World Future Skills Index

Canada Spotlight

Transforming higher education for the skills economy

Skills Fit | Academic Readiness | Future of Work | Economic Transformation

Higher education's role in future workforce readiness

Welcome to the Canada Spotlight on the QS World Future Skills Index, where we explore higher education's critical role in shaping the workforce of tomorrow. This tailored resource empowers you to analyse Canada's future skills supply and demand, benchmark key industry jobs and skills gaps against over 80 countries, and align your higher education system with the skills training required for economic transformation.

By 2030, an estimated 375 million workers will need to switch occupational categories, requiring tailored reskilling initiatives and modular, lifelong learning opportunities.

Source: Jobs Lost, Jobs Gained report from McKinsey

The QS World Future Skills Index in numbers

190+
countries analysed

4
indicators, informed by 13 sub-indicators

280m+
job postings assessed

5m+
employer skill demands reviewed

5,000+
universities measured

17.5m+
research papers examined

How to use the QS World Future Skills Index

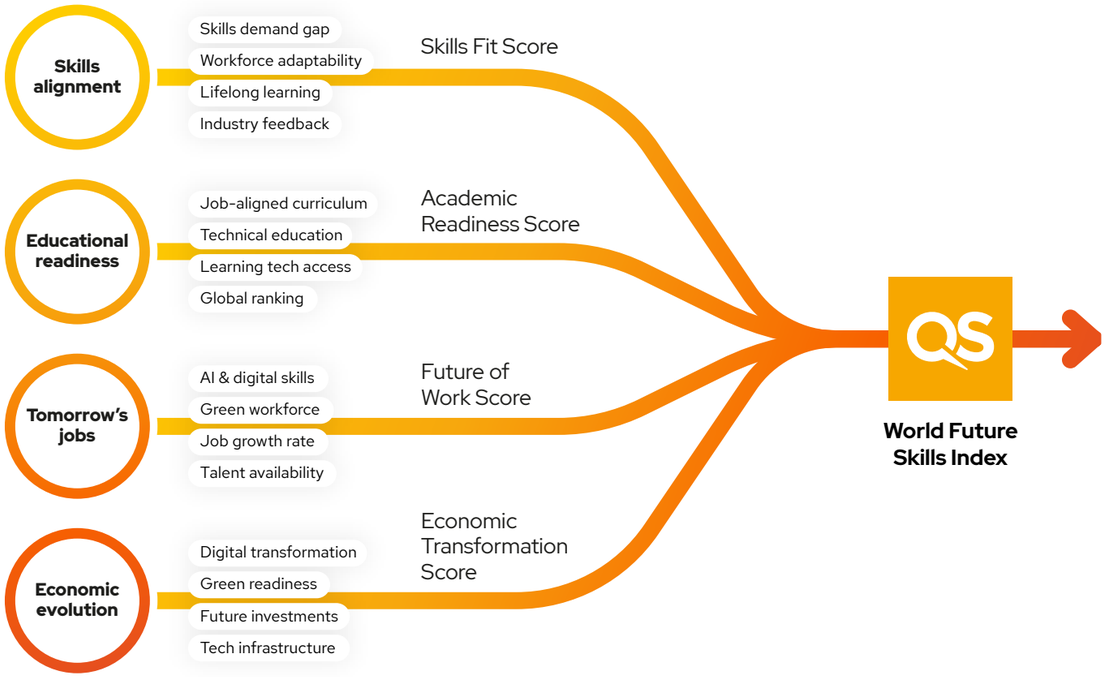
Analyse
Assess your future skills supply and demand imbalance

Benchmark
Identify and close key industry jobs and skills gaps in comparison to other countries/regions

Align
Align your curricula to nurture the necessary future skills and reduce the risk of workforce displacement

The QS World Future Skills Index is designed to assess how prepared countries are to tackle the shifting demands of the global workforce, particularly in the context of digital transformation, AI, sustainability, and the broader economic changes impacting jobs.

Skills like AI proficiency, digital literacy, and environmental sustainability will form the bedrock of the industries of tomorrow. Countries that fail to adapt risk losing their competitive edge and missing opportunities for economic growth.



