

Indigenous Peoples



Profile of Indigenous Energy Workers



“The term, Indigenous Peoples, refers to three groups—First Nations people, Métis and Inuit—who are recognized in the *Constitution Act*. However, while these groups are representative of the Indigenous population as a whole, each is tremendously diverse. This diversity is reflected in over 70 Indigenous languages that were reported during the 2021 Census, over 600 First Nations who represent their people across the country, the plurality of groups representing Métis nationhood, and the four regions and 50 communities of Inuit Nunangat that Inuit call home.”ⁱ

The future strength of Canada’s energy labour force will greatly depend on the participation of diverse groups, such as Indigenous Peoples, women, immigrants, racialized groups and youth. Many of these groups have historically been underrepresented or underutilized across various industries in Canada.

This analysis, based on data from Statistics Canada’s 2021 Census, focuses on the following established energy industry sectors: exploration and production (E&P)ⁱⁱ, energy services, pipelines and refining. In 2021, Canada’s energy industry labour force—comprising those working and actively looking for work—totaled 172,600.

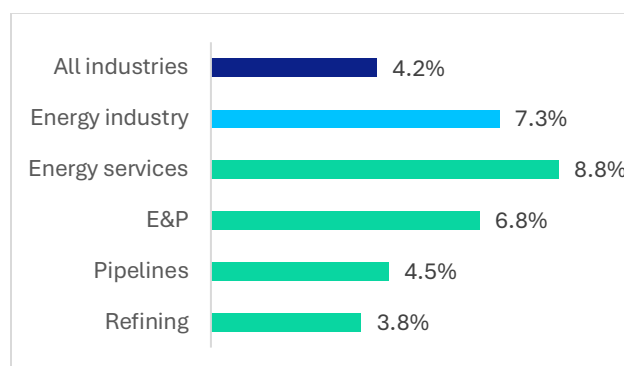
Indigenous workers by industry and sector

In 2021, there were approximately 13,000 Indigenous workers in Canada’s energy industry—representing 7.3% of the energy labour force, compared to 4.2% of the overall Canadian labour force. The energy services sector (8.8%) and the E&P sector (6.8%) have the largest shares of Indigenous workers (Figure 1).

While Indigenous Peoples are well-represented in Canada’s energy industry overall, they are underrepresented in STEM

(science, technology, engineering and mathematics) occupations. According to the Conference Board of Canada, less than 2% of people working in STEM occupations are Indigenous.ⁱⁱⁱ

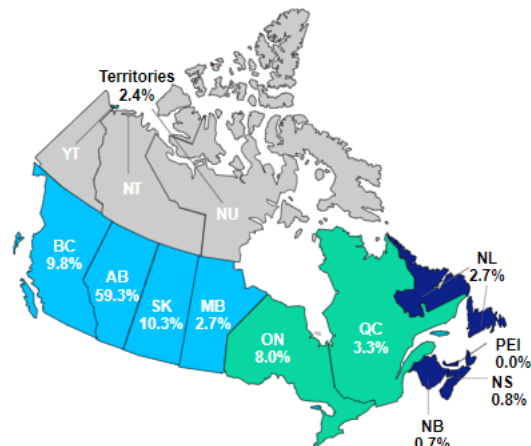
Figure 1: Share of Indigenous labour force by industry and sector, Canada, 2021



Indigenous energy workers by region

The energy industry has long been a major employer of Indigenous Peoples—partly because energy operations are often near Indigenous communities. In 2021, 82% of the Indigenous energy labour force was in Western Canada, 11% in Central Canada, 4% in Atlantic Canada and 2.4% in the Territories (Figure 2).

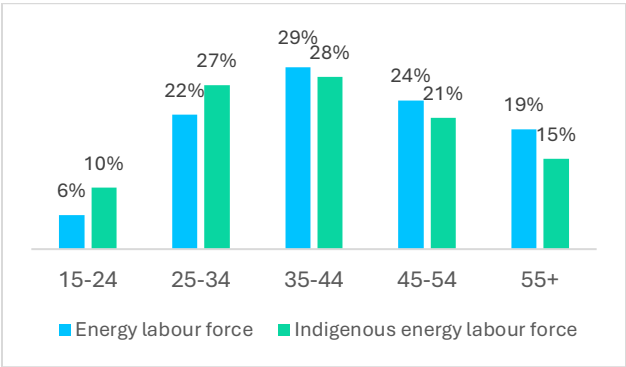
Figure 2: Indigenous energy labour force by region, 2021



Indigenous energy workers by age

Indigenous energy workers tend to be younger than the overall energy labour force, consistent with population trends in Canada. The 2021 Census shows the average age of the Indigenous population is 33.6 years, compared with 41.8 years for the non-Indigenous population.^{iv} About 37% of the Indigenous labour force in the energy sector are under the age of 35, compared with 28% of the energy labour force overall (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Canada's energy industry labour force by age, 2021

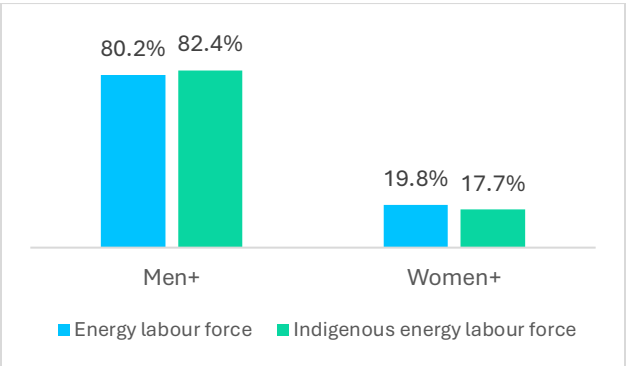


Indigenous energy workers by gender

Women's representation in the energy industry is below that of the broader economy and varies across sectors. Despite making up 48% of the Canadian labour force, women account for just 19.8% of the energy labour force.

