Making the Most of It: Canadian Student Employment in Summer 2012

Canadian Education Project Insight Brief

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August 2012

CANADIAN EDUCATION PROJECT

Higher Education Strategy Associates (HESA) is a Toronto-based firm specializing in research, data and strategy. Our mission is to help universities and colleges compete in the educational marketplace based on quality; to that end we offer our clients a broad range of informational, analytical, evaluative, and advisory services.

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Please cite as:

Lambert, J., and Usher, A. (2011). *Making the Most of It: Canadian Student Employment in Summer 2012.* Toronto: Higher Education Strategy Associates.

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INTRODUCTION

Summer is a key time for students; it is the period where they have the greatest contact with the labour market, which is important both for short-term earnings and savings and for long-term preference formation or skill development in the labour market. Yet, over the years, beyond the occasional Statistics Canada piece on student summer employment rates, very little has been written about this period in students' lives.

In 2010, Higher Education Strategy Associates (HESA)'s Canadian Education Project began an annual survey of university students to explore precisely these issues. This document is our third research report on students' summer activities in Canada. In 2010, we looked at wages earned, employment by industry, and how students combined work and school. In 2011, we took a closer look at the winners and losers of the summer labour market—specifically, how the summer labour market was red-hot for certain technical and scientific disciplines, and distinctly tepid for everyone else.

Overall, the pattern of this year's employment statistics is similar to last year's. However, in 2012, we have designed the survey to provide deeper insight into how students spend their time both within conventional summer employment and outside of it by taking a closer look at how students split their time between work, school and volunteer commitments. Additionally, we look at what students outside of the conventional paid employment market are getting out of their summer experiences—in particular, how their self-employment and volunteer experiences are related to their fields of study. Regardless of how students are spending their summer, are they making the most of it?

Section 1 of this paper provides a brief description of our survey sample. Section 2 looks specifically at employment, unemployment and participation rates, as well as at how difficult students feel their job search was compared to that in 2011. Section 3 looks at hours worked and wages earned as well as the number of jobs held. Section 4 looks at the never-before-examined issue of the relationship between field of study and the degree to which summer jobs are related to students' fields of study. Section 5 looks at students' desires to take on more work, while Section 6 looks at the reasons behind students' unemployment or non-participation in the labour market. Section 7 provides an interesting look at students' attendance at summer courses (an area not covered by Statistics Canada data). Section 8 examines students' time spent in unpaid activities, including volunteer positions and internships. Finally, Section 9 provides some brief data about students' travel plans during the summer.

SAMPLE DESCRIPTION AND METHODOLOGY

The data in this report were collected during an online survey conducted by Higher Education Strategy Associates' Canadian Education Project between 15 and 28 June 2012. HESA runs an on-going on-line panel with a membership of over 8000 undergraduate students who were enrolled in an undergraduate program in a Canadian degree-granting institution at some point in the 2011-2012 academic year and have indicated that they are returning for undergraduate study in 2011-2012. Roughly every six weeks, HESA sends a survey on a variety of issues to students on the panel, with a response rate that varies from month to month but which is usually in the range of 25-40%. The sample for this study is 1768 cases; this only includes students who were enrolled in an undergraduate program at a Canadian degree-granting university at some point in the 2011-2012 academic year, had not yet graduated from their degree program and will be returning to study in 2012-13.

Obviously, the resulting sample for any of these monthly surveys is not a purely random one, as members of the panel must have responded to at least one previous survey administered by Higher Education Strategy Associates (either directly or as part of its Canadian Education Project). Since they are not based on random probability samples, the concept of "margin of sampling error" is not applicable to results shown here.

Our panel is also slightly overweight in Atlantic Canada and underweight in Ontario and Manitoba. It is also biased towards upper-year students, particularly in Ontario where we were unable to obtain a representative sample. Results in the report have been weighted to correct for age-related coverage issues in our Ontario sample[1] and to be representative of the regional and gender distribution of the Canadian undergraduate population.[2]

