

WINS

Winning Inclusive Solutions



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Community Voices 2024-25:

Narrowing the Gap—Progress and Persistent Challenges in
Canada's Economic Disparities

I. Introduction and Study Context

Winning Inclusive Solutions (WINS) Canada, a not-for-profit organization committed to advocating for inclusive policies and eliminating discrimination in the Canadian workforce, proudly presents the findings of its Community Voices 2024-25 study. This research continues WINS' ongoing commitment to understanding and creating awareness of the persistent economic inequities faced by diverse segments of the Canadian population. Canada's cultural and ethnic diversity is a defining feature of its national persona, yet this diversity is accompanied by substantial economic inequities that disproportionately affect marginalized populations, including racialized groups, women, 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, and immigrants. The continuing economic stress caused by inflation, housing concerns, and job instability necessitates a comprehensive examination of these financial realities.

The current report is based on **1,380 valid complete adult responses** collected online between September 15, 2024, and April 2, 2025. The demographic data gathered provides a diverse and generally representative sample of the Canadian population, allowing for a detailed analysis of economic disparities across key variables such as race, immigration status, and disability status. The purpose of this Community Voices initiative is to provide evidence that will infuse WINS' upcoming advocacy work with employers, government, and society at large.

II. Key National Economic Trends: Intensified Volatility and Psychological Strain

The 2024 data reveals a Canadian economic climate characterized by **increased volatility in the labor market** and a **deepening psychological toll** on the population, suggesting that persistent inflation and rising costs are eroding the purchasing power of wages.

Employment Conditions and Job Security: While modest improvement was observed in full-time employment, which rose slightly from 57.8% in 2023 to 59.3% in 2024 (+1.5 percentage points, or pp), this was offset by a marked rise in involuntary work disruptions. **22.6% of respondents reported having experienced job loss or reduced hours** in the previous 12 months, an increase of 3.7 pp from 18.9% in 2023. This volatility led to a decline in confidence: among those employed, perceived job security fell from 59.9% in 2023 to **56.5% in 2024** (–3.4 pp). This pattern indicates that, despite a slight rise in full-time roles, employment recovery is uneven and stability concerns have increased across the labor force.

Worsened Financial Conditions and Cost of Living: The financial pinch intensified since the previous survey. **50.6% of respondents indicated that rising costs worsened their standard of living** in 2024, a sharp increase of 6.1 pp from the 44.5% who reported this in 2023. The negative impact on family and social life also grew, climbing from 39.4% to 44.9% (+5.5 pp). Interestingly, the percentage relying on government assistance fell slightly from 19.3% to 17.6% (–1.7 pp), even as overall financial strain grew, which may suggest potential shifts in program eligibility or that increased financial distress is outpacing available public support.

Mental Health Crisis and Government Perception: Mental health emerged as a major growing concern. **33.8% of respondents reported that their mental health had worsened due to the economic climate** in 2024, compared to 28.2% in 2023 (+5.6 pp). The modest decline in overall financial satisfaction coupled with this sizeable increase in self-reported mental health deterioration highlights the growing psychological toll of persistent financial pressure, likely amplified by increased carrying costs on variable-rate debts due to rising rates.

Concurrently, public trust in governmental measures eroded substantially. The share of respondents who felt that **“provincial or federal governments are not doing enough to deal with economic disparities”** surged from 68.5% in 2023 to 76.5% in 2024 (+8.0 pp). This rise suggests widespread public skepticism that government policy efforts, whether targeted relief or broader fiscal responses, have been sufficient or quick enough to alleviate prevailing pressures.

III. Economic Disparities Among Marginalized Groups (2023 vs. 2024 Comparison)

The comparison between 2023 and 2024 data provides valuable insights into how disparities have shifted for marginalized groups. While the overall economic strain increased nationally, some relative narrowing of disparities was observed in certain key areas.

Racialized Groups: Racialized individuals experienced significantly higher rates of economic hardship in 2023, but the disparity gaps narrowed in 2024. The gap in **job loss or reduced hours** decreased from a 19.5% difference in 2023 to a 13.62% difference in 2024 (29.96% for racialized vs. 16.34% for non-racialized). Similarly, the difference in the **need for government assistance** decreased from 17.0% in 2023 to 9.14% in 2024. Despite this relative improvement, racialized groups still face disproportionate challenges, as evidenced by a 17.72% gap in the need to cut back on expenses.

