



# Empowering People for Recovery and Growth: 2022 Skills Survey Report

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Business + Higher Education Roundtable  
March 2022

# Key Findings

While COVID-19 and its impacts have largely defined Canadian employers and workers over the past two years, ongoing technological and demographic shifts have increased, along with the demand for skilled workers.

Our Skills Survey Report provides a snapshot of the evolving skills priorities of human resource executives at Canada's largest companies. This edition is the fifth in the series. It offers insight into how priorities have evolved over the past eight years and helps us see emerging trends and challenges.

Some major findings of the 2022 Skills Survey Report:

COVID-19 has shifted how and where people work as well as employer expectations about in-demand skills and how to find them.

Employers consistently look for human skills more than any other, but demand for technical skills is growing and becoming more specialized.

Canada's companies continue to depend on post-secondary institutions to produce new graduates with the skills they need.

Employers are generally confident about their ability to hire and replace workers, but opportunities exist to find new ways to recruit, train, and develop future workers, including recruiting more recent immigrants.

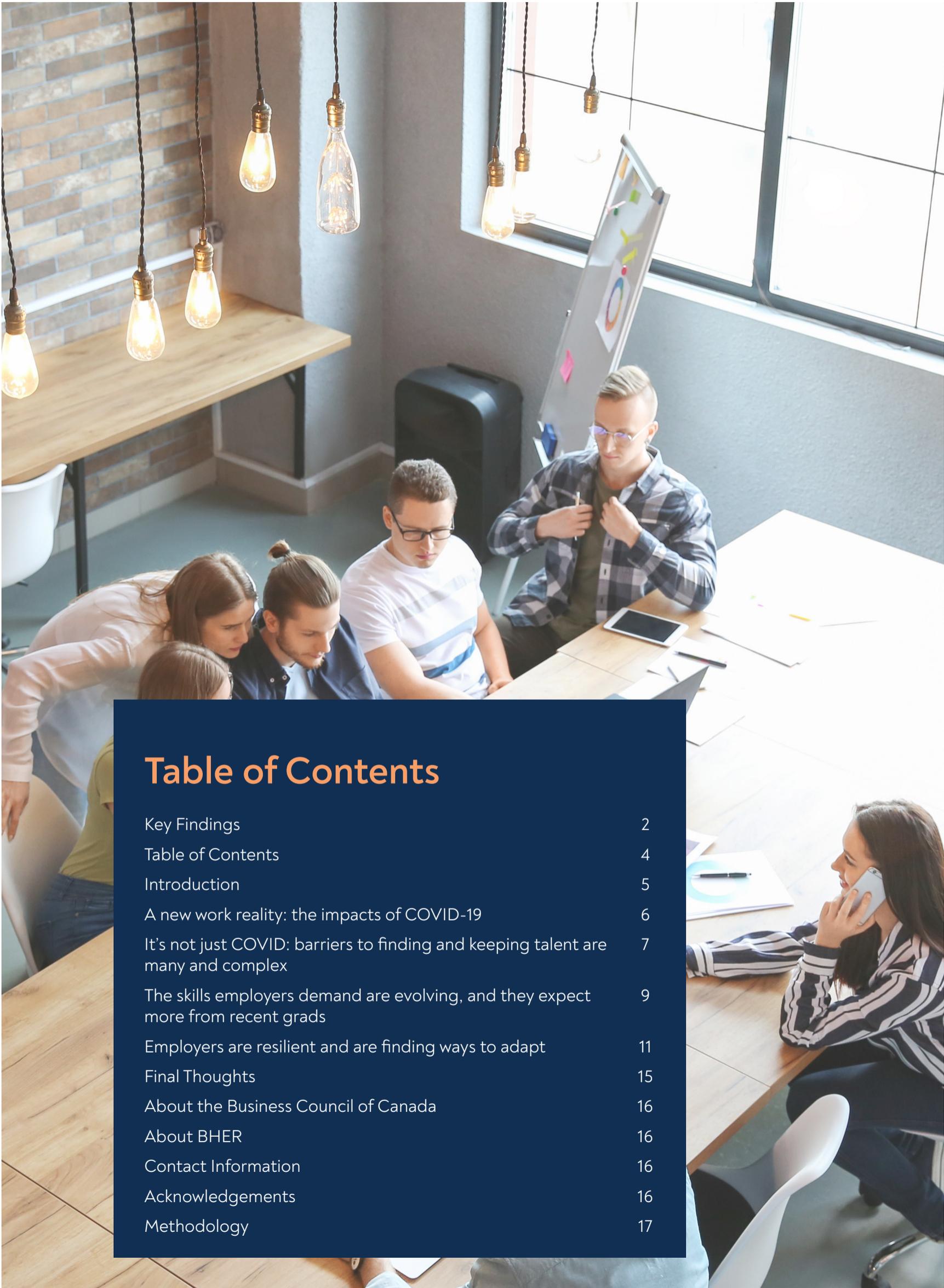
Work-integrated learning (WIL) remains the gold standard to develop, recruit, and transition new grads into the workplace. Companies are increasingly adopting WIL as part of their recruitment strategies and collaborating with post-secondary education institutions to do so.

Companies also recognize the need to pay for employee training and development, but lack data and guidance on what skills workers need, where to find them, or who to partner with to co-develop tailored programming.

The need for worker upskilling and reskilling is growing, especially amid COVID-19. But Canada's companies are not yet collaborating with post-secondary institutions to address these needs to the same degree as they do on WIL.



This year's survey raises new questions around how employers are investing in worker upskilling/reskilling. We'll address some of those questions in a follow-up report on key findings from a recent BHER-BCC Skills Working Group, which brought together industry and post-secondary leaders to discuss employer-led reskilling and training programs/partnership models that can help fill sectoral skills gaps and address emerging and future skills needs.



