



STATE OF BLACK ECONOMICS REPORT

SOBER 2026

Insights on Education, Employment, and Entrepreneurship

Partners



Based in TMU's Ted Rogers School of Management, the Diversity Institute (DI) has a research staff of over 50 in 10 regional hubs across Canada, and works with more than 200 partners and a global network of experts. The Diversity Institute leads research on skills and employment trends, technology adoption, inclusive ecosystems (with a focus on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurship), as well as related innovation pilot design and evaluation. Our action oriented, evidence-based approach is advancing knowledge of the complex barriers faced by Indigenous people and equity-deserving groups, informing policies and practices to effect change, and producing concrete results.

DI is the research lead for the Future Skills Centre (FSC) a consortium including Toronto Metropolitan University, Signal49 Research, and Blueprint. DI leads research on responsible AI adoption in Canada and internationally to inform policies, strategies, and programs. As part of its commitment to advancing inclusive innovation and entrepreneurship, DI founded the Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub (WEKH) and the Inclusive Innovation and Entrepreneurship Network (IINet) and offers a range of training programs and advisory services.



The Future Skills Centre is powered by a Canada-wide network of **5,000+ partners** committed to solving Canada's most pressing labour market challenges. More than just a funder, we are an active partner in every project we support. We ask more of our partners — prioritizing collaboration, shared learning and openness — to foster long-term relationships and enable the ambitious approaches needed to drive real change.

The Future Skills Centre operates as a consortium of Toronto Metropolitan University (including the Diversity Institute and Magnet), Signal49 Research, and Blueprint. We are funded by the Government of Canada's Future Skills Program.

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Contents

<u>Executive Summary</u>	<u>i</u>
<u>Introduction</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Context</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>Education</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>Employment</u>	<u>16</u>
<u>Leadership</u>	<u>33</u>
<u>Entrepreneurship</u>	<u>39</u>
<u>Conclusions and Recommendations</u>	<u>44</u>
<u>Appendix A</u>	<u>49</u>
<u>References</u>	<u>64</u>

Executive Summary

Black economic inclusion is central to what comes next.

Black people are among Canada's youngest and fastest-growing communities, with strong labour-force attachment — yet outcomes still lag, across four pillars.

01/

Education

02/

Employment

03/

Leadership

04/

Entrepreneurship

4.3%

of Canada's population is Black — more than double since 1996

41.9%

of the Black population is under age 25

5.5%

of Canada's labour force

73.8%

labour-force participation — above the 64.5% overall rate

11.1%

unemployment — nearly twice the 6.4% overall rate

47.3%

report workplace discrimination — 2× the overall rate

Executive Summary

41.9%

of the Black population is under age 25,
a rising share of Canada's future workforce.

Canada begins 2026 amid significant economic uncertainty and structural change. Population aging, tighter immigration measures, labour shortages in critical sectors and a visible backlash against equity, diversity, and inclusion are unfolding while Canada is trying to advance productivity, technology adoption, sectoral transformation, and “Canada Strong” economic priorities. At the same time, the United Nations’ Second International Decade for People of African Descent renews the global call for recognition, justice, and development through stronger action on equal participation, respect for the heritage and contributions of people of African descent, and legal and policy frameworks to address racism and discrimination. In this context, the economic inclusion of Black people is not peripheral; rather, it is central to Canada’s workforce growth, innovation capacity, and long-term competitiveness. Advancing Black economic inclusion is both a matter of equity and a practical requirement for building a more productive, resilient, and future-ready economy.

The *State of Black Economics Report* synthesizes research from government,

academia, industry, and community organizations on the economic realities of Black people in Canada, examining representation and inclusion across education, employment, leadership, and entrepreneurship. The inaugural report, published in 2025, established baseline conditions, documenting disparities alongside progress and identifying structural barriers that continue to affect opportunities and outcomes for Black people in Canada.

The 2026 report builds on this foundation by focusing on where evidence can be updated, extended, or examined in greater depth, particularly in sectors critical to Canada’s productivity, infrastructure, and digital transformation. An intersectional lens is applied throughout, examining the ways in which outcomes are shaped by race alongside other identity factors such as gender, disability, immigration status, age, and other intersecting identities, where data permit. Drawing on foundational work by Kimberlé Crenshaw and Patricia Hill Collins, intersectionality is understood here as both a way to examine overlapping forms of discrimination and a broader framework for



Advancing Black economic inclusion is both a matter of equity and a practical requirement for building a more productive, resilient, and future-ready economy.

understanding how systems of power shape unequal outcomes across institutions and society. The analysis is organized across four pillars, each with a clearly defined focus for this year's report:

- **Education:** This report provides a systematic review of publicly available data from a sample of school boards and post-secondary institutions to identify disparities, where reported, as well as documenting gaps and inconsistencies in race-disaggregated reporting. These gaps in transparency limit effective workforce planning, particularly as Canada works to better align education pathways with sectoral labour needs.
- **Employment:** This report draws on newly available data to update key labour market indicators, followed by a focused analysis of three growing sectors (i.e., health care, skilled trades and information and communications technology) to assess access for Black workers in areas of projected labour demand that are central to Canada's housing acceleration, clean growth, digital adoption, and health system sustainability.
- **Leadership:** This year's analysis reviews a sample of top Toronto Stock Exchange (TSX)-listed companies to provide updated insights into Black representation across the corporate sector. During a time of public service renewal, the analysis also focuses on the public sector. It further assesses representation in management roles, where pathways into senior leadership are formed.
- **Entrepreneurship:** Rather than revisiting well-documented barriers, the focus of this report shifts to impact, highlighting the contributions of Black-owned businesses. It includes a look at their role in trade diversification, innovation, and growth at a time when Canada seeks to expand export markets and strengthen domestic supply chains.

Appendix A highlights selected initiatives that support the educational, employment, leadership, and entrepreneurial development of Black people in Canada. Where available, results are included. Featuring examples led by governments, employers, community organizations, and others, the appendix is intended to illustrate the range of efforts underway rather than offer a comprehensive inventory.

Context

Black people make up 4.3% of Canada's population. This number has more than doubled since 1996, driven by immigration and natural increase, with immigrants accounting for half of the Black population. The population is young (41.9% are under 25), and is projected to exceed three million by 2041, meaning that gaps in education,

employment, and economic security will have growing implications for the Canadian labour market and economy, especially as employers look to new sources of talent to sustain expansion in priority sectors and adapt to demographic shifts.

While public discourse around equity, diversity and inclusion has become more polarized, Canada's legal frameworks, policies, and public sentiment remain broadly supportive. Evidence consistently shows that inclusive practices strengthen organizational performance, support innovation, and help employers respond to labour shortages by expanding access to talent. At the same time, anti-Black racism remains embedded across institutions and continues to shape outcomes in areas such as employment, education and economic participation. The data should therefore be read with care, recognizing that stereotypes and bias can affect how Black people are treated, evaluated, and given opportunities across different systems. Addressing these disparities requires a notably more consistent use of disaggregated and intersectional data to better understand differences within the Black population and to inform more targeted and effective responses.

Education

Kindergarten to Grade 12

This edition of the report incorporates a systematic scan of Ontario's largest school boards. A key limitation identified in this analysis is the lack of race-disaggregated reporting. Despite this constraint, the evidence suggests that while there has been progress, barriers persist for Black students and educators. Black educators remain under-represented compared to the

student populations they serve. For the few school boards publishing race-based data, the graduation rates for Black students are typically three to five percentage points lower than for other students, and Black students are much more likely to face disciplinary action, including suspensions and expulsions. The majority of reported racist incidents documented by school boards also involve forms of anti-Black racism.

While Ontario has eliminated Grade 9 academic and applied streaming, informal pathwaying persists, where disparities are difficult to track. In practice, pathwaying can and does begin much earlier, including through special education pull-outs and classroom grouping practices in elementary school. In secondary school, applied and locally developed courses, particularly in subjects such as math, remain in use across many school boards. As a result, streaming must now be assessed through Grade 10 and 11 course pathways, which can delay identification and intervention. These disparities stem from a variety of factors, including systemic bias and persistent stereotyping, which often portray Black youth as more disruptive and less academically capable, as well as limited institutional support affecting inclusion and student success.

College-level education

Participation in college pathways is increasing among Black learners, making what happens at this level especially important. However, a cross-country review of major colleges suggests that this part of the education pipeline has the weakest public reporting, as most sampled institutions do not publish Black-specific data. When this information is available, it is often aggregated and lacks



sufficient detail for meaningful analysis. Nonetheless, the available figures show that Black staff and faculty remain under-represented relative to Black student enrolment, pointing to ongoing equity challenges within post-secondary institutions.

University-level education

An analysis of select universities across Canada, focusing on those with the largest undergraduate enrolment, shows that although reporting is more consistent than in colleges, representation gaps persist. Across most institutions, Black students make up a larger share of the student body than Black employees do of the workforce, and faculty representation is much lower beyond that, with evidence, where available, showing that the gap widens significantly with seniority.

Employment

The analysis in this report shows that Black people continue to demonstrate strong labour force participation and sustained commitment to their skill development. Despite this commitment, Black people experience poorer outcomes across multiple labour market

indicators, including employment stability, earnings, occupational mobility and workplace experiences. These patterns underscore the persistence of structural barriers that hinder their advancement. In other words, even when Black people demonstrate comparable or even higher levels of qualifications, the returns they receive are not equal, pointing to systemic inequities in how skills and contributions are recognized and rewarded in the labour market.

Workplace discrimination

Findings from the Survey on Employment and Skills show that nearly half (47.3%) of Black respondents report experiencing workplace discrimination, which is more than double the rate in the overall sample (18.5%), and this disparity persists across both gender and sectors.

Labour market outcomes

This year's report continues to examine labour market outcomes, providing an important lens on economic participation and opportunity. Black people account for 5.5% of the labour force and show stronger attachment to work, with higher participation (73.8%) and employment (65.6%) than the overall population (64.5% and 60.4%, respectively), yet unemployment remains nearly twice as high (11.1% vs. 6.4%). The difference is most visible among youth, where about one in five (20%) Black young people are unemployed, nearly nine percentage points above non-racialized peers.

Job quality and occupational distribution

Black workers are more likely to face employment precarity. Average hourly earnings for Black workers are about 17%

lower than for non-racialized workers, and Black workers are more than twice as likely to fall below the low-pay threshold (19.2% Black vs. 8.1% non-racialized, non-Indigenous). Employment is concentrated in lower-wage occupations, with about one-quarter of Black workers in sales and service, while only 4.9% are in management.

Differences within the Black population

Labour market outcomes vary substantially within the Black population, highlighting important differences across immigration status and generational groups. Caribbean-born immigrants show comparatively strong employment and earnings, while African-born immigrants, despite often having high educational attainment, face weaker employment outcomes and higher overqualification rates. While non-permanent residents have relatively high employment, they experience the lowest incomes and the highest overqualification, indicating that access to employment does not necessarily translate into equitable or appropriate job quality. Second-generation individuals experience mixed results, and third-generation-or-more populations show the weakest outcomes, including lower employment and earnings. This pattern suggests that labour market challenges are not solely linked to recent immigration but may persist or even deepen across generations.

Skills, technology, and workplace adaptation

The results from the latest national Survey on Employment and Skills indicate that Black workers are actively adapting to changing workplace dynamics, including higher participation in employment training, more

self-directed AI training, and greater AI use at work, compared to Canadians overall.

Access to in-demand sectors and occupations

Black people have a stronger presence in front-line roles, and are less represented in higher-paid or supervisory positions across sectors projected to drive future employment.

- **Health care:** Black workers are over-represented in health care overall, but concentrated in care and support roles, with much lower representation among physicians and clinical leadership.
- **Skilled trades and construction:** Representation is roughly equal to their overall share of employment, but workers are concentrated in labour-intensive roles, with far fewer in certified trades and supervisory positions.
- **Information and communications technology:** There is a notable presence in some technical specialties such as cybersecurity and systems-related specialties, but Black people are much less present in software development, engineering and management positions. They also experience the largest pay gaps within the sector.

Leadership

Corporate sector

Reporting from the corporate sector suggests progress has slowed and disclosure on leadership diversity has declined. An analysis of top TSX-listed firms show that Black people hold 4.1% of board seats across 25 large companies, with lower representation

in senior management (1.5%). Within this sample, Black women comprise the majority of Black directors and senior leaders, while representation in boards and executive roles overall remains dominated by men. However, the findings should be interpreted with caution given the small sample size, and should not be read as evidence of broad progress or parity for Black women in corporate leadership.

Public sector

Even though it is generally considered more accountable, the public sector also shows gaps in leadership representation. Interviews with Black federal service leaders document significant barriers, including harassment and intimidation, challenges to authority and insubordination, denial of career-advancing opportunities, biased performance assessments, excessive workloads and racially targeted complaints and investigations, with Black women reporting these experiences at particularly high rates.

Management roles

Across sectors, Black representation in leadership remains limited, with disparities appearing well before senior roles, as Black workers have the largest gap between their presence in the workforce and their presence in management compared with other racialized and non-racialized groups. These gaps matter not only for representation, but for succession planning and for the progression of Black people into leadership positions. This points to barriers within the leadership pipeline, including how organizations assess professionalism, leadership potential, and cultural fit. Although these standards are presented as neutral, they often privilege white norms around communication, appearance, behaviour, etc., resulting in the exclusion of Black workers from management.

Entrepreneurship

Impact of Black entrepreneurs

Despite these pressures, Black-owned businesses play an important economic and community role across Canada, contributing to job creation, innovation, and local economic development, often meeting community needs that might otherwise go unmet. Many Black entrepreneurs are first generation business owners, contributing to wealth-building and encouraging further entrepreneurship in their communities. In addition, Black immigrant entrepreneurs are often more internationally oriented, engaging in cross-border business activities and expanding Canada's international trade links. Together, these contributions highlight the broader economic and social value of Black entrepreneurship beyond business ownership alone.

Trends in Black entrepreneurship

Although Black entrepreneurship remains below population share and is projected to continue lagging even as the Black population grows, recent data show continued growth despite economic pressures. For example, Black self-employment rose from 3.16% in 2024 to 3.53% in 2025, suggesting incremental gains in entrepreneurial activity. This upward movement reflects sustained engagement in business formation, although the evidence suggests that Black entrepreneurs experience heightened exposure to economic volatility. They appear more sensitive to economic shifts, with their optimism declining more sharply from 2024 to 2025 than that of entrepreneurs overall. This trend is likely linked to structural constraints, including having fewer financial resources to fall back on. As a result, while participation is increasing, the stability and resilience of Black-owned businesses remain

disproportionately affected by broader economic conditions.

Conclusions and recommendations

The evidence presented in this report indicates that strengthening economic outcomes for the Black population in Canada requires sustained attention not only to access, but to advancement. Across education, employment, leadership, and entrepreneurship, the primary barrier is less about entry and more about what comes after it, including wage growth, progression into leadership, employment stability, and entrepreneurial sustainability.

As Canada navigates demographic aging and sectoral labour shortages, improving representation for Black people within high-demand and strategically important sectors, particularly in more stable and high-earning roles as workers and as small business owners within Canada's supply chain, is directly connected to Canada's economic performance. Persistent barriers mean that skills, education and experience are not translating into equitable employment, earnings, and leadership outcomes.

Key areas for action include:

- Enhancing race-disaggregated data collection and public reporting across education systems, labour markets and leadership structures to support accountability and informed workforce planning.
- Implementing targeted anti-Black racism strategies within school boards and post-secondary institutions, including

curriculum reform, and expanding pathways for Black teachers and administrators.



Persistent barriers mean that skills, education and experience are not translating into equitable employment, earnings, and leadership outcomes.

- Expanding structured pathways into and within growth sectors through apprenticeships, credential recognition, work-integrated learning and sector-aligned training initiatives.
- Addressing leadership gaps where representation disparities emerge early and shape long-term advancement outcomes.
- Aligning workforce and entrepreneurship supports with national sector priorities and export strategies, including targeted supports for internationally connected and trade-oriented businesses.
- Strengthening mentorship, sponsorship and peer networks to support Black people and to strengthen training focused on anti-Black racism for decision makers.

Taken together, these measures position the economic participation of Black people as both an inclusion imperative and a strategic component of Canada's productivity, sectoral growth and economic resilience.

Key Findings

What the evidence says — and why it matters now.

Biggest opportunities

- Young, fast-growing — 3M+ by 2041
- 32.4% hold a bachelor's degree, near parity
- Strong labour-force attachment
- Self-employment up 3.16%– 3.53% in a year

Biggest challenges

- Unemployment nearly double: 11.1% vs. 6.4%
- ~17% lower average hourly earnings
- 47.3% report workplace discrimination
- Only 4.1% of TSX boards, 1.5% of senior roles

What changed since 2025

- Deeper look at health care, trades and ICT
- New review of top TSX-listed firms
- Sharper focus on Black entrepreneurship
- Gaps persist in K–12 race-based data

Why it matters

- Central to Canada's workforce growth
- Strengthens innovation and competitiveness
- The barrier is advancement, not entry
- Both an equity imperative and economic strategy

Introduction

Advancing Black economic inclusion is both a matter of equity and a practical requirement for a productive, resilient and future-ready economy.

Canada enters 2026 at a crossroads. Economic uncertainty, geopolitical instability, rapid technological change¹ and a visible backlash against equity, diversity, and inclusion are reshaping public discourse and policy choices.^{2, 3} The State of Black Economics Report (SOBER) 2026 reviews the Black population's economic outcomes within the broader context shaping productivity, workforce growth, and international competitiveness. Recognizing the diversity within Black communities and the unique experiences of Black women, this report applies an intersectional lens where data are available. It also draws on an ecological framework to consider how interacting factors at the societal, organizational, and individual levels shape experiences for Black people across education, employment, leadership, and entrepreneurship.

With the next census scheduled for May 2026, this report draws on the 2021 Census to provide a national demographic portrait of Black people in Canada, while integrating recent Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey data (January 2026) to assess current employment conditions. This report provides an analysis of education where data are available, which is the foundation of employment, leadership and entrepreneurship. The report also examines labour market

indicators including participation, employment, and unemployment trends by age and gender, and examines Black representation in high-demand sectors such as health care, skilled trades and construction, and information and communications technology. By connecting early educational pathways as well as real-time labour market outcomes, the report highlights where gaps persist and their impact.

While this report highlights newly available data, the findings should be understood within the broader context of anti-Black racism and the systemic barriers that continue to produce disparities across education, employment, leadership, and entrepreneurship for diverse Black communities. The disparities highlighted in this report are neither isolated nor new, but are connected to long-standing laws, policies, social norms, and institutional practices that have shaped, and continue to shape, access to quality education, stable and well-paid employment, secure housing, wealth-building opportunities, and positions of influence in civic and economic life. Inequities remain embedded in the structures and everyday practices that shape Black people's access to opportunity, the assessment of their qualifications, the recognition of their contributions, and their treatment within institutions and workplaces across Canada today.

Context

50.9%

just over half of Canada's Black population are immigrants — driving diversity in country of origin, language and migration history.

The Black community in Canada is diverse and growing. Understanding its demographic composition is critical for identifying how barriers and differences in economic and social outcomes vary within the Black population across age, gender, ability, ethnicity, immigration status, religion, and other intersecting characteristics.

Projections suggest that the Black population could exceed three million by 2041, making it the second-largest racialized group in the country. According to the 2021 Census,⁴ Black people comprise 4.3% of Canada's population, and the population more than doubled between 1996 and 2021 due to immigration and natural increase. Immigrants make up just slightly over half (50.9%) of the Black population, contributing to significant diversity in country of origin, language, and migration history. Next to Canadian-born individuals (41%), those born in Africa make up the largest share of the Black population (32.6%), followed by those born in the Caribbean (21%). The population is notably young, with youth under 25 comprising 41.9% of the Black population, compared to 12.1% youth under 25 across Canada's overall population.⁵

In 2025, Black people accounted for 5.5% of Canada's labour force, reflecting both demographic expansion and strong labour market attachment.⁶ As a result, trends affecting Black people increasingly influence Canada's overall labour market performance and workforce supply. The significant immigrant share of the population also shapes patterns of labour market integration, credential recognition and entrepreneurship.

The case for equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) against backlash

Recent legal and policy shifts in the US, alongside an increasingly polarized public debate, have helped fuel an EDI backlash that is now echoing in Canada. In this climate, EDI is more frequently treated as a reputational or political risk, rather than a core workforce and workplace priority or as part of an obligation to uphold human rights obligations.

