



# WCG NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT INDEX 2022

BRITISH COLUMBIA  
SPOTLIGHT



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# WCG Services: leading the way in sustainable employment

WCG Services is an industry leader in developing and delivering employment and vocational rehabilitation services across Canada.

For more than 28 years WCG has been partnering with governments and local service delivery organizations to create sustainable employment opportunities for people, businesses, and communities.

**Every day we help people reach their employment goals and improve the quality of their lives - many of them with multiple, complex barriers to entering or re-entering the workforce. Our participants include persons with disabilities, Indigenous people, Youth, Veterans, Francophones, Black and Racialized People and other demographic groups underrepresented in the labour market.**

WCG is part of the APM Group, which delivers employment and allied health services internationally. Our global network of companies shares a core purpose: to enable better lives. In the last 12 months, our team of 13,400 people in 11 countries have reached the lives of more than two million people. In 2020, WCG commissioned independent market research consultancy, CoreData, to conduct research on diversity and inclusivity in the workplace.

The result was the inaugural WCG National Employment Index 2021 and three spotlight reports, one for each of Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario. A landmark piece of research, the Index sought to create a benchmark against which to measure and track over time the employment and career access, equity and inclusion in the workforce. The research findings marked an inaugural waypost for businesses and job seekers to navigate and progress towards equitable employment.

One year on, we set out to understand how the landscape had changed. The National Employment Index 2022 provides insights into trends in equity and inclusion of Canadians over the last 12 months.

# About the WCG National Employment Index

WCG Services commissioned independent market research consultancy, CoreData, to develop and establish a National Employment Index. The Index assesses the equity of employment opportunities for unemployed Canadians, and the proactive steps being taken by both job seekers and employers to improve employment outcomes. It measures three main areas: Attitudes, Access and Actions.

## Attitudes

Measures whether the mindsets of employers and job seekers are strengthening employment outcomes. It includes:

### 1.1 Employability:

Employer perceptions of the employability of groups typically underrepresented in the workforce and job seekers' perceptions of their own employability.

1.2 Equity: Employer willingness to employ these cohorts and job seekers' perceptions of employer willingness.

1.3 Myths: Prevalence of negative attitudes and employer misperceptions.

## Access

Measures the accessibility of meaningful employment outcomes. It includes:

2.1 Awareness: Whether job seekers know where to go for assistance finding a job and whether employers know where to go for help recruiting underrepresented groups.

2.2 Availability: Whether job seekers have the support needed to find work and employers have the support needed to recruit and retain people from underrepresented groups.

2.3 Capability: Job seekers' existing skills and knowledge and employers' organizational capability to recruit people from typically underrepresented groups.

## Actions

Measures the tangible actions and interventions that are influencing employment outcomes. It includes:

3.1 Services: Employers' and job seekers' ease of accessing employment services to assist with recruitment, retention and finding work and relevance of services.

3.2 System: Employers' and job seekers' understanding of how to access these supports within the current system.

3.3 Activity: Actions taken or planned by job seekers to increase their employability and by employers to recruit and retain job seekers.

The Index was developed from quantitative surveys conducted in November and December 2022 of 1,393 employers involved in recruitment and 1,375 Canadians who had been actively seeking work within the last 12 months.[1] While the sample of job seekers included both employed and unemployed respondents, the Index results are based only on the responses of those who were unemployed at the time they submitted their responses.

Throughout the report, we use the term “people who represent groups that are typically underrepresented in the workforce”, abbreviated thereafter to “underrepresented groups”. For the purposes of this research, this includes people who are, or identify as:

- Indigenous
- Visible minorities
- People with a disability or chronic physical and/or mental health conditions
- Those with limited work experience
- Recent immigrants to Canada
- Previously incarcerated/with a criminal record
- Homeless or without stable, secure accommodation
- Survivors of violence or abuse
- Youth (under 25)
- A Veteran
- Older (over 50)
- People who identify as part of the LGBTQ2+ community
- Those who have experienced periods of involuntary long-term unemployment

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[1] Referred to throughout the report as ‘job seekers’.



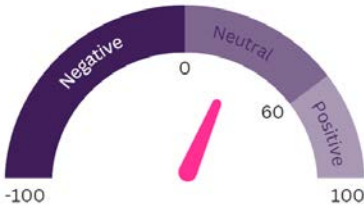


# 2022 NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT INDEX SCORECARD

## 2022 Index Scorecard (average of Attitudes, Access and Actions)

**39.7/100**

-0.7 vs 2021



This score is in the neutral-to-negative range and has declined since the inaugural benchmark research was conducted 12 months ago, suggesting there remains strong room for improvement.