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# Introduction

Employers who recognize and respond to emerging skills needs will be better positioned to succeed than those who don't. Similarly, employees who understand which skills are becoming more valuable will be better positioned to adapt and succeed in the workforce. Governments see this too. Right now, federal and provincial governments are making historic investments in skills training and development in Canada to help ensure inclusive, sustainable, long-term economic growth.

The findings from this survey will help to inform policy and decision-makers. Designed to collect data on Business Council of Canada (BCC) companies' skills needs and training practices, the Skills Survey offers unique insights into labour-market trends and the ways businesses are adapting to changing circumstances.

The survey has been conducted five times (previous reports were produced in [2014](#), [2016](#), [2018](#), and [2020](#)). For this report, we heard from 95 members of the BCC, who represent some of Canada's largest businesses and collectively, employ more than 830,000 workers across Canada (see [Methodology](#) section).

We conducted this year's survey between July and September 2021. Employers responded during a global pandemic and we asked new questions about the impacts of COVID-19. We also asked questions familiar from previous reports related to employer expectations of new graduates; skills needs; investments in learning and development; relationships with post-secondary education institutions; barriers to hiring and how employers are adapting.

Where possible, we've compared findings from previous years and pointed to emerging trends and changing priorities. We know, for example, that the skills employers require of recent graduates are becoming more specialized, more technical, but that human skills remain in high demand. Employers believe the shift towards remote and/or hybrid work is likely to last, while HR executives recognize that for their companies to remain competitive, they must invest in employee training, and increasingly in upskilling and reskilling, though they're not always sure where to turn for resources or partners.

The Skills Survey Report isn't a comprehensive study of the Canadian labour market, but rather a snapshot in time of skills and training practices for a specific subset of large Canadian companies. What we've learned falls broadly into four main themes:



A new work reality: the impacts of COVID-19



It's not just COVID: barriers to finding and keeping talent are many and complex



The skills that employers demand are evolving, and they expect more from recent grads



Employers are resilient and are finding ways to adapt

# 01

## A new work reality: the impacts of COVID-19

Over the past two years, COVID-19 has significantly changed how and where people work.

Nearly everyone we surveyed (98%) reported that certain segments of their workforce have shifted to remote and/or hybrid work (i.e., employees work from home once or more per week). And 91 per cent believe remote and/or hybrid work arrangements will remain the norm after the pandemic ends.

With the shift to remote/hybrid work (among other pandemic impacts), more than half of the employers we heard from (56%) have adjusted how they approach leadership, management, or mentoring practices at their organizations as a result of the pandemic, with 63 per cent anticipating these adjustments to continue after the pandemic.

Eighty-seven per cent of employers we surveyed report COVID-19 has affected employee health and psychological well-being.

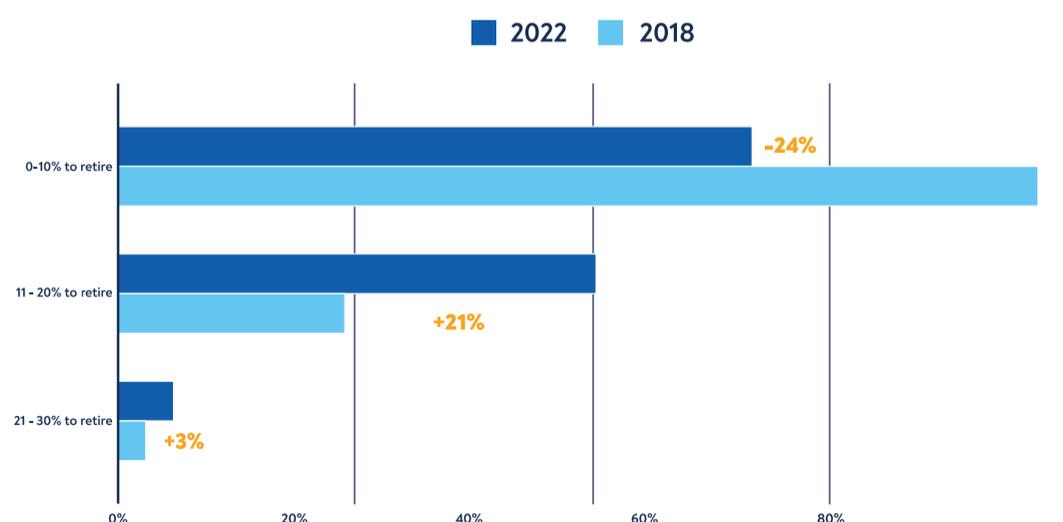
On a troubling but unsurprising note, there's consensus that the pandemic has affected the mental health of their employees. The majority of respondents (87%) report COVID-19 has affected their employees' health and psychological well-being. A majority of employers (61%) also foresee the pandemic affecting employee health and psychological well-being over the next two to three years.

When it comes to the impact of COVID-19 on training and development over the past 15 months, 21 per cent of respondents signal that entry-level workers will require specific types of upskilling or reskilling. That number increased to 37 per cent when it came to mid-career workers. When we asked employers to consider the impact over the next two to three years, they were slightly more likely to indicate both entry-level and mid-career workers will require upskilling or reskilling activities (26% and 40%, respectively).

Corporate Canada remains cautiously optimistic, though, about a recovery from the pandemic. When asked to estimate whether the total number of their employees in Canada would increase or decrease over the next three years (not including retirements), a third of respondents believe there will be no change, while close to half (44%) expect the number of their employees to increase.

