

PERSPECTIVES ON CANADIAN TRANSITIONS AND THE FUTURE OF WORK



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This presentation draws from a number of past and present Brookfield Institute projects, including work led by our colleagues on future skills, occupational demand, and workforce development solutions; firm-level pandemic trends including remote work and digital adoption; the digital divide; and designing supportive, feasible job pathways and transitions.

This includes:

- [Employment in 2030](#) (2019-2020) and [Action Labs](#) (2020-2021)
- [Anything but static: Risks of COVID-19 to workers in Canada](#) (Apr 2020)
- [Is Canada's workforce ready to deal with 'Long COVID'?](#) (Dec 2020)
- [Mapping Toronto's Digital Divide](#) (Jan 2021)
- [How are Canadian businesses adapting to the pandemic?](#) (Mar 2021)
- [Job Pathways: Food Retail and Oil and Gas](#) (2019-2022)



1

PRE-PANDEMIC: A LOOK AT EMPLOYMENT IN 2030

The Employment in 2030 Project

What we aimed for:

1. Creating a new source of labour market information — a forecast of employment growth for 2030 that was based on skills and looked to the next decade
2. Identifying potential areas of risk and opportunity for different workers
3. Informing the stakeholders that need this information

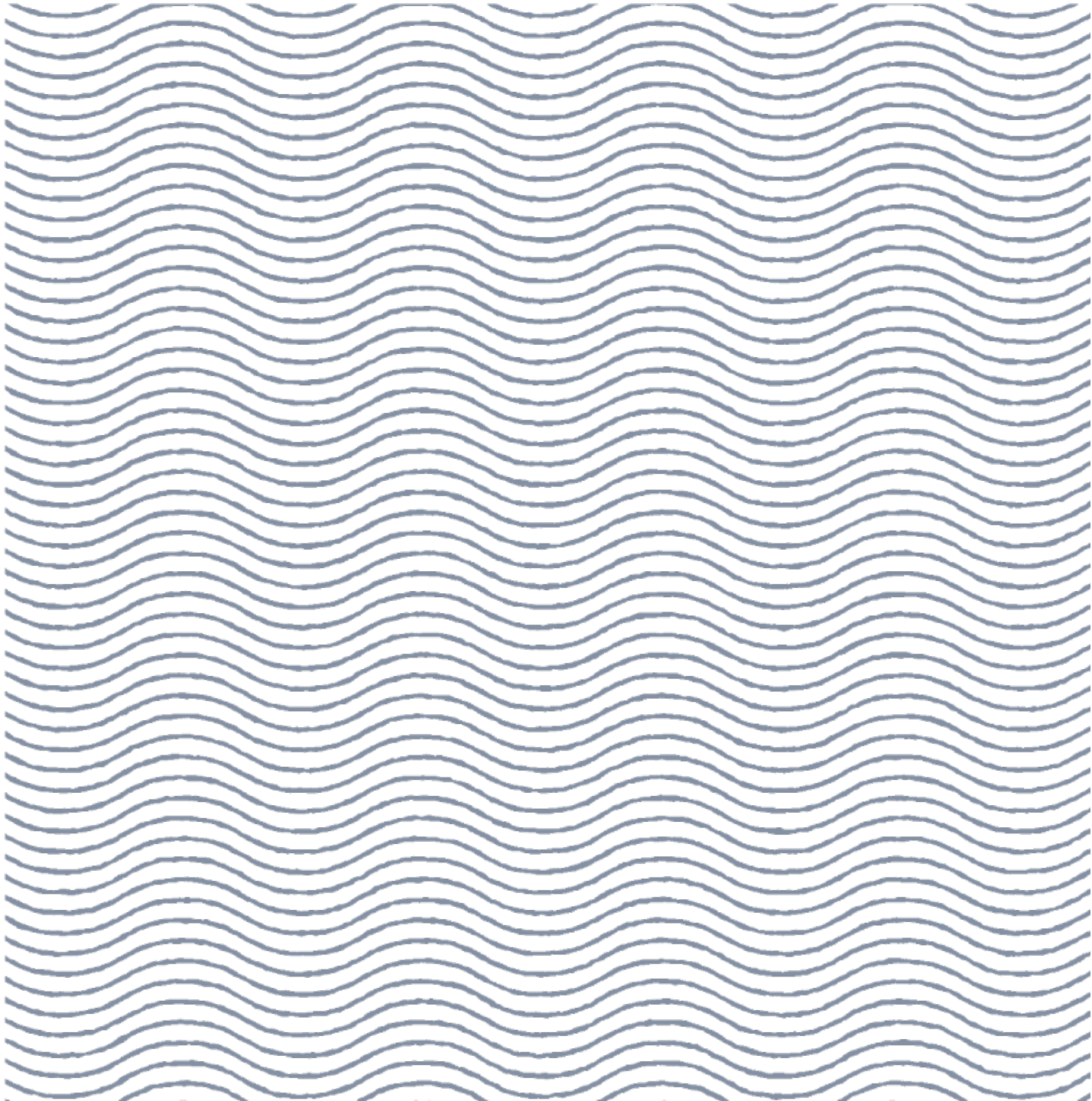
How we did it:

