



WCG EMPLOYMENT INDEX 2024

ALBERTA SPOTLIGHT



www.wcgservices.com



Table of **CONTENTS**

- 01** **Background and Methodology**
- 03** **WCG Employment Index**
- 07** **Alberta Spotlight**
- 14** **Conclusion**

WCG SERVICES

LEADING THE WAY IN SUSTAINABLE EMPLOYMENT

For more than 30 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 14,750 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 Employment Index 2021 and three spotlight reports, one for 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 created an inaugural benchmark for businesses and job seekers to navigate and progress towards equitable employment.

Three years on, we set out to understand how the landscape had changed since the 2021 Index and subsequent 2022 Index. The WCG Employment Index 2024 provides insights into trends in equity and inclusion of Canadians over the last 12 months.

ABOUT THE WCG EMPLOYMENT INDEX

WCG Services commissioned independent market research consultancy CoreData to develop and establish the WCG 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:** If job seekers know where to go for assistance finding a job, and if employers know where to go for help recruiting people from typically underrepresented groups.
- 2.2 Availability:** If job seekers have the support needed to find work and employers have the support needed to recruit and retain people from typically 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 by job seekers to increase their employability and by employers to recruit and retain job seekers.



WCG EMPLOYMENT INDEX 2024 SCORECARD

The Index was developed from quantitative surveys conducted in June 2024 of 1,008 employers and 1,007 Canadians who had been actively seeking work within the previous 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 people
- Racialized people
- People with a disability or chronic physical and/or mental health conditions
- Those with limited work experience
- Recent immigrants to Canada (arrived in the last 2 years)
- Previously incarcerated/with a criminal record
- Homeless or without stable, secure accommodation
- Survivors of violence or abuse
- Youth (under 25)
- A Veteran
- Older people (over 50)
- Part of the 2SLGBTQI+ community
- Those who have experienced periods of involuntary long-term unemployment



**1,008 EMPLOYERS
WERE SURVEYED**



**1,007 CANADIAN
JOBSEEKERS WERE
SURVEYED**



¹ Referred to throughout the report as “job seekers.”



2022 INDEX SCORECARD AVERAGE OF ATTITUDES, ACCESS AND ACTIONS

The score remains on a par with the inaugural benchmark research conducted in 2021 and is in the neutral-to-negative range.

On the surface, the lack of apparent change is concerning. However, there are some signs that employers are becoming more aware of the support available to assist them in employing and retaining underrepresented job seekers.

Established in 2021, the WCG 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 subcomponent scores can range from +100 to -100 as they track both positive and negative factors.



ATTITUDES

20.8 / 100
(-3.3 vs 2022)

The Attitudes pillar has been steadily declining since the inaugural benchmark research and revealed some large shifts in the underlying subcomponents this year.

Job seekers and employers are much more negative about the employment opportunities available to underrepresented groups, a trend that is occurring at a time when national unemployment is rising.² This strong downwards trend has been partially offset by marginal improvements in the prevalence of negative attitudes about people from underrepresented groups, observed by both job seekers and employers.

Perceptions of employability are relatively stable year-on-year, however job seekers from underrepresented groups are more positive about their own employability than employers. Employers hold particularly negative views about the employability of people with a criminal record, or without stable and secure accommodation.



EMPLOYABILITY

68.5

+1.1 vs 2022



EQUITY

8.8

-18.5 vs 2022



MYTHS

-14.8

+7.6 vs 2022

ACCESS

55.8 / 100
+0.3 vs 2022

Access remains the best-performing Index pillar, increasing slowly but steadily since the inaugural benchmark research.

The small improvement in the Awareness subcomponent reflects improved understanding of where employers can find help employing people from underrepresented groups.

After a slight increase in the Capability subcomponent in 2022, due to greater confidence among employers in their ability to recruit and retain newly-hired employees from underrepresented groups, this aspect of the Index is stable in 2024.

The Availability subcomponent is likewise static this year, as the majority of employers believe they have at least some of the support they need to recruit and retain underrepresented groups, and most job seekers say they have at least some of the support they need to find and maintain a job.



