Indspire

Indigenous education, Canada's future. | L'éducation des autochtones. L'avenir du Canada.

# State of Indigenous Education and Labour Market

2025 | RESEARCH AND IMPACT

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# FOREWORD FOR RESEARCH & IMPACT'S EDUCATION AND LABOUR MARKET REPORTS SERIES

For First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples across Canada, access to equitable, culturally relevant education has always been fundamental to achieving individual and collective goals. Yet, while many Indigenous learners continue to demonstrate resilience and academic excellence, persistent systemic barriers hinder full participation in post-secondary education and meaningful employment. Addressing these challenges requires not only commitment but also evidence: a thoughtful collection and examination of data that centres Indigenous experiences and informs responsive, effective policy.

With that goal in mind, Indspire is proud to present the *Education and Labour Market Series*, a collection of six interrelated research reports developed by Indspire's Research & Impact (R&I) team and supported by the Employment and Social Development Canada's (ESDC) *Skills and Partnership Fund*. This series offers a comprehensive look at the current state of Indigenous post-secondary education and labour market outcomes across the country. As Statistics Canada's *2021 Census* made plain, Indigenous young people are the fastest-growing demographic in the country. It is essential that they are supported throughout their educational journeys—and, ultimately, to successfully enter their chosen careers after graduation.

Drawing on both quantitative and qualitative data, including five years of *Building Brighter Futures: Bursaries & Scholarships* (BBF) recipient information and feedback from Indigenous graduates and employers, these reports illuminate critical trends, challenges, and opportunities. They reveal growing post-secondary enrolment, especially among Indigenous women, and underscore the strong employment outcomes of BBF recipients. They also point to ongoing disparities in access to funding and the need for more culturally informed support during the transition to employment.

What distinguishes this research is its grounding in Indigenous perspectives. National data often fails to reflect the lived experiences of Indigenous learners or to capture the complexities of their educational and career journeys. By centring Indigenous voices and producing Indigenous-led analysis, this series begins to fill a long-standing research gap, beginning the essential work of building programs and policies that truly support Indigenous success.

As Indspire continues to advocate for systemic change, the insights in this series will serve as a guidepost. They will inform the development of a forthcoming position statement that synthesizes key findings and recommendations, offering a sustainable strategic path forward. We hope this research will spark conversation, guide collaboration, and inspire meaningful action at multiple levels by a wide circle of stakeholders.

**Dr. Mike DeGagné,** Ph.D.
*President and CEO,*
*Indspire*

# INDSPIRE'S EDUCATION AND LABOUR MARKET RESEARCH PROGRAM: TRENDS AMONG INDIGENOUS LEARNERS IN CANADA

## Education and Labour Market Series

This series of six interrelated research reports explores the evolving landscape of post-secondary education and labour market transitions for Indigenous learners in Canada. Developed by Indspire's Research and Impact department, these studies aim to inform program design, donor engagement, and policy advocacy to better support First Nations, Inuit, and Métis learners.

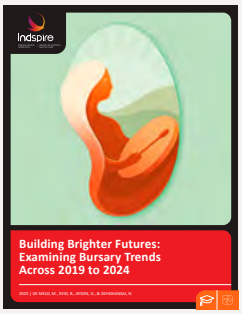
Despite progress in Indigenous educational attainment, significant gaps remain in access, persistence, and equitable transition into the labour market. There is limited national research that integrates Indigenous student experiences with labour market outcomes—creating a need for Indigenous-led, data-informed studies. This research program helps fill that gap and is supported by the Government of Canada's Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) through the Skills and Partnership Fund.

*Chi-Miigwetch* for all of the hope and encouragement that you all bring.


### State of Indigenous Education and Labour Market

**Research and Impact, 2025**

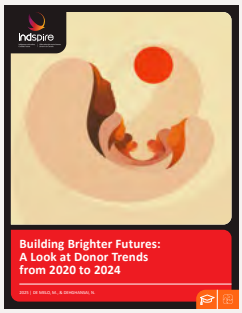
Providing a national overview of Indigenous student enrollment, educational attainment, and labour market integration, this report identifies key disparities in post-secondary access, highlights growth in enrollment—particularly among women—and demonstrates how Indspire's Building Brighter Futures (BBF) recipients mirror broader student trends while supporting alignment with in-demand careers, especially in healthcare.




### Building Brighter Futures: Examining Bursary Trends Across 2019–2024

**De Melo et al., 2025**

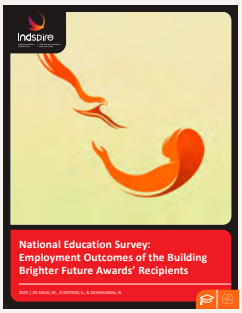
Analyzing five years of BBF recipient data, along with showing substantial growth in both participation (+63%) and funding disbursement (+74%), this report explores recipient demographics, fields of study, and financial need, finding a concentration in BHASE programs and persistent gaps between funding levels and student needs, especially in health-related fields.




### Building Brighter Futures: A Look at Donor Trends from 2020–2024

**De Melo & Dehghansai, 2025**

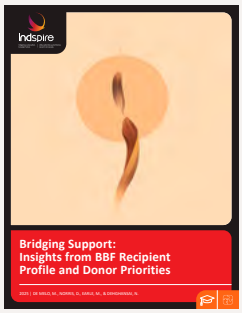
Examining donor funding patterns and priorities, this report reveals an increase in donor engagement and highlights alignment (and misalignment) between donor preferences and student demand. While most donors do not restrict funding based on gender or Indigenous identity, significant program-specific preferences exist, particularly favouring STEM fields over more commonly chosen BHASE disciplines.




### National Education Survey: Employment Outcomes of Building Brighter Future Awards' Recipients

**De Melo et al., 2025**

Based on survey data from BBF recipients (2016–2022), this report highlights strong post-graduation employment outcomes. Among graduates, 88% were employed (78% full-time), with many securing work in their field within six months. Respondents reported high satisfaction with job relevance and growth potential, reinforcing the long-term value of BBF support.




### Bridging Support: Insights from BBF Recipient Profile and Donor Priorities

**De Melo et al., 2025**

This comparative study bridges data from two BBF reports (*Examining Bursary Trends Across 2019–2024* and *A Look at Donor Trends from 2020–2024*) to assess how well donor support aligns with student needs. The analysis uncovers gaps in program alignment—most notably, the underfunding of health, education, and social sciences—and recommends strategies to better match donor investments with recipient goals.


### Understanding the Experience of Indigenous Students Transitioning into the Labour Market

**Mazhar et al., 2025**

A qualitative study capturing perspectives from Indigenous graduates and employers, this report explores challenges faced by students transitioning from education to employment, including workplace adjustments and (lack of) culturally responsive support, and recommends improved experiential learning and targeted hiring practices.

## Looking Ahead

Indspire is in the process of developing a position statement that will consolidate key insights and recommendations from across all six reports. It will serve as a strategic tool to guide Indspire's partnerships, advocacy, and program development in support of Indigenous post-secondary success.

## ABOUT INDSPIRE

Indspire is an Indigenous national registered charity that invests in the education of Indigenous People for the long-term benefit of students, their families and communities, and Canada. With the support of its funding partners, Indspire disburses financial awards, delivers programming, and provides resources with the goal of improving educational outcomes for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis students. Indspire provides resources to students, educators, communities, and other stakeholders who are committed to improving success in education for Indigenous youth. Since 2019, Indspire has awarded over $120 million through over 33,800 bursaries and scholarships to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis youth, making it the largest funder of Indigenous post-secondary education outside of the Canadian federal government.


## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to begin by acknowledging and thanking our *Building Brighter Futures* program recipients who shared their experiences with us and provided valuable insight into the experiences of Indigenous students across Canada. We also wish to acknowledge Indspire's staff, funding partners, and other stakeholders, whose support has enabled us to provide thousands of bursaries, scholarships, and awards each year to students pursuing post-secondary education and training. At Indspire, it is important for us to provide space for Indigenous communities to feel seen, represented, and celebrated. The success experienced by Indigenous students, and the ways they use their education to demonstrate reciprocity in giving back to their communities, are truly inspiring and tell the story of how brighter futures can be built when we work in partnership.

*Chi-Miigwetch* for all of the hope and encouragement that you all bring.

## RESEARCH SPONSOR

This project is funded in part by the Government of Canada | Canada

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# KEY TERMS

### Indigenous Population
Self-identified Indigenous people.

### Registered Indigenous Population
Indigenous people who are Registered or Treaty Indian Status, enrolled in an Inuit Land Claims Agreement, or Members of a recognized Métis Government or Settlement (Statistics Canada, 2024a).

### Indigenous Student Population
Self-identified Indigenous people who are enrolled in post-secondary education.

### BBF Recipients
Indigenous post-secondary students who have verified their Indigenous identity and receive funding from Indspire's *Building Brighter Futures* (BBF) bursary program.

### Men+/Women+
Binary gender categories used by Statistics Canada that include some non-binary persons.

### New Entrants
Students entering a program after not being enrolled in that program type for at least two years.

### Field of Study
Area or discipline of learning for a given program of study, including STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics and computer science) and BHASE[1] (business, humanities, health, arts, social science, and education).

### Labour Shortage
Across Canada, where there are substantially more job openings for an occupation than there are job seekers. Labour shortages make it easier to find a job.

### Labour Surplus
Across Canada, where there are substantially fewer job openings for an occupation than there are job seekers. Labour surpluses make it difficult to find a job.

1 Beyond these core areas, BHASE also includes fields like legal studies, trades, services, natural resources, and conservation.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Through its BBF bursary program, Indspire provides financial assistance to Indigenous post-secondary students. This report examined the post-secondary education landscape among the Indigenous and non-Indigenous student population, compared BBF recipients to Indigenous post-secondary students on key demographics and educational outcomes, and explored the labour market trends following graduation. The analysis focused on registered Indigenous people—who have Registered or Treaty Indian Status, are enrolled in an Inuit Land Claims Agreement, or are Members of a recognized Métis Government or Settlement—where data were available, as they provide the most relevant comparison group for BBF recipients, who must verify their Indigenous identity to qualify for funding.

