



Indigenous Peoples in the Workplace

Examining Employment, Discrimination,
Training, and Artificial Intelligence Use

**Environics
Institute**
For Survey Research



**Future
Skills
Centre** Centre des
**Compétences
futures**

**TED
ROGERS
SCHOOL
OF MANAGEMENT**

DiVERSITY
INSTITUTE

Partners

Environics Institute

For Survey Research



The [Environics Institute for Survey Research](#) was established by Michael Adams in 2006 with a mandate to conduct in-depth public opinion and social research on the issues shaping Canada's future. It is through such research that Canadians can better understand themselves and their changing society.



The [Future Skills Centre \(FSC\)](#) is a forward-thinking centre for research and collaboration dedicated to driving innovation in skills development so that everyone in Canada can be prepared for the future of work. We partner with policymakers, researchers, practitioners, employers and labour, and post-secondary institutions to solve pressing labour market challenges and ensure that everyone can benefit from relevant lifelong learning opportunities. We are founded by a consortium whose members are Toronto Metropolitan University, Blueprint, and Signal49 Research, and are funded by the [Government of Canada's Future Skills Program](#).



The [Diversity Institute](#) conducts and coordinates multi-disciplinary, multi-stakeholder research to address the needs of diverse Canadians, the changing nature of skills and competencies, and the policies, processes and tools that advance economic inclusion and success. Our action-oriented, evidence-based approach is advancing knowledge of the complex barriers faced by underrepresented groups, leading practices to effect change, and producing concrete results. The Diversity Institute is a research lead for the Future Skills Centre.

Funder

Funded by the
Government of Canada's
Future Skills Program



The Future Skills Centre – Centre des Compétences futures is funded by the [Government of Canada's Future Skills Program](#). The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.

Publication Date:
March 2026

Authors

Wendy Cukier

Founder and Academic Director

Diversity Institute

Professor, Entrepreneurship and Innovation

Toronto Metropolitan University

Noel Baldwin

Executive Director

Future Skills Centre

Matthew McDonald

Research Assistant

Diversity Institute

Contributors

Matthew Foss

Vice President, Research & Public Policy

Canadian Council for Indigenous Business

Guang Ying Mo

Director of Research

Diversity Institute



The Survey on Employment & Skills

The Survey on Employment and Skills is conducted by the Environics Institute for Survey Research, in partnership with the Future Skills Centre and the Diversity Institute at Toronto Metropolitan University.

In early 2020, the Survey on Employment and Skills began as a project designed to explore Canadians' experiences with the changing nature of work, including technology-driven disruptions, increasing insecurity and shifting skills requirements. Following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the survey was expanded to investigate the impact of the crisis on Canadians' employment, earnings and work environments. A second wave of the survey was conducted in December 2020, a third wave in June 2021, a fourth wave in March–April 2022, a fifth wave in March 2023, a sixth wave in October–November 2023, a seventh wave in May–July 2024 and an eighth wave in March–April 2025. Each wave of the study consists of a survey of over 5,000 Canadians aged 18 years and over, conducted in all provinces and territories. A total of 46,198 Canadians were surveyed across the eight waves.

The survey includes oversamples of Canadians living in smaller provinces and territories, those under the age of 34 years, racialized Canadians and Canadians who identify as Indigenous, in order to provide a better portrait of the range of experiences across the country. Unless otherwise indicated, the survey results in this report are weighted by age, gender, region, education, racial identity and Indigenous identity to ensure that they are representative of the Canadian population as a whole.

See all Survey on Employment & Skills reports:

[The Environics Institute for Survey Research website](#)

[The Future Skills Centre website](#)

[The Diversity Institute website](#)

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

1

Context

7

Methods

8

Findings

10

Conclusion

22

References

24



Executive Summary

Context

Indigenous Peoples face significant barriers to employment because of genocide, colonialism and systemic discrimination. Despite growing at nearly double the rate of the non-Indigenous population, Indigenous Peoples remain underrepresented in the labour market, especially in mid- to senior-level positions. While Indigenous university graduates have similar employment outcomes to non-Indigenous university graduates, they are far less likely to finish university and face challenges at every stage in the educational system. While research has examined labour market access issues and workplace discrimination less is known about the current experiences and perspectives of Indigenous Peoples in the workplace.

This report aims to address that gap by answering the following research question: *How do Indigenous People's experiences in the workplace differ from the general population?* Based on the Survey on Skills and Employment, this report explores experiences in the areas of employment, training, AI use at work, and discrimination at work. By asking about workplace experiences rather than only analyzing labour market outcomes, this report provides new insight into how Indigenous Peoples experience work, opportunity, and advancement today.

*This report aims to answer the following research question: **How do Indigenous People's experiences in the workplace differ from the general population?***

Methods

This report draws on Wave 8 of the Survey on Skills and Employment a collaboration of the Environics Institute, Diversity Institute, Toronto Metropolitan University and Future Skills Centre, conducted in 2025. Among the weighted survey respondents 5.1% identified as Indigenous (n=281), including 189 First Nations (3.4%), 61 as Metis (1.1%), 14 as Inuit (0.2%), and 17 as other or prefer not to say (0.3%). This dataset is considered representative of both the Indigenous Peoples and the general population in Canada.

The weighted sample is rather small, and women and people 15-34 and 35-54 are over over-represented, while those individuals with at least some college or university education are underrepresented in our survey compared to the data from Statistics Canada. Statistics Canada (2024) data show a similar unemployment gap nationally (9.8% vs. 6.3%) and a smaller full-time employment gap (46.2% vs. 50.2%). These sample characteristics should be considered when interpreting comparisons between Indigenous and non-Indigenous respondents.

Findings

The findings below summarize reported differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous respondents across education, employment, workplace discrimination, well-being, training participation, and AI use, important factors shaping workplace experiences.

Education and employment

The survey showed differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous respondents in terms of education. For example, 53% of Indigenous respondents had completed high school or less compared to 19% of non-Indigenous respondents. Among Indigenous respondents, 19% had completed apprenticeship or trades training compared to 9% among the non-Indigenous respondents but only 29% had completed some college or university compared to 62% of the non-Indigenous respondents.

53% of Indigenous respondents had completed high school or less, compared to 19% of non-Indigenous respondents.

Their employment also differed: 49% of Indigenous respondents reported that they worked in the private sector compared to 61% of non-Indigenous respondents. 39% of Indigenous work in government compared to 30% of non-Indigenous peoples. Comparable proportions work in non profits (4% vs. 3%) and a smaller proportion are self-employed (8% versus 11%).

Discrimination at work

In comparison to racialized groups, Indigenous Peoples reported higher rates of discrimination than Chinese respondents but lower rates of discrimination than South Asian or Black people.

There were variations among Indigenous Peoples about their experiences with workplace discrimination. Higher rates of discrimination were reported by those who identify as First Nations (46%) and by those in the youngest age group (ages 18 to 34 years) (45%). Indigenous men also reported workplace discrimination at a higher rate than Indigenous women (43% vs. 33%). Consistent with prior research, these findings indicate that discrimination remains a structural workplace barrier that can affect retention, advancement, and well-being.

