

The Precariousness of Frontline Community Support Work in Canada: Higher Education & Labour Market Matters.

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INTRODUCTION

The occupation of frontline community support worker in the immigrant settlement services industry is defined as low-wage, low-to-intermediate skilled, according to Canada's National Occupational Classification (NOC):

Social and community service workers administer and implement a variety of social assistance programs and community services, and assist clients to deal with personal and social problems. They are employed by social service and government agencies, mental health agencies, group homes, shelters, substance abuse centres, school boards, correctional facilities and other establishments (NOC Group 4212 by ESDC, 2016).

Women constitute the majority of people employed at the frontline of community support programs and services for immigrants and refugees.

"Of the 102,360 individuals who indicated they were community and social service workers in the 2006 census, 78,980 (77%) were female" (HR Council, 2013). That proportional distribution repeated in the 2016 census, when 131,600 Canadians reported they were employed as community support workers (Statistics Canada cited by ESDC, 2018).

Post-secondary education, labour market, and systemic gender and racial inequalities, influence and contribute at the possibility of making a living working as a frontline community support worker.

Under the current labour market conditions, frontline community support work, NOC 4212, is a genderized occupation and precarious employment.

Current labour market projections place NOC 4212 as viable and attractive paid occupation where number of job opportunities matches the number of qualified job seekers, particularly from newly graduated from Canadian institutions of secondary (Grade 12) and post-secondary (Certificate or Diploma) education (Cf., ESDC, 2018; Census 2011, 2016). These projections do not account for the number of newcomer immigrant and refugee women who possess post-secondary education and are seeking to enter the Canadian labour market.

PURPOSE AND QUESTIONS

The purpose is to conduct a feasibility study with national significance for the design, implementation and evaluation of a large-scale pilot for a new Community Worker Leadership Certificate (CWLC), which will enhance career advancement, post-secondary education (PSE) opportunities, and essential skills and knowledge for women frontline community workers.

Intended outcomes:

- Increased knowledge of gaps in existing post-secondary education (PSE) programs for community support workers.
- Increased knowledge of capacity and needs social purpose organizations (SPOs) have to support career development of frontline community workers.
- Increased relationships between SPOs and PSE institutions to support the upskilling of frontline community workers, advancement in the workplace, and participation in PSE training.

SOURCES OF DATA & KNOWLEDGE

- The study consisted of streams of research focusing on input from
 - community support organizations (SPOs) employers of community support service workers (CWs);
 - Indigenous and immigrant women employed in frontline community support worker (CWs);
 - post-secondary educational institutions (PSEs) that offer educational programs for CWs; and
 - Statistics Canada's Census and Labour Market Survey
 - Data from ESDC's Job Bank