In 2021, there were 102,260 self-identified Indigenous students, 61.0% of whom were registered Indigenous students. Post-secondary enrollment rates varied by Indigenous identity: Registered Métis learners had the highest enrollment rate, with 10.0% of those aged 15 years and over enrolled; followed by registered First Nations people (7.3%) and registered Inuit (4.2%). Across all Indigenous identities, women+ had higher enrollment rates than men+. Registered Indigenous women+ were enrolled at a rate of 9.6%, 3.8 percentage points higher than that of registered Indigenous men+ (5.8%). By comparison, non-Indigenous people aged 15 years and over had higher enrollment rates, and a smaller gap (2.0 %) between enrollment rates for women+ (10.1%) and men+ (8.1%).

Findings from the registered and self-identified Indigenous populations highlight that in the 2020-2021 academic year, 6,238 students received BBF funding, representing 10.0% of registered Indigenous post-secondary students. Overall, recipients of Indspire's BBF bursaries were representative of the broader registered Indigenous student population, although there were notable differences in Indigenous identity and gender. Indspire BBF funding reached a larger proportion of First Nations students (70.0%) than their share in the broader registered Indigenous student population (65.7%). In contrast, Métis students made up a smaller share of BBF recipients (27.0%) compared to their representation among registered Indigenous students (31.7%). The percentage of BBF recipients who were Inuit (3.0%) was similar to their representation among registered Indigenous students (2.6%). Men+ were underrepresented among BBF recipients, accounting for 26.9% of recipients, compared to 35.8% of registered Indigenous students. These findings indicate that Indigenous men may face barriers to accessing post-secondary education and funding. Further research into the barriers Indigenous men face may help inform strategies to better support this group.

The majority of Indigenous students and BBF recipients were entering BHASE rather than STEM fields of study. However, the share of Indigenous students entering STEM is increasing—from 15.3% in 2015 to 16.9% in 2021. Data indicate that STEM fields lead to a higher median income, particularly in the fields of mathematics, computer science, information sciences, and architecture, engineering, and related technologies.

Labour market projections for 2024–2033 highlight the importance of post-secondary education. Of the 103 occupations at risk of labour shortages, 88 require post-secondary education. The majority of occupations at high risk of labour shortages are in healthcare (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2025a). Also, healthcare was the most common field of study for BBF recipients, underlining how the BBF program helps Indigenous students reach labour market opportunities.

The review and analysis of available post-secondary education and labour market data highlights opportunities to further integrate data into Indspire's research, priorities, programming design, evaluation, and advocacy efforts. These opportunities include identifying good starting points for additional research to understand different Indigenous students' experiences and factors or barriers related to attending post-secondary. Identifying which populations are over- or underrepresented among Indigenous students can start the line of inquiry to better understand why we observe these outcomes, thus shaping advocacy and programming design in a national, data-driven way. More specific programming decisions could also leverage labour market data, shaping partnerships around in-demand occupations, to better position Indigenous students in higher-paying, higher-demand occupations.

Finally, the goal is to leverage these data and undertake a more informed approach with regular reporting mechanisms to monitor and identify trends across the education and labour market sectors. To that effect, undertaking reports on a regular basis, in alignment with data releases of the highest relevance, could provide Indspire with up-to-date information to measure the reach and success of its programs, shape partnerships, and support advocacy efforts. The value of this information could be further enhanced through digital platforms, increasing efficiency, accessibility, and relevance, in addition to ensuring that information is made available as close to data releases as possible.

# INTRODUCTION

This report examined Indigenous student enrollment in post-secondary education, compared enrollment rates of Indspire's BBF recipients to those of the broader Indigenous student population, and explored post-graduation labour market outcomes. By analyzing enrollment patterns, funding access, and employment prospects, these findings inform strategies to better support Indigenous learners through their education and transition to the labour market. Where data were available, the report focused on the registered Indigenous student population, as this group provides the best comparison group to BBF recipients, who must demonstrate their Indigenous identity to be eligible for funding.

The results of the analyses are divided into three main sections. Section 1 (p. 13) provides a broad overview of key characteristics of Indigenous students, registered Indigenous students, and non-Indigenous students enrolled in post-secondary education in Canada. Section 2 (p. 21) discusses the demographic and educational characteristics of BBF recipients compared to the broader Indigenous student population, making comparisons to registered Indigenous students when possible. Section 3 (p. 24) explores the employment outcomes of post-secondary graduates, highlighting income trends, labour market alignment, and projected job shortages and surpluses. Lastly, key considerations and recommendations for Indspire are discussed.

By shedding light on Indigenous post-secondary enrollment patterns, funding access, and employment prospects, these findings will inform strategies to better support Indigenous learners throughout their education and transition to the labour market.

# METHOD

This report draws on both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data on BBF recipients were provided by Indspire. During the application process, BBF recipients provided information pertaining to demographics, education, and employment. Additional information was gathered through surveys that were distributed to recipients after their completion of the school year. Secondary data on Indigenous post-secondary enrollment, school program participation, and labour market conditions were drawn from a combination of custom requests and publicly available datasets. These data sources, including any relevant limitations, are described below.

The analyses conducted in sections 1 (p. 13) and 2 (p. 21) relied on 2021 Census of Population (Census) data sourced from both publicly available tables and custom data table requests. Demographic analyses (sections 1.1, p. 13, and 2.1, p. 21) were based on data from a custom request detailing post-secondary enrollment for Indigenous people who are Registered or Treaty Indian Status, enrolled in an Inuit Land Claims Agreement, or a Member of a recognized Métis Government or Settlement. The purpose of the custom request was to access data relevant to registered Indigenous students which would permit a more suitable comparison to BBF recipients. This disaggregation allows for analysis of post-secondary enrollment specific to registered Indigenous students.

Analyses by institution type (section 1.2, p. 17), level of study (section 2.2, p. 25), and field of study (sections 1.3, p.19, and 2.3, p. 26) relied on publicly available data from Statistics Canada. Data on post-secondary institution type came from the Census, while data on new entrants by level and field of study were sourced from both the Census and the Postsecondary Student Information System. Data used in these sections did not differentiate between registered and non-registered Indigenous students. As such, overviews and comparisons were made to the broader Indigenous post-secondary student population. These analyses focused on the experiences of Indigenous students with a single Indigenous identity, excluding the minority of students who had multiple Indigenous identities and those who did not specify their Indigenous identity, but reported being Registered or Treaty Indian Status, enrolled in an Inuit Land Claims Agreement, or a Member of a recognized Métis Government or Settlement.

Section 3 used publicly available data from Statistics Canada on the median employment income of post-secondary graduates, and labour market projection data from Employment and Social Development Canada. The analysis in section 3 (p. 27) focused on national labour market trends and did not account for differences in regional labour markets. Data on median income by field of study were not differentiated by Indigenous identity, and therefore do not reflect Indigenous-specific factors that influence employment outcomes. For example, graduates may be unable to find work related to their education while living in their home communities.

Unless otherwise noted, comparisons between BBF recipients and the broader Indigenous student population are for the 2020-2021 school year. Focusing on this time frame allowed for direct comparisons to be made with data from the Census. However, due to the small sample sizes of BBF recipient data, some breakdowns of BBF recipient data include averages from 2019–2024.

# RESULTS

## 1. Indigenous Student Enrollment in Post-Secondary Education

### Overview

This section provides a descriptive overview of Indigenous students enrolled in post-secondary education in Canada. Section 1.1 describes the demographic breakdown of Indigenous students enrolled in post-secondary education, including by age group and gender. Section 1.2 (p. 17) provides an overview of the type of post-secondary institutions Indigenous students were attending. Section 1.3 (p. 19) describes the fields of study Indigenous students were entering. For sections 1.2 and 1.3, data did not allow for separate analyses of registered Indigenous students.

### Key Findings

Enrollment rates varied by Indigenous identity, gender, and age. For example, Indigenous women+ had higher enrollment rates and were more likely to be in university compared to Indigenous men+, who had lower enrollment rates and were more likely to attend college, trade school, or non-university institutions. While participation in STEM fields was low, a growing share of Indigenous students were entering these fields.

### 1.1 Demographics

In 2021, there were 102,260 Indigenous students enrolled in post-secondary education, the majority (62,355 or 61.0%) of whom were Registered or Treaty Indian Status, enrolled in an Inuit Land Claims Agreement, or a Member of a recognized Métis Government or Settlement (referred to as the registered Indigenous population; Statistics Canada, 2024a). Table 1.1.1 (p. 14) shows the number and rate of enrollment in post-secondary education by Indigenous identity, including Indigenous students with registered status.

In 2021, the proportion of the registered Indigenous population aged 15 years and over who were enrolled in post-secondary education was nearly identical to that of the total Indigenous population (7.8% vs. 7.9%; Statistics Canada, 2024a). Within the registered Indigenous population, enrollment rates varied by Indigenous identity: Inuit had the lowest enrollment rate at 4.2%, while First Nations people had an enrollment rate of 7.3%. Métis people had the highest enrollment rate at 10.0%, surpassing the non-Indigenous enrollment rate of 9.1%. This difference may be due to the fact that the Métis population is younger than the non-Indigenous population. Among those aged 20–24, registered Métis had a lower[2] enrollment rate (43.2%) than the non-Indigenous population (51.5% see section 1.1.2, p. 16).

2 Formal significance testing was not conducted; however, given population and sample sizes, many of the observed differences are likely to be statistically significant. Though caution should be exercised in interpreting results, the patterns identified are nonetheless meaningful and provide valuable insights into broader trends.