Established in 2021, the Canadian National Employment Index is designed to understand the employment landscape in Canada from the perspective of both Canadians seeking work and employers. It tracks the challenges and issues they face, job seekers' steps to become employed and employers' steps to recruit and retain people from groups typically underrepresented in the workforce.

The Index and sub-component scores can range from +100 to -100 as they track both positive and negative factors.

## Attitudes

**24.1/100**

-4.8 vs 2021



The Attitudes pillar experienced the largest overall shift, driven by increased prevalence of negative attitudes about people from underrepresented groups, observed by both employers and job seekers. These included, for example, negative attitudes about people with limited work experience and the perception that employing people with disability, injury or illness is challenging.

While perceptions of employability and employers' willingness to hire people from underrepresented groups remains stable, this was offset by an increase in negative attitudes towards them and a range of misperceptions.

### Components

**67.4**

**Employability**

-0.2 vs 2021

**27.3**

**Equity**

+0.1 vs 2021

**-22.4**

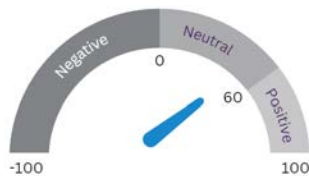
**Myths**

-14.2 vs 2021

## Access

**55.5/100**

+1.4 vs 2021



Access remained the best-performing Index pillar with the score stable year-on-year.

This was influenced primarily by an improvement in the Capability score, driven by greater confidence among employers in their ability to recruit and retain newly-hired employees who represent groups that are typically underrepresented in the workforce. This is reflective of wider trends observed in the results, with employers increasingly taking steps to make their workplaces inclusive, such as hiring diversity and inclusion officers and raising awareness of different characteristics employees may have.

### Components

**48.7**

**Awareness**

+1.8 vs 2021

**46.5**

**Availability**

-0.9 vs 2021

**71.3**

**Capability**

+3.0 vs 2021

## Actions

**39.5/100**

+1.2 vs 2021



The Actions pillar remains stable year-on-year, with marginal improvements across all subcomponent scores.

There is increased awareness of employment services providers among businesses, as well as improvement in the perception that such services are easy to access. Furthermore, most Canadian employers are actively recruiting at least one underrepresented group and the proportion who are doing so increased compared to last year. While a slightly lower number of job seekers took steps to improve their situation this year, the Activity score overall remained stable.

### Components

**20.8**

**Services**

+3.4 vs 2021

**29.9**

**System**

+1.2 vs 2021

**67.8**

**Activity**

+0.8 vs 2021





# **British Columbia Spotlight**

## Key Findings

# British Columbia Spotlight - Key Findings

The British Columbian job market has recovered considerably since the onset of the global pandemic. Peaking at an unemployment rate of 13.3 per cent in May 2020, unemployment had more than halved to 4.8 per cent by December 2022.[2] This trend was reflected in our research, with far fewer job seekers reporting having lost their job due to COVID-19 compared to last year's study (24 per cent vs 42 per cent).

The number of job openings in British Columbia is expected to increase over the coming years, with 96,000 new jobs on average, between 2023 and 2031.[3] Against this backdrop, employers have had to work harder to recruit and retain talent. However, entrenched practices and attitudes towards employment of people from underrepresented groups remain.

## 1. Employers are Taking Action to Improve Workplace Inclusivity

a) Almost half of British Columbian employers (46 per cent) took steps in the last 12 months to promote hiring diversity and inclusivity, up from 38 per cent last year. Large businesses (with 20+ employees) are more likely than smaller businesses with fewer than 20 employees to have taken action (53 vs 32 per cent).

b) The most common actions taken were: making workplace values/culture changes to ensure all employees feel welcomed and included (43 per cent), introducing, expanding or improving mentoring for employees (38 per cent) and introducing training for HR staff to build capacity in the area of hiring inclusivity and workforce diversity (37 per cent).

c) However, disparities between underrepresented groups remain: while more British Columbian employers this year reported having previously hired people who identify as homeless/without stable secure accommodation (15 per cent vs 9 per cent) and people previously incarcerated (17 per cent vs 13 per cent), fewer had employed visible minorities (55 per cent vs 64 per cent) and immigrants to Canada within the last two years (48 per cent vs 52 per cent).

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[2] Statistics Canada, Labour force survey in brief interactive app, [Click Here](#)

[3] Work BC, British Columbia Labour Market Outlook 2021 Edition, pg 8, [Click Here](#)

d) Concerningly, British Columbian employers reported a decrease in active recruitment of most underrepresented groups. The largest declines were active recruitment of visible minorities (28 per cent vs 44 per cent), people with limited work experience (37 per cent vs 43 per cent) and Indigenous Canadians (27 per cent vs 31 per cent).