But the retirement projections are not insignificant. Over the next three years, 40 per cent of respondents expect 10-20 per cent of their current staffing complement to retire. Twice as many reported the same percentage of retirements in 2018 (40% now versus 19% in 2018). Despite this, more than 80 per cent of respondents are confident they'll be able to replace these workers.

Figure 1 - What percentage of your Canadian workforce do you expect to retire over the next three years? 2018 - 2022 comparison



"I am confident that our company will be able to replace the needed skills and knowledge of retiring workers in Canada."

Note: The 2022 Skills Survey provided a new option for respondents to indicate that they expected "no retirements" over the next three years. Of those we surveyed, 11 per cent selected this option. To maintain longitudinal consistency, this data was not reported separately in the above graph, and is included in the 0-10 per cent category.

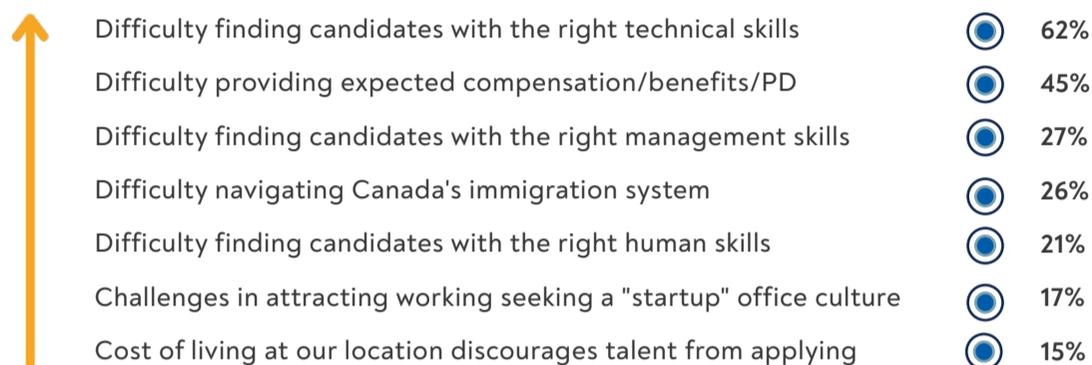
# 02

## It's not just COVID: barriers to finding and keeping talent are many and complex

Some of the biggest barriers are in finding and keeping talented employees.

The pandemic has added new challenges to the list of longstanding ones for Canada's businesses.<sup>1</sup> A delayed but anticipated surge in retirements (see previous section) will exacerbate labour shortages, underscoring the need for employers to be proactive about developing strategies to meet their talent needs.<sup>2</sup>

Figure 2 - What are the main barriers business leaders face in acquiring and retaining talent?



Note: Employers were provided with a range of potential barriers, and were asked to select all that apply. Percentages represent the proportion of employers who selected that barrier. We present them in ranked order.

We've consistently heard from HR executives, both before and after the emergence of COVID-19, that they struggle to find and retain talent. There are a range of reasons why and when we asked executives to identify the top ones, here's what they told us: Six of the seven barriers employers identify in 2022 carry over from 2020. Then, as now, a majority (62%) of employers indicate that finding candidates with the technical skills they need is a barrier. Technical skills were also the barrier selected by the most respondents in 2020.

Second on the list is the struggle to attract talent because they can't match the compensation, benefits, or career development opportunities that prospective employees are looking for (45% of employers). Finding management and leadership talent (27%) along with people who have the right mix of human skills (21%) also remains a challenge.

Closer to the bottom of the list, a smaller number of employers indicated that they struggle to meet employee demands for a "start-up" office culture (17%), a concern that first appeared on the list in 2020, and that the cost of living in their region is a barrier to attracting and retaining talent (15%).

The shift to remote work will only increase the competition among companies for talent, providing workers with a greater range of opportunities regardless of regions or borders. With the ability to tap into talent on a global level, large tech companies like Google and Amazon are taking advantage of Canada's skilled workforce.

Of course, this works both ways. Canadian businesses are also able to compete for talent beyond their borders. As one leader with a Toronto-based company explained in a 2020 report: "Toronto has been touted as a new Silicon Valley... It's not just the talent. The tech ecosystem is thriving. There's no better place than Toronto, as far as we're concerned."<sup>3</sup>

New this year, though, is a concern about navigating Canada's immigration system. Compared to other countries, Canada proportionately has one of the highest immigration rates in the world and is the fastest growing G7 country.<sup>4</sup> Even amid the pandemic, which included border closures and lockdowns, Canada welcomed more than 401,000 new permanent residents in 2021.

<sup>1</sup>Statistics Canada (2022, January 7). [Reason for leaving job during previous year, annual.](#)

<sup>2</sup>Agopsowicz, Andrew. (2021, July 12). [Will a Return to Pre-Pandemic Retirement and Job Quitting Levels Worsen Emerging Labour Shortages in Canada?](#) RBC Economics.

<sup>3</sup>McKenna, Barrie. (2020, December). [Magnetic North: How Canada Holds Its Own In The Global Race For Talent.](#) The Innovation Economy Council.

“Immigration rules continue to be a barrier in bringing in skilled workers.”

Despite the steady inflow of newcomers, 26% of employers cite immigration rules as a barrier to talent recruitment. The reasons for this may include processing delays, paperwork requirements, or a perception that immigration programs are not aligned with the needs of employers.<sup>5</sup>

While Canada’s approach to immigration has many strengths and inspires other countries,<sup>6</sup> our system is also one of the most complex and decentralized immigration systems in the world,<sup>7</sup> with programs and pathways designed to meet the needs of specific sectors and communities. For businesses seeking quick access to international talent, navigating the system, identifying the appropriate programs, and filing the necessary paperwork can be time-consuming and prohibitive.