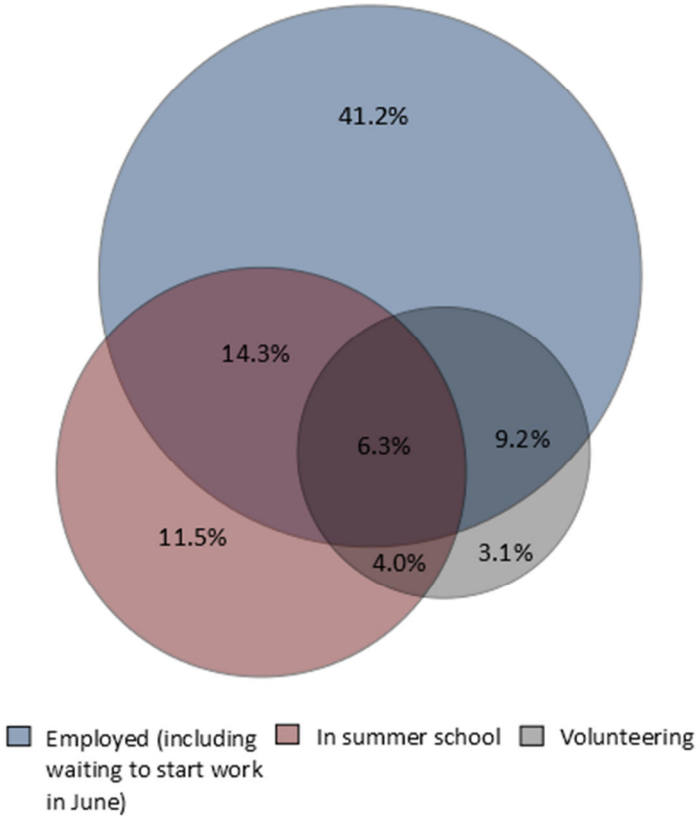
[1] Canadian Undergraduate Survey Consortium. 2011. Canadian Undergraduate Student Survey, 2011.
[2] Statistics Canada 2011. Special tabulation, based on 2009 Postsecondary Student Information System (PSIS).

EMPLOYMENT, UNEMPLOYMENT AND PARTICIPATION.

The key point to understand about the summer labour market is that it is not a simple matter of working or not working. Students also have the option of swinging back into education for a month at a time thanks to courses offered in May, June and, to a lesser extent, July. Many of them may also be carrying unpaid work opportunities—either in terms of volunteer jobs or unpaid internships whose purpose is usually academic in nature. In fact, only 41% of students spend the summer working to the exclusion of other activities; 14.3% of survey respondents plan to combine employment and summer school, and another 9.2^ intend to spend their time working and volunteering. Our sample included some consummate multitaskers—6.3% of respondents will have employment-related, volunteer and academic commitments this summer.

Other respondents plan to spend the summer of 2012 focused on activities other than paid employment. Eleven-and-a-half percent will solely attend summer school, and another 4.0% expect to combine summer school and volunteer work. Just over 3% plan on spending the summer engaged in a volunteer or unpaid internship position. An additional 10.4% have no reported plans to work, attend class or volunteer; as will be discussed later in this report, many of these respondents will spend their summer travelling.

Figure 1: Students' Labour Market and Educational Activities, Summer 2012



As shown below in Table 1, our survey found that labour market participation—which we define as students in paid employment plus students who had looked for work and were unable to find it plus students planning to look for work in the near future—was 84.8%, essentially unchanged from last summer's 84.6%. However, the employment rate in the second half of June 2012—that is, the percentage of all students that were in work at the time of the survey—was 68.3% (though this increases slightly to 71% if we include students who have already obtained work but not started it at the time of the survey). This implies an unemployment rate of 19.4%.

Not surprisingly, there were significant differences in participation and employment across a range of demographic factors. For instance, participation rates in Alberta and Atlantic Canada are substantially higher than they are in Quebec and Ontario. Employment rates also vary by region. For the second year in a row, students in the Atlantic provinces have the country's highest employment rate (80%).

Table 1: Rates of Employment, Unemployment, and Participation among Canadian University Students

	Employment Rate	Unemployment Rate	Participation Rate
CANADA	68.3%	19.4%	84.8%
Female	69.8%	17.8%	85.0%
Male	66.6%	21.2%	84.5%
Atlantic Canada	80.0%	13.3%	92.3%
Quebec	63.1%	22.8%	81.8%
Ontario	64.0%	23.1%	83.2%
Manitoba & Saskatchewan	77.1%	12.9%	88.6%
Alberta	75.7%	13.8%	87.8%
British Columbia	72.3%	15.2%	85.2%
Education	77.2%	7.6%	83.5%
Visual & Performing Arts	65.0%	29.2%	91.8%
Humanities	74.0%	19.7%	92.2%
Social Sciences	62.0%	27.9%	86.0%
Health and related	81.5%	8.2%	88.8%
Business	66.7%	16.8%	80.1%
Physical & Life Sciences	66.9%	21.8%	85.6%
Math & Computer Science	61.5%	18.8%	75.8%
Engineering & Architecture	68.6%	14.3%	80.0%
Agriculture & Environmental Sciences	73.8%	11.4%	83.3%
19 & under*	71.2%	19.4%	88.4%
20 to 21	72.3%	17.2%	87.3%
22 to 25	70.3%	17.2%	84.9%
26 & older	49.8%	32.1%	73.4%

* Due to our weighting methodology, age group results are reported using different categories from those used in the 2010 and 2011 summer employment reports.

