

WOMEN RECLAIMING LEADERSHIP

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# Towards a Business Case for Inclusive and Diverse Environmental Workplaces



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As the steward for Canada’s environmental workforce, ECO Canada has the mandate and passion to excel in providing tailored HR solutions for students, practitioners and businesses engaged in the environmental sector.

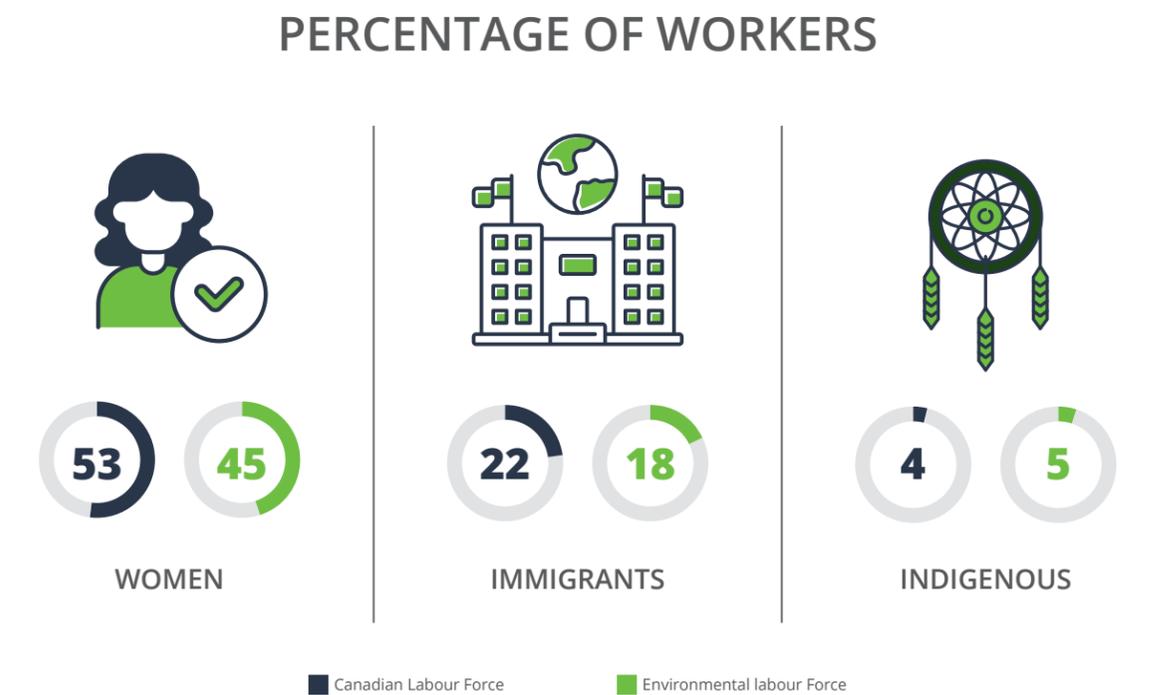
This report aims to support the creation of a business case for employers that highlights the benefits of organizational policies and practices designed to increase the representation of women in environmental and engineering careers.

As the number of retirements is predicted to grow, ensuring that environmental organizations have a sustainable, diverse, and qualified pool of talent is crucial. This report provides relevant and impactful research that will enable organizations to more easily access information on the benefits of implementing successful diversity and inclusion initiatives with the ultimate goal of increasing the number of women in the environmental and engineering workforce

## Workforce Profile

Data on the demographic composition of workers in environmental careers show that women and immigrants are slightly underrepresented compared to the overall Canadian labour force whereas the representation of self-reported Indigenous workers is slightly higher than the Canadian average. (See Chart 1.) The percentage of women<sup>1</sup> in environmental careers is slightly lower than in the Canadian labour force across all industries, but it is much higher than in other heavy industries such as mining and quarrying and construction.<sup>2</sup>