The QS World Future Skills Index uses data from over 280 million job postings via QS 1Mentor, the QS Global Employer Survey, and economic and demographic statistics from the World Bank Group. The Index assesses countries across four key indicators: Skills Fit, Academic Readiness, Future of Work, and Economic Transformation. Each indicator plays a vital role in providing a comprehensive view of a country's preparedness to thrive in an increasingly skills-driven global economy.

QS World Future Skills Index indicators

Skills Fit

The Skills Fit indicator measures how well countries are equipping graduates with the skills that employers desire. This is assessed by determining the gap between what employers find important and their level of satisfaction with the skills provided by graduates.

This is done using data from the QS Global Employer Survey, the largest of its kind, and data from the World Bank Group. Since 2021, over 100,000 employers have rated the importance of certain skills and their satisfaction in their graduate hires.

Future of Work

The Future of Work indicator evaluates a country's readiness to recruit for the skills needed in the jobs of tomorrow. Specifically, it measures how well the job market is prepared to meet the growing demand for digital, AI, and green skills, all of which are becoming critical as economies transition towards technology-driven and sustainable industries.

Academic Readiness

This dimension measures how well a country is prepared for the future of work. We look at the number of universities assessed for the QS World University Rankings by Subject, and how they perform.

We then measure this in tandem with population size – if a country has a large population but few well-ranked institutions, for example, the country will be penalised.

Economic Transformation

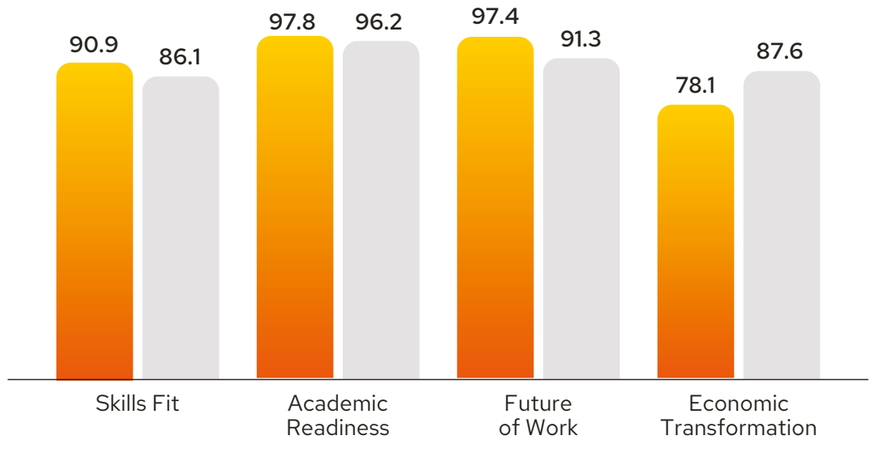
Economic Transformation uses a weighted formula to assess a country's readiness to support the growth and future of work and skills by examining various key indicators. The Index highlights whether a country has the infrastructure, investment power, and talent available to transition to industries driven by AI, digital transformation, green technologies, and high-skilled work, using data from the World Bank Group, UNESCO Institute for Statistics and the Education Policy Institute.

Canada | Performance overview

Canada's higher education system stands out as a global leader in workforce alignment and future skills readiness. With near-perfect scores in Academic Readiness (97.8), Future of Work (97.4), and Skills Fit (90.9), Canada demonstrates world-class performance in producing talent equipped with AI, Digital, and Green expertise. However, its Economic Transformation score (78.1) reveals an important gap between education outcomes and broader economic impact. Compared with peers like the United States and Australia, Canada lags in research investment and faces higher youth unemployment. These figures underscore the need to scale R&D commercialisation, accelerate innovation diffusion, and translate academic excellence into sustainable, productivity-led growth.

Overall score: **91.0/100**

QS World Future Skills Index
Canada performance vs G7 average



Skills Fit
90.9/100

Skills Fit measures the alignment between workforce skills and employer needs. It highlights how effectively education systems prepare graduates for key industries, especially in emerging fields like AI, green technology, and digital innovation. Addressing gaps here boosts employability, drives economic transformation, and ensures the workforce remains competitive internationally.