1. We did in-depth strategic foresight analysis and identified 31 main trends that could significantly affect Canada's labour market in the next decade.
2. We brought this to LMI experts throughout the country. From them, we gathered expert opinion about select occupations and whether these might grow or decline.
3. We created a machine-learning model that allowed us to see what our participants would have said about the remaining occupations in Canada, creating a set of projections that spans the labour market.



PRE-PANDEMIC, WE FOUND THAT...

- + The two most salient trends:
 - AI Everything and Resource Scarcity
- + Trends such as these were already affecting the way we work:
 - Connected but lonely
 - Aging population
 - Work and life integration
 - Suburban boom
- + A core set of skills and abilities may prove foundational to our work landscape:
 - Instruction
 - Persuasion
 - Service orientation
 - Fluency of ideas
 - Brainstorming
- + Different workers will face different challenges and need different levels of support



Pre-pandemic, this project signalled changes on the horizon. Now, some trends have reversed while others have accelerated. And some of these impacts are hitting now.



2

DURING THE PANDEMIC: EMPLOYMENT IN 2030 IN ACTION

What are some of the current, most pressing challenges for provinces and territories in terms of their forward-looking skills and employment strategies?

- + **Newfoundland and Labrador:** How might we support displaced, highly skilled mid- to late-career (40+ years) job seekers to explore future-oriented skills and new, alternative careers in order to facilitate career transitions?
- + **Quebec:** How can we support people (mid-career workers) in jobs in tourism and hospitality to develop fundamental skills to improve their mobility in the labour market of tomorrow?
- + **Yukon:** How might we help youth (from grade 9 to age 24) to future-proof their skills and enable an easier transition to the workforce, and in particular to prepare to navigate non-traditional or undefined career paths?
- + **Manitoba:** How might we help high school students to better prepare for the future workforce, and in particular for navigating non-linear career paths, through improved career guidance and development of foundational skills and abilities?
- + **British Columbia:** How might we help immigrants, refugees and newcomers (women aged 25 - 45) to access culturally relevant and meaningful opportunities to leverage and future-proof their skills?



3

WE'RE (NOT) ALL IN THIS TOGETHER: EXPERIENTIAL DIFFERENCES IN THE COVID- 19 PANDEMIC

The experiential impacts of the pandemic have varied widely for firms and workers, sectors, and occupations, and demographics.

- + This includes:
 - Sectoral disruption and unemployment levels due to changing public health rules and business closures;
 - Access to remote work or requirement to work in person and home internet affordability and reliability;
 - Risk of exposure and illness rates, access to paid sick leave, etc.
- + We've also seen a reversal in some occupations regarding expected trends — a hard shift from what was going to be *replaced* or declining, to work that became *essential* but was undervalued and underpaid.

From remote work and learning to online sales to technology has shaped our pandemic experience.