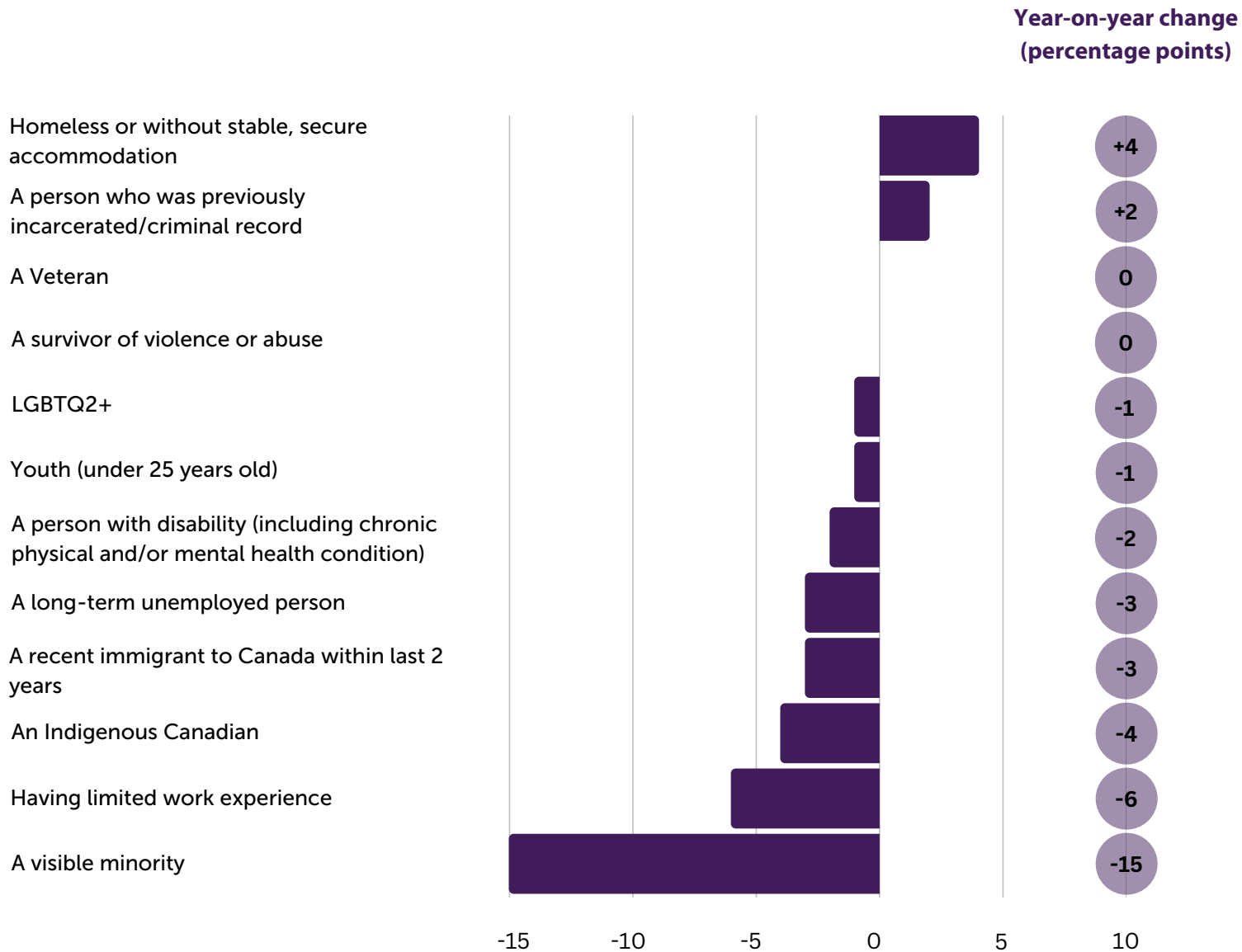
e) The declines come despite British Columbian employers with experience hiring underrepresented job seekers ('experienced employers') almost universally rating their experiences positively. Among experienced employers, at least 70 per cent said their experience was positive, the only exception being the employment of those with limited work experience (64 per cent) and those who are homeless or without stable, secure accommodation (63 per cent).

f) Most British Columbian employers believe Canadian employers are willing to provide employment opportunities for people typically underrepresented in the workforce (60 per cent), on par with last year (62 per cent). Similar patterns were observed among underrepresented job seekers, with 58 per cent believing employers are willing to employ people with similar abilities to them, in line with last year (56 per cent).

g) Larger businesses are more likely to believe there are adequate employment opportunities for underrepresented job seekers (65 per cent) than smaller businesses (51 per cent), perhaps reflecting the greater capacity of large business to employ these job seekers.



