

Interest in Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition in Canada: National Survey and Personal Views

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Rethinking Work and Learning:
Research Findings and Policy Challenges



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Centre for the Study of Education and Work [CSEW]

<http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/csew>



- The Centre for the Study of Education and Work (CSEW) brings together academics, labour educators and community partners to understand and enrich the often undervalued informal and formal learning of working people.
- The CSEW develops research and teaching programs on learning and work. It promotes policy initiatives and public events connected to both the paid and unpaid workplace, in traditional and new media for learning.

New Approaches to Lifelong Learning [NALL]

www.nall.ca



Funded by the SSHRC (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council) and composed of more than 50 researchers and collaborators, the NALL research Network (1996-2002) produced a wealth of empirical data, both qualitative and quantitative, on the subject of informal and formal learning.

Changing Nature of Work and Lifelong Learning

<http://www.wallnetwork.ca>



- Research Network funded by SSHRC under Collaborative Research Initiatives on the “New Economy”
- Includes 2004 national survey of 9,063 randomly selected respondents over 18 on many issues of working conditions and adult learning
- Also includes 12 related case studies of different industry sectors, at-risk workers, unpaid work and informal learning
- Builds on research completed by New Approaches to Lifelong Learning research network. See: www.nall.ca

Interest in PLAR in Canada National Survey Findings and Adult Learning Perspectives



- PLA Centre established (1996)



- NALL Survey Research (1998)

Portfolio Learning Methodology

- Initial purpose – successful mid-career adults who wanted/needed PSE credentials
- Skeptical audience (faculty & institutions)
- Robust, rigorous and effective (identification, reflection/analysis, articulation, evidence/demonstration, presentation) - highly successful in terms of standards, outcomes and completion rates
- Despite this remains marginal and vulnerable in PSE sector

PLA Centre 'Discovery' of Innovative Portfolio Learning Applications

- Broad diversity of adults-in-transition including:
- Blue collar workers, unemployed and receiving social assistance, persons with disabilities, Aboriginal and African Nova Scotian communities, male and female prison inmates, immigrant newcomers, high-end professionals
- PSE not top priority for most

The Denial of Informal/*Experiential* Learning

- NALL survey experience – two-stage approach to ‘learning’ questions
- Portfolio Learning participants – similar ‘denial’ response
- NALL findings re *informal/experiential* adult learning (12 hours per week) vs *formal* adult learning (4 hours per week)
- Mutual NALL/PLA Centre resonance – quantitative data + adult learner voices

Portfolio Learning Process and Product

- 8-12 adults + facilitator
- One 3-hour session per week over 10 weeks
- Assignments between sessions
- Normally organized and presented in 3-ring binder (increasing use of other forms)
- Also available as Portfolio@Distance program

Scale to Date (1996-2006)

- 5,000 + participants completed program over past decade in NS, NB and beyond – via direct and indirect delivery
- Early adoption of leadership training and capacity building strategy – 325 PLA Practitioners trained and certified
- Ongoing PD support and development, new adaptations and applications (both official languages) collaborative partnerships

Interview with **Angela Bailey**

Source

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***” ... and only
regret is I
didn't do
this soon
enough ... ”***



Interview with Lt Col Michael Kennedy

Source

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Halifax PLA Centre

***” ... we often
take for
granted the
skills that
we do have”***

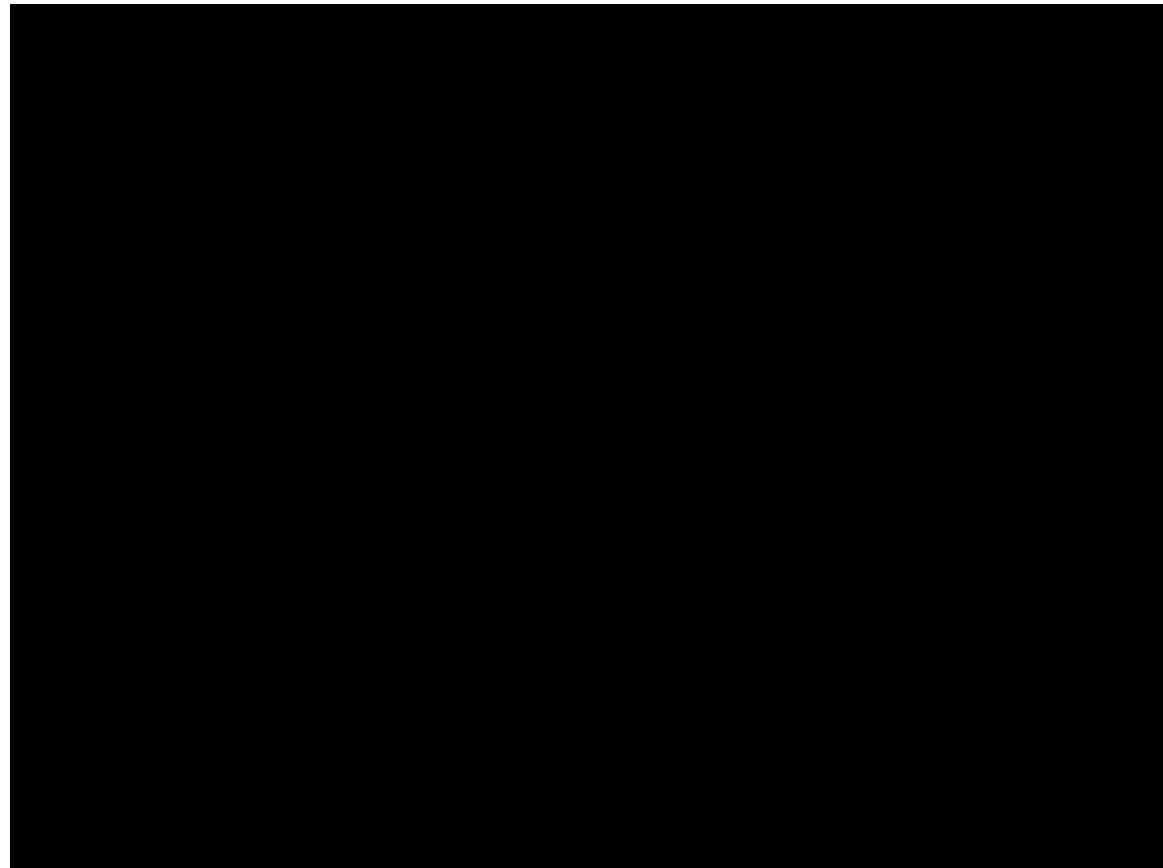
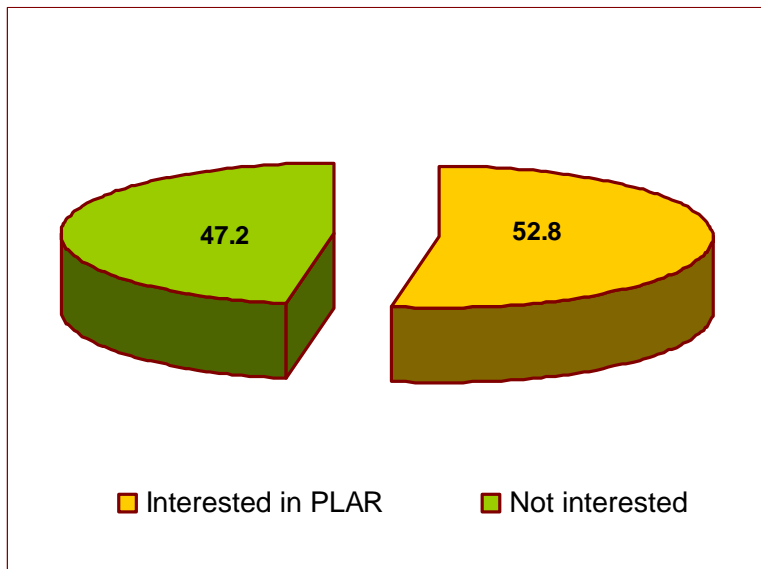


Chart 1 Interest in Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition in Canada, 2004

All Respondents (%)



Currently employed (%)