WHY ARE THESE LABOUR MARKET FIGURES DIFFERENT FROM STATISTICS CANADA'S?

The figures in this are slightly different from those provided by Statistics Canada in their May and June Labour Force Survey (LFS) reports in that both the unemployment and participation are higher in our survey than in the LFS (which reported them as being 13.0% and 72.6%, respectively). The obvious reason for any difference is the nature of the sample (the Statistics Canada headline number is "students 20-24," whereas this study looks at university students only and is more inclusive of age). But there is a basic methodological issue at play in terms of participation rates that lead us to report higher figures than Statistics Canada.

We use slightly different measures of how to include someone in the labour market. The LFS defines anyone who was taking a full course load during the previous four weeks as being "not in the labour force." However, our data suggests that 5.9% of students were both working and taking more than three courses during the summer. Our definition, unlike Statistics Canada's, includes them in the labour market.

Table 2 shows working students' perceptions of the ease with which they were able to find a job this year compared to the previous year. About half of all students saw no difference, with 25.2% saying they thought it was easier than 2010 and 19.6% saying it was more difficult than in 2010—a net "plus" of 5.6%, essentially unchanged from last year's 5.4%. This does not necessarily mean that the labour market is improving; part of what is being picked up in this question is the fact that older students have more labour market experience and hence are becoming more employable. It does, however, mean that overall labour market conditions are relatively similar to last year.

However, this figure hides some enormous differences by gender and field of study. The "plus" figure for women was 0.6%, while for men it was 13.5%. Driving this gender gap are some absolutely enormous differences by field of study: 21.4% in (largely male-dominated) engineering & architecture and 16.7% in (similarly male-dominated) math & computer science. In the more female-dominated fields of study like social sciences and education, the gap was -8% and -2%, respectively, though humanities recorded an increase of 5.6%. Visual & performing arts had an enormous positive figure (31%), though there are relatively few students in this category.

Table 2: Difficulty Finding Employment in 2012 vs. 2011 (working students only)

	Easier	The same	Harder	% change easier/harder compared to 2011
CANADA	25.2%	55.2%	19.6%	5.6%
Female	21.5%	57.6%	20.9%	0.6%
Male	30.7%	51.6%	17.6%	13.1%
Atlantic Canada	22.4%	53.1%	24.5%	-2.0%
Quebec	19.4%	52.8%	27.8%	-8.3%
Ontario	28.1%	58.7%	13.2%	15.0%
Manitoba & Saskatchewan	28.3%	51.7%	20.0%	8.3%
Alberta	25.3%	55.7%	19.0%	6.3%
British Columbia	25.7%	51.5%	22.8%	3.0%
Education	21.3%	55.3%	23.4%	-2.1%
Visual & Performing Arts	41.4%	48.3%	10.3%	31.0%
Humanities	24.1%	57.4%	18.5%	5.6%
Social Sciences	18.9%	53.4%	27.7%	-8.8%
Health & related	23.6%	48.6%	27.8%	-4.2%
Business	17.5%	52.4%	30.2%	-12.7%
Physical & Life Sciences	30.1%	54.8%	15.1%	15.1%
Math & Computer Science	23.8%	69.0%	7.1%	16.7%
Engineering & Architecture	33.0%	55.3%	11.7%	21.4%
Agriculture & Environmental Sciences	25.0%	60.7%	14.3%	10.7%
19 & under	21.3%	50.0%	28.7%	-7.3%
20 to 21	26.7%	52.0%	21.3%	5.5%
22 to 25	30.6%	54.1%	15.3%	15.3%
26 & older	11.6%	81.4%	7.0%	4.7%

Self-Employment

The number of students who choose some sort of self-employment option in the summer is relatively small: just 2.7%, according to our survey. Of these, only about 60% reported self-employment as their only source of income; for the rest, self-employment was something that was combined with paid employment of some kind.