AWARENESS

50.3

+1.6 vs 2022



AVAILABILITY

46.6

+0.1 vs 2022



CAPABILITY

70.6

-0.7 vs 2022

² The Daily — Labour Force Survey, June 2024 (statcan.gc.ca)



ACTIONS

43.3 / 100
(+3.8 vs 2022)

The Actions pillar experienced a small uptick in 2024, as a result of improvement in all subcomponents.

There is better employer knowledge of how to recruit and retain groups who are typically underrepresented in the workforce, as well as increased job seeker knowledge of how to access and the relevance of support available to help them find a job.

However, there is opportunity to transform this knowledge into more concrete action. While more employers say they've taken steps to promote hiring inclusivity and a diverse workforce, only half say their recruitment approach includes support for underrepresented groups.

Giving the landscape of rising unemployment, more job seekers have taken steps in the last 12 months to increase their chances of getting a job, with job seeking online, updating resumes and applying for jobs more common than formal training or assistance from ESPs (Employment Service Providers).



SERVICES

25.0

+4.2 vs 2022



SYSTEM

34.6

+4.7 vs 2022



ACTIVITY

70.5

+2.7 vs 2022



ALBERTA SPOTLIGHT



ALBERTA SPOTLIGHT – KEY FINDINGS

Rapid population growth in Alberta over the past year, driven primarily by interprovincial and international migration, has brought both opportunities and challenges for employers and job seekers. Between Q2 2023 and Q2 2024, the job vacancy rate for Alberta has fallen from 4.2% to 3.3%, staying throughout that year almost exactly on par with the national average.⁴ While the larger workforce and diverse skill sets from migration are beneficial, increased competition for jobs presents major challenges, especially for those from typically underrepresented groups. As a result, job seekers must work harder to find and retain employment while overcoming entrenched employer attitudes.

JOB SEEKERS ARE TAKING PROACTIVE MEASURES TO FIND WORK

Three-quarters of Albertan job seekers find job searching extremely or somewhat challenging, compared to the national average of 69%. As a result of greater challenges finding employment, they tend to be more proactive in their approaches to finding employment, including:

- **Skill Development:** Nearly three-quarters of Albertan job seekers (73%) rate themselves as having several to all of the skills/knowledge required to do their desired job, similar to the national average of 71%.
- **Seeking Support:** Our survey shows 32% of Albertan job seekers have received support from an Employment Services Provider (ESP), compared to 37% nationally. While this provincial percentage is slightly lower, it's important to note 66% of Albertan job seekers have never engaged with an ESP, compared to 59% in Canada, suggesting a potential opportunity for increased ESP engagement in Alberta.
- **Identifying Needed Support:** Albertan job seekers who don't have all the support they need to find and maintain a job are more likely to say being connected to employers who are hiring would be helpful (64%), compared to 57% nationally.

These findings suggest Albertan job seekers are open to receiving support to increase their chances of employment.



⁴ Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0398-01 Job vacancies, payroll employees, and job vacancy rate, by economic regions, quarterly, adjusted for seasonality.



EMPLOYERS' ATTITUDES AND INCLUSIVITY PRACTICES ARE (MOSTLY) POSITIVE

Employers in Alberta demonstrate slightly more positive attitudes towards diversity and inclusivity compared to the national average.

Inclusive Workplace Culture

More than three-quarters of Albertan employers (78%) believe their workplace culture enables employees with disabilities or health conditions to excel and meaningfully contribute to their organisation's success, compared to 74% of Canadian employers.

Yet as far as employed Albertan job seekers are concerned, there's still work to be done in creating truly inclusive workplaces. Approximately three in five (63%) feel their workplace is inclusive of people with disabilities, however only 13% describe their workplace culture as 'extremely inclusive'.

Active Recruitment of Underrepresented Groups

Albertan employers are slightly more proactive in recruiting from underrepresented groups. For instance, 37% of Albertan employers actively recruit Indigenous people, compared to the national average of 31%.

Nearly two in five (38%) Albertan employers actively recruit racialized people, on a par with employers nationally (36%).

Support for Underrepresented Groups

Nearly three-quarters of Albertan employers (74%) report having all or some of the support needed to retain employees from underrepresented groups.

These findings suggest that Albertan employers are slightly more proactive in fostering inclusive workplaces and recruiting from diverse talent pools.

EMPLOYERS REPORT CHALLENGES IN EMPLOYING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Albertan employers report slightly higher concerns than the national average when it comes to employing people with disabilities.