Outlook

Despite these challenges, Indigenous Peoples reported a more positive outlook than those from the non-Indigenous population. While Indigenous peoples were more likely to be unemployed than non-Indigenous peoples they are significantly more likely to believe now is a good time to find a job (42%) compared to non-Indigenous respondents (25%), suggesting labour market optimism among respondents even alongside ongoing employment challenges. When asked how they felt about the way things are going in Canada today 43% said they were satisfied, compared to just 31% of the non-Indigenous population. Indigenous men had the highest proportion reporting they were satisfied (53%), much higher than Indigenous women (35%). Indigenous respondents were also more optimistic about their financial situation over the next six months (42% vs 23%), indicating stronger expectations of economic improvement despite employment disparities.

Physical and mental health

Indigenous respondents are more likely to report good physical health (47%) than non-Indigenous respondents (37%), although there are gender differences (61% for men vs. 40% for women). However, Indigenous respondents report poorer overall mental health than non-Indigenous respondents. While 18.1% of Indigenous respondents rate their mental health as excellent (compared with 14.6% of non-Indigenous respondents), a larger share report their mental health as fair or poor (36.3% vs. 27.6%), indicating greater overall mental health challenges. Indigenous respondents also report more frequent symptoms of depression (41% vs 25%), anxiety (37% vs. 32%), and isolation (38% vs. 25%) three or more days per week. These patterns are particularly pronounced among Indigenous women, who report substantially higher levels of depression and anxiety than Indigenous men.

Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction also appeared to be higher among Indigenous Peoples, with 44% being reported that they were “very satisfied” with their current job, compared to only 30% of the non-Indigenous population. Indigenous men are more likely to report being “very satisfied” than women (52% vs. 38%), but both Indigenous men and women reported similar levels of overall positive job satisfaction (82% vs. 77%).

Higher reported job satisfaction coexists with elevated unemployment and substantial reports of workplace discrimination, underscoring the complexity of Indigenous Peoples’ workplace experiences.



Training

Indigenous respondents were more likely to report participating in employer-provided training over the last twelve months (56%) than their non-Indigenous counterparts (44%). Indigenous respondents are more likely to report salary increases as a result of their training compared to non-Indigenous people (58% vs. 38%). Indigenous respondents also reported that their training resulted in a promotion at a rate of almost double the non-Indigenous Population (51% vs. 27%). Meanwhile, a higher proportion of Indigenous women reported promotions after training compared to men (55% vs 48%). These outcomes suggest that training participation may be contributing to measurable workplace advancement.

Overall, Indigenous respondents reported more familiarity with AI use in the workplace at a higher rate than the non-Indigenous population. Almost double (32% vs. 17%) reported that they were “very familiar” with AI programs in the workplace (32% vs. 17%). While both the Indigenous population (78%) and non-Indigenous population (78%) reported that AI made them more productive (much more + a little more), more Indigenous respondents (46%) say AI made them “much more productive” compared to non-Indigenous respondents (30%). Indigenous respondents were also more likely to report receiving AI-related training, indicating strong engagement with emerging workplace technologies.

Conclusion

The data analysed in this report demonstrates the strengths and ongoing challenges for Indigenous Peoples in the labour market. While Indigenous Peoples have lower levels of formal education, particularly at the post-secondary level, and face significant levels of discrimination, they report being more satisfied with their jobs, receive more training and report more familiarity with AI than non-Indigenous respondents. This report shows how structural barriers including discrimination, employment instability, and poorer mental health outcomes coexist with high levels of job satisfaction, optimism, training participation, and engagement with emerging technologies. This latest survey data reaffirms previous research about the importance of addressing well-being alongside employment and skills development. Advancing labour market inclusion requires both reducing systemic barriers and building on demonstrated strengths in workplace engagement, skills development, and technological adaptation.

This report shows how structural barriers including discrimination, employment instability, and poorer mental health outcomes coexist with high levels of job satisfaction, optimism, training participation, and engagement with emerging technologies.

The findings from this report inform our recommendations which include:

- > **Implement measures to reduce discrimination in the workplace**, while simultaneously increasing the proportion of Indigenous leadership in companies and organizations. Organizations should also establish transparent promotion criteria and track advancement outcomes to ensure equitable access to career progression and leadership pathways.
- > **Barriers to education remain at all levels**, highlighting the need for increased supports for Indigenous youth to access education, especially for women. These supports should include targeted pathways into skilled trades, post-secondary education, and emerging technology sectors.
- > **Introduce more mentorship opportunities for Indigenous youth and workers** to help expand their professional networks and improve workplace outcomes. Mentorship programs should support career advancement, earnings progression, and access to decision-making roles.
- > **Continued supports for both the mental and physical health of Indigenous Peoples** to ensure they have avenues to help deal with the barriers and discrimination they face. These supports should be culturally responsive and trauma-informed, recognizing the intersection of workplace discrimination, employment instability, health outcomes and the inter-generational impacts of residential schools.
- > **A gender and diversity lens** is needed to address various needs of the Indigenous Peoples. Intersectional and distinctions-based approaches should recognize differences across gender, age, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities, as well as regional and urban–rural (on-reserve and off-reserve) contexts.

Supports should be delivered through intersectional and distinctions-based approaches that reflect differences across Indigenous identities and regional, urban, rural, and remote contexts.

Advancing these priorities will require coordinated, wrap-around supports that integrate education access, workplace inclusion, mentorship, skills training, and culturally responsive health services. These supports should be delivered through intersectional and distinctions-based approaches that reflect differences across Indigenous identities and regional, urban, rural, and remote contexts. Such integrated approaches can help ensure that participation

in the labour market translates into sustainable well-being, career advancement, and leadership representation, rather than temporary or unstable gains.

More research is needed to understand whether the results of this study just reflect the sample or if they are representative of the types of roles Indigenous Peoples are in and the workplaces where they are employed. Future research is also needed to understand the differences in context and the links between access to training, employment and job satisfaction. However, this study does offer a new perspective on the experiences of Indigenous peoples in the workplace. Continued evidence-building will be essential to inform policy and organizational strategies that effectively support inclusive, sustainable outcomes across diverse lived experiences, including those in remote fly-in First Nations and Inuit communities.



Context

Despite growing at nearly double the rate of the non-Indigenous population, Indigenous Peoples remain underrepresented in the labour market. The Indigenous population grew by 9.4% between 2016 and 2021, and in 2021, 1.81 million people identified as Indigenous (5% of population).¹ They are also the youngest population in Canada, about 28% were under the age of 25 in 2021.

It is important to recognize distinctions within the Indigenous community (First Nations, Métis, Inuit) and the effects of intersectionality. Additionally, a history of genocide, discrimination, exclusion, inter-generational trauma has shaped access to opportunities and hindered economic growth.^{2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7} Further disparities in access to infrastructure affect opportunities for education, employment, and skills training complicating the pathways for Indigenous Peoples in the workplace.^{8, 9, 10, 11}

This study asks the following research question: *How do the experiences of Indigenous People in the workplace differ from those of the general population?* Our study will dive more deeply into the experience of Indigenous peoples with experiences of discrimination in the workplace but also opportunities for training and technology use. We also use a diversity and intersectional lens to compare Indigenous women's experiences with those of Indigenous men.

Further disparities in access to infrastructure affect opportunities for education, employment, and skills training – complicating the pathways for Indigenous Peoples in the workplace.