Different businesses

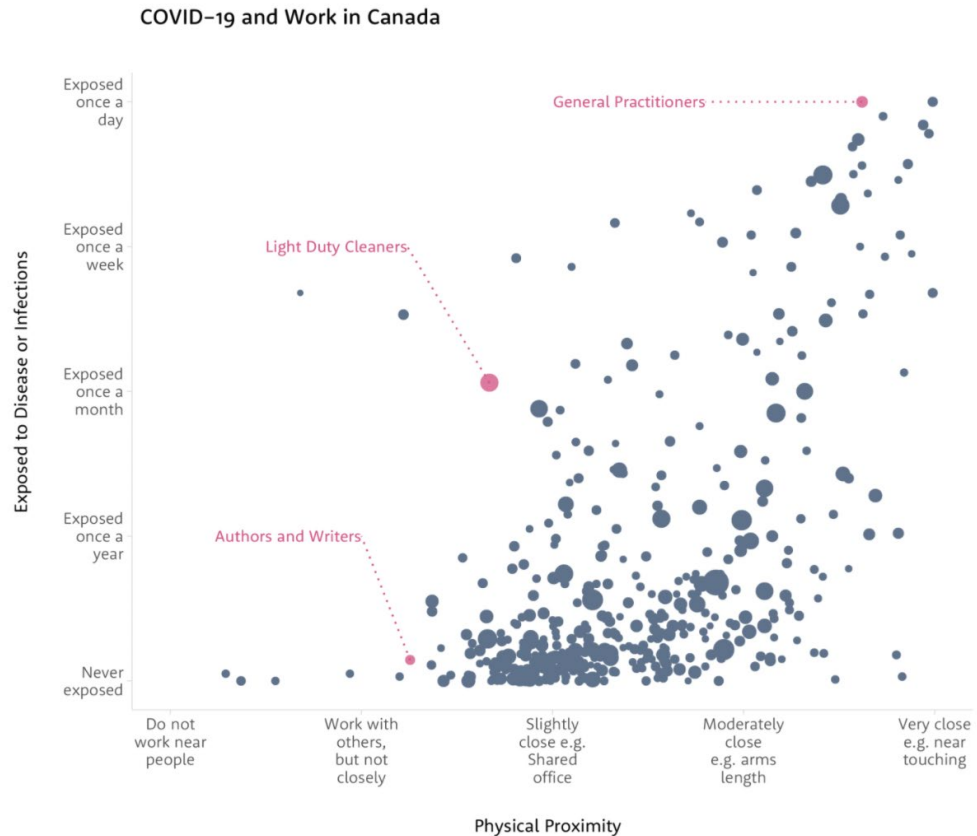
- + Businesses reporting that remote work is a possibility is down slightly in the first quarter of 2021 (32%) compared to the last quarter of 2020 (35%).
- + Of these businesses, only ¼ reported operating almost or entirely remotely and many have made only partial remote work arrangements.
- + 26% of small businesses (20-99 employees) had adopted or planned to adopt an online sales platform due to the pandemic but only 11% of businesses with 1-4 employees, likely due to higher pre-pandemic use of online sales for micro firms.
- + However, the overall picture isn't a dramatic shift: in 2020, 9% of businesses made 60%+ of their total sales online, up from 6% in 2019.
- + Skills demands are evolving: up to 15% of businesses in some sectors reported that they plan to hire staff with skills or knowledge their current employees lack.

Even in major urban centres, home internet access isn't universal, affordable, or sufficiently fast.

Different connectivity levels

- + In a study on household internet access in Toronto in Fall 2020, we found that though the vast majority of households had home internet access, 2% of survey respondents did not, with the majority citing affordability or lack of a device as the barrier. For those that do have access, worries about ability to pay, or insufficient speeds are common.
- + $\frac{1}{3}$ of households indicated that they worried some or a lot about paying their home internet bill, and over 50% of households with incomes under \$30K are worried.
- + Nearly 40% of Toronto households did not have speeds +50 mbps with higher rates for lower income households, those working outside the home or unemployed, and older adults.
- + Lower income households, seniors, and those living in apartments or condos had higher rates of no access.
- + Closure of public access points such as libraries, community centres, and cafes and rules on gathering indoors have impacted access throughout the pandemic.