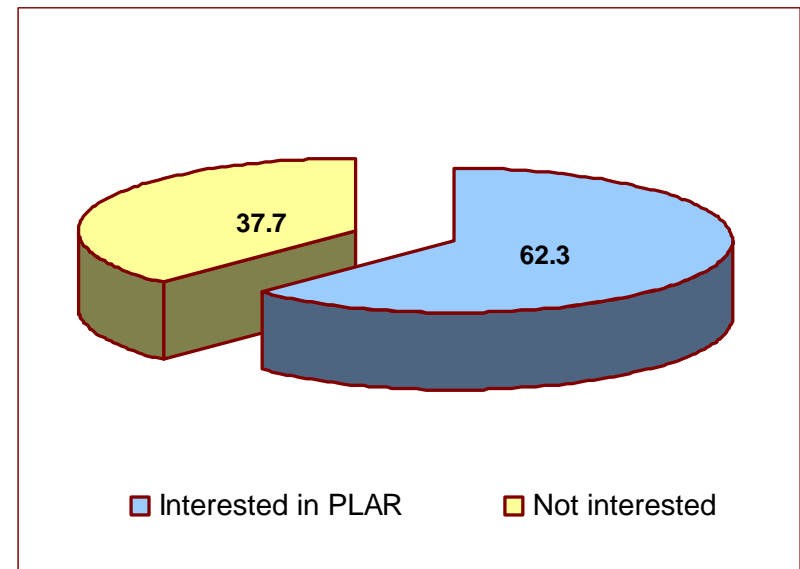
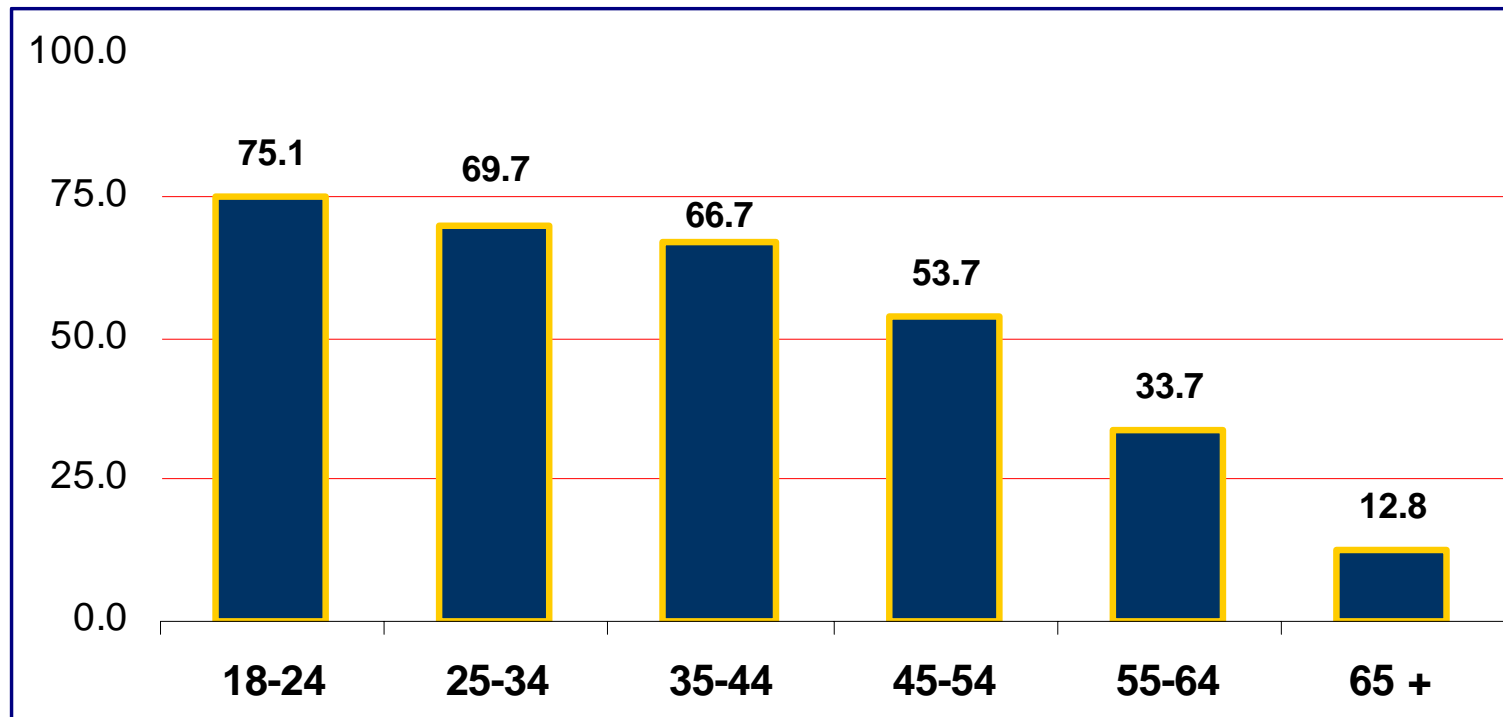


Table 1 Current Participation in Formal Education and PLAR, 2004

Participation Status	% of Total Population	% Interested in PLAR
Enrolled past year	45	64
Not enrolled, wanted course	17	<i>66 [Est. 2.5 million]</i>
Not enrolled, not wanted	37	34
TOTAL	100	53

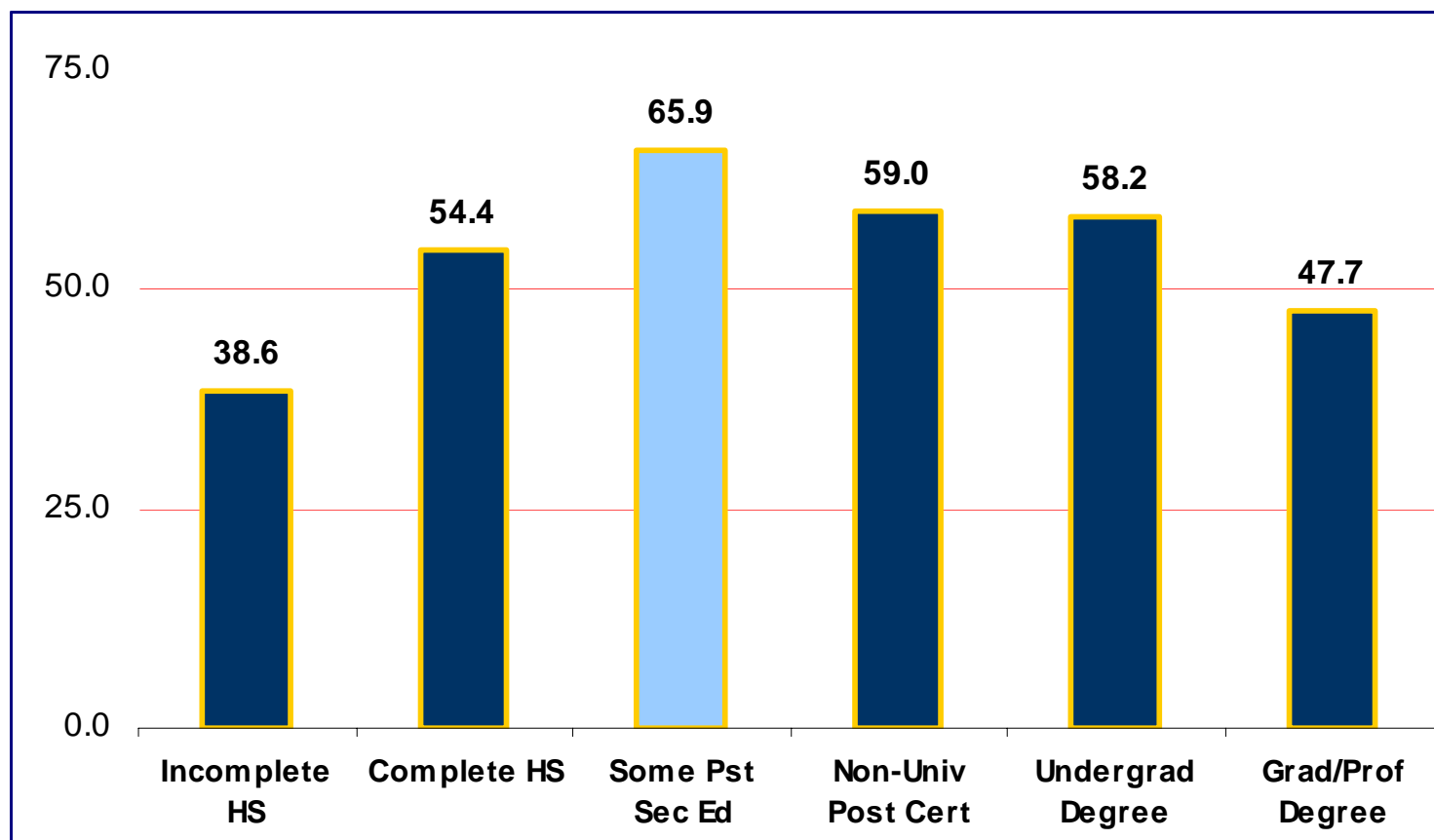
[Source: WALL, 2004]

