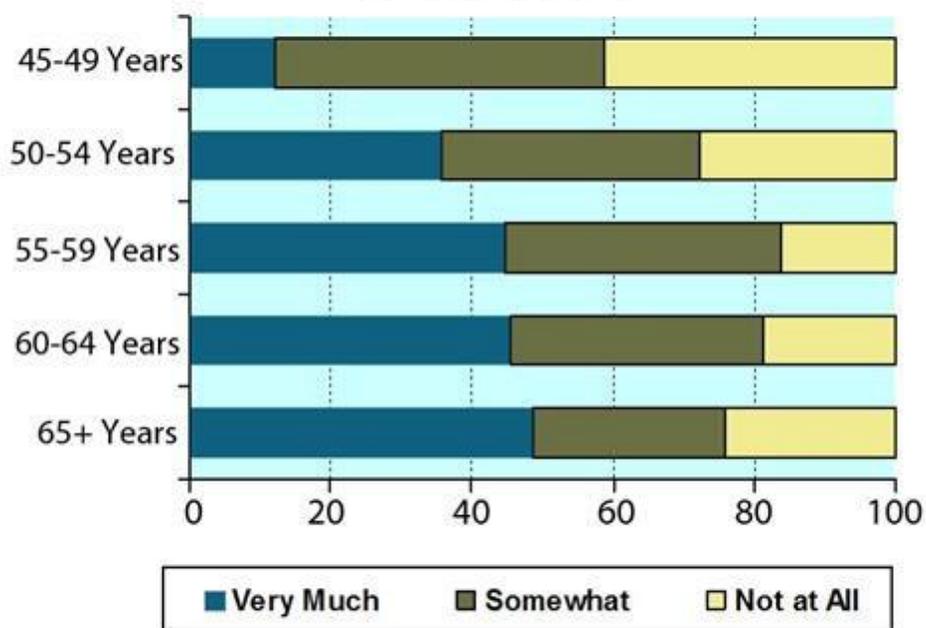


Regarding whether respondents had any health or physical limitations that made it difficult for them to find employment, 12.8% said they had such limitations, and 87.2% did not. In other words, this sample of mature workers was generally healthy, with only a small minority reporting such difficulties.

Respondents were asked whether they felt their age was an obstacle or a limitation to finding employment. About a third (33.4%) of the sample said that their age was “very much” an obstacle, 39.4% said it was ‘somewhat’ an obstacle, and 27.2% said it was not an obstacle at all.

Not surprisingly, the percentage of those saying age is “very much” an obstacle rose as one climbed up the age distribution. Thus, only 12.1% of those 45-49 years said it was “very much” an obstacle. This figure then rose to 35.8% for those 50-54, and rose further to 44.8% for those 55-59 years, 45.5% for those 60-64 years, and 48.5% for those 65+ years (Figure 6). It seems that age was perceived to be a more significant obstacle starting at the age of 50 years.

Figure 6
Whether Respondents Felt Age was an Obstacle to Finding Employment
Across Age Groups



Finally, respondents were asked whether they had any further comments about obstacles or challenges they have encountered while looking for employment. The following remarks were made:

- “Although I am bilingual, my written French has deteriorated from lack of use. It has cost me two job offers”;
- “As a senior scientist in Analytical Chemistry, with 28 years of R&D experience in the pulp and paper industry, I lost my job suddenly. I cannot speak or write French well and so I cannot find a job in my area of training. Have not worked for more than two years. I feel my age of 56 has been an impediment to finding employment”;
- “As I have not been employed in the field for which I have been trained for some time and have been out of the regular work force in general while concentrating on parenting, I feel somewhat unprepared for the current work market, and feel unsure how to even resume”;

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

- “The false belief that the older brain/body cannot be trained or re-trained, perceiving older people as worthless, looking at how many years they can work and seeing the spending company's money on training older person as lost because it is not 25 years but maybe 5 years they will be able to work, all that makes it almost impossible to find a job”;
- “Being Anglo is a huge obstacle. I am fluent in several languages (spoken and written) and have up-to-date credentials and a stellar career background -- but most employers seem to want someone French”;
- “Being female in a male dominated hierarchical profession is an issue. My former employer - an international agency limits opportunities to their female staff - both administrative and professional level”;
- “Being slightly overweight doesn't help potential employers look favorably on my skills, even if I get past the possible age discrimination barrier”;
- “Changing career path after 25 years in the same industry is very difficult. Employers are skeptical as to why you want to change and if you will like your new path”;
- “I have lots of experience in my professional field (Information Technology) BUT due to age, lack of French writing experience, and economic downturn conditions, I have been neglected”;
- “I am fluent in French, having earned an advanced degree in France. But in Quebec, I feel that my French fluency is always questioned because I am Asian and speak French with a continental accent”;
- “I am re-entering the job market after almost 16 years because I took time off to raise my children. Places of past employment don't exist anymore and therefore employers cannot contact them for references”;
- “I feel that because of my name as well as my age, I do not get called for interviews. I can only get bottom of the line jobs at very low pay”.

RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

It would be a simplistic approach to consider mature unemployed and underemployed English-speaking individuals as a monolithic group, with similar challenges and characteristics. In fact, this is a complex group presenting numerous life situations and experiences. For instance, the challenges of younger and older mature workers are quite different; those who are immigrants have different obstacles than those born in the rest of Canada, or Quebec; those who live in the City of Montreal have different issues than those living in the rest of the GMA proper.

According to the findings of this report, mature English-speaking workers who are recent immigrants face numerous challenges, including the fact that some lack adequate French language skills, they are more likely to experience racial or religious discrimination, and are less likely to know about available resources for finding employment.

Those living outside the City of Montreal, but within the GMA, tend to have a lower level of education, are less likely to have undergone some type of training program, are more likely to say their French language skills are an obstacle, and are less likely to know about available resources, than those living in the City of Montreal.

Older mature workers likewise seem to have less French language skills, are more likely to consider their level of computer skills as an obstacle, and are more likely to experience prejudice related to their age.

It is interesting that the phenomenon of age discrimination related to seeking employment begins to be felt most acutely after the age of 50 years, and is particularly pronounced after 55 years. This prejudice exists despite the fact that a very small percentage of English-speaking mature workers have physical or health limitations that impact on their ability to find employment.

There is one obstacle that seems to be mentioned more often than the rest, and that is the difficulty in finding employment with poor French-speaking and/or writing skills. There is little doubt that individuals with limited French language fluency have the most challenging time finding work. However, there is a more insidious side to this problem. Some of the respondents mentioned the fact that even though they were perfectly bilingual, they felt job discrimination targeted them simply because they are not Francophone.

In other words, many of the mature workers participating in this study felt frustration because they faced challenges which they had no control over, whether related to the fact that they belonged to a linguistic minority, were recent immigrants whose schooling was not recognized, were considered “too old” to be seriously considered, or simply a “housewife” who had not been in the labour force for several years.

RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

On the other hand, many of these mature workers felt that their skills were relevant to current labour conditions. In their open-ended comments, some expressed frustrations because they felt they could contribute many years of work experience to any job they undertook. And finally, many were definitely willing to undergo further training if it meant enhancing the possibility of gaining employment. In short, they were eager to find work, and were willing to make greater efforts to secure it.

CEDEC

WISHES TO THANK THE FOLLOWING ORGANIZATIONS FOR THEIR ONGOING SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE:

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