

2020

Preliminary Report on the Perception of Immigrants Integrating Into the Quebec Labour Market

CASE OF PROFESSIONAL ORDERS



By Osvaldo Enrique Anaya and
Nathalia Guevara Jaramillo

TABLE OF CONTENTS

3 Introduction of The Immigrant Voice (TIV)

4 Presenting the Issue

5 Perception Survey

5 Perception survey

5 Justification of the survey

6 Methodology

7 Survey structure

8 Results

9 Participant profiles

10 Journey to Canada

14 Proceedings with professional orders

21 Conclusion

23 Recommendations

INTRODUCTION TO THE IMMIGRANT VOICE (TIV)

The Immigrant Voice (TIV) is a non-profit organization created in 2013 in the Outaouais region with a nationwide reach. TIV's mission is to collectively defend the rights of immigrants who have graduated abroad, whose profession is regulated, and who encounter systemic difficulties with certain professional orders in Quebec.

The organization also offers services to immigrants of all origins who hold a degree obtained within Quebec, or in any other province of Canada, but who are experiencing the same systemic difficulties integrating into a professional order in Quebec.

Direction and administration

LVI is managed by a board of directors and a management team in accordance with the provisions of the Quebec Companies Act.

Board of Directors

- **Hamid Benrabha** (President)
- **Denise Laurence Dadié** (Vice President)
- **Nathalia Guevara Jaramillo** (Administrative assistant)
- **Jeef Beia Kabemba** (Treasurer)
- **Youyou Nsembe Nsombe** (Administrator)
- **Lomami Shomba** (Administrator)
- **Sattarov Khusravdod** (Administrator)

Work team

- **Didier Muamba Kabeya** (Director)
- **Oswaldo Enrique Anaya** (Project Manager, Volunteer)
- **Maysaa Al-Khatib** (Administrative assistant – Volunteer)
- **Olivia Hnatyshyn** (Communications)

PRESENTING THE ISSUE

The majority of immigrants arriving in Quebec are informed of the requirements to practice a profession and the specific requirements for licenses issued by professional orders in the province. However, the information obtained is often insufficient and unclear. Immigrant professionals soon realize that there are systemic barriers that make it almost impossible for so many to integrate into certain professional orders.

This prevents foreign graduates from entering the labour market in general, as well as their profession of experience. The systemic barriers impede immigrants from obtaining the necessary licenses from professional orders and hinders their professional integration. Additionally, this prevents Quebec and Canadian companies from benefitting from the knowledge and expertise of professional immigrants and skilled workers.

The organization (TIV) is thus initiating this survey in order to gauge the extent of the situation throughout Quebec, and to propose appropriate solutions, apart from the collective defence of the rights of the immigrants concerned.



PERCEPTION SURVEY

OBJECTIVES OF THE SURVEY

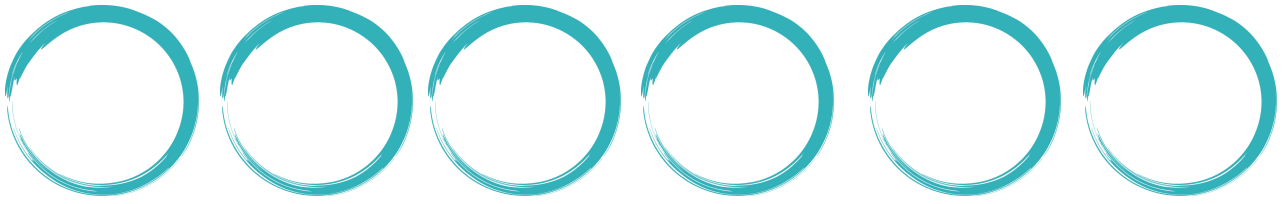
The main objective of this survey is to identify the perception that immigrants with foreign credentials have regarding their integration into the labour market, and particularly the perception that they have concerning the systemic barriers imposed by professional orders that prevent them from practicing their professions in Quebec.

JUSTIFICATION OF THE SURVEY

While the organization has been working to defend the collective rights of immigrant professionals since 2013, its 2020-2021 action plan calls for conducting this survey to give voice to the people affected by accreditation issues, in order to work together to find appropriate and sustainable solutions.

The results of the survey will allow us to:

- To raise awareness among the members of the organization regarding the complex and multifaceted nature of the problem;
- Present the survey report to political and administrative authorities;
- Mobilize the people concerned by the issue and address their demands;
- Distribute the results to public opinion at the national level (Quebec / Canada).



METHODOLOGY

The survey questions were derived from the thoughts and input of TIV members during educational sessions conducted over the past seven years. The questions were reviewed, revised, and validated by the Board of Directors and management prior to submission to respondents.

The Google application was used to design and create the online survey forms. The application allows for both mass distribution of the survey (via email attachment) and the generation of a URL shortcut to access the survey from a website, text message or social network such as Facebook or Twitter.

The methodology used was entirely virtual (via email, website, social networks) due to the global pandemic of corona virus (COVID-19).

