

**INDIGENOUS
& NORTHERN
HOUSING**

Evaluation of the Housing Internship for Indigenous Youth (HIY) Program

**Final Report
April 2025**

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Executive Summary

Evaluation objective, scope, and methodology

- The evaluation provides a neutral assessment of the **relevance, coherence, effectiveness, impact, and efficiency of the Housing Internship for Indigenous Youth (HIY) Program** to support evidence-based decision-making and to inform future policy directions.
- The evaluation scope covered the period from fiscal year **2018-2019 to 2023-2024**, encompassing the program change from the Housing Internship Initiative for First Nation and Inuit Youth (HIIFNIY).
- Methodologies included: interviews; literature, document, data review; post-internship survey.

Summary of key findings

- There is a **continuing need** for the HIY, due to the need for employment opportunities for Indigenous youth and the need to support housing capacity building in Indigenous communities.
- Overall, the HIY is **effective** in providing Indigenous youth with access to opportunities that help them acquire the necessary skills to find and maintain employment or return to (or remain in) school. During the evaluation's scope, the HIY supported over 2,500 internships in various areas of the housing sector. It has contributed to the development of both **soft and hard skills**, supported **employment and educational outcomes**, and **career advancement**.
- Although the program's top-up funding resulted in greater reach and impact, the uptake from **Métis** interns and organizations has been limited since the expanded eligibility of the HIY.

- Overall, the HIY is **positively received and recommended**, although **longer internships** and a **higher intern wage** would increase the program's impact and responsiveness. While most internships are completed in full, some incomplete internships highlight challenges faced by interns and sponsors (personal issues, COVID-19, substance abuse, etc.).
- Beyond benefits to the intern, the program also **supports Indigenous housing capacity** and has benefited sponsor organizations and Indigenous communities in developing a skilled workforce, strengthening community relations, and providing operational support and capacity. Sponsor organizations find the application and reporting process straightforward.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, the evaluation proposes four recommendations:

1. Change the program name.
2. Implement an equity framework to encourage more equitable program participation.
3. Consider ways to increase the meaningfulness of internship opportunities.
4. Update the program guidelines to reflect the new program.

Table of Content

2	Executive Summary
4	List of Tables and Figures
5	List of Acronyms
6	Introduction
8	Findings: Relevance and Coherence
12	Findings: Effectiveness and Impact
32	Findings: Efficiency
35	Conclusions and Recommendations
37	Annex A: Evaluation Methodology
38	Annex B: Other Indigenous Youth and Housing Capacity Building Programs
39	Annex C: Urban, Rural, Northern and In-Community Location Analysis
41	Annex D: Provincial and Territorial Minimum Wage
42	References



List of Tables and Figures

- 7 Table 1: Program eligibility for interns and sponsors
- 10 Table 2: Skills and capacity needs outlined in distinction-based strategies
- 12 Table 3: Number of internships, by fiscal year
- 16 Table 4: Indigenous identity of HIY participants
- 17 Table 5: HIY and related industry sectors, by gender
- 18 Table 6: Percentage of internships at each age range
- 22 Table 7: Average internship duration in weeks, by fiscal year
- 23 Table 8: Average hourly wage, by year
- 37 Table 9: Number of key informant interviews by stakeholder type and Indigenous distinction
- 39 Table 10: Details on internships in community and in URN areas
- 40 Table 11: Methodology for determining each community and URN location category
- 41 Table 12: Minimum wage, by province or territory and fiscal year
- 41 Table 13: Difference between HIY wage and minimum wage, by fiscal year

- 8 Figure 1: Labour force status by Indigenous and non-Indigenous identity (ages 15-29), 2021
- 9 Figure 2: Labour force status for First Nations youth (ages 15 – 29) on- and off-reserve, 2021
- 9 Figure 3: Proportion of Indigenous (by distinction) and non-Indigenous youth (ages 15-29) by highest level of educational attainment, 2021
- 13 Figure 4: HIY internships and budgeted funding, by province (FY 2018-2019 to FY 2023-2024)
- 14 Figure 5: HIY Internships, inside and outside urban, rural, northern (URN) areas
- 15 Figure 6: Distribution of HIY internships by postal code across Canada (n=2,600)
- 16 Figure 7: Indigenous identity of HIY participants (n=1,287) since program change, compared to the Indigenous population
- 17 Figure 8: Gender of internship participants
- 19 Figure 9: Educational attainment of internship participants
- 20 Figure 10: Internship completion rate, by fiscal year
- 21 Figure 11: Reasons for incomplete internships
- 24 Figure 12: Average hourly wage, by gender, age, Indigenous identity, location, sector
- 25 Figure 13: Hypothetical scenario of wage increase
- 27 Figure 14: Percentage of internships offering services, supports, and training (FY 2021-2022 to FY 2023-2024 only)