### What skills do employers think will remain in demand but in short supply in the next three years?

The growth in demand for technical skills seems to be here to stay, at least for the next three years. The business leaders we surveyed say they anticipate the most pressing skills shortages will be in analytics (1), cognitive computing (2), cybersecurity (3), general IT (4), and computer science (5).

Based on previous Skills Surveys, there’s a clear trend towards more specialized skills. Employers are replacing their generic responses for fields like computer science or skilled trades, for example, with more specific demands for programming and software development, while analytics, statistics, and quantitative analysis top the list again.

When considering fast-changing technology and advances in fields like artificial intelligence (AI), machine-learning and automation, Canadian business leaders are evenly split on whether the implications are positive or negative, at least when it comes to the number of employees they’ll need as they adapt. Half (50%) anticipate no change in their employee headcount in Canada in the next five years as a result of automation and AI; one in four (25%) believes these tech changes will result in a decreased employee headcount; and an equal number (25%) anticipates that their headcount will increase.

To address the impact of tech advances, 76 per cent say they’ll need to recruit talent with more specialized post-secondary degrees (e.g., AI courses versus a computer science degree), while 72 per cent say they’ll fill vacancies and/or find new positions for displaced workers using up-skilling and reskilling strategies. Close to half (45%) report that they’ll rely on Canada’s immigration system as a recruitment tool.

In terms of the particular skills businesses are looking for, the 2022 Skills Survey reinforces what companies told us in previous surveys: they value human skills (including interpersonal skills, communication skills, and problem-solving abilities).

Figure 3 - What do employers believe will be the most in-demand skills over the next three years?

	1	2	3	4	5
2022	Analytics, statistics, quantitative analysis	Cognitive computing such as artificial intelligence and machine learning	Cyber security, such as threat analysis, file recovery and risk management.	Information technology	Computer science, such as programming and software development
2020	Analytics, statistics, quantitative analysis	Cognitive computing such as artificial intelligence and machine learning	Computer science	Skilled trades	Cyber security, such as threat analysis, file recovery and risk management.
2018	Information technology	Skilled trades	Analytics, statistics, quantitative analysis	Engineering	Leadership, management
2016	Skilled trades	Leadership, management	Information technology	Engineering	Analytics, statistics, quantitative analysis

<sup>4</sup> Statistics Canada. (2022, February 9). [The Daily – Canada tops G7 growth despite COVID.](#)

<sup>5</sup> Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. (2021, December 23). [Canada Welcomes the Most Immigrants in a Single Year in Its History.](#)

<sup>6</sup> Griffith, Andrew. (2017, October 31). [Building a Mosaic: The Evolution of Canada’s Approach to Immigrant Integration.](#) Migration Policy Institute.

<sup>7</sup> Toughill, Kelly. (2021, April 14). [How Immigration Really Works.](#) The Walrus.

# 03 The skills employers demand are evolving, and they expect more from recent grads

To break things down further, we asked employers to tell us which skills and capabilities they consider most important when they are hiring someone. They told us interpersonal skills are critical, whether they're hiring for entry-level or mid-career positions. Communication skills, which are closely linked with interpersonal skills, are among the most sought-after skills in prospective entry-level and mid-career employees.

The value employers place on these and other human skills aligns with recent research showing that the most in demand skills for today and tomorrow's labour market are "social and emotional." Academic research and industry surveys on skills' needs indicate that social and emotional skills, also called human skills, are critical for employability and career success.<sup>8</sup>

For the first time, however, employers ranked technical skills among the top five skills they look for in entry-level hires. Technical skills were new to the list in 2020, but for mid-career workers. But it isn't surprising to see them on this year's list for entry-level workers, given that employers have identified technical skills as the biggest barrier to recruitment now and over the next three years.

Add it all up, though, and what employers are looking for is people with diverse skill sets. Human skills and technical skills are valued independently by employers but interconnected. As one respondent put it: "What is most challenging is finding talent that has both human AND technical skills."

## Do recent grads have the skills employers are looking for?

The answer varies, depending on the question. Close to 60 per cent of the employers we surveyed agree that recent graduates have business acumen, while more than 90 per cent believe recent grads have basic literacy and numeracy skills. Employers are satisfied with the resiliency (66%) and human skills (73%) of new hires. But whereas in 2020, 99% of employers reported that recent grads had the technical skills they need, that number dropped to 84% this time around.

Figure 5 - What percentage of employers agree that recent post-secondary graduates recruited in Canada have in-demand skills?

Year	Basic Business Acumen	Numeracy and literacy skills	Professionalism	Resiliency	Technical Skills	Human skills
2022	58.3%	93.2%	75.0%	66.3%	83.6%	73.3%
2020		100%	87.0%	85.0%	99.0%	
2018	52.6%	96.0%	91.0%	93.0%	96.0%	73.5%

While the majority of employers we surveyed agree that recent graduates generally possess in-demand skills (see Figure 5 above), the overall number who agree is gradually declining. And when asked to compare today's graduates with those of five years ago, the results are mixed. On technical skills, the results were evenly split between those who feel things haven't changed (49%) and those who feel graduates are better prepared (48%). When it comes to human skills, less than a third (30%) believe recent graduates are better prepared now than in the past.

Figure 4 - What are the top skills employers look for in entry-level and mid-career hires?



**“To connect with clients and peers, communication has become an increasingly important skill to continue to develop relationships, deliver on our commitments, and position ourselves as a trusted advisor to our customers.”**

<sup>8</sup>Giammarco, Maria, Higham, Stephen, and McKean, Matthew. (2020, March 31). [The Future is Social and Emotional: Evolving Skills Needs in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century](#). Conference Board of Canada.