Chart 2 Age and Interest in PLAR (%)



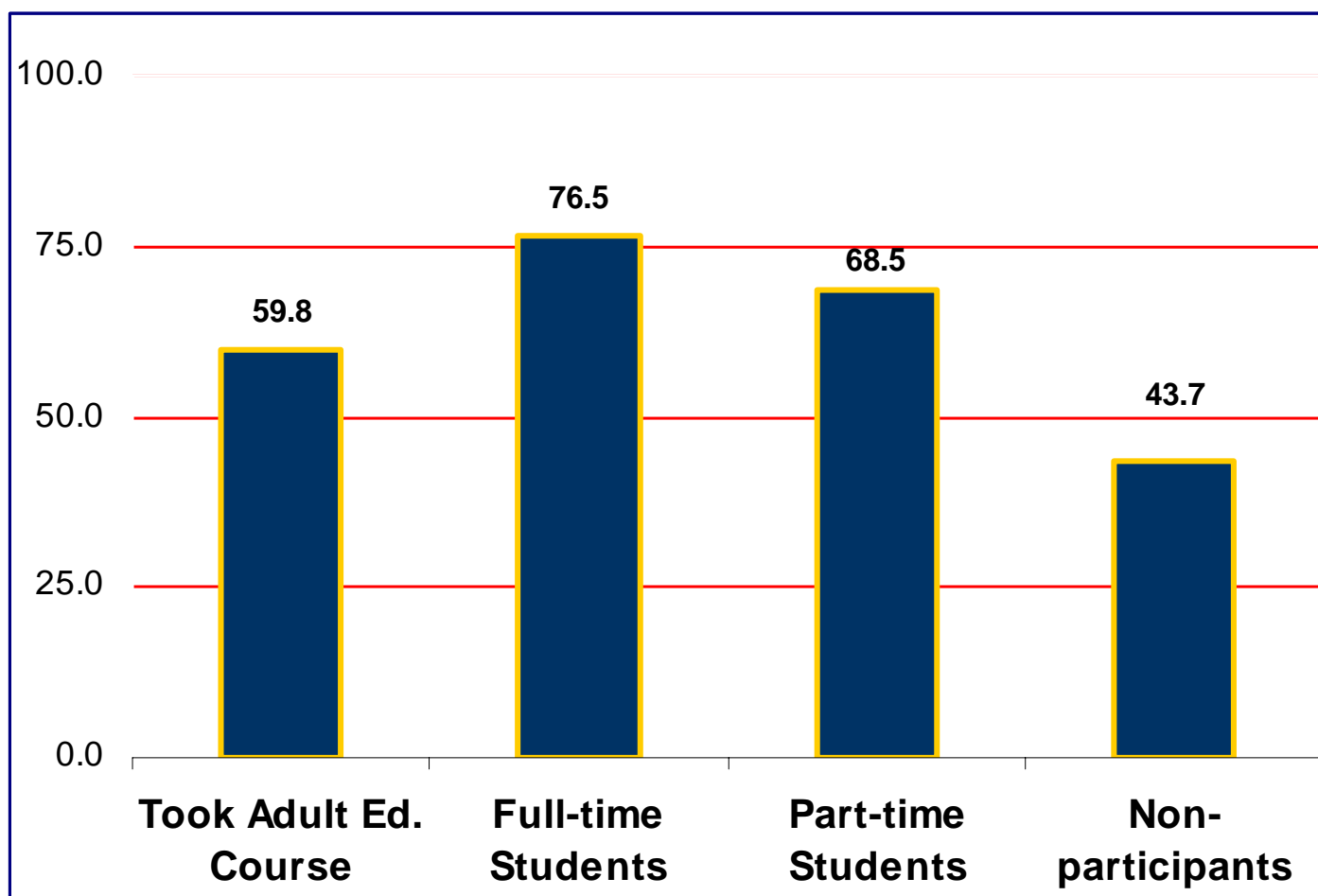
[Source: WALL, 2004.]

Chart 3 Formal Educational Attainment and PLAR (%)



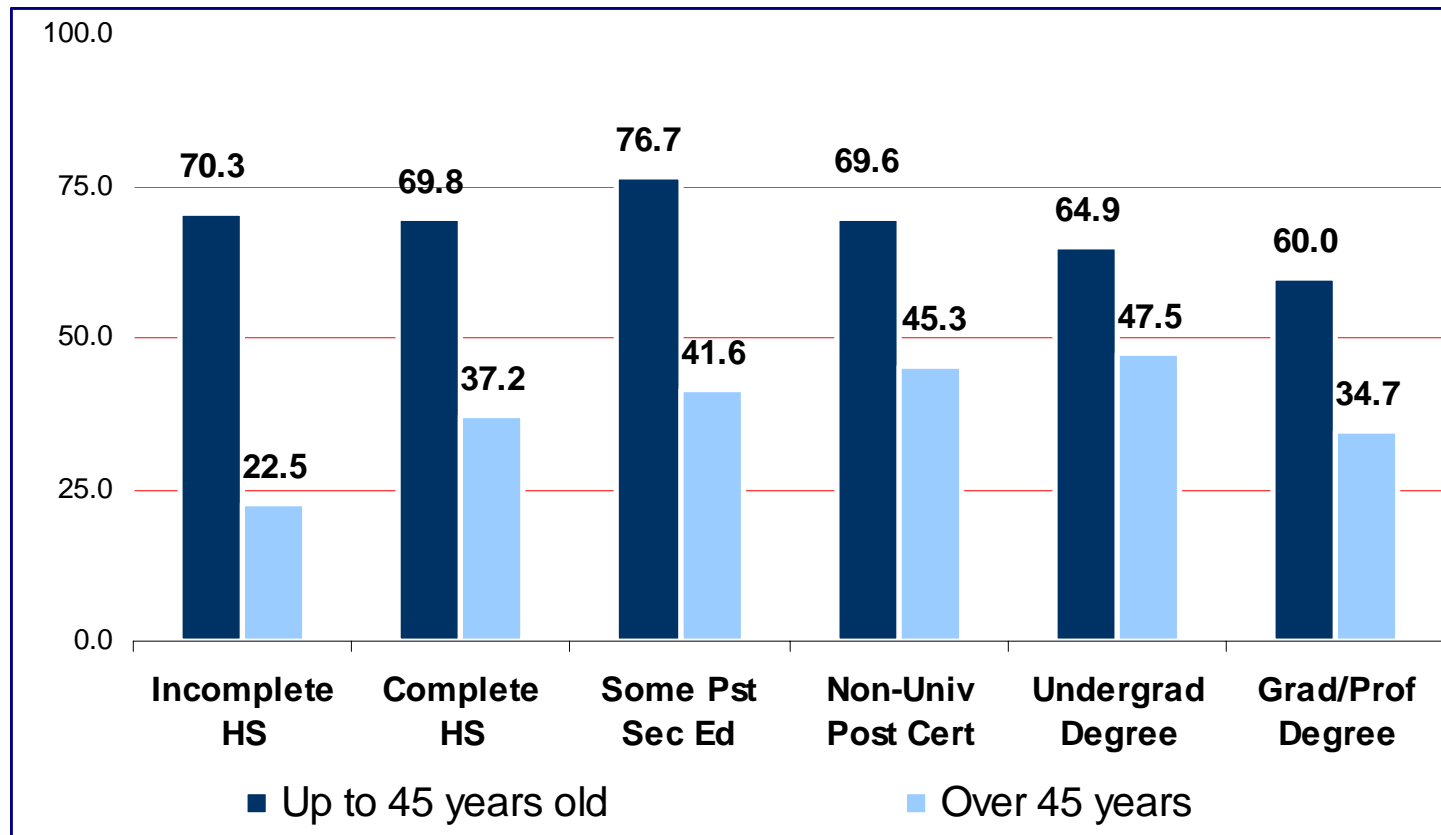
[Source: WALL, 2004.]