Perception of Risk

One-third of Albertan employers (33%) express concern over the perceived risks involved in employing a person with a disability and/or their ability to manage such employees. Having appropriate policies and processes in place can help alleviate concerns, yet fewer than one quarter of Albertan employers (23%) have a recruitment approach that supports people with disabilities and only 26% of Albertan employers overall are actively recruiting them.



33% OF ALBERTAN EMPLOYERS EXPRESS CONCERN OVER PERCEIVED RISKS IN HIRING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES.

Resource Constraints

Nearly three in ten Albertan employers (29%) cite lack of or insufficient resources (time, money, people) as a barrier to employing people with disabilities, compared to 26% nationally.



29% OF ALBERTAN EMPLOYERS CITE LACK OF RESOURCES (TIME, MONEY, PEOPLE) AS A BARRIER TO EMPLOYING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES.

Adaptation Difficulties

Nearly three in ten Albertan employers (29%) also report inability or difficulty in adapting roles as a barrier to employing people with disabilities, higher than the national average of 26%.



29% OF ALBERTAN EMPLOYERS REPORT DIFFICULTIES IN ADAPTING ROLES FOR EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES.

These findings highlight the need for additional support and resources for Albertan employers to facilitate the employment of people with disabilities.



EMPLOYER PERCEPTIONS ON EMPLOYABILITY ARE GENERALLY LOWER FOR UNDERREPRESENTED JOB SEEKERS

Albertan employers generally have somewhat lower perceptions of employability for various underrepresented groups compared to other employers in Canada. The biggest disparities are in perceptions about: people with disabilities (47% vs 53%), the long-term unemployed (52% vs 55%), survivors of violence or abuse (66% vs 70%), and job seekers 50 years old or older (64% vs 68%).

Albertan employers' views of the employability of people with limited work experience is on a par with employers nationally (54% vs 53%). Employers in Alberta also matched other employers in Canada in their opinion on the employability of people who were previously incarcerated or had a criminal record (36%) and young people under 25 years old (76%).

As with previous years, there continues to be a disconnect between how employers rate the employability of certain groups and their actual hiring practices. For example, while 47% of Albertan employers rate people with disabilities as employable, only 26% are actively recruiting people with disabilities. Similarly, 52% of Albertan employers rate long-term unemployed people as employable, but only 33% are actively recruiting from this group.

For a province experiencing an influx of immigrants, it's interesting to note only 31% of Albertan employers are actively recruiting recent immigrants to Canada. For the 41% of Albertan employers who have employed a recent immigrant, the vast majority (81%) report it was a positive experience.

As a whole, our data suggests a gap between theoretical employability and practical hiring decisions for people from typically underrepresented groups.



47% OF ALBERTAN EMPLOYERS RATE PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AS EMPLOYABLE, BUT ONLY 26% ACTIVELY RECRUIT THEM.



52% OF ALBERTAN EMPLOYERS SEE THE LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED AS EMPLOYABLE, YET ONLY 33% ACTIVELY RECRUIT THEM.



31% OF ALBERTAN EMPLOYERS ARE ACTIVELY RECRUITING RECENT IMMIGRANTS.