SURVEY STRUCTURE

The survey is divided into four parts: a) participant profile, b) journey to Canada, c) proceedings with professional orders and d) integration into the workforce.

a) Participant Profile

The information sought here is: How long has the participant been in Canada, what is his or her status, what is his or her country of origin, what is his or her age and gender, where does he or she live, what is his or her level of French, his or her level of education, his or her field of training, as well as his or her work experience outside Canada.

b) Journey to Canada

The information sought here is related to: The participant's current occupation, the existence of Canadian credentials or whether the participant is currently in school, working, unemployed, or in some other situation.

c) Proceedings with Professional Orders

The information sought here is whether or not the participant is required to have a permit to practice his or her profession in Quebec, and if so, what is the participant's perception of the steps taken with professional orders. In this respect, the first question asked is whether the participant in a regulated profession already has a professional permit or if the permit application time is short. It is also a question of knowing if the participant, after having started the steps, has abandoned them. Next, it will be a question of finding out the participant's perception of the steps taken with the professional orders, his or her perception of the information available, the requirements, the recognition of prior learning, the time required to obtain the permit and the cost of the process.

d) Integration Into the Workforce

The information sought here is related to the recognition of education and experience acquired outside of Canada, as well as suggestions to facilitate integration into the labour market.

RESULTS

A total of eighty-five (85) Quebec residents responded to the survey. The survey was posted on the organization's website and social networks (Facebook and Twitter) for a period of three (3) weeks. The survey was also emailed to the organization's members via virtual messaging, including WhatsApp.

The survey was disseminated through the networks of partners, including the *Table de concertation des organismes au service des personnes refugies et immigrantes* (TCRI), the *Service intégration travail Outaouais* (SITO) and the *Carrefour jeunesse emploi de l'Outaouais* (CJEO).

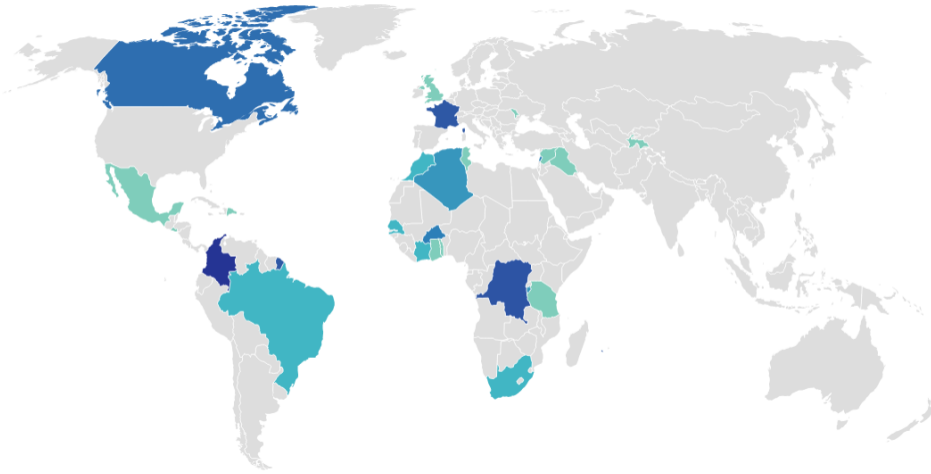
The survey involved women and men of twenty-two (22) different nationalities, residents of twelve (12) of the fourteen (14) administrative regions of Quebec and with degrees from more than 30 different professions.

The results of the survey are presented according to the four-part structure of the project, namely: a) participant profile, b) journey to Canada, c) proceedings with the professional orders and d) integration into the workforce.



a) Participant Profile

The following tables present graphically the participants' information on the length of their residence in Quebec, their status in Canada and their country of origin:



Colombia	28
Canada	5
England	1
Morocco	2
Dominican Republic	1
Tajikistan	1
Democratic Republic of the Congo	9
France	7
Lebanon	4
Syria	1
Burkina Faso	4
South Africa	2
El Salvador	1
Tunisia	1
Senegal	2
Togo	1
Algeria	3
Burundi	3
Tanzania	1
Ghana	1
Brazil	2
Côte d'Ivoire	2
Iraq	1
Mexico	1
Moldova	1

Table: Olivia Hnatyshyn • Source: LVI • Created with Datawrapper

Arrival in Canada

■ 3- 5 years ago
 ■ Less than 3 years ago
 ■ From 6- 8 years ago
 ■ Over 12 years ago
 ■ 9- 12 years ago

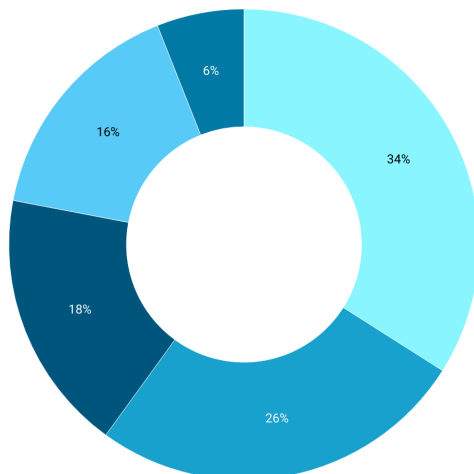


Chart: Olivia Hnatyshyn • Source: LVI • Created with Datawrapper

Status in Canada

■ Citizen
 ■ Permanent Resident
 ■ Temporary Worker
 ■ Refugee
 ■ International Student