**Table 1.1.1:** Enrollment in Post-secondary Education by Identity, and Registered Status, 15 Years and Over (Canada, 2021)

| Indigenous Identity | Total | Student | Rate |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Registered Indigenous** | 797,870 | 62,355 | 7.8% |
| Registered First Nations | 562,165 | 40,985 | 7.3% |
| Registered Inuit | 38,955 | 1,625 | 4.2% |
| Registered Métis | 196,750 | 19,745 | 10.0% |
| **Total Indigenous** | 1,299,245 | 102,260 | 7.9% |
| Total First Nations | 764,755 | 57,975 | 7.6% |
| Total Inuit | 47,870 | 2,310 | 4.8% |
| Total Métis | 486,620 | 41,985 | 8.6% |
| **Non-Indigenous** | 28,987,880 | 2,643,890 | 9.1% |

**Source:** *Statistics Canada, 2024a. Census of Population 2021. Custom request.*

Data from 2015–2021 indicate that the number of new Indigenous entrants to post-secondary education declined in 2020, the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, with First Nations and Métis entrants decreasing by 11.2% and 8.3%, respectively (Statistics Canada, 2024b). In 2021, the number of new entrants began increasing, up 3.9% for First Nations and 7.7% for Métis people. The number of Inuit new entrants was too small to identify clear trends. Table 1.1.2 (p. 15) shows the number and percent change in the number of new entrants to post-secondary education by Indigenous identity in Canada.

**Table 1.1.2:** New Entrants to Post-Secondary Education by Identity, 15 Years and Over (Canada, 2015–2021)

| | | Year | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Indigenous Identity** | | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **2020** | **2021** |
| **Indigenous** | Count | 17,260 | 17,560 | 17,370 | 17,260 | 17,280 | 15,550 | 16,390 |
| | Rate of Change[3] | | 1.7% | -1.1% | -0.6% | 0.1% | -10.0% | 5.4% |
| First Nations | Count | 9,960 | 10,160 | 9,770 | 10,070 | 9,820 | 8,720 | 9,060 |
| | Rate of Change | | 2.0% | -3.8% | 3.1% | -2.5% | -11.2% | 3.9% |
| Inuit | Count | 310 | 310 | 320 | 290 | 290 | 290 | 270 |
| | Rate of Change | | 0.0% | 3.2% | -9.4% | 0.0% | 0.0% | -6.9% |
| Métis | Count | 6,470 | 6,550 | 6,760 | 6,320 | 6,630 | 6,080 | 6,550 |
| | Rate of Change | | 1.2% | 3.2% | -6.5% | 4.9% | -8.3% | 7.7% |
| **Non-Indigenous** | Count | 364,190 | 357,670 | 358,550 | 352,960 | 348,340 | 340,200 | 344,610 |
| | Rate of Change | | -1.8% | 0.3% | -1.6% | -1.3% | -2.3% | 1.3% |

**Source:** *Statistics Canada, 2024b. Table 37-10-0264-01 New entrants to postsecondary education by Indigenous identity, educational qualification, field of study (STEM and BHASE groupings), gender and age.*

### 1.1.1 Gender

In 2021, registered Indigenous women+ were enrolled in post-secondary education at higher rates than men+ (9.6% vs. 5.8%; Statistics Canada, 2024a). This enrollment gender difference was consistent across all Indigenous identities but was most pronounced for registered Métis students (a difference of 4.3%). The gap between the enrollment rates of women+ and men+ was narrowest for non-Indigenous students (a difference of 2.0%). Table 1.1.3 (p. 16) shows the number and rate of enrollment in post-secondary education by Indigenous identity and gender in Canada.

3 This is the change in percentage and not just a percentage.

**Table 1.1.3:** Enrollment in Post-secondary Education by Identity, Registered Status, and Gender, 15 Years and Over (Canada, 2021)

| Indigenous Identity | Men+ | | | Women+ | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | Student | Rate | Total | Student | Rate |
| **Registered Indigenous** | 382,415 | 22,330 | 5.8% | 415,460 | 40,025 | 9.6% |
| Registered First Nations | 265,985 | 14,105 | 5.3% | 296,180 | 26,875 | 9.1% |
| Registered Inuit | 18,845 | 525 | 2.8% | 20,110 | 1,095 | 5.4% |
| Registered Métis | 97,570 | 7,685 | 7.9% | 99,170 | 12,050 | 12.2% |
| **Total Indigenous** | 621,465 | 36,890 | 5.9% | 677,780 | 65,370 | 9.6% |
| Total First Nations | 361,490 | 20,205 | 5.6% | 403,265 | 37,765 | 9.4% |
| Total Inuit | 23,080 | 830 | 3.6% | 24,790 | 1,480 | 6.0% |
| Total Métis | 236,890 | 15,855 | 6.7% | 249,730 | 26,125 | 10.5% |
| **Non-Indigenous** | 14,217,300 | 1,157,440 | 8.1% | 14,770,580 | 1,486,450 | 10.1% |

**Source:** *Statistics Canada, 2024a. Census of Population 2021. Custom request.*

**Note:** *Due to small population sizes, Statistics Canada rolls other genders into men+ and women+ categories.*

### 1.1.2 Age

Across all Indigenous identities, including for registered Indigenous people, people aged 20–24 had the highest post-secondary enrollment rates (24.7%), with enrollment rates decreasing with age (Statistics Canada, 2024a). Table 1.1.4 (p. 17) shows the number of post-secondary students and enrollment rates by Indigenous identity and age group in Canada in 2021.

While higher shares of young people were enrolled in post-secondary education, registered Indigenous students aged 35–54 and 55–64 had higher enrollment rates (5.1% and 1.5%) than their non-Indigenous peers (4.9% and 0.9%). This suggests that registered Indigenous students may enroll in post-secondary education at an older age than non-Indigenous students. In fact, 54.7% of registered Indigenous students were 25 years and over, compared to 44.3% of non-Indigenous students.

**Table 1.1.4:** Post-secondary Education Enrollment by Identity, Registered Status, and Age Group (Canada, 2021)

| Indigenous Identity | | Age Groups | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 15–19 Years | 20–24 Years | 25–34 Years | 35–54 Years | 55–64 Years | 65 Years and Above |
| **Registered Indigenous** | Count | 7,705 | 20,525 | 18,915 | 13,140 | 1,740 | 330 |
| | Rate | 8.7% | 24.7% | 11.9% | 5.1% | 1.5% | 0.4% |
| Registered First Nations | Count | 4,560 | 12,535 | 13,165 | 9,265 | 1,235 | 230 |
| | Rate | 6.8% | 20.5% | 11.3% | 5.2% | 1.6% | 0.4% |
| Registered Inuit | Count | 240 | 490 | 520 | 330 | 45 | 10 |
| | Rate | 4.6% | 10.3% | 5.7% | 2.7% | 1.0% | 0.3% |
| Registered Métis | Count | 2,900 | 7,490 | 5,245 | 3,555 | 465 | 90 |
| | Rate | 18.2% | 43.2% | 15.5% | 5.5% | 1.3% | 0.3% |
| **Total Indigenous** | Count | 14,210 | 35,090 | 29,505 | 20,340 | 2,515 | 605 |
| | Rate | 9.9% | 26.7% | 11.6% | 5.0% | 1.3% | 0.4% |
| Total First Nations | Count | 7,335 | 18,755 | 17,680 | 12,295 | 1,555 | 355 |
| | Rate | 8.2% | 23.1% | 11.4% | 5.1% | 1.4% | 0.4% |
| Total Inuit | Count | 365 | 750 | 715 | 420 | 55 | 20 |
| | Rate | 5.7% | 13.0% | 6.5% | 2.8% | 1.0% | 0.5% |
| Total Métis | Count | 6,510 | 15,585 | 11,120 | 7,625 | 915 | 230 |
| | Rate | 13.6% | 35.0% | 12.5% | 4.9% | 1.1% | 0.3% |
| **Non-Indigenous** | Count | 420,905 | 1,051,720 | 668,745 | 442,945 | 44,365 | 15,215 |
| | Rate | 22.7% | 51.5% | 14.4% | 4.9% | 0.9% | 0.2% |

**Source:** *Statistics Canada, 2024a. Census of Population 2021. Custom request.*

## 1.2 Institution Type

This section describes attendance of Indigenous students at non-university and university post-secondary institutions, but does not make comparisons to registered Indigenous students due to data limitations. A similar share of Indigenous students attended non-university (50.2%) and university (48.1%) institutions, whereas the majority of non-Indigenous students attended university (55.8%; Statistics Canada, 2023). Among Indigenous students, 57.8% of Inuit students attended college, trade school, or non-university institutions, compared to 46.9% of Métis students and 52.4% of First Nations students. This may indicate a preference among Inuit students for job-ready skills, but it may also highlight potential barriers to university access for this population. Table 1.2.1 (p. 18) shows the number and percentage of post-secondary students who attended non-university institutions and universities by Indigenous identity and gender. Data on attendance by institution type for registered Indigenous students was not publicly available.

Gender differences in attendance by institution type were seen among students of all identities. Indigenous women+ were more likely than men+ to attend university (51.4% vs. 42.2%), while Indigenous men+ were more likely than women+ to attend college, trade school, or non-university institutions (55.9% vs. 47.1%; Statistics Canada, 2023). This trend was consistent across different Indigenous identities. Gender differences in non-university and university attendance were narrowest for non-Indigenous students.