# Annual change in active recruitment of underrepresented groups by British Columbian employers



**Q: Is your organisation actively recruiting people with one or more of these characteristics?**

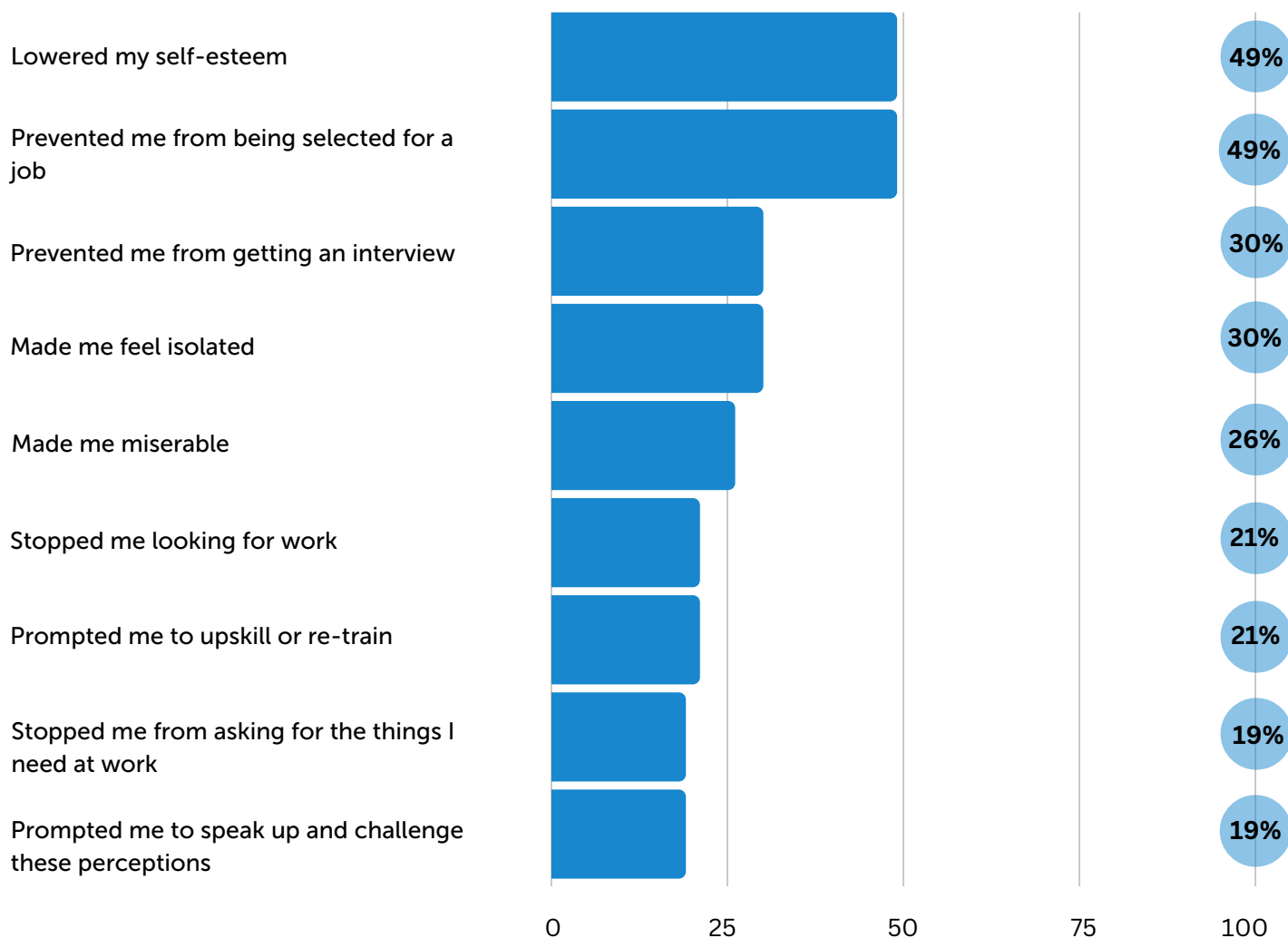
**n=230, British Columbian employers**



## 2. Negative Attitudes Towards Underrepresented Groups Remain Prevalent

- a) Consistent with last year's findings, the vast majority of British Columbian employers and job seekers from underrepresented groups have observed negative attitudes or misperceptions from employers about underrepresented groups. Almost four in five (79 per cent) British Columbians from underrepresented groups have experienced employer misperceptions while searching for a job or at work, up from 65 per cent last year. A similar proportion of employers (76 per cent) have witnessed negative attitudes from their colleagues or other businesses, rising from 64 per cent last year.
- b) Some attitudes are more prevalent than others and stigma commonly relates to perceived lack of work experience and employability. The most common misperceptions encountered by British Columbians from underrepresented groups were that: hiring people who need flexible work days/hours is too difficult (46 per cent) and people with gaps in their resumes are not good employees (38 per cent).
- c) Negative attitudes about underrepresented groups were also common, including that older workers are not worth employing (38 per cent) and that hiring people with disability, injury or illness is a burden (37 per cent).
- d) Among employers, the most widespread attitudes observed were that poor employment history is a red flag (57 per cent), that employing someone with disability, injury or illness is challenging (49 per cent), and the perception that younger workers are less reliable than older workers (46 per cent).
- e) British Columbian employers recognise that stigma exists. When asked why job seekers from underrepresented groups do not make it through the hiring process, the top reasons cited were negative perceptions of people with these characteristics (35 per cent) and rigid recruitment criteria that screens them out (33 per cent).