While there are spillover effects of the anti-EDI discourse in Canada, our well-established legal framework is unchanged. Section 15 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* guarantees the right to equality without

discrimination based on race, ethnic origin, or other protected characteristics, and explicitly permits measures that address disadvantage.⁷ The *Canadian Human Rights Act* reinforces these protections at the federal level, while provincial and territorial human rights codes extend similar protections across sectors.⁸ The *Employment Equity Act* goes further by requiring federally regulated employers to take proactive steps to improve representation for designated groups.⁹ Additional legislation at the provincial level and recent court decisions reinforce the importance of Canadian organizations “staying the course.”^{10, 11}

While there has been backlash against immigration levels in Canada and some evidence of a reframing of EDI, legislative frameworks, corporate policies and practices, and public sentiment remain broadly supportive of EDI. Recent research shows that a majority (54%) of Canadian workers view EDI positively, more than three times the share who view it negatively (16%), and nearly half (47%) report that EDI has had a positive impact on their own opportunities. Support is particularly strong among equity-deserving groups, especially Black respondents (65%).¹²

There is also a strong body of evidence linking diversity and inclusion to organizational performance. Research shows that diversity and inclusion are associated with enhanced organizational efficiency and financial performance.^{13, 14} Diverse teams bring a wider range of perspectives, which supports innovation, creativity, and problem-solving.^{15, 16, 17, 18} Inclusive hiring practices also expand the available talent pool, helping organizations address skills gaps and remain competitive in tight labour markets.¹⁹ Inclusive workplaces are associated with higher levels of employee



satisfaction, engagement, and loyalty, which support productivity and retention and reduce the costs associated with turnover.^{20, 21, 22, 23,}

²⁴ Maintaining and strengthening Canada’s equity commitments is therefore both a matter of principle and a practical approach to sustaining effective and competitive organizations.

Anti-Black racism

Anti-Black racism is a form of racism shaped by the historical legacies of slavery, colonialism, segregation, and discrimination.²⁵ Despite progress, it continues to influence stereotypes, policies, organizational practices, and individual attitudes today. There is significant evidence that systemic bias creates barriers for Black people in education, employment, housing, health care, and policing, making it harder for them to succeed and thrive.^{26, 27, 28, 29, 30}

Many Canadians are unaware of Canada’s history of slavery, which spanned nearly 200 years between the 17th and 19th centuries.³¹ Unlike the plantation economy of the United States, enslavement in Canada primarily

served in domestic roles, yet enslaved persons were subject to physical, psychological, sexual and reproductive violence.³² Even after abolition in 1834, substantive legal protections in housing, education, and employment did not materialize until the 1950s and 1960s.^{33, 34}



There is increasing recognition of the need to recognize the distinct experience of Black people in Canada rather than subsuming them within the broad category of “racialized people” or “visible minorities.”

These colonial legacies continue to permeate modern institutions and disadvantage Black Canadians whose contributions to the development of communities, business and economies, culture, and science are often overlooked. The legacy of slavery and inequality has also affected the accumulation of generational wealth.³⁵ Past experiences and ongoing barriers to access result in generational trauma and prevent trust-building across communities.³⁶ Put simply, despite having deep roots in Canada, many Black people continue to experience anti-Black racism.

Canada's *Employment Equity Act*, which applies to federally regulated corporations

but shapes broader approaches to EDI, aims to achieve substantive equality in Canadian workplaces, ensuring equal outcomes for designated groups, namely: women, Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities, and racialized people.³⁷ Substantive equality moves beyond formal equality, which treats everyone the same, by recognizing that different groups face different historical, structural, and systemic barriers. It requires proactive and sometimes differential measures, such as accommodations, barrier removal, targeted supports, and special measures, to achieve equitable outcomes rather than simply equal treatment. There is increasing recognition of the need to recognize the distinct experience of Black people in Canada rather than subsuming them within the broad category of “racialized people” or “visible minorities.”^{38, 39}

Disaggregated data are essential to making these distinctions actionable. Intersectional data are also critical to understanding differences within the Black community, particularly in light of the compounded barriers faced by Black women,⁴⁰ the challenges of credential non-recognition among Black immigrants, who represent 50.9% of the population,⁴¹ etc. Statistics Canada data already show significant income differences across origin, gender, and generation within the Black community.⁴²



Education

Where economic mobility begins —
classrooms, colleges and universities.

3–5 pts

lower graduation rates for Black students

2–3×

more likely to be suspended or expelled

Education

28.8%

of suspensions and expulsions at the Toronto DSB involved Black students — nearly three times their share of enrolment.

Education pathways shape long-term employment outcomes, entrepreneurial entry and access to leadership and higher wage roles. Extensive research has examined learning gaps and anti-Black racism in education, including curriculum, pedagogy, career counselling and disciplinary practices,^{43, 44, 45} and there have been a series of inquiries and recommendations for reform.^{46, 47, 48}

Despite this, there remains limited national or even provincial race-disaggregated data on educational outcomes to allow us to benchmark or track performance. Data limitations are even more pronounced when trying to apply an intersectional analysis to differences within the Black student population, including by gender, disability, immigration status, and other factors. This matters because Black students are not a homogenous group, and research has shown that Black boys and Black girls, for example, can experience schooling differently.⁴⁹

Given these limitations, publicly available data remain an important starting point for understanding where disparities are visible and where accountability gaps persist. This section therefore draws on publicly reported race-disaggregated data from Ontario's

largest school boards, alongside a review of publicly available information from a sample of colleges across Canada and representation data from a selection of major universities. Although these sources do not provide a complete picture, they help identify areas where inequities are evident, where reporting remains insufficient, and where stronger data infrastructure is needed to support more effective monitoring and action.

Kindergarten to Grade 12

The K–12 years are formative for long-term educational and economic outcomes. Decisions made here, including access to programming and disciplinary responses, affect whether students are positioned for stable and high-earning careers, or steered toward more precarious pathways. For Black students in Canada, evidence consistently points to structural barriers operating across all of these dimensions. This section examines publicly available race-disaggregated data from Ontario's largest school boards,⁵⁰ which collectively serve the province with the largest Black population in the country.⁵¹

The analysis covers five key areas: staff and teacher representation, graduation outcomes,



course placement and streaming, disciplinary measures, and inclusion. Not all boards publicly report race-disaggregated data, and where reporting exists, methodologies and reference years vary. The findings presented here are therefore illustrative of broader patterns rather than a definitive provincial picture.

Staff and teacher representation

There is considerable research emphasizing the importance of Black role models and teachers with lived experience to support Black learners.^{52, 53, 54} Additionally, research shows that increasing and supporting Black staff, including administrators, counsellors, and principals can improve academic outcomes for Black students and affect their perception of future opportunities.^{55, 56,}

⁵⁷ Despite this evidence, the review shows that Black staff are under-represented across boards, compared to the student population they serve.⁵⁸ Toronto District School Board (DSB) is a notable exception, reporting 10.5% Black staff ⁵⁹ alongside 10% Black students.⁶⁰ In most other boards, there are gaps of several percentage points, with the widest disparity

in Dufferin–Peel Catholic DSB, where Black students comprise roughly 17–18% of the student body compared to about 7% Black staff.⁶¹

Where teacher representation data are available, disparities become more pronounced. For example, in Toronto DSB, Black students account for roughly 10% of the student population, while Black teachers represent about 7.2% at the elementary level and 5% at the secondary level.⁶² In Peel DSB, Black students make up 11.2% of the student population,⁶³ compared to 6.7% of elementary teachers and 9.8% of secondary teachers.⁶⁴ Similar patterns are observed in Dufferin–Peel Catholic DSB, where Black students represent about 17–18% of enrolment, while Black teachers account for about 3% at the elementary level and 6% at the secondary level.⁶⁵

Graduation outcomes

Across boards and years, Black students are less likely to graduate and more likely to take longer to complete their studies. Only a few school boards in Ontario report their graduation rates for different racial groups and of those who make the data available, the difference in the graduation rate varies between three and five percentage points. For example, for the 2018–19 student cohort, Peel DSB reported a graduation rate of 86% for Black students compared to 91% overall. The non-graduation track Disproportionality Index was 1.7, indicating that Black students were significantly more likely to leave without graduating.⁶⁶ For the 2019–20 student cohort, York Region DSB reported a graduation rate of 92% for Black students compared to 97% for other races.⁶⁷ Dufferin–Peel Catholic DSB and Durham DSB reported disparities of 3%.^{68, 69} Ottawa–Carleton DSB reported

that only 76.1% of Black students were on track to graduate compared to 86.8% overall. No publicly available race-disaggregated graduation data was identified for the Toronto DSB beyond the 2006–2011 student cohort, when a gap of 15 percentage points between Black students and white students was recorded.⁷¹

Course placement and streaming

Educational inequities are structurally embedded early in the academic trajectory, as school systems disproportionately place Black students into behavioural or special education pathways.⁷² For example, in Toronto DSB's report examining trends from 2016 to 2022, Black students account for 40% of behavioural exceptionalities, despite making up only 10–12% of the overall student population.⁷³ Moreover, Black students account for 26% of those placed in special education, the highest share among racialized groups. They are also less likely to be enrolled in academic pathways, with 78% of Black students compared to 90% of white students.⁷⁴

In Dufferin–Peel DSB, the 2021–22 Black student cohort was under-represented in university-track courses, by 8 percentage points in English, 12 in math, and 14 in science, and over-represented in college-track courses, by 46 points in English, 42 in math, and 46 in science.⁷⁵ Similarly, in Peel DSB, Black students remain over-represented in pathways linked to non-university outcomes. They are about twice as likely to be enrolled in the Grade 11 college or workplace track,⁷⁶ and although their disproportionality in locally developed compulsory credit programs declined from 2.5 in 2018–19 to 1.6 in 2023–24, they remain over-represented.⁷⁷ Black



students are also more likely to be identified with language impairment, mild intellectual disability, and learning disability, and less likely to be identified as gifted. This is significant because several of these designations are based on more subjective forms of assessment and do not require a medical diagnosis.⁷⁸

In York Region, Black students continue to be over-represented in special education needs designations, with the Disproportionality Index increasing from 1.17 to 1.28 for Black single-race students and from 1.06 to 1.2 for Black multiracial students between 2021 and 2024, while all other groups remained below 1.0.⁷⁹ In Ottawa–Carleton, Black students represent 25% of those in modified elementary curricula despite making up only 12.2% of the elementary student population.⁸⁰ In Halton, Black students are also over-represented among those with individualized education plans, with a Disproportionality Index of 1.10 based on 2022 reporting.⁸¹

The scale and consistency of these patterns point to systemic bias and racism within the education system. A qualitative study commissioned by the Toronto Catholic

DSB found that educators often held lower expectations for Black students.⁸² Other research has shown that, even when factors like ADHD diagnoses and socioeconomic status are similar, Black students are more likely than their white peers to be flagged for behavioural or learning challenges.⁸³ This systemic denial of equitable education actively constructs a school-to-precarity pipeline, effectively limiting future economic and social mobility.

Disciplinary measures

Research has shown that the over-representation of Black students in suspensions and expulsions is largely produced by systemic biases and institutional stereotyping that consistently cast Black youth as disruptive and less academically capable.⁸⁴ Educators and disciplinary structures frequently project aggression against Black youth, resulting in harsher punitive measures for identical conduct compared to their white peers.^{85, 86, 87}



Research has shown that the over-representation of Black students in suspensions and expulsions is largely produced by systemic biases and institutional stereotyping that consistently cast Black youth as disruptive and less academically capable.

Across the boards reviewed, Black students are suspended or expelled at disproportionately high rates, often double

and in some cases nearly three times their share of the student population. In Toronto DSB, Black students accounted for 28.8% of suspensions and expulsions, nearly three times their representation.⁸⁸ In Peel DSB, 21% of Black students were suspended, with a Disproportionality Index of 2.3.⁸⁹ In York Region, suspension rates were more than double for Black students, with a Disproportionality Index of 2.16 for Black multiracial students and 2.14 for Black single-race students, compared to 0.86 for other students.⁹⁰ Black students had the third highest suspension rate (DI = 1.64) in Ottawa–Carleton, following Indigenous (2.15) and Middle Eastern students (1.97).⁹¹ In Dufferin–Peel Catholic DSB, Black secondary students were suspended at nearly twice their population share, and students in grades 4–8 were 49% more likely to be suspended.⁹² In Durham DSB, Black students were suspended at more than double their representation,⁹³ while in Halton DSB, the Disproportionality Index for Black students reached 1.83.⁹⁴

Inclusion

Some of the reviewed boards have conducted school climate surveys and community consultations that offer valuable insight into how anti-Black racism is experienced in schools and how institutional practices affect Black students' sense of inclusion. In Dufferin–Peel DSB, for example, Black students report lower levels of peer inclusion, school support, and positive identity, with gaps more pronounced in secondary grades. Black students in grades 4 to 8 were 42% more likely than their peers to report moderate to high levels of exclusion, and 30% more likely at the secondary level.⁹⁵ These findings should not be read as deficits among Black students, but as evidence of the school conditions,



relationships, and institutional responses that shape their experiences.

In Peel DSB, Black students described feeling that some teachers showed disinterest or even dislike toward them, while favouring non-Black peers.⁹⁶ They also spoke about negative assumptions about their academic abilities. Similarly, in Durham DSB, Black students reported facing low expectations from teachers, higher suspension rates, and discrimination in academic planning, while emphasizing the need for more Black role models and teaching staff.⁹⁷ Together, these findings point to the need for a stronger understanding of the multiple forms of racism among educators, administrators, and other decision makers, particularly because their assumptions and decisions can shape discipline, streaming, academic planning, and access to opportunity. Barriers start early, as Black students are more often placed into behavioural or special education pathways^{98, 99, 100, 101, 102} placed in modified¹⁰³ or locally developed courses,¹⁰⁴ and are less likely to access university-track courses.^{105, 106} Most reported incidents of racism, bias and hate involve anti-Black racism (61% at TDSB,¹⁰⁷ 52% at York Region DSB¹⁰⁸).

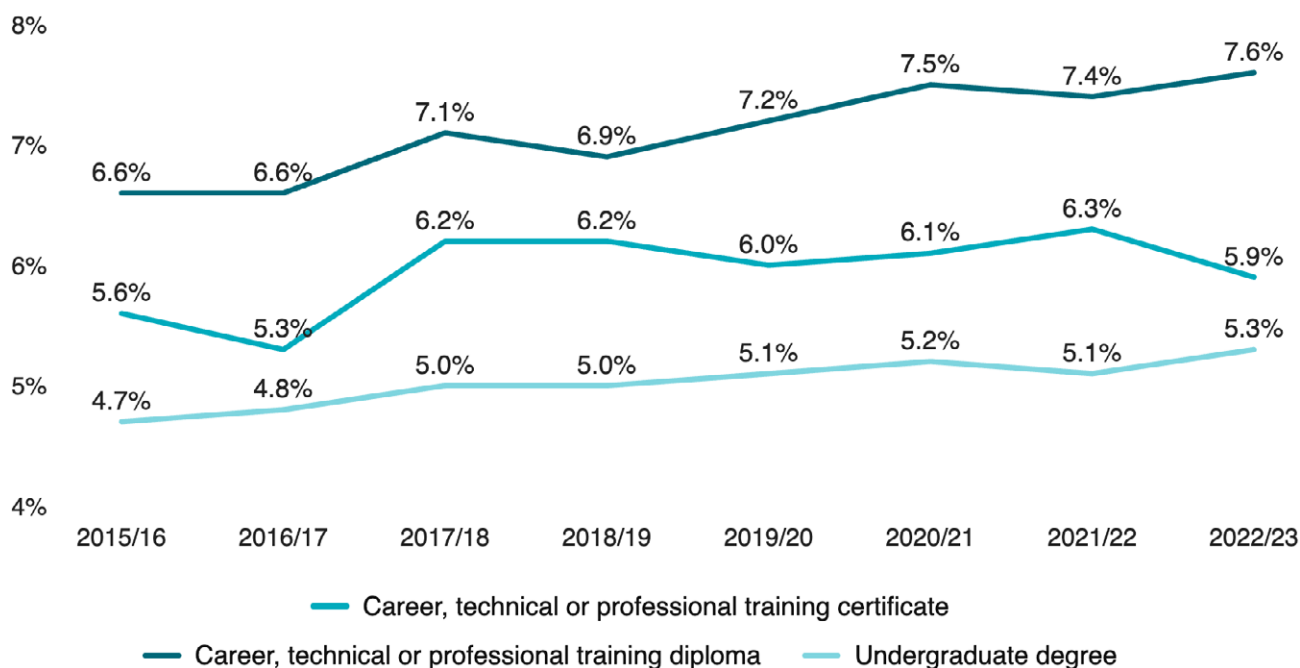
College-level education

The Scarborough Charter on Anti-Black Racism and Black Inclusion, endorsed by a growing number of Canadian universities and colleges, establishes a sector-wide commitment to advancing Black inclusion through concrete action and institutional accountability.¹⁰⁹ Examining representation across students, faculty, and staff provides an important lens on how these commitments are being realized in practice.

Post-secondary education is regarded as important among Black individuals, with 31.9% strongly agreeing that post-secondary education is essential for employment, compared with 21.7% of Canadians overall.¹¹⁰ College and applied pathways hold particular appeal. About 64% of Black respondents say they would recommend trades or apprenticeship routes over university, compared with 56% overall.¹¹¹ Black people have consistently been more likely to enrol in college pathways over universities, and the gap between diplomas and undergraduate degrees has widened over time (see Figure 1).¹¹² The available data do not explain why these pathway preferences exist. These patterns may reflect differences in educational aspirations due to internalized racism or socioeconomic conditions that shape post-secondary decision-making, including affordability, the need to enter the labour market sooner, and perceived return on investment.^{113, 114} At the same time, college and applied pathways are important avenues to employment and economic mobility.¹¹⁵

Figure 1

Proportion of Black students among new entrants by credential type and entry cohort, 2015–16 to 2022–23¹¹⁶



Despite their growing enrolment, a sample of public colleges across Canada, selected based on enrolment size and regional representation, including multiple institutions in provinces with larger Black populations,¹¹⁷ shows that race-disaggregated reporting at the college level is extremely limited. This may reflect a combination of weaker sector-wide reporting requirements, inconsistent institutional capacity, and lower external pressure to publish such data, although this interpretation requires further research.

Key findings:

- Most colleges do not publicly report data on Black students, staff, or faculty.
- Where data are available, they are often grouped under broad “racialized” or

“visible minority” categories, with no specific breakdown for Black communities.

- Reporting is less transparent and less consistent than what is available in many Kindergarten to Grade 12 school boards and universities.
- Where data exists, the gaps are significant. At Humber College, for instance, Black students made up 19.4% of the student body in 2025,¹¹⁸ but only 3% of full-time staff and 1.3% of faculty are Black.¹¹⁹

University-level education

University-level educational attainment among Black Canadians has risen significantly over the past two decades. According to the 2021

Census, nearly one-third (32.4%) of the Black population aged 25 to 64 holds a bachelor's degree or higher, up from 27.0% in 2016 and 19.9% in 2006, bringing attainment nearly in line with the overall population (32.9%).¹²⁰ This makes representation within educational institutions increasingly important. When Black students rarely see Black professors, advisors, or staff in positions of authority, it sends a message about who is seen as credible and who “fits” in academic spaces, with implications for engagement and confidence.^{121, 122}

The Diversity Institute reviewed select universities across Canada, identified based on total undergraduate enrolment and regional representation, including the province's largest university in Quebec given its sizable Black population. This sample does not represent the full Canadian university landscape, and findings should be interpreted as indicative rather than comprehensive. Where data were publicly available, universities reported race-disaggregated data more consistently than colleges. The available figures reveal persistent gaps between the share of Black students and their representation among faculty, particularly at senior ranks.

There is a recurring gap between Black student representation and Black representation among employees and faculty. In several institutions, the share of Black students exceeds the share of Black faculty, and often also exceeds the share of Black employees. For example, at York University, where Black students represented 14.7% of students, compared with 7.3% of employees and 6.5% of faculty.¹²³ At McGill, there is a gap of 3.0 percentage points between Black students (4.6%)¹²⁴ and faculty (1.6%),¹²⁵ while



representation among administrative and support staff (4.4%)¹²⁶ is closely aligned with the student population. At Western University, Black students represented 4.6% of students, compared with 2.5% of employees and 1.9% of faculty.¹²⁷

At the University of British Columbia, Black faculty and employee representation remained lower than Black student representation across both campuses, with students accounting for 4.7% at UBC Okanagan and 3.5% at UBC Vancouver, compared to 3.1% and 2.5% of employees, and 1.9% and 1.8% of faculty, respectively.¹²⁸ At the University of Toronto, Black student and faculty representation were roughly similar, at 5.97% and 5.7%, while Black employee representation was higher at 8.7%.¹²⁹

Gaps are also evident at Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU), where Black students accounted for 9% of students, compared with 8% of employees¹³⁰ and 6.4% of faculty.¹³¹ TMU's more detailed reporting enables us to see the decline in representation with each higher level of seniority. While Black faculty are well represented at the assistant professor level (16%), this share drops to 5% among associate professors, and just 1% of full professors are Black.¹³²

Table 1

Overview of Black representation across select universities in Canada

University	Total Undergrad Enrolment (2025) ¹³³	Black Students (%)	Black Employees (%)	Black Faculty (%)
University of Toronto ¹³⁴	74,880	6% (2025)	8.7% (2024)	5.7% ¹³⁵ (2024)
University of British Columbia ¹³⁶	46,700	4.7% - UBC Okanagan 3.5% - UBC Vancouver (2024)	3.1% - UBC Okanagan 2.5% - UBC Vancouver (2024)	1.9% - UBC Okanagan 1.8% - UBC Vancouver (2024)
York University ¹³⁷	42,752	14.7% (2025)	7.3% (2025)	6.5% (2025)
University of Alberta	35,831	7.6% ¹³⁸ (2023)	3.1% ¹³⁹ (2023)	Data not publicly available
Western University ¹⁴⁰	35,800	4.6% (2021)	2.5% (2021)	1.9% (2021)
Toronto Metropolitan University ¹⁴¹	32,122	9% (2024)	8% (2024)	6.4% ¹⁴² (2024)
McGill University ¹⁴³	24,899	4.6% (2024)	4.4% (2024)	1.6% ¹⁴⁴ (2023)

Note: Dates reflect the reference year of the data rather than the publication date.