Chart 4 Current Participation in Formal Education and PLAR (%)



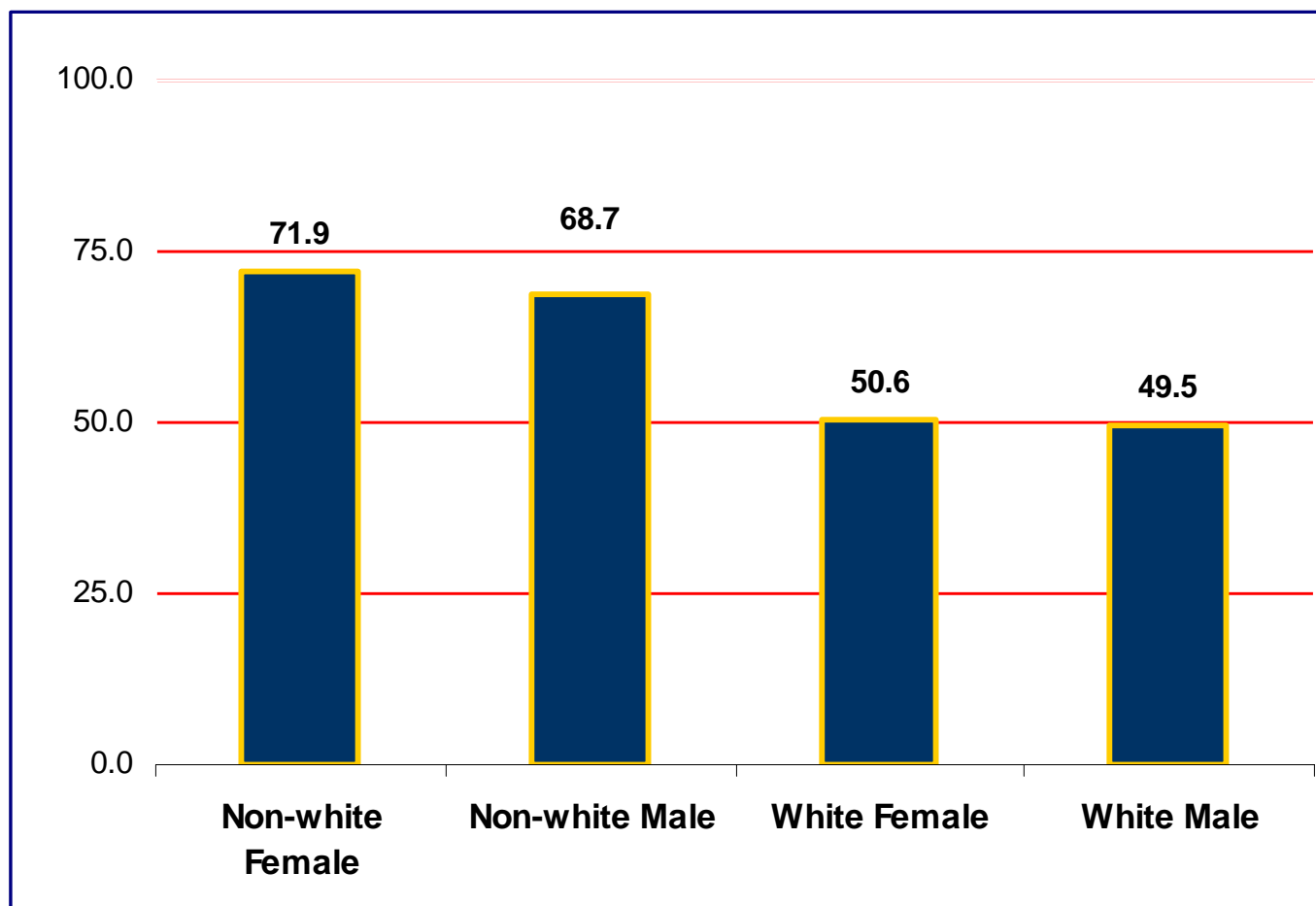
[Source: WALL, 2004.]

Chart 5 Age and Educational Attainment by Interest in PLAR (%)



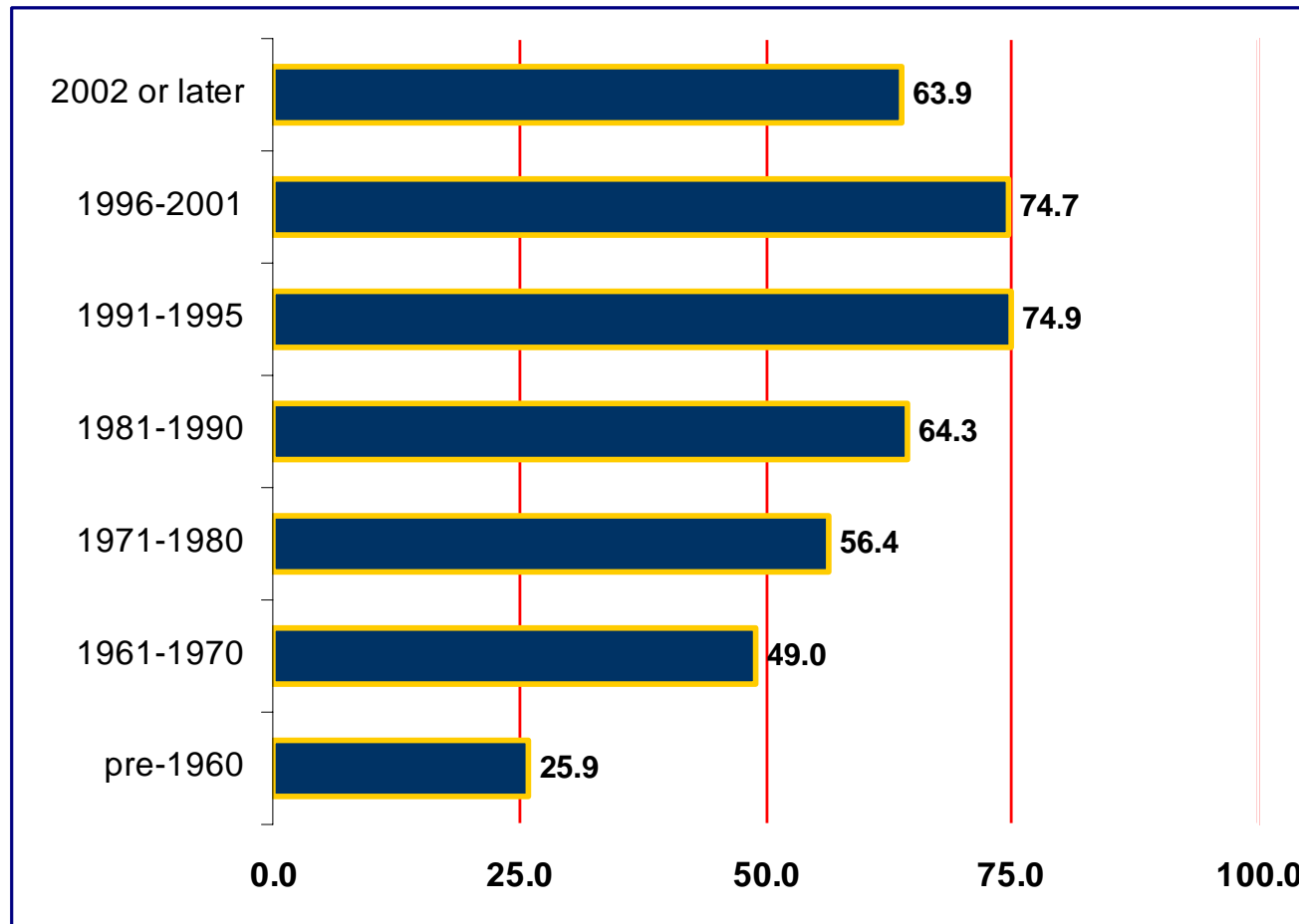
[Source: WALL, 2004.]