Immigration Background: Immigrants, compared to native-born Canadians, showed an improved access to government assistance, with the disparity gap shrinking from -16.2% in 2023 to -2.13% in 2024. However, broader **quality-of-life challenges persist**. The disparity in **worsened standard of living** remained stable at an 11.07% difference in 2024 (57.79% for immigrants vs. 46.72% for native-born). The negative impact on family and social life slightly increased for immigrants, showing an 11.88% difference in 2024. This highlights the need for better integration support to improve long-term financial wellbeing.

People with Disabilities: Individuals with disabilities saw a large reduction in the gap related to cutting back on expenses and experienced a lessening of the mental health impact disparity. Nonetheless, this group continues to exhibit a disproportionately **high reliance on government assistance**. The difference in the need for assistance between those with and without disabilities decreased only slightly, from 29.4% in 2023 to **22.51% in 2024** (36.05% vs. 13.54%). This persistent need underscores the urgency for enhanced financial support and accommodations.

Gender: Gender-based disparities showed notable reductions between 2023 and 2024. The gap in reporting a worsened standard of living due to rising costs shrank from 10.6% in 2023 to 3.35% in 2024. Similarly, the disparity in worsened mental health decreased from 10.2% to 6.19%. While these reductions indicate progress toward gender equity in economic impacts, disparities across gender are consistently noted as the smallest among the four categories discussed, and women still report higher rates of distress compared to men.

IV. Comprehensive Recommendations for Systemic Change

The findings underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions to address systemic inequities. WINS Canada advocates for a multifaceted strategy to mitigate intensified financial pressures and job insecurity:

1. Strengthening Economic Support Systems: Governments must prioritize financial assistance programs that alleviate the burden of rising costs, particularly for racialized households and individuals with disabilities who face higher essential living expenses. Expanding access to subsidies for housing and childcare is critical to enhancing economic stability. Simplifying complex eligibility criteria and increasing outreach efforts are vital steps to ensuring these programs effectively reach vulnerable populations, especially immigrants. This policy advocacy is directly informed by the data collected through the 'Community Voices' initiative.

2. Promoting Inclusive Employment Practices: Employers must implement robust Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) frameworks to address labor market volatility. This includes offering flexible work arrangements and targeted skill development programs to reduce the underemployment experienced by immigrants and women. For individuals with disabilities, prioritizing workplace accommodations—such as accessible facilities and adaptive technologies—is essential to enhance participation and job security. WINS' *Road to Success* initiative supports this goal by offering DEIA consulting and events designed to connect diverse professionals with employers.

3. Enhancing Mental Health Support: Given the significant increase in mental health challenges linked to economic pressure, community-based mental health programs tailored to marginalized groups, including women and racialized individuals, must be expanded. These programs should ensure accessibility through culturally sensitive, multilingual services and virtual platforms. Integrating mental health support with financial literacy initiatives can holistically address the interconnected nature of economic and psychological distress.

4. Advancing Financial Literacy and Policy Advocacy: Financial literacy programs focusing on budgeting and debt management, tailored to the specific needs of marginalized communities, are essential for promoting self-sufficiency and reducing dependency on social support. Finally, to combat public distrust, stakeholders must amplify advocacy efforts to influence policymakers, engaging with them to push for targeted interventions—such as tax credits for low-income households and incentives for inclusive hiring—to drive systemic change.

V. Conclusion

The WINS Community Voices 2024-25 report reveals a complex economic landscape where, despite some relative progress in narrowing specific gaps, marginalized communities in Canada continue to face significant disparities. The overall financial hardship and psychological stress have intensified. These findings underscore that addressing systemic barriers is not just an ethical imperative but a strategic necessity to unlock the full potential of Canada's diverse population, fostering a more resilient and equitable society.

To gain a deeper understanding of the specific data supporting these trends, including detailed comparative metrics across racialized groups, immigrants, and persons with disabilities, and to review the complete implementation strategy for strengthening economic support systems and enhancing inclusive employment, download the full WINS Community Voices 2024-25 report today.

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