Initiatives and support programs

Some institutions have attempted to reduce the gaps between students and teachers, staff, and faculty through steps like making anti-racism practices and competencies a criteria in hiring and promotion decisions,^{145, 146} partnering with universities to create a teacher pathway program for Black students that begins in elementary school,¹⁴⁷ Black faculty cohort hiring,¹⁴⁸ and diversifying hiring panels.¹⁴⁹

School boards have also introduced broader initiatives to support Black students and address anti-Black racism. Examples include TDSB's Centre of Excellence for

Black Student Achievement, which offers mentorship, community-engagement events, and resources,¹⁵⁰ PDSB's Black Student Success Strategy with interconnected focus areas, professional development for staff, and accountability measures¹⁵¹ and YRDSB's Centre for Black Student Excellence Programs.¹⁵²

Tailored mentorship approaches

Tailored mentorship can help counter academic streaming and lower expectations that limit Black students' educational and career prospects. Such programs can build resilience against microaggressions and affirm students' lived experiences, and are associated with stronger inclusion, academic achievement, retention, and overall

wellbeing.^{153, 154} Graduation coaches can also play an important role in supporting student success. For 2025 to 2026, the ministry provided \$6 million in funding for 46 graduation coaches across 26 school boards in Ontario, as part of Ontario's Anti-Racism Strategic Plan to support improved outcomes for Black students.¹⁵⁵ Inter-school and community-based mentorship programs have also been shown to help Black students translate their aspirations into post-secondary and career pathways.¹⁵⁶

Despite these promising approaches, common challenges remain in Canada's Black youth mentorship ecosystem that limit their effectiveness and accessibility.¹⁵⁷ Programs remain concentrated in Ontario and Nova Scotia, leaving many provinces underserved. Access is also more limited for youth in economically disadvantaged communities, who may face household financial responsibilities that make participation more difficult. Black women and girls often face more precarious conditions, yet mentorship opportunities tailored to their needs remain limited. At the same time, the lack of comprehensive data on mentorship for Black youth constrains evidence-based planning and implementation. Mentorship is also too often seen as a support only for "at-risk" youth, rather than as a proactive approach to strengthening leadership, confidence, belonging, and longer-term educational and career pathways. Access to mentors who share similar identities and lived experiences can further support Black youth by promoting positive racial identity development, fostering ethnocultural empathy, and providing guidance grounded in shared experiences and understanding.¹⁵⁸

Experiential learning and youth employment bridging programs

Black students continue to face significant challenges when transitioning from education to employment due to systemic discrimination and limited social capital.¹⁵⁹ Youth employment bridging programs can help address these gaps by providing work placements, high-demand skills training, and opportunities to connect and network with industry leaders.

Leveraging artificial intelligence

With artificial intelligence's growing prominence in the workforce, it is increasingly important to ensure that Black students are equipped with the skills and knowledge to thrive, and not fall behind in an AI-driven economy. A recent study commissioned by TELUS has found that Generation Z in Canada and the United States views education as the sector where artificial intelligence holds the greatest potential, highlighting opportunities such as personalized tutoring and adaptive instruction.¹⁶⁰ The Survey on Employment and Skills also found that the majority (75.5%) of Black students have used AI in school, underscoring the widespread use of these tools and suggesting how early familiarity could shape later workforce participation and AI adoption.¹⁶¹ AI education initiatives are emerging, which may be understood as a response to the growing recognition of the need for guidance on how AI can be leveraged in ways that enhance Black students' learning and career development. For example, the Black Youth AI Innovation Club at Ontario Tech University equips Black youth with foundational AI and machine learning knowledge while demonstrating how these skills can be applied within STEM fields where they remain under-represented.¹⁶²



Employment

Turning qualifications into stable,
well-paid work in growing sectors.

47.3%

report workplace discrimination —
2× the overall rate

17%

lower average hourly earnings

Employment

11.1%

unemployment for Black workers — nearly double the 6.4% national rate, despite higher labour-force participation.

This section examines updated national labour force data to assess participation, employment, unemployment, occupational distribution, and earnings among Black people in Canada. Given projected labour demand in health care, skilled trades and construction, and information and communications technology, the section also includes an in-depth look into Black representation and barriers within these sectors.

The data show that Black people are engaged in the labour force and invested in skill development, including training and adaptation to technological change. At the same time, this high level of engagement coexists with high levels of unemployment, concentration in lower-wage roles, and greater exposure to precarious employment.

The results cannot be attributed to lower educational attainment, as Black people are as likely as the overall population to hold undergraduate degrees.¹⁶³ Nor can they be explained by concentration in declining sectors, as the data below show that the Black population is well represented in sectors and occupations that are experiencing labour demand and expansion. These factors suggest that the observed disparities in labour

market outcomes are not driven by individual choices or effort. Instead, the evidence points to structural barriers within the labour market, including inequities in recruitment, promotion, credential recognition, and workplace culture and practices.^{164, 165, 166, 167}

Workplace discrimination

Recent results from a national survey shows that anti-Black racism continues to be widespread and common in the workplace.¹⁶⁸

- Nearly half (47.3%) of Black respondents reported discrimination within the previous year compared with 18.5% of respondents overall.
- The disparity persists across gender, affecting both Black men (50%) and Black women (44.5%), compared with fewer than one in five men (19.8%) and women (17%) overall.

Exposure remains high across workplace settings rather than concentrated in a single sector: public sector (55.8% Black vs. 26.9% overall), private sector (50.3% Black vs. 20.1% overall).

Labour market outcomes

In 2025, Black people accounted for 5.5% of Canada’s labour force.¹⁶⁹ As of January 2026, Black people continue to show stronger attachment to the labour market, with higher labour force participation (73.8% Black vs. 64.5% overall), which measures the share of the working age population that is either employed or actively seeking work, and higher employment rates (65.6% Black vs. 60.4%

overall) than the overall population. However, their unemployment rate is nearly double that of the overall population (11.1% vs. 6.4%) (see Figure 2). In other words, a relatively high share of Black people actively seeking work are unable to secure employment. This pattern similarly holds for Black women, who continue to experience strong labour force participation (69%) and employment rates (61.6%), alongside disproportionately high unemployment (10.8%) (see Figure 3).

Figure 2
Participation, employment and unemployment rates by population group, January 2026¹⁷⁰

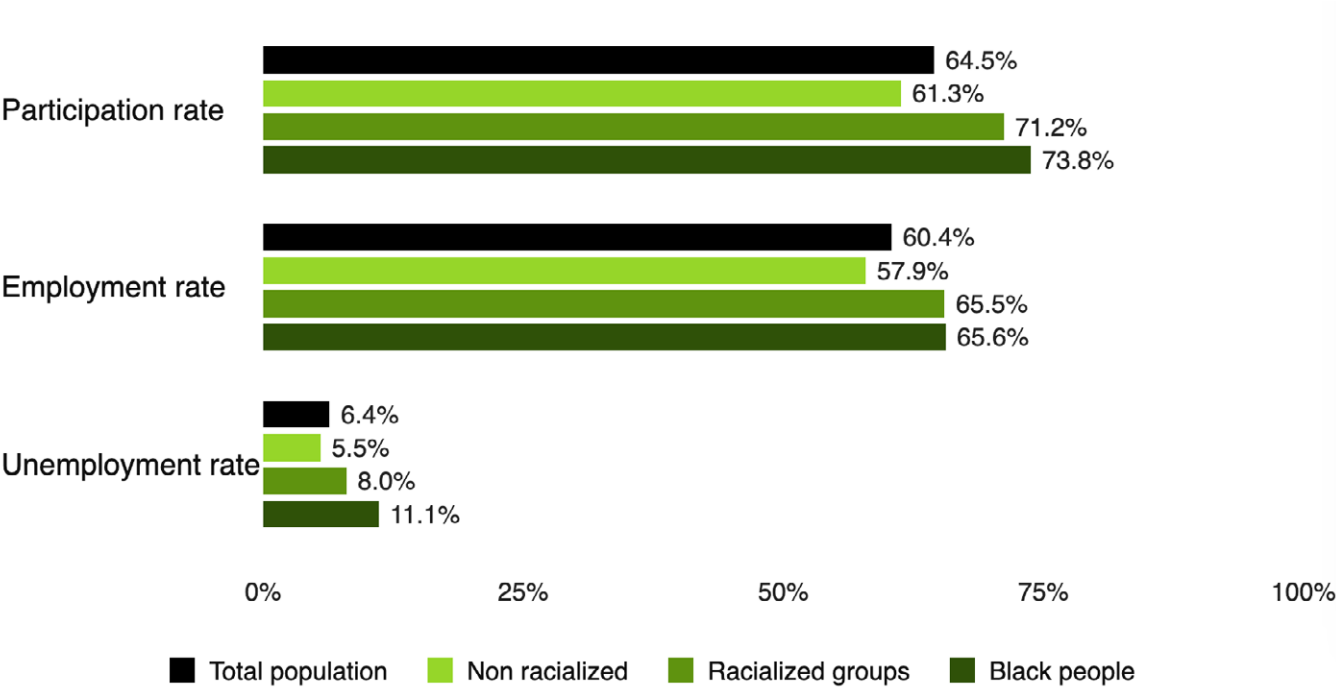
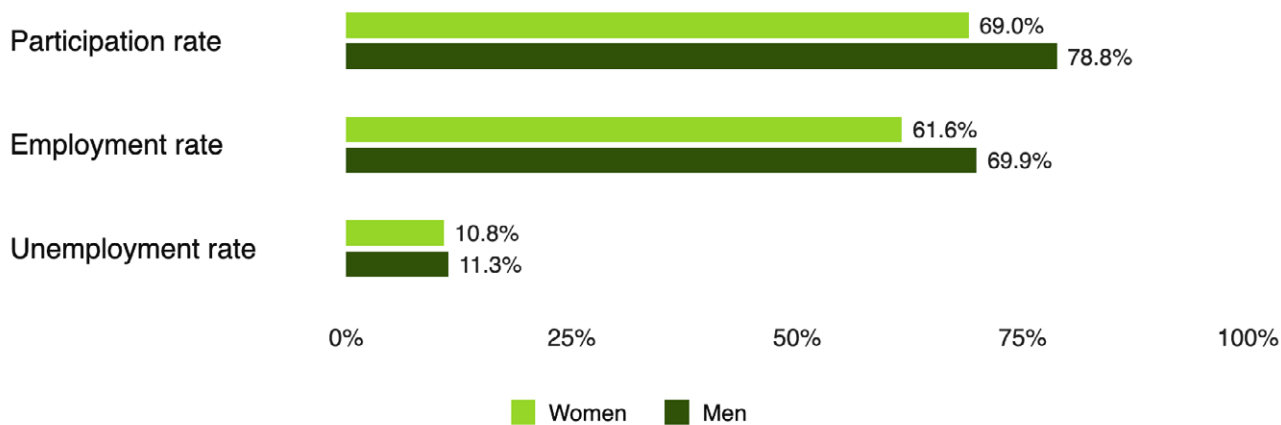


Figure 3
 Participation, employment and unemployment rates within the Black population, by gender, January 2026¹⁷¹



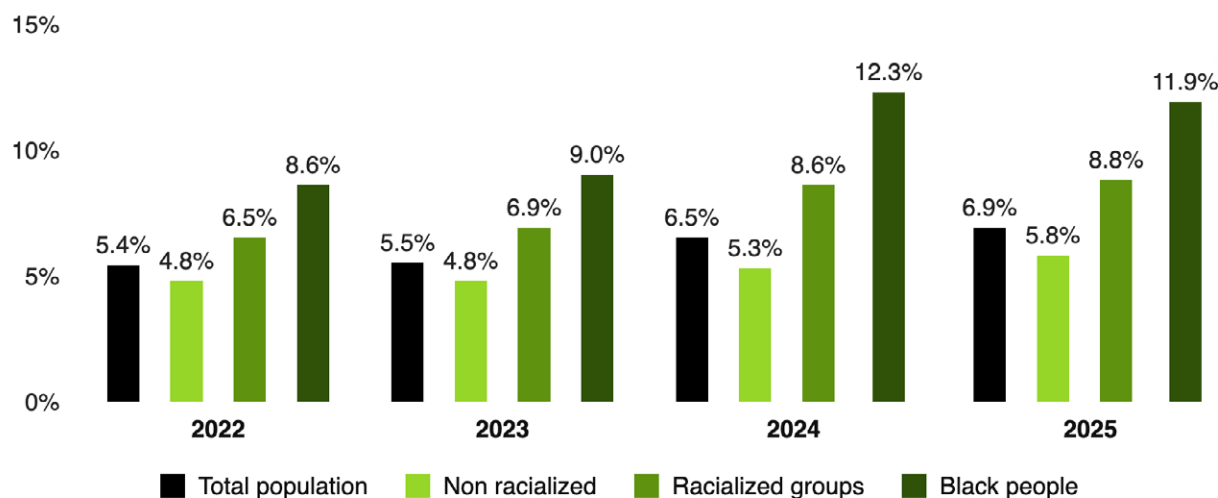
Even when comparing youth to youth, Black young people face substantially higher unemployment. Among all racial groups, Black youth (15–24 years old) experience the highest (20%) unemployment rate, with Black girls facing a slightly lower but still elevated rate of 17.5%, compared with 11.1% for non-racialized peers and 12.2% for youth overall.¹⁷²

Unemployment is rising faster among Black people, pointing not only to their greater exposure to economic volatility, but also to structural barriers in recruitment and advancement. These include unequal access to professional networks and sponsorship, subjective hiring and promotion

processes, and occupational segregation that limits mobility into more stable and senior positions.¹⁷³ From 2022 to 2024, the Black unemployment rate increased by 3.7 percentage points, while Black women experienced a smaller increase (+2.9 pp) that nonetheless remained higher than the increase observed among all racialized groups (+2.1 pp) and non-racialized individuals (+0.5 pp).¹⁷⁴ In 2025, unemployment among the Black population remained substantially higher but declined modestly (–0.4 pp overall and –0.5 pp for Black women), while it increased slightly (+0.4 pp) for the overall population (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

Trends in unemployment by population group, 2022–2025¹⁷⁵



Job quality and occupational distribution

Regarding the quality of jobs being accessed, evidence shows that Black workers experience the second-largest racial wage gap in Canada, earning on average nearly 17% less per hour than non-racialized workers.¹⁷⁶ This gap is shaped, in part, by the concentration of Black workers in lower-wage employment. In 2024, nearly one-fifth (19.2%) of Black workers earned less than the low-pay threshold, defined as less than two-thirds of the median hourly wage, more than double the 8.1% rate observed among non-racialized, non-Indigenous employees.¹⁷⁷ A gender breakdown of wage inequality among Black workers reveals that Black men experience a larger racial wage gap (–18.2%) relative to non-racialized men than Black women (–14.3%) relative to non-racialized women, although Black women still earn 8.4% less than Black men.¹⁷⁸ The relatively smaller racial wage gap experienced by Black women may partly reflect their concentration in highly unionized health care occupations.

Disparities in access to quality employment remain despite comparable educational attainment. Black people are as likely as the overall population to have a university degree (32.4% Black vs. 32.9% overall),¹⁷⁹ yet they are substantially more likely to be employed in jobs that typically require only a high school level of education (26.7% Black overqualification rate vs. 16.7% overall).¹⁸⁰ Importantly, this disparity cannot be explained primarily by challenges related to foreign credential recognition. Even when restricting to those educated in Canada, 16% of Black graduates were overqualified, the highest rate among Canadian educated racialized groups.¹⁸¹

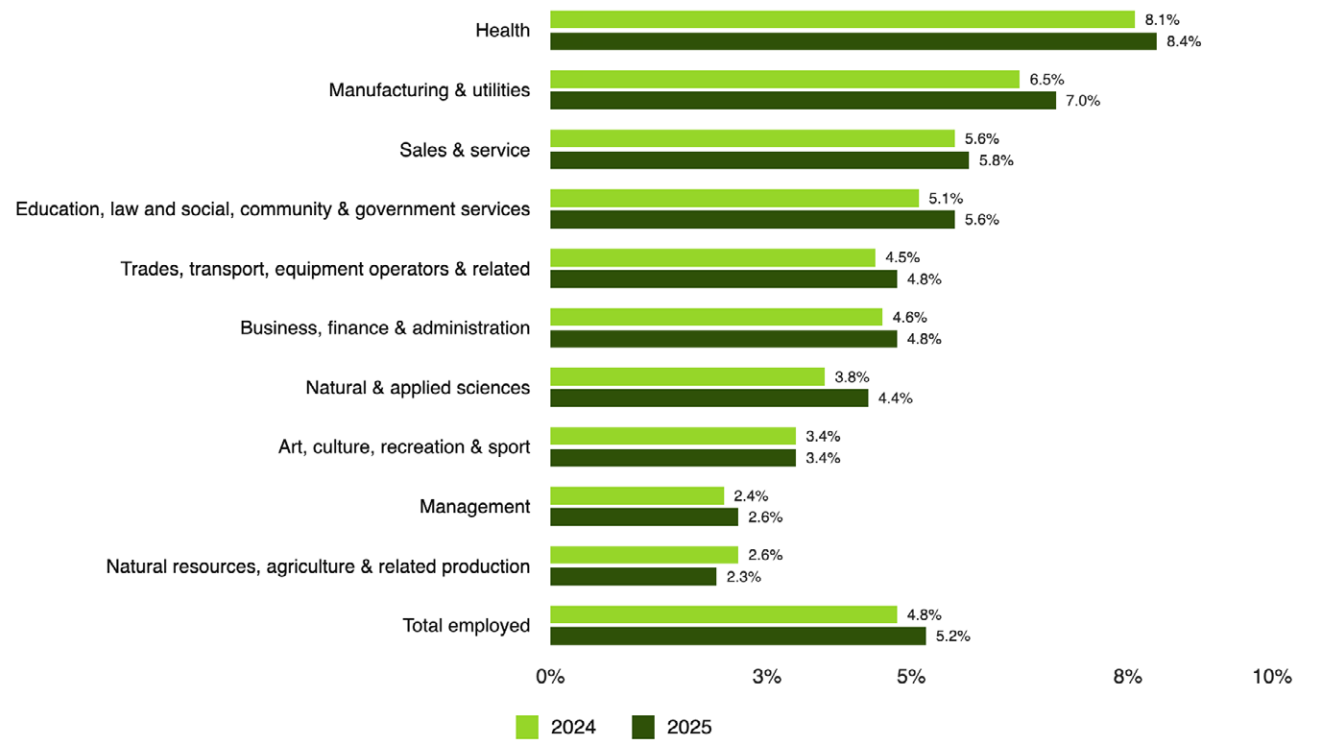
New national survey data suggest that Black workers experience greater employment precarity. They are less likely to hold permanent jobs (72.1% Black vs. 83.1% overall) and are more likely to be in temporary, casual or seasonal roles (27.3% Black vs. 16.2% overall), as well as part-time or multiple job arrangements (20.1% part-time and 2.9% multiple part-time vs. 11.2% and 0.8% overall, respectively).¹⁸²

Looking at the occupational distribution of Black workers, nearly one-quarter of employed Black people are in sales and service occupations (24.1%) in 2025, which have the lowest average hourly wages among the broad occupational groups. By contrast, management accounts for a much smaller share of Black employment (4.9%), despite being the highest-paying occupational group.^{183, 184}

Black workers made up 5.2% of total employment in 2025, up from 4.8% in 2024 (+0.4 pp). Most occupational groups rose slightly alongside this broader increase (see Figure 5).

- In 2025, Black workers continued to be over-represented in health (8.4%, compared with 5.2% in total employment, a difference of 3.2 pp), manufacturing and utilities (7%, +1.8 pp) and sales and service (5.8%, +0.6 pp).
- Roughly proportional: education, law, social, community and government services (5.6%, +0.44 pp); business, finance and administration (4.8%, -0.4 pp); trades, transport, equipment operators and related (4.8%, -0.4 pp).
- Despite a modest rise, management remains one of the most under-represented categories at 2.6% (-2.6 pp) in 2025.