Academic Readiness
97.8/100

Academic Readiness reflects the capacity of a country's higher education system to equip students with relevant skills for future jobs. A robust system fosters innovation, aligns curricula with industry demands. This ensures graduates are not only employable but also capable of adapting to a rapidly changing global economy

Future of Work
97.4/100

Future of Work assesses a country's preparedness for jobs of the future, focusing on adaptability to technological and industrial changes. It reflects innovation, R&D investments, and sustainable practices in education. Higher education plays a vital role in fostering a future-ready workforce equipped with the skills required for evolving global industries.

Economic Transformation
78.1/100

Economic Transformation examines the interplay between education, workforce skills, and industrial growth. Higher education underpins this by driving productivity, innovation, and sustainability. Universities that align their programmes with industry needs not only strengthen national competitiveness but also ensure a balance between economic momentum and workforce adaptability.

Canada | Detailed performance

Skills Fit

	Overall Skills Fit Score	Adaptive Life Long Skills	Human-centred Leadership	Entrepreneurial and Innovative Mindset	Sustainable and Ethical Workforce
Canada	90.9	92.1	94.4	88.3	87.3
G7	86.1	86.9	88.5	84.0	86.0
OECD	76.1	76.2	78.1	75.8	75.8
G20	71.5	72.8	73.9	69.7	70.4
EU	69.6	69.7	71.4	69.6	69.0
APAC	69.1	70.2	72.2	66.6	67.8
ASEAN	57.3	58.4	60.5	55.1	55.3
BRICS	56.7	58.7	59.4	54.4	54.5
Latin America	50.0	51.0	50.4	50.3	51.3
MENA	42.6	43.7	45.7	40.2	41.0
Africa	28.0	28.9	29.4	27.1	27.5

QS Analysis

Canada's Skills Fit score (90.9) confirms that its workforce is equipped with high levels of adaptability and leadership. Adaptive Lifelong Skills (92.1) and Human-Centred Leadership (94.4) indicate a culture of continuous learning and responsive management. However, Entrepreneurial and Innovative Mindset (88.3) and Sustainable and Ethical Workforce (87.3) slightly trail, suggesting opportunities to further nurture innovation culture and ethical transformation. Universities and employers must collaborate to embed real-world entrepreneurship and sustainability into lifelong learning pathways, ensuring that strong foundational skills also drive business creation and sector-wide innovation.

Note: The Skills Fit score is derived from over 5 million skills nominations, reflecting insights from more than 100,000 employer responses to the QS Global Employer Survey over the past four years. Employers identified key skills they value and their satisfaction levels. By analysing this data at the country level, and integrating it with the World Bank's Human Capital Index, the QS Insights and Consulting team developed the final scores. Skills nominated by employers have been grouped based on the findings.

Academic Readiness

	Overall Academic Readiness Score	AI	Digital	Green
Canada	97.8	97.5	97.8	97.1
G7	96.2	90.8	91.0	91.6
G20	90.2	82.3	82.9	82.9
BRICS	88.2	77.0	76.6	76.9
OECD	87.0	86.2	86.4	86.4
APAC	86.1	80.5	80.7	81.7
EU	81.9	83.3	82.2	81.2
ASEAN	78.7	78.2	77.8	79.1
Latin America	76.7	73.4	76.6	77.3
MENA	58.1	61.3	60.0	59.4
Africa	39.1	38.6	38.4	38.6

QS Analysis

Canadian universities perform exceptionally across future-focused disciplines—Green (97.1), Digital (97.8), and AI (97.5)—providing a strong academic pipeline for industry. However, Canada's relatively low research investment hinders the full economic potential of this talent. By contrast, the United States invests over double that of Canada, enabling greater innovation impact. To compete globally, Canadian universities must deepen partnerships with employers, scale applied R&D initiatives, and ensure academic research is consistently translated into commercial products, policy innovation, and productivity gains.