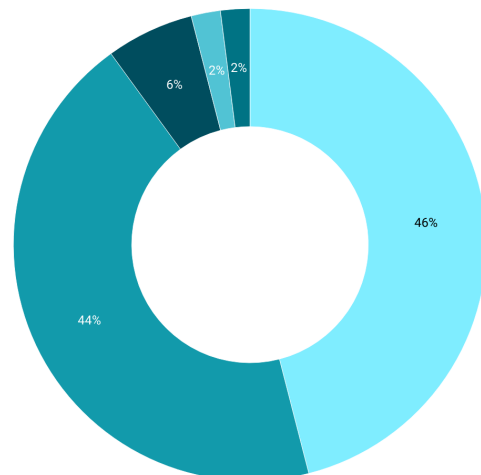


Chart: Olivia Hnatyshyn • Source: LVI • Created with Datawrapper

b) Journey to Canada

Most of the survey participants have a profession related to administration, teaching, humanities and social sciences, and health sciences. Despite the differences in occupations and licensing requirements (e.g., health professionals must belong to a college to practice, while social science professionals are not attached to professional orders), the difficulties and concerns encountered by participants with respect to credential recognition are similar. The table shown here captures the distribution of survey participants' occupations by domain.

Area of Occupation of Survey Participants

Administration, business, accounting, and finance	25
Teaching and educational sciences, humanities and social sciences	18
Health	18
Information technology	8
Justice and public safety	5
Buildings development and transport	2
Natural resources, agriculture, wildlife and environment	2
Other: Communications, electronics, mechanical engineering, chemistry, logistics, math and food service	7
Total	85

Table: Olivia Hnatyshyn • Source: LVI • Created with Datawrapper

Level of Education

■ Bachelor's degree
 ■ Master's degree
 ■ College diploma
 ■ Doctorate
 ■ Specialist

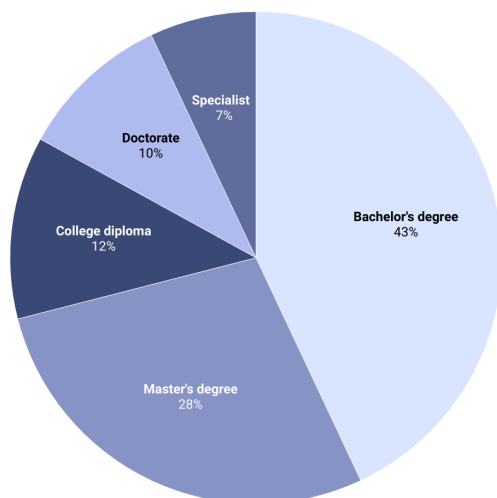


Chart: Olivia Hnatyshyn • Source: LVI • Created with Datawrapper

The graph shown here distributes the results by level of education of the survey participants. It was noted that a few participants changed their field of study and thus reoriented their career. The survey does not provide the motivations for such a change. A relevant exercise in the future would be to explore the reasons and experiences of newcomers who decide to reorient their careers.

The following graph shows the distribution of the total number of years of schooling undertaken by the participants.

Years of Schooling



Chart: Olivia Hnatyshyn • Source: LVI • Created with Datawrapper

Most of the survey participants have degrees at the Bachelor's (33) and Master's (21) levels, representing between 15 and 20 years of education. Experience in practicing outside of Quebec varied among participants, but the majority had practiced for more than 3 years. This demonstrates the importance of placing a fair value on qualifications and experience obtained outside of Quebec.

The following graph shows the current distribution of participants' occupations. Of the twenty-seven (27) individuals with a Canadian degree, six (6) have degrees in another field and nine (9) in a related or affiliated field.

Current Occupation

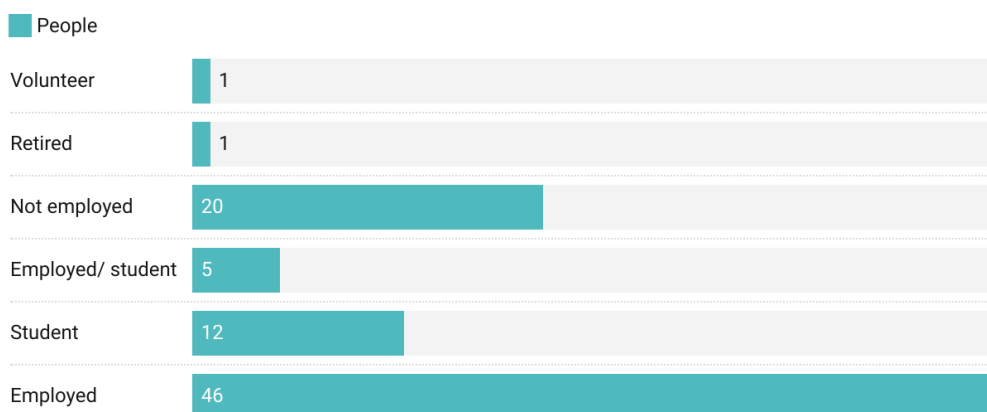
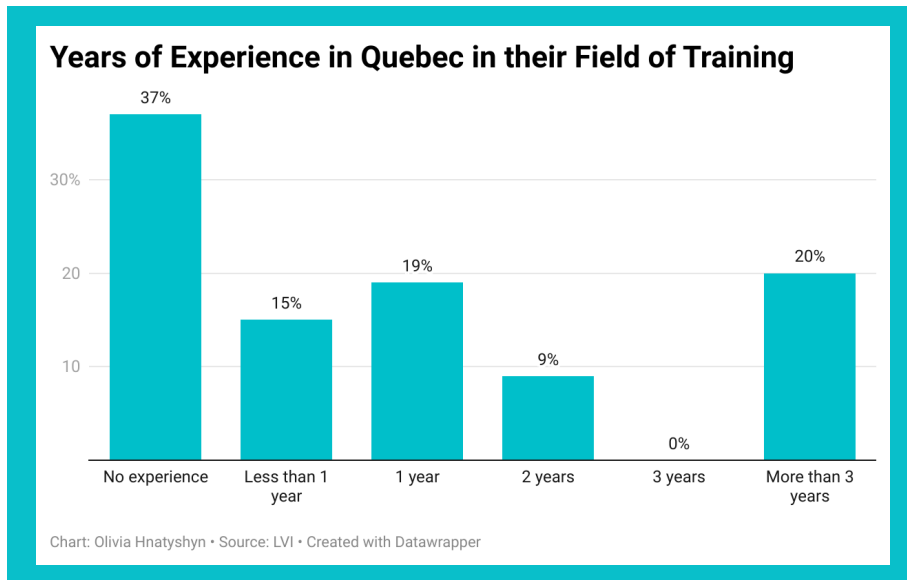