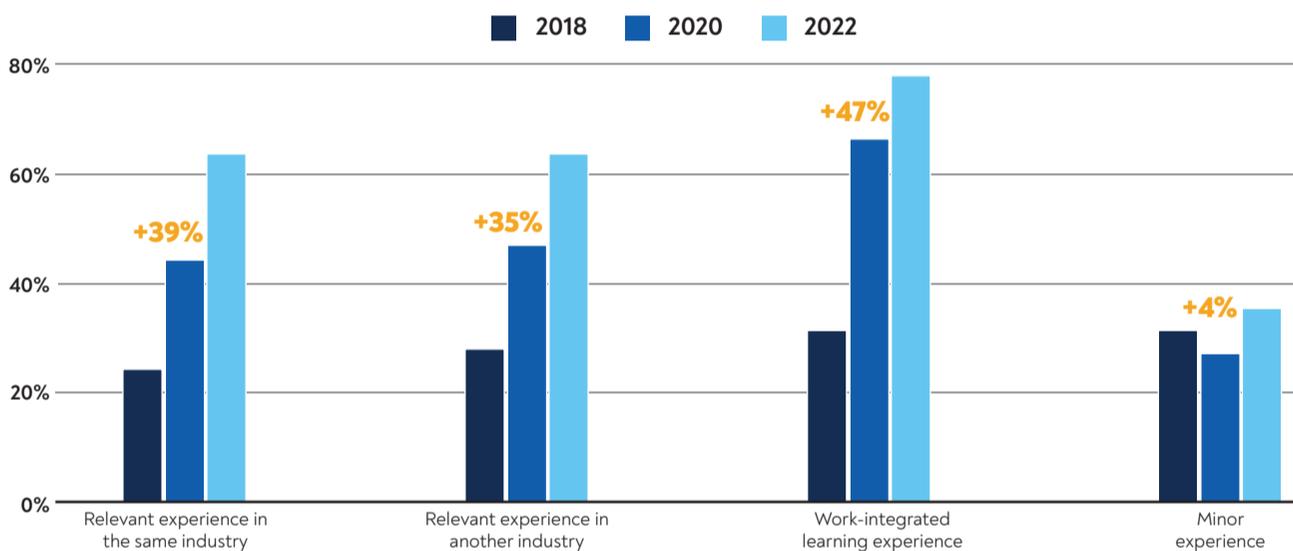
What all of this suggests is that employers are generally satisfied with the skills recent grads possess, but there's room for improvement. Part of the challenge is that employer expectations of recent graduates are rising (Figure 6), with a majority (61%) indicating that they expect more of recent graduates than they did five years ago.

Figure 6 - Compared to five years ago, how prepared are PSI graduates?

Technical Skills	Equally prepared	49%	Human Skills	Equally prepared	56%
	Better prepared	48%		Better prepared	30%

Along with evolving expectations, there are signs that employers prioritize recent graduates who have experience. In this year's survey, 63 per cent of employers told us that their entry-level employees typically have relevant experience in their industry. By contrast, only 24 per cent of employers said the same thing in 2018. We see similar trends for other types of experience, with a sharp rise in the number of individuals entering the workforce with work-integrated learning (WIL) experiences.

Figure 7 - Recent graduates are entering the workforce with more experience than in previous years



The Skills Survey paints a picture of growing demand for workers who have a range of strong skills and relevant experience. But at a time when employers face significant competition for talent, finding or developing the employees they need requires non-traditional approaches.

Employers' rising expectations, one respondent commented, are the result of graduates having gained workplace experience during their studies: "One of the reasons we 'expect more' is due to so many of our new hires being former WIL students."



# 04

## Employers are resilient and are finding ways to adapt

The challenge of identifying and retaining talent will only grow, especially as Canada's businesses recover from the pandemic. To make sure they can find and retain the talent they need, our Skills Survey found businesses are:



Identifying new and different sources of talent



Investing in their current workforce



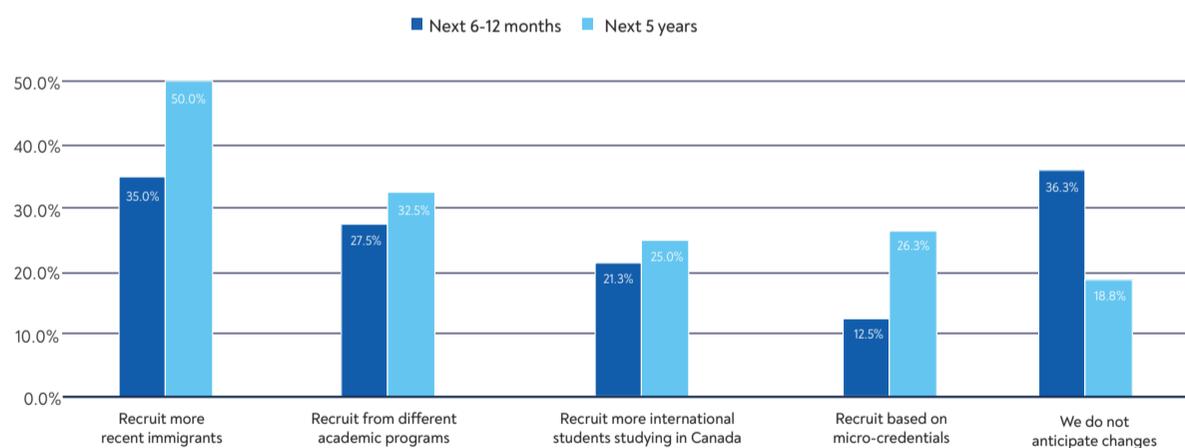
Partnering with others

### Employers are identifying new and different sources of talent

More than 80 per cent of business leaders we surveyed predict that the next five years will bring significant changes to their organization's recruitment and hiring practices. That means that businesses will need to look for new and different sources of talent, i.e., beyond traditional academic pathways and the existing Canadian labour market. For many companies, the immigration system has become an integral part of their recruitment efforts.

