

# Roadblocks to success for PhD grads could mean missed opportunities for Canada

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Canada could be sitting on a significant untapped resource, as the number of Ph.D. holders in this country rises, but persistent barriers make it hard for them to put their skills to work. According to a new expert panel report from the Council of Canadian Academies (CCA), Ph.D. graduates play a critical role in the Canadian economy, but many are missing out on important opportunities to contribute their expertise

and bolster growth and innovation.

"The growing number of Ph.D. graduates in Canada could represent a significant opportunity to drive innovation and increase our competitiveness in a global economy," said M. Elizabeth Cannon, O.C., Ph.D., FRSC, FCAE, Chair of the Expert Panel. "The difficulties graduates face raise important questions about the nature of Ph.D. education in Canada, and this report considers how stakeholders influence the experience of Ph.D.s and what could be done to address the challenges they confront after graduation."

Ph.D.s are increasingly faced with career-stalling roadblocks as they attempt to enter the labor market. The traditional path to the professoriate is available to fewer and fewer people, and meaningful jobs outside the academy have not materialized fast enough to fill that gap. A skills mismatch—between what Ph.D.s are trained for during their studies and what employers are seeking—may contribute to the problem and make the bridge from academia to outside employment difficult to navigate. At the same time, Ph.D. graduates may be unaware of their skills and have a hard time describing their value to potential employers.

"This report shines a light on the lived experiences of students, contributing to a better understanding of the career transition challenges they encounter," said Eric M. Meslin, Ph.D., FRSC, FCAHS, President and CEO of the CCA. "Addressing their integration into the labor force is essential, particularly in the era of COVID-19 when the need for their complex problem-solving skills takes on even greater urgency."

The Panel found earnings and employment for Ph.D. graduates vary significantly based on discipline and gender, and men earn more across all disciplines. Women are more likely to be unemployed or find themselves in temporary or part-time employment.

Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada asked the CCA to examine the main roadblocks faced by Ph.D. students in Canada as they transition into the labor market, and how these challenges differ by field of study.

Degrees of Success details the challenges faced by Ph.D.s as they begin their careers, key factors contributing to these challenges, and promising practices to address them.

**More information:** Degrees of Success: [www.cca-reports.ca/wp-content/ ... ss FullReport EN.pdf](http://www.cca-reports.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Degrees-of-Success-Full-Report-EN.pdf)

Provided by Council of Canadian Academies

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