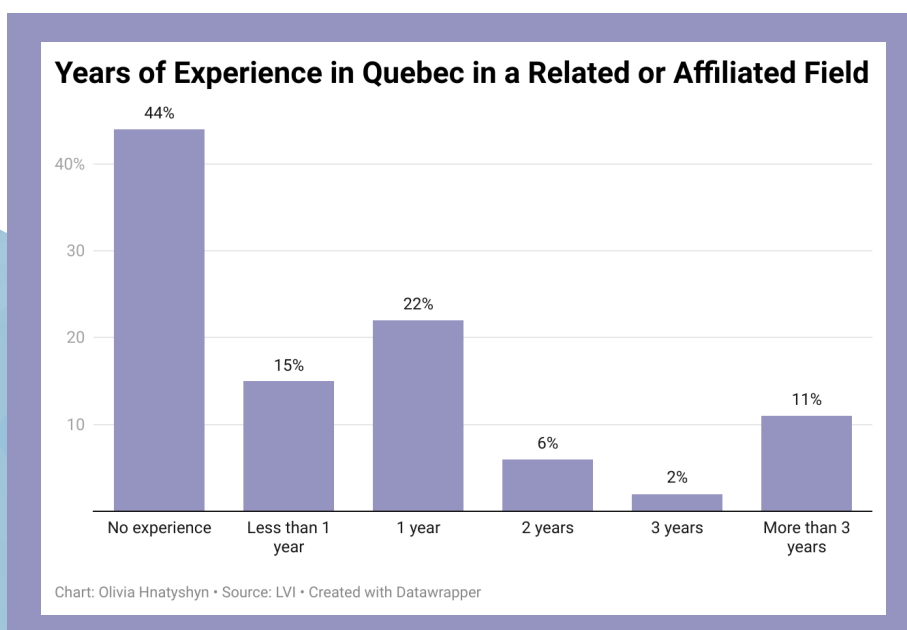
Chart: Olivia Hnatyshyn • Source: LVI • Created with Datawrapper

Twenty (20) of the survey participants were unemployed; of these, only six (6) had a Canadian education. Fifty-two (52) participants are employed and of these, twenty-six (26), or half, have a Canadian degree (3 vocational, 12 college, 3 undergraduate, 8 graduate, and 1 postgraduate).



The one participant who was retired also had a Canadian degree.

Notably, the proportion of employed participants with a Canadian degree was higher (50%) than the proportion of unemployed individuals who had completed their education in Canada. This demonstrates that, for survey participants, the lack of a Canadian degree increases the risk of being unemployed.



One concerning piece of information that emerges from the survey is the lack of Quebec experience in the participants' field of work: 37% (20 people) say they have no experience in their field in Quebec and 44% (24 people) say they have no experience in a field related to their basic education. These figures are not necessarily attributable to a recent arrival, as only 26% of respondents arrived in Quebec less than 3 years ago.

Only 20% of participants have more than 3 years of experience in their field of study in Quebec, even though most of them have more than 3 years of experience in their chosen field outside the country. The survey shows that experience outside of Quebec does not necessarily correspond to the experience that individuals can gain in Quebec in their fields of study. This suggests that, despite the wealth of experience gained outside of Quebec, survey participants find it difficult to practice their professions. It should be noted that the number of participants without professional experience in their fields is high (37%); this means that more than three quarters (3/4) of the people who participated in the survey have not had the opportunity to apply their skills in Quebec. In its mission, TIV identified the difficulties in recognizing diplomas and skills obtained abroad as one of the main problems in integrating newcomers to Quebec.