ALBERTA SPOTLIGHT – KEY FINDINGS

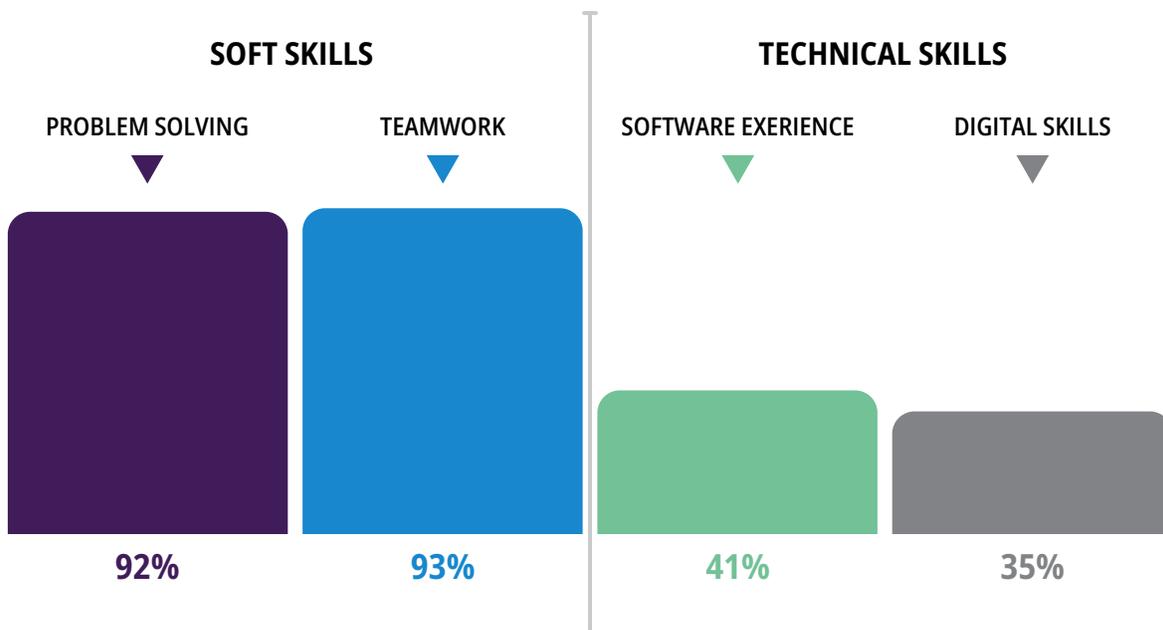
JOB SEEKERS RATE THEIR SOFT SKILLS HIGHLY BUT LACK CONFIDENCE IN TECHNICAL SKILLS

Albertan job seekers report higher confidence in some soft skills. For example, 93% of Albertan job seekers who say their desired job requires teamwork skills feel they already possess these skills, compared to only 89% nationally. Similarly, 92% of those who believe their desired job requires problem-solving skills feel they have these, compared to 86% of job seekers in Canada.

When it comes to technical skills, Albertan job seekers report lower confidence. Only 41% of those whose preferred job requires experience with specific software feel they have enough experience, compared to the national average of 48%. Likewise, 35% of Albertan job seekers whose desired job requires digital skills feel they need to develop these skills, compared to 32% across the country. Interestingly, only 24% of Albertan employers cite a candidate's lack of digital skills as a reason for the candidate not making it through the hiring process.

Despite job seekers' abilities, employers' attitudes about underrepresented groups continue to be a significant barrier to job seekers finding employment. As previously stated, most Albertan job seekers (73%) say they have several to all skills/knowledge required for their desired job. However, 66% of Albertan employers admit to encountering negative attitudes or misperceptions from their colleagues or leaders about employing people from underrepresented groups. These attitudes could make it more difficult for job seekers to find employment, despite their skills and willingness to be employed.

Soft Skills vs. Technical Skills Confidence



ALBERTA SPOTLIGHT – KEY FINDINGS

FEWER OPPORTUNITIES AND MORE BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT IN ALBERTA

Albertan employers struggle with several barriers to retaining employees from underrepresented groups compared to other parts of the country. These include being unable to provide the longer-term support needed by these employees (28% vs 24%) and not having positive role models or mentors relevant to their employees (22% vs 18%).

Less than one-quarter of job seekers in Alberta (23%) say there are adequate employment opportunities for people like them, compared to more than a third (36%) nationally. Those who find it challenging to find a job cite lack of jobs and job vacancies as a barrier to employment (48%), a similar number to the rest of the country (49%). Despite this, Albertan job seekers appear more resilient than the average Canadian. Albertan job seekers who say it's challenging finding a job report lower levels of fear, anxiety or confusion over what to do (22% vs 28%) and don't suffer as much from low self-esteem from frequent rejections (24% vs 27%) when compared to the national averages.

Fewer employed Albertan job seekers with disabilities (including chronic physical and/or mental health conditions) make their employer aware of their disabilities or health condition (53%) compared to 58% in Canada. Lack of disclosure can lead to a poor working experience. Less than two-thirds of people from underrepresented groups who are employed in Alberta (64%) say they are comfortable being themselves at work, compared to 70% nationally. Employed Albertans are more negative about whether their employers enable them to excel or make meaningful contributions to organisational success (42% vs 31% in Canada). In addition, 37% say their workplace is not inclusive of people with disabilities, compared to the national average of 34%.