While navigating Canada's range of immigration programs and processes can be challenging for businesses, more than a third (35%) of survey respondents expect to recruit more recent immigrants in the next six to 12 months. Half (50%) of the companies we surveyed anticipate recruiting more recent immigrants in the next five years, reflecting the important role immigration plays in bringing talented workers into the Canadian economy (Figure 8).

Figure 8 - Expected changes to recruitment and hiring practices



Canada's immigration system consists of multiple streams, programs, and (as discussed earlier) levels of complexity. We asked respondents which federal and provincial programs they use to recruit immigrants and received a wide range of answers (Figure 9).

Figure 9 - Types of immigration program(s) used to recruit immigrants

- Global skills strategy
- Provincial programs
- Intra-company transfer visas
- NAFTA Work Visa Categories
- Post-graduation work permits program
- Specialized NGOs

In addition to seeking to hire immigrants, 21 per cent of the businesses we surveyed anticipate recruiting more international students studying in Canada. In the 2019-2020 academic year, 388,782 international students were enrolled at Canadian post-secondary institutions,<sup>9</sup> providing a sizeable pool of people who are educated, have in-demand skills, and speak more than one language.

<sup>9</sup>Statistics Canada. (2021, November 24). [Postsecondary graduates, by credential type, age group, program type and gender.](#)

The trouble is with retention. A recent Statistics Canada study found fewer than half of all international students remained in their region of study after graduation. The study suggested the availability of job opportunities, city size, and the presence of family and social ties were key considerations for international students in deciding whether or not to stay.<sup>10</sup> The good news is that international students who gain work experience during their studies and identify job opportunities after graduation are more likely to stay in Canada,<sup>11</sup> underscoring the value of partnerships among employers and post-secondary institutions.

An added incentive for businesses to identify skilled workers through immigration or by connecting with international students is that hiring them can help strengthen the diversity of their workforces. The Skills Survey reveals that 88 per cent of respondents have developed and/or updated their equity, diversity, and inclusion strategy, reflecting broader institutional changes within corporate Canada.

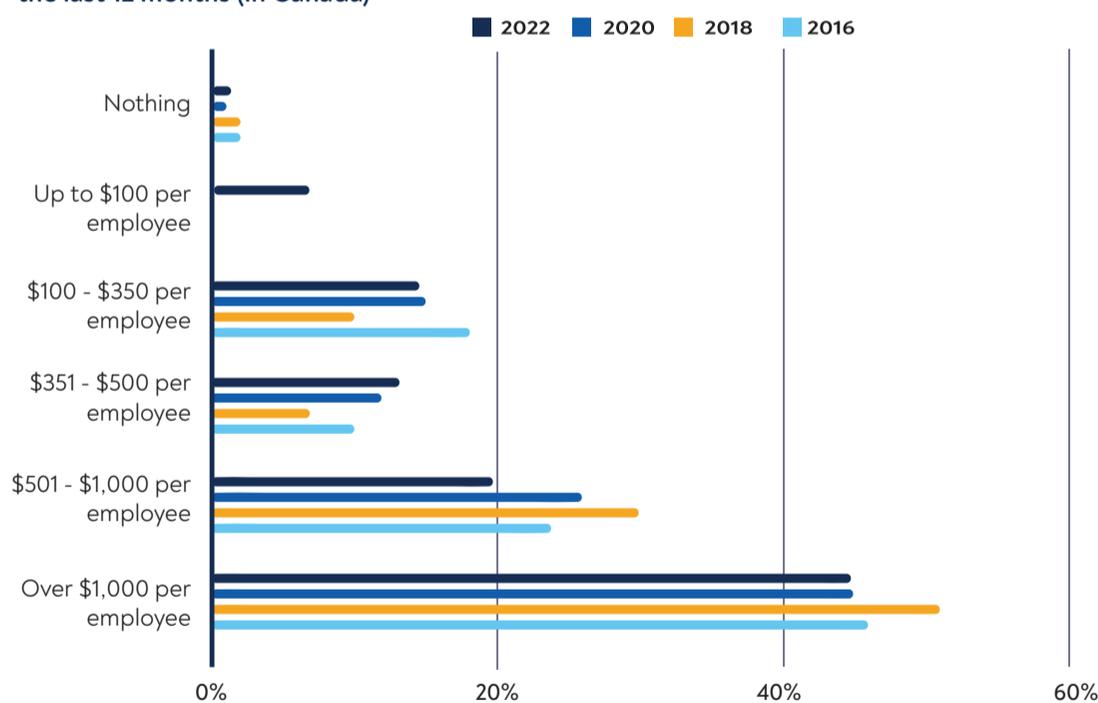
For businesses already working with post-secondary institutions to hire international and domestic students, 28 per cent say they will look to recruit from different academic programs than those they've relied upon in the past.

There are also signs that employers are willing to look beyond traditional education channels in assessing talent and recruiting workers in general. While just 13% of business leaders we surveyed said they will recruit based on micro-credentials in the short-term, that number doubles to 26% when looking ahead to the next five years. This suggests that employers see micro-credentials as an emerging resource to help them identify talent.

## Employers are investing in their current employees

Employers recognize that often the best place to find talent is to develop it in-house. The 2022 survey finds that employers are investing in employee training and development despite the impacts of the pandemic.