One possible reason for low levels of self-employment is that students appear to find it difficult to make such jobs generate sufficient hours to support themselves: the median self-employed student is working 19 hours per week in their jobs, compared to 40 hours per week for all students. However, self-employed students seem more motivated by time flexibility than they are by monetary rewards. Over 75% of self-employed students cited the opportunity to have a flexible schedule as a reason for choosing self-employment, compared to just 63% who cited income as a reason

Table 3:Reasons Cited for Self-Employment

Reason	
Flexible schedule	76.8%
Learning new skills and competencies	64.3%
Earning potential	62.8%
Exploring ideas/directions on a future career choice	39.6%
Networking opportunities	33.8%
Other	21.5%

Though self-employment is often thought of as being the province of go-getting entrepreneurs, in fact the field is dominated to a surprising degree by businesses that are more artistic in nature. The most common business type run by our respondents was in artistic services (e.g., piano lessons, DJing), followed by tutoring and other educational services. Correspondingly, there is a statistically significant relationship between field of study and exclusive self-employment: 27.3% of exclusively self-employed students are in the visual and performing arts, followed by 22.7% studying business-related disciplines and 13.6% in the sciences.

Repeat Job Tenure

As we reported in our April 2012 report *Jobs Don't Come to Those Who Wait*, the majority of students do not search for new jobs each summer; in fact, what is more common is that students add hours to jobs they already have, or return to jobs they held in a previous summer.

This year, 45.1% of students said their primary job is one they had never previously held, up slightly from 42.6% in 2011. The relationship between co-op status and having held one's current job before is statistically significant, as is the relationship between field of study and returning to a job. Co-op students are branching out far more than their peers in conventional undergrad programs, with nearly 65% (vs. 41.9%) of students working for a new employer during this summer's work placement. Additionally, students in math & computer science, engineering & architecture and agriculture are considerably more likely than their peers in other disciplines to work for a new employer; each of their fields have at least half of their students pursuing work with a different employer. Students in visual arts and the humanities are the most likely to return to the job at which they worked last summer. The relationship between wage characteristics and returning to a job is statistically significant too, and tells a rather interesting story—people who are returning to jobs aren't returning to particularly good ones. Those returning to jobs they worked at during the academic year are barely working full-time hours, and the median hourly wage for students returning to the jobs they held last summer is roughly 70 cents less than the national average.

Table 4: Have you Previously Worked at this Job? (Primary Job Only)

	Did not work at this job before	Worked at this job during the academic year	Worked at this job last summer	Worked at this job both during the academic year and last summer
CANADA	45.1%	19.3%	21.8%	13.9%
Education	46.6%	17.2%	24.1%	12.1%
Visual & Performing Arts	37.5%	6.3%	40.6%	15.6%
Humanities	36.1%	22.4%	27.3%	14.2%
Social Sciences	45.7%	18.5%	20.1%	15.8%
Health & related	38.1%	35.7%	17.9%	8.3%
Business	48.9%	22.3%	16.0%	12.8%
Physical & Life Sciences	47.0%	14.2%	21.9%	16.9%
Math & Computer Science	62.3%	9.4%	9.4%	18.9%
Engineering & Architecture	53.4%	18.8%	22.6%	5.3%
Agriculture & Environmental Sciences	51.6%	19.4%	25.8%	3.2%
Not on a co-op work term	41.9%	18.0%	24.7%	15.3%
On a co-op work term	64.8%	27.6%	2.8%	4.8%
Weekly Hours	40	33	40	35
Weekly wage	$500.00	$410.00	$490.61	$400.00
Hourly wage	$12.66	$13.00	$11.79	$12.13

HOURS AND WAGES

Among survey participants who reported being employed, the median hours of work per week in all jobs was 40 (up slightly from 38 hours in 2011 and 36 hours in 2010), and median earnings were $460/week, up slightly from 2011. Despite having higher levels of unemployment, male students reported working more hours per week than female students (40 hours vs. 38 hours), and also reported receiving substantially higher median wages ($500/week vs. $440/week), though this gap is reduced somewhat from last year. Geographically, remuneration was substantially higher in the Prairie provinces (especially Alberta) than elsewhere.

Of particular note is the enormous wage gap between engineering students and everyone else—$720/week vs. a little under $450/week. A similar gap exists between co-op and non-co-op students, partly because co-op students are disproportionately drawn from engineering; however, even excluding engineers, the wage premium for co-op students tends can be anywhere from 30% to 80% (except in agriculture, where co-op students appear to make less money than their non-co-op counterparts).