- 28 Figure 15: Initial results of completed internships
- 29 Figure 16: Internship success, as rated by sponsors
- 30 Figure 17: Number of unique sponsor organizations and interns hired, by fiscal year
- 30 Figure 18: Sponsor’s Indigenous identity and organization type, unique sponsors only, FY 2021-2022 to FY 2023-2024 (n=338)
- 31 Figure 19: Key themes on the benefits of internships to sponsor organizations
- 32 Figure 20: Intern survey and interview responses to: “On a scale of 1 to 10, how likely are you to recommend HIY?”
- 33 Figure 21: Post-approval process for sponsors
- 34 Figure 22: HIY budgeted funding (in \$ millions) and number of funded interns by year, not including administrative costs
- 39 Figure 23: In community and urban, rural, northern

List of Acronyms

CA	census agglomeration
CMA	census metropolitan area
CMHC	Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
ESDC	Employment and Social Development Canada
FNHPA	First Nations Housing Professionals Association
FY	fiscal year
ISC	Indigenous Services Canada
HIY	Housing Internship for Indigenous Youth
HIIFNIY	Housing Internship Initiative for First Nation and Inuit Youth
MTSGIG	Modern Treaty and Self-Governing Indigenous Governments
URN	urban, rural, northern
YESS	Youth Employment and Skills Strategy

Introduction

Evaluation context, questions, and methodologies

Objective and overview of the evaluation

The evaluation provides a neutral assessment of the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, impact, and efficiency of the Housing Internship for Indigenous Youth (HIY) Program to support evidence-based decision-making and to inform future policy directions. The evaluation was conducted in alignment with the Program Evaluation Standards adopted by the Canadian Evaluation Society and the Treasury Board Secretariat's *Policy on Results* (Treasury Board Secretariat, 2016).

The evaluation team was composed of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's (CMHC) Evaluation Services and DPRA Canada Inc. It was supported by a working group of CMHC staff from various sectors.

Evaluation scope

The evaluation launched in August 2023 and was completed in January 2025. The evaluation includes data from fiscal year (FY) 2018-2019 to FY 2023-2024 with a cut-off date of March 31, 2024.

Evaluation questions

Relevance and Coherence

1. To what extent is there a **continued need** for a program that provides Indigenous youth with paid internships (for example, learning opportunities and work experience) in the housing sector?
2. To what extent is there a **continued need** for a program that supports housing capacity in Indigenous communities?
3. To what extent is the HIY **compatible with other programs**?
4. To what extent is the HIY **responsive to changing needs, contexts, and priorities**?

Effectiveness and Impact

5. To what extent has the HIY program **achieved its intended horizontal outcomes**? What are the **impacts**?
6. To what extent has the HIY program **achieved its CMHC outcomes**? What are the **impacts**?

Efficiency

7. Are there **more efficient ways to design or deliver** the HIY?

Evaluation methodologies

The evaluation was informed by the following lines of evidence, see annex A for more details:

- **Key informant interviews** with CMHC staff (n=6), sponsor organizations (that is, employers) (n=12), past program interns (n=7), and Indigenous partners (n=2).
- **Literature and documentation review** of internal program documentation (around 40 documents), academic literature, and grey literature.
- **Post-internship youth survey results** (n=110)¹, administered by program staff.
- **Administrative data review** of program, internship outcomes, and financial data.

Program profile

The Housing Internship for Indigenous Youth (HIY) **provides financial assistance through a wage subsidy for organizations and businesses** (hereinafter, "sponsors") **in the housing sector to hire Indigenous youth** (hereinafter, "interns"). CMHC is not involved in the hiring of interns; rather, sponsors recruit interns once their HIY application has been approved. The program's goal is to assist Indigenous youth in gaining paid work experience and pursuing long-term employment in the housing or related sectors. During the evaluation period, the program received a \$6.2M average annual budget and funded 452 internships each year on average, which, based on available data, went to 544 unique organizations.