Different workers



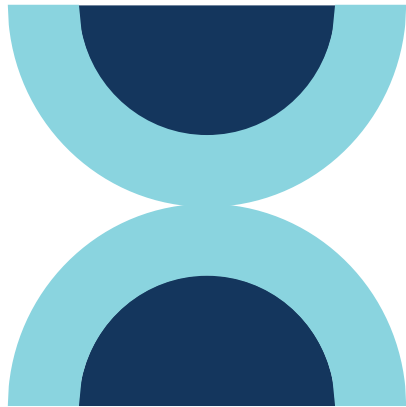
- + Even among workers who cannot work remotely, expected occupational risk of exposure to disease varies widely among sectors, occupations, provinces and territories, and individual workplaces.
- + In practice, we're seeing continued workplace outbreaks in places where workers are indoors including offices, large retail stores, services (e.g., gyms), manufacturing, etc with COVID-19 very much remaining an "occupational disease".
- + With up to of 35% of COVID patients experiencing long term complications and many reporting difficulty returning to work fulltime in the months after their initial illness, COVID-19 is going to shape the workforce landscape for years to come.



4

HOW DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES CAN MAKE IT INTO POLICY DESIGN: E.G. JOB TRANSITIONS

THE JOB PATHWAYS APPROACH



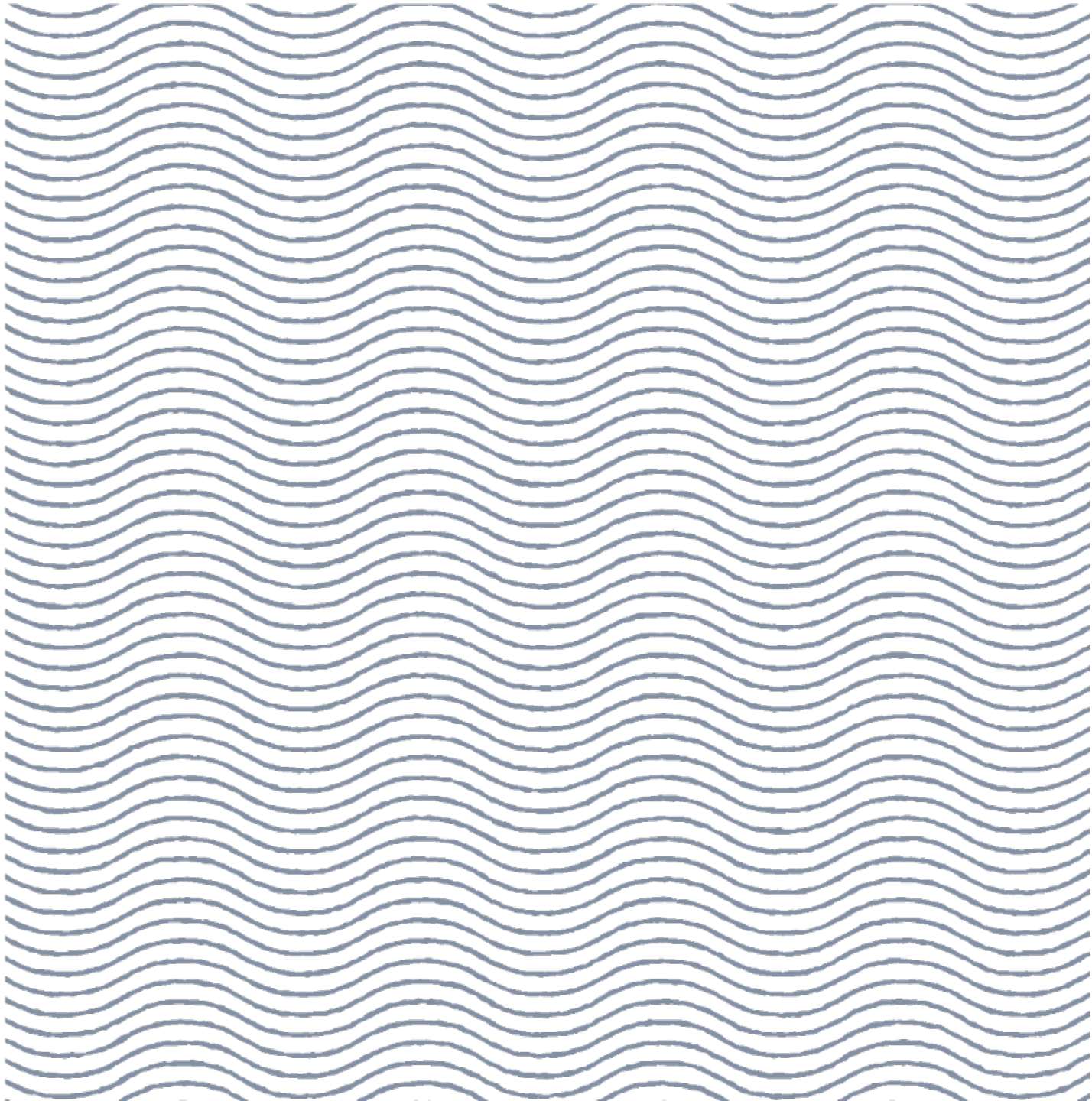
- + Our motivation:
 - Workers who are displaced from their jobs, or facing disruption, have a variety of the skills and abilities that may not be recognized, yet may fill existing demand in other roles. BUT barriers such as incomplete information, lack of tailored support, and unclear guidance prevent such transitions from happening.
- + Goals
 - To identify **potential** and **realistic** job pathways for mid-career workers facing disruption
 - To generate insights for policymakers and contribute to the targeting of interventions