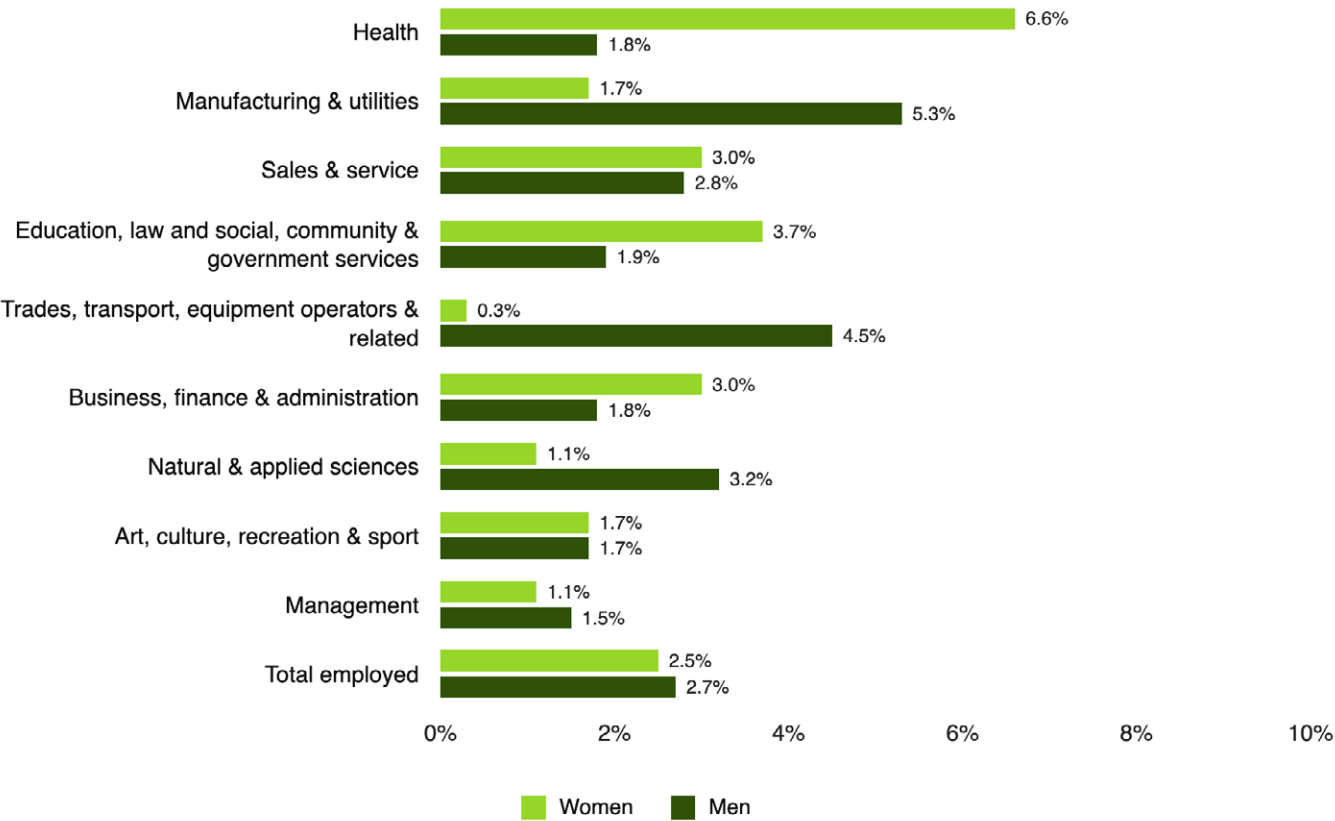
Figure 5
Black representation by occupational group, 2024 and 2025¹⁸⁵



The gender breakdown of Black workers across occupational groups in 2025 reveals distinct patterns of labour market concentration between Black women and Black men (see Figure 6). Black women were most represented in care- and service-related occupations, including health occupations

(6.6%) and education, law, social, community and government services (3.7%). Meanwhile, Black men were more concentrated in industrial and technical fields, including manufacturing and utilities (5.3%), trades and transport (4.5%) and natural and applied sciences (3.2%).

Figure 6
Black representation within occupational groups, by gender, 2025¹⁸⁶



Differences within the Black population

Labour market outcomes vary across the Black population. Recent analysis by Statistics Canada using 2021 Census data highlights

significant variation by place of birth and generational status.¹⁸⁷ Figures 7 and 8 present differences in employment and unemployment rates across groups by gender. The following summarizes the broader findings in the Statistics Canada report, including in income, overqualification and gender.

- **Caribbean-born immigrants** exhibit strong labour market outcomes with higher employment (77.6%), lower unemployment (9.6%) and higher median annual employment income of \$47,600, compared to the Black population average of \$44,000. Caribbean-born women perform relatively well, with median annual employment income (\$46,400) comparable to that of women in the overall population (\$46,400).
- **African-born immigrants** have high levels of educational attainment, with 46.1% holding a bachelor's degree or higher, yet this does not translate into strong labour market returns. Employment is lower (72.7%), unemployment is higher (12%) and overqualification remains widespread, particularly among those educated outside Canada (35.2%). African-born immigrant women tend to fare worse in the labour market than their male counterparts, who experience lower participation (76.8% women vs. 89.1% men) and employment rates (66.4% women vs. 79.6% men), higher unemployment rates (13.5% women vs. 10.6% men) and lower median annual employment income (\$39,600 for women vs. \$48,400 for men).
- **Immigrants born outside of the Caribbean and Africa** exhibit the highest median annual employment income among the Black populations (\$51,600 vs. \$44,000 for the Black population overall). Despite these comparatively stronger economic outcomes, gender disparities remain evident, with women in this group facing lower participation (80.9% women vs. 86.8% men) and employment rates (71.8% women vs. 77.4% men), and higher unemployment (11.2%) than men in this group (10.8%), even though a greater proportion of these women hold a bachelor's degree or higher (50.3% women vs. 37.2% men).
- **Second-generation populations** display mixed labour market outcomes. Employment levels (72.5%) are close to the Black population average (73.7%) and the gender gap in employment income was lower for this group (\$1,200) compared to other Black population groups where the gender wage gap is as high as \$8,800, but unemployment remains high (13.4%). Within this group, women have higher employment (72.9% women vs. 72.1% men) and lower unemployment (12.6% women vs. 14.3% men) than men.
- **Third-generation-or-more populations** exhibit the poorest labour market outcomes, with the lowest employment (64.8%), highest unemployment (15.7%) and lowest median annual employment income (\$43,200) if excluding non-permanent residents. Black women showed poorer outcomes than Black men across all these indicators.
- **Non-permanent residents'** high employment (76.2%) coincides with the lowest median annual employment income (\$28,200) and the highest overqualification rates, reflecting concentration in lower-quality and more precarious work. Black non-permanent residents exhibit the second-largest gender wage gap (\$7,600) among the Black population groups, trailing only African-born immigrants (\$8,800).

Figure 7

Employment rates within the Black population, by gender, 2021¹⁸⁸

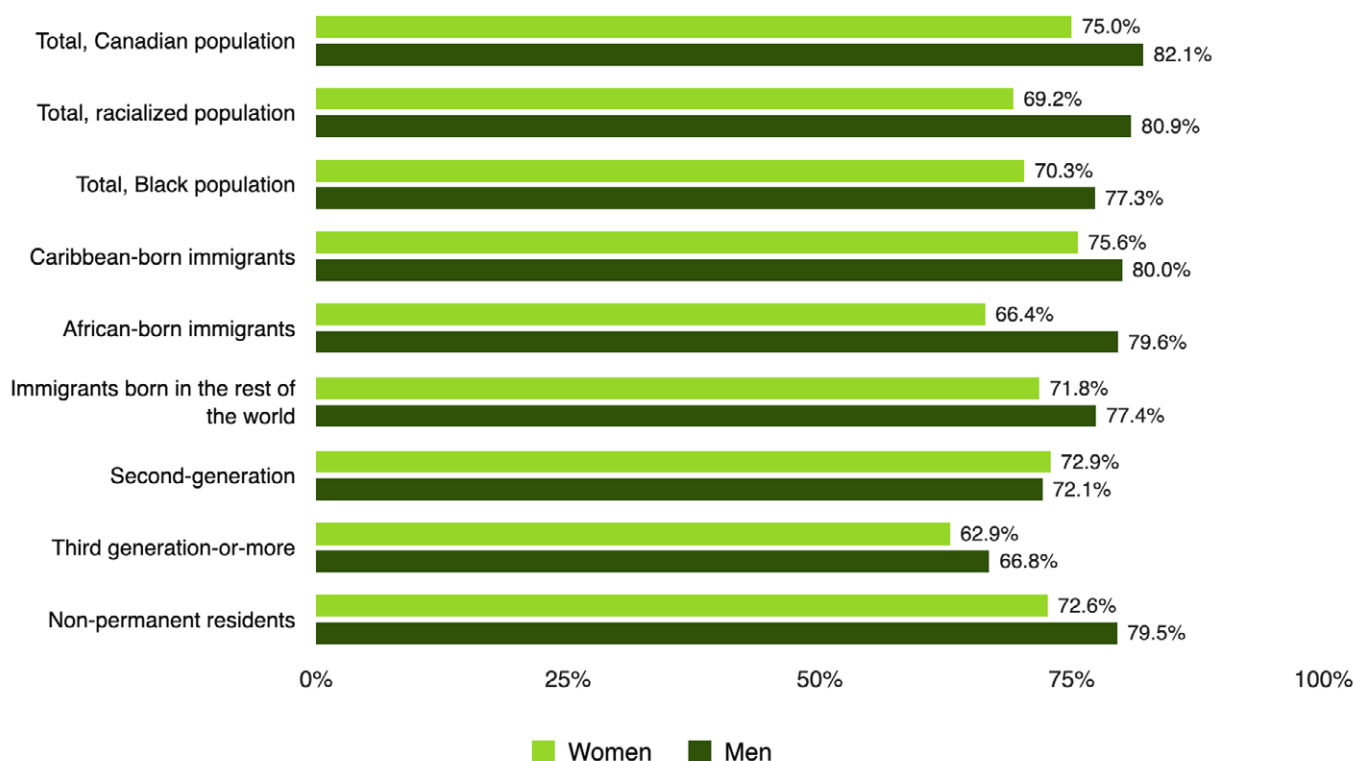
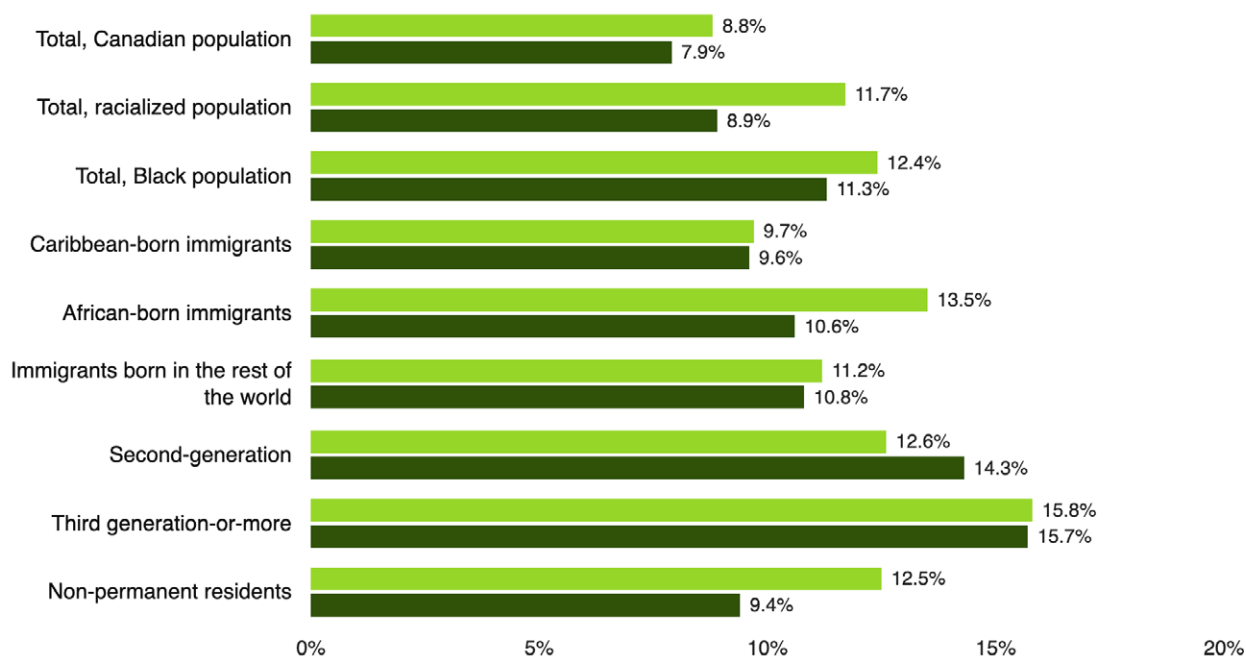


Figure 8

Unemployment rates within the Black population, by gender, 2021¹⁸⁹



Skills, technology, and workplace adaptation

As discussed in the education section, 75.5% of Black students report having used AI in school. This early engagement matters because it suggests that many Black students are already developing familiarity with the tools and habits that are increasingly shaping workplaces. The same survey shows that Black employees seem to be more engaged in adapting to changing workplace demands.¹⁹⁰ They report higher participation in employer-provided training (48.8% Black vs. 34.1% among all employees). Black people are also more likely to seek out AI-related training on their own (23.4% vs. 19.6% overall). This carries into day-to-day work, where Black workers are more likely (47.5%) to report using AI in their tasks compared to all workers (36.7%). Taken together, these findings point to early adoption, self-directed upskilling, and workplace adaptation across the education-to-employment pathway. They also suggest that Black students and workers are not simply being exposed to technological change, but are actively engaging with it and building the skills needed to navigate an AI-enabled labour market.

Access to in-demand sectors and occupations

As health care, skilled trades and construction, and information and communications technology (ICT) are anticipated to drive future hiring, Black access to and experience within these sectors warrant closer examination. Overall sector representation and the leading occupations within each sector are examined.

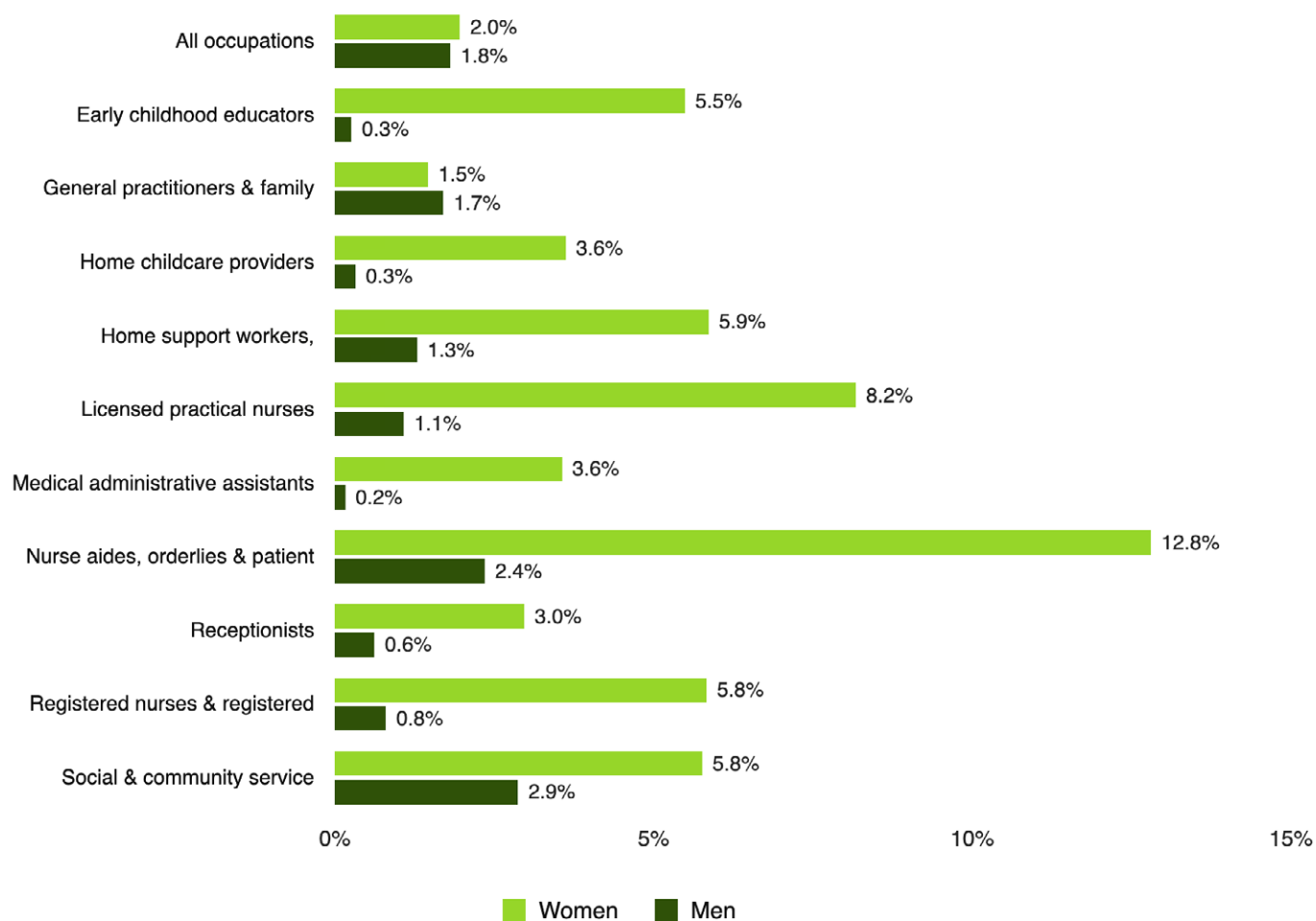
The data for specific occupations presented below rely on the 2021 Census, when Black workers accounted for 3.77% of employment across all occupations.

Health care

- As of 2025, Black workers are more likely to be employed in health care: 13.33% of Black workers are employed in health care, compared with 8.16% of workers overall.¹⁹¹
- According to 2021 Census data, Black workers are concentrated in care roles that are essential but undervalued (e.g., as nurse aides, orderlies and patient service associates (15.2%), licenced practical nurses (9.2%), social and community service workers (8.6%) and home support and caregiving roles (7.2%)).¹⁹² These occupations are also highly gendered, with women making up the majority of Black workers in many care roles (see Figure 9).
- Fewer Black workers are found in higher-paid or leadership positions in health care (e.g., 3.5% of nurse practitioners and 5.7% of nursing coordinators and supervisors identify as Black).¹⁹³
- Black representation is even lower in physician roles that often serve as the first point of contact with the health system, making up only 3.2% of general practitioners and family doctors;¹⁹⁴ this is important because having a doctor with a shared racial background is linked to better patient experience and engagement.¹⁹⁵

Figure 9

Black representation across in-demand health care occupations, by gender, 2021¹⁹⁶



The occupational segregation of Black workers is linked to systemic barriers that arise in different stages, including in education, workplace environments, and promotion processes. Studies on Black physicians and trainees have found that racism and discrimination are common in both clinical and training settings, including differential treatment from peers, supervisors, and patients, alongside limited access to mentorship and career development supports.

¹⁹⁷ In a 2021 University of Toronto survey, as

many as 56% of Black medical students, 65% of Black residents, and 39% of Black clinical fellows reported experiencing discrimination at least once during the academic year.¹⁹⁸

Similar barriers have been documented in nursing, a field where many Black women are employed. Research on anti-Black racism in Canada's health care system shows that Black nurses often face unequal treatment and fewer opportunities to advance into leadership or specialized roles, reflecting a

legacy of historical exclusion and institutional structures that continue to privilege white nurses.¹⁹⁹ They report racial discrimination and microaggressions from colleagues, patients, and managers, including being unfairly denied access to clinical placements and specialized hospital units, and questioning of their qualifications.²⁰⁰ Black women, in particular, face distinct forms of anti-Black racism, including refusals of care from patients who express a preference for white nurses.^{201, 202}

Skilled trades and construction

- As of 2025, Black representation in trades, transport, equipment operators and related occupations is close to overall employment levels, at 4.8%, about 0.4 percentage points lower. Within the Black workforce, 13.94% are employed in trades and related roles, a higher share than that of racialized workers overall (12.52%), though slightly lower than among non-racialized workers (16.18%).²⁰³
- According to 2021 Census data, Black representation is higher in more labour-intensive roles, such as construction trades helpers and labourers (4.05%) and plasterers, drywall installers and finishers (4.03%) due to occupational segregation,²⁰⁴ and lower across many certified and typically higher-paying trades, including carpenters (1.75%), electricians (1.77%), heavy equipment operators (1.07%), plumbers (2.22%) and contractor and supervisory roles (1.97%).²⁰⁵
- Among Black workers in these occupations, men account for the overwhelmingly majority of workers,

with the largest gender gaps observed in plasterers, drywall installers and finishers (3.87% men vs. 0.16% women), construction trades helpers and labourers (3.87% men vs. 0.18% women), and residential and commercial installers and servicers (2.83% men vs. 0.12% women) (see Figure 11).