**Table 1.2.1:** Post-secondary Students by Institution Type, Gender (Canada, 2021)

| | | Attended College, CEGEP, Trade School, or Non-University | | Attended University | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Indigenous Identity** | **Gender** | **Count** | **Rate** | **Count** | **Rate** | **Count** |
| **Total Indigenous** | **Total** | **51,380** | **50.2%** | **49,180** | **48.1%** | **102,260** |
| | Men+ | 20,605 | 55.9% | 15,585 | 42.2% | **36,890** |
| | Women+ | 30,770 | 47.1% | 33,600 | 51.4% | **65,370** |
| Total First Nations | **Total** | **30,365** | **52.4%** | **26,695** | **46.0%** | **57,975** |
| | Men+ | 11,850 | 58.6% | 7,985 | 39.5% | **20,205** |
| | Women+ | 18,520 | 49.0% | 18,705 | 49.5% | **37,765** |
| Total Inuit | **Total** | **1,335** | **57.8%** | **930** | **40.3%** | **2,310** |
| | Men+ | 535 | 64.5% | 290 | 34.9% | **830** |
| | Women+ | 800 | 54.1% | 640 | 43.2% | **1,480** |
| Total Métis | **Total** | **19,675** | **46.9%** | **21,555** | **51.3%** | **41,985** |
| | Men+ | 8,225 | 51.9% | 7,305 | 46.1% | **15,855** |
| | Women+ | 11,450 | 43.8% | 14,255 | 54.6% | **26,125** |
| **Non-Indigenous** | **Total** | **1,132,840** | **42.8%** | **1,475,080** | **55.8%** | **2,643,890** |
| | Men+ | 516,460 | 44.6% | 624,695 | 54.0% | **1,157,440** |
| | Women+ | 616,380 | 41.5% | 850,380 | 57.2% | **1,486,450** |

**Source:** *Statistics Canada. Table 98-10-0419-01 School attendance by Indigenous identity: Canada, provinces and territories, census divisions, and census subdivisions with a population of 5,000 or more.*

**Note:** *Students attending both university and CEGEP, trade school, or other non-university post-secondary education represent 0.7% or less of each identity and gender, and are not shown in this table. Due to small population sizes, Statistics Canada rolls other genders into men+ and women+ categories.*

## 1.3 Field of Study

This section describes the fields of study pursued by Indigenous students in their post-secondary education and does not make comparisons to registered Indigenous students. Most Indigenous students pursued BHASE (83.1%) compared to STEM fields of study (16.9%), although the share of Indigenous students in STEM has grown since 2015. This trend was more prevalent with First Nations students, while the shift was minor for Inuit students. This trend was consistent across all Indigenous identities and non-Indigenous students, though non-Indigenous students had a higher STEM participation rate (28.4%; Statistics Canada, 2024b). Table 1.3.1 (p. 20) shows the percentage of new entrants to post-secondary education by field of study and gender. This table omits the share of new entrants in unclassified programs.

Gender differences in STEM and BHASE participation were also found. Indigenous men+ were more likely to enter STEM fields (26.1%) than were women+ (12.2%). While this gender difference was consistent across all Indigenous identities and non-Indigenous students, the difference in STEM participation was smaller among Indigenous students (13.9%) than among non-Indigenous students (18.9%). The gender difference in STEM participation was smallest among First Nations students (12.6%; Statistics Canada, 2024b).

**Table 1.3.1:** Percentage of New Entrants to Post-secondary Education by Field of Study, and Gender (Canada, 2021)

| | | STEM | | BHASE | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Indigenous Identity** | **Gender** | **2015** | **2021** | **2015** | **2021** |
| **Total Indigenous** | **Total** | **15.3%** | **16.9%** | **84.7%** | **83.1%** |
| | Men+ | 23.0% | 26.1% | 77.0% | 73.9% |
| | Women+ | 10.8% | 12.2% | 89.2% | 87.8% |
| Total First Nations | **Total** | **12.9%** | **14.7%** | **87.1%** | **85.3%** |
| | Men+ | 18.9% | 23.4% | 81.1% | 76.6% |
| | Women+ | 9.0% | 10.8% | 91.0% | 89.2% |
| Total Inuit | **Total** | **20.0%** | **14.8%** | **80.0%** | **85.2%** |
| | Men+ | 22.2% | 20.0% | 77.8% | 80.0% |
| | Women+ | 11.1% | 6.7% | 88.9% | 93.3% |
| Total Métis | **Total** | **19.2%** | **19.5%** | **80.8%** | **80.5%** |
| | Men+ | 27.8% | 29.2% | 72.3% | 70.8% |
| | Women+ | 13.1% | 14.3% | 86.9% | 85.7% |
| **Non-Indigenous** | **Total** | **26.2%** | **28.4%** | **73.8%** | **71.6%** |
| | Men+ | 36.8% | 39.1% | 63.2% | 60.9% |
| | Women+ | 17.5% | 20.2% | 82.5% | 79.8% |

**Source:** *Statistics Canada, 2024b. Table 37-10-0264-01 New entrants to postsecondary education by Indigenous identity, educational qualification, field of study (STEM and BHASE (non-STEM) groupings), gender, and age.*

**Note:** *This table omits the share of new entrants in unclassified fields of study. Data for Inuit students may be more variable due to the smaller population size and should be interpreted with caution.*

# 2. Comparative Analysis of Indspire's BBF Recipients to Other Cohorts

## Overview

This section draws comparisons between Indspire's BBF recipients and the overall Indigenous student population. This section discusses the over- and underrepresentation of BBF recipients relative to registered Indigenous post-secondary students, as a means of understanding funding distribution and recipient demographics. Over- or underrepresentation is not inherently positive nor negative, but can provide insights into how access to funding aligns with Indspire's goals.

Section 2.1 outlines demographic differences between BBF recipients and registered Indigenous students in the Census, including Indigenous identity, geography, gender, and age. Sections 2.2 (p. 25) and 2.3 (p. 26) outline differences in the share of new entrants to post-secondary education and new BBF recipients by the level of study and field of study; these sections do not detail differences by registered Indigenous status.

## Key Findings

Overall, 2021 BBF recipients shared similar characteristics to registered Indigenous post-secondary students, with the exception of two key differences. Both First Nations students and women+ students were overrepresented among BBF recipients, relative to their share in the population. Similar to the registered Indigenous post-secondary population, BBF recipients were primarily entering undergraduate degrees and BHASE fields of study.

### 2.1 Demographics

In the 2020-2021 academic year, 10.0% of the registered Indigenous student population received BBF funding (6,238 recipients; Indspire, 2025). The demographic distribution of BBF recipients by Indigenous identity largely aligned with the distribution of registered Indigenous students enrolled in post-secondary education in 2021. The majority of BBF recipients (70.0%) and registered Indigenous students (65.7%) were First Nations, though there was an overrepresentation of First Nations students among BBF recipients. In contrast, Métis BBF recipients were underrepresented, with the share of Métis BBF recipients (27.0%) lower than the share of registered Indigenous students who were Métis (31.7%). A similar share of BBF recipients (3.0%) and registered Indigenous students (2.6%) were Inuit (Indspire, 2025; Statistics Canada, 2024a). Table 2.1.1 (p. 22) shows the number of BBF recipients in the 2020-2021 academic year, the registered Indigenous student population, and the total Indigenous student population.

**Table 2.1.1:** BBF Recipients and Indigenous Students by Registration Status and Identity (2020-2021)

| Indigenous Identity | BBF Recipients, 2020-2021 | | Registered Indigenous Student Population, 2021 Census | | Total Indigenous Student Population, 2021 Census | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Count | Rate | Count | Rate | Count | Rate |
| **Indigenous** | **6,238** | **100.0%** | **62,355** | **100.0%** | **102,260** | **100.0%** |
| First Nations | 4,367 | 70.0% | 40,985 | 65.7% | 57,975 | 56.7% |
| Inuit | 1,684 | 3.0% | 1,625 | 2.6% | 2,310 | 2.3% |
| Métis | 187 | 27.0% | 19,745 | 31.7% | 41,985 | 41.1% |

**Source:** *Indspire, 2025. Building Brighter Futures Recipient Data.*
*Statistics Canada, 2024a. Census of Population 2021. Custom request.*

### 2.1.1 Age

The average age of BBF recipients from 2019–2024 was 27 years old (de Melo et al., 2025). Among registered Indigenous students, 25–34 years was the age group with the most First Nations (32.1%) and Inuit (31.8%) students, closely aligning with the average age of BBF recipients. Registered Métis students were, on average, younger than both First Nations and Inuit students, with 20- to 24-year-olds making up the largest age group (37.9%; Statistics Canada, 2024a).

### 2.1.2 Gender

The majority of BBF recipients were female[3] (72.3%), greater than the share of registered Indigenous students who were women+ (64.2%; de Melo et al., 2025; Statistics Canada, 2024a). On the other hand, males were underrepresented among BBF recipients (26.9%) compared to the share of registered Indigenous students who were men+ (35.8%). Table 2.1.2 (p. 23) shows the number and percentage of BBF recipients and the total Indigenous student population by gender.

3. The term female was operationally defined differently in other Indspire reports to the women+ here, and therefore, this was articulated as such in this report.

**Table 2.1.2:** BBF Recipients and the Total Indigenous Post-secondary Student Population (Canada, 2020-2021)

| | BBF Recipients, 2020-2021 | | Registered Indigenous Student Population, 2021 Census | | Total Indigenous Student Population, 2021 Census | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Gender** | **Count** | **Rate** | **Count** | **Rate** | **Count** | **Rate** |
| **Total** | **6,238** | **100.0%** | **62,355** | **100.0%** | **102,260** | **100.0%** |
| Male/Men+ | 1,681 | 26.9% | 22,330 | 35.8% | 36,890 | 36.1% |
| Female/Women+ | 4,510 | 72.3% | 40,025 | 64.2% | 65,370 | 63.9% |
| Other | 47 | 0.8% | – | – | – | – |

**Source:** *Indspire, 2025. Building Brighter Futures Recipient Data.*
*Statistics Canada, 2024a. Census of Population 2021. Custom request.*