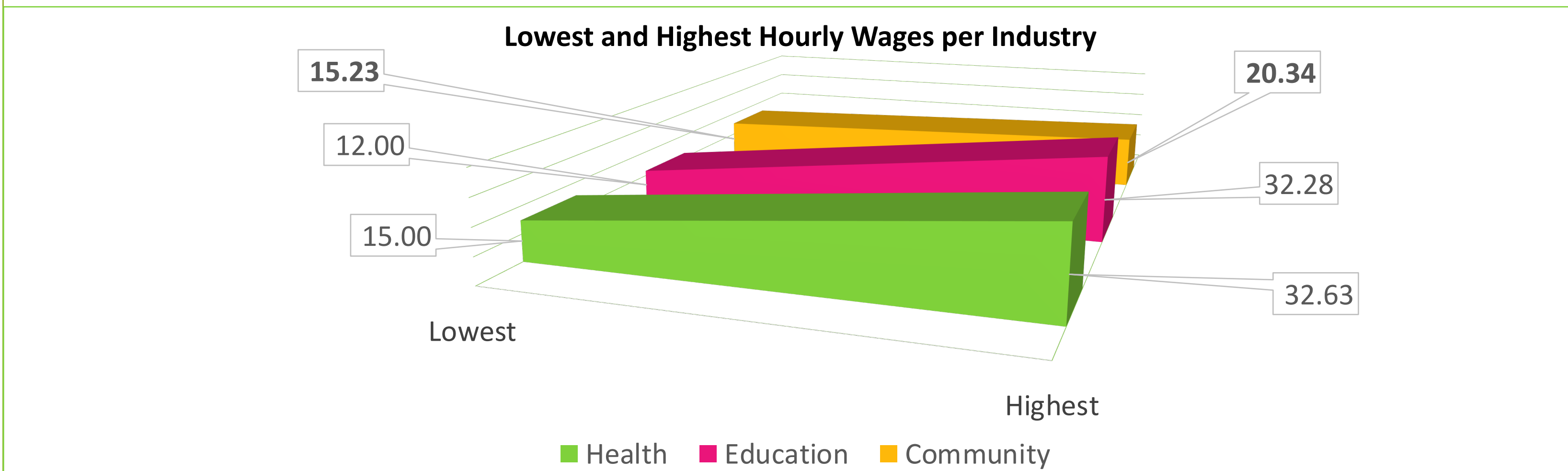
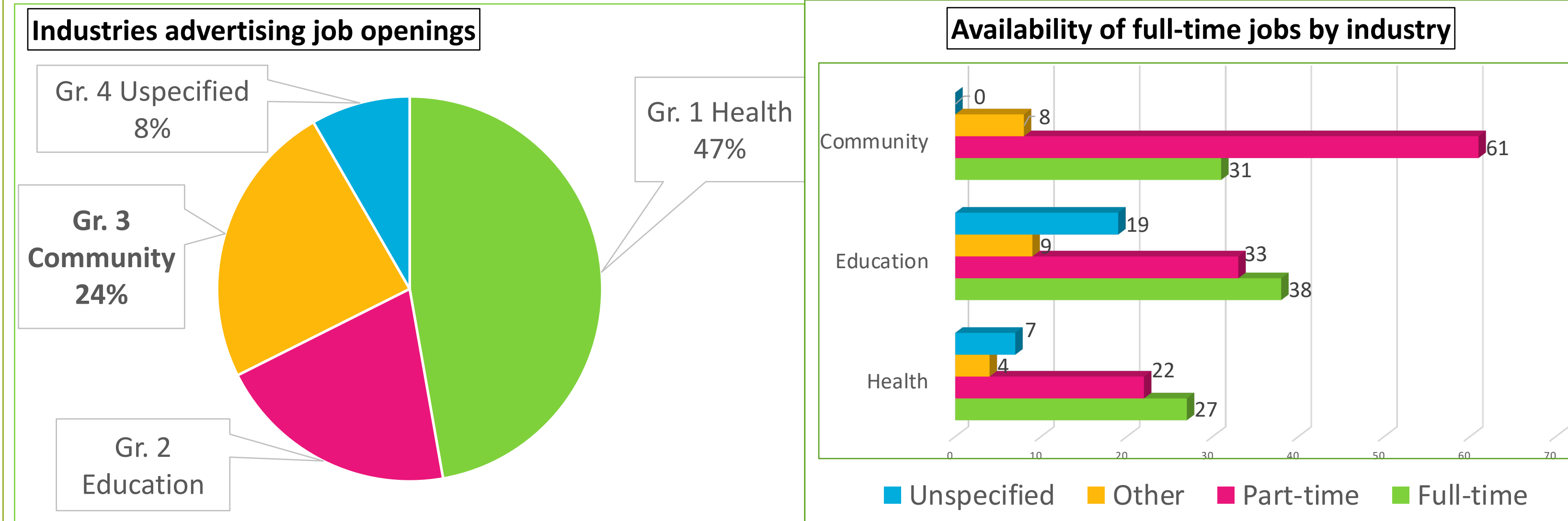
Canada-wide interviews with 48 women CWs, 16 SPOs, and 12 PSEs.

This poster shares selected findings from sources D and E, including synthesis of Job Ads (N= 108) for NOC 4212 posted in the Job Bank website by ESDC on March 27, 2018.

PROJECT OUTPUTS

- Canada-wide inventory of PSE Certificate programs for Frontline Community Support Work;
- Canada-wide community labour market analyses with focus on Indigenous and immigrant women in NOC4212;
- Proposed framework for a Certificate Program for Indigenous and immigrant women in NOC4212 Occupations.

SELECTED FINDINGS



Jobs in immigration/ community frontline service (Group 3) tend to offer lowest wages vs expectation of possession of skills acquitted through higher education studies.

