

# AGE DISTRIBUTION OF CANADA'S GREEN WORKFORCE

In a tight national labour market, many Canadian employers are struggling to attract and retain talent. At the same time, unemployment rates among youth (15 to 24 years old) are consistently higher than those in the broader labour force. For example, in March 2023, the unemployment rate among youth workers was 9% compared to 4% for workers 25 years and over.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the employment rate is particularly low among workers 55 years and over. In March 2023, just over one-third of Canadians 55 years and over were employed, compared to 85% of those 25 to 54 years old.

Employers seeking environmental workers are experiencing similar challenges: how to attract, recruit, train, and retain qualified workers.<sup>2</sup> One approach being explored by employers is to reach out to talent in demographic groups not traditionally represented in the environmental workforce. ECO Canada's 2022 Survey of Canadian Environmental Employers<sup>3</sup> demographic data suggests that there is an opportunity to increase the number of youth and older workers involved in environmental roles.

## OVERALL

In 2022, ECO Canada surveyed employers of environmental workers across various industries, regions, sizes, and organization types. The 459 employers who reported on the age distribution of their environmental workforce represented 39,690 environmental workers.

### Of these workers:

**75%** were  
25 to 54 years old

**16%** were  
55 years and over

**8%** were youth  
(15 to 24 years old)



AGE GROUP  
■ 15-24 years ■ 25-30 years ■ 31-54 years ■ 55-64 years ■ 65+ years

### In contrast, a key observation from Canada's 2021 Census of Population data shows that:



**13%** of the Canadian labour force were youth (15 to 24 years old)



**23%** of the broader Canadian labour force was 55 years and over<sup>4</sup>

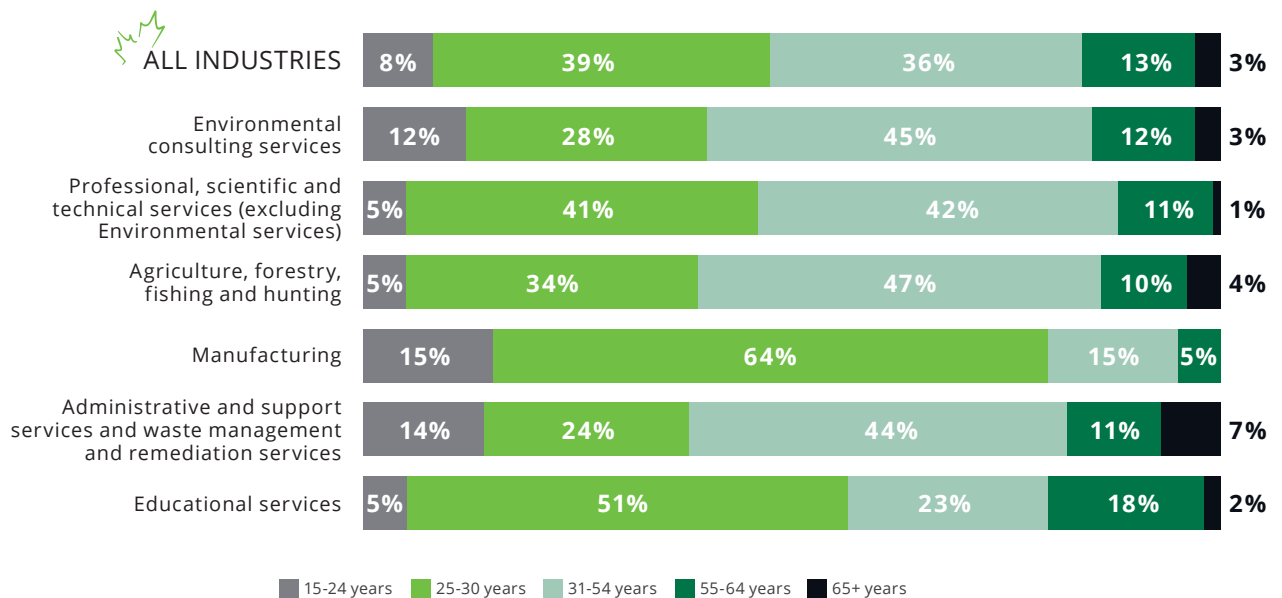
## FOOTNOTES & REFERENCES

1 Statistics Canada. (2023, March 5). *Table 14-10-0287-01 Labour force characteristics, monthly, seasonally adjusted and trend-cycle, last 5 months*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25318/1410028701-eng>

2 ECO Canada. (2021, March). *From Recession to Recovery: Environmental Workforce Needs, Trends and Challenges. Updated Labour Market Outlook to 2025*. <https://eco.ca/new-reports/updated-environmental-labour-outlook-to-2025/>

3 The survey questions align with the Government of Canada's *Employment Equity Act* (S.C. 1995, c. 44) and *Employment Equity Regulations* (SOR/96-470). See *2022 Survey of Environmental Employers: Scope, Methodology and Respondent Profile* for further information.