Several factors hinder access and advancement in trades for Black people. At the entry stage, many Black people lack clear information about the range of career opportunities in the trades and the credentials needed to pursue them.²⁰⁶ Once they attempt to enter apprenticeship pathways, financial and logistical constraints pose significant obstacles, including the cost of tools, equipment, tuition and training fees, lost income during in-class training periods, and transportation to job sites and training locations. Navigating the apprenticeship system itself can also be challenging, with apprentices reporting a need for simpler processes, clearer pathways, and more mentorship opportunities to improve access. Workplace and institutional factors further shape outcomes, as employers often view apprenticeship sponsorship as administratively burdensome, and many worksites lack structured mentorship, targeted supports for equity-deserving groups, or intentional recruitment and retention strategies.²⁰⁷ Anti-Black racism remains a significant issue in construction, which has led to the establishment of the Afro-Canadian Construction Association in response to persistent discrimination experienced by Black workers and contractors.²⁰⁸

Figure 10

Representation across in-demand skilled trades and construction occupations, 2021²⁰⁹

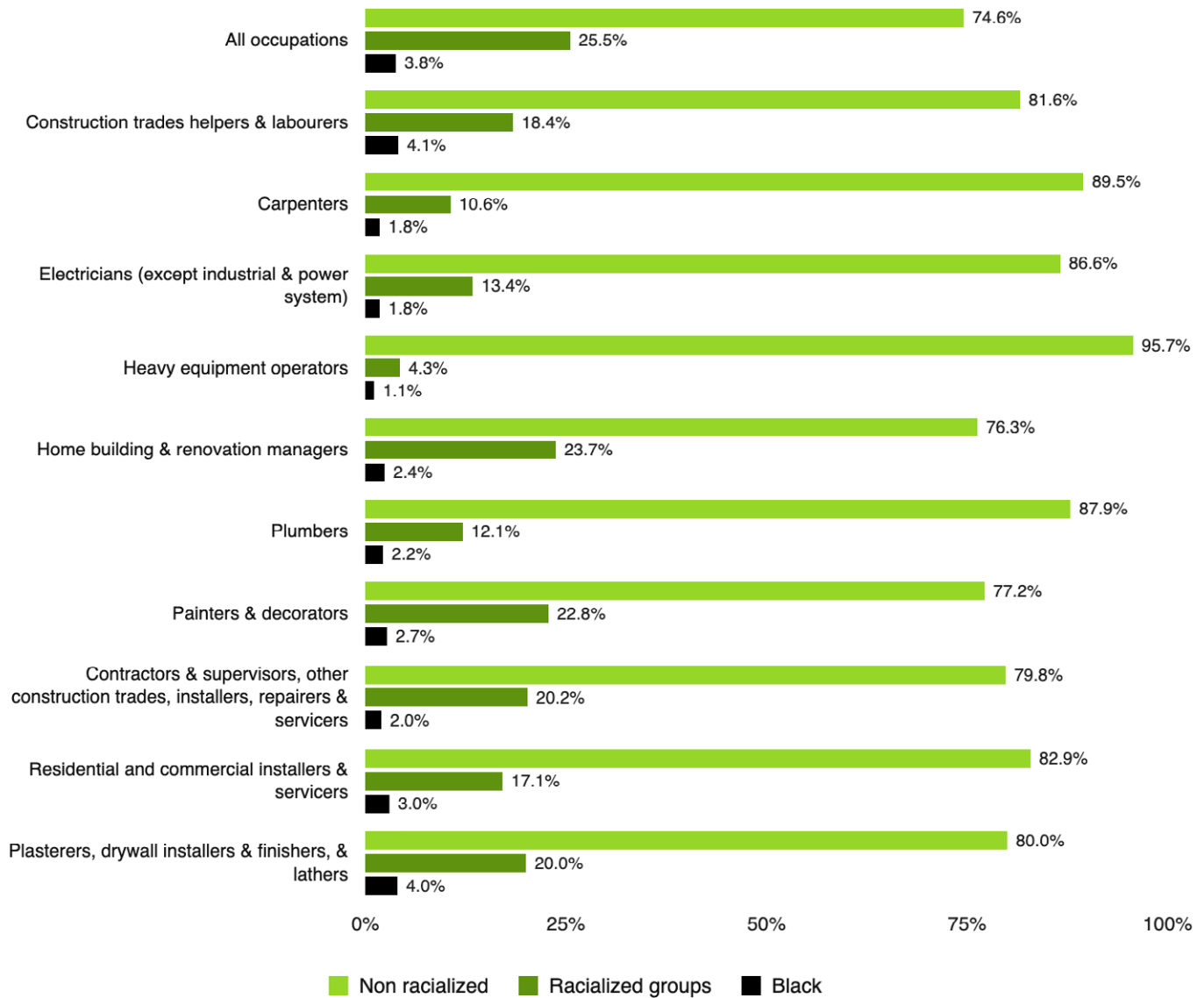
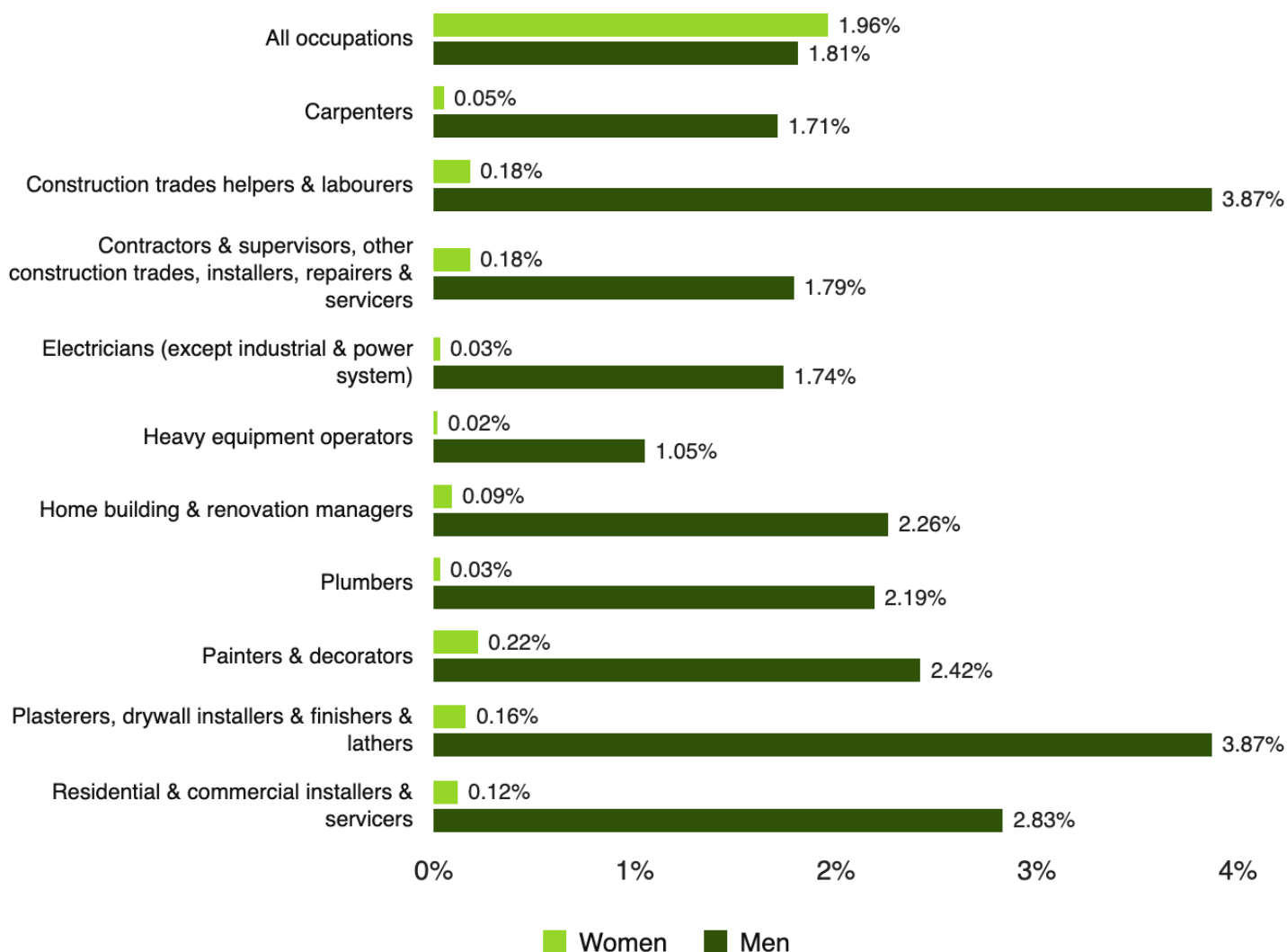


Figure 11

Black representation across in-demand skills trades and construction occupations, by gender, 2021²¹⁰



Information and communications technology (ICT)

- Focusing on high-growth tech occupations,²¹¹ Black people are more strongly represented among cybersecurity specialists (6.78% vs. 3.77% across all occupations), information systems

specialists (4.20%) and business systems specialists (4.17%).

- Black people are less represented as software engineers and designers (2.28%), software developers and programmers (2.25%), or computer and information systems managers (2.74%).

- Gender distribution across in-demand ICT occupations generally shows higher representation of men, with cybersecurity specialist roles showing a particularly large gap between men and women (5.31% men vs. 1.46% women) (see Figure 13).
- Black workers experience the largest income disparity in the sector among all other racial groups (\$70,955 for Black workers vs. \$78,800 for all racialized).²¹²

Figure 12

Representation across in-demand ICT occupations, 2021²¹³

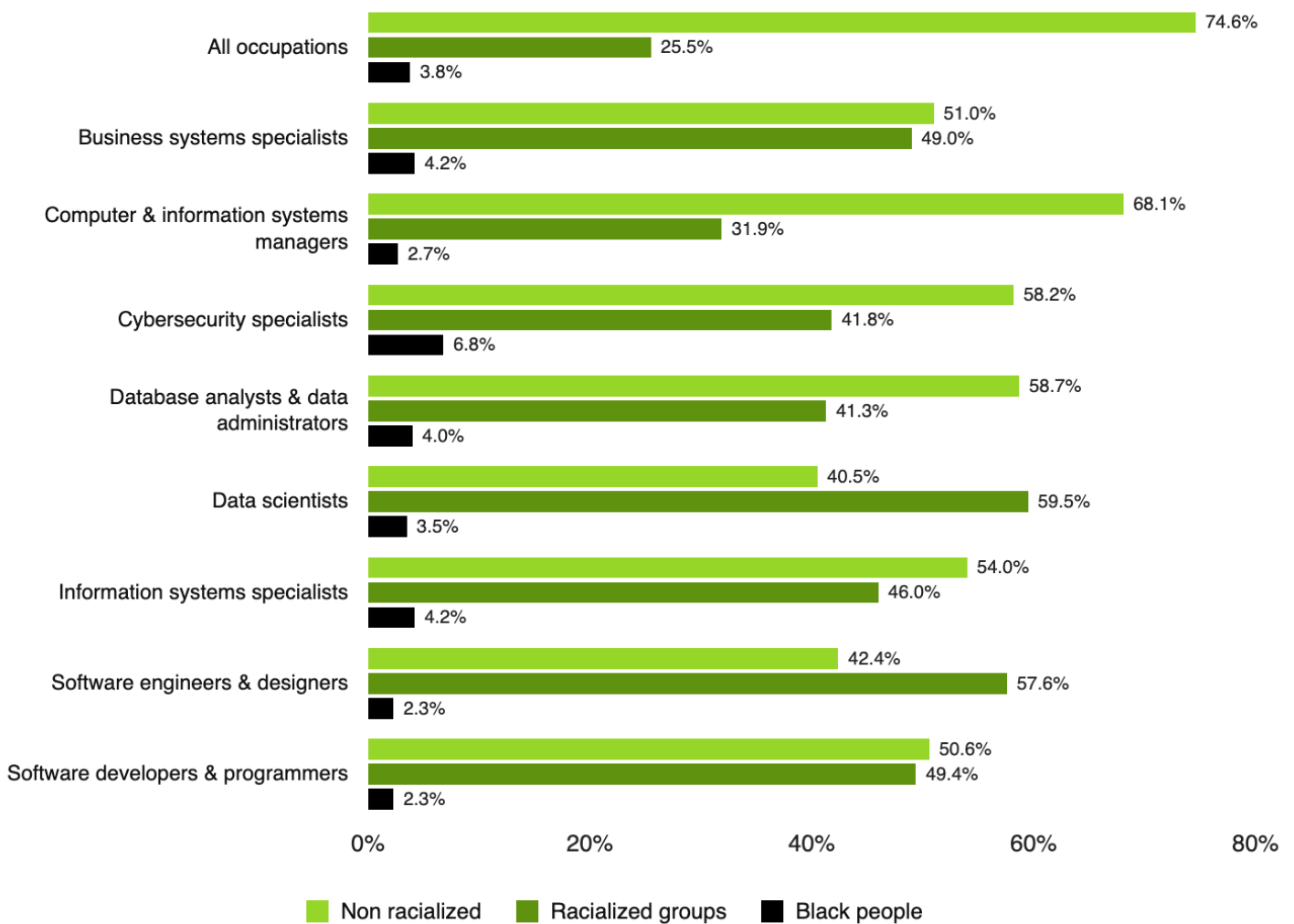
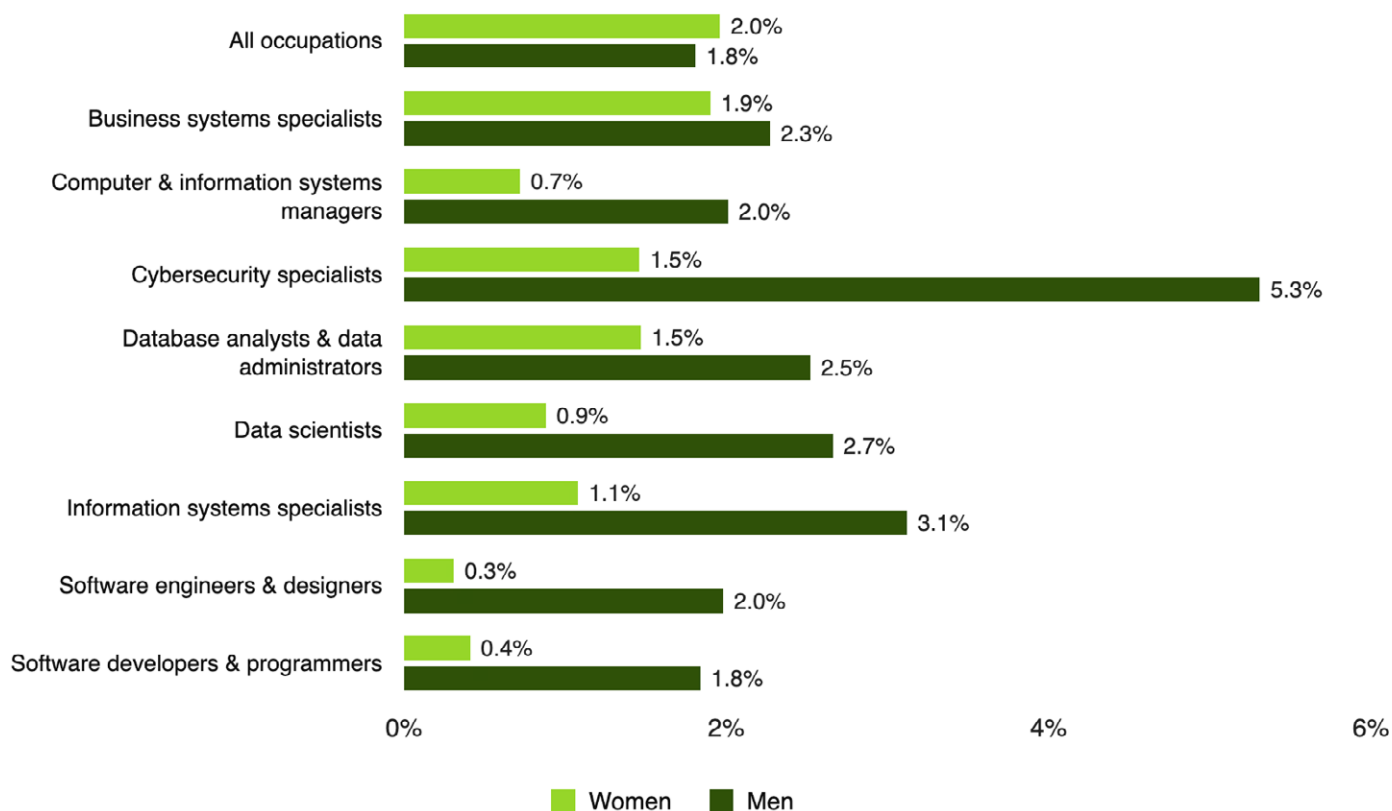


Figure 13

Black representation across in-demand ICT occupations, by gender, 2021²¹⁴



There are many challenges that limit entry into, and progression within, the tech workforce. Even before hiring, unequal access to learning opportunities and resources, stereotypes, and limited role models or mentors can discourage interest in a career in tech for Black girls and youth.²¹⁵ In the workplace, hiring and promotion processes often reflect affinity bias, where decision makers favour candidates who remind them of themselves, reinforcing a narrow idea of who belongs in leadership.²¹⁶ Over-reliance on “cultural fit” can also lead to the exclusion of Black candidates based on perceived differences.²¹⁷ For Black women in particular, racial and gender stereotyping can contribute to inequities to hiring and

promotion, pay disparities, and bullying and harassment in the workplace, leading to decreased satisfaction and high turnover.²¹⁸ These stereotypes also limit perceptions of Black women as diverse and creative contributors in a sector that depends on innovation and varied perspectives.²¹⁹ A lack of diversity at the top makes it harder to create environments where Black employees feel supported. However, representation alone is not enough. When Black leaders are visible but lack meaningful authority, access to decision-making, and organizational support, representation can become tokenistic. In these cases, visibility may increase without changing the practices, norms, and power dynamics

that reinforce anti-Black racism in the workplace. These challenges are reinforced by limited access to mentorship, leadership development, and professional networks that support advancement. In Toronto's tech sector, for example, Black workers reported the lowest average scores on inclusion, diversity, and belonging compared with other groups.²²⁰

Related research on STEM education pathways also points to barriers earlier in the pipeline. Statistics Canada shows that Black students are less likely than some other groups to enter math-intensive STEM fields, and among men, Black students are the least likely to do so. Among those who begin in STEM, Black men are also among the least likely to complete a STEM degree by the sixth year.²²¹ For Black girls and young women, racial and gender stereotypes in math and computing classrooms can reduce confidence and interest in technology careers, while the lack of Black women mentors and role models in tech may contribute to feelings of exclusion and limited awareness of attainable career pathways in the field.²²² While these findings relate to students rather than workers, they suggest that disparities in representation within technical occupations may also be shaped by earlier barriers in access to, and persistence within, STEM fields.

Initiatives and support programs

While governments and community organizations play a critical role in supporting Black employment through initiatives such as skills development and training, meaningful and scalable change will also

require employer commitment. At the governance and leadership level, employers can set representation goals and collect disaggregated data to track employee demographics, hiring trends, retention rates, and promotion pathways.

Across the workforce and talent pipeline, employers can review recruitment, hiring, and promotion practices to identify barriers affecting Black candidates, including bias in hiring. Within workplace culture, employers can strengthen anti-discrimination policies and support practices that promote the inclusion of Black employees. Employers can also prioritize partnerships with government and intermediaries that align skills training with employment opportunities, while also supporting programs that pair this training with systemic reforms, such as anti-racist policy frameworks and employer accountability measures.

Targeted skills and capacity building initiatives

Targeted initiatives can strengthen labour market outcomes for Black job seekers by pairing skills development with practical supports that improve access to opportunities. These may include mentorship,²²³ career navigation,²²⁴ employer connections,²²⁵ bridging programs,²²⁶ and work-integrated learning.²²⁷ Networking and job placement hubs can help connect job seekers to employers, sector-specific bridging programs can support entry into in-demand industries, mentorship can expand professional networks and career guidance, and work-integrated learning can help build practical experience and employability.



Leadership

Who gets to decide — boardrooms, management and public service.

4.1%

of board seats across large TSX-listed firms

1.5%

of senior management roles

Leadership

3.2%

of all management positions are held by Black professionals — below their 4.3% share of the population.