Experience in the Field of Expertise in Quebec

■ No experience
 ■ More than 3 years
 ■ 1 year
 ■ Less than 1 year
 ■ 2 years

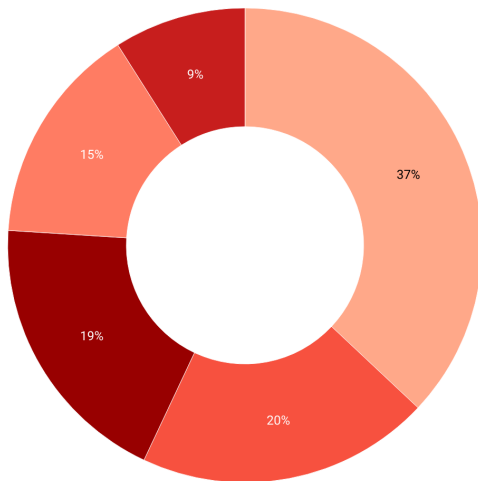


Chart: Olivia Hnatyshyn • Source: LVI • Created with Datawrapper

Accumulated Experience Outside Quebec in the Field of Expertise

■ 6 to 8 years
 ■ 3 to 5 years
 ■ 9 to 12 years
 ■ Over 12 years
 ■ Less than 3 years

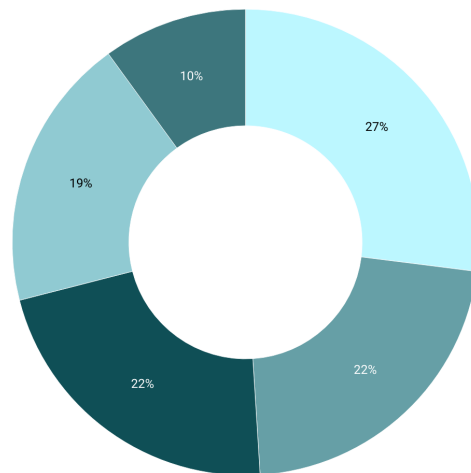


Chart: Olivia Hnatyshyn • Source: LVI • Created with Datawrapper

The reasons for the lack of experience in the field of study can be varied, and they can be related to the recognition of skills, experience and diplomas obtained abroad. We can differentiate between participants who work in professions regulated by an order and those who work in professions without an order. Among the first group, some answers testify to the multiple difficulties in dealing with the orders (costly and time-consuming process, unclear information and too many documents to provide). For those in the second group (without a professional association), the difficulties were varied (e.g., difficulties in obtaining a comparative assessment and lack of knowledge of diplomas by some employers).

One of the participants summarized the situation regarding the qualifications of new immigrants: "Canada selects us as skilled workers but basically remains rigid about the recognition of diplomas and Canadian experience".

c) Professional orders and the recognition of qualifications obtained outside Quebec

44% of survey respondents have degrees leading to professions regulated by a college in Quebec; most have degrees in accounting, medicine, nursing, social work and law.