4 Statistics Canada. (2022, November 30). *Table 98-10-0448-01 Industry groups by class of worker including job permanency, labour force status, age and gender: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations with parts*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25318/9810044801-eng>

BY INDUSTRY<sup>5</sup>

- While youth workers in the age group 15 to 24 years made up 8% of the reported environmental workers across all industry groups, the share varied by industry:
  - Higher shares were reported in **Manufacturing** (15%) and **Administrative and support services and waste management and remediation services** (14%), and
  - A lower share (5%) was reported in **Professional, scientific, and technical services**, **Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting**, and **Educational services**.
- 20% of environmental workers in Educational services and Manufacturing were 55 years and over. Environmental workers in this age group were less represented in the Professional, scientific, and technical services industry at 12%.

In contrast, Canada's 2021 Census of the overall labour force data reveals another observation.

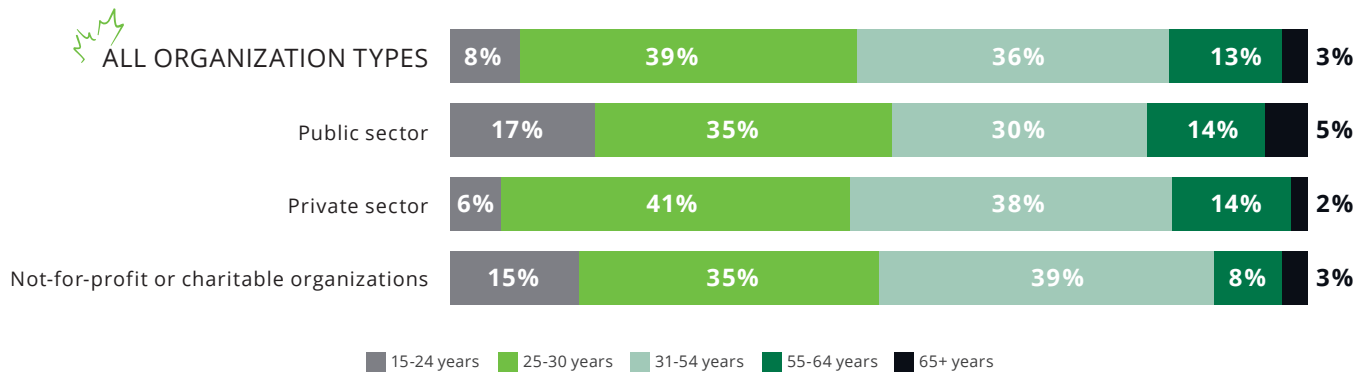
- Across all industries, 13% of the Canadian labour force was youth workers 15 to 24 years:
  - A higher share (14%) was observed in **Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting** and **Administrative and support services and waste management and remediation services**
  - Lower shares were observed in 8% in **Educational services** (8%) and **Professional, scientific, and technical services** (7%)<sup>6</sup>
- Workers 55 years and over made up 23% of Canada's overall labour force across industries, with this age group comprising 39% of the workforce in Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting and 27% in Manufacturing.

## FOOTNOTES &amp; REFERENCES

<sup>5</sup> Industries with 40 or more employer respondents are included in this factsheet. The infographic represents the industry group employer respondents indicated best describes their primary business activity.