Chart 6 Race, Gender and Interest in PLAR (%)



[Source: WALL, 2004.]

Chart 7 Period of Immigration to Canada and Interest in PLAR (%)



[Source: WALL, 2004, N=1,642.]

Interview with **Li Jin**

Source

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***” ... I found my
education
and work
experiences
means ...
nothing, ...
almost noting
... ”***

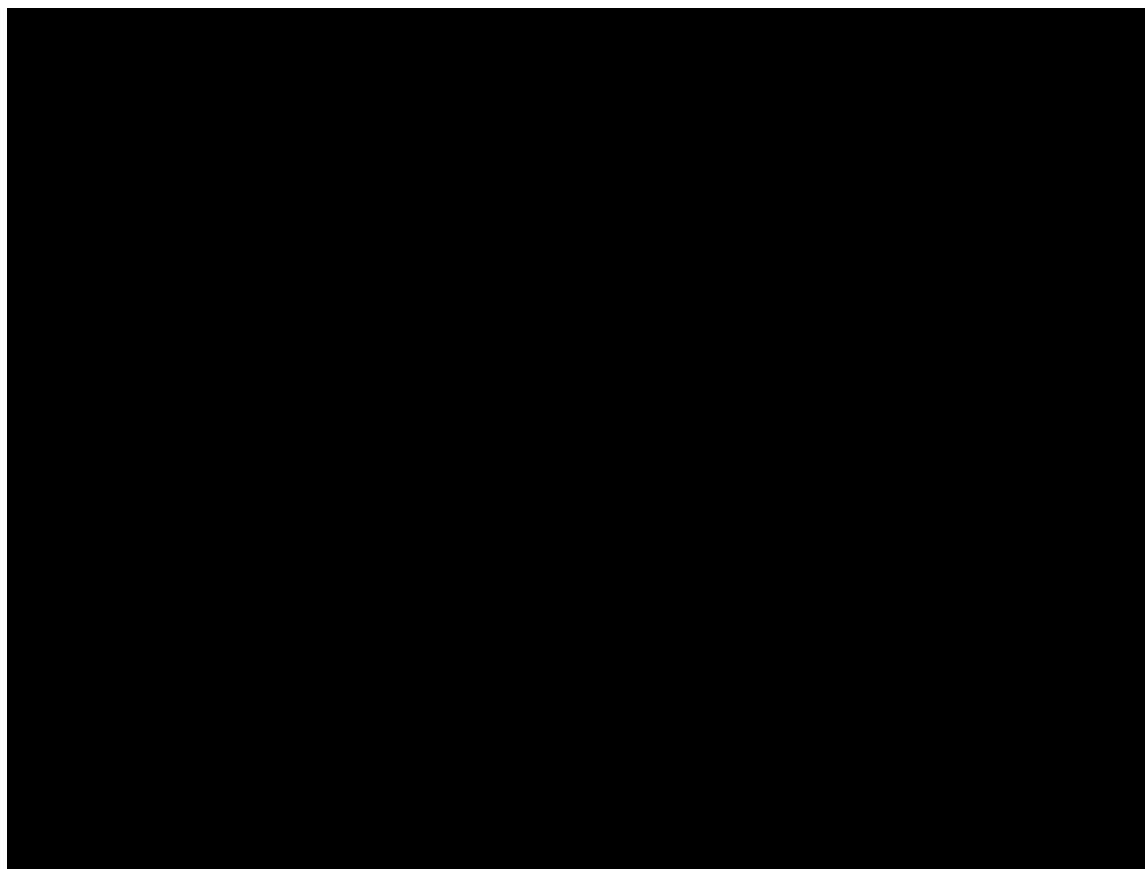
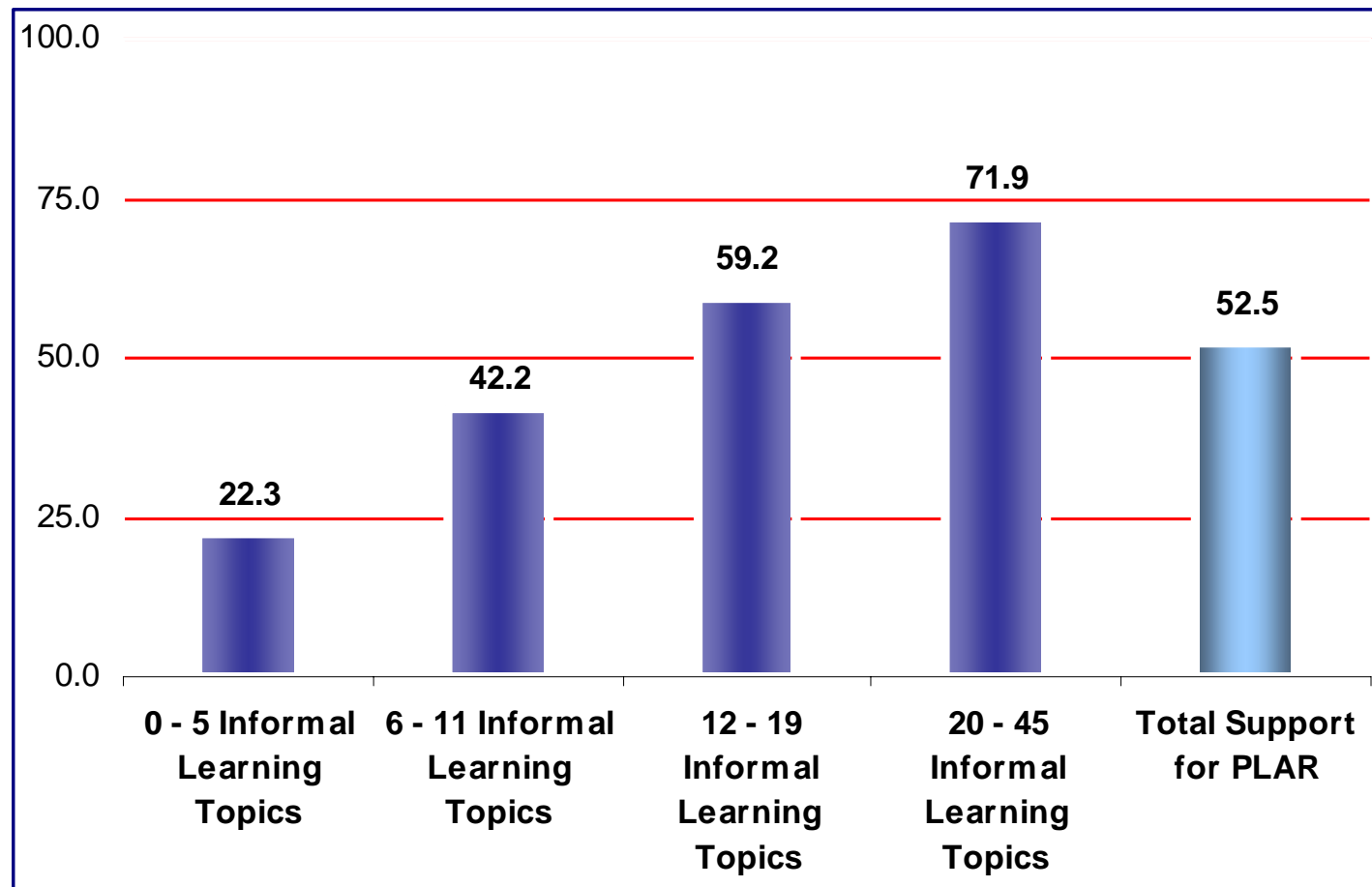
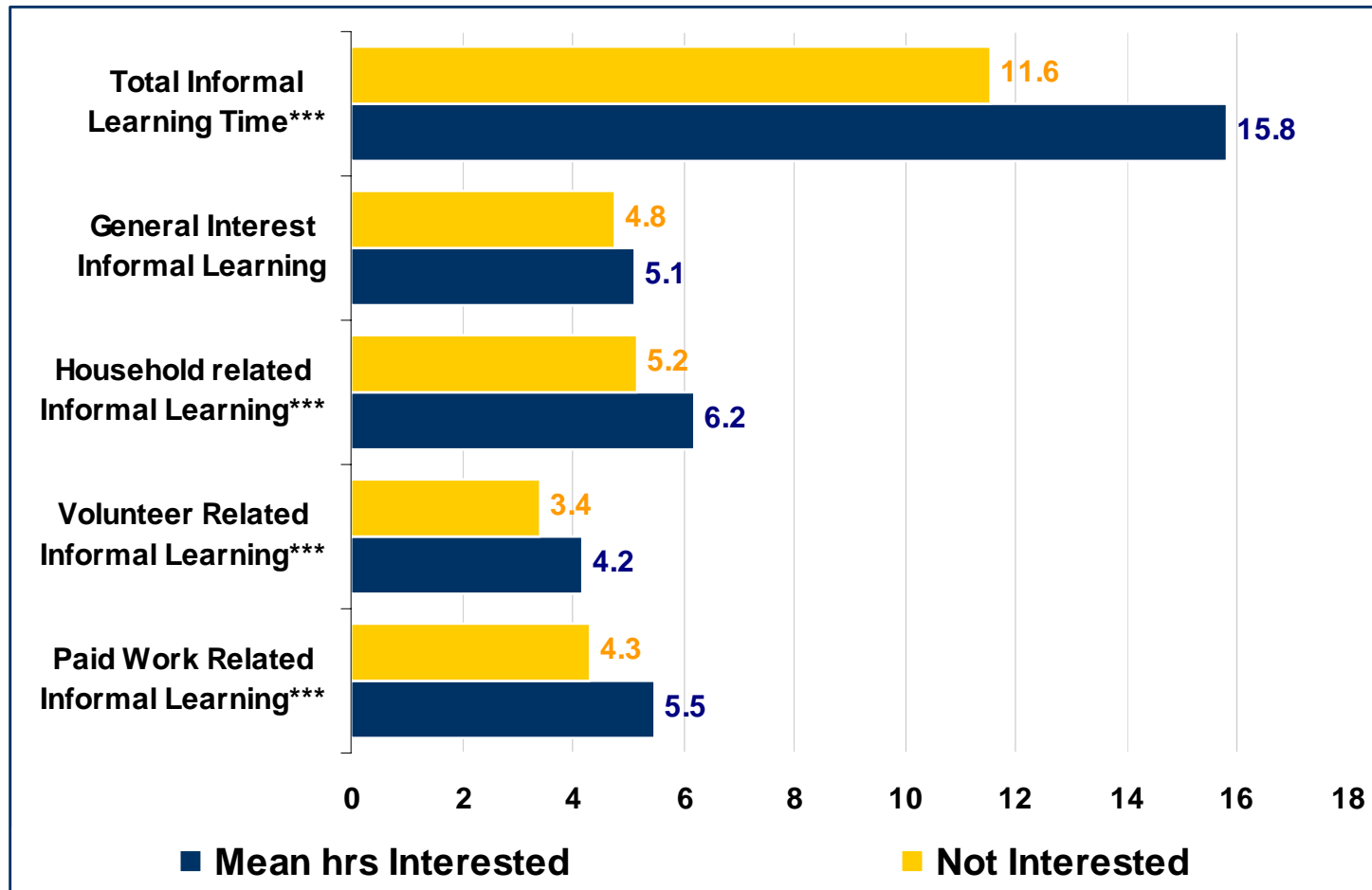