Methods

Our data is drawn from the Survey on Skills and Employment data Wave 8 (from March to April 2025), focusing on Indigenous Peoples' experiences in workplaces, including discrimination, training, and use of AI. The weighted dataset consists of 5.1% Indigenous Peoples (n=281) versus 94.9% of non-Indigenous individuals (n=5269), with the unweighted dataset consisting of 14.4% Indigenous Peoples (n=809) versus 85.6% non-Indigenous individuals (n=4794) due to oversampling of the Indigenous population. With the weighted survey, the total of 281 respondents includes 189 identifying as First Nations (3.4%), 61 as Metis (1.1%), 14 as Inuit (0.2%), and 17 as other or prefer not to say (0.3%). This dataset is considered representative of both the Indigenous Peoples and the general population in Canada.

The weighted sample is rather small, and women are overrepresented compared to the data from Census survey data from Statistics Canada. The age groups 15-34 and 35-54 are overrepresented, and individuals with at least some college or university education are underrepresented in our survey compared to the data from Statistics Canada. Our survey also has a higher percentage of Indigenous Peoples who have completed an apprenticeship or trades training. We also find that Indigenous Peoples are over-represented in the public sector and underrepresented in the private sector compared to Census data, although this could be slightly skewed due to our survey including a non-profit sector option which Statistics Canada did not include.

Table 1**Sample comparison to population**

Socio-economic characteristic	Survey on Employment and Skills (%)	Statistics Canada (%)
Women	55.8	51.4
Age 15-34	54.1	30.4
Age 35-54	31.0	23.5
Age 55+	14.9	20.8
High school diploma or less (SES)	53.1	50.8
Apprenticeship or trades training	18.9	11.0
At least Some college/CGEP or university education	28.5	38.1
Self-employed	7.8	10.0
Employees in public sector	39.4	28.3
Employees in private sector	49.4	71.7
Employees in non-profit sector	4.4	N/A
Unemployed	8.8	9.8

Source: Demographic and educational data is from the 2021 Census, Employment data is from the 2024 Labour Force Survey.



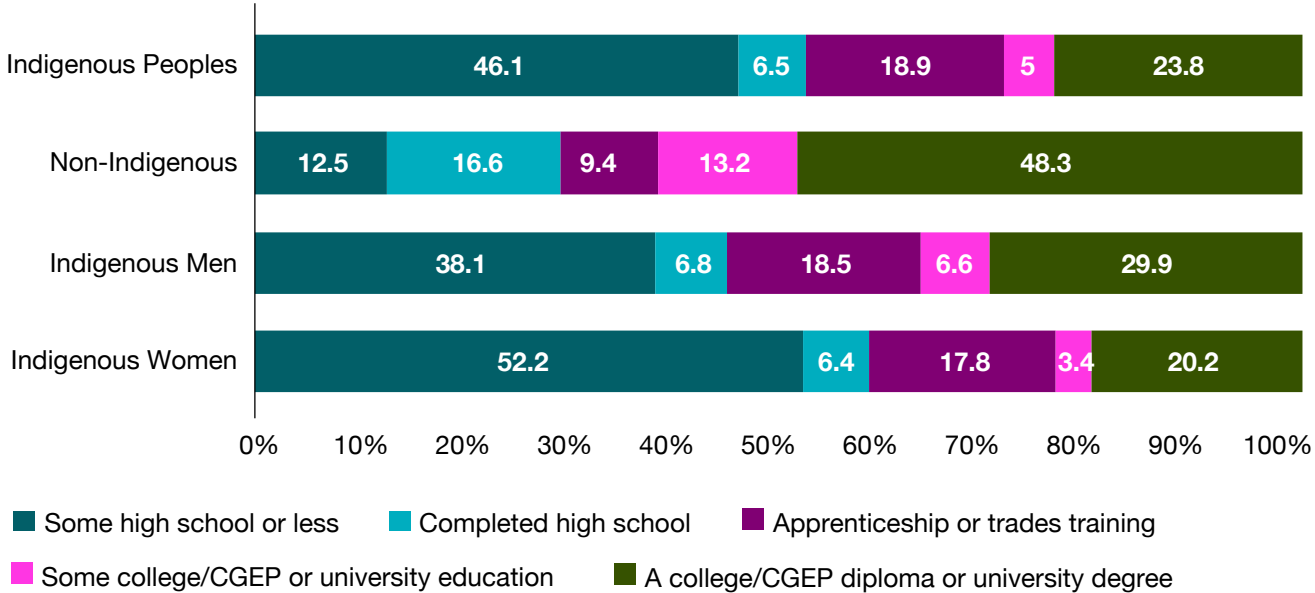
Findings

Education

In our survey Indigenous respondents reported lower levels of education than the non-Indigenous participants. More than half (53%)

of Indigenous participants had completed high school or less as the highest level of education, which is almost twice the percentage of non-Indigenous respondents (29%) (Figure 1).

Figure 1
Highest level of education reached



A gender gap among Indigenous participants is observed: 45% of Indigenous men had high school or less as their highest level of education reached, compared to 59% of Indigenous women.

Less than half of the Indigenous participants had at least some college/CGEP or university education or more as the highest level of education, compared to non-Indigenous participants (29% vs 62%). There is also a noticeable gap with 36% of Indigenous men and only 24% of Indigenous women reaching this level.

At the same time, Indigenous respondents were twice as likely as non-Indigenous respondents to report working in skilled trades (18.9% compared to 9.4%), with near gender parity among Indigenous men (18.5%)

and women (17.8%). Given ongoing labour shortages in construction, infrastructure, and energy sectors, this represents a meaningful opportunity for economic participation.

Employment

The survey data provides insights into the differences in employment situations and demographic between Indigenous Peoples and the rest of the population. The survey data is comparable with the most recent Statistics Canada data and is included below (Table 2). Our sample shows significantly higher representation from the public sector than we see in the general population, especially among Indigenous respondents and lower representation in the private sector which may be reflected in the results.

Table 2
Labour force statistics

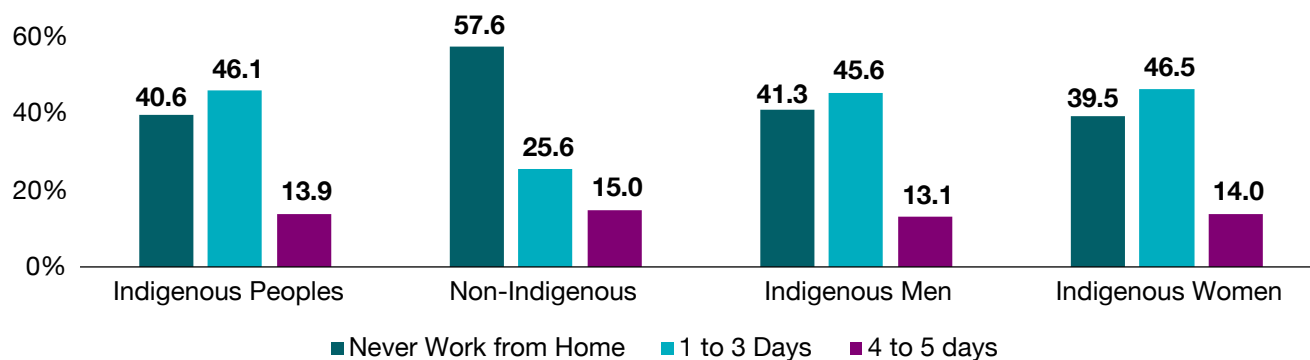
	Environics Survey (2025)		Statistics Canada (2024)	
	Non-Indigenous (%)	Indigenous Peoples (%)	Non-Indigenous (%)	Indigenous Peoples (%)
Self-employed	11.0	7.8	13.0	10.0
Public sector	29.8	39.4	24.5	28.3
Private sector	60.5	49.4	75.5	71.7
Non-profit sector	3.1	4.4	NA	NA
Full-time	44.0	36.0	50.2	46.2
Part-time	11.0	16.0	11.1	10.9
Unemployed	6.0	10.8	6.3	9.8