Note: This chart draws on data from the QS World University Rankings by Subject 2024, analysing over 5,000 universities globally. The Academic Readiness score is calculated using the median subject rankings score for each country, adjusted for performance in key areas such as AI, digital, and green-related disciplines. Population size and the number of universities ranked are used as weighting factors to ensure a balanced assessment of scale and quality. This provides a comprehensive view of how effectively higher education systems are preparing for future workforce demands.

Future of Work

	Overall Future of Work Score	AI	Digital	Green
Canada	97.4	98.9	87.9	97.8
G7	91.3	90.7	83.8	85.2
G20	84.3	78.9	75.1	79.7
APAC	82.9	76.1	74.6	77.1
ASEAN	80.1	69.5	71.4	75.3
BRICS	76.1	71.3	60.2	71.5
Latin America	73.0	57.6	63.7	69.7
OECD	72.9	68.2	63.9	60.9
EU	68.2	64.5	57.1	53.7
Africa	54.2	38.4	49.6	38.9
MENA	49.9	31.9	40.2	40.6

QS Analysis

Canada's Future of Work score (97.4) reflects near-complete alignment between academic output and employer demand. Employers consistently seek advanced skills in AI, Digital, and Green sectors, and Canadian institutions are delivering on that promise. However, translating this strong demand into innovation-led job creation requires more than just talent—it demands bold employer partnerships, work-based learning expansion, and investment in digital infrastructure. By embedding industry engagement across all sectors and ensuring access to hands-on experience, Canada can retain and activate its highly skilled graduates within a fast-evolving labour market.

Note: The Future of Work Score measures the extent to which future-focused skills—such as digital, AI, and green competencies—have permeated global job advertisements compared to traditional skillsets. This score is derived from an analysis of over 280 million job postings worldwide, leveraging the QS proprietary skills taxonomy. Over 9,500 emerging skills were identified and benchmarked against conventional skills, providing a clear indicator of how deeply future-oriented capabilities are being prioritised by employers in the global labour market.

Economic Transformation

	Overall Economic Transformation Score	Economic Capacity	Workforce Readiness	Future-oriented Innovation and Sustainability
G7	87.6	70.7	69.1	68.3
Canada	78.1	57.6	65.1	51.3
OECD	77.3	47.0	67.1	64.7
EU	71.6	40.9	64.5	59.0
G20	70.2	60.2	62.1	49.2
APAC	65.1	57.4	58.9	42.2
BRICS	61.6	61.2	54.0	32.8
ASEAN	44.9	42.3	46.8	27.4
MENA	40.7	33.7	43.6	29.8
Latin America	33.6	24.6	47.4	27.1
Africa	25.6	26.1	31.7	25.4

QS Analysis

Canada's Economic Transformation score (78.1) reveals a disconnect between exceptional educational foundations and the ability to scale innovation-led growth. While Workforce Readiness (65.1) and Green Readiness (61.1) are strong, Economic Capacity (57.6) and Future-Oriented Innovation & Sustainability (51.3) remain lower than peers such as the United States and Australia. The issue is not the quality of graduates, but the structural bottlenecks in commercialisation and innovation absorption. Universities must focus on aligning their outputs with market needs, supporting emerging tech ventures, and embedding sustainability as a core innovation driver.

Note: The Economic Transformation indicator is built on three core dimensions: Economic Capacity, Workforce Readiness, and Future-Oriented Innovation and Sustainability. It combines data on GDP growth, labour productivity, employment rates, R&D investment, and infrastructure development. These indicators are weighted and benchmarked globally to assess a country's ability to adapt to skills-driven industrial change, with a focus on AI, digital, and green industries. The methodology ensures a comprehensive view of how effectively economic fundamentals and future-focused investments align with evolving workforce demands.

Canada | Full results summary

Note: The scores reflect the final results of the QS World Future Skills Index.
Categories are organised alphabetically by economy for clarity and ease of comparison.