Representation in leadership signals who belongs, affirms excellence, creates role models, and affects wage gaps. Diverse leadership also enhances organizational performance. While the representation of Black leaders has slightly increased, Black people remain under-represented in executive and board positions across sectors. Intersectionality compounds these barriers significantly: Black women in particular face the overlapping weight of race and gender discrimination in leadership pipelines, confronting both a racial ceiling and a gender gap that together depress earnings and limit advancement. This section examines leadership data in the private and the public sectors.



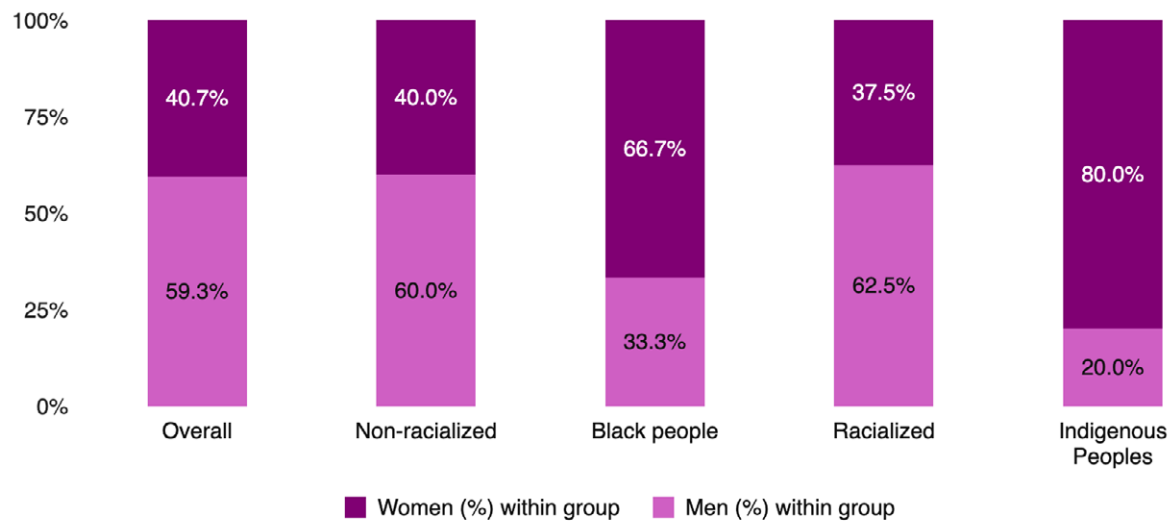
While the representation of Black leaders has slightly increased, Black people remain under-represented in executive and board positions across sectors.

Corporate sector

Progress on leadership diversity in Canada's corporate sector appears to be losing momentum, alongside a pullback in transparency that has direct implications for tracking Black representation. The Diversity Institute conducted its own analysis to understand representation in Canada's corporate sector, examining the top 25 Toronto Stock Exchange (TSX) constituents by market capitalization. While this analysis provides a limited view of representation among some of Canada's largest publicly traded companies, it is based on a small sample and should not be interpreted as representative of the wider corporate sector. The findings show that Black people comprise 4.1% of board seats, exceeding the target of 3.5% set by the BlackNorth Initiative in 2020. While overall this is close to their share of the national population (4.3% in 2021),²²⁸ Figure 14 further shows that boards are generally dominated by men overall and among non-racialized and racialized directors, but the pattern reverses for Black and Indigenous directors, where women form the majority.

Figure 14

Boards of directors' gender distribution by population group, 2026



Note: Diversity Institute, internal calculations (2026). Based on the top 25 TSX constituents by market capitalization.

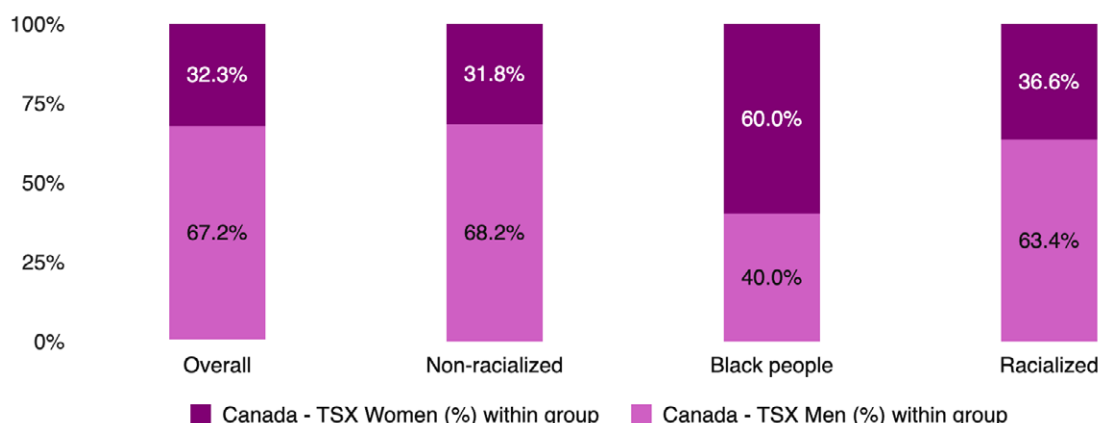
The Diversity Institute also analyzed representation in senior management. Black people hold 1.5% of senior management roles across the top 25 TSX-listed companies, 2.8 percentage points below their share of the national population and 2.6 percentage points lower than their representation among board directors.²²⁹ This suggests weaker representation in executive roles than at the board level, but again the sample is small and not generalizable. Figure 15 illustrates the board composition across senior management roles. As with boards, leadership overall remains dominated by men, but the pattern again reverses among Black leaders, where women form the majority (60% Black women vs. 40% Black men).

Naming representation gaps is a necessary starting point, but the analysis must go further. The critical questions are not only who is

visible in leadership, but who is resourced, who decides, and who sets the terms. Board presence is not the same as governance power. A director who holds a seat without access to the information, relationships, and institutional backing that shape decisions is represented but not empowered. Future analysis should distinguish between symbolic inclusion (i.e., presence at the table) and structural inclusion (i.e., authority over resource allocation, agenda-setting power, and the ability to shape organizational direction). This requires going beyond headcount to examine compensation parity, tenure, and access to the informal influence networks that determine who actually drives institutional decisions.

Figure 15

Senior management gender distribution by population group, 2026



Note: Diversity Institute, internal calculations (2026). Based on the top 25 TSX constituents by market capitalization.

Public sector

The public sector, despite presenting itself as a meritocratic and accountable employer, replicates severe systemic barriers for Black people who aspire to leadership.²³⁰ Black executives within the federal public service frequently report facing hostile environments characterized by harassment, intimidation, and the constant undermining of their authority.²³¹ Furthermore, these leaders endure prolonged career stagnation through acting opportunities that often led to nowhere, alongside unequal workloads, biased performance assessments, and disproportionate disciplinary scrutiny. Crucially, Black women report the most acute impacts of these systemic failures, reflecting how intersecting forms of racism and sexism, referred to as misogynoir, operate within institutional hierarchies.²³² Further, informal networks and nepotism can also shape access to opportunities, as a recent case of a deputy minister using her position to help an unqualified acquaintance secure a job shows how proximity to power can override merit and

narrow pathways for others, including Black employees seeking leadership roles.²³³ These data demonstrate that career advancement is curtailed not by a lack of qualification, but by entrenched institutional bias and racism that denies access to Black leadership. Recent federal initiatives focused on Black executives suggest that the government has taken preliminary steps to address persistent inequities in access to leadership pipelines.²³⁴

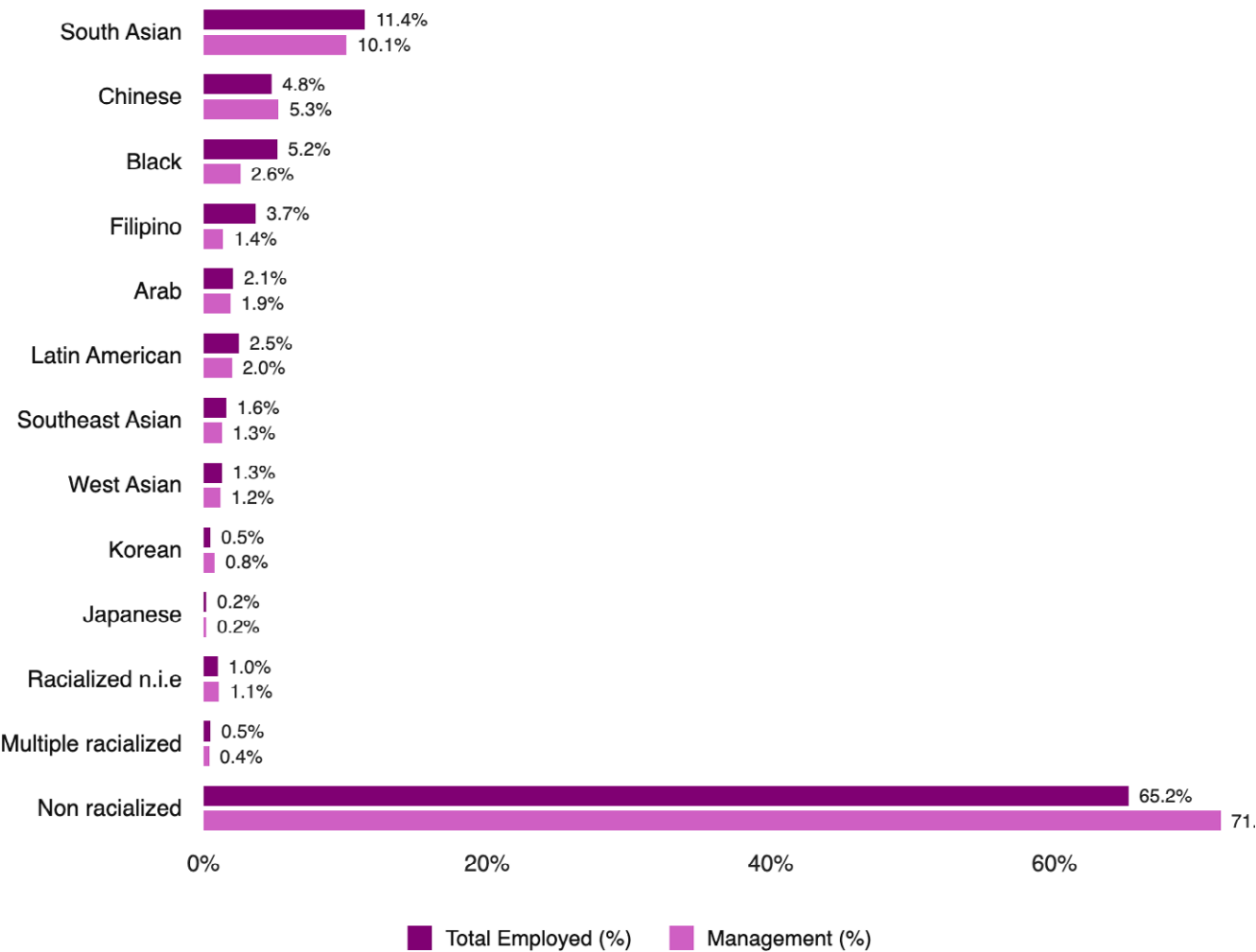
About 5.7% of public sector employees identify as Black, which is roughly equal to the share of Black people in the labour force (5.5%).²³⁵ Data on leadership representation across the public sector remains scarce, although recent federal data suggests that representation has increased but continues to remain limited. As of March 31, 2024, 3% of individuals in senior leadership positions in the federal public service self-identified as Black, up from 1.4% in March 2017. However, Black representation in the executive ranks remains below overall workforce representation (3% of executives vs. 5% overall).²³⁶

Management roles

In many cases, management is where senior leadership trajectories begin, so gaps at this stage influence who gains the experience and visibility needed to move further up. In 2025, Black workers made up 5.17% of

the employed workforce but only 2.61% of management, a difference of 2.56 percentage points, the largest gap across all population groups. Meanwhile, non-racialized workers are over-represented by about 6.55 percentage points (see Figure 16).

Figure 16
Management representation relative to employment share, by population group, 2025²³⁷



Initiatives and support programs

Strengthening pathways to middle management and senior leadership

requires coordinated action across policy, organizational practices, targeted supports, and accountability mechanisms. While governments, employers, and community-based organizations have developed

leadership programs, mentorship initiatives, sponsorship models, and reporting frameworks over several decades, persistent gaps suggest that these efforts are not sufficient on their own. Advancing Black representation in leadership requires stronger accountability for results, including clear equity and diversity objectives, disaggregated data to track progress, and mechanisms that link leadership performance to measurable progress on employment equity goals.

Regulatory and voluntary approaches can still play an important role when they are designed to drive action rather than simply encourage disclosure. Measures such as compliance or explanation reporting frameworks, expanded across sectors and supported by disaggregated data, can improve transparency and accountability. However, their impact depends on whether organizations use the data to change decision-making, address barriers in hiring and promotion, and hold senior leaders responsible for outcomes. Initiatives such as the BlackNorth Initiative and the 50 – 30 Challenge have helped keep leadership diversity on the agenda, but sustained progress also requires changes to organizational culture, including how talent is identified, supported, evaluated, and advanced.

Targeted leadership development programs remain an important component, particularly when they provide skills training, mentorship,



sponsorship, and networking opportunities that support career progression. However, these programs are most effective when paired with systemic changes inside organizations, including inclusive promotion processes, sponsorship from senior leaders, and accountability structures that ensure employment equity and diversity objectives are reflected in performance expectations.



Entrepreneurship

Black-owned businesses as engines of jobs, innovation and trade.

3.53%

self-employment rate, up from 3.16% in 2024

>3M

projected Black population by 2041

Entrepreneurship

76%

of Black entrepreneurs cite access to financing as their single biggest barrier to growth.

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are central to Canada's economy, accounting for the majority of private sector employment and driving growth and exports. Entrepreneurship represents a key pathway to intergenerational wealth, historically denied to Black Canadians through slavery and discrimination. Many turn to entrepreneurship because labour markets fail them.^{238, 239} Black women and immigrants face compounded barriers invisible in aggregate data, particularly in relation to access to capital, mentorship, and scalability.²⁴⁰ Their economic inclusion is a national economic imperative, not merely a social equity concern.

Impact of Black entrepreneurs

While it remains important to keep tracking the barriers Black-owned businesses face, the evidence base is already strong and recent findings largely reinforce what is known.^{241, 242} Instead of revisiting the challenges, emphasis should be directed toward impact, what Black-owned businesses contribute, and how those contributions show up in communities and in the wider economy. At the same time, their continued presence and growth point

to a high degree of resilience. Black-owned businesses have persisted and expanded even while navigating structural barriers and uneven access to resources.^{243, 244}

Even as economic conditions tighten, Black-owned businesses continue to play a meaningful role in day-to-day economic activity. As of 2020, an estimated 144,980 Black-owned businesses were operating across Canada, representing 2.4% of all Canadian SMEs and accounting for about \$3 billion annually.^{245, 246} Black owners hold 2.9% of unincorporated businesses and 1.6% of incorporated businesses, operating in almost all industries.²⁴⁷ Many offer goods and services shaped by lived experience that meet needs that are often overlooked by the market. Evidence suggests that Black communities represent a substantial share of the customer base for these firms, about 27%, underscoring how Black-owned businesses can help fill market gaps.²⁴⁸

Black immigrant entrepreneurs also stand out for their international orientation. More than half, 57.1%, report exporting goods or services from Canada to their country of origin, compared with 36.0% of other racialized immigrants and 19.8% of non-

racialized immigrants.²⁴⁹ This kind of cross-border activity can open new markets and strengthen commercial ties outside of Canada.

Entrepreneurship also matters in the context of wealth-building. Many Black business owners are pioneering entrepreneurship within their families, with 84% reporting they are the first to start a business.^{250, 251} Over time, business ownership can create pathways to income stability, asset building, and community investment, especially in places where employment opportunities are inaccessible. Successful Black businesses can also make entrepreneurship feel more attainable for Black people and help grow networks of peers, mentors, and future founders.

Yet framing Black entrepreneurship primarily as an inclusion issue understates what is at stake. The deeper structural gap is not market access alone, but economic ownership, including presence in supply chains, procurement pipelines, and the infrastructure of distribution. Questions of who owns logistics networks, who builds platforms, and who controls distribution channels remain largely unexamined in economic-inclusion research.

Trends in Black entrepreneurship

There has been an increase in Black self-employment from 2024 (3.16%) to 2025 (3.53%),²⁵² but still below that of total population share (4.3%).²⁵³ Ownership data show a similar gap: as of 2020, Black people accounted for 2.4% of all business owners.²⁵⁴ Projections suggest Black people could account for about 3.2% of entrepreneurs



by 2034,²⁵⁵ remaining below their 2021 population share and not keeping pace with their expected population growth. Since that population share is itself projected to grow substantially as the Black population approaches and exceeds three million by 2041, true entrepreneurship parity would require growth that significantly outpaces current trajectories.²⁵⁶ This underscores the need for sustained, targeted support that goes well beyond access-stage interventions.

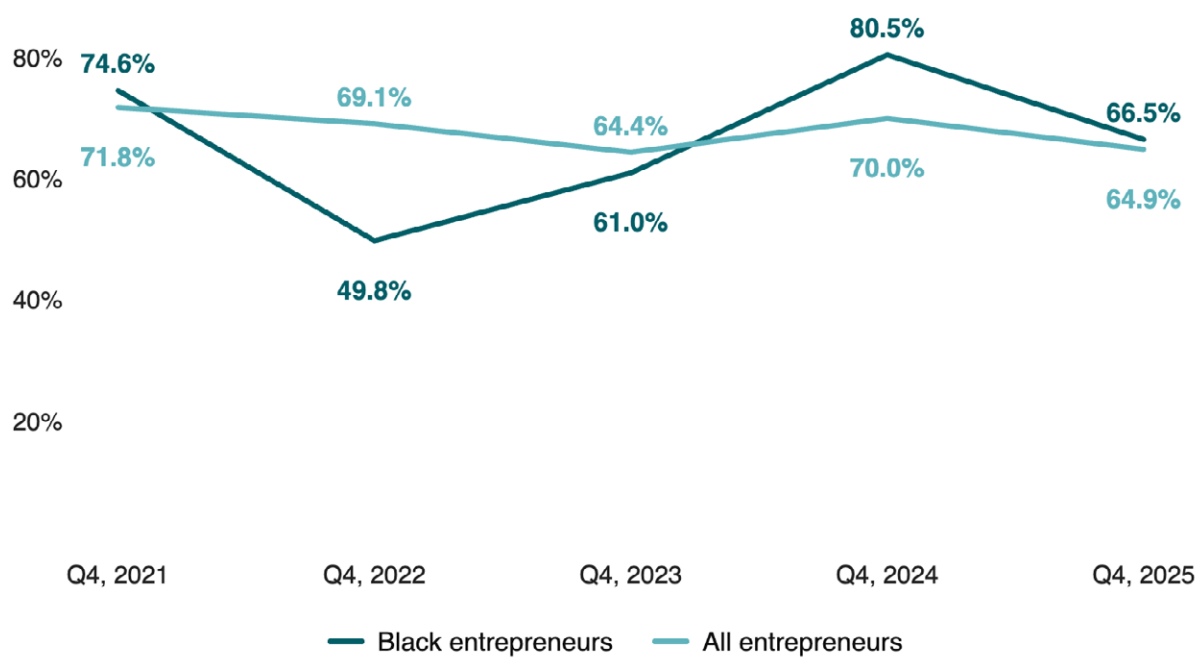
Black entrepreneurs appear to be experiencing economic pressures more acutely. From the fourth quarter of 2024 to the fourth quarter of 2025, optimism fell from 80.5% to 66.5%, a drop of 14 percentage points in just one year (vs. 70% to 64.9%, -5.10 percentage points for entrepreneurs overall). Statistics Canada reports that 62.9% of Black entrepreneurs are sole proprietors,²⁵⁷ often due to limited access to financing, professional networks,

and advisory support.^{258, 259} Given these constraints, they frequently operate with thin financial cushions and rely heavily on personal credit, with more than 80% of Black women entrepreneurs using personal financing to fund their businesses.^{260, 261} As a result, they can be more vulnerable to even modest shifts in economic conditions, which can explain why their business outlooks tend to show greater volatility compared with entrepreneurs overall (see Figure 17).