**Note:** *Due to small population sizes, Statistics Canada rolls "other" genders into men+ and women+ categories.*

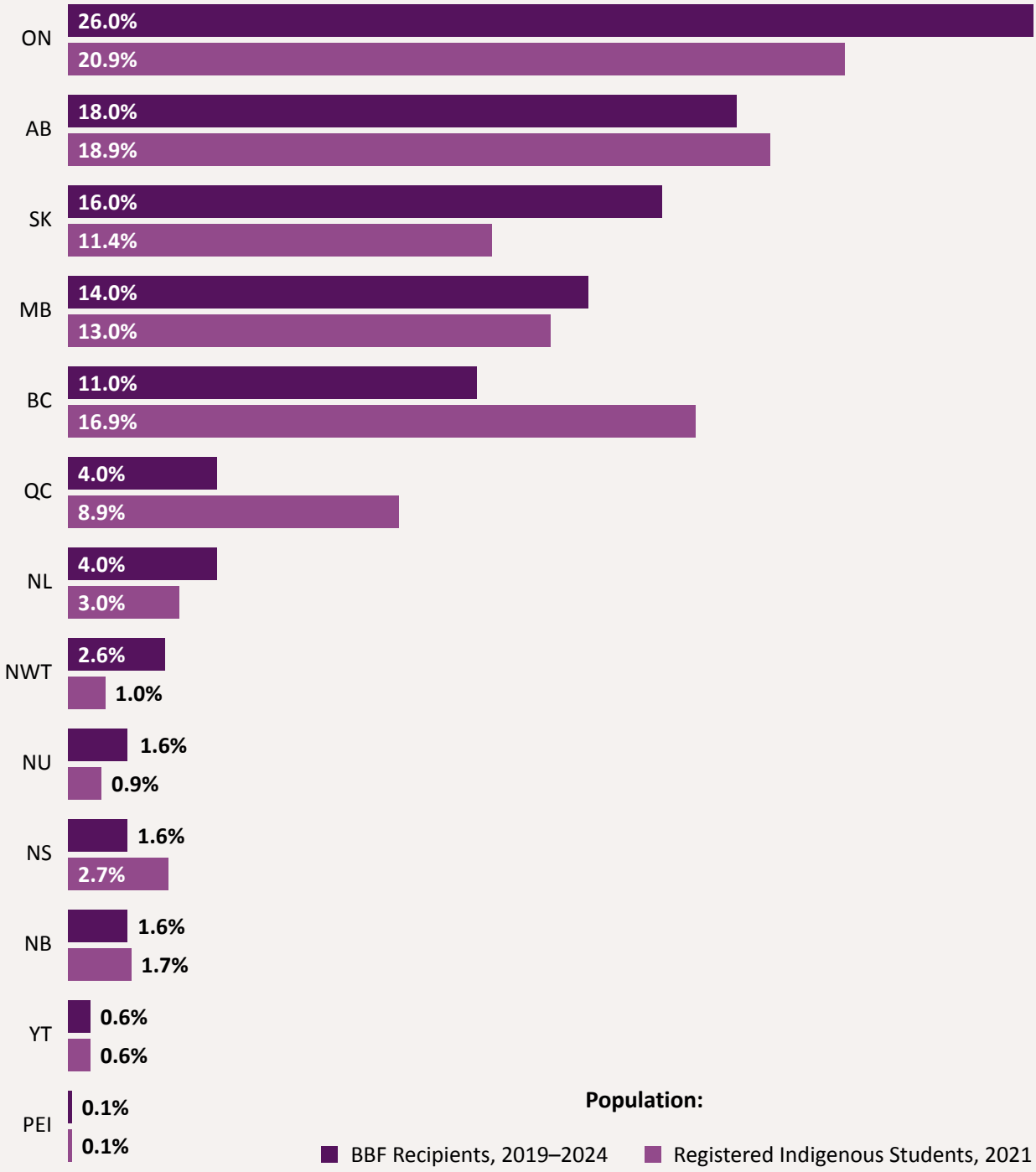
### 2.1.1 Geography

Geographic distribution of BBF recipients differed from that of registered Indigenous post-secondary students. Figure 2.1.1 shows the average share of BBF recipients from 2019–2024 and registered Indigenous students in 2021 across provinces and territories.

From 2019–2024, BBF recipients were overrepresented in Ontario and Saskatchewan compared to the share of registered Indigenous students in these provinces in 2021. The share of BBF recipients in Ontario exceeded the share of registered Indigenous students by 5.1% (Indspire, 2025; Statistics Canada, 2024a). From 2019–2024, the number of First Nations BBF recipients in Ontario decreased by 7.9%, while there were minimal changes to the number of Métis and Inuit BBF recipients (Indspire, 2025). Saskatchewan had a 4.6% gap between the share of BBF recipients and registered Indigenous students. Growth in the number of First Nations (3.9%) and Métis (5.1%) BBF recipients from 2019–2024 contributed to this overrepresentation.

There were lower average shares of BBF recipients in British Columbia and Quebec (11.0% and 4.0%, respectively) relative to the registered Indigenous populations in these provinces (16.9% and 8.9%, respectively; Indspire, 2025; Statistics Canada, 2024a). Notably, the number of Métis BBF recipients decreased by 9.4% in British Columbia. In Quebec from 2019–2024, the number of Inuit BBF recipients increased by 3.0% (De Melo et al., 2025).

**Figure 2.1.1:** Share of BBF Recipients (2019–2024) and Registered Indigenous Student Population (2021) by Province or Territory




**Source:** *Indspire, 2025. Building Brighter Futures Recipient Data.*
*Statistics Canada, 2024a. Census of Population 2021. Custom request.*

## 2.2 Level of Study

Among new entrants, BBF recipients (55.7%) were more likely to be enrolled in university degrees than were Indigenous students (40.1%). Table 2.2.1 shows the percentage of new post-secondary entrants by level of study for BBF recipients (2015–2021) and all Indigenous students (2019–2024). Data by registered status were not available.

Similar to the pattern observed for undergraduate degrees, a higher share of BBF recipients were enrolled in master's and doctoral degrees (8.7% and 1.7%) compared to Indigenous new entrants (5.2% and 1.0%). Conversely, a lower share of BBF recipients were in certificate or diploma programs (10.0% and 21.8%) than were Indigenous new entrants (21.9% and 31.8%; Statistics Canada, 2024b). This underrepresentation of certificate and diploma programs among BBF recipients may suggest that BBF funding provides greater access to university degrees. Alternative explanations for this could be multiple. The rigorous BBF application process may be perceived as daunting to non-academic oriented learners, while the merit-based assessment of the applications could also hinder the eligibility of those who apply but do not have the academic writing strengths in their skill sets.

Following the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, the share of BBF recipients in undergraduate programs declined slightly, while a change was not seen among Indigenous new entrants. Moreover, during this same time span, the share of BBF recipients in diploma programs increased, while the share of Indigenous new entrants entering diploma programs decreased. These shifts suggest that the preferences and enrollment decisions of BBF recipients differ from the broader Indigenous post-secondary population.

**Table 2.2.1:** Percentage of New Entrants and New BBF Recipients by Level of Study (Canada, 2015–2024)

| | New BBF Recipients | | | | | Indigenous New Entrants | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Year | Certificate | Diploma | Undergrad* | Master's Degree | Doctoral Degree | Certificate | Diploma | Undergrad* | Master's Degree | Doctoral Degree |
| 2015 | – | – | – | – | – | 24.9% | 33.5% | 36.3% | 4.4% | 0.9% |
| 2016 | – | – | – | – | – | 23.6% | 31.3% | 39.1% | 5.2% | 0.7% |
| 2017 | – | – | – | – | – | 22.9% | 32.9% | 38.6% | 4.8% | 0.9% |
| 2018 | – | – | – | – | – | 22.4% | 30.9% | 40.6% | 5.0% | 1.0% |
| 2019 | 8.0% | 19.0% | 63.5% | 7.4% | 2.0% | 21.0% | 32.4% | 40.6% | 5.1% | 1.0% |
| 2020 | 8.4% | 21.5% | 58.3% | 9.3% | 2.1% | 17.8% | 32.2% | 42.7% | 6.1% | 1.2% |
| 2021 | 11.5% | 23.1% | 55.7% | 8.5% | 1.2% | 21.0% | 29.4% | 42.5% | 6.0% | 1.2% |
| 2022 | 10.2% | 23.2% | 55.4% | 9.5% | 1.7% | – | – | – | – | – |
| 2023 | 12.1% | 22.0% | 55.6% | 8.8% | 1.4% | – | – | – | – | – |
| **Average** | **10.0%** | **21.8%** | **57.7%** | **8.7%** | **1.7%** | **21.9%** | **31.8%** | **40.1%** | **5.2%** | **1.0%** |

**Source:** *Statistics Canada, 2024b. Table 37-10-0264-01 New entrants to postsecondary education by Indigenous identity, educational qualification, field of study (STEM and BHASE (non-STEM) groupings), gender and age; Indspire, 2025. Building Brighter Futures Recipient Data.*

**Note**: **Undergraduate degrees include associate degrees and professional designations.*

## 2.3 Field of Study

The majority of BBF recipients and Indigenous new entrants pursued BHASE studies, as shown in Table 2.3.1 (p. 27). Data by registered status were not available. A slightly higher share of BBF recipients (86.4%) enrolled in BHASE programs compared to all Indigenous new entrants (83.8%). Conversely, a larger share of Indigenous new entrants entered STEM programs (16.2%) compared to BBF recipients (13.6%; Statistics Canada, 2024b). This pattern appears to be primarily driven by differences between First Nations BBF recipients and new entrants, as the differences among Métis and Inuit students were minimal.

Although direct comparisons are not possible due to data limitations, it is noteworthy that the percentage of new Indigenous entrants in STEM fields increased from 15.3% in 2015 to 16.9% in 2021. In contrast, the share of BBF recipients entering STEM fields declined from 16.1% in 2019 to 13.8% in 2024 (Statistics Canada, 2024b). Conversely, the share of BBF recipients entering BHASE fields increased from 83.9% to 86.2%.

**Table 2.3.1:** Average STEM and BHASE Participation for New Entrants and BBF Recipients by Indigenous Identity

| | Average New BBF Recipients, 2019–2024 | | Average Indigenous New Entrants, 2015–2021 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Indigenous Identity** | **BHASE** | **STEM** | **BHASE** | **STEM** |
| **Indigenous** | **86.4%** | **13.6%** | **83.8%** | **16.2%** |
| First Nations | 89.0% | 11.0% | 86.6% | 13.4% |
| Inuit | 82.6% | 17.4% | 83.0% | 17.0% |
| Métis | 81.0% | 19.0% | 80.0% | 20.0% |

**Source:** *Statistics Canada, 2024b. Table 37-10-0264-01 New entrants to postsecondary education by Indigenous identity, educational qualification, field of study (STEM and BHASE (non-STEM) groupings), gender and age; Indspire BBF Recipients 2019–2024.*

# 3. Transition to the Labour Market and Post-Graduation Outcomes

## Overview

Section 3.1 describes the median employment income of university graduates by field and level of study. It does not explore the impact of gaining a certificate or diploma on income and does not consider the cost associated with pursuing education. Section 3.2 (p. 30) describes occupations that are projected to be at risk of shortage or surplus from 2024–2033, which could inform Indspire's priorities. A full list of occupations projected to be in labour shortage or surplus is included in Appendix A (p. 37).