Chart 8 Overall Involvement in Informal Learning and PLAR (%)



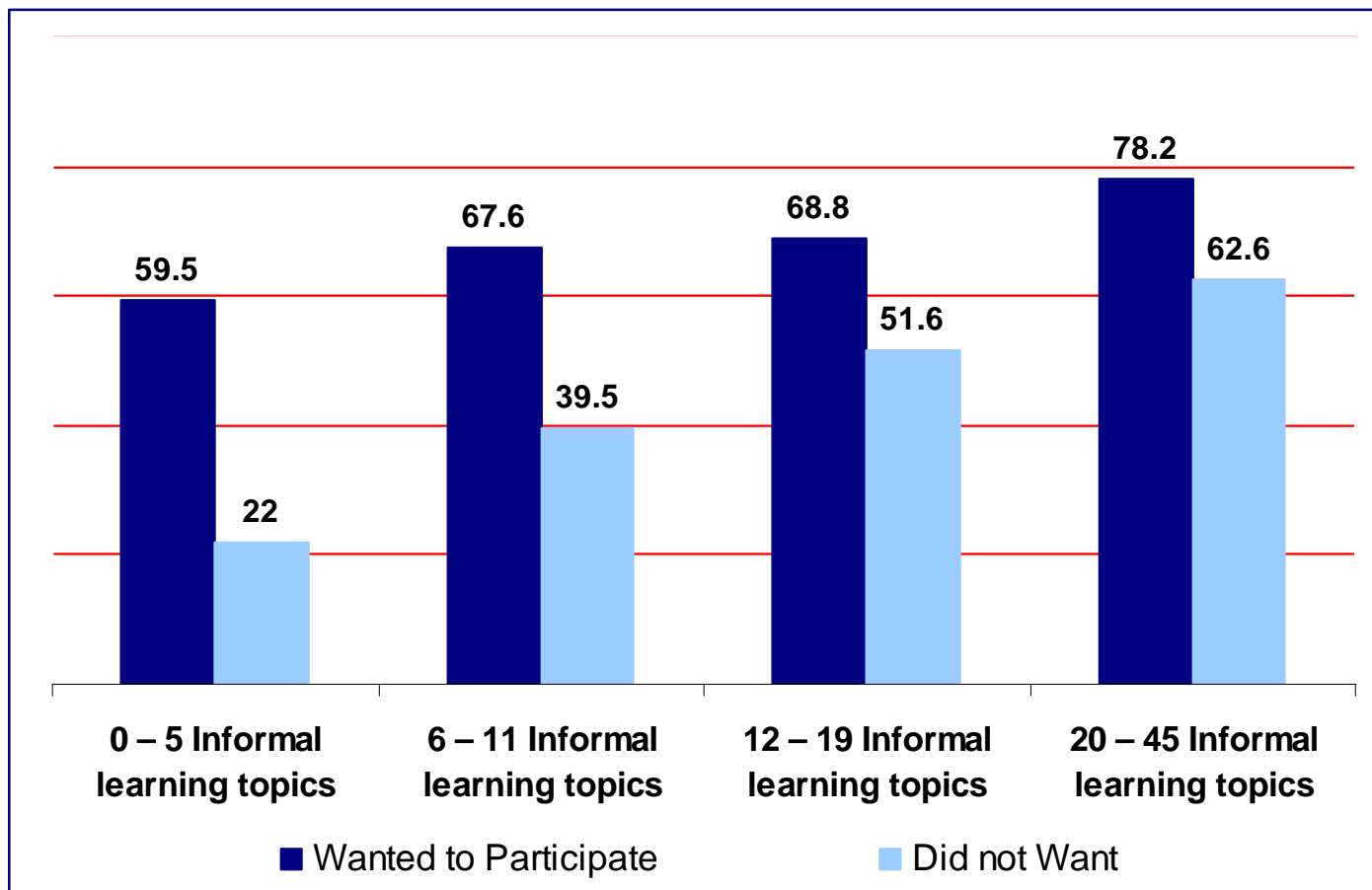
[Source: WALL, 2004.]