¹ This was spread over three years, as follows: 2021-2022 (n=25); 2022-2023 (n=43); 2023-2024 (n=42). Note that this represents the survey completion rate. Some survey questions only apply to a sub-set of respondents, such as those that completed the program.

Table 1: Program eligibility for interns and sponsors

Eligible Interns	Eligible Sponsors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous youth aged 15 to 30 • Not otherwise be employed during the internship • Not receiving employment insurance benefits or must agree to discontinue the benefits before the start of the internship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous governments and affiliated organizations • Indigenous organizations in the public or not-for-profit sector • Indigenous businesses in the for-profit sector • Non-Indigenous employers in the public, private, or not-for-profit sectors

CMHC’s funding contribution can pay for:

- the intern’s wages (at least minimum wage) in whole or in part;
- employment insurance and Canada/Quebec Pension Plans workers’ compensation premiums;
- vacation pay;
- northern allowance, and;
- some safety equipment costs and skills training activities or required curriculums.

The HIY is part of **Employment and Social Development Canada’s Youth Employment and Skills Strategy (YESS)**, which funds various programs across different departments and agencies. CMHC has delivered the HIY since 1997 (then known as the Housing Internship Initiative for First Nation and Inuit Youth [HIIFNIY]). In FY 2021-2022, the HIIFNIY was changed to the HIY, which enabled youth of all Indigenous distinction groups to apply, and for non-Indigenous and Métis organizations to become sponsors.

The program was last evaluated in 1999 (CMHC, 1999).



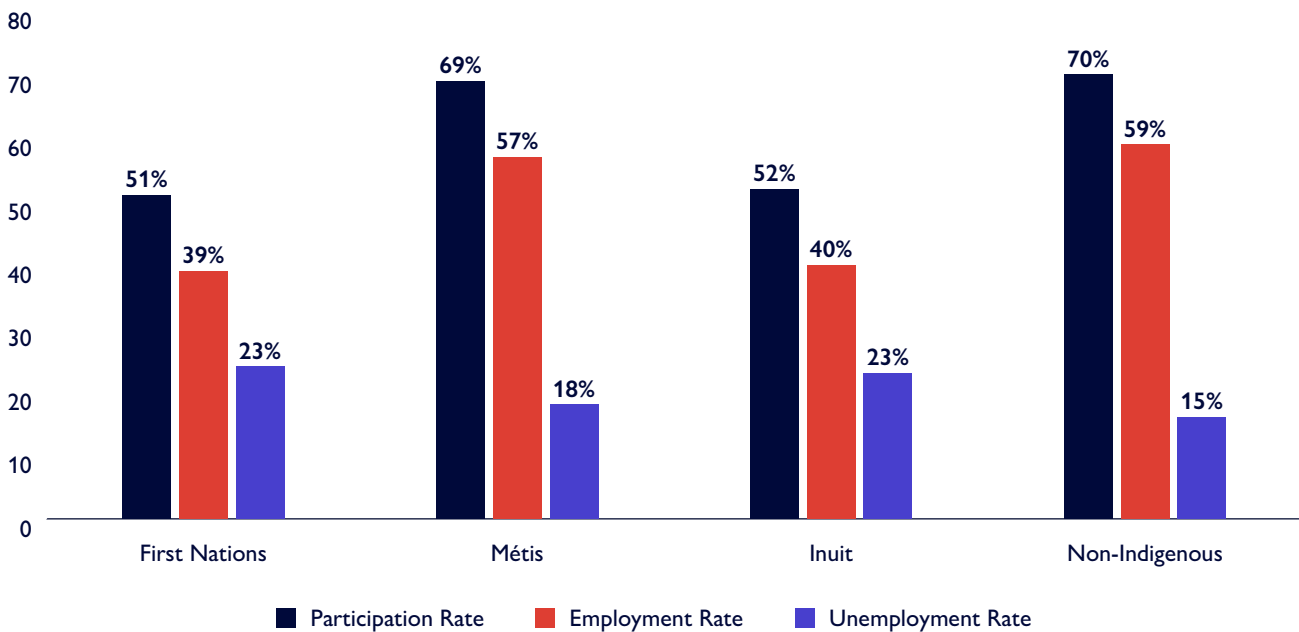
Findings: Relevance and Coherence

FINDING 1:

The HIY responds to both a continuing need for a program that provides Indigenous youth with paid internships and to a continuing need to support Indigenous housing sector capacity.