These structural barriers are even more pronounced in rural and remote settlements, where Black entrepreneurs face greater barriers related to local capital, anchor institutions, and access to opportunity.²⁶² Rural

economies present distinct entrepreneurial conditions shaped by small populations, lower density, and large distance to agglomerations, all of which can limit business growth and resilience. Recent Statistics Canada data indicate that businesses in rural and small town areas have experienced mounting economic pressures, including increased input costs, labour shortages, and heightened debt burdens.^{263,264} In 2024, 66.7% rural and small town enterprises identified cost-related obstacles as the most anticipated challenge, while 44.3% reported inflation as the most pressing short-term obstacle. Moreover, 19.9% of enterprises expected to raise prices in the near term to offset escalating production costs.²⁶⁵

Figure 17
Optimistic outlook over the next 12 months, Q4 2021 to Q4 2025^{266, 267, 268, 269, 270}





Initiatives and support programs

In the last year, government and organizational support programs have persisted in their support of Black entrepreneurship amid the rollback of EDI initiatives across the country. The most substantial initiative is the Government of Canada's Black Entrepreneurship Program (BEP) that launched in 2021, which received a major extension of up to \$189 million in funding for Black business owners over the next five years.^{271, 272,}

²⁷³ However, questions remain about whether the program's fund allocation and eligibility criteria are well-matched to the full spectrum of Black-owned businesses. Existing loan thresholds and application requirements may favour more established enterprises, leaving micro-businesses and early-stage entrepreneurs underserved. A review of how

funding is structured and allocated across programs, alongside expanded microloan access with simplified eligibility criteria, would strengthen reach and impact across the full spectrum of Black entrepreneurs.

In addition to funding, a range of support programs has emerged to meet the needs of Black entrepreneurs through skills training and capacity building that incorporate mentorship, networking, and practical guidance, including support in navigating available funding opportunities. These supports are particularly important given persistent gaps in training, guidance, and business knowledge that can leave many Black entrepreneurs less prepared to operate and grow their businesses. For example, more than half (54%) report being unaware of available government funding initiatives and programs.²⁷⁴ A national survey of more than 300 Black entrepreneurs also found that 56% were classified as unempowered entrepreneurs, lacking the guidance and skills needed to run their businesses effectively.²⁷⁵ Similarly, a survey of more than 250 Black entrepreneurs in Alberta found that only 22% had received any form of business training, with many also reporting limited understanding of funding options and financial tools.²⁷⁶ These findings point to the need for more accessible and well-connected business supports that meet Black entrepreneurs where they are and link them to the same opportunities, resources, and standards of support available across the broader entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Six areas for action — from access to advancement.

Improve race-disaggregated data collection and public reporting

WHO

Governments · school boards · employers

WHY

Enables accountability and informed workforce planning.

Implement targeted anti-Black racism strategies in education

WHO

Ministries · school boards · post-secondary

WHY

Closes gaps that form early and shape later outcomes.

Expand structured pathways into growth sectors

WHO

Employers · industry · training providers

WHY

Turns qualifications into stable, higher-earning jobs.

Address leadership gaps early in the pipeline

WHO

Employers · boards · public service

WHY

Disparities emerge before senior roles and compound.

Align entrepreneurship supports with sector and export priorities

WHO

Governments · economic-development agencies

WHY

Strengthens trade-oriented Black-owned businesses.

Strengthen mentorship, sponsorship and anti-racism training

WHO

Employers · sector bodies

WHY

Builds networks and reduces bias in evaluation.

Conclusion and Recommendations

\$150B+

potential annual boost to Canada's economy from closing Black employment and earnings gaps — the opportunity these recommendations aim to unlock.

Improving outcomes in Black economic participation will require action at multiple overlapping levels: societal, organizational, and individual. The findings show the challenge is less about entering education or work and more about inclusion, retention, and advancement once inside. In education, disparities appear early and limited public reporting at the college level makes progress difficult to track, pointing to the need for clearer and more consistent data. In the labour market, strong participation exists alongside concentration in lower-wage and front-line roles, suggesting that mobility and job quality require greater attention. Disparities in representation begin before senior roles, particularly at the management stage, indicating that advancement pathways, mentorship, and sponsorship matter as much as recruitment. In entrepreneurship, Black-owned businesses contribute meaningfully to communities and the economy but remain more exposed to economic shocks, underscoring the importance of a supportive and accessible entrepreneurial ecosystem.

These findings carry broader economic implications as Canada navigates demographic aging, reduced immigration

targets, and labour shortages across housing, health care, infrastructure, clean growth, and digital sectors. Workforce inclusion is directly tied to productivity, institutional capacity, and Canada's ability to deliver on large-scale economic transformation priorities. Ensuring that Black talent can advance within high-demand sectors is therefore not only a matter of equity, but aligned with national economic resilience and competitiveness.

Societal level

Government and public institutions play a foundational role in shaping the structural conditions that enable or constrain Black economic participation. Addressing persistent disparities requires policy interventions that are targeted, evidence-based, and rooted in an understanding of the distinct history and diversity of Black communities in Canada.

- **Recognize Black workers as a distinct designated group under the Employment Equity Act.** As recommended in A Transformative Framework to Achieve and Sustain Employment Equity, the report of the Employment Equity Act Review Task Force chaired by Professor Adelle Blackett,

this would acknowledge the distinct history and ongoing impacts of anti-Black racism, slavery, exclusion, and systemic discrimination that are often obscured within broader racialized or “visible minority” categories.

- **Strengthen race-disaggregated and intersectional data collection across education, employment, leadership, and entrepreneurship.** Better data are needed to identify where barriers emerge, track outcomes over time, support policy and program design, and evaluate whether interventions are improving outcomes for Black communities.
- **Invest earlier in education-to-employment pathways for Black children and youth.** Governments should expand supports in elementary and secondary school, improve pathways to post-secondary education, mandate anti-racist disciplinary frameworks across provincially controlled school boards, and address the school-to-precarity pipeline that disproportionately affects Black



These findings carry broader economic implications as Canada navigates demographic aging, reduced immigration targets, and labour shortages across housing, health care, infrastructure, clean growth, and digital sectors.

students. Work-integrated learning, career exposure, and sector-specific pathways should be targeted toward Black youth, particularly in high-growth and non-traditional sectors.

- **Align workforce development strategies with federal and provincial sector priorities.** Labour market strategies should connect Black workers to opportunities in housing, health care, defence, infrastructure, clean economy transitions, digital adoption, and other priority sectors. This should include targeted apprenticeship expansion, credential recognition supports, leadership development in public service and regulated professions, and procurement-linked workforce inclusion measures tied to major public investments.
- **Move beyond recruitment to advancement, retention, and leadership.** Responses to labour shortages should focus not only on hiring a more diverse workforce, but also on improving representation in supervisory, leadership, secure, and higher-paid roles. Governments should reinforce transparency and disclosure requirements on leadership representation, with disaggregated reporting on Black people specifically.
- **Reaffirm Canada's equity commitments and strengthen public narratives about Black success.** Federal guidance should clearly reaffirm Canada's commitments to equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism, particularly in light of rollbacks in other jurisdictions. Public and private organizations should challenge stereotypes

and actively celebrate Black excellence to erode bias, shape aspirations, and expand perceptions of Black participation in high-growth and non-traditional sectors.

- **Leverage the knowledge, networks, and market potential of Black immigrant diasporas.** Governments and institutions should recognize Black immigrant communities as sources of global expertise, entrepreneurship, trade connections, and access to emerging markets.

Organizational level

Employers, educational institutions, and professional bodies are the environments in which inclusion either takes hold or breaks down. Organizational change requires visible leadership commitment, reformed processes, and targeted interventions that address the specific points at which Black people are most often held back.

- **Treat equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism as strategic priorities.** Senior leaders should set a clear tone from the top, link equity commitments to organizational strategy, and ensure that improving employment, advancement, and market opportunities for Black communities is not treated as peripheral or symbolic.
- **Reform recruitment, hiring, and credential recognition practices.** Organizations should remove screening criteria that introduce unintended bias, strengthen structured outreach, and provide ongoing training for hiring managers, promotion committees, and others with gatekeeping authority. Employers, educational institutions, regulators, and professional bodies should also



expand bridging programs, prior learning assessment, and regulated profession reforms to address barriers faced by internationally trained Black professionals.

- **Strengthen retention, sponsorship, and advancement pathways.** Organizations should address barriers to promotion by creating transparent criteria, structured mentorship and sponsorship, and mid-level leadership pathways. Black leaders also need support once they enter leadership roles, including sponsorship from senior leaders and psychosocial supports that recognize the compounded pressures of navigating institutions not designed with them in mind.
- **Operationalize intersectionality in workplace systems.** Organizations should conduct pay equity and advancement audits that explicitly analyze race and gender together, name and address misogynoir as a distinct institutional phenomenon, and develop gender-specific anti-racism measures rather than subsuming these issues within generic EDI programming.

- **Tailor entrepreneurship supports to the realities of Black-owned businesses.** Funding, procurement, incubator, accelerator, education, and training supports should reflect differences by business stage, sector, and scale. Programs should reach the full spectrum of Black-owned businesses, with particular attention to micro-enterprises, simplified eligibility criteria, and expanded access to microloans.

Individual level

While systemic and organizational change is primary, targeted supports for Black individuals can help bridge gaps and build capacity.

- **Support skill development, mentorship, and leadership capacity building linked to labour demand.** Programs should provide appropriate wraparound supports while connecting participants to sector-specific opportunities (e.g., including pathways into certified trades, health leadership, digital and AI roles, and export-oriented entrepreneurship) so that individual development is aligned with projected labour demand.
- **Strengthen peer learning and professional networks.** Knowledge sharing among Black entrepreneurs and professionals can reduce isolation, improve access to informal information, and expand awareness of opportunities that are often shared through networks rather than formal channels.
- **Differentiate supports across Black communities.** Individual supports should account for differences by gender, national origin, generational status, immigration history, and other intersecting identities. Because outcomes and barriers vary meaningfully within the Black population, one-size-fits-all programming is unlikely to address the specific challenges people face.

Appendix A

This appendix provides examples of initiatives that support the educational, employment, leadership, and entrepreneurial development of Black people in Canada. Where available, results are included. Some newer initiatives have not yet published results, but still reflect ongoing efforts to advance EDI, even amid growing backlash in some organizational contexts across Canada. Each section highlights selected initiatives and supports led by governments, institutions, employers, and community organizations. These examples are intended to illustrate the range of responses and areas of activity, rather than serve as a comprehensive inventory.

Table A1: Education initiatives and support programs

Program	Organization	Dates	Description and results (if available)
Advanced Digital and Professional Training (ADaPT) for Black Youth	Diversity Institute, Toronto Metropolitan University	2022-ongoing	A work-integrated learning program supporting Black youth through skill-building workshops, job search preparation, networking, community engagement, and wraparound supports. From April 2024 to March 2025, 232 participants engaged in training, 175 completed it, and 149 moved into work placements, with 85% securing employment. Participants also reported progress toward their education, career, and life goals (89%), while most described the program as culturally relevant (95%). Reported gains included career planning (89%), communication (88%), and digital skills (82%). ²⁷⁷
Afro-Caribbean Mentorship Program (ACMP) ²⁷⁸	Afro-Caribbean Mentorship Program	2018-ongoing	An Ottawa-based initiative supporting the success of African, Caribbean, and Black undergraduate and graduate students, building confidence, financial literacy, and professional networks to encourage civic participation.

Program	Organization	Dates	Description and results (if available)
AI Education for Black and Indigenous Youth ²⁷⁹	CultureLink	2025-ongoing	Offers Black and Indigenous youth free access to AI courses on Coursera, the opportunity to earn a Google certificate, one-on-one mentorship, and employment workshops to support workforce readiness. Results not yet available
All That Kids Can Be Mentorship Program ²⁸⁰	African Communities of Manitoba Inc. (ACOMI)	Ongoing	A youth development program that supports young people, especially newcomer youth, through mentorship, after-school activities, summer work experience and scholarships or bursaries for students of African descent.
Big on Campus and the Black Youth Mentorship Program ^{281, 282}	Sheridan College; Big Brothers Big Sisters Peel	2020-ongoing	Connects Black Sheridan students with Black alumni mentors to build networks, explore career pathways, and strengthen belonging. To date, all BYMP participants reported increased knowledge of post-secondary life and Black culture and history, and all Bigs on Campus mentees described their mentoring relationship positively. ²⁸³
Black Achievers Mentorship Program ²⁸⁴	YMCA Greater Toronto	2021-ongoing	Supports Black youth in the Greater Toronto Area through mentorship, social development, and academic guidance from Black professionals and role models. Expanded in 2025 from Scarborough to North Etobicoke and Brampton. It currently serves 173 youth and 43 mentors, and 74 students have graduated into post-secondary education, trades, or employment. ^{285, 286, 287}
Black Student Summer Leadership Program (BSSLP) ²⁸⁸	Toronto DSB/ Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement	2019-ongoing	A seven-week paid internship for Black students in grades 10 to 12 that combines experiential placements, mentorship, wellness, and community-building through Afrocentric and community-based approaches. By 2023, the program had received over 200 applications and supported 106 students. Participants reported stronger interpersonal, professional, and research skills, especially in public speaking, communication, teamwork, time management, work ethic, and career direction. ²⁸⁹
Black Youth AI Fellowship ²⁹⁰	Tribe Network	2025-ongoing	An eight-week virtual fellowship that provides Black university students in Canada with practical AI skills, mentorship, and access to a national network at no cost. Results not yet available.
Black Youth Mentorship and Leadership Program ²⁹¹	University of Alberta	2020-ongoing	An Alberta-based initiative for Black students in grades 10 and 11 focused on economic outcomes, belonging, leadership, and positive cultural identity. Participants reported stronger knowledge of post-secondary resources, greater ability to address racism and discrimination, and increased confidence in navigating career pathways. ²⁹² Confidence in career aspirations rose from 73.9% at the start of the program to 85.7% by the end. ²⁹³

Program	Organization	Dates	Description and results (if available)
Black Youth School Success Initiative ²⁹⁴	Peel District School Board	2018–ongoing	A collaborative initiative that supports Black students in Peel Region through tutoring, mentoring, leadership development, and family supports. It aims to strengthen academic achievement, school engagement, and longer-term educational pathways.
The African Nova Scotian Freedom School (ANSFS) ²⁹⁵	The African Nova Scotian Freedom School	2020–ongoing	A summer program for Black children and teens in Nova Scotia that provides culturally grounded learning focused on Black history, leadership, social justice, and wellness. It aims to affirm the strengths of Black youth while building knowledge, confidence, and community engagement.
Black Youth Visionary program ²⁹⁶	Ontario Tech University	2025–ongoing	Supports Black applicants and students at Ontario Tech University through outreach, financial assistance, and wraparound supports to strengthen access to post-secondary education and employment in their field. Since launching in January 2025, enrolment has grown steadily, suggesting strong uptake and relevance. ²⁹⁷
CEE Centre for Young Black Professionals Programs ²⁹⁸	CEE Centre for Young Black Professionals	2024–ongoing	Delivers targeted career development programming for Black youth aged 18 to 30 across technology, entertainment, finance, social services, and trades. In 2024, CEE delivered 15 programs, engaged 182 participants, achieved an 85% completion rate, and reported a 61% employment placement rate.
ELITE Program for Black Youth ^{299, 230}	University of Alberta; InnoTech Alberta	2021–ongoing	Provides Black youth aged 15 to 22 with paid, hands-on work experience in research and innovation settings across universities, businesses, and government. The program has supported more than 200 students and expanded to Carleton University in 2022. In 2024, it partnered with the DiscoverE Program to pilot science and engineering summer camp access for Black elementary students, and in 2025 this expansion grew to support an additional 90 students annually for three years.
Interac Experiential Learning Program	The Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement; Interac	2022–ongoing	Designed for Black high school students in the TDSB, this program addresses under-representation in STEM and IT by building skills in coding, innovation, digital identity, and professional branding, while connecting students with Black professionals. It increased awareness of STEM, business, and IT, with 79% reporting improved learning, 71% gaining greater insight into related careers, and 50% saying they were very or extremely likely to pursue these fields. ³⁰¹
Jamaican Canadian Association Scholarship Program ³⁰²	Jamaican Canadian Association	2002–ongoing	A scholarship and bursary program that supports students of Caribbean and African heritage pursuing full-time post-secondary studies at Ontario colleges and universities. The program aims to promote academic excellence, leadership, community engagement, and access to post-secondary education, while helping reduce financial barriers.

Program	Organization	Dates	Description and results (if available)
L.E.A.R.N. Mentorship Program ³⁰³	TAIBU Community Health Centre	2019–ongoing	Uses an Afrocentric lens to support youth aged 7 to 13 and 14 to 19 through one-on-one mentorship, homework help, and broader educational support. The program has supported 150 students and their parents, expanded in-person programming in 2023–24, and engaged 61 mentors. ³⁰⁴
Leadership By Design (LBD) ³⁰⁵	Lifelong Learning Institute	2016–ongoing	A multi-year initiative that works with Black youth, parents, and community partners to foster leadership, ambition, and academic success. In 2024, 57 students received support across grades 10 to 12. Graduates entered competitive universities in Canada and the United States, including programs in medicine, engineering, and architecture, with several receiving major scholarships.
Mentorship & Leadership Program ³⁰⁶	Africa Centre	Ongoing	A multi-level mentorship initiative for Black youth aged 12–30 in Alberta connecting them with young adults, professionals, and community leaders. Results: 303 African, Caribbean, and Black youth participated; 36 were trained in career and skill development, of whom 33 secured employment; 24 students were awarded EREC scholarships totalling \$50,000.
National Black Youth in STEM Program ³⁰⁷	Actua	2022–ongoing	Provides Black youth with intentional STEM engagement through camps, clubs, workshops, and events, while increasing access to relatable role models and more supportive learning environments. The program reaches 10,000 Black youth annually. ³⁰⁸
NDC Youth Programming ³⁰⁹	Neighbourhood Developing Careers (NDC)	Ongoing	Provides information and exposure to Black, racialized, and equity-deserving youth and their families about careers in the skilled construction trades.
Onyx Initiative ³¹⁰	Onyx Initiative	2020–ongoing	A non-profit that supports Black students and recent graduates as they begin their careers through placements, mentorship, professional development, and partnerships with corporate, educational, and community organizations across Canada. Participation nearly doubled between the first and second cohorts, and partner companies have hired participants. ³¹¹ The sixth cohort in 2025 included 450 participants. ³¹²
Pathways to Public Health Program	The Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement; Dalla Lana School of Public Health	2023–ongoing	Exposes Black students in grades 10 to 12 to careers in public health through weekly sessions, group discussions, activities, and mentorship from Black professionals and same-race facilitators. All participants reported satisfaction, and 77.8% said the program increased their interest in a public health career in 2023–24. ³¹³

Program	Organization	Dates	Description and results (if available)
PLUG Project ^{314, 315}	TAIBU Community Health Centre	2020–2021	Supported students and parents through workshops and tools designed to reduce conflict in the education system and keep students in school. In 2023–24, cases involving PLUG reportedly achieved a 100% success rate in having suspensions and expulsions withdrawn and records expunged. ³¹⁶ Supports included mental health referrals, school supports, youth programming, legal services, and parent and family supports.
Study Buddy ³¹⁷	Ontario Tech University; Jean Augustine Centre; Lifelong Leadership Institute; Diversity Institute	2020–2023	Provided free one-on-one online tutoring to racialized K–12 students, with emphasis on Black, Indigenous, and newcomer youth. The program engaged 684 students from 451 families and mobilized 331 tutors, who delivered more than 8,600 tutoring hours across over 12,800 sessions. Parents reported reduced stress and greater hope for their children's futures, while students gained access to quality learning resources and meaningful peer connections.
Supports for Student Learning Program ³¹⁸	Federation of Black Canadians	2022–ongoing	A free after-school program offering mentorship, workshops, tutoring, and physical activity to support Black youth in their transition to post-secondary education. A total of \$250,000 was invested to reduce financial barriers, directly supporting 180 youth across six or more community sites.
Together We Can Youth Mentorship Program ³¹⁹	Tropicana Community Services	2017–ongoing	Supports high-risk Black, African, and Caribbean youth by connecting them with caring adult mentors and helping them pursue goals related to education, employment or entrepreneurship, civic engagement, leadership, and cultural identity. Since 2020, 180 youth have participated in individual and group mentoring sessions and reported positive experiences, including stronger confidence and self-esteem. ^{320, 321, 322}
Western BLUE317 ³²³	Western Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion	2022–ongoing	Provides paid, part-time leadership placements for Black students through community organizations in the London area, including Western. Placements are valued at \$6,300 over five months and have included projects at the London Health Sciences Centre on lung cancer screening equity and pressure injuries on darker skin tones. Students gain professional skills, confidence, networks, and career preparation.