Chart 1: Characteristics for Canadian and Environmental Labour Forces



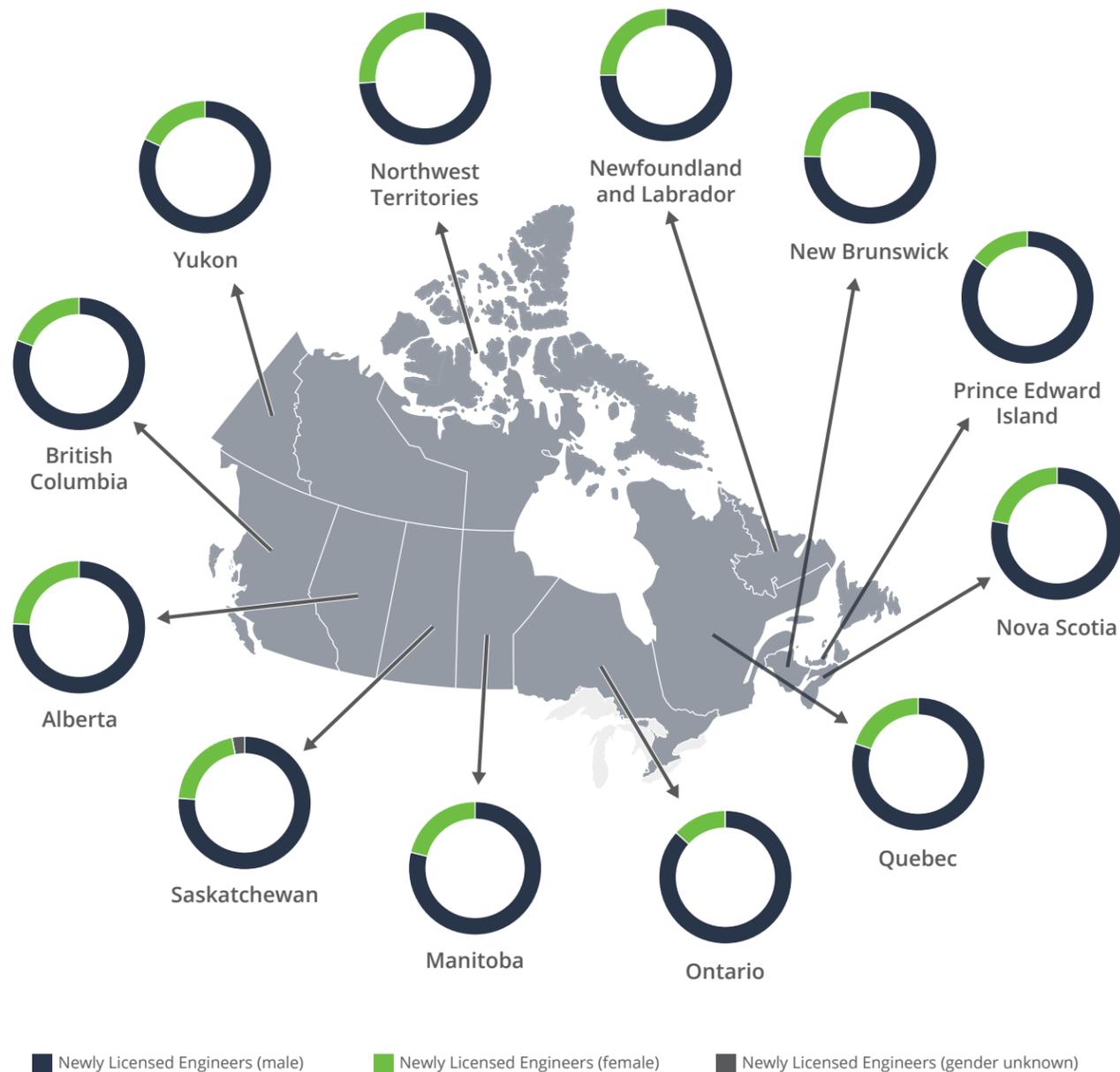
Source: Statistics Canada (2016), Eco Canada (2022)

<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada collects information on female representation in the workforce where ECO Canada's forecast uses survey information focused on gender.

<sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada, "Table: 14-10-0355-01."

Although 47.3 percent of the Canadian workforce consisted of females in 2021, only 35.6 per cent were in management occupations, with slightly less (30.9 per cent) in senior management occupations. (See Chart 2.) Moreover, the data show that women are underrepresented in leadership positions across all industries in Canada, providing an improvement opportunity for organizations interested in increasing diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

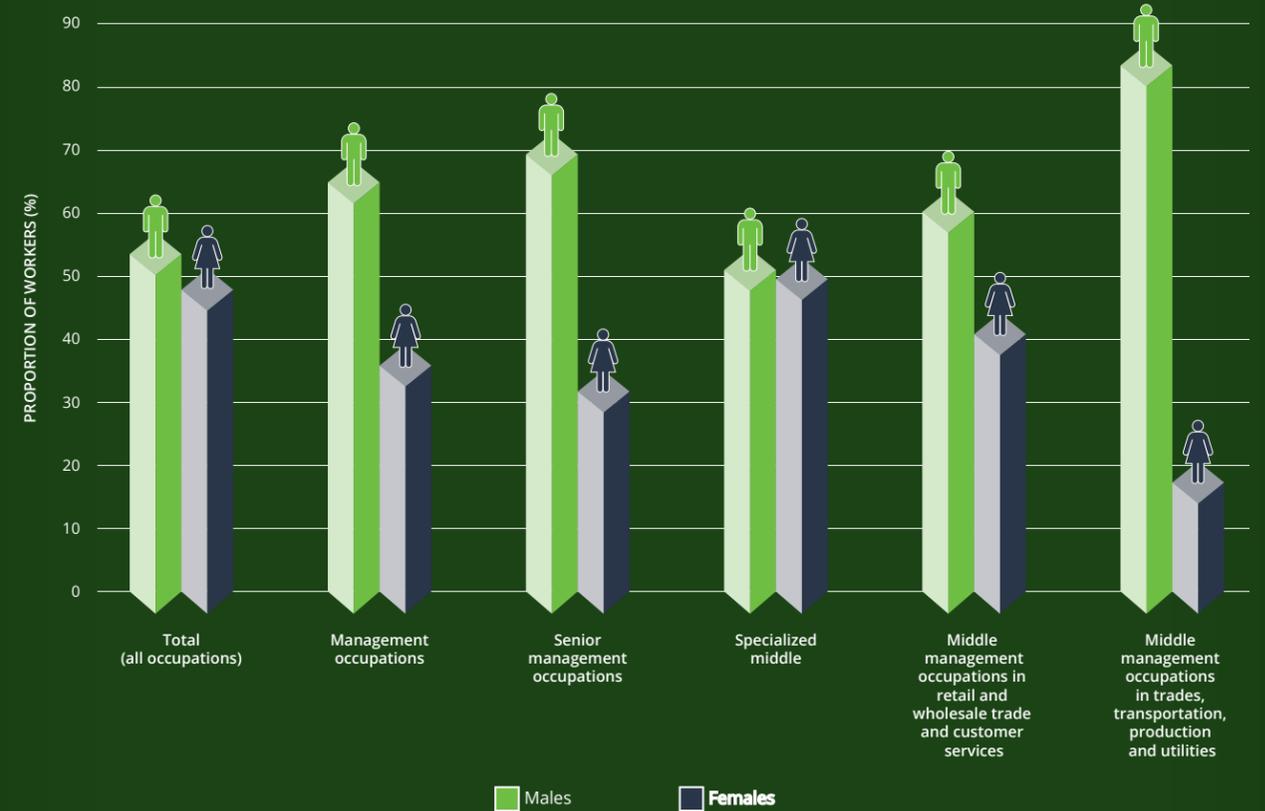
**Chart 2:** Gender Representation for Engineers in Canada