Participants With a Profession Regulated by a Professional Order

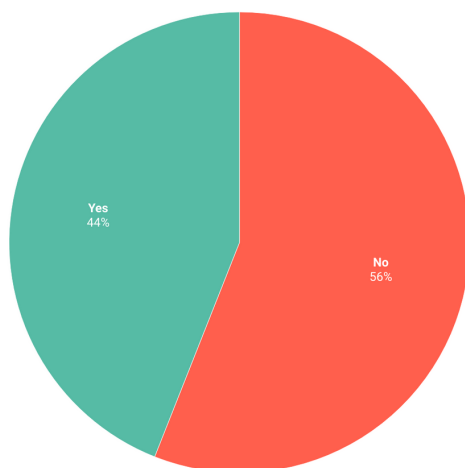


Chart: Olivia Hnatyshyn • Source: LVI • Created with Datawrapper

Professions Regulated by Orders

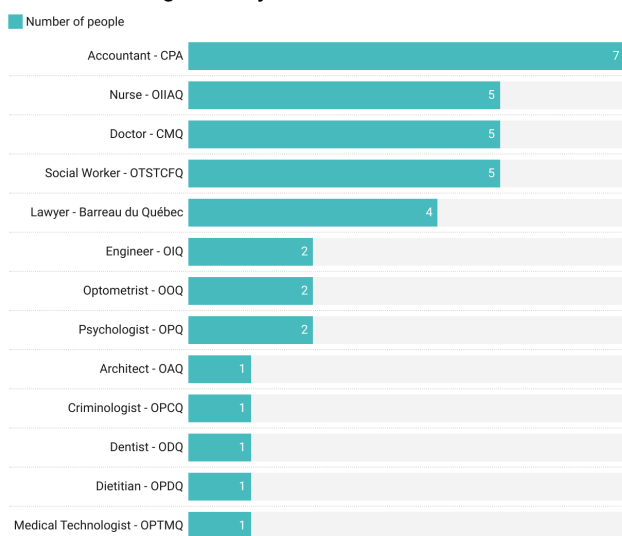


Chart: Olivia Hnatyshyn • Source: LVI • Created with Datawrapper

Current Status With Professional Orders

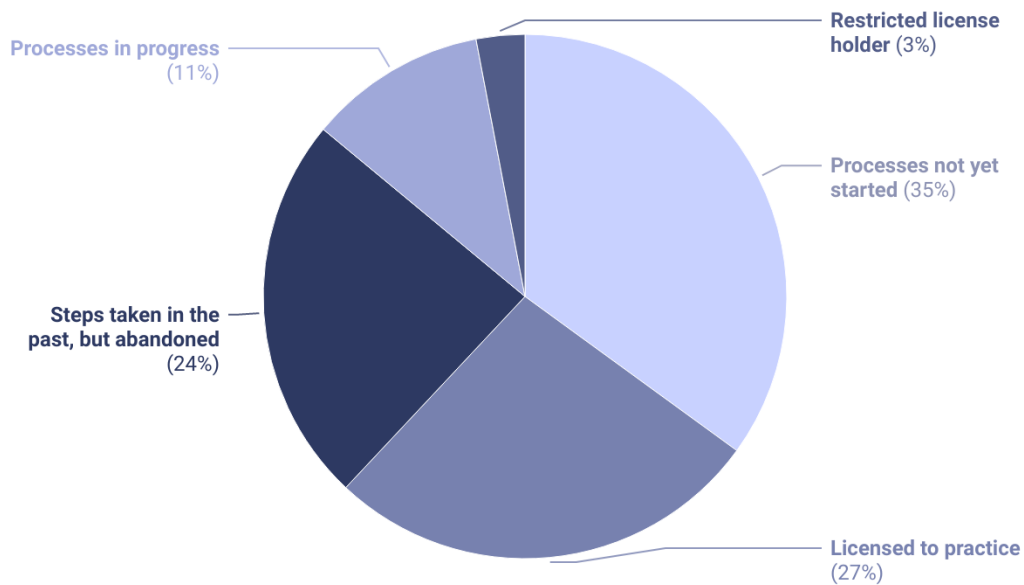


Chart: Olivia Hnatyshyn • Source: LVI • Created with Datawrapper

Almost three quarters (3/4) of the participants who had started an application to a professional order (24%) abandoned the process and considered it difficult:

- "The process is too complex, costly and has a lot of uncertainties".*
- "Because the information was difficult to obtain from the Quebec Bar"*
- "The waiting period is long".*
- "You have to start all over again even if you have been working in the field for a long time".*
- "Too many documents to provide"*

Some of the reasons given for the decision to abandon the application for a professional license were:

- "No financial support for me and my family"*
- [I decided to] "go back to school to study"*
- "Distrust and the feeling that the college would take money from me knowing that my degrees earned abroad would not be recognized"*
- "A lot of expectations"*
- "A lot of paperwork to submit"*
- "Missing documents that are not able to be found"*

Participants who had not yet begun the process of contacting a professional association gave similar reasons for their dismay:

- "Too long a procedure, I had to work on other things".*
- Costly and time consuming procedures".*

Four (4) respondents reported that, at the time of completing the survey, they were in the process of being recognized by a professional order. These professionals, all from the health sector (medicine, nursing and dentistry), had been waiting for a response from the college for over a year.

13 to 18 months	1
19 to 24 months	2
Over 24 months	1
Total	4

For most participants who were successful in their licensing process, obtaining the necessary information was easy to navigate, easily accessible, clear, understandable and comprehensive. However, one participant explained that he had to complete an additional bachelor's degree in Canada to become licensed. Another identified having two files, one physical and one electronic, as being a challenge to the process.

Length of Time it Took to Obtain a Permit

Over 24 months 1 to 6 months 13 to 18 months 7 to 12 months

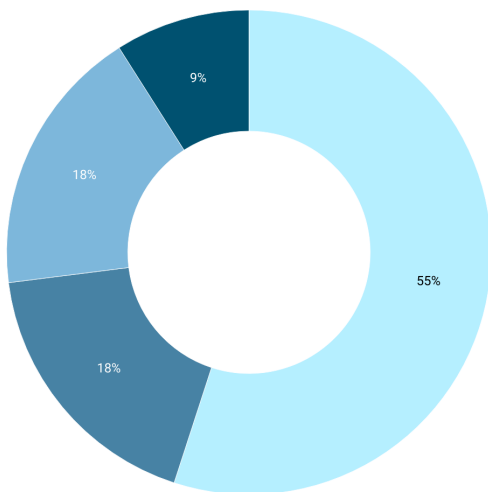


Chart: Olivia Hnatyshyn • Source: LVI • Created with Datawrapper

Nine (9) of the participants had to take at least one university or CEGEP course to become licensed, which involves significant time and expense. For most people, the courses cost \$2500 or less, but for one person the courses cost between \$2500 and \$5000. For one participant, however, the cost was over \$7500. Despite such an investment, most participants considered the courses to be relevant. For the majority, the entire process with the College cost between \$0 and \$5000.