Indigenous youth face higher unemployment rates and lower rates of high school and post-secondary completion than non-Indigenous youth.

Figure 1: Labour force status by Indigenous and non-Indigenous identity (ages 15-29), 2021



Census 2021 indicated that Indigenous youth (ages 15-29) were more likely to be unemployed and had lower rates of employment and labour force participation than non-Indigenous youth, **particularly for First Nations and Inuit** (Statistics Canada, 2022e).² This is especially prominent in rural and remote areas, where Indigenous youth were less likely to be employed (OECD, 2018; Skudra et al., 2020). Indigenous youth in **Nunavut, Northwest Territories, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba** face notable gaps in labour force participation (Statistics Canada, 2022e). A lack of opportunities for Indigenous

youth to develop and use their skills within their own communities **can result in relocating to other areas** to pursue educational and employment opportunities (Skudra et al., 2020; Wannell & Currie, 2016). This impacts the communities' available workforce.

While First Nations youth (ages 15- 29) living **off-reserve** had comparable labour force participation and employment rates as non-Indigenous youth, rates were notably higher compared to First Nations youth living **on-reserve** (see figure 2, Statistics Canada, 2023b).

² See Statistics Canada (2024b) for definitions of labour force participation rate, employment rate, and unemployment rate: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/241108/dq241108a-eng.htm>

Figure 2: Labour force status for First Nations youth (ages 15 – 29) on- and off-reserve, 2021

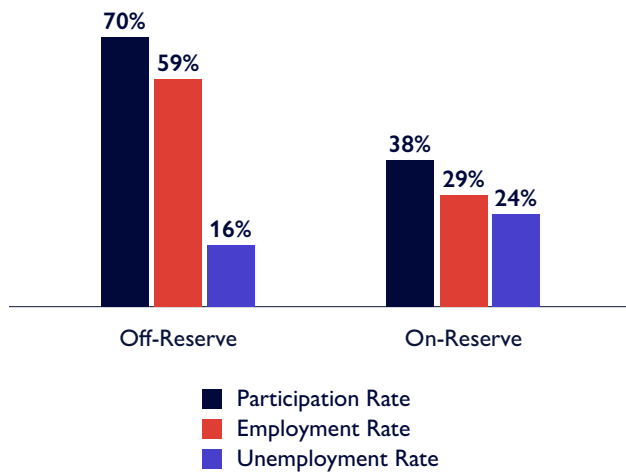
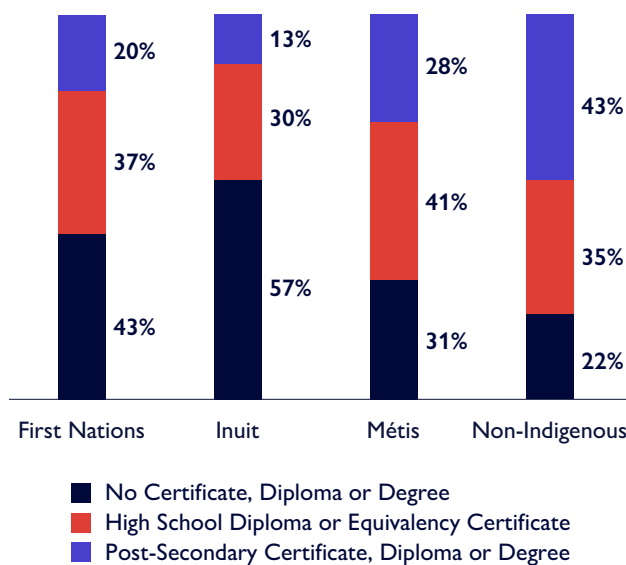


Figure 3 shows the educational attainment rates in 2021, with Inuit youth as the least likely to have a high school diploma or a post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree (Statistics Canada, 2022e).

Figure 3: Proportion of Indigenous (by distinction) and non-Indigenous youth (ages 15-29) by highest level of educational attainment, 2021



Indigenous youth face systemic barriers to education and employment.

