



World Bank Skills Towards Employment and Productivity (STEP) Survey

What's it all about?

The World Bank Skills Towards Employability and Productivity (STEP) program assesses the skills of urban-based adults aged 15 to 64 in low-and middle-income countries. It aims to collect data to inform policy-makers as they decide how to align skills and work opportunities.

This program evaluates job-relevant skills, social and emotional skills, and cognitive skills. The social and emotional skills portion of the program is based on the Big Five Model competency framework, which clusters specific social and emotional skills into five main categories of personality traits and identifies compound skills that cross category boundaries.

So far, the program has collected data from Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, Georgia, Ghana, Kenya, Kosovo, Lao PDR, North Macedonia, Philippines, Serbia, Sri Lanka, Ukraine, Vietnam, and Yunnan Province in China. It will continue to collect information and build its database.

This summary is part of our curated digital platform on social and emotional skills (SES) assessment and contains key details on one of the external SES assessment tools and applied studies we reviewed. The platform is part of The Conference Board of Canada's multi-year research project for the Future Skills Centre on SES. [For more information, check out our landing page here.](#)

How does it work?

The program is divided into two sections. Each section contains survey questions about three key areas: job-relevant skills, SES, and cognitive skills.

Household survey

This survey collects information about a household's health, financial background, education, employment, family size, and other personal information, using self-reported questionnaires and assessments. This helps researchers understand how social and economic factors and employment, education, and related outcomes are connected.

Employer survey

This survey collects information about labour-market participation, identifies in-demand skills, explores the training opportunities that companies offer, and collects data about employer organizations. It is completed by a random sample of employers from the targeted countries.

Intended users

Policy-makers

Policy-makers can use information from STEP reports to make informed decisions about skills development in their countries: for example, to ensure that curricula respond to the changing needs of students from varying backgrounds. This can help them develop or adjust policies aimed at aligning skills supply and demand.

Employers

Using findings from this program, employers can create targeted skills training opportunities and change their work environments to promote skills development.



Canadian context

Despite Canada's status as a developed country, its inequalities, uneven access to employment and education, inadequate housing, and varying health outcomes across diverse communities (among other challenges) suggest that the STEP program has relevance.

A 2015 United Nations report, *Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of Canada*, explored Canada's failing relationship with Indigenous communities. In this respect, some of the realities faced by individuals in low- and middle-income countries may be comparable to those faced by urban low-income communities in Canada.

Given these parallels, information from this study can be used to help understand the diverse barriers, needs, and opportunities for SES in Canada.

Social and emotional skills measured

The skills assessed in this survey are divided into three main areas: job-relevant skills, social and emotional skills, and cognitive skills. The following reflects the social and emotional skills portions of the survey:

Conscientiousness:

- When doing a task, are you very careful?
- Are you very interested in learning new things?

Emotional stability:

- Are you relaxed during stressful situations?
- Do you tend to worry?
- Do you get nervous easily?

Extraversion:

- Do you come up with ideas other people haven't thought of before?
- Are you outgoing and sociable? For example, do you make friends very easily?

Agreeableness:

- Do you forgive other people easily?
- Are you very polite to other people?
- Are you generous to other people with your time or money?

Openness to experience:

- Do you come up with ideas other people haven't thought of before?
- Are you very interested in learning new things?
- Do you enjoy beautiful things, like nature, art, and music?

Grit:

- Do you finish whatever you begin?
- Do you work very hard? For example, do you keep working when others stop to take a break?
- Do you enjoy working on things that take a very long time (at least several months) to complete?

Hostile bias:

- Do people take advantage of you?
- Are people mean/not nice to you?

Decision-making:

- Do you think about how the things you do will affect you in the future?
- Do you think carefully before you make an important decision?
- Do you ask for help when you don't understand something?

Read the findings from the STEP program:

<https://microdata.worldbank.org/index.php/catalog/step>

FSC partners

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