## Key Findings

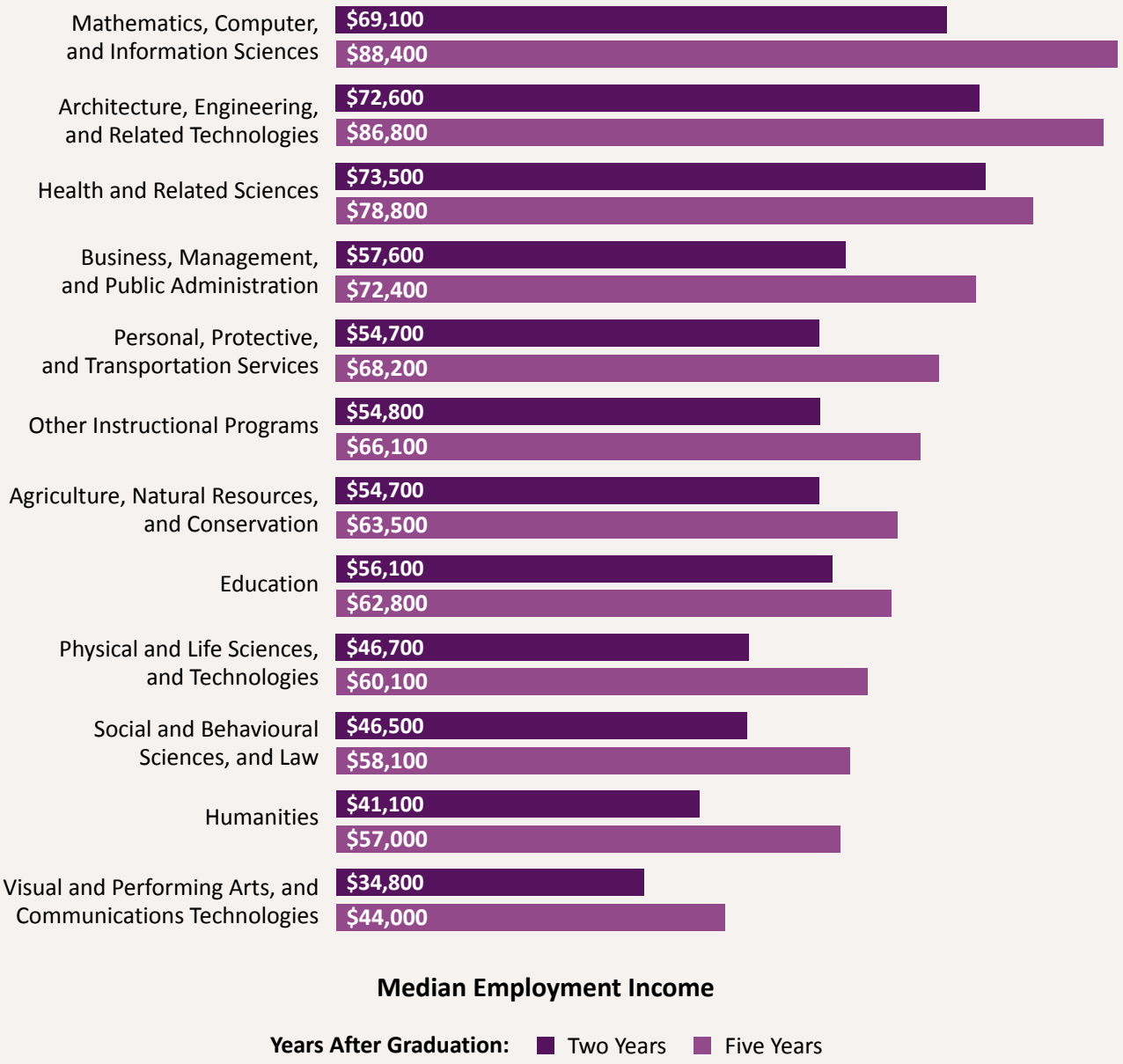
Post-secondary education was associated with stronger labour market outcomes. University graduates earned more than the Canadian median income, with STEM fields in particular having high median income. Post-secondary education is required in the majority (85.4%) of occupations projected to be at risk of a labour shortage between 2024 and 2033. Of the 38 occupations projected to be at high risk of labour shortage, 22 (57.9%) are healthcare occupations that require post-secondary education.

### 3.1 Employment Income of Graduates by Field and Level of Study

Figure 3.1.1 presents the median employment income two and five years after graduation among people who graduated in 2017 with a bachelor's degree. In 2022, this cohort of bachelor's degree graduates had a higher median income than the overall Canadian median of $42,400 (Statistics Canada, 2024c), though the size of this income advantage varied by field of study (Statistics Canada, 2024d). STEM graduates demonstrated higher long-term earning potential compared to graduates from BHASE fields

of study. The two highest-earning fields of study five years after graduating with a bachelor's degree were the STEM fields of Mathematics, Computer, and Information Sciences; and Architecture, Engineering, and Related Technologies. The two lowest earning fields of study five years after graduating were in the BHASE fields of Humanities; and Visual and Performing Arts, and Communications Technologies.

**Figure 3.1.1:** Income of Bachelor's Degree Graduates by Field of Study (Canada, 2017 Cohort)

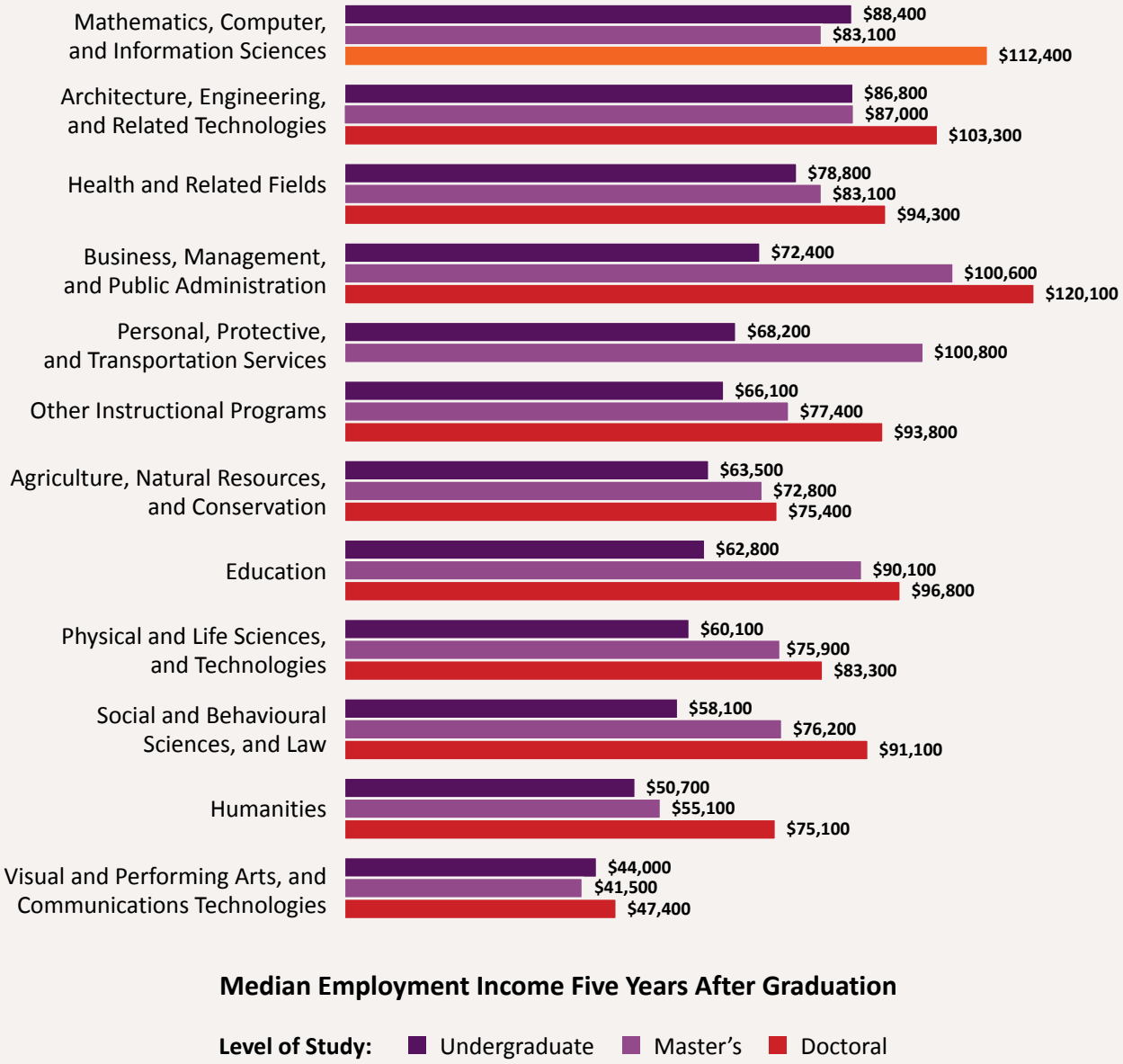



**Source:** *Statistics Canada, 2024. Table 37-10-0115-01 Characteristics and median employment income of longitudinal cohorts of postsecondary graduates two and five years after graduation, by educational qualification and field of study (primary groupings).*

**Note:** *These statistics exclude graduates with no employment income. Median employment income is in 2022 dollars.*

The financial benefit of pursuing a master's or doctoral degree also varied by field. Figure 3.1.2 shows the median employment income of undergraduate, master's, and doctoral degree graduates five years after graduation by field of study.