Table 5: Median Hours of Work and Median Wages among Canadian University Students, Summer 2012

	Hours of work	Weekly wages	Hourly wage	Percentage full-time (30 hours or more)
CANADA	40	$460.00	$12.50	79.2%
Female	38	$440.00	$12.00	77.5%
Male	40	$500.00	$13.45	81.4%
Atlantic Canada	40	$426.34	$11.00	84.6%
Quebec	38	$420.00	$12.03	76.1%
Ontario	38	$472.11	$12.80	80.2%
Manitoba & Saskatchewan	40	$500.00	$12.63	83.8%
Alberta	40	$579.78	$15.00	83.0%
British Columbia	37	$431.60	$12.52	70.7%
Education	40	$420.00	$11.59	78.7%
Visual & Performing Arts	40	$453.20	$12.01	82.1%
Humanities	35	$414.00	$11.62	71.9%
Social Sciences	37	$400.00	$11.53	73.7%
Health & related	40	$440.00	$12.03	75.0%
Business	40	$553.84	$15.00	79.8%
Physical & Life Sciences	38	$420.00	$12.00	80.7%
Math & Computer Science	40	$500.00	$13.25	85.5%
Engineering & Architecture	40	$720.00	$18.00	94.7%
Agriculture & Environmental Sciences	40	$497.14	$12.41	77.4%
19 & under	40	$410.00	$11.23	85.6%
20 to 21	38	$470.76	$12.50	79.5%
22 to 25	38	$484.96	$13.47	74.0%
26 & older	35	$500.00	$13.29	80.7%
Not on co-op work term	38	$422.62	$12.00	76.7%
On co-op work term	40	$720.00	$18.00	95.1%

In terms of fields of study, students in humanities and social sciences earned substantially less money than students in engineering & architecture, math & computer science and business. This is not simply a function of hourly wages, but also of hours worked; students in fields of study receiving lower wages also tend to work fewer hours.

It turns out that these differences by field of study fully explain the gender gap in income. Within each field of study, men and women tend to earn similar amounts (there are some differences, but they do not run consistently in favour of either gender). But since humanities and social sciences are overwhelmingly (66.4% and 70.7% respectively) female and math & computer science and engineering & architecture are overwhelmingly (67% and 71.3% respectively) male, the overall picture shows that men earn more than women, even though there are no significant differences within any given field of study.

Not surprisingly, the survey found that older students had a substantial wage premium over younger ones. Survey participants who are 19 years old or younger reported a median hourly income of $11.23 while those 26 years old and older reported a median income of $13.29 per hour.

Number of Jobs held

Respondents who indicated that they had already obtained work by mid-/late-June were then asked how many jobs they held. Seven out of ten respondents (69.8%) reported having only one job, with 25.4% reporting having two jobs for the summer and 5% of respondents indicating they held three or more jobs for the summer.

Though there are differences by region, the key variable to look at once again here is field of study. In the three fields we have already identified as being “good” in terms of total income, (business, engineering & architecture and math & computer science) students are substantially less likely to have more than one job than students in other fields. Contrarily, in those fields where income potential seems to be weak (humanities, life sciences, social sciences and visual/performing arts), students are substantially more likely to have more than one job.

Table 6: Number of jobs held

	One	Two	Three+
CANADA	69.6%	25.4%	5.0%
Female	69.6%	27.0%	3.4%
Male	69.7%	23.3%	7.0%
Atlantic Canada	71.8%	24.2%	4.0%
Quebec	64.2%	32.6%	3.2%
Ontario	72.9%	23.1%	4.0%
Manitoba & Saskatchewan	65.0%	26.3%	8.8%
Alberta	71.2%	24.3%	4.5%
British Columbia	66.9%	24.1%	9.0%
Education	59.7%	29.0%	11.3%
Visual & Performing Arts	55.0%	30.0%	15.0%
Humanities	67.0%	30.4%	2.6%
Social Sciences	65.9%	29.2%	4.9%
Health & related	62.5%	30.7%	6.8%
Business	68.7%	26.3%	5.1%
Physical & Life Sciences and Technologies	72.6%	22.6%	4.8%
Math & Computer Science	78.6%	21.4%	0.0%
Engineering & Architecture	86.3%	13.0%	0.8%
Agriculture & Environmental Sciences	54.8%	25.8%	19.4%
19 & under	61.2%	31.8%	7.0%
20 to 21	73.3%	22.3%	4.3%
22 to 25	67.7%	26.6%	5.6%
26 & older	76.3%	21.1%	2.6%
Not on co-op work term	67.4%	27.2%	5.4%
On co-op work term	84.5%	13.4%	2.1%

JOB REQUIREMENTS: RELATIONSHIP OF PRIMARY JOB TO FIELD OF STUDY

Survey respondents were asked to characterize the relationship between their field of study and their summer jobs. For each job they held, they were asked to choose between one of four descriptions of the relationship between education and employment: “PSE is not required for this job,” “PSE is required but field of study does not matter much,” “My field of study is useful but others would have been good as well” and “My field of study is the only/by far the best for the job.”

Slightly fewer than 62% of respondents stated that some form of post-secondary education was required for their primary summer job, with 19.5%—roughly the same as the previous year—stating that their field of study was the only possible/by far the best field for their job. However, a little more than 38% of students said that their primary summer job did not require any post-secondary education at all, down substantially from last year’s 47%. This improvement was not across-the-board, however: decrease in non-PSE required jobs came mostly in engineering, sciences and humanities.