**Figure 10 - How much did your company allocate to employee learning and development in the last 12 months (in Canada)**



Note: Category of “up to \$100” was not included in previous versions of survey

Nearly half (45%) of employers provide more than \$1,000 per employee for training and development, with a fifth (20%) of employers providing between \$500 and \$1,000 per employee.

These figures are consistent or slightly lower than in previous years, but reflect continued investment in employee learning and development (see Figure 10).

**“I think the government should work with corporations to understand the skills needed and help to focus our academic institutions in developing those skills in support of a stronger Canada.”**

<sup>10</sup>Statistics Canada. (2021, June 23). [International Students as a source of labour supply: Retention in their province of study.](#)

<sup>11</sup>Esses, Victoria et al. (2018, June). [Retaining International Students in Canada Post-Graduation: Understanding the Motivations and Drivers of the Decision to Stay.](#) Canadian Bureau for International Education.

Worker upskilling and reskilling is fast becoming a variation on the theme of employee training and development, especially when it comes to upskilling or reskilling workers to transition them to different jobs or sectors.

When asked who should be paying for the majority of training costs associated with upskilling and reskilling, nearly 80 per cent of employers indicated that businesses themselves should pay for training (as opposed to depending on government programs, for example), even during a pandemic when many are cash-strapped. This figure is up from 65 per cent of companies in 2020.

**“We focus on workers whose jobs are at risk. We try to retain them by redeploying them where possible. We are also focusing on better understanding the required skills of the future resulting from technology-enabled tasks and work.”**

**Figure 11 - Which upskilling and reskilling activities are businesses investing in?**

	2022	2020	% Change
Digital training programs	69%	33%	35%
Micro-credentials	37%	14%	23%
Bootcamps	27%	10%	17%
Programs created with PSIs	24%	17%	7%
Other	16%	17%	-1%
In-house training	100%		
Off-site training	55%		

Note: In-house training and off-site training were not included as responses to this question in the 2020 survey.

Some 65 per cent of survey respondents have strategies in place to upskill and reskill workers whose jobs may be at risk of transformation or loss, up slightly from 61 per cent in 2020. Perhaps not surprising, owing to the growing demand for tech skills, the percentage of employers investing in digital training programs has more than doubled from 33 per cent in 2020 to 69 per cent in 2022. Similar increases can be seen for investments in other types of upskilling and reskilling activities (Figure 11).

Although Canada’s largest companies are committed to investing in employee skills, many told us they lack the tools and labour market information that would help them develop strategies and optimize their approaches.

When we asked about barriers to upskilling and reskilling efforts, employers report difficulty finding appropriate partners to deliver the training, and cite high costs associated with developing training programs. These obstacles can prevent companies from investing in their employees and limit the number of opportunities available for workers at risk of disruption or seeking new roles.

**For industry-wide reskilling, like finding other opportunities for trades workers, the government needs to fund programs. For job-specific reskilling, employers should be responsible.**

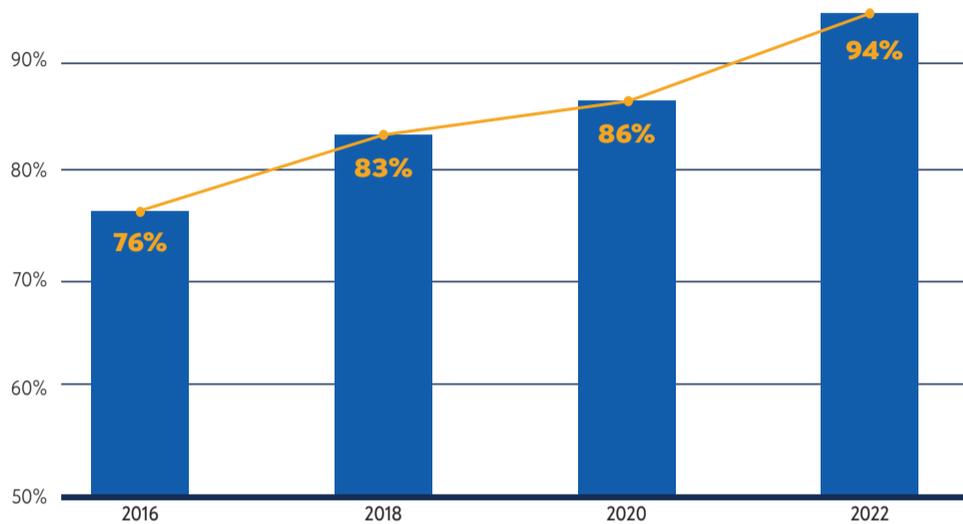
**Figure 12 - How business leaders rank their company’s biggest barriers to upskilling/reskilling workers**

- Lack of data on what skills are needed
- Cost of developing a training program
- Programs don't exist to teach skills needed for future job
- Risk of skilled talent leaving after using program
- Employee willingness to participate in a program
- Difficulty finding appropriate delivery partner

## Employers are working closely with post-secondary partners

To find and retain the talent they need during the pandemic, while they are also facing the challenges of an aging population, rising costs, and growing competition, employers are finding ways to adapt. At least 54 per cent of respondents indicated they partner with not-for-profit organizations to strengthen their talent pipelines, while 41 per cent partner with other companies. Partnering with post-secondary institutions, though, remains the most common way businesses identify talent.

Figure 13 - Percentage of employers partnering with post-secondary institutions 2016-2022



Increasingly, WIL is at the heart of business and post-secondary collaboration. WIL connects soon-to-be graduates with businesses looking to address skills and talent challenges and provides essential opportunities for employers to identify and develop talent. This year we learned that 94 per cent of survey respondents currently partner with post-secondary institutions to participate in WIL, an increase from 86 per cent of respondents in 2020 and 83 per cent in 2018.