- f) This creates a cycle of negativity for job seekers from underrepresented groups, nearly half of whom say encountering negative attitudes lowered their self-esteem (49 per cent). Just as many say negative attitudes prevented them from being selected for a job (49 per cent), and approximately three in 10 say it made them feel isolated (30 per cent) and miserable (26 per cent).

## Effects of negative employer attitudes on underrepresented British Columbian job seekers



### Q. What impact(s) has [encountering negative attitudes] had on your experience job seeking or working?

n=117, British Columbian job seekers from underrepresented groups who encountered negative attitudes while job seeking or at work.

"I AM WORKING FEWER HOURS THAN I WOULD LIKE [TO] BECAUSE OF MY INVISIBLE DISABILITY. IT IS HARD TO WORK LONG HOURS AND ALSO DIFFICULT TO GET EMPLOYERS TO HIRE YOU."

(Job seeker, Male, 48 years old)

"[EMPLOYERS BELIEVE] PEOPLE WHO HAVE RECOVERED FROM ADDICTION AND HAVE BEEN HOMELESS ARE A LIABILITY RISK FOR THEFT AND/OR NOT SHOWING UP FOR REQUESTED SHIFTS."

(Job seeker, Male, 53 years old)

### 3. Both Employers and Job Seekers See Value in "Hard" and "Soft" Skills Training to Improve Employability and Retention

a) Despite the fall in British Columbia's unemployment rate, most British Columbian job seekers from underrepresented groups are finding it challenging to get a job (77 per cent), and nearly two in five of those facing difficulty say it is due to a lack of skills required by the employer (38 per cent). A similar proportion cite a lack of job vacancies (35 per cent).

b) Job seekers from underrepresented groups are taking steps to increase their chances of finding work (71 per cent) but most often, their actions are day-to-day parts of the jobseeking process like looking for jobs online (81 per cent), submitting job applications (69 per cent) and updating their CV/resume (69 per cent).