Indigenous women represent an even smaller proportion of the Indigenous energy labour force at 17.7% (Figure 4). The share of Indigenous women ranges from a low of 14% in energy services to a high of 39% in pipelines.

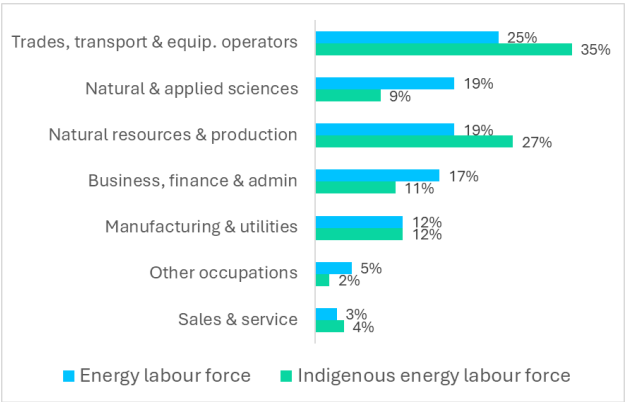
Figure 4: Canada's energy industry labour force by gender^v, 2021



Indigenous energy workers by occupation

Indigenous Peoples in Canada's energy industry are more likely to work in trades, transport and equipment operator occupations (35%) and natural resources and production occupations (27%) (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Canada's energy industry labour force by occupational category, 2021



Explore [170 career profiles](#) and [12 career pathways](#) to understand the various roles, education requirements, working conditions, skills, qualifications, experience and salaries available in Canada's dynamic energy industry.

Figure 6: Top occupations of Indigenous workers in Canada's energy industry, 2021

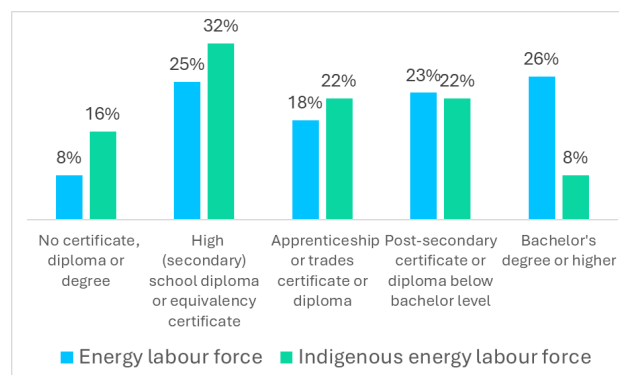
NOC ^{vi}	Occupation
73400	Heavy equipment operators
85111	Oil and gas drilling, servicing and related labourers
93101	Central control and process operators
73300	Transport truck drivers
82021	Contractors and supervisors, oil and gas drilling services
83101	Oil and gas well drillers, servicers testers and related workers
75110	Construction trades helpers and labourers
84101	Oil and gas well drilling and related workers and services operators
72400	Construction millwrights and industrial mechanics
92100	Power engineers and power system operators

Indigenous energy workers by educational attainment

The educational attainment of Indigenous energy workers looks quite different from the energy industry labour force overall. As shown in Figures 5 and 6, Indigenous Peoples are more likely to work in trades, operator and labourer occupations which typically require an apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma, high school diploma, or no certificate, diploma or degree (Figure 7).

Indigenous Peoples are more likely to live in remote or northern communities and often face multiple barriers to attaining higher levels of education. These barriers can include limited or no access to higher education, a lack of culturally relevant curricula, personal or family responsibilities, inadequate financial resources or funding and experiences of racism or discrimination.^{vii}

Figure 7: Canada's energy industry labour force by highest level of educational attainment, 2021



National and Regional Labour Market Outlooks to 2035 provide workforce projections and trends for Canada's established and emerging energy sectors, including the Western, Central and Atlantic regions.

Endnotes

ⁱ Government of Canada, Statistics Canada. (2022, September 21). *The Daily — Indigenous population continues to grow and is much younger than the non-Indigenous population, although the pace of growth has slowed.* <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220921/dq220921a-eng.htm>

ⁱⁱ Includes exploration for crude petroleum and natural gas, production of oil and gas and hydrocarbon liquids and the mining and extraction of oil from oil shale and oil sands.

ⁱⁱⁱ The Future Skills Centre – Centre des Compétences, Hogue, M., Sutherland, M., Swayze, S., Snively, G., Wanost'sa, L., Marshall, A., & Alkholy, M. (2020). *Incorporating indigenous cultures and realities in STEM*. In Primer (pp. 2–3) [Report]. The Future Skills Centre. https://fsc-ccf.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/24559_10697_incorporating-indigenous-culture-and-realities_primer.pdf

^{iv} Government of Canada, Statistics Canada. (2023, June 21). *Canada's Indigenous population*. Statistics Canada. <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/ol/en/plus/3920-canadas-indigenous-population#More%20Than%201.8%20Million%20Indigenous%20People>

^v Men+ is defined by Statistics Canada as those identifying as men and/or boys, as well as some non-binary persons. Women+ is defined as those identifying as women and/or girls, as well as some non-binary persons.

^{vi} The National Occupational Classification (NOC) is Canada's national system for describing occupations. [National Occupational Classification - Canada.ca \(esdc.gc.ca\)](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2023001/article/00012-eng.htm)

^{vii} Government of Canada, Statistics Canada. (2023b, October 27). *Postsecondary educational attainment and labour market outcomes among Indigenous peoples in Canada, findings from the 2021 Census.* <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2023001/article/00012-eng.htm>