Literature and interviews identified social and systemic barriers that may **impede Indigenous youth from participating in the labour market**, many of which were recognized as lasting impacts from colonialism. These barriers also influence education rates, which can be a prerequisite for employment:

- Lack of economic and job opportunities;
- Limited access to high school and post-secondary school (Layton, 2023);
- Generational trauma and experiences with mental health issues;
- Housing precarity and homelessness;
- Language barriers;
- Lack of transportation and childcare (Jewell et al., 2020; Perkins, 2021; Skudra et al., 2020); and
- Experiences of racism and discrimination (Hyatt, 2019; Perkins, 2021).

Other barriers were attributed to precarious work arrangements, such as seasonal and short-term contract employment (Hyatt, 2019), as well as a general lack of employment skills and training.

The HIY addresses employment needs among Indigenous youth by **offering a pathway into the workforce with practical experience**, without requiring complete formal education. It also aims to help youth build confidence and equips them with skills that can support future educational pursuits.

“Past trauma from the residential schools that lead to addictions and other social issues prevent Indigenous youth from finishing high school. Even if [youth] finish high school, they don’t have the grades. Education is a big factor, but more than that, [it’s] the underlying socioeconomic conditions that are preventing people from reaching their full potential.”

– Indigenous Partner

Indigenous communities need greater housing capacity, including skilled labour, to meet housing needs.

A continued need to support housing capacity in Indigenous communities was identified within the literature and among interviews with sponsors and Indigenous partners. This includes capacity needs outlined in the *Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous (URN) Housing What We Heard Report* (CMHC, 2024a) and within the distinction-based housing strategies (Assembly of First Nations, 2018; Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2019; Métis Nation, 2018) (see table 2). The URN Report (CMHC, 2024a) speaks to improving education and training in the areas of **proposal writing, program knowledge, housing and project management, financial literacy, housing rights and responsibilities, and trades, maintenance and labour**. This represents some of the capacity-building needs, as identified in the report.

Labour shortages are a barrier to housing development in Indigenous communities. Specific labour needs identified from the literature and interviews include the following:

- Greater awareness about skilled trades and other housing sector professions.
- Staff with skills in administration, management, construction, finance, and other areas.
- Wages that align with communities’ cost of living.

The HIY helps build Indigenous housing capacity by addressing these labour shortages and providing opportunities for Indigenous youth to gain work experience and skills to help meet local needs.

Table 2: Skills and capacity needs outlined in distinction-based strategies

Distinction-Based Housing Strategies	
First Nations	Acquire the skills and capacity to exercise responsibility, care, control and management over housing.
Métis	Increase capacity of Métis housing institutions and advance self-determination by supporting housing programs to be developed, managed and delivered by Métis housing institutions.
Inuit	Building institutional and organizational capacity to eliminate the housing gap through building local skills and trade certification.

“We’re facing a housing crisis, and one of the big pillars is the industrial strategy and getting enough expertise in these roles. [The HIY] program would be a key part of actually getting that expertise out and really making a difference in many communities.”

– CMHC Staff

FINDING 2:

The HIY is a unique program that complements existing housing and employment programs.

The HIY focuses on Indigenous youth's skills within the housing sector.

There are several youth — and Indigenous youth — paid employment and skills programs funded through Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), other levels of governments, and Indigenous and private organizations. Annex B summarizes 12 programs.

Document reviews and interviews found that while there are some overlaps in the populations served, the HIY has a unique focus on developing skills within the housing sector and therefore developing Indigenous communities' housing sector capacity. For example, two key similar federal programs are:

- **ESDC's Indigenous Skills and Employment Training Program**, which funds Indigenous organizations providing job training services to First Nations, Inuit, Métis and urban/non-affiliated Indigenous communities (ESDC, 2023a). While targeted to all Indigenous distinction groups, this program is not specific to youth or the housing sector; and
- **ISC's First Nations and Inuit Youth Employment Strategy**, which funds initiatives aimed at providing First Nations and Inuit youth with work experience and employable skill development (ISC, 2021). However, this youth program is not for all Indigenous distinction groups, and not specific to the housing sector.