Additionally, in our survey, Indigenous respondents reported working from home at much higher rates than the non-Indigenous respondents. Fewer Indigenous respondents (40%) report they never work from home, compared to non-Indigenous respondents (58%) (Figure 2). This means 60% of Indigenous participants work from home at least once a week, compared to only 42% of the non-Indigenous participants. However,

Indigenous respondents had a similar proportion report that they work from home most or all of the time (four or five days a week) (14% vs 15%). They had a much higher proportion report that they work three or less days a week from home (46% vs 26%). Indigenous men and women reported in similar proportions that they never work from home (41% vs 40%) or that they work from home most or all of the time (13% vs 14%).

Figure 2

Amount of time worked from home per week



Indigenous respondents had a much higher proportion report that they think now is a good time to find a job compared to the non-Indigenous participants (42% vs 25%). However, while Indigenous respondents had a higher proportion think that now is a good time to find a job, they had a similar proportion report that they were worried (“very worried” and “somewhat worried”) about themselves or their immediate family finding or keeping a stable job (52% vs 48%). They also had a much higher proportion to be “very worried” (21% vs 14%).

Discrimination at work

About 38% of Indigenous respondents reported experience of discrimination because of their Indigenous identity. Indigenous men report higher proportions (43%) of racial discrimination compared to Indigenous women (33%), with the highest proportions (45%) observed among the youngest age group (ages 18 to 34 years) for both Indigenous men and women (Table 3).

Table 3

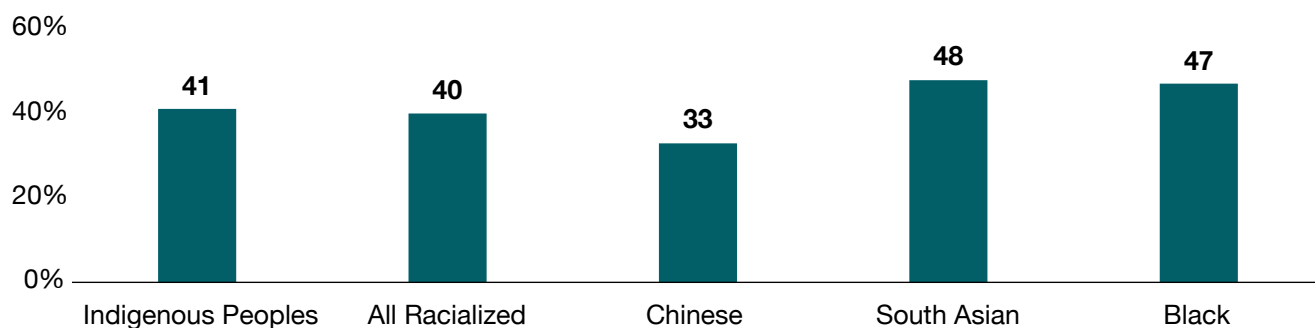
Percentage of Indigenous respondents who reported experience of discrimination or unfair treatment in the workplace because of race or ethnicity

Demographic	Indigenous (% Yes)
Men	46
Women	35
Age 18-34	51
Age 35-54	40
Age 55+	23
Average	38

When looking at race or ethnicity discrimination, 41% of Indigenous respondents reported discrimination, which is similar to all racialized (40%) and higher than Chinese respondents (33%), and lower than South Asian (48%) or Black people (47%) (Figure 3).

Figure 3

Reported discrimination of Indigenous respondents compared to other ethnicities



Physical and mental health

In terms of physical health, a higher percentage of Indigenous respondents reported that their physical health was excellent or very good (47%), compared to non-Indigenous peoples

(37%). There was a large gap in physical health between Indigenous men and women, with 61% of men reporting they had excellent or very good physical health, compared to only 40% of women (Figure 4).

Figure 4
Physical health by Indigenous Peoples



Indigenous respondents report somewhat poorer mental health than non-Indigenous respondents overall: 18.1% of Indigenous respondents rate their mental health as excellent compared with 14.6% of non-Indigenous respondents, while 21.6% versus 26.5% say it is very good, and 23.9% versus

31.1% say it is good. A higher proportion of Indigenous Peoples select fair (23.5% compared with 18.5%) or poor (12.8% compared with 9.1%), indicating greater mental health challenges in Indigenous communities relative to the non-Indigenous population.

Figure 5
Reported mental health by Indigenous Peoples



When looking at other aspects of mental health Indigenous participants continued to show worse and more persistent symptoms. A much higher proportion of Indigenous respondents reported that they felt depressed three or more days a week (41%), than the non-Indigenous respondents (25%). While 50% of the non-Indigenous respondents reported they felt depressed less than 1 day a week, this was only 32% for Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous men appear to feel depressed less often than women with 37% of men reporting they felt depressed 3+ days a week, compared to 43% of women.

Indigenous participants also reported feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge at a much higher proportion than the non-Indigenous participants, with 37% reporting that they felt this way 3 days or more a week. This was much higher than the 32% reported by the non-Indigenous participants. This feeling appears to affect Indigenous women much more often, as only 25% of men reported this, compared to 46% of women. Indigenous men

also reported they felt this way less than one day a week (48%) at a much higher proportion than Indigenous women (29%).

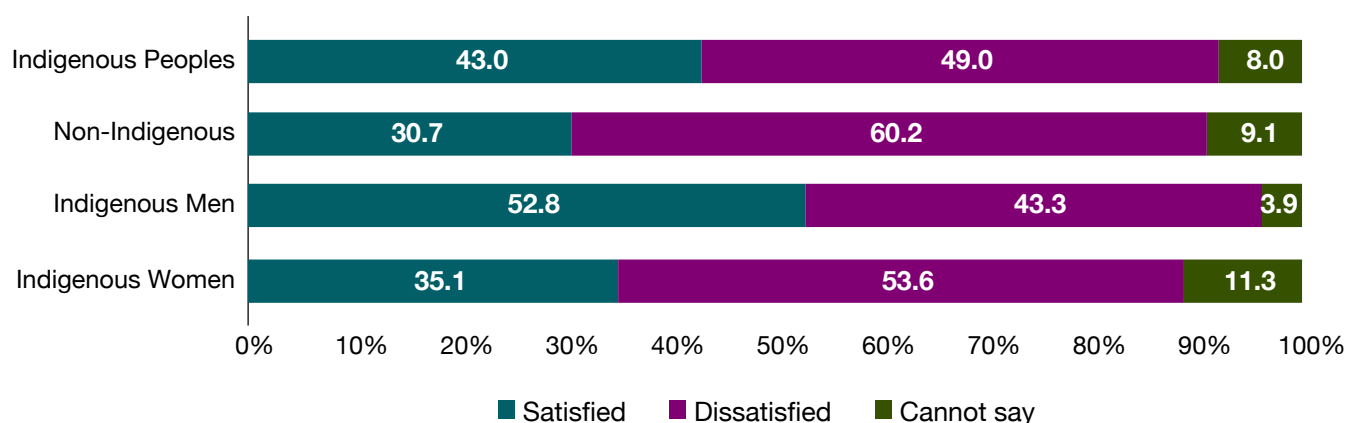
The feeling of isolation also appears more prevalent for Indigenous Peoples. They reported feeling isolated for three or more days a week at a much higher proportion than the non-Indigenous participants (38% vs 25%). Unlike other mental health symptoms this feeling of isolation appears to affect both Indigenous men and women at a similar proportion (36% vs 37%).

