

Rural Employment and Workforce Development

Impacts and Opportunities

SUMMARY

This report examines the impact of COVID-19 on rural employment and workforce development. Key findings from the report include:

- ❑ The impacts of COVID-19 on rural employment and workforce development vary between urban and rural Canada and between regions.
- ❑ Approximately 35% - 42% of jobs in Canada are highly susceptible to automation.
- ❑ In March and April 2020, the COVID-19 impact on jobs was higher in rural and small areas than in larger urban centres, but not uniformly across all provinces.
- ❑ Rural and small town employment reductions and labour/skills shortages vary across industries, economic regions and provinces.
- ❑ Older working women, youth and younger workers, and senior workers are most affected by COVID in rural and small towns.
- ❑ Rural jobs recovered during COVID-19 may not be of the same quality as pre-COVID times and needs to be better monitored.
- ❑ The small natural balance of population (births slightly greater than deaths) plus changing migration in-flows by both immigrants and migrants from urban areas may introduce new rural workforce growth dynamics which need monitoring.

CALLS TO ACTION

- ❑ Policymakers across the different levels of government and in partnership with private actors need to apply a regional rural lens to policy responses to labour market issues in rural and small towns.
- ❑ Strengthen labour market standards and fund community services to maintain and improve employment quality in RST areas, especially for most affected demographics.
- ❑ Governments need to provide policies and programs to support regionally appropriate training and new trends in skill requirements to enable and sustain RST productivity.
- ❑ Develop and fund regional partnership programs to support workers to adapt to “Future of Work” and occupational growth trends and encourage locational investment in training capacity for post secondary training outside urban areas.
- ❑ Foster place-based strategies to make rural areas a viable choice for people to ‘work, earn, live & spend’.
- ❑ Workforce planning strategies and government policies need to foster inclusive economic participation of Indigenous peoples and racialized.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The research article was written by Victoria Agyepong, Ryan Gibson, and Ray Bollman. The article was published by the [Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation](https://www.ruraldev.ca/).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research initiative is funded by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, through the Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance.