

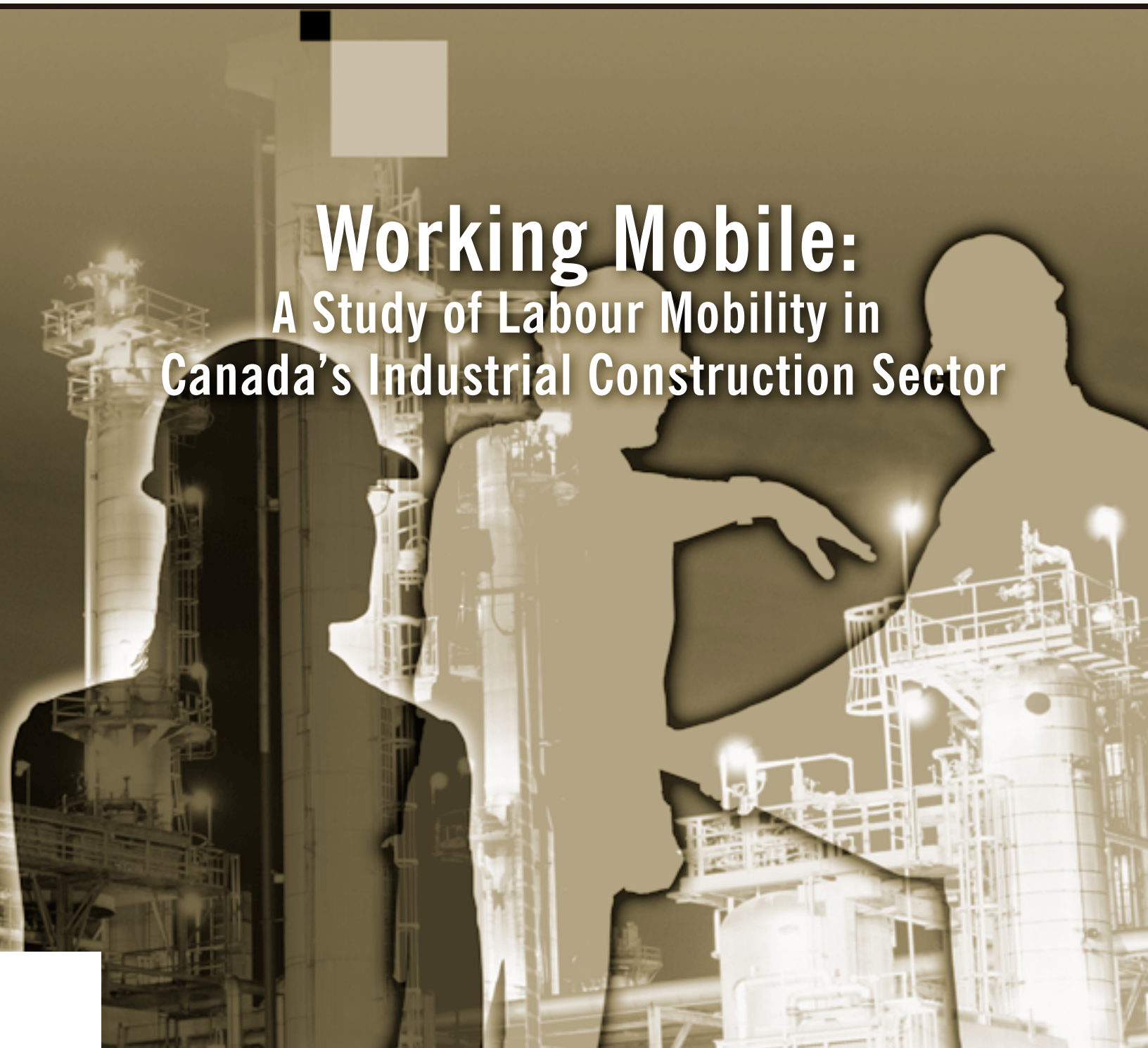
CONSTRUCTION
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Working Mobile:

A Study of Labour Mobility in Canada's Industrial Construction Sector



The Construction Sector Council (CSC) is a national organization committed to the development of a highly skilled workforce – one that will support the current and future needs of the construction industry in Canada.

Created in April 2001, and financed by both government and industry, the CSC is a partnership between labour and business. The CSC is governed by a Board of Directors who represent a variety of interests within the construction industry. At the heart of the CSC's mandate is the need to address human resource issues through partnerships within the construction industry.

Like many industries, the construction industry faces a number of human resource challenges. These include the need to accurately forecast labour demand and supply, to improve the mobility of workers, to make the most of new technologies, and to cope with an aging workforce. As a result, the CSC has identified four key priorities:

- Labour Market Information
- Technology at Work
- Career Awareness Programs
- Standards and Skills Development

This study is part of a series of research papers produced through the CSC's Labour Market Information (LMI) program. The LMI program represents a significant component of CSC activities. It will drive the future work of the organization and inform industry and government decision making.

This report is also available in French, and it is available electronically at www.csc-ca.org.

For more information, or additional copies contact:



The Construction Sector Council
220 Laurier Ave. West, Suite 1150
Ottawa, Ontario, K1P 5Z9
Phone: (613) 569-5552
Fax: (613) 569-1220
info@csc-ca.org

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The Findings in Brief

Who is the mobile worker? Why does he move away from home to work? Are there barriers to working mobile? If so, what are they and what can be done about them?

To gain a better understanding of the factors related to worker mobility in the industrial sector of the construction industry, the Construction Sector Council commissioned this research paper and discovered the following:

The mobile worker is male, aged 30 to 49 years. He is a member of a traditional craft union and has completed an apprenticeship in his trade, which he pursues on heavy construction sites. He is married, with at least two dependents under the age of 18 years, and his working mobile has a negative impact on his marriage and family. His motivation for working mobile is financial, but the personal expenses incurred on the job site and at home because of it could become a barrier to his continuing to work mobile.

As the industry contemplates strategies to meet the demand for skilled labour created by large projects in remote locations, the results of *Working Mobile*, published in the Spring of 2005, hold important implications that should be considered.

In general, mobile workers feel like the unacknowledged backbone of the construction trades.

Although in most cases they are mobile because of necessity and not choice, they nonetheless believe themselves to provide the necessary skills and commitment to build the infrastructure of the nation. But they find they are not regarded with respect by their fellow tradespersons (for whom local work is always preferable). They observe a lack of parity with other industries (such as truckers and mechanics, who are provided preferential tax consideration by the government). And they find industry leaders tend to treat them as replaceable commodities. Most would not recommend the life to their children, although they themselves are resigned to continue it until retirement.

Although working mobile is a “natural consequence” that most acknowledge comes with the heavy construction industry, there is clearly a sense of resignation to it. Especially for those who come from areas of the country where there is inadequate construction work to keep them working steady.

For all but a very few, working mobile is an unpleasant choice that would be avoided if possible. Why?

There are no significant barriers to mobile work related to certification, pension and benefit transfers, and to the travel card. And the study found that the increased earning potential associated with working mobile was readily acknowledged. But a generous share of this extra margin of income was eaten up by the added expenses and lifestyle costs associated with the stresses of being away from home.

The social costs associated with working mobile also constitute a significant obstacle that should be addressed if workers can reasonably be expected to choose to work away from home. Quality of life issues related to housing arrangements and the lack of a “community life” are among the examples mentioned.

In fact, there must be a substantial gap between what can be earned locally compared with what can be earned by going mobile before workers will consider the costs associated with mobile work “worth it,” on balance.

It also takes a certain personality type to sustain working mobile. It seems that there is a significant number of workers who work mobile for a job or two, but who do not become regular mobile workers. The study participants spoke of many who could not cope with the strains of mobile work – in some cases leaving just days before claiming their entitlement to certain bonuses for staying.

Even for those who fit the category of “regular” mobile workers, it was clear this was not so much a lifestyle choice as an occupational necessity. Maintaining eligibility for Employment Insurance; recognizing the inherent cyclical nature of the construction industry; and a growing reliance on the levels of income afforded by the overtime offered in most mobile work (versus the base income provided by local work) were the most common reasons provided for working mobile.

Purpose of Study

This study was commissioned to help the construction industry gain a better understanding of the various factors relating to worker mobility in the large industrial and civil engineering sectors of the industry. More specifically, the study provides insights on:

- The different motivations and factors that influence reasons for accepting work away from home
- The various obstacles and barriers that complicate working away from home and in different jurisdictions
- The career path of mobile construction workers, including their movements between sectors of the industry and provinces/territories

The implications that arise from the results of this study – the first of its kind — should be considered as the industry contemplates strategies to meet the demand for skilled labour that will be created by large projects anticipated in remote locations.

Previous public programs and policy on this issue include the Government of Canada's *Manpower Mobility Program* announced in May of 1965, which consisted of loans and grants for workers who moved within Canada to seek and to find work. Later, the Government of Canada's *Industry Labour Adjustment Program* was instituted with a similar structure. Both programs were terminated in the mid-1980s because a federally commissioned evaluation¹ suggested that many of the people helped would have moved without financial assistance.² The federal department of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (formerly, *Human Resources Development Canada*) no longer provides mobility assistance to its clients.

Recent analysis of labour mobility in Canada categorizes barriers to labour mobility as either “natural, economic barriers” or “artificial barriers to labour mobility.” Natural, economic barriers include distance and linguistic-cultural differences, although language differences are affected by law and regulations. Artificial barriers to mobility are those imposed by law and regulation, including “professional occupational licensing, government occupational licensing of trades, preferential hiring practices, income security programs, education and language requirements, and employment standards legislation.”³

Recent emphases in the development of public policy with respect to labour mobility have focused on the artificial barriers. These include a federation-wide, interprovincial mobility agreement across several sectors, bilateral provincial agreements, and both federal and provincial statutes on “internal” – that is, inter-provincial – trade including “credential recognition.” But aside from non-refundable tax credits in respect of moving expenses related to accepting employment, the Government of Canada no longer subsidizes labour mobility.

But nowhere has research been conducted in Canada with respect to the mobile worker’s motivation for moving to seek and to find work, the obstacles to worker mobility, nor with respect to developing a profile of the mobile worker. This study seeks to fill that gap.

Methodology

On-site Survey by Questionnaire

A survey of mobile workers was designed to reveal:

- The profile of the mobile worker in the heavy construction industry
- The mobile worker’s motivations for moving to major work sites (Is it economic necessity or economic payoff, career enhancement, quality of life, or a lifestyle choice?)
- The obstacles to mobility and whether or not they have been removed (as HRSDC suggests they have by 97% especially for those with “Red Seal” certification), and to test inter-sector mobility (How similar or different are the four sectors?)
- Some demographic particulars that contribute to the development of the profile of the mobile worker

Three groups were surveyed: traditional building trades, “alternate union” (namely, the Christian Labour Association of Canada), and non-union (which includes the “merit shop” in the West). With a view to obtaining representative samples from these three groups of workers, survey questionnaires (see Appendix A) were administered at three sites in Alberta and at one site in New Brunswick:

- The Syncrude site (Fort McMurray, Alberta) The questionnaire was administered on-site on June 22nd 2004

¹ *Employment and Immigration Program Evaluation Report: Evaluation of the Canada Mobility Program* (February 1985). Ottawa: Government of Canada, 1985.

² John Hunter, *The Employment Challenge, Federal Employment Policies and Programs 1900-1990*. Ottawa: Government of Canada, 1993. As the title indicates, this is a comprehensive survey of federal policies and programs with respect to employment, including labour mobility.

³ Morley Gunderson, “Barriers to Interprovincial Labour Mobility.” In Filip Palda, *Provincial Trade Wars: Why the Blockade Must End*. Vancouver: The Fraser Institute, 1994.

- Suncor MVU (Fort McMurray, Alberta) Questionnaire administration was on June 24th 2004
- Suncor (“Firebag,” near Fort McMurray, Alberta) This questionnaire was administered on June 24th 2004
- NB Hydro (Coleson Cove site near Saint John, New Brunswick) The questionnaire was administered on October 27th and 28th, 2004

In total, 875 completed questionnaires were obtained. 277 from the Syncrude site; 290 from Suncor MVU; 152 from Suncor (“Firebag”); and 156 from NB Power (Coleson Cove).

In every case, the questionnaire was administered to workers on site immediately following the regular “safety meeting.” Following a brief explanation of who was sponsoring the survey, who was conducting the survey, and how the surveys would be used, the questionnaires were distributed for completion. In each case, a representative of the research firm was on site to distribute and recover the completed questionnaire, and to answer any incidental questions from site contractors and workers.

Attempts were made to broaden the sample and permission was understood to have been obtained from three additional sites in Quebec, British Columbia, and Newfoundland, respectively. However, in each case (although for different reasons), data could not be collected from these sites. In two cases, cancellations were due to local circumstances that arose in the week of the time scheduled for data collection, and in the third, logistical concerns arose which could not be overcome without compromising the integrity of the data. In consequence, there is a constraint in the quantitative data in that site selection does not adequately acknowledge the regional diversity which is expected in the mobile construction workforce.

On-site Focus Groups

The focus groups were designed to confirm (or contradict) the findings of the survey research, to elicit anecdotal data that might “flesh out” results obtained from the quantitative research, and to surface issues and perspectives by way of the dynamics of group discussion that were not brought out by the questionnaires completed individually.

The objectives were as follows:

- Testing the applicability to regions of the country not included in the data set to confirm its general applicability
- Investigating more fully whether there is a progression from “rare” mobile workers to “occasional” mobile

workers to “regular” mobile workers. This will have a significant impact on recruitment strategies for mobile workers

- Understanding more fully the impact of the quality-of-life factors on workers’ decisions to continue working mobile in the future
- Identifying possible strategies that could reduce negative quality-of-life ratings

From February 21st to March 15th, 2005, 68 mobile workers participated in six focus groups organized by the researchers in liaison with contractors and union organizers at six sites:

- Prince George, British Columbia, on February 21st 2005
- La Cory, Alberta, between Bonneyville and Cold Lake, Alberta
- Fort MacMurray, Alberta
- Oshawa, Ontario
- Hamilton, Ontario
- Saint John, New Brunswick

Sites were selected to give regional representation that might reflect any differences from region to region.

Survey Results

An archetype of the mobile worker is male, aged 30 to 49 years. He is a member of a traditional craft union and has completed his apprenticeship in his trade, which he pursues on heavy construction sites. He is married, with at least two dependents under the age of 18 years, and his working mobile has a net-negative impact on his marriage and family. His motivation for working mobile is financial, but the personal expenses incurred on the job site and at home because of his working mobile could become a barrier to his working mobile in future.

Who is the Mobile Worker?

Construction Profile

Some 20% (20.8%) of those surveyed were steamfitters, 15% were electricians, 10.8% were welders, 9.7% were carpenters, and the remainder was in a variety of trades and jobs as reflected in the appendix. On employment history, some 35.8% had been employed for 21 years or more in construction, 21.2% for 11 to 20 years, 18.1% for 6 to 10 years, 20.8% for 1 to 5 years, and the remainder for less than a year. Some 40.3% of those surveyed started working in construction when they were aged 19 to 24, 39.8% were younger than 19 years of age, 10.3% were aged 25 to 29, and the remainder were aged 30 years or older. Of those surveyed, some 60% (61.2%) declared that their first construction

sector job was in the heavy industrial sector, 17.7% were first employed in “Institutional/Commercial/High-rise residential” construction, and 16.8% were first employed in Low-rise residential and renovations. Approximately a quarter (24.8%) got their starts in construction by way of a friend and 23% through a family member – in all, more than 50% got their starts by way of a personal contact (friends, family, co-worker, or neighbour). In the remainder, 21.6% got their starts through a union or hiring hall, 15.2% through the employer, and 5.9% responded to an advertisement. Fewer than 10% had worked previously in civil engineering projects, more than 80% had worked previously in heavy industrial projects, slightly less than half (47%) had worked previously on institutional/commercial/high-rise residential projects, 41.4% on low-rise/residential projects, and 25.9% had worked in the non-construction sector OR construction was the first sector worked in.

With respect to union affiliation, 57.2% had been affiliated with a traditional craft union, 17.8% with an “alternative union,” 14.9% with an “open shop,” and 45.2% had been “non-union.”⁴ The survey asked the question historically: “Have you previously been affiliated with a labour organization?” The understanding of the present labour arrangements for the sample is such that 49% were working under contract with a traditional craft union; 17% under contract with an alternative union (CLAC); and the remaining 32% were working either “open shop” or “non-union.” While these categories were distinguished to note the difference between non-union employment arrangements where there is a system of benefit portability (as is in place with contractors affiliated with the Merit Group of Contractors) and where there is no benefit portability, this distinction was lost on most workers and, as a result, “non union” and “open shop” responses are treated as one category for analytical purposes.

In a typical year, about one third (33.1%) worked for two employers, approximately another third (31.2%) worked for one employer, 18.5% worked for three employers, and 15.5% worked for four or more employers. More than half (51.3%) had worked in the past full-time “in non-construction” with a wide dispersal (none exceeding 5%) across non-construction work types.

... more than 50% got their starts by way of a personal contact (friends, family, co-worker, or neighbour).

Specific Jobs and How They Got There

At the time of survey, 56.6% claimed the journey person designation, 23.6% were apprentices, 11.9% were supervisors/superintendents/foremen, and the remainder were self-designated as labourers. Of those surveyed, 83.3% had been an apprentice in their particular trades and 58.7% had completed their apprenticeship programs (21.9% were still in their apprenticeship programs). Approximately 25% of those surveyed had completed their programs from 2000 to 2004 and about 15% from 1994 to 1999 – about 40% in the past ten years with the 60% mostly dispersed over the years 1969 to 1993. Some 25.8% had completed their apprenticeships in Alberta, 10.3% in New Brunswick, 5.4% in British Columbia – with the remainder completing their apprenticeships across the other provinces and the Yukon (ca. 8.3%), and outside Canada.

Some 68.3% were not certified in another trade, 17.9% were certified in one other trade, 10% in two other trades, and the remaining 3.8% in four or more trades altogether. Of those surveyed, 47.3% claimed a Red Seal certification in their present trades and 34% claimed some other certification widely dispersed over categories (see appendix).

Work History Profile

With respect to their work histories, large majorities of those surveyed had worked previous to their present jobs in heavy construction sites with more than 100 workers for in excess of 90 nights, in Alberta, as members of a union. About half had worked in “mechanical/electrical.” For 35.4% of those surveyed, “most” of their jobs were mobile, for 25.1% “all” their jobs were mobile, for 17.2% “some” and for 13.2% a “few” were mobile requiring travelling 100 kilometres or more one way and sleeping over for one or more nights. Of those surveyed, 66.5% had worked “mobile” as apprentices.

With respect to previous construction jobs, 66.7% left either when the job was “complete” or because they were laid off for “lack of work,” and 10.6% quit their previous construction jobs to work at the site where they were surveyed. Of those who did not quit their previous construction jobs, 40.2% thought they could have readily found another construction job close to home. With respect to

⁴ The sum of these exceeds 100% since those surveyed were asked to check all that applied.

their current jobs, 29.3% found out about them through personal contacts (friend, family, neighbour, or co-worker), 48.5% by way of a union or hiring hall, and 17.3% through the employer.

Motivations, Incentives, and Barriers

For 48.8%, they left home for the only work available to them, 45.3% went for financial reasons,⁵ 13.8% had “no choice” – they were assigned to the work by their employers, 11.1% sought the work with a sense of adventure, 21% did so for their career advancement, and 7.5% sought work away from home for personal or family reasons. With respect to barriers to working away from home, only 8.5% found their qualifications were not transferable, fewer than 4% found that their pensions and benefits were not transferable, and less than 5% of those surveyed had difficulty obtaining or depositing a travel card. However, 29.2% encountered significant personal expenses in getting and holding the job and 31.8% incurred significant personal expenses at home while they were away. 38.8% responded that they encountered no barriers – 61.2% did encounter barriers to working away from home.

With respect to what barriers might influence workers not to be a mobile worker, those surveyed were invited to check up to three: 15.9% saw “qualifications not transferable” as a barrier, 15% saw difficulty obtaining or depositing a travel card as a barrier, and 8.1% saw “qualifications not transferable” as a barrier. But 35.2% saw personal expenses in getting and holding a job and 37.5% saw personal expenses at home while away as a barrier to taking work away from home. Some 28.6% anticipated no barriers to working away from home.

Expectations for the Future, and Attitudes

With respect to the total amount of time workers expected to commit to their current projects, 44.7% expected to spend 1 to 3 years on site, 24.2% expected to spend 7 to 11 months, 18.2% expected four to six months, and 12.9% expected to spend from one night to three months on site. For 70.5%, all or part of their travel, room, and board costs were covered by others. Of those who answered in the affirmative, in nearly all cases their employers were the “others” covering a portion of their costs. In about one quarter of cases, the employer offered a travel incentive to move to the current job.

Some 51.8% expected to work away from home for their next jobs while 35% “didn’t know.” But only 20% affirmed that they wanted to work away from home while 28.1% “didn’t know.” Some 50.7% responded that they “usually take a break (not work at all) between away from home jobs.” If they learn that they will be working on a project away from home within a month, 78.8% will keep working until they leave for the project, 4% will quit their current jobs, and 17.2% will turn down work or not look for work before going to the project.

With respect to their families, again, 61.7% considered working away from home a negative.

Six-fold Continuum on Quality of Life

On six measures of quality of life, 51.6% of those surveyed saw “pride in contributing to a major project” as “slightly positive” or “positive,” 49% specified “job satisfaction” as a positive, and 52.3% specified “camaraderie” as a positive. However, with respect to their marriages, 60.3% specified working away from home as a negative while 17.5% considered this either “slightly positive” or a “positive effect.” With respect to their families, again, 61.7% considered working away from home a negative while 15.5% considered this “slightly positive” or a “positive effect.” Finally, with respect to “community involvement,” 70.8% considered working away from home a negative.

Demographic Markers

Of those surveyed:

- 32.3% were 50 years of age or older
- 51.7% were aged from 30 to 49 years
- 16.6% were under the age of 30 years
- 97.5% were male
- 71.1% were married or “common law”
- 11% were separated or divorced
- 17.5% were “single”
- 51.5% had dependents at home – 39.7% had one dependent, 32.4% had two dependents, and 27.4% had three or more dependents

Of dependents, in 29.6% of cases the age of the first dependent was under six years, 59.5% of the first dependents were under the age of 13, and in 77.8% of cases the age of the first dependent was under the age of 18 years.

Some 97.6% of those surveyed were either Canadian citizens or “landed immigrants.” More than a quarter of those who were “Canadian-born” originated in Alberta (27.3%), 30.3% originated in Atlantic Canada, and 16.5% from western Canada but not from Alberta (Yukon, B.C.,

⁵ Almost certainly there is an overlap between the first two.

Saskatchewan, and Manitoba). A small number (7.6%) of those surveyed reported being “Aboriginal.” Among the 6.9% not Canadian-born, their countries of origin were spread over more than 20 countries. Some 4.4% of all surveyed were working under “a temporary foreign worker policy.” For 86.9%, English was their first language and for 9.1% French was their first language.

Why be a Mobile Worker?

In addition to developing a profile of the mobile worker, survey results identified factors influencing the decision to be a mobile worker, the obstacles and barriers faced by mobile workers, and the impacts experienced by mobile workers with respect to their quality of life.

Regular, Occasional, and Rare Mobile Workers

By and large, there is a subset of workers – “mobile workers” – who supply the labour to industrial projects wherever and whenever mobile workers are required:

- Approximately 60% of those surveyed view themselves as “regular” mobile workers, with “all” or “most” of their jobs in their construction career being mobile.
- “Occasional” mobile workers make up 17% of the workforce, with “some of their jobs in their construction career being mobile.
- “Rare” mobile workers make up 21% of the workforce with “few” or “none” of their jobs in their construction career being mobile.

“Regular” mobile workers are more likely than average to check “only available work” or “Personal/Family Reasons” as factors affecting their decisions to leave their home areas. They are less likely than average to see mobile work as fulfilling “a sense of adventure” or advancing their “career prospects.”

“Rare” mobile workers are significantly more likely than average to cite “a sense of adventure” as a factor affecting their decisions to move. This may, however, be attributable to age, in that almost 30% of those who checked the “sense of adventure” as a factor were under the age of 30 years. Notably, the only other age group listing a “sense of adventure” as one of the factors in above expected numbers was the group aged 60-64 years.

Pension and benefit transfers, obtaining union travel cards, and having qualifications recognized in different jurisdictions appear to be relatively routine and not a difficulty for most workers.

Both the “rare” mobile worker and the “occasional” mobile worker are more likely to look upon ‘working mobile’ as advancing their career prospects.

Obstacles and Barriers

The structures surrounding working mobile appear to be well established in that the level of barriers encountered by mobile workers is quite low. Some 37% of respondents reported no barriers. Pension and benefit transfers, obtaining union travel cards, and having qualifications recognized

in different jurisdictions appear to be relatively routine and not a difficulty for most workers. Approximately 30% checked significant personal expenses as a barrier. Given that financial incentives are a primary factor in the decision of almost half of the mobile workforce, this is hardly surprising. Judging from the comments, it appears that “personal/family” emergencies are a factor in this.

Motives and Quality of Life

It is useful to examine the data with respect to the factors that affect the decision to work mobile and to pinpoint the impact of working mobile on quality of life more closely since these provide insights that will affect how the labour supply issues that are a concern in this industry are addressed.

It is clear that there are significant differences in the factors affecting the choices of different categories of mobile workers. The 60% of the workforce surveyed that sees themselves as “regular” mobile workers are most likely to cite “no choice” because their employers assigned them, or because working away from home was the only available work. When the plus/minus data is compared against an average of the overall sample of which regular workers compose 60%, the difference is stark. The 21% who view themselves as “rare” mobile workers are much less likely to cite mobile work as their only option, suggesting there is a sense of adventure that has motivated the decision. The negative impact on family is most likely to be cited by the 17% of workers who view themselves as “occasional” mobile workers. A likely explanation is that while “regular” mobile workers have developed coping mechanisms and adjusted to living away from family, and “rare” mobile workers have made a conscious decision in this particular circumstance and do not expect this to be part of an ongoing lifestyle, the “occasional” mobile worker feels the negative impact more acutely.

	PERCENTAGES				PLUS/MINUS AVERAGE		
	REGULAR	OCCASIONAL	RARE		REGULAR	OCCASIONAL	RARE
No Choice	63.55932	16.94915	18.64407	No Choice	3.56	-0.05	-2.36
Financial Incentive	62.33766	18.18182	18.7013	Financial Incentive	2.34	1.18	-2.30
Only Work Available	67.46988	15.66265	15.42169	Only Work	7.47	-1.34	-5.58
Adventure	47.36842	17.89474	31.57895	Adventure	-12.63	0.89	10.58
Career	54.28571	20.57143	24	Career	-5.71	3.57	3.00
Personal/Family	65.625	10.9375	18.75	Personal/Family	5.63	-6.06	-2.25
Other	61.44578	16.86747	21.68675	Other	1.45	-0.13	0.69

Age Factors

When the factors affecting the choice to work mobile are analyzed against the various age groupings, these observations emerge:

- There is a marked increase of mobile work being the “only available work for me” in the 50-years-and-over age bracket
- The “sense of adventure about working away from home” is most pronounced among those under the age of 30 years
- There is a steady decline in the “advancing career prospects” with age

- The “other” category is also most likely to be checked by those under 30. Approximately two-thirds of comments appear to fit within existing categories but some reflect eclectic choices (“put in time away while young,” “labourers must go where needed,” “boredom,” or “getting married in September,” to name a few)

Labour Organization Factors

There are few observable differences between the labour organization types.

A pattern emerges in which workers who are affiliated with traditional craft unions appear more inclined than average to work mobile because it is the only available work. Open-shop and non-union workers cite financial incentives marginally more than they cite that it is the only available work. Alternative union, open-shop, and non-union workers are more likely than average to find career and financial considerations to be incentives.

	NO CHOICE – ASSIGNED BY EMPLOYER	FINANCIAL INCENTIVES	ONLY WORK	SENSE OF ADVENTURE	ADVANCE CAREER PROSPECTS	PERSONAL/FAMILY REASONS	OTHER
15-19	00.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
20-24	7.14	23.81	16.67	16.67	19.05	4.76	11.90
25-29	8.38	28.27	18.85	12.57	17.28	5.76	8.90
30-34	8.11	31.35	27.03	4.86	18.38	4.86	5.41
35-39	12.12	26.77	30.30	8.08	15.15	2.53	5.05
40-44	7.47	30.46	29.89	7.47	13.22	4.60	6.90
45-49	8.82	30.15	30.88	4.41	14.71	4.41	6.62
50-54	5.79	31.40	39.67	2.48	6.61	6.61	7.44
55-59	9.39	27.07	40.33	5.52	8.29	5.52	3.87
60-64	6.76	35.14	36.49	5.41	6.76	6.76	2.70
65-69	13.33	13.33	50.00	10.00	10.00	0.00	3.33
N=	87	278	420	77	129	46	62

Figures expressed as percentage of responses in the relevant age categories.

Question 22 – “What factors affected your decision to leave your home area for work? (Please check up to three)”

	NO CHOICE	FINANCIAL INCENTIVES	ONLY AVAILABLE WORK	SENSE OF ADVENTURE	CAREER PROSPECTS	PERSONAL/FAMILY REASONS	OTHER
Total	13.8	45.3	48.8	11	21	7.5	9.7
Traditional	14.5	44.2	59.3	9.8	14.9	7.2	9.7
Alternative	13.8	51.3	43.4	11.2	26.9	10.5	8.6
Open-Shop	16.2	55	44.9	10.9	21.7	9.3	10.1
Non-Union	15.3	51.1	39.5	12.2	27.6	7.8	11.2

Figures expressed as percentage of responses in the relevant age categories.

Necessity, Desire, and Choice

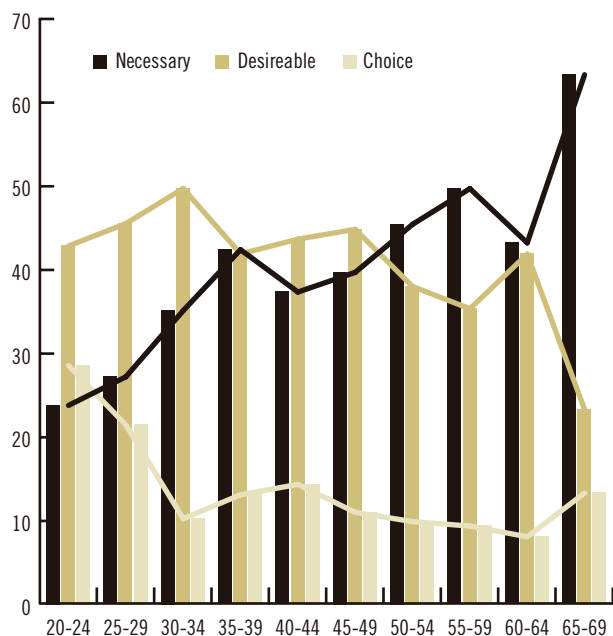
The data relating to factors impinging on the decision to become mobile for work can be reframed into three categories: those who are mobile due to necessity (combining the “only available work” and the “no choice- employer assigned me” options); due to desire from a career perspective (combining “financial incentives” with “career prospects” options); and due to choice (combining “sense of adventure” with “other” options).

Framing the data in this way ignores data from the “Personal/Family” reasons which make working away from home an advantageous option (4.8% of data). Given the very positive quality-of-life ratings this subset provided (above average compared to the overall sample in every category except community involvement), for some workers working mobile provides an opportunity to “get away from it all.” The data set is too small to provide statistically significant results for categorizing this group, but the pattern may indicate that this is most frequently a response to familial and marital circumstances.

The results in percentage terms are as follows:

	NECESSITY	DESIRE	CHOICE
N=	528	565	177
15-19	100.00	0.00	0.00
20-24	23.81	42.86	28.57
25-29	27.23	45.55	21.47
30-34	35.14	49.73	10.27
35-39	42.42	41.92	13.13
40-44	37.36	43.68	14.37
45-49	39.71	44.85	11.03
50-54	45.45	38.02	9.92
55-59	49.72	35.36	9.39
60-64	43.24	41.89	8.11
65-69	63.33	23.33	13.33
	41.5748	44.48819	13.93701

Factors Affecting Choice to Work Mobile (%)



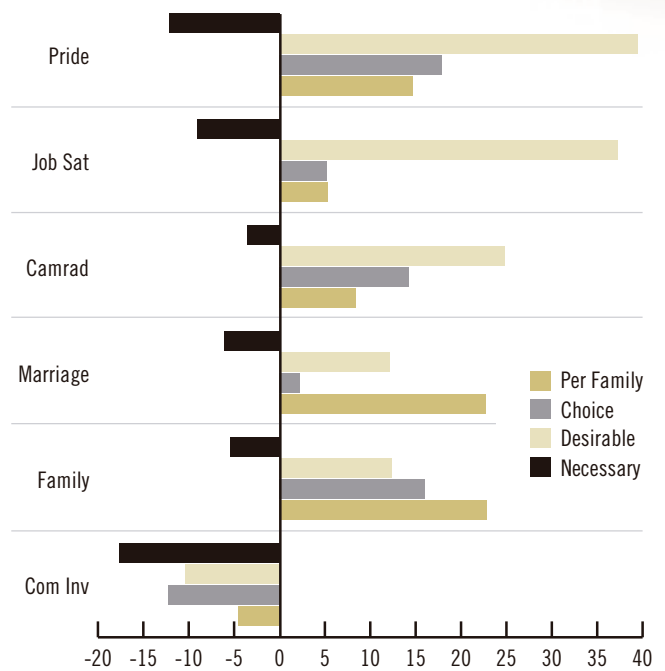
The trend lines are telling. Ignoring the 15-19 age group (which is based on a data set of 2, and, therefore, meaningless), it is clear that for younger workers, mobile work is more likely to be seen as desirable from a career and income perspective with some adventure and personal reasons included. For this group, to a lesser degree, such work is necessary in order to work in their trades. By the time workers are 30 years of age, adventure and personal reasons have diminished in importance. From the age of 30 years on, reasons related to necessity increase in statistical importance while desirability factors are in decline.

So, what is the perceived impact in terms of quality of life? There are obvious patterns that emerge. Those who work mobile due to necessity report negative quality-of-life ratings in every category significantly more than the other two groups. Workers who indicated that working mobile

was desirable for their careers are the most positive in work-related categories of life satisfaction (camaraderie, job satisfaction, and pride) and are more positive than the overall group in terms of personal categories (marriage and family). This might point to the fact that they have developed coping mechanisms and accepted the difficulties associated with mobile work as part of the job. All categories of workers indicate strong ‘negatives’ with respect to the impact on their community involvements. Analyzing this data from the quality-of-life impact (measured in percentage terms, plus or minus from the overall sample average), the range of impacts becomes clearer.

The age profiles are as expected. By definition one expects fewer “regular” mobile workers in the younger age categories. Similarly, one expects to find more “Rare” mobile workers in the younger age categories. On balance, however, there are no striking age patterns that distinguish these groups.

As expected, the majority of “regular” mobile workers have accumulated their work histories with traditional craft unions. It is difficult to apply these numbers to the overall workforce since a sample of this sort has an inherent bias – 49% of the workers surveyed were working under a traditional craft union contract. “Regular” mobile workers are more likely than average to expect to work mobile again on their next job while “rare” mobile workers are significantly more likely than average to expect not to work mobile, again, on their next jobs.



Comparisons between “regular,” “occasional,” and “rare” mobile workers on such measures as age when entering the construction industry, on the sector in which they worked their first jobs, on the number of trades in which workers were certified, on Red Seal certification, on their means of finding their current jobs, on dependents, or on Aboriginal status showed no meaningful differences between the three categories.

	NO CHOICE	\$ INCENTIVES	ONLY WORK	ADVENTURE	ADVANCE CAREER	OTHER	PERSONAL / FAMILY
Pride	-6.54	10.47	-5.59	18.53	29.00	-0.65	14.71
Job Satisfaction	-5.12	12.08	-4.01	15.51	25.25	-10.30	5.30
Camaraderie	1.44	10.10	-4.99	8.68	14.70	5.64	8.44
Marriage	0.21	2.52	-6.28	13.39	9.68	-11.15	22.80
Family	1.95	0.70	-7.43	24.22	11.72	-8.23	22.87
Com Inv	-6.27	-7.62	-11.47	-2.52	-2.76	-9.73	-4.60

AGE RANGE	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69
Regular	100	39.1	35.5	64.3	59	59.6	68.1	71.4	67.3	68.8	72.7
Occasional	0	8.7	14.5	13	27	17.4	17.6	9.9	19.5	18.8	18.2
Rare	0	47.87	48.2	20	13.1	22	13.2	17.6	13.3	12.5	9.1
N=	2	23	110	115	122	109	91	91	113	48	22

Figures given in percentages

Question 7- Affiliation to labour organization:

	CRAFT	ALT	OPEN SHOP	NON-UNION
Regular	64.2	68	65.4	59.17
Occasional	16.5	19	20	18.09
Rare	18.5	11.8	13.8	21.96

Question 29 – Expects to work away on next job:

	NO	YES	DON'T KNOW	TOTAL
Regular	29.1	78	49.7	61.6
Occasional	23.6	11.4	23.5	17.3
Rare	47.3	9.5	25.5	20.2

All terms are given as percentages

Comparison with Survey Results Obtained at Focus Groups

The analysis of the sixty-eight questionnaires obtained from the six focus groups found results remarkably consistent with the above despite the wide difference in sample size: 875 in the above compared to 68 questionnaires obtained from the focus groups. When the qualitative data set (68) was compared to the quantitative data set (875), the qualitative data set was found to be consistent across virtually all “frequencies” and “cross-tabs.” Fewer than half a dozen significant anomalies between the two were identified. These were disregarded, as in every case the anomalies entailed subgroups with very small data sets which simply could not be considered statistically significant.

Consequently, the qualitative data drawn from the focus groups is treated as being consistent with the quantitative data set drawn from the surveys, both of which it is believed, fairly reflect the perspective of mobile workers on industrial projects in English Canada.

Focus Group Results

The following section describes the settings and compositions of the focus groups, the demographic differences between them, and common themes that surfaced in the focus group discussions.

Settings and Compositions of the Focus Groups

Six focus groups were convened in Prince George, B.C., La Cory, Alberta, near Fort MacMurray, Alberta, Oshawa and Hamilton, Ontario, and Saint John, New Brunswick, with participants originating across the country and

working across the industrial construction trades. There were demographic variables across the groups which tend to explain certain emphases from group to group, but the overall demographic profile roughly approximated the demographic markers of the earlier surveyed group:

- The Prince George group had a median age of about 40 years, and were mostly married with children still at home.
- La Cory’s group had a median age of about 35 years with about half the group under the age of 25 years. Most of these latter were single, never married, and still pursuing their apprenticeships.
- The Fort MacMurray group also had a median age of about 35 years, but most were closer in age to this median.
- The Oshawa, Hamilton, and Saint John groups had a median age of about 50+ years and most had grown children.

The focus group discussion followed the outline included in Appendix B of this report.

Differences of Note

The Prince George and Fort MacMurray groups emphasized marriage and family concerns and pressures they were experiencing, while the La Cory group’s concerns – as a group – were related to problems with apprenticeship and achieving the journeyperson designation. For the Oshawa, Hamilton, and Saint John groups, core concerns had to do with pensions and retirement. These concerns are reflective of their respective stages of life, described in the previous sub-section.

Common Themes

As an aggregate, the focus groups surfaced four over-riding, common themes:

- A majority of mobile workers constitute a subset who consistently work mobile.
- This majority subset work mobile out of necessity.
- This majority, mobile worker subset experience a significantly lower and more negative quality of life than the minority of mobile workers who do not consistently work mobile.
- Mobile workers are characterized by significant negative self-esteem and concern about their social status vis à vis the communities in which they work mobile and in respect of other lines of work.

With respect to there being a subset of workers who consistently work mobile, most saw themselves working mobile for the foreseeable future, and saw working at home as an occasional bonus. They generally expected to work mobile until retirement. For many, they accept that “this is the way I work,” given the cyclical nature of the construction industry.

For most, the decision to work mobile was initially motivated by financial necessity. They acknowledge that working mobile is more lucrative – “working 50 to 60 hours a week versus working 40 hours” – but many were quick to point out that out-of-pocket expenses and lifestyle costs associated with mobile work eroded the financial advantage. While in some cases working mobile provided slight wage-level increases over local work, it was the “steady work – not two weeks on and a week with no work” that provided the real advantage. In virtually all cases, money was the number-one incentive for working mobile. Said one, “If I could make this money in Edmonton, I would stay there.” Said another, “I don’t think anybody makes the decision to work mobile permanently. But you get so used to the money – it’s tough to go back to working a 40-hour-a-week job.”

Related to quality of life issues, comments were virtually unanimous as to the detriment of working mobile to marriage, family, and community. However, the mobile workers’ rationalizations were similarly unanimous: “It’s tough to be away but I can make more money in a shorter period,” said one. While acknowledging that his family was suffering, another noted that “the money is what keeps me here.”

When it came to marriage, across the focus groups there is a high rate of divorce among mobile workers. One claimed it is common knowledge that “87% of workers are divorced,” while another made a similar point in a more home-spun manner: “Half the guys are divorced because they’re away from home, and half of the remaining can’t stand to live with their spouses when they’re at home.” The vast majority of comments reflected a starkly negative assessment as to the impact working mobile makes on marriages, and the focus group participants who spoke of maintaining stable marriages were conspicuous exceptions.

...out of pocket expenses and lifestyle costs ...eroded the financial advantage

With respect to parenting, one focus group participant wondered out loud “if my boys would get in as much trouble” if he did not work mobile. A second-generation mobile worker noted, “My dad worked mobile, and now I do. We try to work the same jobs to make up for lost years.” One father remarked that his little boys thought he lived on a plane because his family dropped him off and picked him up at the airport. They spoke of missing ball games, piano recitals, and graduations because of working mobile, and of difficulty getting time off and finding money to return home in times of family crisis. Over and over again, they noted how much the burden of caring for children and running the household falls on the spouse at home.

Others noted the struggle to care for older parents while working mobile, and difficulty getting time off from the job to even bury a parent. Although most related stories of support and sympathy as they recounted coping with family crisis while on the road, in every focus group there were anecdotes provided of circumstances where personal crises had not been accommodated, and the group reactions indicated that these were not necessarily isolated exceptions.

On community involvement, one comment was typical: “I love to play ball – but I can’t commit to it.” Others noted the difficulties of community service coaching hockey or carrying on church involvement.

With respect to general quality of life on the job, on off hours, it was generally uncommon for any kind of intramural sports to be organized even though younger mobile workers indicated they would have an interest in this. As a result, a lot of workers eat, sleep, and work and some spend significant portions of their paycheques in lounges.

Specifically on quality of life in the camps, there was general agreement that camps were not conducive to quality of life, but the expense of accommodations away from home exerted financial pressure. While it was acknowledged that camp life had improved over the years, the contention about lack of any privacy or personal space in camp environments was echoed across the groups. Offsetting the overall improvement in camp life were comments heard regarding certain specific circumstances. In one specific case, the quality of camp life at one site was almost unanimously described as “hellish.”

Still, across the groups a sense of camaraderie developed. There were several examples of this: “We keep in touch job to job with friends – close friendships on the job – know what friends on the job are doing even when not working together . . . it’s a way of life – keeping in touch by e-mail – keep in touch with what’s happening on other jobs, hop from job to job.” Some groups intentionally go from job to job so they can work together, if possible, with people they know and trust.

In respect of self-esteem and social status, beefs with government programs were framed in terms of the respect or lack thereof extended to the mobile worker. Said one, “Fishermen can earn \$100,000 and draw EI and not be penalized, and we’re working all around the country, and we get kicked.” Others observed that “a lot of the welders are going ‘contract’ to get more write-offs,” and others noted that truckers in Canada and the skilled trades in the U.S. can claim a variety of write-offs against income, but not the skilled trades in Canada. While complaints against tax treatment of expenses were raised in the context of mobile work and were driven by financial concerns, there seems little doubt that the underlying driving concern is the lack of respect that this group of workers feels, and their tax treatment seems to be the most convenient avenue by which to voice that complaint.

On the respect they are given by contractors, some noted that “Project managers don’t rise from the ranks of trades anymore, they come to the job from university.” The participants seemed to find a lower level of empathy from project managers who had not worked in the trades. Another observed, “This is where the work gets done – we make it happen, and the hands should be treated as such – head office undervalues the workers – tired of being just a number – we can replace you in a heartbeat.”

*“We keep in touch
job to job with friends.”*

The self-esteem (or lack thereof) on the part of mobile workers is also influenced by the attitudes of those in the communities in which they work. One felt as though “townspeople say, ‘Lock up your daughters,’” as soon as mobile workers were brought into their community. Many considered that the communities where they work or board like their money, but tend not to like them. In several focus groups, it was noted that mobile workers are charged more for their meals and other services than are locals.

Mobile workers acknowledged that other mobile workers have sometimes contributed to their less-than-ideal reputation with residents in the communities where they work. In the words of one, some workers “don’t care a rat’s ass about that town.” Generally, though, mobile workers saw themselves as just doing a job, earning money to send home, and just trying to find a decent place to room and board while on the job, and they resent being on the receiving end of ill will in communities where they work mobile.

In general, mobile workers feel like the unacknowledged backbone of the construction trades. Although they are mobile because of necessity and not choice, they nonetheless believe themselves to provide the necessary skill and commitment to build the infrastructure of the nation. But they find they are not regarded with respect by their fellow tradespersons (for whom local work is always preferable). They observe a lack of parity with other blue-collar industries (such as truckers and mechanics, who are provided preferential tax consideration by the government). And they find industry leaders tend to treat them as replaceable commodities. Most would not recommend the life to their children, although they themselves are resigned to continue it until retirement.

Conclusions

Survey Questionnaire

This study sought to develop a profile of the mobile worker in the heavy construction sector and to identify the mobile worker's motivations for moving to major work sites. Do they move out of economic necessity, for the economic payoff, for career enhancement, quality of life, or lifestyle choice reasons?

The study also attempted to uncover any obstacles to mobility and whether or not they have been removed; to test for inter-sector mobility; and to add demographic particulars that contribute to the development of the profile of the mobile worker.

The survey found that key motivations for working mobile are "financial incentives" and "only work available." As a motivation, "sense of adventure" diminishes by the age of 30 years and increases, again, among workers toward the end of their working lives.

No significant barriers to mobile work related to certification, transferring pension and benefits, and to the travel card were found. However, "significant personal expenses" either on the job or at home while workers are away was cited as a significant potential barrier to 'working mobile.'

A majority of those identifying as "regular" mobile workers have accumulated their work histories as members of traditional craft unions. There is a subset of workers – mobile workers – in the heavy construction sector who move from job site to job site.

In summary, the mobile worker is male, aged 30 to 49 years. He is a member of a traditional craft union and has completed his apprenticeship in his trade, which he pursues on heavy construction sites. He is married, with at least two dependents under the age of 18 years, and his working mobile has a net-negative impact on his marriage and family. His motivation for working mobile is for financial reasons, but the personal expenses incurred on the job site and at home because of his working mobile could become a barrier to his working mobile in future.

Focus Groups

One of the objectives of the focus group discussions was to test whether there was a progression from "rare" mobile workers to "occasional" mobile workers to "regular" mobile workers. This is clearly important for recruitment strategies. It seems that there is a significant number of workers who work mobile for a job or two, but who do not become regular mobile workers. It takes a certain personality type to sustain working mobile. Focus group participants spoke of many who could not cope with the strains of mobile work, in some cases leaving just days before claiming their entitlement to certain bonuses for staying because of the stresses mobile work was causing them.

While it is not surprising that most who took part in the focus groups would fit the category "regular" mobile workers, it was clear this was not so much a lifestyle choice as an occupational necessity. Maintaining eligibility for Employment Insurance; recognizing the inherent cyclical nature of the construction industry; and a growing reliance on the levels of income afforded by the overtime offered in most mobile work (versus the base income provided by local work) were the most common reasons provided for working mobile.

The major conclusions are:

- A majority of mobile workers constitute a subset who consistently work mobile.
- This majority subset work mobile out of financial necessity.
- This majority, mobile worker subset experience a significantly lower and more negative quality of life than the minority of mobile workers who do not consistently work mobile.
- Mobile workers are characterized by significant negative self-esteem and concern about the social status of the skilled trades vis à vis the communities in which they work mobile and in respect of other lines of work.

Next Steps

In the course of the focus groups, mobile workers made several comments and even explicitly offered suggestions with respect to working mobile.

One consistent suggestion dealt with tax treatment. Whether based on comparisons with treatment of the trades under the United States tax code or the treatment provided under Canadian law for mechanics (with respect to whom the perception is that all tools are tax deductible) and truckers (for whom travelling costs are deductible), Canadian mobile workers feel unfairly treated by the tax system. Many estimated that upwards of \$10,000 and \$20,000 per annum costs were required from their after-tax income to pay for travel expenses to and from their mobile projects and for a second residence. While some jobs offer a live-out allowance, examples where such allowances were not in place were frequently cited, or where they were inadequate to cover costs of living. This was cited in every focus group not just as a financial issue, but as a fundamental issue of respect.

Another frequently-made suggestion related to methods of testing. While credentials seem generally transferable, there were many examples cited of welding tests and safety programs which workers were required to repeat from one provincial jurisdiction to the next. Not only was this seen as redundant and effectively a means for different jurisdictions to collect user fees, but the expense of having to travel to inconvenient locations to complete these tests at personal expense, was a source of significant frustration.

Several workers in the focus groups had not joined the construction trades immediately upon completion of high school, but, instead, had come to the construction industry after unsatisfactory job experiences or earning potential in other sectors. As a result of these experiences, the suggestion was made in several groups that recruitment efforts for apprentices currently undertaken by the construction industry are wrongly focused on only young people, and that a more targeted campaign should be made to recruit slightly older workers (aged from 25 to 35 years) to the sector.

In response to the question, “What incentive could be offered other than more money which would be effective in getting more construction workers to consider mobile work?” answers all focused on quality of life. Some focused on improved quality or more convenient housing arrangements while others suggested organized recreational activities to “fill the void of no community life.”

Developing a Supply Side Model

As the industry contemplates strategies to meet the demand for skilled labour that will be created by large projects anticipated in remote locations, the results of this study hold various implications that should be considered.

Although working mobile is a “natural consequence” that most acknowledge comes with the heavy construction industry and, especially for those who come from areas of the country where there is inadequate construction work to keep them working steady, there is a sense of resignation to this, for all but a very few working mobile is an unpleasant choice that would be avoided if possible. While the increased earning potential associated with working mobile was readily acknowledged, a generous share of this extra margin of income from working mobile was eaten up by the extra expenses and lifestyle costs associated with working mobile especially with respect to the stresses of being away from home.