Outlook

Indigenous respondents reported a more positive outlook compared to non-Indigenous respondents. When asked how they felt about the way things are going in Canada today 43% said they were satisfied, compared to just 31% of the non-Indigenous participants. Indigenous men had the highest proportion reporting they were satisfied (53%), much higher than Indigenous women (35%) (Figure 6).

Figure 6

Satisfaction with the way things are going in our country today

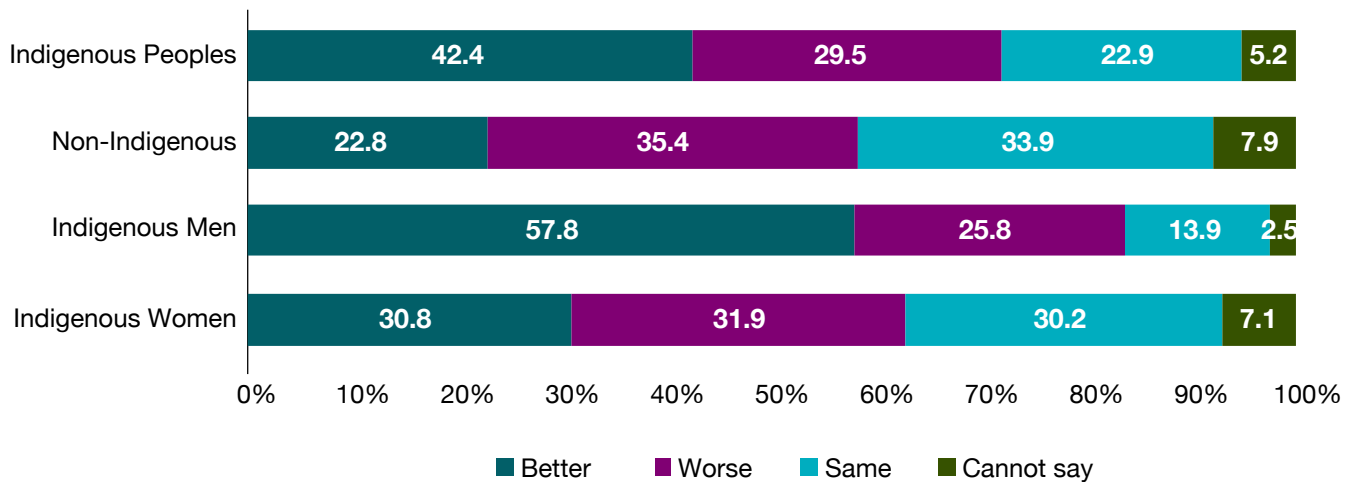


Indigenous participants were also more optimistic about their financial situations, with 42% expecting their situation would be better in six months, almost double the non-Indigenous participants (23%). Indigenous men

were much more optimistic than Indigenous women reporting that their financial situation would be better in six months at a proportion almost double that of Indigenous women (58% vs 31%) (Figure 7).

Figure 7

Outlook on financial situation in the next six months compared to today

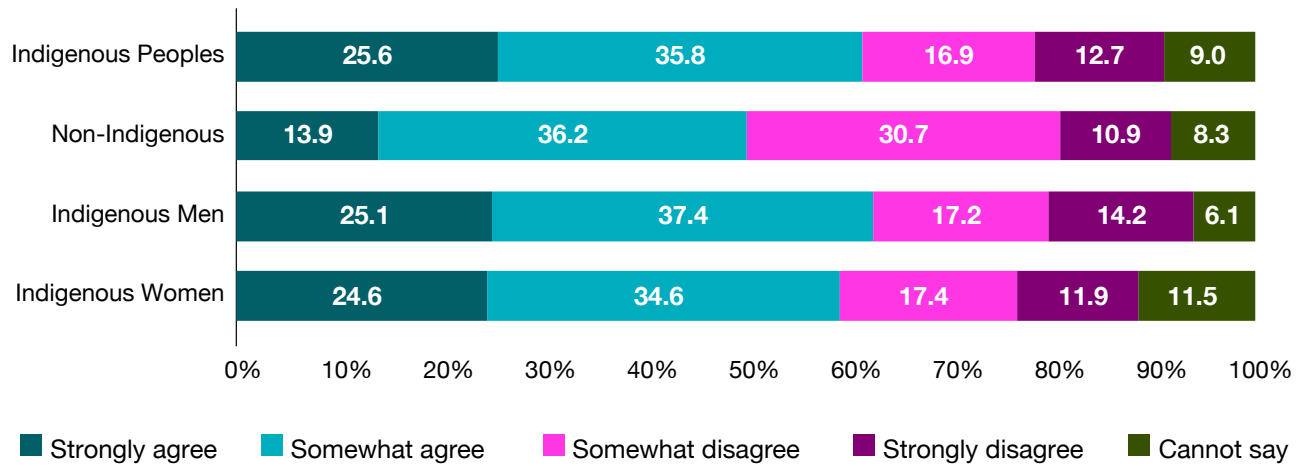


They also showed greater care about the environment, with 56% agreeing that protecting the environment was more important than protecting jobs. This is a much higher proportion than the non-Indigenous participants which agreed at only 35%. Indigenous men and women agreed at a similar proportion (57% vs. 55%).

When it came to new technologies (specifically AI) a higher proportion of Indigenous respondents agreed that they were causing more problems than they are solving compared to the non-Indigenous respondents (61% vs. 50%). Indigenous men and women agree at a similar proportion as well (63% vs. 59%) (Figure 8).

Figure 8

New technologies are causing more problems than they are solving



Note: The value of Indigenous Peoples is higher than the average of Indigenous men and women for some categories as Indigenous Peoples also include an “Other” and “Cannot say” for the gender.

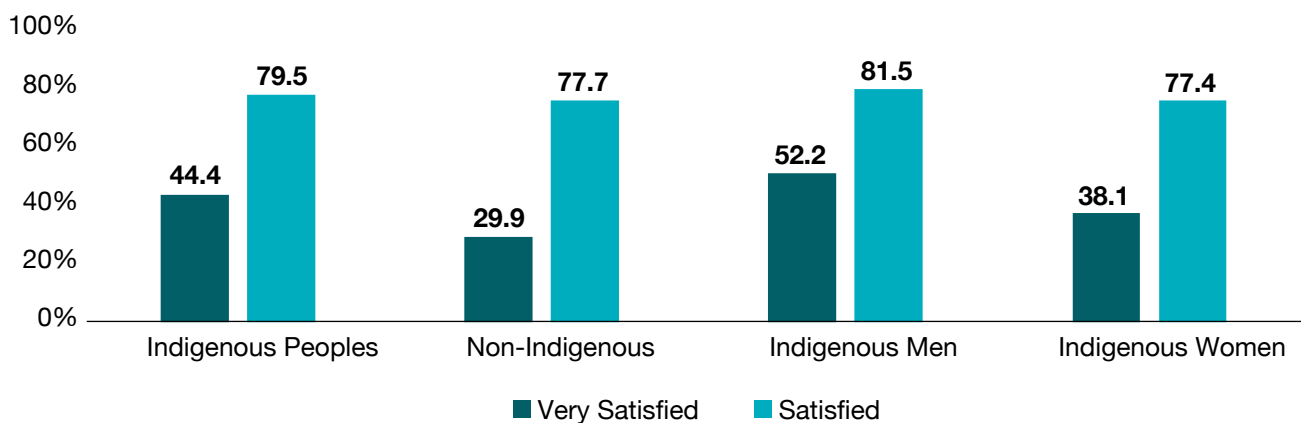
Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction appears to be higher among Indigenous respondents than the non-Indigenous respondents. Overall Indigenous and non-Indigenous respondents reported similar levels of positive job satisfaction (78% vs 80%). However, Indigenous respondents were more likely (44%) to say that they are