Analysis by field of study makes for the most interesting reading because we again see a similar pattern playing itself out. Students enrolled in social science (6.5%) and humanities (7.6%) are the least likely to report that their field of study is the best possible fit for their summer job, whereas students in engineering & architecture (35.9%), math & computer science (30.8%), and physical & life sciences (30.6%) are the most likely to report that their field of study is the best fit. The converse is true with respect to jobs not requiring any PSE—roughly 60% of jobs held by humanities and social science students fit that description, compared to only a little over a quarter of math & computer science and business students, and just 8% in engineering.

Table 7: Relationship between Program of Study and Summer Job

	"My field of study is the only possible/by far the best for the job"	"My field of study is useful but others would have been good too/"PSE is required but FOS doesn't matter"	"PSE is not required for this job"
CANADA	19.5%	42.7%	37.9%
Female	16.5%	42.7%	40.8%
Male	23.7%	42.7%	33.6%
Education	10.0%	43.3%	46.7%
Visual & Performing Arts	13.2%	44.7%	42.1%
Humanities	7.6%	35.3%	57.1%
Social Sciences	6.5%	33.5%	60.0%
Health & related	21.2%	50.6%	28.2%
Business	23.2%	48.5%	28.3%
Physical & Life Sciences	30.6%	35.5%	33.9%
Math & Computer Science	30.8%	46.2%	23.1%
Engineering & Architecture	35.9%	56.5%	7.6%
Agriculture & Environmental Sciences	10.0%	73.3%	16.7%
19 & under	15.0%	32.4%	52.6%
20 to 21	20.8%	43.2%	36.0%
22 to 25	21.1%	44.2%	34.7%
26 & older	18.3%	56.0%	25.7%
Not on co-op work term	16.8%	39.7%	43.5%
On co-op work term	36.9%	62.4%	0.7%
Weekly hours	40	40	35
Weekly earnings	$500.00	$500.00	$400.00
Hourly wage	$13.46	$13.58	$11.24

One interesting factor here is that students do not appear to be sacrificing wages in order to get “good” jobs. The bottom half of Table 4 shows that in fact students who are able to get a job where PSE is required are rewarded for their skills; it is jobs that do not require PSE that are by far the least-well remunerated. Students whose education is described as being the best or only field for the job receive a median wage of $13.59/hour. Students with jobs not requiring PSE, on the other hand, are more likely to languish near the minimum wage line, receiving a median income of $11.25 per hour.

DESIRE TO WORK MORE HOURS

This is the fourth year that the survey has asked students if they would have worked more hours had they been offered the chance to do so. As in each of the two previous years, a substantial majority of students replied that they would work more hours if offered under similar conditions to their main job. Six in ten said they would accept more hours, 24.1% said they would not and 17.8% said they were unsure. The proportion saying they wanted more hours is almost exactly the same as in 2009 (59%) and 2010 (57%) and 2011 (58.1%).

There are some regional and field of study variations on this question, but they are less pronounced than in previous years. In particular, there is virtually no gender gap on this question this year.

Table 8: Would you work more hours at the same job? (Primary job only)