Although market forces will always prove to be an incentive for some workers to work mobile, for many in the industry, the “hidden” financial costs that erode the extra earning potential and the significant non-financial, social costs associated with working mobile constitute a significant obstacle that should be addressed if workers can reasonably be expected to choose to work away from home. In fact, the input received suggests there must be a substantial gap between what can be earned locally compared with what can be earned by going mobile before workers will consider the costs associated with mobile work “worth it,” on balance. This balance – financial and social – should be carefully considered.

Appendix A: Questionnaire



LABOUR MOBILITY SURVEY

This survey is part of a study on labour mobility and industrial construction commissioned by the Construction Sector Council of Canada. WRF Services, Inc. has been contracted to conduct the study. The data gathered in this survey is confidential and anonymous. All results will be aggregate – no survey response will be specifically or personally referred to, either in our database, or in any reports and other publications emerging from the study. The accuracy and thoroughness of your response is important, and we thank you for the time and care you give to this survey.

ADMIN ONLY:

Date: _____
Site Code: _____

EMPLOYMENT DATA

1. In what capacity are you presently working?

Design and Development

- Architect
- Engineer
- Interior Designer
- Landscaper
- Surveyor

Interiors and Finishing

- Drywaller/Finisher/Taper
- Floor Covering Installer
- Heat & Frost Insulator
- Painter & Decorator
- Lather/Interior Systems Mechanic
- Glazier

Wood

- Cabinet Maker
- Carpenter
- Joiner

Trowel

- Brick Layer
- Stone Mason
- Tile Setter
- Plasterer
- Fire Proofer

Demolition

- Demolition Labourer
- Blaster

Concrete

- Cement Mason
- Cement Finisher
- Formworker
- Labourer

Mechanical/Electrical

- Electrician
- Construction Line Worker
- Instrument Mechanic
- Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Mechanic
- Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning
- Heat & Frost Insulator
- Millwright
- Plumber
- Gasfitter
- Steamfitter
- Sprinkler Fitter
- Boilermaker
- Elevator Constructor
- Ironworker
- Rod Worker
- Sheet Metal Worker
- Welder
- Pre-cast Concrete Erector

Pipeline

- Pipeline Welder
- Pipeline Journeyperson
- Pipeline Helper
- Stringing
- Pipeline Labourer
- Pipeline Dozer Operator
- Pipeline Excavator Operator
- Pipeline Sideboom Operator
- Other: _____

Equipment Operating

- Mobile Crane Operator
- Boom Truck Operator
- Tower Crane Operator

- Construction Heavy Equipment
- Foundation & Shoring Operator
- Grapple Operator
- Scraper Operator
- Wheel Loader
- Dozer Operator
- Grader Operator
- Excavator Operator
- Tractor Loader Backhoe Operator
- Directional Drill Operator
- Packer Operator
- Paver/Screed Operator
- Roller Operator
- Concrete Pump Operator
- Forklift Operator
- Personnel Lift Operator
- Aggregate Plant Operator
- Asphalt Operator
- Concrete Plant Operator
- Ditcher/Trencher Operator
- Rock Truck Operator

Other

- Equipment Service Person/Heavy Duty Mechanic
- Environmental Worker
- Tractor Trailer Driver
- Material Handler/Warehouse Person
- Roofer
- Rigger
- Other: _____

EMPLOYMENT DATA, CONT'D

2. Approximately how many years have you been employed in the construction industry?

- Less than 1
- 1-5
- 6-10
- 11-20
- 21+

3. How old were you when you were first employed in the construction industry?

- Younger than 19
- 19-24
- 25-29
- 30-34
- 34-39
- 40+

4. In which construction sector is/was your first job?

- Civil Engineering
- Heavy Industrial/Industrial
- Institutional/Commercial/High-Rise Residential
- Low-Rise Residential/Renovations

5. How did you get your start in construction?

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advertisement | <input type="checkbox"/> Friend |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employer | <input type="checkbox"/> Family |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Union/Hiring Hall | <input type="checkbox"/> Neighbour |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Co-worker | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

6. Please check all sectors you have worked in previously.

- Civil Engineering
- Heavy Industrial/Industrial
- Institutional/Commercial/High-Rise Residential
- Low-Rise Residential/Renovations
- Non-construction or construction is the first sector I have worked in

7. Have you previously been affiliated with a labour organization? (check all that apply – if not previously affiliated, check 'non-union')

- Traditional Craft Union
- Alternative Union
- Open Shop
- Non-Union

EMPLOYMENT DATA, CONT'D

8. In a typical year, how many employers do you work for?

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> This is my first employer | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5+ |

9. Have you worked full-time in any other industry besides the construction industry?

- Yes
 No

If yes, which industry were you working in immediately prior to entering the construction industry?

EMPLOYMENT QUALIFICATIONS

10. What is your current position?

- Journeyperson
 Apprentice
 Labourer
 Supervisor/Superintendent/Foreman

11. Are you or have you been an apprentice in your particular trade?

- Yes
 No

12. Did you complete your apprenticeship program?

- Yes
Year completed: _____ Province completed: _____
- No
 Still in the apprenticeship program

13. In how many other trades, besides your present trade, are you certified?

- None
 1
 2
 3
 4
 5+

Please specify the additional trades in which you are certified: _____

EMPLOYMENT QUALIFICATIONS. CONT'D

14. Are you Red Seal certified in your present trade?

- Yes
- No

15. Do you have any other certification?

- Yes
- No

Please specify: _____

LABOUR MOBILITY

In this section of the survey, 'mobile' is defined as travelling 100 kilometres or more one way, or sleeping over for one or more nights, for the purpose of working on a construction project.

16. Please complete the following information for your last three construction jobs, NOT including your present job. If you have worked on fewer than three construction jobs, fill out as many sections as apply to you. Begin with your most recent job.

JOB ONE

Sector (check one)

- Civil Engineering
- Heavy Industrial/Industrial
- Institutional/Commercial/High-Rise Residential
- Low-Rise Residential/Renovations

Number of construction workers on site

- Less than 20 Workers
- 20-99 Workers
- 100-299 Workers
- 300-500 Workers
- 500+ Workers

Length of time you worked on the project

- Less than 5 nights
- 5-10 nights
- 11-30 nights
- 31-90 nights
- 91+ nights

Trade Grouping (see question 1)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Design & Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Demolition |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interiors & Finishing | <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical/Electrical |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wood | <input type="checkbox"/> Metal Fabricating & Erecting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trowel | <input type="checkbox"/> Craning & Hoisting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concrete | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Province/Territory

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yukon/NWT/Nunavut | <input type="checkbox"/> Ontario |
| <input type="checkbox"/> British Columbia | <input type="checkbox"/> Quebec |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alberta | <input type="checkbox"/> New Brunswick |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Saskatchewan | <input type="checkbox"/> Nova Scotia/PEI |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Manitoba | <input type="checkbox"/> Newfoundland/Labrador |

Organization

- Union Alternative Union Open Shop Non-union

LABOUR MOBILITY, CONT'D

JOB TWO

Sector (check one)

- Civil Engineering
- Heavy Industrial/Industrial
- Institutional/Commercial/High-Rise Residential
- Low-Rise Residential/Renovations

Number of construction workers on site

- Less than 20 Workers
- 20-99 Workers
- 100-299 Workers
- 300-500 Workers
- 500+ Workers

Length of time you worked on the project

- Less than 5 nights
- 5-10 nights
- 11-30 nights
- 31-90 nights
- 91+ nights

Trade Grouping (see question 1)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Design & Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Demolition |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interiors & Finishing | <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical/Electrical |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wood | <input type="checkbox"/> Metal Fabricating & Erecting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trowel | <input type="checkbox"/> Craning & Hoisting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concrete | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Province/Territory

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yukon/NWT/Nunavut | <input type="checkbox"/> Ontario |
| <input type="checkbox"/> British Columbia | <input type="checkbox"/> Quebec |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alberta | <input type="checkbox"/> New Brunswick |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Saskatchewan | <input type="checkbox"/> Nova Scotia/PEI |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Manitoba | <input type="checkbox"/> Newfoundland/Labrador |

Organization

- Union Alternative Union Open Shop Non-union

JOB THREE

Sector (check one)

- Civil Engineering
- Heavy Industrial/Industrial
- Institutional/Commercial/High-Rise Residential
- Low-Rise Residential/Renovations

Number of construction workers on site

- Less than 20 Workers
- 20-99 Workers
- 100-299 Workers
- 300-500 Workers
- 500+ Workers

Length of time you worked on the project

- Less than 5 nights
- 5-10 nights
- 11-30 nights
- 31-90 nights
- 91+ nights

Trade Grouping (see question 1)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Design & Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Demolition |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interiors & Finishing | <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical/Electrical |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wood | <input type="checkbox"/> Metal Fabricating & Erecting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trowel | <input type="checkbox"/> Craning & Hoisting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concrete | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Province/Territory

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yukon/NWT/Nunavut | <input type="checkbox"/> Ontario |
| <input type="checkbox"/> British Columbia | <input type="checkbox"/> Quebec |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alberta | <input type="checkbox"/> New Brunswick |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Saskatchewan | <input type="checkbox"/> Nova Scotia/PEI |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Manitoba | <input type="checkbox"/> Newfoundland/Labrador |

Organization

- Union Alternative Union Open Shop Non-union

LABOUR MOBILITY. CONT'D

17. Thinking about your career, how many of your jobs were 'mobile', if mobility is defined as travelling 100 kilometres or more one way, or sleeping over for one or more nights, for the purpose of working on a construction project?

