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CANADIAN EDUCATION AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR COUNSELLING  
INSTITUT CANADIEN D'ÉDUCATION ET DE RECHERCHE EN ORIENTATION

2011

# Survey of Career Service Professionals

HIGHLIGHTS REPORT





# Highlights Report

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The Canadian Education and Research Institute for Counselling (CERIC) plays a part in generating primary data about the career counselling and career development field. CERIC also tracks how Canadians feel about their place of work, career planning and training. The findings from these research activities are presented in information documents that apprise stakeholders about sector conditions and attitudes about the workplace. CERIC also uses this material to customize its programs to meet practitioner needs and sector realities.

This report provides highlights from the CERIC Survey of Career Service Professionals, conducted between October 14 and November 18, 2011. The online survey was completed by 1,013 respondents from the field. Participants were recruited via an open call across CERIC's email lists. Supporting organizations also forwarded the survey notification to broaden representation. The survey delved into research and education issues as well as career competency and mobility. The resultant information offers a snapshot of the composition of the career services community including some of its interests and challenges, along with professional development and information needs.

**Demographic Information Highlights:** *A significantly larger proportion of the career service professional community is female. This gender-based disparity is expected to increase in the near future. For the most part, those in this field made a deliberate choice to enter the profession. However, the field appears to offer modest compensation taking into consideration the fact that participants are very well-educated. Personal growth/new challenge is the leading reason for those thinking about leaving the field.*

Demographic Breakdown. The field has a much higher ratio of females (79%) compared to males (21%). The gender-based disparity is likely to increase in the next 15 years as 48 percent of females are in the 25 to 44 year-old age group compared to 31 percent of males.

Educational Profile. Almost four in 10 (38%) have a Bachelor's Degree as their highest level of educational attainment while another 44 percent obtained a Master's Degree. These ratios are significantly higher than those in the general population. Counselling or Educational Psychology (21%), Career Development (19%) and Education (16%) are mentioned as the top three main areas of focus in post-secondary studies applicable to the career services field.

Career Path. Several different responses were provided to the question "what was the primary influencer for your entry into the field of career

development?" The top five are: Interest in career development, wanted to help people, job/advancement opportunity, educational background, and having had an unsatisfying experience with career services (as a client). The field's workforce includes a relatively even distribution from newcomers to seasoned veterans. One-fifth (20%) have been working in career development for five years or less, slightly over one-quarter (26%) from five to 10 years, about one-third (34%) from 11 to 20 years, and just under one-fifth (19%) over 20 years.

Workplace Characteristics. More than half of those in the field work in one of two sectors as 32 percent find themselves employed in the not-for-profit sector (including charities) and another 27 percent are in the post-secondary education sector. The private sector (comprising career management / transition firms and independent career professionals) contains almost one-fifth (19%) of the workforce while those in government represent 14 percent. Over two-thirds (68%) are directly involved in the provision of career services in some form (either one-on-one, in a group, or both) compared to less than one-fifth (16%) who manage or supervise those who deliver career services. Only four percent develop career-related products as their main job function while two percent note that their primary role in the field is in research/academics.

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Employment Details. Those in the field find themselves mainly working full-time (85%) compared to part-time (15%). Of those who are currently employed, 79 percent have a single employer versus 15 percent who have multiple contracts. Details pertaining to gross (before deductions) annual salary or income shows that career service professionals receive a relatively modest remuneration taking into consideration their education level. Close to one-fifth (19%) make less than \$40,000 per year, while about one-third (32%) receive between \$40,000 and \$55,000 annually. Furthermore, 23 percent make between \$55,001 and \$70,000 and just 13 percent have a yearly salary or income of \$70,000 to \$85,000.

Career Plans. Several questions were asked to gain insight into the career plans of those in the career service community. An even split exists between those who are planning to stay in the field and those considering moving on (52% versus 48%). Personal growth/new challenge is the leading reason for those thinking about leaving (31%) followed by poor salary/income (15%) and feeling burned out (11%).

## **Professional Development and Learning**

**Highlights:** *Career service professionals are interested in enhancing their job skills in several areas. They are likewise very interested on accessing information about the field.*

*Unfortunately, limited financial support along with time constraints sometimes preclude them from taking advantage of these learning opportunities. In-person professional development is preferred while the Internet is the favoured means of accessing career-related information.*

Skills Enhancement. Those in the career service community are interested in focusing their professional development over the next five years on a wide range of areas. While 44 percent would like to concentrate on career assessment tools, 36 percent are interested in focusing on career and labour market information followed by 32 percent who would prefer to concentrate on exploring future trends (for instance, macro business issues).