Time Invested in the Courses Required to Obtain License

1 to 6 months Over 24 months 7 to 12 months 19 to 24 months

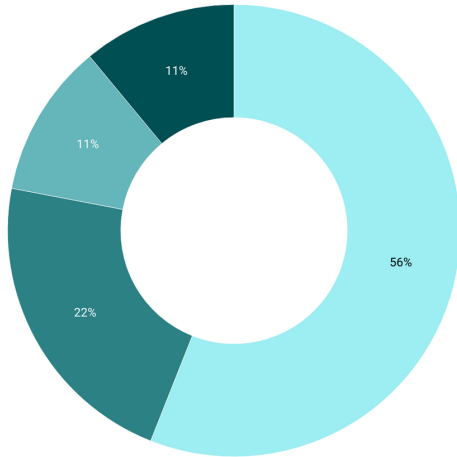


Chart: Olivia Hnatyshyn • Source: LVI • Created with Datawrapper

Processing Duration of Current Application

19 to 24 months 13 to 18 months Over 24 months

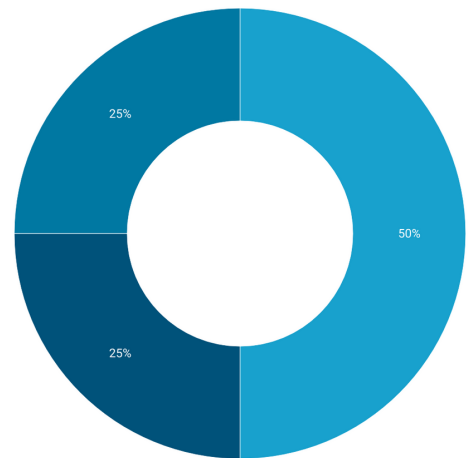


Chart: Olivia Hnatyshyn • Source: LVI • Created with Datawrapper

Total Cost of the Licensing Process

\$0 to \$5000 \$10 001 to \$15 000 Over \$15 000

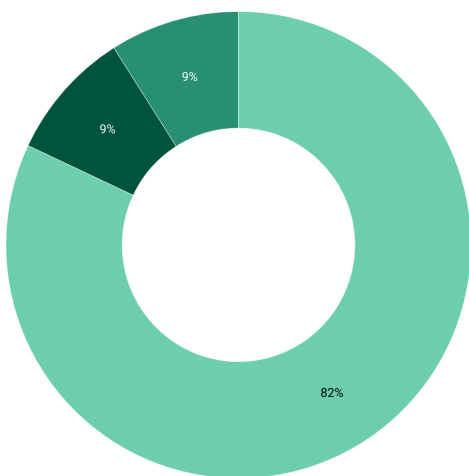


Chart: Olivia Hnatyshyn • Source: LVI • Created with Datawrapper

Four (4) of the participants were in the process of obtaining a license. The time it took to obtain the documents ranged from 0 to 6 months (1 person), 7 to 12 months (2 people) and 12 to 18 months (1 person). Three (3) of these individuals paid between \$0 and \$1500 and one spent over \$4500. One obstacle identified in obtaining the necessary documents for the permit application is that of obtaining certain certificates at a distance (for example, a document detailing the training program course by course, including details of each course taken outside Canada).

Time Invested in the Process (Application Abandoned)

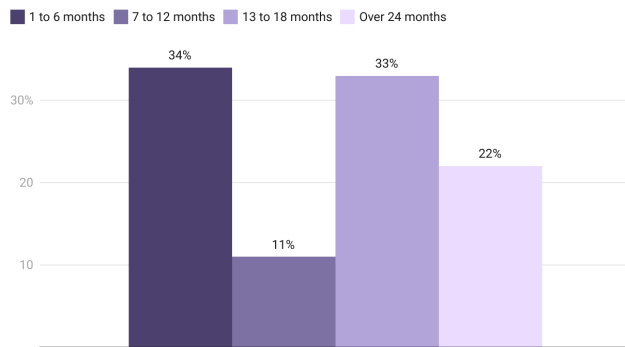


Chart: Olivia Hnatyshyn • Source: LVI • Created with Datawrapper

Cost of the Process (Abandoned Application)

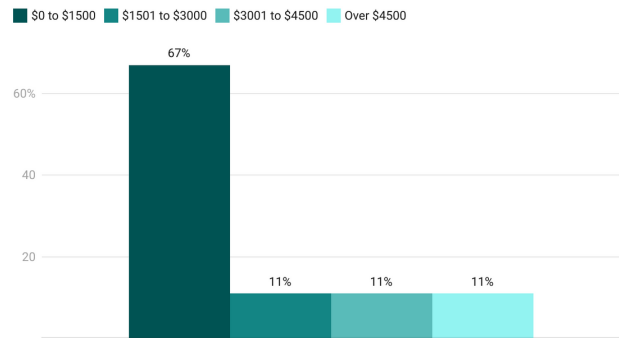


Chart: Olivia Hnatyshyn • Source: LVI • Created with Datawrapper

Six (6) people stated that they intend to begin the procedure with a professional order in Quebec. All of the others said that they would like to be accompanied in their dealings with the professional order, which demonstrates the importance of the mission of The Immigrant Voice, and the need to have a budget to offer this type of service to the community.

In the case of graduates who do not have to apply to a college, the survey also revealed several difficulties in terms of professional integration. Among the testimonies written in the survey, we found experiences of overqualification, dequalification and underqualification. In the category of under-qualification, we found that, often, the lack of experience in Quebec (and in Canada) is a sufficient reason for not getting a job. For overqualified professionals, several responses indicated that educational credentials can be perceived as a disadvantage or inconvenience in obtaining a job, resulting in the practice of omitting certain qualifications from resumes in order to obtain an under-qualified job.