These findings show the need for targeted interventions to address specific employment barriers in Alberta and highlight where ESPs can offer these services.



CONCLUSION



ALBERTA SPOTLIGHT – CONCLUSION

The employment landscape in Alberta presents unique opportunities for improving equity and inclusion. While job seekers in Alberta face more challenges in finding employment, they also demonstrate a strong willingness to develop their skills and seek support. Employers in Alberta show slightly more positive attitudes towards diversity and inclusivity, but job seekers indicate more can be done.

Our survey suggests several areas of potential focus in Alberta:

1. Increase Awareness and Engagement with ESP

Increasing awareness of ESPs and engagement with both job seekers and employers, as ESP utilisation is lower in Alberta compared to the rest of the country. Employer engagement: 48% vs 54% nationally, Job seeker engagement: 32% vs 37% nationally.

2. Provide Targeted Support for Inclusive Roles

Providing targeted support to help employers manage perceived risks and adapt roles for people with disabilities.

3. Offer Training in Technical and Digital Skills

Offering training programmes to help job seekers develop technical and digital skills, areas where Albertan job seekers report lower confidence.

4. Enhance Employer Perceptions of Underrepresented Talent

Working with employers to improve perceptions of employability for various underrepresented groups and take advantage of an untapped talent pool.

5. Address Job Market Barriers in Alberta

Developing initiatives to address specific barriers reported by both job seekers and employers in Alberta. There's untapped potential for ESPs to bridge the gap between employers and job seekers in Alberta. While 64% of Albertan job seekers who do not have all the support they need to find and maintain a job say being connected with employers who are hiring would help them find employment, only 24% of Albertan employers are currently working with ESPs, who could facilitate these connections.

6. Support Skilled Immigrants' Integration

Targeting skilled immigrants who have recently arrived in Canada and may be struggling to establish new professional and employment networks.

ESPs can play a crucial role in improving employment outcomes and fostering a more inclusive workforce in Alberta. The more positive attitudes towards diversity and inclusion among Albertan employers compared to the rest of the nation provide a foundation upon which to build these initiatives.



UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS WARRANTING IMMEDIATE ATTENTION INCLUDE:

Older people (over 50 years old): 84% of employers in Alberta who have previously employed older people report positive experiences employing people in this age demographic, but only 30% of employers overall are actively recruiting this group, even though 64% rate them as employable. Older people garner the highest positive employment experience of any group, yet there's a sizeable gap between the positive outcomes of employing them and active recruitment efforts undertaken. Employers could benefit from tapping into this experienced workforce more actively.

2SLGBTQI+ individuals: 83% of employers in Alberta who have hired people who identify as being part of the 2SLGBTQI+ community report positive experiences employing this group. However, just over a quarter of Albertan employers (27%) overall are actively recruiting from this group. Despite highly positive employment experiences, active recruitment of 2SLGBTQI+ individuals is relatively uncommon.

Veterans: 80% of Albertan employers who have previously employed veterans report positive experiences and 74% overall rate them as employable. This is in stark contrast to what's occurring, with only 20% of employers actively recruiting veterans. This group represents a potentially untapped talent pool for employers.

Racialized people: 80% of employers in Alberta who have employed racialized people report positive experiences, with 38% of Albertan employers overall actively recruiting from this group, higher than some underrepresented groups but still leaving room for improvement. Extremely positive employment experiences suggest employers could benefit from increasing their focus on hiring racialized people even further.

Young people (under 25 years old): 73% of Albertan employers who have hired people under 25 report positive experiences. As a group, young people rate high for employability (76%) but only 43% of Albertan employers overall are actively recruiting young people. A high employability rating and positive experiences suggest that employers could still benefit from increasing their focus on employing young people.

It's important to note that while this report highlights differences between Alberta and the rest of the nation, many of the challenges and opportunities in Alberta mirror the national trends. National strategies that have proven successful may be adapted and implemented in Alberta while considering the nuances of the Albertan employment landscape.

Moving forward, regular monitoring and analysis of these trends will be crucial to assess the impact of interventions and to continually refine strategies for improving employment equity for underrepresented groups in Alberta.



www.wcgservices.com