Job Pathways: From theory to practice

Lost and found:
Pathways from disruption to employment

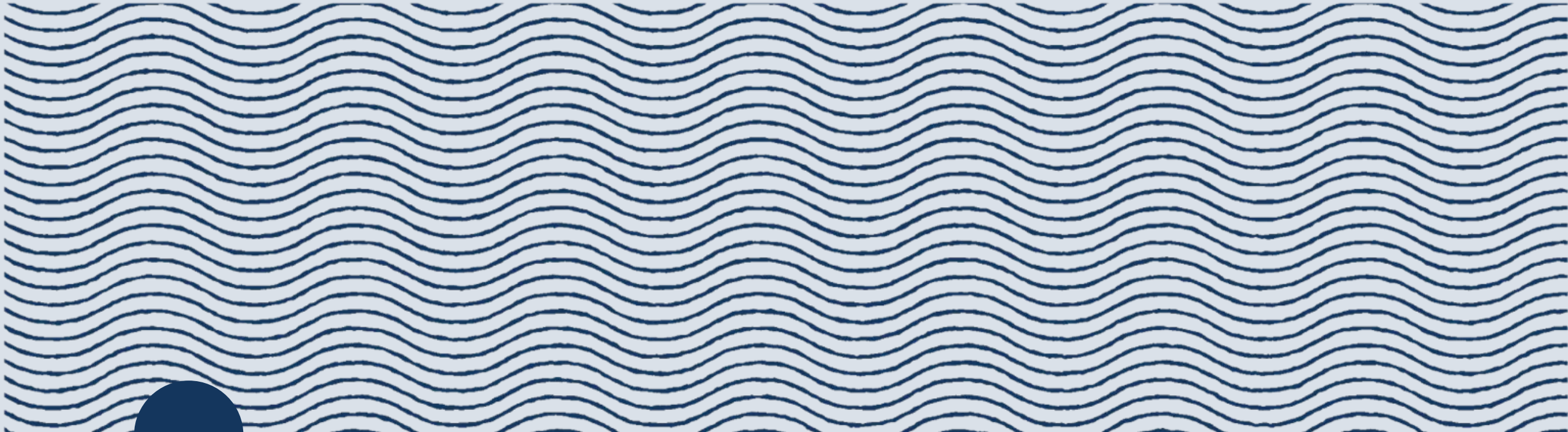
Job Pathways for Food Retail in Ontario

Job Pathways for Oil and Gas in Newfoundland and Labrador



These perspectives can be better included in research and programs through:

- Place-based design**
- Human-centred design**
- Room for flexibility**



THANK YOU

