# AHEAD BY A DECADE:
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Preparing for the future of work is one of the biggest challenges facing policymakers, employers, educators, service providers, and unions. The Brookfield Institute's Forecast of Canadian Occupational Growth provides a new tool for understanding how Canada's labour market could evolve over the next decade, shaped by potentially disruptive drivers ranging from technological change to resource scarcity and an aging population. Ahead by a Decade: Employment in 2030 highlights key insights from this forecast, exploring how Canadian occupations may grow or decline relative to national employment over the next ten years. The interdisciplinary methodology behind this analysis involves foresight research, expert insights, and machine learning. This novel approach was used to create projections informed by each occupation's skill, ability, and knowledge requirements, and by data gathered through six cross-country workshops.

This report highlights:

+ The jobs projected to grow or decline:
A third of Canada's workers are currently in occupations projected to change in the next decade: 19% of Canadian workers are in occupations projected to grow; 15% are in occupations projected to decline in employment share (the portion of all Canadian workers they employ). Occupations in health, natural, and applied sciences are projected to grow, along with those with a high degree of service orientation and technical expertise. Occupations in manufacturing and utilities, however, are generally projected to decline by 2030. Both workers and employers will need support in navigating these potential shifts.
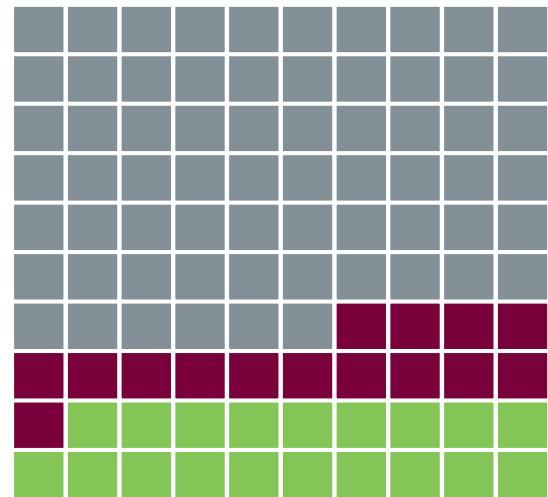
■ Portion in jobs projected to increase   ■ Portion in jobs projected to decrease   ■ Portion of people in neither section

+ Skills and abilities expected to be important across the labour market:
Five social skills and cognitive abilities emerge as foundational for the workforce of the future: fluency of ideas, memorization, instructing, persuasion, and service orientation. Echoing recent research, these traits encompass a worker's capability to brainstorm, to absorb new information of different kinds, to teach, to influence opinions and behaviour, and to identify ways to help people. They are likely to become increasingly necessary for workers to remain resilient as the labour market evolves in the next decade. In addition, this report highlights a number of other areas that can enhance a worker's resilience when paired with existing education and experience.

+ **The needs and realities of different workers:**
Risks, resilience, and opportunities are unevenly distributed across Canada's people and regions. Key examples include:

  – Men are more likely than women to work in occupations projected to grow—and in occupations projected to decline. This suggests that the future of work for women may present less opportunity as well as less risk.

  – Workers in occupations projected to decline earn less than those in occupations projected to increase or remain stable, which may make it harder to navigate job disruption. Notably, while fewer women are working in occupations projected to decline, those who are may be more vulnerable to change: they are paid significantly less than men in these occupations ($33,552 versus $42,883).

  – First-generation immigrants are more likely to work in occupations projected to grow when compared to the workforce average. This is a positive indicator, as immigration is expected to remain a main driver of workforce growth in Canada.

  – While some visible minority workers are, on average, more likely to hold jobs in occupations projected to grow, certain groups may face more risk. Notably, over one fifth of men who identify as Filipino, Southeast Asian, Black, or Latin American, as well as those who do not identify as part of a visible minority, are in occupations projected to shrink.

  – Available data suggests that among all workers, Indigenous peoples are some of the most likely to be employed in occupations projected to decline in employment share. However, there is a large gap in labour market information available for Indigenous peoples, making these insights less certain. This underlines the need for investments in Indigenous-led initiatives to better enable Indigenous communities and workers to respond to labour market change.

  – There is no single province or territory that is better positioned to navigate future employment change; however workers in Nunavut and Saskatchewan are slightly less likely to work in occupations projected to grow and more likely to work in declining ones.

  – Almost half of workers in growing occupations have a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to only 13% of those in occupations projected to decline in importance. This suggests that higher education will become increasingly necessary to access high-potential jobs over the next decade.

+ **Recommendations for helping workers and employers navigate change:**
Skill development and employment policies and initiatives should be designed not only to respond to immediate needs, but with future resilience in mind. This forecast points to opportunities for policy and program design to proactively support worker and employer resilience by highlighting the occupations, industries, regions, and people who may face more disruption, as well as the skills and abilities that could help them adjust.

The forecast and this accompanying report provide a picture of the future that is complementary to existing research and forecasts, but is not a definitive prediction. It introduces a new perspective on the future of employment that differs from the Canadian Occupational Projection System (COPS), which largely relies on extrapolation from past trends. *Ahead by a Decade* is designed to help policymakers, program designers, educators, and service providers identify and respond to potential risks and opportunities, better positioning workers and employers to navigate a dynamic labour market.

A NOTE RE: FORECASTS IN TIMES OF EXTREME UNCERTAINTY

Although this report is being released in the first half of 2020, the vast majority of the work putting together the Forecast of Canadian Occupational Growth (FCOG) occurred in 2018 and 2019.

This is not unusual for large scale projects of this nature: there are almost always inevitable lags between finishing raw research and releasing a polished, understandable, externally-reviewed version for public consumption. However, in this case, the emergence of the COVID-19 crisis and its enormously disruptive effect on the world present a particular challenge: Are the results of an occupational growth forecast created before the crisis still relevant?

We believe the answer is a strong "yes." The findings of the report and, more generally, the FCOG provide a very helpful guide for thinking about long-term employment and skills trends in Canada between now and 2030.

The global pandemic and accompanying economic crisis will undoubtedly have an impact on these trends. Some trends may accelerate, new ones will emerge, others may slow down or stop. Future versions of this forecast will necessarily incorporate the impact of the crisis on long-term employment trends.

But, many of these trends are deeply rooted in economic, social, political, technological, and environmental changes that we believe will continue. And the time frame of the forecast—targeting 2030, not 2021—is designed to focus on the long-term.

Forecasts, at their best, are snapshots of the future from a particular point in time. They are almost never 100% right; no one ever predicts the future with certainty. Rather, the best forecasts are meant to be tools to help guide our thinking about the future—an exercise that is inherently clouded with uncertainty.

Similarly, the FCOG is not an attempt to paint a definitive picture of the future of Canadian employment. It is a complementary tool which, used alongside other sources of future-looking information, can guide the design of skills development policies and programs that are more likely to be resilient into the future.

As Canada and the world grapple with how to recover from the current COVID-19 crisis, thinking about the long-term will be more important than ever. The need to design policy and program supports that will be effective into the future is more urgent as we seek to support workers and businesses not only in weathering this crisis, but in emerging as strong or stronger than before.

We hope this forecast may be a useful contribution to this challenge.

Sincerely,

Sean Mullin
Executive Director
Brookfield Institute for Innovation + Entrepreneurship

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