Country/Location	Skills Fit	Academic Readiness	Future Of Work	Economic Transformation	Final Score
United States	94.4	98.2	100.0	97.9	**97.6**
United Kingdom	100.0	100.0	95.6	92.7	**97.1**
Germany	89.2	99.6	94.7	94.7	**94.6**
Australia	87.2	98.9	96.5	90.6	**93.3**
Canada	90.9	97.8	97.4	78.1	**91.0**
Netherlands	88.6	99.3	90.4	81.2	**89.9**
Switzerland	80.7	97.1	82.6	96.8	**89.3**
France	84.8	92.6	91.3	84.3	**88.2**
Singapore	83.2	91.7	92.2	85.4	**88.1**
South Korea	84.4	88.4	76.5	100.0	**87.3**
China	78.5	93.9	87.8	88.5	**87.2**
Spain	76.4	96.3	93.0	70.8	**84.1**
Israel	70.6	93.0	73.0	98.9	**83.9**
Sweden	80.4	95.1	72.2	86.4	**83.5**
Japan	73.4	87.9	74.7	95.8	**83.0**
Belgium	72.4	95.9	71.3	91.6	**82.8**
Ireland	81.8	95.5	86.1	67.7	**82.8**
Denmark	73.0	96.7	66.1	93.7	**82.4**
Hong Kong SAR	77.0	98.6	69.5	80.2	**81.3**
Italy	70.3	97.4	85.2	69.7	**80.7**
Finland	76.1	93.4	62.6	87.5	**79.9**
New Zealand	75.6	94.7	80.0	63.5	**78.5**
Norway		94.3	56.5	83.3	**78.0**
Poland	68.5	85.3	86.9	68.7	**77.3**
India	59.1	89.9	99.1	58.3	**76.6**
Portugal	71.0	92.1	66.9	76.0	**76.5**
Czech Republic	72.4	77.5	82.6	71.8	**76.1**
Austria	66.5	90.8	64.3	82.2	**75.9**
United Arab Emirates	71.6	90.3	77.4	60.4	**74.9**

Canada | Full results summary

Country/Location	Skills Fit	Academic Readiness	Future Of Work	Economic Transformation	Final Score
Greece	62.3	85.9	65.2	72.9	71.6
Brazil	44.1	83.1	78.2	77.0	70.6
Malaysia	64.0	91.2	88.6	35.4	69.8
Thailand	58.1	81.4	80.8	52.0	68.1
Mexico	54.8	80.8	98.2	37.5	67.8
Lithuania	61.4	87.4	52.2	66.6	66.9
Hungary	59.3	84.2	68.6	54.1	66.6
Russia	73.4	84.8	33.8	73.9	66.5
Saudi Arabia	56.9	82.5	73.8	51.0	66.1
Türkiye	62.1	73.3	60.0	64.5	65.0
Colombia	58.3	82.0	89.5	27.0	64.2
Costa Rica		67.5	79.1	45.8	64.1
Argentina	57.8	83.7	84.3	23.9	62.4
Philippines	47.6	66.6	93.8	40.6	62.2
Estonia		70.1	53.0	61.4	61.5
Kazakhstan	67.8	75.5	40.8	59.3	60.9
Egypt	45.4	76.9	75.6	44.7	60.6
Indonesia	60.0	74.0	67.8	39.5	60.3
Lebanon	45.9	86.4	46.9		59.7
Chile	63.1	88.9	70.4	13.5	59.0
Qatar	45.5	79.5	59.1	47.9	58.0
Romania	43.0	72.5	58.2	48.9	55.7
Vietnam	58.1	74.7	57.4	31.2	55.4
Jordan	49.2	78.2	49.5	41.6	54.6
Slovenia		49.1	35.6	79.1	54.6
Bulgaria	37.6	56.0	61.7	57.2	53.1
Peru	51.0	80.1	54.7	26.0	53.0
Latvia	56.4	60.7	46.1	46.8	52.5
South Africa	28.3	89.4	81.7	10.4	52.4