Program	Organization	Dates	Description and results (if available)
Youth Outreach Worker (YOW) Program ³²⁴	African Community Services of Peel; Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services	Ongoing	Connects Black youth and their families to a range of services and supports intended to improve access and strengthen outcomes.
Youth Taking Flight ³²⁵	Youth Taking Flight	2017–ongoing	A targeted STEM pathway initiative for Black and equity-deserving youth, combining aerospace and aviation training with mentorship, leadership development, and hands-on learning opportunities. Emphasizes affordability and access to reduce barriers linked to cost and under-representation.
Black Youth Excellence ³²⁶	Afrodescendant Leadership Alliance	2022–ongoing	Supports CÉGEP and university-level Black students through mentorship, skills training, and networking to facilitate their transition into the workforce. To date, the program has supported over 60 students, improving their professional readiness, confidence, and access to industry connections and internships.
Empowerment Program ³²⁷	ABLE Autism Inc.	Ongoing	A six-month, hands-on training program designed to bridge the employment gap for Black youths with special needs. The program focuses on building confidence, independence, and opportunities for personal growth through mentorship and community-based learning.
Micro-Internship Program ³²⁸	The Prep Academy	2022–ongoing	Designed to help African Nova Scotian students build workplace readiness, employability, and career exploration skills through opportunities to job shadow, strengthen their resumes, and connect with Black mentors. The program has demonstrated strong impact for participating students, with 92% of student participants reporting improved abilities, knowledge, and skills, and plans to continue their mentorship relationship, while 84% indicated that the program provided valuable information to support informed career decisions.
College & University Expo ³²⁹	The Prep Academy	2022–ongoing	Connects African Nova Scotian students with colleges and universities across Atlantic Canada to explore academic programs and engage with campus staff, expanding students' exposure to post-secondary opportunities. In 2024/25, the program reached 115 students. ³³⁰

Table A2: Employment initiatives and support programs

Program	Organization	Dates	Description and results (if available)
ArtWorksTO ³³¹	Toronto Arts Foundation; City of Toronto; Remix Project; OCAD University	2022–ongoing	A two-year talent pipeline designed to address the exclusion of IBPOC and 2SLGBTQ+ early-career creatives from institutional contracts. It combines paid creative contracts with City of Toronto departments, portfolio and proposal development, one-on-one coaching, and accredited training through OCAD University. The program enrolled 61 participants, all of whom identified as Indigenous, Black, or persons of colour. More than half identified as 2SLGBTQ+. Results include 84% securing meaningful employment, 68% accessing additional paid creative work, and \$244,000 awarded directly through creative contracts.
Black Youth Fellowship Program ³³²	Youth Fellowship	2021–ongoing	A professional and leadership development program focused on building the next generation of Black public servants. The fellowship is designed to strengthen political literacy and understanding of the democratic process through an intensive eight-month model that includes training, mentorship, a community project, and a 12-week placement in the office of a Member of City Council.
Black Professional Network	Business Development Bank of Canada ³³³	2025–ongoing	The Business Development Bank of Canada has developed a number of EDI initiatives to support their employees including the launch of the Black Professional Network in 2025 to address barriers faced by Black professionals and support their career advancement.
Black Physicians of Canada Mentorship Program ³³⁴	Black Physicians of Canada	2021–ongoing	Provides race-concordant mentorship for Black medical learners and early-career physicians through one-on-one support and tailored communal learning. In its first year, it included 58 mentor-mentee pairs, and 95% of participants rated the experience positively. ³³⁵
Canadian Black Nurses Alliance Mentorship Program ³³⁶	Canadian Black Nurses Alliance (CBNA)	2022–ongoing	Connects aspiring Black nurses and nursing students with Black nursing leaders across Canada. Feedback highlights the value of Black role models for professional guidance, emotional support, and confidence-building. ³³⁷
CJF Black Journalism Fellowship ^{338, 339, 340}	Canadian Journalism Foundation	2021–ongoing	Provides Black early-career journalists with a six-month immersive newsroom experience through media partners, along with mentorship, skills training, and a full-time stipend. As of 2024, 92% of fellows remained in journalism or related fields, and several moved into professional journalism roles after the fellowship.

Program	Organization	Dates	Description and results (if available)
IGM Financial EDI Programs ^{341, 342}	IGM Financial	2019–ongoing	A set of EDI initiatives supporting the professional development and advancement of Black employees, with targets for representation at the executive, board, and student workforce levels. By December 2024, all targets had been met or exceeded, including 3.7% Black representation in executive and board roles, 5% Black hiring in the student workforce, and 86% of interns coming from equity-deserving communities.
Newcomers and NEET Program ³⁴³	Federation of Black Canadians	2025–2026	A hybrid initiative for newcomer and NEET Black youth that combines skills development, wraparound supports, mentorship, and workshops. It reached youth across Alberta and Ontario and helped strengthen job readiness, peer networks, and confidence in navigating education and employment pathways.
Obsidi ³⁴⁴	Black Professionals in Tech Network	2022–ongoing	A networking and talent platform that connects Black professionals with events, learning, recruiters, and executive networks. The platform has supported more than 120,000 professionals, with 70% of members at the mid- to executive level.
Propel Mentorship Program ^{345, 346}	Black Mentorship Inc.	2020–ongoing	A six-month mentorship program for Black entry-level and mid-career professionals that combines one-on-one mentoring, career guidance, workshops, and networking. Over six years, it has supported more than 10,000 professionals, reported a 98% success rate, and built partnerships with more than 75 organizations. Alumni report clearer career goals, stronger networks, and support in securing internships and employment.
Transforming Skills and Talent Acquisition in Canadian Cybersecurity ³⁴⁷	Rogers Cybersecure Catalyst	2021–2023	Sought to diversify Canada’s cybersecurity talent pipeline by creating pathways for equity-deserving groups, including Black and racialized Canadians. The initiative developed and tested inclusive recruitment and talent acquisition models for employers, showing that equity-centred workforce development is both feasible and important in specialized technical fields.
AWA Career Advancement ³⁴⁸	Delta Family Resource Centre (DFRC)	2024–ongoing	Provides Black youth and young adults (aged 17–30), particularly those at risk or involved in the justice system, with in-demand digital and entrepreneurial skills through hands-on training in cybersecurity, network technology, Python programming, business development, and employment readiness. The program has demonstrated strong outcomes, with DFRC reporting a 95% success rate among IT students completing CISCO-certified training, helping participants gain industry recognized credentials and pathways into tech careers. ^{349, 350}

Table A3: Leadership initiatives and support programs

Program	Organization	Dates	Description and results (if available)
ACCELERATE Leadership ^{351, 352}	Coalition of Innovation Leaders Advancing Respect (CILAR), with KDPM Consulting Group, TD Bank, MaRS Discovery District	2023–ongoing	Launched in February 2023, this leadership initiative supports senior executives in Canada’s innovation sector to strengthen inclusive leadership practice through executive coaching and related mentorship supports. Pilot participants reported that the tools and frameworks were highly valuable, with peer learning and community-building identified as especially useful, and the initiative has since moved into a scale-up phase.
Black Leaders of Tomorrow Program ³⁵³	Roots Community Services	2018–ongoing	A youth business mentoring program that pairs Black youth with mentees to strengthen business, communication, leadership, and financial management skills.
BlackNorth Initiative (BNI)	BNI	2020–ongoing	BNI mobilizes corporate leaders to make measurable commitments to address anti-Black racism and increase Black representation in senior leadership and governance. By 2025, more than 500 organizations had signed the pledge. Analysis by DI found that Black board representation among TSX-listed signatories reached 3.3%, compared with 1.6% among non-signatories, and 24.3% of signatories had at least one Black director, compared with 12.6% of non-signatories. The representation of Black women on boards is also more than double in BNI companies (2.6% vs. 1.0%). ³⁵⁴
CivicMatch ³⁵⁵	CivicAction	2021–2023	CivicMatch connected Black, racialized, and Indigenous rising leaders with established leaders across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area through small-group conversations aimed at opening pathways to leadership. In 2021 alone, more than 150 rising leaders participated, 99% found the conversations insightful, and 97% said they would recommend the program. CivicAction later reported that, since 2021, more than 450 rising leaders had connected with more than 110 executive leaders.³⁵⁶

Program	Organization	Dates	Description and results (if available)
FutureBUILDS NEXT ³⁵⁷	FutureBUILDS	2025–ongoing	FutureBUILDS NEXT is a fellowship for early-career Black professionals in Toronto’s non-profit housing sector, focused on leadership development and talent-building. The initiative launched for 2025, building on earlier FutureBUILDS cohorts, where 98% of participants improved their understanding of development processes, 83% modified projects using program learning, 24% expanded project scope, and 35% advanced projects to municipal approval. ³⁵⁸
Loblaw leadership initiative	Loblaw	2024	Loblaw committed to increasing racialized representation on its executive (from 20% to 25%) and management teams (21% to 30%) by the end of 2024. ³⁵⁹ By 2024, racialized groups held 28% of executive roles and 34% of management roles, exceeding companies’ targets for both levels. ³⁶⁰
Mosaic Leadership Development Program ^{361, 362}	Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, Centre on Diversity and Inclusion	2021–ongoing	Co-developed in 2021, Mosaic supports EX-01 public servants from equity-seeking groups in preparing for senior executive roles through sponsorship, learning, experience-building, and assessment. As of spring 2024, Mentorship Plus included 57 departments and agencies across the federal public service and had established close to 700 sponsorship relationships across government. ³⁶³ Of the 38 participants in Cohort 1, 36 graduated and 25 had already been appointed or were acting in EX-01 or equivalent roles by 2025. Seven participants (18%) identified as Black. Cohort 2 launched on September 13, 2023, with 50 participants, including 15 who identified as Black. ³⁶⁴
Operation Black Vote Canada ³⁶⁵	Operation Black Vote Canada	2004–ongoing	Promotes Black participation in politics and public leadership through training, workshops, and advocacy. It has trained more than 100 Black Canadians for public office. Survey results from 2025 also found that, among respondents who had attended candidate training while preparing to run, 20% said their training was sponsored by OBVC. ³⁶⁶
R.I.T.E.S. for Black and African Canadian Youth ³⁶⁷	Central Toronto Youth Services	Ongoing	R.I.T.E.S. supports Black and African Canadian youth through identity development and practical leadership, resilience, conflict transformation, and problem-solving skills in an affirming environment.
TD Pathways to Economic Inclusion	TD Bank Group	2023–ongoing	TD’s enterprise-wide strategy to improve employment, financial, and housing access, and strengthen diverse leadership pipelines. Representation of Black, racialized, and Indigenous leaders at the VP level and above increased from 24.3% in 2023 to 25.7% in 2024. ³⁶⁸

Table A4a: New entrepreneurship funding initiatives since 2025

Program		Description
Government Initiatives		
Black Entrepreneurship Program (BEP)	As of October 2025, the Government of Canada is continuing its investment in entrepreneurship equity with a major extension to the Black Entrepreneurship Program (BEP) of up to \$189 million in funding over five years for Black business owners. ^{369, 370}	
	1. The Black Entrepreneurship Loan Fund	Provides loans of up to \$250,000 to Black business owners and entrepreneurs across the country to start, grow and maintain their businesses. The Loan Fund is administered by the Federation of African Canadian Economics (FACE), in partnership with the Business Development Bank of Canada.
	2. Ecosystem Fund	Delivered by the regional development agencies, the Ecosystem Fund supports not-for-profit Black-led business organizations across the country in their capacity to provide support services such as mentorship, financial planning and business training for Black entrepreneurs.
	3. The Black Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub	Conducts research on Black entrepreneurship in Canada to help identify barriers to success and opportunities for growth for Black business owners and entrepreneurs. The Knowledge Hub is led by Carleton University's Sprott School of Business and the Dream Legacy Foundation.
Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency - New investment of \$1.2 million		Delivering up to \$1.2 million over four years, starting in 2026–2027, to support organizations in Nunavut, the Northwest Territories and the Yukon to help Black entrepreneurs access the resources they need to start, grow and succeed. ³⁷¹

Program	Description
Black Entrepreneurship Alliance (BEA) initiative - New investment of \$2.4 million	The investment will support the delivery of several new initiatives, including an 11-week business process improvement program, a 12-week export readiness program, and an annual forum developed in collaboration with York University, municipal partners, and Export Development Canada. The forum is intended to provide a space for Black-led businesses to exchange ideas and build connections. Alongside existing programming, these activities are designed to support Black-led entrepreneurs by strengthening digital capacity, facilitating access to broader markets, and contributing to regional economic activity. The project is expected to reach over 350 businesses and provide mentorship or training to more than 350 professionals across the Greater Toronto Area. ³⁷²
IDEA Mississauga's Step-Up Program	IDEA Mississauga has been awarded funding through the federal Regional Innovation Ecosystem Fund, in partnership with Black Creek Community Health Centre, the Black Entrepreneurship Alliance (BEA), and York University. A total of \$2.4 million in grants will be distributed through this initiative, with IDEA Mississauga receiving \$60,000 to support the Step-Up Program. The six-month program is designed to help innovative and inclusive businesses address barriers to growth, strengthen their capacity, and expand their impact, including through social and environmental outcomes. ³⁷³
Grants and Funding Opportunities for Black-led and Community-Based Non-Profits^{374, 375, 376}	
Black Ideas Grant (B.I.G.) 3.0 – 2025	\$8 million in flexible, one-year funding for Black-led, Black-mandated, and Black-serving (B3) organizations across Canada. Supports initiatives that combat anti-Black racism, improve social outcomes, or enhance economic opportunities.
Supporting Black Canadian Communities Initiative (SBCCI)	Funding to increase the capacity of grassroots not-for-profit organizations serving Black communities in Canada.
Africa Center Black Youth Leadership Program	Micro-grants of up to \$5,000 for youth-led, community-based initiatives that empower young people of African descent to build leadership, civic engagement and cultural heritage projects.
DoorDash #BlackFoodEnergy Restaurant Grant – Year 4	30 Canadian Black-owned restaurants will each receive \$10,220 in non-repayable funding to support innovative projects in the food service industry.
LEVEL BIPOC Grants	Flexible general operating funding of \$150,000 (paid over three years) to invest directly into BIPOC-led or BIPOC youth-led/engaging registered charities and non-profit societies operating in British Columbia.
Ontario Trillium Foundation System Innovations Grant (Youth Opportunities Fund)	Multi-year funding (2–5 years) to support collaborative projects aiming at systemic change — focusing on improving how systems (education, justice, child welfare, social services, employment, etc.) work for youth, especially Indigenous, Black, or other racialized youth who face systemic barriers.

Program	Description
Other Funding Initiatives and Programs	
BKR Capital ³⁷⁷	BKR Capital is a Canadian venture capital fund that solely invests in Black-led startups and businesses. The team focuses on early-stage disruptive companies in the technology space.
Black Youth Entrepreneurship Program ³⁷⁸	BYEP provides workshops, seminars, and training sessions that cover various aspects of entrepreneurship, such as business planning, marketing, financial management, and networking. These educational programs aim to equip young entrepreneurs with skills needed to start and manage their own businesses successfully. The program also provides access to small grants or loans specifically for Black youth who want to start their own businesses. We partner with financial institutions (TD Bank, BDC, and RBC), government agencies and community foundations to secure funding for these initiatives.
Black Entrepreneur Program ^{379, 380}	Black Opportunity Fund is a community-led Canadian charity on a mission to create a healthy and thriving Black Canada by challenging anti-Black racism and responding to long-standing underinvestment in Black communities. The fund facilitates access to capital for Black-led businesses and provides access to grants to Black-led non-profits and charities. As part of its mandate to provide funding and capacity building support for Canadian Black-led businesses, Black Opportunity Fund (BOF) has established the Black Entrepreneur Program to provide Canadian Black entrepreneurs with business education, financial literacy, skills training and support to help build their capacity and knowledge to operate successful, sustainable businesses.
TD's Black Entrepreneur Credit Access Program ³⁸¹	The Black Entrepreneur Credit Access Program is made to provide Black entrepreneurs with access to credit to drive their businesses forward. The program offers an enhanced credit review process, including a holistic view of credit applications as well as services such as business banking advice, financial planning, borrowing advice, mortgage solutions, and more.
Scotiabank's Black-Led Business Financing Program ³⁸²	Scotiabank offers a Black-Led Business Financing Program to lend eligible Black entrepreneurs financing for capital investments and/or working capital needs. Businesses can apply for a term loan for capital investments up to \$250,000.
Futurpreneur Black Entrepreneur Startup Program ³⁸³	Futurpreneur's Black Entrepreneur Startup Program partnered with RBC to provide startup loan financing and access to mentorship for Black entrepreneurs aged 18 to 39. The program guides participants through all the steps of writing a business plan, from financing to launch. The program also offers financing up to \$75,000, mentorship, networking, and follow-on financing.

Table A4b: Entrepreneurship initiatives and support programs

Program	Organization	Dates	Description and results (if available)
B.E.S.T. Program ³⁸⁴	Ontario Tech University; Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario	2022–2024	A skilled trades entrepreneurship program for Black-identified youth aged 16 to 39 in Southern Ontario, focused on building, managing, and scaling a business. Participants reported stronger confidence, broader entrepreneurial skills, and access to new networks and opportunities.
Black African and Caribbean Entrepreneurship Leadership (BACEL) Program ³⁸⁵	Black Business and Professional Association (BBPA); Diversity Institute	2021–2023	A national entrepreneurship training initiative for Black entrepreneurs that combined staged learning, mentorship, networking, and wraparound supports. The program served 563 participants across women, men, and youth cohorts, with reported improvements in financial literacy, networking, and technology-related skills.
Business Advisory Implementation Development Services (BAIDS) ³⁸⁶	BBPA	2020–ongoing	A customized support program for Black entrepreneurs offering professional services in areas such as marketing, staffing, tax, and business advisory. The program received 816 applications, delivered 331 services, engaged 28 Black-owned service providers, and directed more than \$2.07 million to Black-owned businesses.
Black Founders Network (BFN) ³⁸⁷	University of Toronto	2021–ongoing	A network and venture support initiative for Black entrepreneurs that provides mentorship, sponsorship, community, and growth supports to help founders build, fund, and scale their businesses. The initiative has supported more than 15,000 community members, while participating companies have raised over \$50 million in funding and generated over \$45 million in revenues.
Black Innovation Programs ³⁸⁸	DMZ	2019–ongoing	A suite of supports for Black tech entrepreneurs and Black-owned startups, including skills training, mentorship, investor connections, workspace, and ecosystem-building events. Since launch, the initiative has supported more than 2,500 Black founders and distributed over \$3 million in grants and services. In 2025, more than \$400,000 was awarded through the Black Innovation Summit pitch competition. ³⁸⁹
Capital Skills Program ³⁹⁰	BBPA; Diversity Institute	2022–2024	Designed to strengthen access to financial capital for equity-deserving entrepreneurs, including Black entrepreneurs. Through the BBPA stream, participants strengthened business planning and funding readiness, with 88% agreeing the program helped them develop their business plan and 65% securing a share of more than \$2 million in funding.

Program	Organization	Dates	Description and results (if available)
The Mwanzo Program ³⁹¹	Black Business Ventures Association	2022–ongoing	A four-week virtual program for early-stage Black entrepreneurs that combines on-demand training with one-to-one coaching to help participants test ideas and build stronger business foundations. The program has supported more than 60 graduates and 274 participants, while also expanding access to mentorship and entrepreneurial networks
NewLife Youth ReGeneration Program ³⁹²	Realize Your Potential	2020–ongoing	A mentorship and development program for Black youth aged 9 to 24 that combines entrepreneurship and STEM exposure to build skills, confidence, and longer-term pathways into innovation and business ownership.
Retail Entrepreneurship Acceleration Program (REAP) + iLaunchHER-product ³⁹³	de Sedulous Women Leaders	2021–2024	A retail readiness program for Black, racialized, and immigrant women entrepreneurs delivered across three cycles between 2021 and 2024. The program combined 13 expert-led masterclasses with structured buyer engagement opportunities. A total of 285 entrepreneurs completed the program; participants reported stronger confidence and greater understanding of the Canadian retail environment, and 56% reported gaining access to big-box stores through their participation.
Entrepreneurship Program ³⁹⁴	Black Girls Gather	2018–ongoing	A 3-month program assisting Black women entrepreneurs in Atlantic Canada to launch and grow their businesses through education, mentorship, skills training, and networking. Since 2021, the program has supported 75 Black women entrepreneurs in advancing their business goals and strengthening their entrepreneurial skills. About 40% of women entered with only a business idea and gained the knowledge needed to launch a sustainable business, while 60% grew existing startups or early-stage businesses to the next level. ³⁹⁵
Rise Up Women's+ Pitch Competition (Rise Up) ³⁹⁶	BBPA; CASA Foundation; WEKH	2021–ongoing	Rise Up is a pitch competition and mentorship program to support and elevate Black women entrepreneurs across Canada at all stages of their business journey. The program provides participants with mentorship and 1:1 coaching, business plan reviews, group workshops, and training in core entrepreneurial skills like business model design, financial planning, and pitching. It also offers funding opportunities and helps entrepreneurs build networks and access industry experts to overcome barriers to growth and sustainability. In 2024, Rise Up attracted nearly 1,000 applicants, with 27 expert reviewers evaluating business plans, while 27 industry speakers delivered 10 hours of workshops to 222 entrepreneurs, and seven coaches provided personalized pitch coaching to 24 semi-finalists. Eight finalists and sixteen runners-up received a total of \$96,000 in cash prizes, providing financial support to implement their business plans and accelerate market entry or expansion.



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