Thematic Focus. Working with adults in career transition is the highest ranking professional development theme. It is mentioned by nearly

two-thirds (63%) of career service professionals. Post-secondary students received the second highest proportion of responses at 40 percent. The unemployed were mentioned by 37 percent followed by new Canadians/immigrants at 34 percent.

Budgetary Allowance. Employers provide very little financial support for career service professionals to undertake professional development. While 26 percent do not receive any personal professional development funding, one-third receive an allocation of up to \$500 per year. At the other end of the spectrum, only 7 percent are entitled to more than \$2,000 yearly.

Meeting Training Needs. Lack of funds is the main obstacle to accessing necessary career development information. Over two-thirds (67%) mention it as the greatest challenge to meeting their ongoing learning. A shortage of time (46%) and the fact that training is not offered in an accessible venue (41%) are the two next leadings obstacles.

Preferred Training Method and Access to Information. Receiving training in-person is favoured over accessing learning remotely. In-person workshops/seminars (51%) were rated as the most preferred type of training followed by conferences (45%) and courses with face-to-face delivery (34%). That being said, Web site & Internet Searches is by far the preferred means of accessing research and information on tips, trends and techniques in the career development field. Eighty percent favour this method followed by online magazines or newsletters (63%), books (33%) and academic journals (28%).

**Research Highlights:** *A small proportion of the career service professional community is undertaking research about the field. However, there appears to be a greater appetite for knowledge arising from this research. A comparatively higher proportion of those in the field evaluate the work that they do either by tracking client satisfaction or intervention outcomes.*

Research Participation and Approach. Less than one-quarter (23%) of the career service community carries out research about the field.

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Qualitative research is the leading investigative approach compared to gathering quantitative data (50% versus 38%). Less than one-third undertake follow-up studies (28%).

Focus of Research. No particular research topic is a clear favourite for those undertaking career development research. Graduate employment—post secondary (12%) is the most popular theme followed by research related to people with disabilities (9%), immigrants / integration of new Canadians (8%), impact assessment (7%) and labour market information / trends (7%).

Topics of Interest. Career service professionals want more research to be undertaken on a number of career development topics. The top five research gaps are: Labour market trends, social media/web 2.0/cybercounselling, mental health, post-secondary education, and career issues for immigrants/new Canadians.

Evaluating Interventions. Six out of 10 career service professionals evaluate the impact of their career counselling / career development program or services. Evaluations focus on two main criteria. Whereas 57 percent assess client satisfaction, 53 percent examine client outcome (i.e. job/return to school).

**Career Competency / Mobility Highlights:**  
*Those in the career service community believe that professional certification is important to their work. A number of people are already certified by national and provincial associations/bodies who offer accreditation relevant to those in this field. Moving up the career ladder is on the minds of many who provide career services as a strong proportion is interested in one day assuming a managerial role in the field.*

Certification. A majority of the career service professional community believes that having a professional certification is valuable to their work. Nearly one in four (37%) believe it is very important and almost one-third (31%) think that it is important. Conversely, only 7 percent do not consider it important at all. According to what we learned, career service professionals in Canada receive certification from seven national and 16 provincial associations / bodies.

Career Aspirations. The potential to oversee those who provide career services is attractive to almost half of the career service professionals community. Whereas 18 percent mention that they are very interested in becoming a manager in the field of career development, another 29 percent say that they are somewhat interested in doing so.

Meeting Employer Needs. Participants were asked what field-related competency enhancements they thought their employers would like to see them acquire. While individual leadership & initiative (66%) and performance evaluation & support (65%) are the top-ranked choices, customer service orientation (48%) and operational awareness (36%) are at the bottom of the list.

**Technology Access and Awareness Highlights:**  
*Electronic technology (social media, software or mobile applications) related to career development is perceived as very useful by those in the career service community. However, only a small proportion of this group is well aware of how to use these types of tools. A similarly limited ratio is involved in educating their clients about how to use social media tools for professional development purposes.*

The Place of Social Media. Social media is recognized as being an important tool for undertaking career service work. Twenty-four percent believe it is very important while 41 percent think it is important. Only four percent believe that it is not at all important.

Social Media Skills and Client Training. Over four in 10 combined either never or rarely use it for professional purposes (16% and 26%). Furthermore, 7 percent are unfamiliar with most social media tools while 29 percent are not at all skilled in terms of using them for career development. Only 11 percent is very skilled. This may explain why such a small proportion is involved in educating their clients about the use of social media tools. In this case, only 12 percent are very involved in doing so compared to 42 percent who are not at all involved.