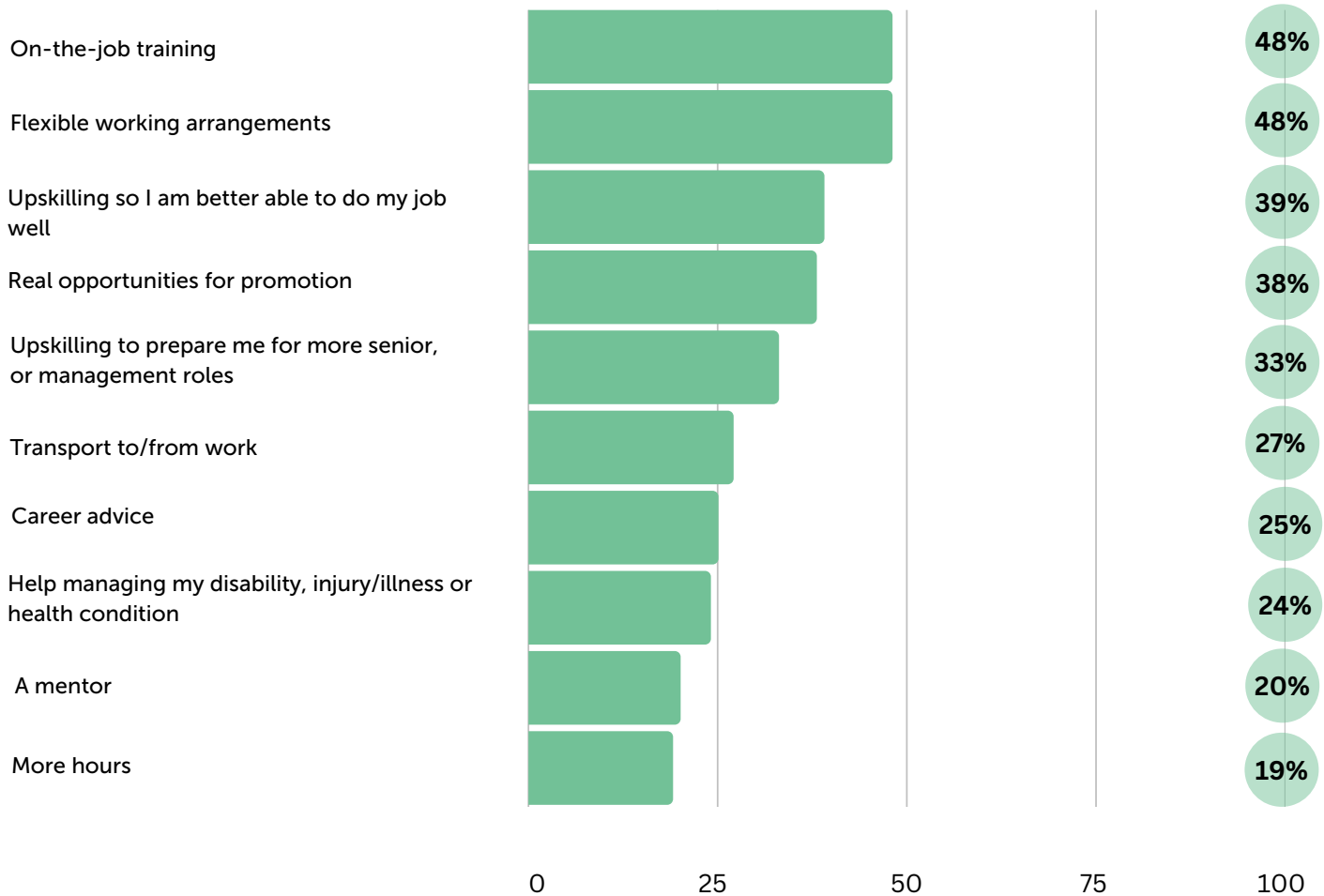
c) There remains a disconnect between British Columbian employers' and underrepresented job seekers' perceptions of 'soft skills' gaps. Critically, when asked why people from underrepresented groups do not make it through the hiring process, the top reasons cited by British Columbian employers are the attitude or mindset of these job seekers (46 per cent) and lack of soft skills (37 per cent). However, unlike employers, most job seekers believed they already possessed soft skills such as communication (77 per cent) and teamwork skills (90 per cent).

d) Both British Columbian employers and underrepresented job seekers agree on the importance of specific technical/hard skills, such as experience with specific software (57 per cent) and certificates and credentials related to a specific industry (55 per cent). They also recognise the value of support to address skills and capability gaps. Among employers who need support to retain underrepresented employees, the most beneficial supports cited are: access to a mentor for the employee (39 per cent) and access to hard skills training (39 per cent), followed closely by soft skills training (38 per cent), and support to help the organisation implement any required accommodations or modifications (38 per cent).

e) On-the-job training and flexible working arrangements (48 per cent) are the top supports underrepresented job seekers need to keep a job (48 per cent).

## Top 10 supports needed by underrepresented job seekers in British Columbia

### Action



### Q. Which of the following types of supports would help you keep a job?

n = 122, British Columbian job seekers from underrepresented groups who either have none of the support they need to find work or only some of the support they need.

"I HAVE BEEN A PROFESSIONAL COOK FOR 35 YEARS AND AS A RESULT I'VE BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH SEVERE ANXIETY DISORDER AND DEPRESSION SO I WAS FORCED TO LEAVE THE INDUSTRY AND GO ON DISABILITY HOWEVER I HAVE PLENTY OF TRANSFERABLE SKILLS TO OFFER IN OTHER AREAS OF EMPLOYMENT."

(Job seeker, Male, 53 years old)

"SINGLE PARENT WITH TWO KIDS FULL TIME, WELL-EDUCATED BUT LIMITED WORK EXPERIENCE DUE TO BEING A STAY-AT-HOME PARENT. LIVING WITH ENDOMETRIOSIS WHICH CAN CAUSE PAIN AND FATIGUE."