- All
- Most
- Some
- Few
- None

18. If and when you were an apprentice, did you work on a site that required you to be mobile?

- Yes
- No

19. Why did you leave your previous construction job (Do not fill out if this is your first job)?

20. Did you quit your previous construction job to work on this site?

- Yes
- No

If no, do you think you could have readily found another construction job close to home?

- Yes
- No

21. How did you find out about your current job?

- Advertisement
- Employer
- Union/Hiring Hall
- Co-worker
- Friend
- Family
- Neighbour
- Other: _____

LABOUR MOBILITY, CONT'D

22. What factors affected your decision to leave your home area for work? (Please check up to three)

- I had no choice - my employer assigned me to this job
- The financial incentives make working away from home worth it
- Working away from home is the only available work for me
- There is a sense of adventure about working away from home
- Working away from home will advance my career prospects
- There are personal/family reasons which make working away from home advantageous
- Other: _____

23. Have you encountered any of the following barriers in working away from home? (Check as many as apply)

- My qualifications recognized in one jurisdiction were not suitable in another jurisdiction
- There were difficulties in arranging for pension/benefit transfers
- There were difficulties obtaining a travel card from my union
- There were difficulties depositing travel card at local away from home
- There were significant personal expenses incurred in the process of getting to and/or maintaining this job
- While working away from home, I incurred significant personal expense in dealing with a family/personal commitment or emergency
- Other _____
- I have not encountered any barriers

24. Would any of the following barriers influence you to not to be a mobile worker in the future? (Please check up to three)

- Qualifications recognized in one jurisdiction not suitable in another jurisdiction
- Difficulties in arranging for pension/benefit transfers
- Difficulties obtaining a travel card from my union
- Difficulties depositing travel card at local away from home
- Significant personal expenses incurred in the process of getting to and/or maintaining this job
- While working away from home, incurring significant personal expense in dealing with a family/personal commitment or emergency
- Other _____
- None of these barriers would change my decision to be a mobile worker

25. What is the total amount of time you expect to commit to the project you are currently working on?

- 1-4 Nights
- 1-3 Weeks
- 1-3 Months
- 4-6 Months
- 7-11 Months
- 1-3 Years

LABOUR MOBILITY. CONT'D

26. Are all or part of your travel, room, and board costs covered by others?

- Yes
- No

If yes, by whom? _____

27. Did your employer offer you a travel incentive to move to your current job?

- Yes
- No

28. Do you expect to work away from home again for your next job?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

29. Do you want to work away from home again for your next job?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

30. Do you usually take a break (not work at all) between away from home jobs?

- Yes
- No

31. If you learn that, within a month, you will be working on a major project away from home, do you...?

- Keep working until you leave for the major project
- Quit your current job immediately
- Turn down other work if it overlaps
- Turn down any other work
- Not look for other work, even if you are unemployed
- Other: _____

GO ON TO NEXT PAGE

LABOUR MOBILITY, CONT'D

32. On a scale of one to five, how has working away from home affected your quality of life? '1' is most negative; '5' is most positive.

Pride in Contributing to a Major Project

Negative Effect 1 2 3 4 5 Positive Effect

Job Satisfaction

Negative Effect 1 2 3 4 5 Positive Effect

Comraderie

Negative Effect 1 2 3 4 5 Positive Effect

Marriage

Negative Effect 1 2 3 4 5 Positive Effect

Family

Negative Effect 1 2 3 4 5 Positive Effect

Community Involvement

Negative Effect 1 2 3 4 5 Positive Effect

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

33. Age Range

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15-19 | <input type="checkbox"/> 35-49 | <input type="checkbox"/> 55-59 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 20-24 | <input type="checkbox"/> 40-44 | <input type="checkbox"/> 60-64 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 25-29 | <input type="checkbox"/> 45-49 | <input type="checkbox"/> 65-69 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 30-34 | <input type="checkbox"/> 50-54 | <input type="checkbox"/> 70+ |

34. Sex

- Male
- Female

35. Marital Status

- Married/Common-law
- Separated/Divorced
- Widowed
- Single

GO ON TO NEXT PAGE

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA, CONT'D

36. Do you have dependents at home?

- Yes
- No

If yes, how many? _____

Age range?

- 0-5 years 6-10 years
- 11-15 years 15-20 years
- 20+

37. Are you a Canadian citizen or landed immigrant?

- Yes No

If Canadian-born, what is your province of origin? _____

If not Canadian-born, what is your country of origin? _____

If not Canadian-born or landed immigrant, are you working under a temporary foreign worker policy?

- Yes No

38. Are you aboriginal?

- Yes No

39. First language

- English
- French
- Other _____

40. Are you conversant in any other official or non-official languages?

- English
- French
- Other _____
- None

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME. WE APPRECIATE
YOUR COOPERATION ON THIS PROJECT!

APPENDIX B

FOCUS GROUP

DISCUSSION OUTLINE

Introduction

Administer Questionnaire

Icebreaker (15 minutes)

Let's start by going around the table. Perhaps you might share with us how you got into the construction industry. What was your first construction job? How old were you at the time? How did you find out about that job?

Focused discussion (75 minutes)

1. First time working mobile?
 - a. Describe as regular/ occasional/ rare?
 - b. How do you decide to work mobile vs. local?
 - c. Obstacles?
 - i. Personal expenses?
2. Move between provinces? Between sectors? Between labour org types?
 - a. Similarities/differences
3. Best part of working mobile?
4. Worst part of working mobile?
5. How is working mobile different from local work?
6. How has working mobile “impacted”:
 - a. Marriage and Family
 - b. Involvement with your community
 - c. Job satisfaction, and pride in your trade and projects worked on
 - d. Your relationship with co-workers
 - e. Other
7. Change of attitudes toward working mobile over time?
 - a. Sense of adventure with respect to working mobile declines?
8. Greatest incentive that could be offered to make you work mobile?
9. Greatest incentive that would entice others to work mobile?
10. What do you anticipate as your career path?
11. Home emergencies working mobile? How responded to?
12. What would you change about working mobile?
13. Would you recommend working mobile to your kids?
14. Anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX C

LITERATURE REVIEW

ORDERS & BARRIERS: LABOUR MOBILITY IN CANADA

The Manpower Mobility Program (MMP) announced in May of 1965 consisted of loans and grants. Later, the Industry Labour Adjustment Program (ILAP) was instituted with a similar structure. Both programs were terminated in the mid-1980s because an evaluation⁶ suggested that many of the people helped would have moved without financial assistance (Hunter, 1993). The federal department of *Human Resources and Skills Development Canada* (HRSD; formerly *Human Resources Development Canada*) no longer provides mobility assistance to its clients

Recent analysis of labour mobility in Canada categorizes barriers to labour mobility as either “natural, economic barriers” or “artificial barriers.” Natural, economic barriers include distance and linguistic-cultural differences, although language differences are affected by law and regulations. Artificial barriers to mobility are those imposed by law and regulation, including “professional occupational licensing, government occupational licensing of trades, preferential hiring practices, income security programs, education and language requirements, and employment standards legislation” (Gunderson, 1994).

Recent emphases in the development of public policy with respect to labour mobility have focused on the artificial barriers to labour mobility. These include a federation-wide interprovincial mobility agreement across several sectors, bilateral provincial agreements, and both federal and provincial statutes on “internal” – that is, inter-provincial – trade including “credential recognition.” But aside from non-refundable tax credits in respect of moving expenses related to accepting employment, the Government of Canada no longer subsidizes labour mobility.

The following annotated, research bibliography includes primary documents in the form of statutes, government-authored or –commissioned institutional policy analysis, and monographs published by government departments that discuss the barriers to labour mobility, focussing especially on the artificial barriers, but also including a primary source document that was used to justify federal public funding for labour mobility especially in the form of the MMP. Among the secondary sources are suggestions that Canada is virtually alone among leading, developed nations in favouring income maintenance programs to the exclusion of labour mobility assistance programs. Clearly, the following is not exhaustive given the constraints of the project. But the primary and secondary documents listed are especially germane to any discussion of labour mobility, including in the construction sector.

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Working Mobile:

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