“very satisfied” with their current job, compared to non-Indigenous respondents (30%) (Figure 9). Both Indigenous men and women report similar levels of overall positive job satisfaction (82% vs. 77%). However, Indigenous men are more likely to report being “very satisfied” (52%) than Indigenous women (38%).

Figure 9

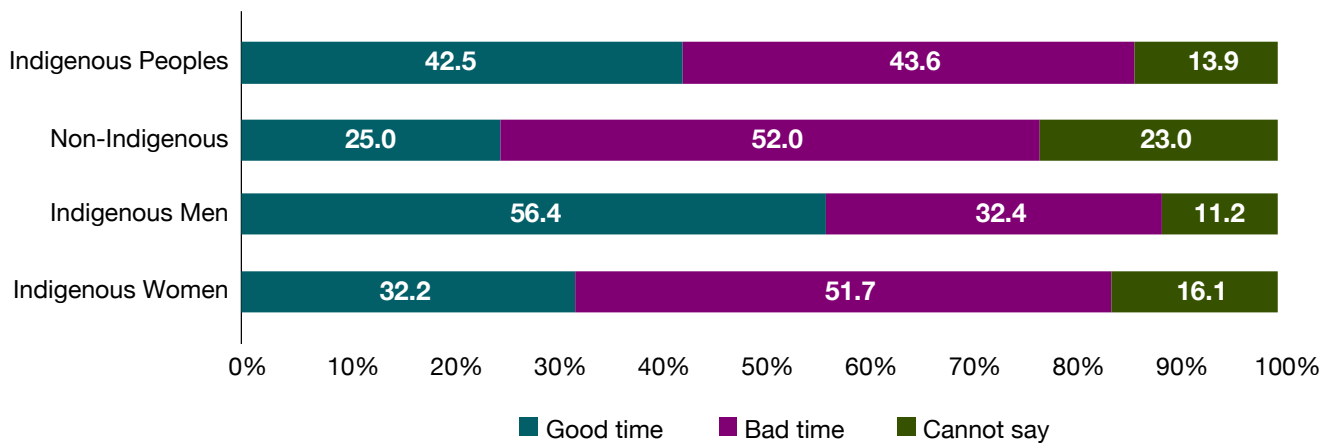
Level of job satisfaction



A higher proportion of Indigenous respondents reported positive thoughts about the job situation in their area. A higher proportion of Indigenous respondents (43%) thought now was a good time to find a job, compared to

non-Indigenous people (25%) (Figure 10). However, a much higher proportion of Indigenous men agreed than women (56% vs. 32%), showing a gap within the Indigenous respondents.

Figure 10
Perspective on timing of finding a job in their city or area

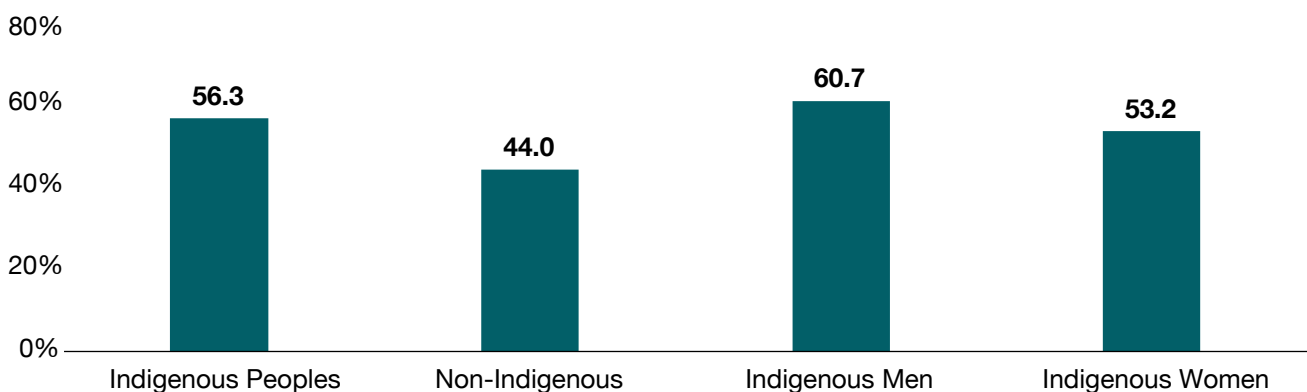


Training

The Indigenous workforce seems to participate in workplace training at a higher rate than their non-Indigenous counterparts, and they appear to reap the benefits of this training at a higher rate as well. More Indigenous respondents (56%) reported that they have participated in a training course in the past twelve months

that was provided by their employer to improve their skills, compared to the non-Indigenous respondents (44%). A higher proportion of Indigenous men than women reported participating in a training course (61% vs. 53%), both higher rates than the non-Indigenous participants (Figure 11). This could be due to a higher proportion of Indigenous Peoples being employed by the public sector.

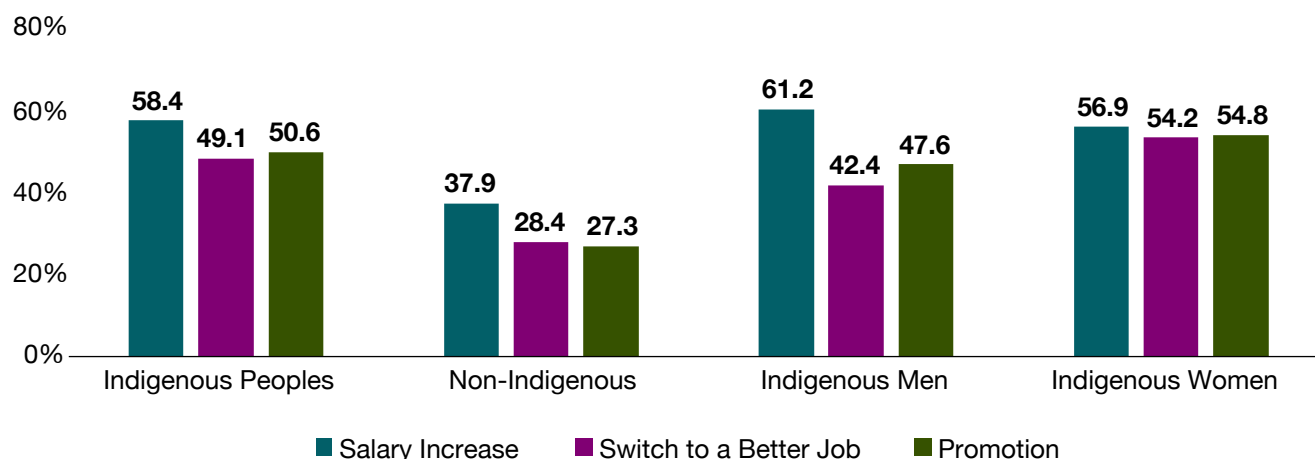
Figure 11
Participation in a training course provided by employer, last 12 months



Indigenous participants reported better outcomes from their workforce training across three measures compared to the non-Indigenous participants. When asked if this workforce training resulted in a salary increase 58% of the Indigenous participants reported that it did, compared to only 38% of the non-Indigenous participants (Figure 12). At the same time, a slightly higher proportion of Indigenous men reported receiving a salary increase, compared to Indigenous women (61% vs. 57%).