**Figure 3.1.2:** Income of University Graduates by Level of Study and Field of Study (Canada, 2017 Cohort)




**Source:** *Statistics Canada, 2024. Table 37-10-0115-01 Characteristics and median employment income of longitudinal cohorts of postsecondary graduates two and five years after graduation, by educational qualification and field of study (primary groupings).*

**Note:** *These statistics exclude graduates with no employment income. Data are not available for doctoral students in personal, protective, and transportation services. Median employment income is in 2022 dollars.*

When comparing bachelor's and master's degrees, gains in employment income were largest in the fields of Education (+$27,300) and Business, Management, and Public Administration (+$28,200; Statistics Canada, 2024d). In contrast, some fields saw minimal income gains—or even declines—with additional education. Mathematics, Computer, and Information Sciences graduates earned $5,300 less, likely because in-demand careers in these fields do not require advanced degrees. Similarly, Architecture Engineering, and Related Technologies master's graduates earned nearly the same (+$200) as undergraduates.

Doctoral degrees consistently led to higher employment income than undergraduate and master's degrees, though the financial return varied by field. When deciding whether to pursue graduate studies, it is important to weigh not only the potential increase in employment income, but also the time spent out of the workforce and the cost of education.

## 3.2 Projected Labour Shortages and Surpluses

Employment and Social Development Canada (2025a) identified 103 occupations that are projected to face moderate to high risk of labour shortages from 2024–2033. Occupations facing labour shortages, particularly those at high risk, tend to afford workers more bargaining power, often resulting in greater job stability and higher wages. Among the occupations facing shortages, 85.4% require post-secondary education, reinforcing the value of pursuing post-secondary education. Table A.1.1 (p. 38) in the appendix shows the occupation and education requirements of occupations in moderate and high risk of labour shortage.

There are 38 occupations at high risk of labour shortages, with 84.2% requiring post-secondary education. Healthcare was the most common field of study among BBF recipients and also has the most occupations at risk of labour shortages (22 occupations), all of which require a post-secondary education. While these shortages pose challenges to economic growth, they also present opportunities for Indigenous graduates to enter in-demand careers with strong employment prospects. Table 3.2.1 (p. 31) shows the education requirements of occupations that are projected to be at high risk of labour shortage in the coming years.

**Table 3.2.1:** Educational Requirements of Occupations Facing High Risk of Labour Shortage by Broad Occupational Category (Canada, 2024–2033)

| Broad Occupation Category | Number of Occupations at Strong Risk of Shortage | Post-Secondary Requirements | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Any Post-Secondary Required? | Highest Level Required |
| Education, Law and Social, Community, and Government Services | 4 | 4 | College: 2<br>Undergraduate: 2 |
| Health | 22 | 22 | College: 8<br>Undergraduate: 9<br>Master's: 2<br>Doctoral: 3 |
| Natural Resources and Agriculture | 3 | 1 | College: 1 |
| Manufacturing and Utilities | 5 | 1 | College: 1 |
| Trades, Transport, and Equipment Operators | 4 | 4 | College or Apprenticeship: 3<br>Undergraduate: 1 |
| **Total** | **38** | **32** | **College or Apprenticeship: 15**<br>**Undergraduate: 12**<br>**Master's: 2**<br>**Doctoral: 3** |

**Source:** *Employment and Social Development Canada, 2025a. Canadian Occupational Projection System (COPS): Occupation Data. Employment and Social Development Canada, 2025b. Structure breakdown – NOC 2021 Version 1.0.*

Labour surpluses occur when there are more job seekers than available positions, making it particularly challenging for new graduates entering the labour market to find employment. Table 3.2.2 (p. 32) presents occupations that are at risk of surplus and their post-secondary education requirements. Table A.1.2 (p. 39) in the appendix provides a full breakdown of each occupation's post-secondary education requirements, along with example job titles to illustrate the types of jobs classified under each occupation.

There are 17 occupations projected to face labour surpluses from 2024–2033, seven of which are related to the visual and performing arts and require some post-secondary education (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2025a). Graduates from this field of study already had the lowest median employment income five years after completion of their studies. The other six occupations at risk of labour surplus and requiring post-secondary education fall into the categories of Business, Finance and Administration, or Natural and Applied Sciences. However, these labour surpluses are

less likely to negatively affect graduates' job prospects, as the required qualifications are often transferable to in-demand occupations. For example, while information systems testing technicians are at risk of labour surplus, the occupation requires a computer science diploma—a credential that also qualifies graduates for roles like information systems testing technician, an occupation at high risk of labour shortage.

**Table 3.2.2:** Educational Requirements of Occupations at Risk of Labour Surplus by Broad Occupational Category (Canada, 2024–2033)

| | | Post-Secondary Requirements | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Broad Occupation Category** | **Number of Occupations at Strong Risk of Shortage** | **Any Post-Secondary Required?** | **Highest Level Required** |
| Business, Finance, and Administration | 2 | 2 | College: 2 |
| Natural and Applied Sciences | 4 | 4 | College: 4 |
| Art, Culture, Recreation, and Sport | 7 | 7 | College: 2<br>Undergraduate: 5 |
| Sales and Service | 1 | 0 | |
| Trades, Transport, and Equipment Operators | 1 | 0 | |
| **Total** | **17** | **13** | **College: 8**<br>**Undergraduate: 5** |

**Source:** *Employment and Social Development Canada, 2025a. Canadian Occupational Projection System (COPS): Occupation Data. Employment and Social Development Canada, 2025b. Structure breakdown – NOC 2021 Version 1.0.*

# KEY CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The review and analysis of available post-secondary education and labour market data highlighted opportunities for Indspire to integrate data into its research priorities, programming design, evaluation, and advocacy efforts. The following subsections propose recommendations based on the findings from this report.

## Patterns in the Education Sector that Yield Opportunities in the Labour Market

Considering more than 80% of occupations forecasted for labour shortages will require post-secondary education emphasizes the importance of Indigenous learners' access to post-secondary education with tailored support to progress and graduate from these programs. Addressing the gender gaps, recognizing Indigenous learners' older cohort that accesses post-secondary education, and the skew of demand for certain geographical locations and Indigenous identities are all important considerations when designing frameworks, initiatives, and programs to support Indigenous learners. Recent research has identified the importance of experiential learning, enabling access to labour market experiences during schooling and the importance of these resources for learner's successful transition to the labour market (Mahzar et al., 2025). This highlights the important role stakeholders like Indspire can play in enabling access to post-secondary education, providing experiential learning opportunities, and supporting transitions to the labour market as a holistic wrap-around support that ensures Indigenous learners thrive in their careers. Insights into education demands and labour market patterns highlighted in this report are vital for stakeholders in making informed decisions.

## An Evaluation Framework that Uses Secondary Data to Assess Program Goals

An evaluation framework states program goals, defines ways of measuring those goals, and sets targets based on these measurements. An evaluation framework for the BBF program that incorporates secondary data would support more effective decision-making, help measure program success, and identify areas for improvements to better support Indigenous students.

For example, this report shows that First Nations students were overrepresented among BBF recipients (+4.3%) and Métis students were underrepresented (-4.7%) compared to the registered Indigenous student population. An evaluation framework might establish the goal of distributing BBF funding proportionately across Indigenous identities, in which case Indspire would aim to fund more Métis students. However, an evaluation framework might instead state that funding could be targeted to groups with lower enrollment rates. Métis have relatively high enrollment rates, and their moderate underrepresentation among BBF recipients may not indicate a gap in support. Using an evaluation framework to state the program's goals and define indicators of success is a key step to leveraging the full benefits of the available secondary data.

## Factors Contributing to Gender Differences in Indigenous Post-Secondary Education and BBF Recipients

There is merit to exploring the factors that affect Indigenous men+'s participation in post-secondary education. Registered Indigenous men+ had a lower enrollment rate (5.8%) than Indigenous women+ (9.6%). The gender gap in enrollment was larger among Indigenous people than among non-Indigenous people. Men were further underrepresented among BBF recipients, suggesting that Indigenous men may face barriers in accessing both post-secondary education and BBF funding. Understanding these barriers can help Indspire expand its reach, support more potential students, and promote higher Indigenous post-secondary achievement.

## Availability and Accessibility of Up-to-Date and Relevant Education and Labour Market Data

Extensive data are available on Indigenous student enrollment and labour market trends. There is a great benefit to enabling real-time access to these secondary data sources, alongside BBF program data, to ensure program decision-makers can quickly and easily draw upon relevant data when making funding decisions. This could involve regular reports, similar to this current edition, developed into a user-friendly dashboard that integrates education and labour market data. A well-designed, regularly updated dashboard tailored to end users' needs could provide decision-makers with Indigenous enrollment numbers, funding distributions by region or institution, and labour market profiles for key occupations. The availability of this information could guide the decisions regarding where resources need to be allocated to support students within educational programs and labour market transitions. A deeper understanding of these trends could also help anticipate shifts in the labour market and support some of the forecasting measures that could be relevant for Indigenous students nearing graduation and looking for opportunities in the labour market. By streamlining access to this information, Indspire will continue to ensure its funding decisions are data-driven, responsive, and aligned with the evolving needs of Indigenous students.

# CONCLUSION

Indspire's BBF bursary program, which funded 6,238 recipients in 2020-2021 academic year, plays a large role in supporting the estimated 62,355 registered Indigenous students enrolled in post-secondary education. This report highlights key insights into Indigenous post-secondary enrollment, funding access, and labour market opportunities. It underscores the importance of post-secondary education and how Indspire's support helps Indigenous students reach careers in in-demand occupations.