Chart 9 Average Informal Learning Hours and Interest in PLAR



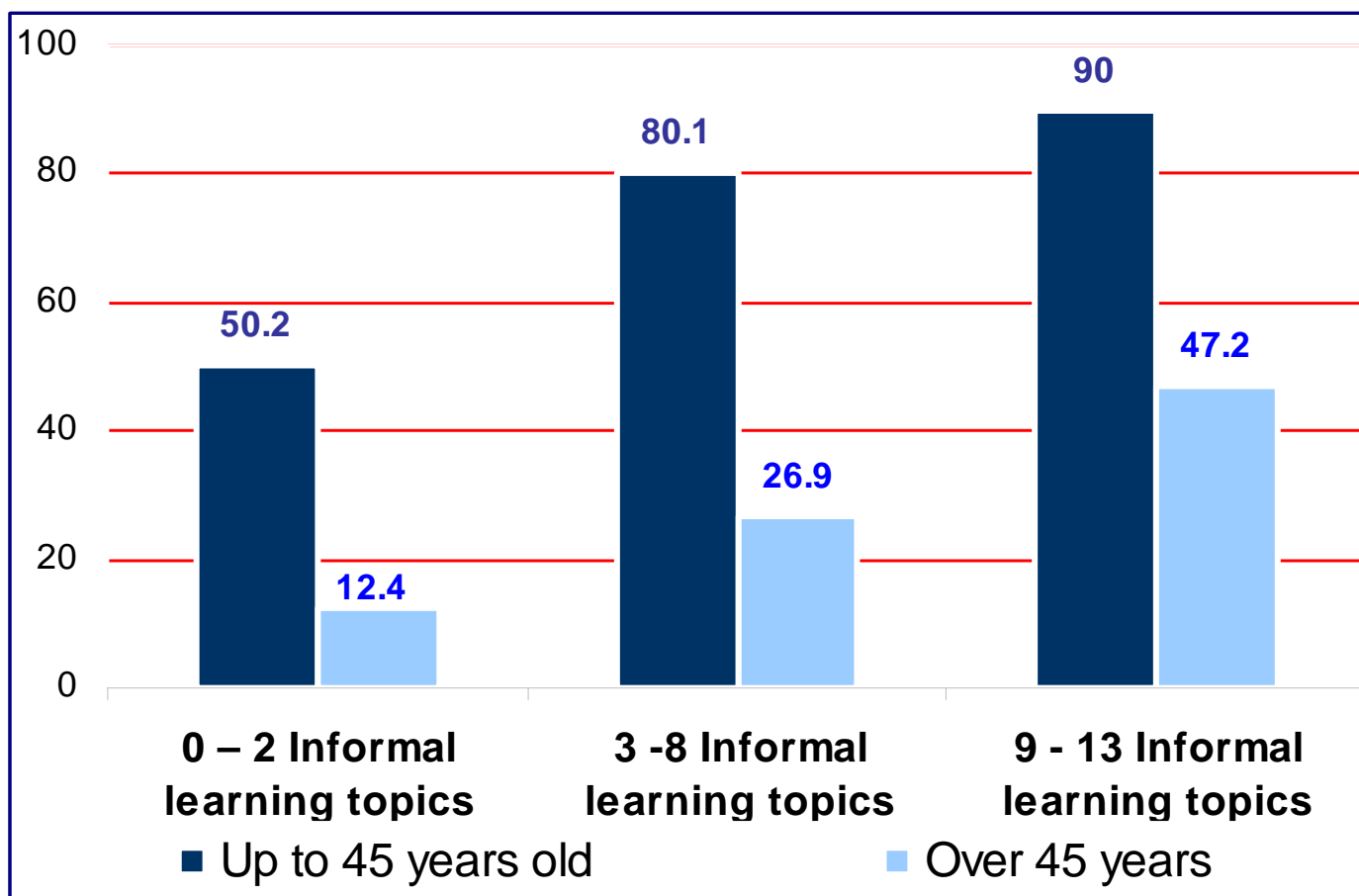
[Source: WALL, 2004.]

Chart 10 Involvement in Informal Learning, Unmet Demand for Education and PLAR (%)



[Source: WALL, 2004.]

Chart 11 Age, Informal Learning and PLAR Among High School Dropouts (%)



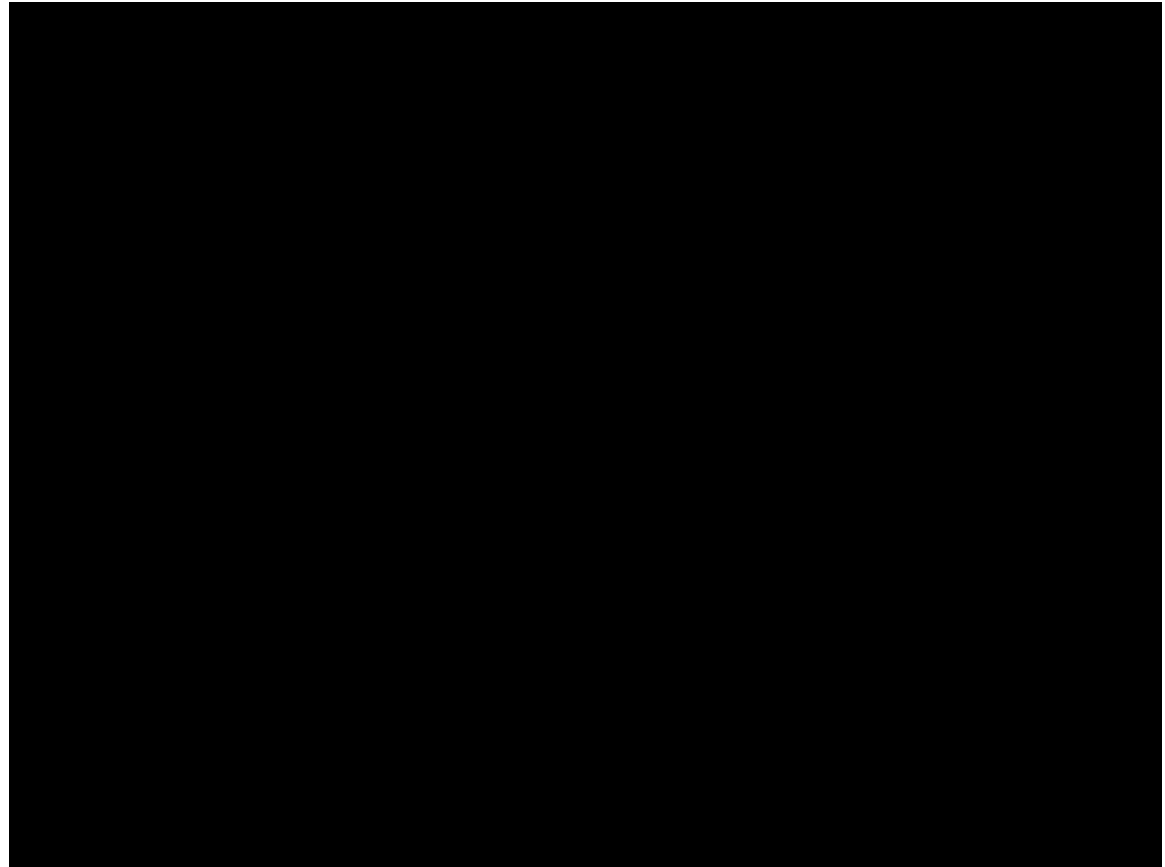
[Source: WALL, 2004.]