(Job seeker, Female, 41 years old)





## 4. Sustainable Employment of Underrepresented Groups Requires a Flexible Approach and Long-term Support

- a) British Columbian employers rate their capability to recruit (6.6 out of 10) and retain (6.4) people from underrepresented groups slightly lower on average than their ability to recruit and retain the average employee (6.9 and 6.8 respectively).
- b) While 63 per cent of employers rate their capacity to retain newly hired employees as excellent, this falls to 53 per cent when asked about their capacity to retain newly hired employees from underrepresented groups.
- c) From a recruitment perspective, only one in five British Columbian employers (22 per cent) say they have all the support they need to recruit underrepresented job seekers, while even fewer (8 per cent) say they do not need any support.
- d) Nearly three in five employers believe they understand what they need to do to recruit or retain people typically underrepresented in the workforce (58 per cent), yet only half say it is easy for their organisation to access employment services and support to recruit and retain employees with these characteristics (51 per cent).
- e) Even though more than half of British Columbian employers (55 per cent) say they offer, or would consider offering, flexible working arrangements to employees from underrepresented groups, they also claim the biggest barrier they face to retaining these workers is an inability to provide flexibility and accommodations (27 per cent), as well as the longer-term support required (27 per cent).
- f) This highlights the need for assistance to effectively retain people from underrepresented groups in the workforce, and British Columbian employers recognise the value in the types of supports provided by an employment services provider (ESP). Nine in 10 (93 per cent) employers who need support to retain people from underrepresented groups say at least one support typically provided by an external third party would help them do this.

g) Yet only two in five British Columbian employers (41 per cent) have used an ESP in the past. Larger businesses are much more likely to be currently working with an ESP than smaller businesses (26 per cent vs 4 per cent). The most common reason for not using an ESP cited by employers was reluctance to pay for these services (28 per cent), even though there is no cost, reflecting a lack of understanding of how ESPs work. A similar proportion are simply unaware that ESPs exist (27 per cent).

h) Awareness of how to find support remains a barrier to take up for job seekers. Less than half of British Columbian underrepresented job seekers (44 per cent) say they would know where to go for assistance finding a job. More than a third do not know where to find ESPs (35 per cent), and a quarter do not know how they can help (24 per cent).

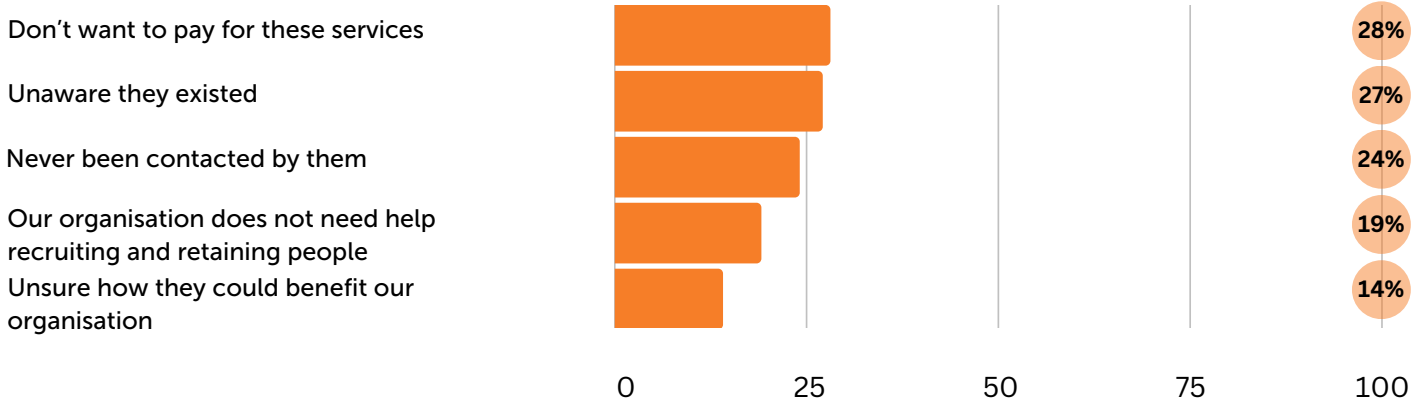
i) When they are using them, job seekers' experience is positive. More than three in five (62 per cent) job seekers who have used an ESP in the past say they found them helpful.