Source: Engineers Canada (2022)

Women are also underrepresented in engineering professions for all Canadian provinces and territories. (See Chart 2). While Engineers Canada has made increasing the representation of women in engineering a strategic priority and have set a goal for 30 per cent of engineers to identify as female by 2030, enrollment in engineering post-secondary programs is still significantly skewed towards males.<sup>3</sup> By focusing on the attraction, retention and professional development of women engineers through strategic initiatives, Engineers Canada hopes to benefit from improved economic performances, meeting labour market demands and a profession that more accurately reflects the diversity of Canada's population.<sup>4</sup>

**Chart 2:** Gender Representation for Engineers in Canada



Source: Statistics Canada (2022)

**Note:** Specialized middle management occupations: This major group comprises specialized middle management occupations. It includes administrative services managers and managers in financial and business services, communication (except broadcasting), engineering, architecture, science and information systems, health care, public administration, education, social and community services, public protection services, art, culture, recreation, and sport.

<sup>3</sup> "Women in Engineering."

<sup>4</sup> "30 by 30."

## Diversity Increases Strength

Diverse, equitable and inclusive workplaces have been shown to have stronger financial performance and profitability than organizations that have less diverse teams.<sup>5</sup> Employees who experience increased feelings of inclusion or belonging are 50% less likely to leave and 56% more productive and take 75% fewer sick days.<sup>6</sup> Although there is a strong financial business case for increasing diversity, there are also numerous non-financial benefits for organizations that diversify their workforce including increased collaboration, greater innovation, higher employee engagement and increased productivity.<sup>7,8</sup>

With 30 per cent of the workforce expected to retire in the next 10 years, developing a pool of diverse and qualified talent is crucial for the sustainability of environmental careers. A worsening shortage of environmental labour is being compounded by increasing demand for environmental workers. Canadian organizations may need to hire roughly 233,500 environmental workers by 2029.<sup>9</sup> In addition to this, more and more businesses are innovating and adding new jobs that require workers with STEM-related training and skills.<sup>10</sup> To cope with this demand, organizations are looking to strengthen their ability to attract, recruit and retain workers through numerous initiatives, including engaging more diverse workers.

High rates of retirement create both challenges and opportunities for organizations to re-imagine future workforces that better reflect the diversity of the Canadian population.<sup>11</sup> Loss of organizational knowledge and experience is a considerable challenge facing companies with employees nearing retirement age. By creating inclusive workplaces, organizations can diversify their workforces to address skill shortages in an increasingly competitive market for talent. Organizations should create comprehensive succession plans to ensure that the transfer of appropriate organizational knowledge to the next generation of leaders creates space for increased representation among under-represented groups at all levels.

As the need for new employees will continue to grow, employers need to find new ways to recruit, attract and retain new talent. Building diverse and inclusive workforces not only allows organizations to leverage numerous benefits including increased profitability, greater collaboration, and higher employee engagement, it will become increasingly critical to continuing their operations.

<sup>5</sup> For a summary see Catalyst's "Why Diversity and Inclusion Matter: Financial Performance."

<sup>6</sup> Waters, "Here's How to Build a Sense of Belonging in the Workplace."

<sup>7</sup> Bitting and Giesler, "Diversity in the Workplace – How Promotion of Diversity Influences Employee Satisfaction."

<sup>8</sup> Cooper and Jackson, "Talent Management Benchmarking.;" Cooper and Jackson, "Workforce Planning Practices in Canada."

<sup>9</sup> ECO Canada, (2022). "Learn About Our Environmental Workforce."

<sup>10</sup> Government of Canada, "The Government of Canada and STEM - Choose Science."

<sup>11</sup> Conference Board of Canada, Talent Trends: Languishing and the Great Attrition report



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