Just under half of Indigenous respondents (49%) reported that their training resulted in a switch to a better job, compared to non-Indigenous respondents (28%) (Figure 12). A higher proportion of Indigenous women reported being able to switch to a better job (54% vs. 42%). Indigenous respondents also reported that their training resulted in a promotion at a rate of almost double the non-Indigenous participants (51% vs. 27%). Indigenous women had a higher proportion to report receiving a promotion than men (55% vs. 48%).

Figure 12
Result of workplace training on salary, role, or promotion



A higher proportion of Indigenous respondents think that mainly the worker should pay for the training (15% vs. 10%) and a lower proportion think the employer should pay for the training (25% vs. 39%). However, the proportion of Indigenous respondents (20%) that thought that the government should mainly pay for training was almost double the proportion of non-Indigenous respondents (11%).

Artificial intelligence at work

Almost twice as many Indigenous respondents (32%) reported that they are “very familiar” with AI programs they can use in the workplace, compared to non-Indigenous respondents (17%), and a higher proportion (66%) were familiar (“very familiar” and “somewhat familiar”) (52%). Indigenous men were more

likely to report that they are “very familiar” with AI programs in the workplace (38%) compared to Indigenous women (28%), and also to say they are more familiar with AI than women (77% vs. 58%).

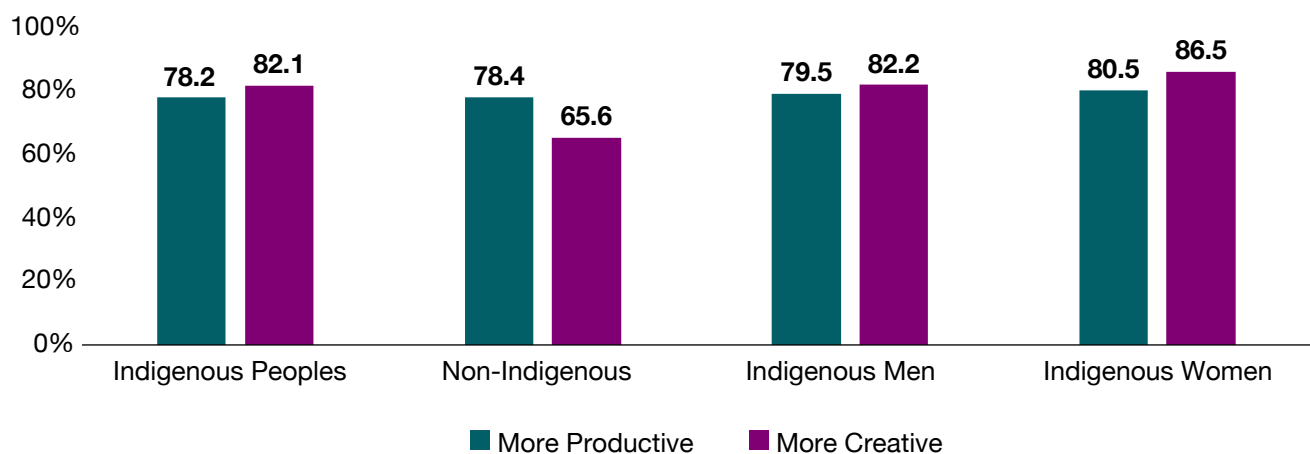
Indigenous Peoples are more likely to report using AI tools in the workplace compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts. Almost half of Indigenous respondents report having used AI programs to help with tasks at work (48%), compared to just over one third of non-Indigenous peoples (36%). Indigenous men are more likely to report that they have used AI programs to help with work (54%) than Indigenous women (44%).

Indigenous participants also harness AI at work to make themselves more productive and creative at a rate higher than the non-Indigenous participants. While the same proportion (78%) of both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous respondents indicated that AI made them more productive (“much more

productive” and “a little more productive”), the Indigenous participants were more likely (46%) to say AI made them “much more productive” compared to non-Indigenous people (30%) (Figure 13). While both Indigenous men and women say AI made them more productive (80% vs 81%), a slightly higher proportion of Indigenous men report that AI at work has made them much more productive (49% vs 45%).

Twice as many (57%) of Indigenous respondents reported that AI made them “much more creative” at work than non-Indigenous respondents (29%). A higher proportion (82%) said that AI made them more creative (“much more creative” and “a little more creative”) at work compared to the non-Indigenous respondents (66%) (Figure 13). However, a higher proportion of Indigenous women (65%) report that AI at work has made them much more creative than Indigenous men (53%).

Figure 13
Impact of using AI at work on productivity and creativity

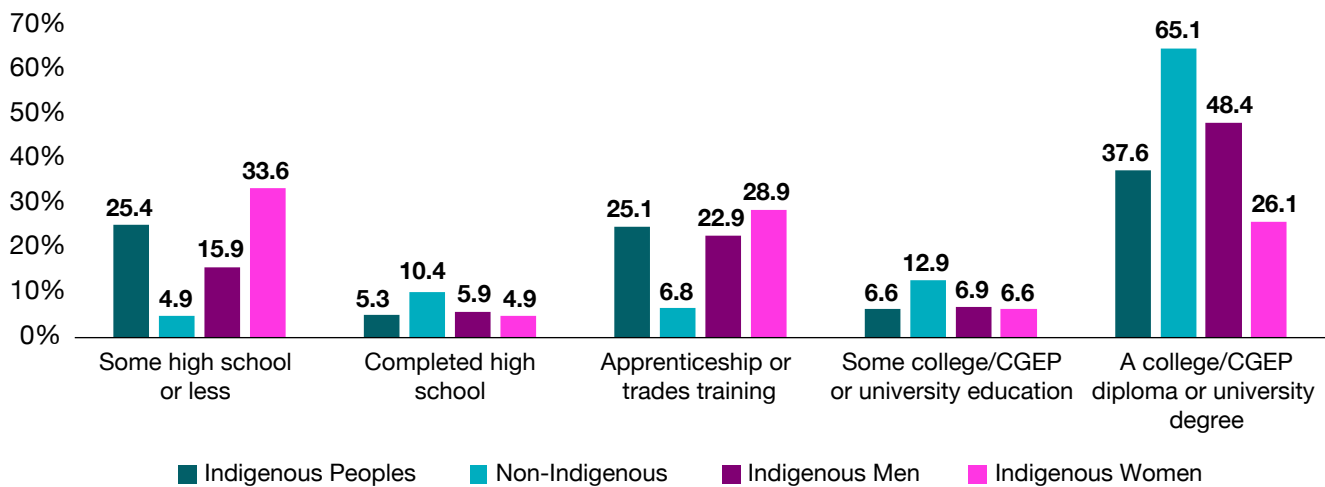


A much higher proportion of Indigenous Peoples say that they received training to help them learn how to use AI in the workplace. Overall, 80% of the Indigenous workforce had received some training on AI programs in the workplace, compared to just over half (53%) of the non-Indigenous workforce. Indigenous women had a much higher proportion reporting to have received training on how to use AI in the workplace compared to men (92% vs. 73%). Roughly half (49%) of the Indigenous respondents workforce had training provided by their employer, compared to only a third (34%) of the non-Indigenous workforce.