Compared to the other examined Indigenous housing capacity-building programs (see annex B), the HIY is unique in that it is **for all Indigenous peoples** (regardless of distinction) and **youth-focused**. Other programs, such as CMHC's **Indigenous Skills and Training Program**, are land-based in their focus on outcomes on-reserve.

As a result, the HIY complements other youth paid employment and skills programs and housing capacity programs by being at the intersection of housing sector capacity-building and Indigenous youth employment, for all distinctions and across the country.

ISC and CMHC demonstrate complementarity by using ISC funding to further the delivery of HIY internships.

Since FY 2022-2023, ISC has provided annual funding to CMHC to support additional HIY internships in the Quebec and Atlantic regions. While the funding comes from ISC, the program administration remains with CMHC. This demonstrates coherence by avoiding the administration and application burden from a separate Indigenous housing internship program.





Findings: Effectiveness and Impact

FINDING 3:

From 2018-2019 to 2023-2024, the HIY provided over 2,500 internships, most of which are in Indigenous communities. Since their eligibility in 2021-2022, Métis youth have been underrepresented in HIY.

In the six fiscal years covered by the evaluation, the HIY provided 2,716 internships (see table 3).

Table 3: Number of internships, by fiscal year

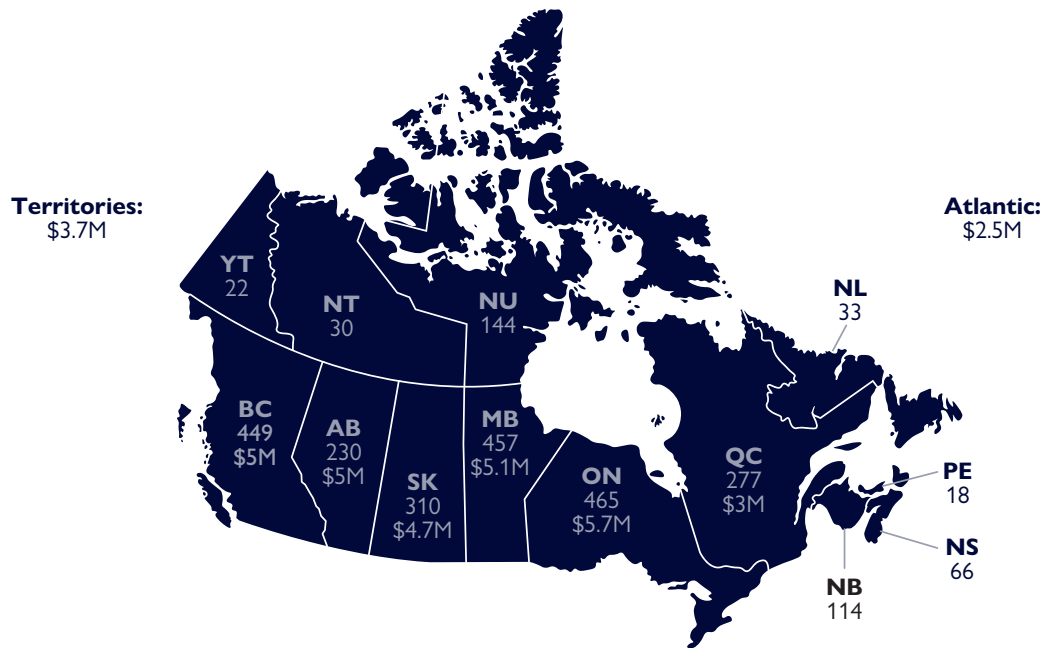
Fiscal Year	Number of Internships
2018-2019	588
2019-2020	443
2020-2021	358
2021-2022	559
2022-2023	413
2023-2024	355
Total	2,716

The number of internships fluctuates each year, primarily due to the irregular amount of available funding. The number of funded internships is also impacted by the wage offered and the internship duration (higher wage and longer internships result in fewer overall internships).

The HIY's budget is allocated from the national level to the provinces and territories each year based on census data on Indigenous populations. A portion of the budget is reserved at the national-level for funding national and regional stakeholders with a large reach (such as tribal councils or organizations that have the capacity to hire many interns). Figure 4 shows that most internships have been in **British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario**.³ Note that the number of internships is based on available data, and therefore, do not add to 2,716.

³ According to Census 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2023a), Saskatchewan and Manitoba are the provinces with the largest proportion of Indigenous people. British Columbia and Ontario have the largest number of Indigenous people.

Figure 4: HIY internships and budgeted funding, by province (FY 2018-2019 to FY 2023-2024)



Internships are mostly in the fields of housing construction, maintenance, and administration.

Data shows that the internships are in the following sectors and areas (n=1,006):



52% Construction and renovations



10% Finance



50% Maintenance and repairs



9% Mould issues



45% Administration and management



17% Other

*Note that the total exceeds 100% because more than one option could be selected.

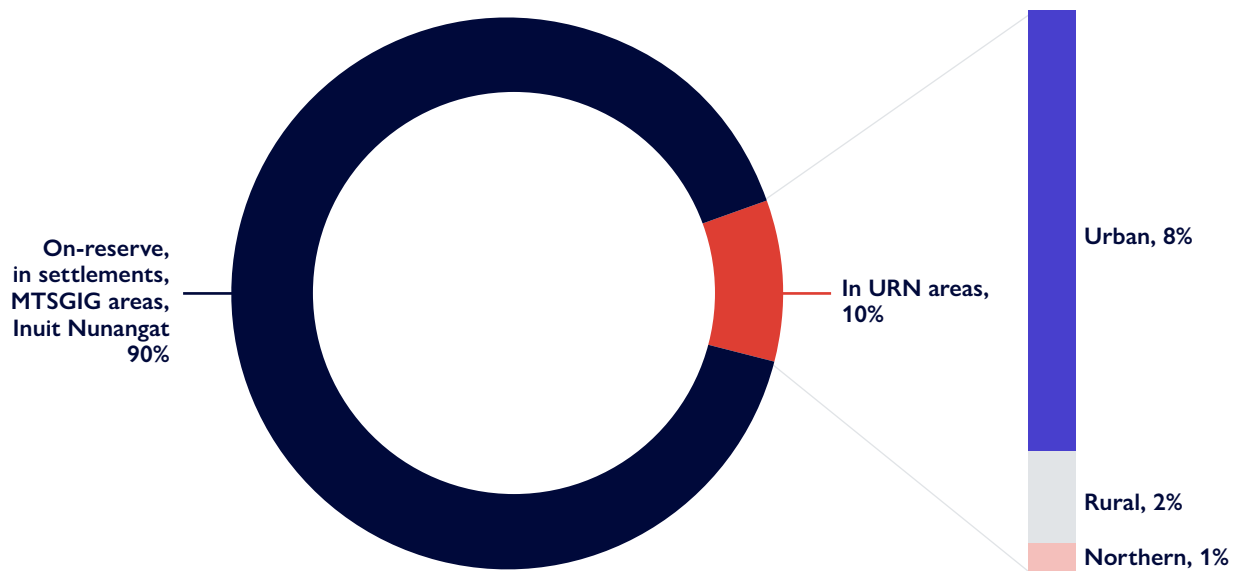
Most internships are in Indigenous communities (specifically First Nations). Outside of that, internships are mostly in urban areas.

Analysis of internship location shows that **almost all** (89.5%, of total n=2,611) **internships are in land-based Indigenous communities** (reserves, settlements, modern treaty and self-governing Indigenous governments (MTSGIGs) areas, and Inuit Nunangat).⁴ Of this 89.5%:

- 92% are in **First Nation** reserves, settlements, MTSGIG areas (82.3% of total); and
- 7.9% are in **Inuit Nunangat** (7.1% of total).

This reflects the Indigenous identity of interns, which are predominantly First Nation on-reserve. However, Indigenous peoples also reside off-reserve, out of settlement, away from MTSGIG areas, and outside of Inuit Nunangat — known as being in **urban, rural, northern**⁵ (URN) areas (see figure 5).

Figure 5: HIY Internships, inside and outside urban, rural, northern (URN) areas



- HIY internships in URN areas are mostly in urban areas (at 8.1%), namely **Thunder Bay, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, and Edmonton**. This is partly explained by a few organizations in these urban areas that have hired more interns due to their capacity to do so. These cities also have higher proportions of Indigenous people (Statistics Canada, 2023a).⁶
- The dominance of internship location being in Indigenous communities (rather than in URN areas) reflects the historic eligibility of the program until FY 2021-2022, where only First Nations and Inuit governments and businesses could be a sponsor.