Country/Location	Skills Fit	Academic Readiness	Future Of Work	Economic Transformation	Final Score
Bahrain	47.2	62.7	33.0	55.2	49.6
Ukraine	57.9	71.8	51.3	15.6	49.1
Bangladesh	39.1	65.7	42.6		49.1
Luxembourg		54.8	47.8	43.7	48.7
Kuwait	36.3	69.3	40.0		48.5
Belarus	57.6	40.4	29.5	65.6	48.3
Iceland		31.6	20.0	89.5	47.0
Pakistan	35.7	78.9	63.4	4.1	45.5
Croatia		36.4	35.6	62.5	44.8
Uruguay	40.6	59.5	60.8	17.7	44.7
Brunei Darussalam	29.8	70.9		30.2	43.6
Ecuador	30.6	64.8	41.7	34.3	42.8
Armenia	25.3		45.2	50.0	40.2
Uzbekistan	48.1	57.2	29.5	16.6	37.9
Cyprus	45.2	44.2	37.4	18.7	36.4
Azerbaijan	31.8	50.6	27.8	29.1	34.8
Oman	32.5	42.5	29.5	33.3	34.4
Panama	24.2		50.4	28.1	34.2
Sri Lanka	43.5		42.6	6.2	30.8
Morocco	17.0		53.8	20.8	30.5
Tunisia		29.0	37.4	19.7	28.7
Algeria	21.3		22.6	32.2	25.4
Tajikistan	16.7		26.9	21.8	21.8

*Where a country lacks an indicator score, this reflects insufficient data available to evaluate overall performance

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Canada | Conclusion

Canada's education and workforce systems rank among the highest globally, but its Economic Transformation lags behind. Despite top-tier talent in AI, Digital, and Green fields, challenges remain in translating this into sustained innovation and job creation. With lower R&D investment and higher unemployment than peers, Canada must scale research commercialisation and industry collaboration to unlock the full value of its world-class graduates and future-ready institutions.

Our analysis and recommendations:

1

Maximising economic impact through education

Canada's universities are among the world's best at producing highly skilled graduates in AI, Digital, and Green domains. However, to ensure that Future of Work (97.4) and Academic Readiness (97.8) translate into long-term growth, institutions must strengthen partnerships with industry, focus on work-based learning, and scale up R&D commercialisation. Transforming research strength into enterprise impact will be key to national competitiveness.

2

Bridging the innovation delivery gap

Despite world-leading education scores, Canada's Economic Transformation score (78.1) and R&D investment levels trail global peers. Universities must close this gap by embedding innovation into curricula, expanding applied research, and collaborating more deeply with startups, businesses, and government. Fostering entrepreneurial ecosystems and sustainability-driven ventures will drive broader economic returns.

3

Securing Canada's Position in a Green and Digital Economy

With unmatched strength in future skills, Canada has an opportunity to lead the next phase of the global economy. But with high youth unemployment and low innovation absorption hindering progress, the focus must shift to systems that retain talent and deploy it effectively. Supporting graduate employment pathways, accelerating digital infrastructure, and embedding climate resilience across education and policy will ensure Canada's future-readiness.

Canada | Future skills ecosystem

Your future workforce and skills partner

Connecting higher education, government policy, employer demands and student needs

Speak to your QS partnership director to gain access to more insight and advice.

Assess economic risk

We can help you analyse skills supply and demand by industry or region to identify skills shortages

Access data on the industries, occupations and skills driving growth to set your labour market strategy

Address skills gaps

Benchmark your skills shortages against peer nations to assess your relative risk

Identify the countries providing the most skills-aligned talent for your high-growth industries to set a talent attraction strategy

Align higher education with future skills

Assess the top performing universities within your country or region to deliver future skills ready graduates

Evaluate performance at the subject level to develop an internal benchmark and skills performance improvement strategy

Establish a future skills strategy for higher education institutions within your country or region, and enhance curricula and learning modes to deliver the skills of tomorrow

1

Assess economic risks: Analyse supply and demand imbalances to identify skill shortages and develop strategies to safeguard your economy against workforce misalignment.

2

Address skills gaps: Benchmark job and skill requirements globally to ensure graduates are equipped to meet industry needs and strengthen economic resilience.

3

Align higher education with future skills: Transform higher education to embed future skills, ensuring graduates contribute to innovation, economic growth, and reduced workforce displacement.

Read the full QS World Future Skills Index briefing paper

QS can help you transform insights into policy and policy into action.

Connect with one of our consultants.

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