## Top 5 reasons why businesses haven't worked with employment services providers

### Reason - Employers

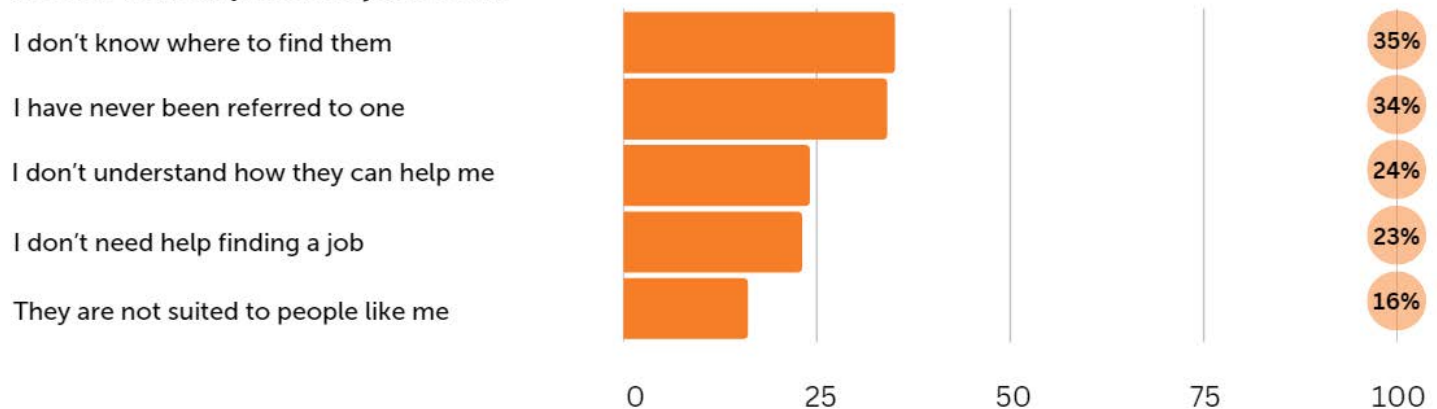


**Q: Why hasn't your organisation worked with an Employment Services Provider, or ESP?**

**n = 74, British Columbian employers who have not worked with an ESP**

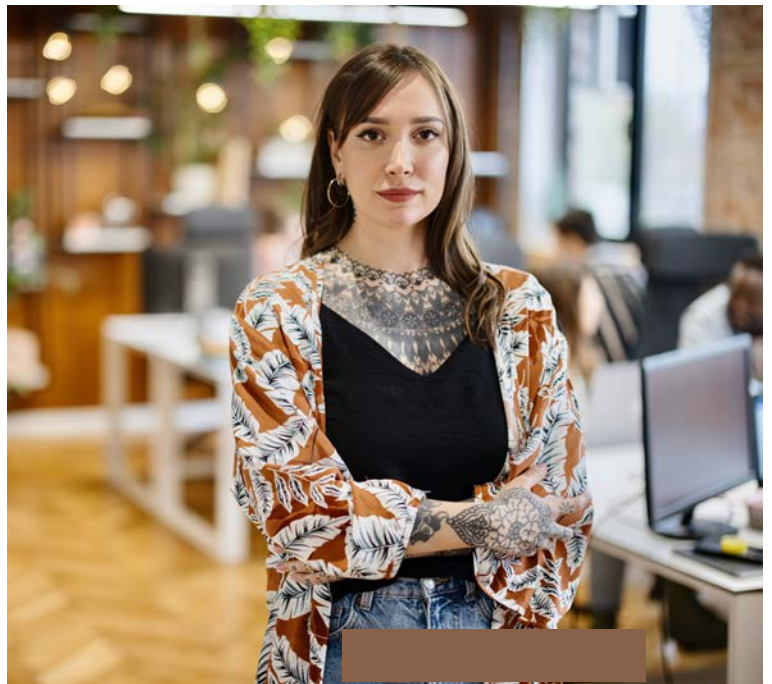
## Top 5 reasons why underrepresented job seekers haven't worked with employment services providers

### Reason - underrepresented job seekers



**Q: What has stopped you from engaging with an Employment Services Provider (ESP)?**

**n = 135, British Columbian job seekers from underrepresented groups who either received support in the past or are not currently receiving support.**



# Conclusion

We hope this report has helped provide meaningful data to inform how to improve labour market participation of people from underrepresented groups. The research demonstrates a clear need to simplify employment services so that job seekers make successful labour market transitions and more employers are able to meet their workforce needs.

Our survey put the spotlight on four key areas that, if addressed, will support employment growth and equity in British Columbia.

## **1. Employers are starting to take action, but more needs to be done**

While our findings demonstrate that employers are taking some steps to improve diversity and inclusivity in the workplace, there remains much work required to improve outcomes for all underrepresented groups, especially in active employment.

## **2. Negative attitudes towards underrepresented groups remain prevalent**

Concerningly, this research highlights the prevalence of negative attitudes and misperceptions in the workplace about underrepresented groups, and the need for employer education to address these myths and break down the perceptible barriers to hiring.

## **3. Both employers and job seekers see value in 'hard' and 'soft' skills training to improve employability and retention**

We found that there is a disconnect between perceptions of employers and underrepresented job seekers about the skills they possess, but alignment in the recognition that training in both areas is a key enabler of greater employment of underrepresented groups.

## **4. Sustainable employment of underrepresented groups requires a flexible approach and long-term support**

Finally, to meet labour market needs, job seekers need employers to be open to new ways of working, and employers need access to employment services that are easy to use and access. Our research highlights the continued work that is needed to ensure equitable and sustainable outcomes in British Columbia and in Canada more generally.



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