Figure 14: What types of work-integrated learning (WIL) are employers engaged in?

	2022	2020	2018
Applied research projects	23%	39%	25%
Co-ops	88%	83%	72%
Internships	86%	78%	60%
Apprenticeships	33%	35%	32%
Bootcamps and hackathons	33%	34%	17%
Curriculum/program development	25%	42%	28%
Student mentorship program	37%	35%	36%
Faculty development	7%	10%	7%
Classroom instruction	17%	30%	19%

Note: Other refers to service learning, mandatory professional practices, and/or field experiences.

“As our need for talent has grown, industry has been working more closely with post-secondary institutions to better shape the curriculum to align with industry needs. Post-secondary institutions as well have doubled down on their efforts to ensure their graduates are ready to enter the workforce as seamlessly as possible.”

Co-ops and internships remain the most popular types of WIL programs Canadian companies offer, similar to what we’ve seen in previous surveys. Over half (56%) of respondents told us they host anywhere from one to 50 students in their WIL programs annually, with 10 per cent of respondents hosting 100 to 500 students per year.

In many cases, WIL experiences are built into program curricula, allowing students to gain skills and experience that help them transition into the workforce after graduation. One respondent explained: “As our need for talent has grown, industry has been working more closely with post-secondary institutions to better shape the curriculum to align with industry needs. Post-secondary institutions as well have doubled down on their efforts to ensure their graduates are ready to enter the workforce as seamlessly as possible.”

# Final Thoughts

The 2022 Skills Survey builds on previous surveys to provide longitudinal insight into the talent and skills needs of some of Canada's largest employers. We conducted this year's survey amid a global pandemic that had myriad and profound impacts on Canada's workers, businesses, and economy. The challenges associated with the pandemic layered onto existing ones and will persist for years to come as the country recovers and grows.

What we heard from some of the country's leading employers, though, is that they're confident that their businesses will recover and grow.

Employers express optimism around their ability to replace retiring employees and identify and recruit new workers, though work clearly needs to be done to train and develop talent with both the technical and the human skills employers need.

We heard from employers that they continue to invest in their employees, despite the disruptive impacts of COVID-19, and that they're finding new and innovative ways to identify and develop the skilled talent they need now and in the future. Immigrants and international students are key puzzle pieces, but rules, regulations, and processes need to be simplified and streamlined.

We heard, too, that owing to the expansion and success of work-integrated learning (WIL), employers now expect and get more from new hires; and that opportunities exist to increase industry-post-secondary education partnerships to help address new and emerging upskilling and reskilling needs as Canada's jobs and labour market evolve.

We hope that policy and decision-makers, educators and employers, will find in this year's Skills Survey the evidence-base they need to work together to tackle the country's most pressing skills and talent challenges. Canada's businesses, in partnership with our post-secondary education institutions and with all levels of government, can collaborate and lead a country hard-hit by the pandemic through a graceful transition to a more sustainable, inclusive, and resilient economy.



### **About the Business Council of Canada**

Founded in 1976, the Business Council of Canada is a not-for-profit, non-partisan organization composed of business leaders in every region and sector of the country. The Council's member companies employ 1.7 million Canadians, contribute the largest share of federal corporate taxes, and are responsible for most of Canada's exports, corporate philanthropy, and private-sector investments in research and development. Through supply chain partnerships, service contracts and mentoring programs, Business Council members support many hundreds of thousands of small businesses and entrepreneurs in communities of all sizes, in every part of Canada.

### **About BHER**

The Business + Higher Education Roundtable (BHER) is a non-partisan, not-for-profit organization bringing together some of Canada's largest companies and leading post-secondary institutions. Since 2015, BHER has worked to harness the strengths of Canada's business and post-secondary education sectors to build opportunities for young Canadians, boost innovation and drive collaboration. Learn more at [www.bher.ca](http://www.bher.ca).

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### **Acknowledgements**

This year's Skills Survey was designed in partnership with the Business Council of Canada. Carolyn Hatch, PhD, Senior Lead, R&D, and Béa (Béatrice) Libchaber, R&D Associate at BHER, administered the survey. Steve Higham, Senior Lead, R&D at BHER led the report writing, with data analysis support from Béa Libchaber, and additional support from Nilanee Koneswaran. The Business Council of Canada's policy team and BHER's R&D team provided feedback along the way. Laura Eggertson copy edited the report, and Alexis Gunawardena, Program Associate at BHER, designed and laid it out.



## Methodology

This report is based on a survey of 95 large Canadian private-sector employers. We conducted the survey between July and September 2021. The participating companies employ more than 830,000 Canadians across the country in a wide range of industries.

The survey is the product of a partnership between the Business + Higher Education Roundtable and the Business Council of Canada (BCC). The BCC is an association representing over 150 of Canada's largest companies.

The 2022 survey (conducted in 2021), asked respondents 44 questions covering the following categories, many of which were aligned with categories in the 2018 and 2020 reports (with surveys conducted in 2017 and 2019, respectively):

- Expectations of employers and new graduates
- Relationships with post-secondary education
- Learning and innovation
- Hiring and skill availability
- Pandemic Impacts

## Survey tool

BHER and the Business Council of Canada developed the survey questions, in consultation with stakeholders in the post-secondary education and business communities.

Respondents completed the survey online, using a browser-based data collection tool, with each company invited to complete the survey. Respondents included chief human resources officers, vice-presidents or directors of HR, and/or HR managers. We aggregated their results. .

We have anonymized quotes from survey participants and edited them for clarity. This survey does not purport to reflect the workforce trends and challenges of all Canadian employers; rather, it serves as a snapshot of a subgroup of the Canadian economy to provide insight to the priorities and challenges Canadian employers face in the current market.



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