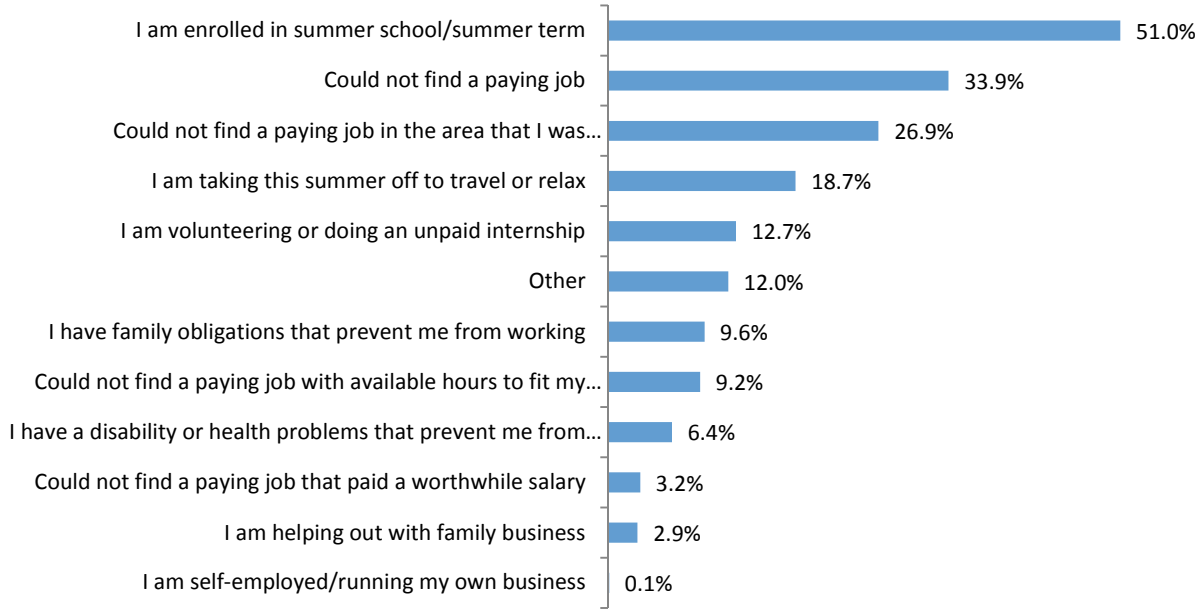
	No	Yes	Not sure
CANADA	22.2%	60.2%	17.6%
Female	20.7%	59.9%	19.4%
Male	24.1%	60.8%	15.1%
Atlantic Canada	23.8%	58.2%	18.0%
Quebec	21.8%	61.1%	17.1%
Ontario	22.1%	60.7%	17.2%
Manitoba & Saskatchewan	20.5%	59.0%	20.5%
Alberta	24.8%	54.3%	21.0%
British Columbia	20.5%	64.8%	14.8%
Education	15.3%	66.1%	18.6%
Visual & Performing Arts	6.3%	75.0%	18.8%
Humanities	19.3%	64.6%	16.0%
Social Sciences	19.6%	57.1%	23.4%
Health & related	21.7%	65.1%	13.3%
Business	24.2%	57.9%	17.9%
Physical & Life Sciences	32.8%	51.4%	15.8%
Math & Computer Science	18.9%	67.9%	13.2%
Engineering & Architecture	22.0%	62.9%	15.2%
Agriculture & Environmental Sciences	26.7%	60.0%	13.3%
19 & under	20.4%	64.0%	15.6%
20 to 21	22.1%	62.8%	15.1%
22 to 25	24.0%	55.4%	20.5%
26 & older	21.6%	54.9%	23.5%
Weekly Hours	40	38	40
Weekly wage	$480.00	$452.96	$471.76
Hourly wage	$12.50	$12.50	$12.70

One thing that is interesting to note is that there is virtually no difference in hourly wages between students who are willing to work more hours and those who are not.

UNEMPLOYMENT AND NON-PARTICIPATION

Almost three in ten (29%) students reported not working in paid employment this summer or not having found a job by late June. In slightly over a third of these cases the inability to find a job was a factor here, (though there were other reasons which might be called a conditional inability to find work, i.e., "couldn't a paying job that fit my schedule" (26.9%), "couldn't find a job that paid sufficiently" (3.2%). Half (51%) of non-working students said their academic schedule precluded them from working, while 18.7% of non-working students said they were not working because they had taken the summer off to relax, travel or both.

Figure 2: Reasons for Not Working, Summer 2012



SUMMER SCHOOL

Only 36.1% of survey respondents reported that they were taking summer courses in 2012, down from 38% in 2010 and 42.2% in 2011. The number of courses being taken appears to be down somewhat as well. Just under half (46.6%) are taking one course (compared to 41% last year), 28% are taking two courses and 26% are taking three or more courses (33% last year). As in previous years, students in British Columbia are more likely to report to be taking summer courses, which may account for the fact that the province also has the lowest median weekly hours worked was at 35 hours per week. There are also some significant variations in courses taken by field of study, but there is no obvious pattern to these differences. The main source of variation has to do with age, with older students being substantially more likely to take summer courses than younger ones.