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# APPENDIX A: OCCUPATIONS IN LABOUR SHORTAGE AND SURPLUS

This appendix provides detailed information on occupations that Employment and Social Development Canada (2025a) projects will face risks of labour shortages from 2024–2033. Table A.1.1 (p. 38) summarizes the 103 occupations at risk of labour shortage, broken down by broad occupation category and post-secondary requirements. Note that post-secondary requirements refer to the job requirements listed by Employment and Social Development Canada (2025b) in their definition of the occupation. These post-secondary requirements may not always reflect the requirements for an entry-level job in a given occupation. In some cases, such as sheet metal workers, a trades occupation at moderate risk of labour shortage, post-secondary education is required to be eligible for trade certification, but trade certification is not required in all provinces or territories.

Table A.1.2 (p. 39) lists the names of the occupations at high risk of labour shortage from 2024–2033. Organized by the broad occupation category and highest educational requirement for the occupation, the table provides a detailed list of the occupations summarized in section 3, Table 3.2.1 (p. 31).

**Table A.1.1:** Educational Requirements of Occupations That Face Risk of Labour Shortage by Broad Occupational Category (Canada, 2024–2033)

| Broad Occupation Category | Number of Occupations at Risk of Shortage | Post-Secondary Requirements | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Any Post-Secondary Required? | Highest Level Required |
| **Education, Law and Social, Community, and Government Services** | 11 | 11 | College: 5<br>Undergraduate: 5<br>Master's: 1 |
| **Health** | 34 | 33 | College: 13<br>Undergraduate: 11<br>Master's: 4<br>Doctoral: 5 |
| **Natural and Applied Sciences** | 12 | 12 | College: 5<br>Undergraduate: 1<br>Doctoral: 6 |
| **Natural Resources and Agriculture** | 6 | 3 | College: 2<br>Doctoral: 1 |
| **Manufacturing and Utilities** | 8 | 1 | College: 1 |
| **Sales and Service** | 4 | 3 | College: 3 |
| **Trades, Transport, and Equipment Operators** | 28 | 25 | College or Apprenticeship: 23<br>Undergraduate: 1<br>Master's: 1 |
| **Total** | **103** | **88** | **College or Apprenticeship: 52**<br>**Undergraduate: 18**<br>**Master's: 6**<br>**Doctoral: 12** |

**Source:** *Employment and Social Development Canada, 2025. Canadian Occupational Projection System (COPS): Summary of results (2024-2033). Employment and Social Development Canada, 2025. Structure breakdown – NOC 2021 Version 1.0.*

**Table A.1.2:** Occupations That Face Strong Risk of Labour Shortage (Canada, 2024–2033)

| Broad Occupation Category | Occupation | Highest Level Required |
|---|---|---|
| **Education, Law and Social, Community and Government Services** | Social and Community Service Workers; and Home Support Workers, Caregivers, and Related Occupations | College |
| | Social Workers; and Early Childhood Educators and Assistants | Undergraduate or Other University |
| **Health** | Nursing Coordinators and Supervisors; Licensed Practical Nurses; Paramedical Occupations; Dental Hygienists and Dental Therapists; Medical Laboratory Technologists; Cardiology Technologists and Electrophysiological Diagnostic Technologists; Medical Laboratory Assistants and Related Technical Occupations; and Nurse Aides, Orderlies, and Patient Service Associates | College |
| | Specialists in Clinical and Laboratory Medicine; Specialists in Surgery; General Practitioners and Family Physicians; Dentists; Optometrists; Pharmacists; Dietitians and Nutritionists; Respiratory Therapists, Clinical Perfusionists, and Cardiopulmonary Technologists; and Medical Radiation Technologists | Undergraduate or Other University |
| | Nurse Practitioners; and Physician Assistants, Midwives, and Allied Health Professionals | Master's |
| | Veterinarians; Psychologists; and Registered Nurses, and Registered Psychiatric Nurses | Doctoral |
| **Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Related Production** | Livestock Labourers; and Harvesting Labourers | None |
| | Specialized Livestock Workers; and Farm Machinery Operators | College |
| **Manufacturing and Utilities** | Paper Converting Machine Operators; Industrial Butchers and Meat Cutters, Poultry Preparers and Related Workers; Fish and Seafood Plant Workers; and Labourers In Fish and Seafood Processing | None |
| | Assemblers, Fabricators, and Inspectors of Industrial Electrical Motors and Transformers | College |
| **Trades, Transport, and Equipment Operators** | Heavy-Duty Equipment Mechanics; Heating, Refrigeration, and Air Conditioning Mechanics; and Carpenters | College or Apprenticeship |
| | Air Pilots, Flight Engineers and Flying Instructors | University |

**Source:** *Employment and Social Development Canada, 2025a. Canadian Occupational Projection System (COPS): Occupation Data. Employment and Social Development Canada, 2025b. Structure breakdown – NOC 2021 Version 1.0.*

**Note:** *Occupations are sorted by highest educational requirement. Not all jobs for these occupations may require this level of education.*

Tables A.1.3–A.1.7 show occupations at risk of labour surplus from 2024–2033. As there are only 17 occupations at risk of labour surplus, this appendix provides more detailed information on the post-secondary requirements for each. An occupation being in labour surplus is particularly concerning to new graduates when their post-secondary education is not also applicable to other occupations.

**Table A.1.3:** Business, Finance, and Administration Occupations That Face Risk of Labour Surplus (Canada, 2024–2033)

| Broad Occupation Category | Occupation | Example Job Titles | Post-Secondary Requirements |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Business, Finance, and Administration** | Statistical Officers and Related Research Support Occupations | • Research Assistant (Except University) | College Diploma or Undergraduate Degrees in Social Science, Commerce, or Statistics |
| | Data Entry Clerks | • Data Control Clerk<br>• Data Processor<br>• Payment Entry Clerk | College Courses in Data Entry |

**Source:** *Employment and Social Development Canada, 2025a. Canadian Occupational Projection System (COPS): Occupation Data. Employment and Social Development Canada, 2025b. Structure breakdown – NOC 2021 Version 1.0.*

**Table A.1.4:** Natural and Applied Sciences Occupations That Face Risk of Labour Surplus (Canada, 2024–2033)

| Broad Occupation Category | Occupation | Example Job Titles | Post-Secondary Requirements |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Natural and Applied Sciences** | Conservation and Fishery Officers | • Conservation Officer<br>• Fish and Wildlife Officer<br>• Game Warden | College Program in Renewable Resources Management or Environmental Conservation |
| | Land Survey Technologists and Technicians | • Engineering Survey Technologist<br>• Transit Operator—Surveying | College Program in Geomatics or Land Survey Technology |
| | Technical Occupations In Geomatics and Meteorology | • Aerial Survey Technician<br>• Avalanche Controller<br>• Cartographer<br>• Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Technician<br>• Meteorological Technician | College Program in Geomatics, Cartography, Photogrammetry, Aerial Survey, Remote Sensing, or Geographic Information System (GIS) |
| | Information Systems Testing Technicians | • App Tester<br>• Software Tester | College Program in Computer Science |

**Source:** *Employment and Social Development Canada, 2025a. Canadian Occupational Projection System (COPS): Occupation Data. Employment and Social Development Canada, 2025b. Structure breakdown – NOC 2021 Version 1.0.*

**Table A.1.5:** Art, Culture, Recreation, and Sport Occupations That Face Risk of Labour Surplus (Canada, 2024–2033)

| Broad Occupation Category | Occupation | Example Job Titles | Post-Secondary Requirements |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Art, Culture, Recreation, and Sport** | Managers—Publishing, Motion Pictures, Broadcasting and Performing Arts | • Dance/Theatre Company Director<br>• Manager of Television Station, Broadcast Station, or Book Publishing<br>• Editor-in-Chief | University Degree or College Diploma in Communications, Broadcasting, Journalism, or Other Arts Discipline |
| | Technical Writers | • Medical Writer<br>• Technical Writer | A University Degree in the Area of Specialization |
| | Producers, Directors, Choreographers, and Related Occupations | • Film, Photography, or Stage Director<br>• Record, Radio, or Television Producer | A University Degree or College Diploma in the Area of Specialization |
| | Library and Public Archive Technicians | • Archive Technician<br>• Library Technician | College Program in Library and Information Technology or Archive Management Technology |
| | Other Technical And Coordinating Occupations in Motion Pictures, Broadcasting, and the Performing Arts | • Costumier<br>• Lighting Technician<br>• Special Effects Technician<br>• Stunt Coordinator | College or University Program in Broadcasting, Theatre Arts, or a Related Field |
| | Graphic Designers and Illustrators | • Animator<br>• Graphic Designer | University Degree or College Diploma in Visual Arts |
| | Motion Pictures, Broadcasting, Photography and Performing Arts Assistants, and Operators | • Boom Grip<br>• Lighting Assistant<br>• Production Assistant<br>• Script Assistant<br>• Stagehand | May Require College Courses in Broadcasting, Theatre Arts, or a Related Field |

**Source:** *Employment and Social Development Canada, 2025a. Canadian Occupational Projection System (COPS): Occupation Data. Employment and Social Development Canada, 2025b. Structure breakdown – NOC 2021 Version 1.0.*

**Table A.1.6:** Sales and Service Occupations that Face Risk of Labour Surplus, Canada, 2024–2033

| Broad Occupation Category | Occupation | Example Job Titles | Post-Secondary Requirements |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Sales and Service** | Outdoor Sport and Recreational Guides | • Canoeing Guide<br>• Fishing Guide<br>• Outdoor Guide | None |

**Source:** *Employment and Social Development Canada, 2025a. Canadian Occupational Projection System (COPS): Occupation Data. Employment and Social Development Canada, 2025b. Structure breakdown – NOC 2021 Version 1.0.*

**Table A.1.7:** Trades, Transport, and Equipment Operators Occupations That Face Risk of Labour Surplus (Canada, 2024–2033)

| Broad Occupation Category | Occupation | Example Job Titles | Post-Secondary Requirements |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Trades, Transport, and Equipment Operators** | Longshore Workers | • Dockworker<br>• Longshore Worker<br>• Ship Loader Operator | None |

**Source:** *Employment and Social Development Canada, 2025a. Canadian Occupational Projection System (COPS): Occupation Data. Employment and Social Development Canada, 2025b. Structure breakdown – NOC 2021 Version 1.0.*

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