Interview with Patricia Serroul

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***”Everything
you do is an
experience
and you are
learning ...”***



Concluding Remarks

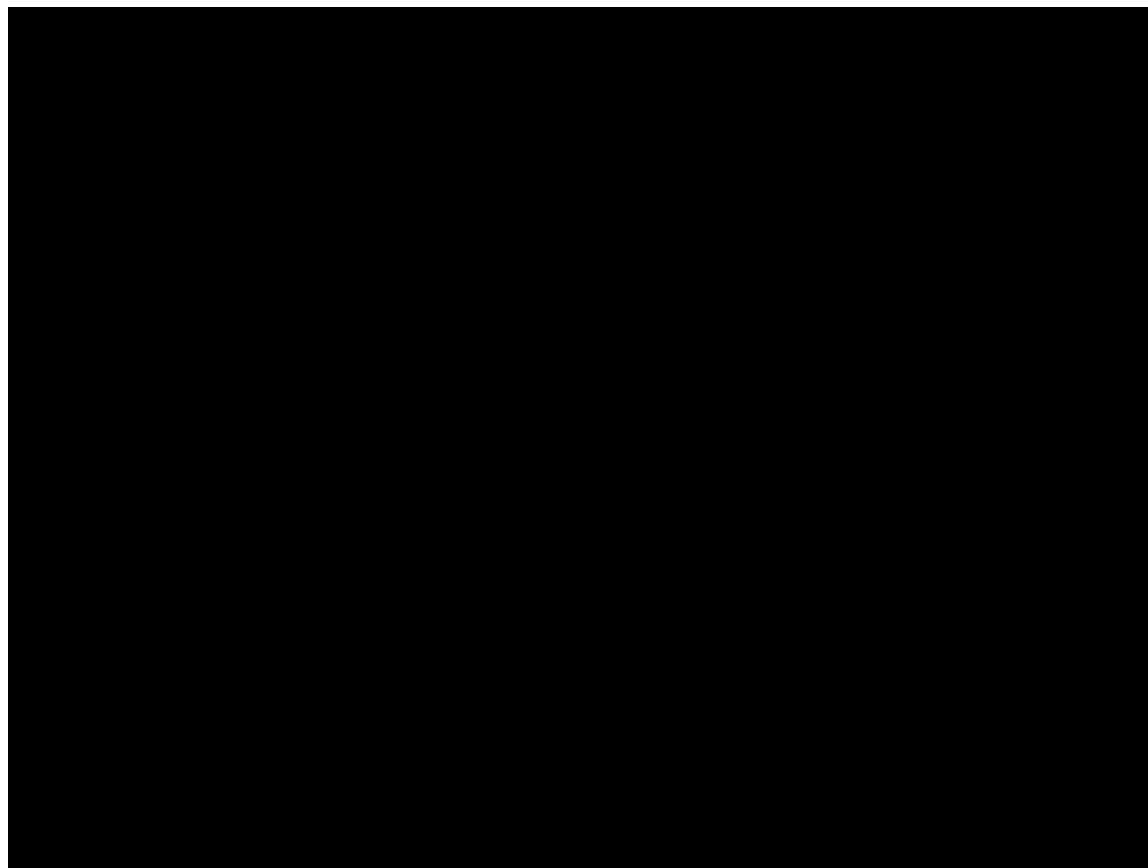
- More than half of all Canadians and even greater numbers of the employed would be more likely to enroll in adult education if their previous informal learning were recognized.
- More than two-thirds of racial minorities, recent immigrants and younger school dropouts express a high interest in enrolment in adult education and training if their prior informal learning were recognized.
- The survey results indicate substantial unmet demand for participation in many kinds of formal education.
- Fuller recognition of Canadian adults' prior informal learning could contribute to substantially greater participation in adult education and training.
- PLAR could address the current shortage of skilled trades workers in Canada.
- Both greater educational equity and a more productive labour force could result.
The key question is can we develop the quality systems needed to support the current demand for PLAR?
- More in-depth studies on prior learning assessment and recognition are needed.

Interview with **Mary Dempster**

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Characteristics of PLAR Field

Basic principles in common:

1. People should not have to waste time and money learning over again what they already know and can do.
2. What people know and can do should matter more than where or how they learned those things.

The PLAR Spectrum

1. QR – qualifications recognition – exchange and transferability of credentials
2. Competency-based PLAR systems – essential skills, performance indicators, etc
3. Developmental PLAR approaches – Portfolio Learning
4. Flexible, rigourous, valid methods to prove prior learning for credit and recognition

Lifelong and Lifewide Learning

- Broader than *lifelong schooling* mindset
- Portfolio Learning not a 'one-trick pony' – ie: superb bridge into formal education and training but much more
- Applies to broad range of transition challenges – starts with 'learning strengths' – builds confidence, motivation – opens range of options (labour market/career change/community engagement/legacy document/etc)

Every Place a Learning Place; Every Person a Learner

- Not an aspiration but the reality of adult learning in Canada – always has been/always will be
- Challenge is to recognize, celebrate, foster and build upon individual and collective *hidden iceberg* of adult learning
- Will provide many more participants for formal education and training programs + range of economic and social spin-off benefits

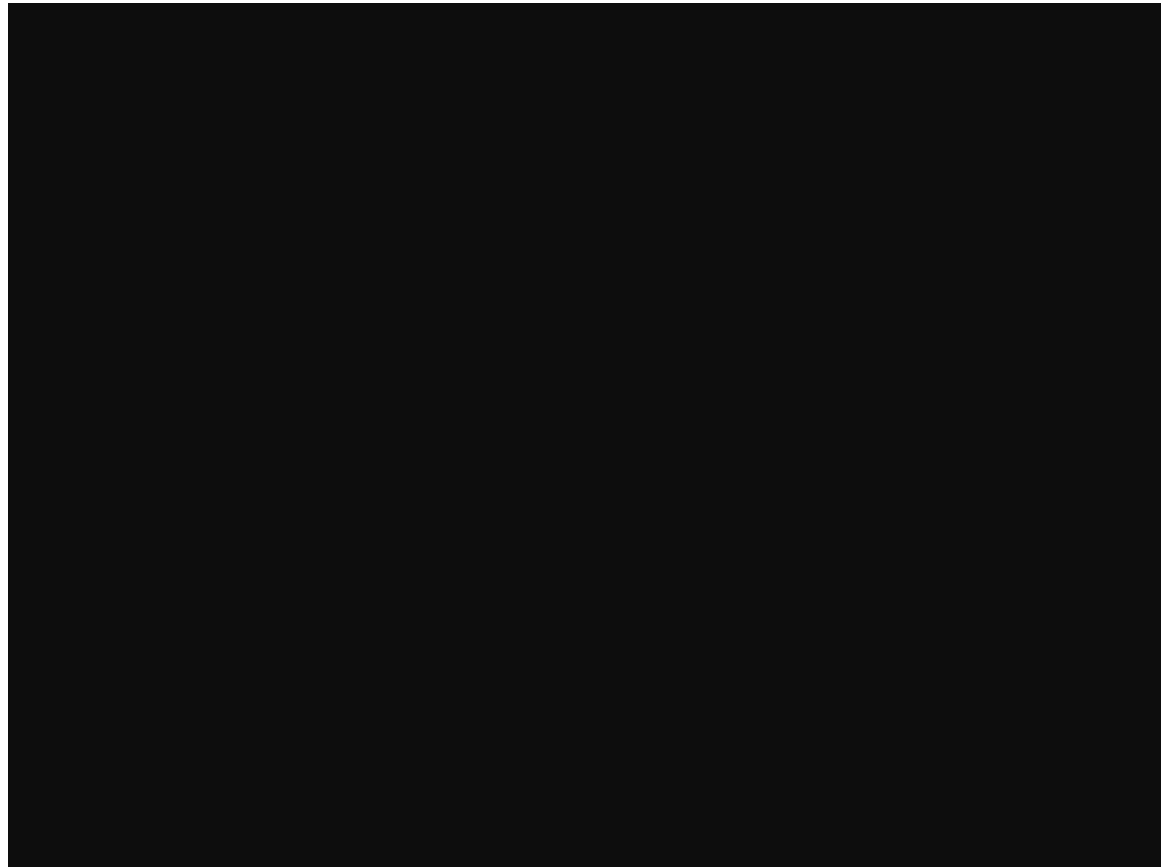
Interview with **Glenda Stevenson**

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*” I think, ...
I might be
overqualified
... ”*



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