Hourly wages in Gr. 1: HEALTH					Hourly Wages in Gr. 2: EDUCATION				
\$/hour	Min. Wage	Type of job	Occupation (post)	Requirements, location	\$/hour	Min. Wage	Type	Occupation (post)	Requirements, location
15.50	12.95	Full-time seasonal, student	Recreation program worker (072, 073)	Education: Gr. 12 Unionized: yes Location: Vancouver, BC	12.00	12.00	Full-time casual	Special education technician (103)	Education: CEGEP Location: QC
16.00	14.00	Full-time shift	Unspecified (090)	Education: PSE diploma Location: Toronto, ON	12.22	12.00	Full-time seasonal (1-3 mo.)	Special education technician (105)	Education: CEGEP Location: QC
17.71	12.95	Part-time casual or regular	Residence support worker (038, 053, 092, 045, 094)	Education: PSE diploma Unionized: yes Location: Kelowna, Fort St. John, Vancouver, BC	16.78	12.95	Part-time seasonal (Full-time if 19-30 yo.)	Summer camp worker (044)	Education: Gr. 12 Location: BC
18.00	12.95	Full-time regular	Community living counselor (042, 052, 075)	Education: Gr. 12 Location: NewWest, Vancouver, BC	17.50	12.00	Part-time casual (10 months)	Special education technician (085)	Education: CEGEP Location: QC
19.58	12.95	Part-time regular	Personal support worker (097, 078, 061)	Education: PSE diploma Unionized: yes Location: Richmond, Vancouver, BC	18.00	12.00	Part-time regular	Animateur & intervenant (048)	Education: CEGEP Location: QC
20.43	12.95	Full-time regular	Forensic community liaison worker (004)	Education: PSE diploma Wage BSW: \$36.75; MSW \$40.90 Location: Vancouver, BC	18.25	12.95	Part-time casual	School community support worker (093)	Education: PSE diploma Location: BC
20.60	13.60	n/a	Mental health outreach worker (001)	Education: n/a Location: Peace River, AB	23.04-32.28	12.00	Part-time temporary; Full-time casual and on-call; Full-time casual; Part-time casual	Special education technician (084, 086, 089, 102)	Requires CEGEP Location: QC
21.55	14.00	Part-time regular	Admitting clerk mental health (024)	Education: n/a Unionized: yes Location: Toronto, ON	15.23	11.00	Part-time one-year contract	Community youth worker advocate (029)	Education: Gr. 12 Unionized: yes Location: NS
24.00	12.95	Part-time regular	Home share coordinator (046)	Education: n/a Location: Smithers, BC	15.23	11.00	Part-time one-year contract	Community youth worker advocate (037, 039)	Education: Gr. 12 Unionized: yes Location: NS
24.28	11.15	Full-time regular	Unspecified (109)	Education: Bachelors degree Wage \$31.98 if previous experience Location: Winnipeg, MB	17.47	12.65	Part-time night shifts	Community support worker (076)	Education: PSE diploma or Bachelors degree (Soc. Sci., Crim.) Unionized: yes Location: BC
32.63	11.00	Full-time regular	Social Worker III Psychologist (068, 069)	Education: Masters degree	17.71	12.65	Full-time temporary	Food preparation worker (059)	Education: PSE diploma. Location: BC
					18.83	12.00	Part-time casual temporary on-call	Intervenant maison d'hebergement (054)	Education: CEGEP Location: QC

SENSE-MAKING OF FINDINGS

- A binary and mutually exclusive typology, full-time/ part-time, is not found in the existing job market for NOC4212. When full-time or part-time jobs are advertised, very few of the openings are permanent. Findings corroborate HR (2013) conclusion that the rate of full-year, full-time work among NOC4212 workers is relatively low. More research needs to be done to determine actual rate of alternative work arrangements among frontline CWs.
- Full-time positions are predominant in Groups 1 (Health institutions) and 2 (Education institutions), while the majority of job openings in Group 3 (community and social support SPOs) are some form of part-time positions.
- In general, NOC 4212 job opening in the actual labour market offer a wage above but barely the local minimum wage. For Groups 1 (Health institutions) and 2 (Education institutions), the lowest wages offered are usually above the local minimum wage; while job openings in Group 3 (community and social support SPOs) are just au-pair with the local minimum wage.
- Based on the actual job market, the educational requirements to access entry-level job opportunities in Group 3 (community and social support SPOs) is possession of Grade 12 diploma and/or 1-2 years of relevant work experience; this results are consistent with ESDC's NOC statement of qualifications of Community Support Workers. Job openings at the entry-level in Groups 1 (Health institutions) and 2 (Education institutions) expect applicants to possess a PSE certificate or diploma (2-3 years program) and 1-2 years of relevant work experience.
- In general, educational or training asked for in the existing job market require job seekers to hold a PSE certificate (2 years program), which is consistent with the NOC definition. Nevertheless, a PSE certificate or apprenticeship training is only good for entry-level jobs.

Discrepancy between actual and anticipated jobs:

- Most job openings advertised through the ESDC's Job Bank ask for educational level and skills-set that are above and beyond the ESDC's skills level for NOC4212.
- Immigrant women participating in the Feasibility Study possess higher level of education from a foreign institutions which open for them a pathway for employment in NOC4212 occupations. None of the participants employed in NOC4212 was asked for a 2-year Certificate or Diploma from a Canadian institution of post-secondary education.

Worth of Return on investment:

- Current demand for NOC 4012 workers creates opening for immigrant women possessing foreign credentials and post-secondary education. Furthermore, It makes more sense for an employer to hire a highly educated new immigrant woman because she is able to learn on-the-go the skills and information required to provide frontline immigrant support service work. In return, she is gainfully employed, gets Canadian work experience and connections she will need to retain employment and/or find a second or third job in the same industry.

Where are the jobs?

- The number of job openings and jobs advertised in NOC4212 seem high and in tune with labour market projections, but almost none of these jobs are permanent, full-time, nor long-term.

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