A higher proportion also report that they had received training on AI that was not provided by their employer (31% vs 19%).

Those who have used AI to help with tasks at work vary greatly by education level. While 25% of Indigenous respondents with some high school or less have used AI to help with tasks at work, only 5% of non-Indigenous respondents report the same (Figure 14). There is also a large gap in AI use by those with a post-secondary education, with only 38% of Indigenous respondents using AI at work, compared to 65% of non-indigenous respondents.

Figure 14
AI use by education levels





Conclusion

This report uses the Survey on Skills and Employment data, mainly focusing on Wave 8, conducted from March to April 2025 with 5,550 participants (including 281 Indigenous Peoples) across Canada to examine on Indigenous Peoples' experiences in workplaces, including training, employment, use of AI, and discrimination. Although the weighted data include a small number of Indigenous participants, who are also overrepresented in the sample, our findings show that Indigenous Peoples in the workplace demonstrated strengths while facing ongoing challenges. These challenges differentiate them from the general population and result in distinct patterns in Indigenous respondents' workplace experiences across employment conditions, well-being, training participation, and technology use.

Although disparities in education and documented experiences of Anti-Indigenous discrimination are well established in research, less attention has been given to Indigenous Peoples' workplace experiences, including training participation, technological engagement, job satisfaction, and perceptions of labour market conditions. The findings in this report indicate that, despite higher unemployment and ongoing exposure to discrimination, Indigenous respondents report comparatively high levels of job satisfaction, strong engagement in employer-provided training, and greater optimism about current job opportunities. At the same time, mental health indicators including elevated reports of depression, anxiety, and isolation demonstrate that positive workplace engagement does not eliminate broader structural and well-being challenges.

These findings suggest that workplace experiences are shaped not only by traditional indicators such as education or unemployment, but also by perceptions of opportunity, training access, well-being, and exposure to discrimination. The findings indicate complexity in Indigenous labour market experiences, with disparities evident in some areas alongside strengths in others.

The findings from this report inform our recommendations which include:

- > **Implement measures to reduce discrimination in the workplace**, while simultaneously increasing the proportion of Indigenous leadership in companies and organizations. Organizations should also establish transparent promotion criteria and track advancement outcomes to ensure equitable access to career progression and leadership pathways.
- > **Barriers to education remain at all levels**, highlighting the need for increased supports for Indigenous youth to access education, especially for women. These supports should include targeted pathways into skilled trades, post-secondary education, and emerging technology sectors.
- > **Introduce more mentorship opportunities for Indigenous youth and workers** to help expand their professional networks and improve workplace outcomes. Mentorship programs should support career advancement, earnings progression, and access to decision-making roles.
- > **Continued supports for both the mental and physical health of Indigenous Peoples** to ensure they have avenues to help deal with the barriers and discrimination they face. These supports should be culturally responsive and trauma-informed, recognizing the intersection of workplace discrimination, employment instability, health outcomes and the inter-generational impacts of residential schools.
- > **A gender and diversity lens** is needed to address various needs of the Indigenous Peoples. Intersectional and distinctions-based approaches should recognize differences across gender, age, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities, as well as regional and urban–rural (on-reserve and off-reserve) contexts.
- > **More research is needed** to understand whether the results of this study just reflect the sample or if they are representative of the types of roles Indigenous Peoples are in and the workplaces where they are employed. Future research is needed to understand the contextual differences in context and the links between access to training, employment and job satisfaction but this study does offer a new perspective on the experiences of Indigenous peoples in the workplace. Continued evidence-building will be essential to understanding how Indigenous workplace engagement evolves and how policy and organizational strategies can most effectively support inclusive and sustainable outcomes.

References

- 1 Statistics Canada. (2023, June 21). *Canada's Indigenous Population*. <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/o1/en/plus/3920-canadas-indigenous-population>
- 2 Baruah, B., & Biskupski-Mujanovic, S. (2023, July). Indigenous women's employment in natural resource industries in Canada: Patterns, barriers and opportunities. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 99, 102784. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2023.102784>
- 3 Mathew, D., Nishikawara, R., Ferguson, A., & Borgen, W. (2023). Cultural infusions and shifting sands: What helps and hinders career decision-making of Indigenous young people. *Canadian Journal of Career Development*, 22(1), 6-18. <https://doi.org/10.53379/cjcd.2023.345>
- 4 Nangia, P., & Arora, T. (2021). Discrimination in the Workplace in Canada. *The Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 46(2), 147-178. <https://doi.org/10.29173/cjs29736>
- 5 Pelletier, A. J., Collins, K. A., LeBlanc, M. M., Peach, J. M., Christianson, T., & Derkson, J. (2025). Harassment and discrimination experiences of Indigenous Peoples in the Canadian Armed Forces. *Journal of Military, Veteran and Family Health*, 11(3), 17-28. <https://doi.org/10.3138/jmvfh-2024-0030>
- 6 Durand-Moreau, Q., Lafontaine, J., & Ward, J. (2022). Work and health challenges of Indigenous people in Canada. *The Lancet Global Health*, 10(8), e1189-e1197. [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X\(22\)00203-0/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(22)00203-0/fulltext)
- 7 Hanson, E., Gamez, D., & Manuel, A. (2020, September). *The Residential School System*. Indigenous Foundations. <https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/residential-school-system-2020/>
- 8 Webb, D., Stutz, S., Hiscock, C., Bowra, A., Butsang, T., Tan, S., Scott-Kay, B., & Mashford-Pringle, A. (2023). Indigenous cultural safety trainings for healthcare professionals working in Ontario, Canada: context and considerations for healthcare institutions. *Health services insights*, 16, 11786329231169939. <https://doi.org/10.1177/11786329231169939>
- 9 Wylie, L., McConkey, S., & Corrado, A. M. (2021). It's a journey not a check box: Indigenous cultural safety from training to transformation. *International Journal of Indigenous Health*, 16(1). <https://doi.org/10.32799/ijih.v16i1.33240>
- 10 Pelletier, A. J., Collins, K. A., LeBlanc, M. M., Peach, J. M., Christianson, T., & Derkson, J. (2025). Harassment and discrimination experiences of Indigenous Peoples in the Canadian Armed Forces. *Journal of Military, Veteran and Family Health*, 11(3), 17-28. <https://doi.org/10.3138/jmvfh-2024-0030>
- 11 Lamb, D., & Verma, A. (2021). Nonstandard employment and indigenous earnings inequality in Canada. *Journal of Industrial Relations*, 63(5), 661-683. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00221856211021128>



**Environics
Institute**
For Survey Research



**Future Skills
Centre** Centre des
**Compétences
futures**

**TED
ROGERS
SCHOOL
OF MANAGEMENT**

DiVERSITY
INSTITUTE