Overqualification	"Since job searches in my field were unsuccessful, I looked for a lower level job with the support of the CJEO and was told I was overqualified for the position when all I wanted was to work."
	"...I have several degrees, so I had to modify my resume accordingly, and leave one degree."
	"Since I had not been able to find a job in my level of training, I tried to find a sub-skilled job, but it did not work out because they said I had too much training."
	"I had to change the way I presented my resume without my full degrees to get a job I wasn't getting before."
	"I find that integration into university education is almost impossible for foreign trained individuals. Outside of education, I have found some interesting options but they do not require a doctoral degree."
Dequalification	"(...) the job requirements were below my qualifications."
Under qualification	"Under qualified because of English."
	"Lack of experience in my field of work in Quebec and people are not used to the diversity of accents."
	"They simply didn't hire me because I didn't have any Quebec experience."

However, most of the non-professional participants felt that their work experience outside of Quebec was recognized in their job search. For those who feel that their experience abroad was not considered, we found some discouraging situations, such as one graduate who explained, "I haven't gotten a job yet," and in 8 months she had only found a 14-week internship in her field, but after her internship, she had to continue to actively look for a job. These experiences give the impression of having received different treatment in the job search because of her newcomer status.

Has Your Work Experience Outside of Quebec Been Recognized?

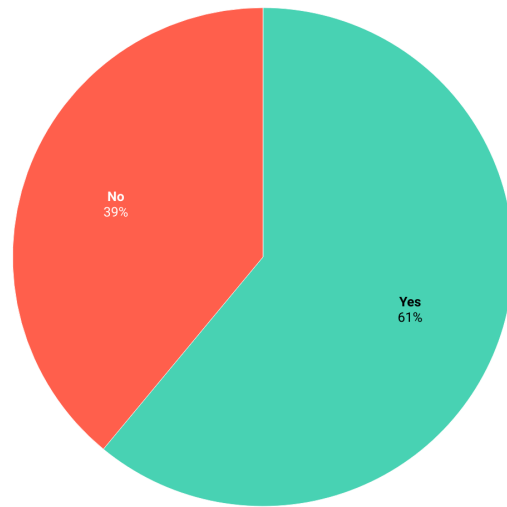


Chart: Olivia Hnatyshyn • Source: LVI • Created with Datawrapper

During their job search, we found a variety of experiences; for example, for some participants, the job search was short (two weeks for a job in their skill/training area) while for others the job search lasted for 1, 2 or 3 years.

CONCLUSION

The results of the survey reflect the opinions of international graduates who participated in the perception survey, which had the objective of providing spaces for reflection on labour market integration in Quebec.

Here are the main lessons learned from the survey:

- Diversity of participation in the survey, notably in terms of origins, regions of residence in Quebec, professional fields, age and gender, among others, allowed for a better assessment of the issue.
- The majority of the participants in the survey are Canadian citizens, i.e., people who have lived in Canada for four (4) years and who have a high level of education (undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate studies) and hold degrees in administration, humanities, social sciences or health, among others.
- Although the majority of participants reported being employed, many of them held positions that were not related to their areas of training (or skill), and around twenty percent (20%) of participants were found to be unemployed.
- The vast majority of participants stated that they had no Quebec experience in their field of training or in a field related to their studies. This suggests that there are barriers to the recognition of foreign credentials by employers. This situation contrasts with the fact that several participants stated that they had omitted their diplomas or experience abroad in order to have the chance to obtain a job.
- Many participants reported that they had returned to school in a different field because of difficulties securing employment in their fields of study. This situation represents a significant loss of expertise that is only available to foreign-trained workers.
- Although the majority of participants stated that they did not have a degree in a field regulated by a professional order in Quebec, a high percentage (40%) confirmed that they needed a license to practice their profession in Quebec.

- Many of the participants who stated that they needed a licence to practice their professions in Quebec confirmed that they had not started the process with the professional orders, or simply stated that they had abandoned the process because of the difficulties encountered with certain professional orders. The main difficulties were: contradictory requirements imposed by certain orders, abnormally long and costly delays for the recognition of prior learning and competencies, etc.
- Survey participants with a degree in a non-regulated field in Quebec reported that their work experience outside of Quebec was recognized in some cases, and that finding a job in their field of expertise (or related field) was not difficult. However, they sometimes had to hide some of their degrees in order to avoid appearing overqualified.
- In light of all of the above, there is no doubt that there is still systemic discrimination regarding immigrants' integration into the labour market, particularly for workers with degrees from outside Quebec whose professions are regulated in the province.

RECOMENDATIONS

- Conduct awareness and reflection sessions around the perception survey results with the participation of the organization's members and other relevant stakeholders.
- Develop a proposal for advocacy based on the reflections and discussions held during the awareness sessions on the survey results.
- Develop a plan to distribute the results of the survey to provincial and federal political and administrative authorities and the public.
- To design, with the participation of the organization's members, services to better assist people affected by the problem identified by the survey and to promote the creation of a mutual aid network.
- To obtain recurrent financial support from the *Secrétariat à l'action communautaire autonome et aux initiatives sociales (SACAIS)* in order to allow the organization to better formulate effective responses to the systemic discrimination in employment experienced by workers with diplomas from outside Quebec, through actions and activities in the collective defence of rights.