Table 9: Percentage of Students Taking Summer School and Number of Courses

	Taking summer school	Course load (of students in school only)		
		One course	Two courses	Three or more
CANADA	36.1%	46.6%	27.9%	25.6%
Female	35.9%	47.2%	26.4%	26.4%
Male	36.7%	45.4%	30.0%	24.6%
Atlantic Canada	32.3%	42.2%	31.1%	26.7%
Quebec	38.4%	55.6%	22.6%	21.8%
Ontario	35.4%	50.8%	25.4%	23.8%
Manitoba & Saskatchewan	34.3%	33.3%	41.7%	25.0%
Alberta	32.7%	37.0%	37.0%	26.1%
British Columbia	41.3%	32.8%	29.9%	37.3%
Education	27.8%	38.1%	38.1%	23.8%
Visual & Performing Arts	30.0%	38.9%	50.0%	11.1%
Humanities	36.0%	64.3%	20.2%	15.5%
Social Sciences	42.2%	27.0%	36.1%	36.9%
Health & related	37.4%	47.1%	11.8%	41.2%
Business	41.3%	40.0%	34.0%	26.0%
Physical & Life Sciences	28.4%	56.0%	22.7%	21.3%
Math & Computer Science	42.9%	34.3%	51.4%	14.3%
Engineering & Architecture	34.0%	63.6%	4.5%	31.8%
Agriculture & Environmental Sciences	42.9%	76.5%	23.5%	0.0%
19 & under	24.6%	64.6%	13.8%	21.5%
20 to 21	35.6%	51.1%	29.6%	19.4%
22 to 25	38.3%	42.4%	26.5%	31.1%
26 & older	48.0%	33.6%	34.6%	31.8%

An important note here is that while Statistics Canada considers full-time students who are taking a full course load during the summer to be non-participants in the labour force, 70.8% of our respondents with a full course load are participating in the labour force, and 50.1% of them are currently employed or will be starting work in June, leading to an unemployment rate of about 29%. This is a prime reason why Statistics Canada's summer unemployment rates fails to capture how students truly experience the summer job market.

VOLUNTEERING

The third major element of students' summer plans is volunteering. Just under a quarter (22.6%) of our sample reported plans to volunteer or participate in an unpaid internship this summer; of these, just over two-thirds are combining paid work and volunteering, while the rest are volunteering but have either not found work or are attending summer classes. Female students are more likely than their male counterparts to combine volunteering and work; students who volunteer and work at a paid job work also tend to work fewer hours and earn less than their non-volunteering counterparts.

For some students, volunteer positions or unpaid internships may be a consolation prize for those unable to find work, however, this does not appear to be the majority experience. Among students who are volunteering and not working for pay, 55% are simply not participating in the labour force this summer. Similarly, fewer than a fifth of students doing an unpaid internship said that they were unable to find a paying job this summer.

Students pursuing unpaid internships most commonly said that their internships are required components of their degree programs—e.g., practicums in fields such as occupational therapy and social work. In many ways these respondents are similar to co-op students in that their summer work—albeit unpaid—is structured, work-integrated learning. Given the nature of many of our respondents' unpaid internships, it makes sense that labour force participation rates are slightly lower for students who choose unpaid internships versus students involved in volunteer positions. This suggests that in Canada unpaid internships do not primarily serve as a refuge for students unable to find paid employment. .

Given that internships are a form of work-integrated learning, it is not surprising that students rate their unpaid internships as having a strong relationship with their field of study: 73.8% say that their field of study is the only or best possible one for their position whereas 22.6% feel that their field of study is moderately relevant to their position. These rates of agreement are higher than even what respondents on co-op work terms report for their summer placements. The link between field of study and volunteer positions generally was not as strong; on the whole, the strength of the link was very similar to that seen with primary jobs.

When examining the reasons why students volunteer or take on unpaid internships, many say that their involvement in the voluntary sector gives them strong opportunities to develop labour market-relevant skills while giving back to their communities. In the case of students who hold paid employment, volunteerism gives them further opportunities to augment the skill development that they experience at their paying job.

In short, our data on the experiences of volunteering students suggests that they are spending their summer gaining rewarding, field-of-study-relevant experience whether or not they are employed.

TRAVEL PLANS

For the first time this year, we asked respondents in-depth questions about travel plans. Just over 5% of students said they would not be working because they wished to travel. Of these, over two-thirds said they would be doing their travelling outside Canada, and nearly a third are planning to leave Canada for the entire summer. However, even among students who are working this summer, travel is still clearly on their agenda, even if it is for shorter periods of time. Nearly one-third of all other students said they would be travelling outside the country for at least a brief period of time during the summer months; about a third of these students expect to get away for less than a week.

More than half of all students who are travelling (and nearly all students who say their trip is of less than one week's duration) pick the United States as their destination. Europe is the most popular destination among students taking longer trips, followed by Asia and then the Americas.

Table 10: Do you have plans to travel outside Canada this summer?

	Planning to take the summer off to travel	Everyone else
Yes	64.4%	28.8%
No	34.4%	66.1%
Not sure	1.4%	5.1%

Table 11: How long are you planning to travel?

	Planning to take the summer off to travel	Everyone else
Less than a week	2.3%	29.4%
A week	4.6%	25.8%
A couple weeks	13.6%	25.7%
A month	18.2%	11.1%
A couple of months	31.6%	4.0%
The whole summer	29.6%	4.1%

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