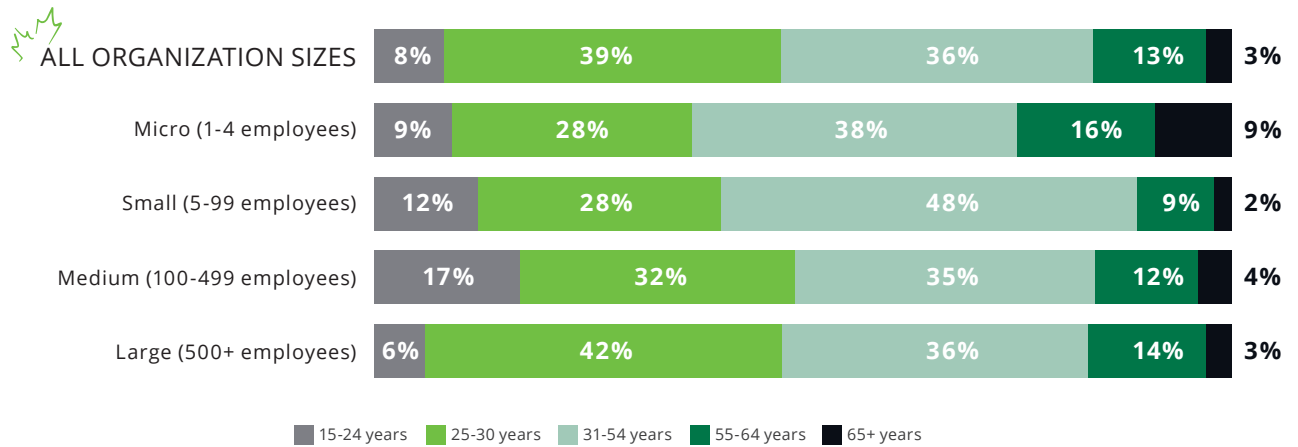
<sup>6</sup> Statistics Canada. (2022, November 30). *Table 98-10-0448-01 Industry groups by class of worker including job permanency, labour force status, age and gender: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations with parts*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25318/9810044801-eng>

## BY ORGANIZATION TYPE



- Youth workers, 15 to 24 years, made up a larger share of public sector organizations at 17% and not-for-profit or charitable organizations at 15% compared to private organizations at 6%.
- Similarly, public sector organizations reported higher shares of workers 55 years and over at 19%.

## BY ORGANIZATION SIZE



- Large-sized organizations (500+ employees) had a slightly higher than average proportion between 25 to 54 years at 78% and the lowest proportion within the age group 15 to 24 years at 6%.
- Medium-sized organizations (100 - 499 employees) reported that 17% were in the age group of 15 to 24 years.
- Micro firms (1- 4 employees) had the highest proportion within the age group 55 years and over at 25%.

## SUMMARY

Organizations employing an inter-generational workforce contribute to a sustainable economy with an inclusive approach. Age diversity can help an organization reduce employee turnover and job shuffling and encourage long-term worker commitments. In doing so, organizations can see reduced costs from hiring and training new employees and improved company performance.<sup>7</sup>

Employers can engage with youth who can bring creative ideas and novel solutions to the sustainability field. Attracting youth workers to a career in the growing environmental sector is essential for developing future green jobs leaders and environmental stewards.<sup>8</sup>

The environmental sector also relies on workers with more skills and experience to meet current and future demands for green talent that is overtaking supply.<sup>9</sup> An older worker's long-term institutional knowledge and skills create a bridge to effective succession planning and staff retention efforts of green talent.

As an environmental thought leader, ECO Canada advances responsible, sustainable economic growth around prioritizing environmental care and best practices. ECO Canada offers programs, services, and resources to support and encourage employers to diversify their workforce by recruiting youth entering their first environmental work and older workers transitioning from other sectors. Such programs and services include:

- *Environmental Employability Pathways/Canada's Youth Employment and Skills Strategy (YESS)* provide underrepresented youth (15 to 30 years) with skills to navigate the green labour market into sustained environmental employment.
- Adopting the best HR strategies leverages individual strengths and attracts the best candidates based on competencies, behaviours, and expectations is crucial to diversifying the workforce effectively in the current tight labour market and economy. *ECO Canada's Human Resources* division has a range of customized services from candidate recruitment to strategic HR management, including the largest online environmental job board in Canada.

## FOOTNOTES & REFERENCES

7 ECO Canada (2021, March) *National Environmental Workforce Strategy Framework to Address Environmental Talent Needs and Gaps*. <https://eco.ca/new-reports/national-environmental-workforce-strategy-framework/>

8 Guzman Skotnitsky, Sabrina. (2021, May). *Build Back Better: Expanding Green Jobs for Youth Post-Pandemic*. Canadian Council for Youth Prosperity. [https://441491a8-bbab-4bca-a287-4cfd5caae3c0.filesusr.com/ugd/4d20ed\\_5b47c8a85c404e5fbf315f33dae5bd81.pdf](https://441491a8-bbab-4bca-a287-4cfd5caae3c0.filesusr.com/ugd/4d20ed_5b47c8a85c404e5fbf315f33dae5bd81.pdf)

9 LinkedIn Economic Graph. *Global Green Skills Report 2022*. <https://economicgraph.linkedin.com/content/dam/me/economicgraph/en-us/global-green-skills-report/global-green-skills-report-pdf/li-green-economy-report-2022-annex.pdf>



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This project was undertaken with the financial support of:

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