Data in the spotlight box on Indigenous populations adds to this understanding and showcases the need for internships and housing capacity support that are **both in community and URN areas**.

⁴ This was analyzed by examining the sponsor employer organization and their postal code. This is used as a proxy for the internship location, recognizing there are limitations such as if interns are working off-site, or if an organization operates in various locations.

⁵ **Urban** is defined as being in a Census Metropolitan Area (population of over 100,000) or Census Agglomeration (population of over 10,000). **Rural** is defined as being neither in a territory or in an urban area. **Northern** is defined as the territories (outside of Inuit Nunangat and First Nation reserves/MTSGIG areas). See annex C for more details.

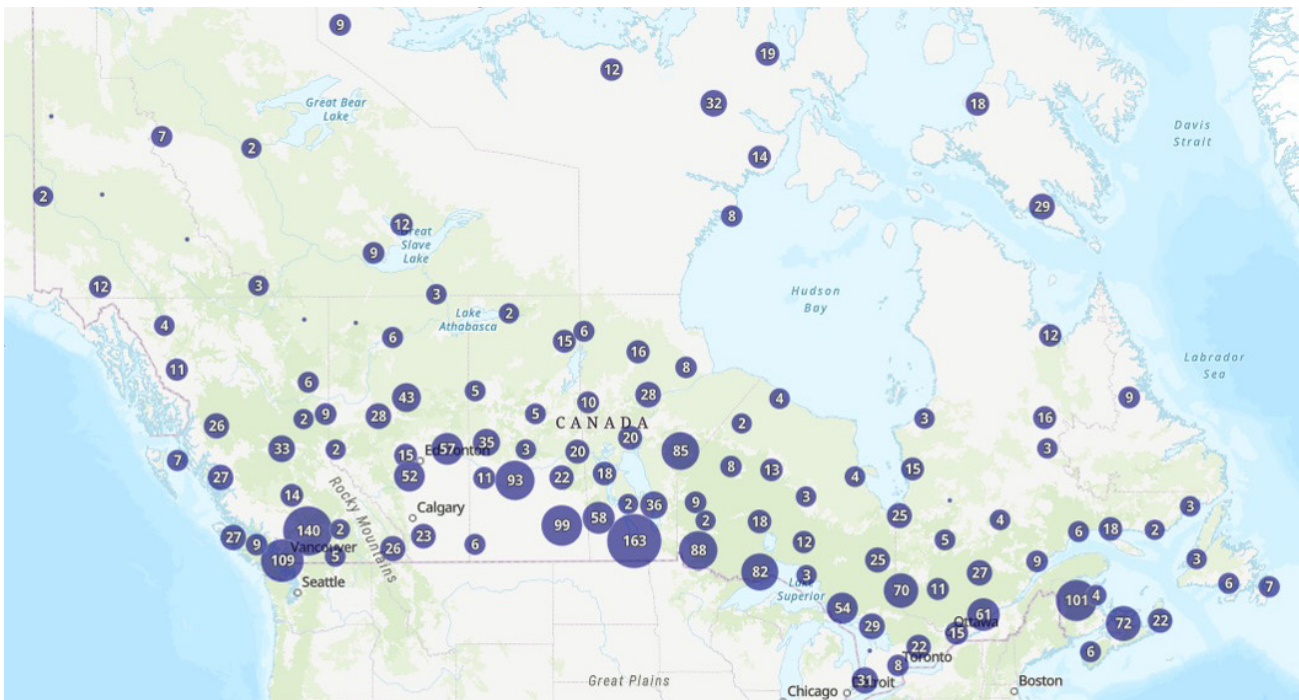
⁶ According to Census 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2023a), the rates of Indigenous peoples in these CMAs are as follows: Thunder Bay (14%); Winnipeg (12.5%); Saskatoon (11.3%); Edmonton (6.3%). Thunder Bay has the highest proportion of Indigenous peoples for any CMA in Canada.

Indigenous Population and Location

- The majority of Indigenous youth aged 15-34 (63.1%) lived in an urban area in 2021, which is highest among Métis (74.5% of which live in urban areas), followed by First Nations (59.1%), and Inuit (19.6%) (Statistics Canada, 2023a).
- Indigenous populations continue to grow in census metropolitan areas (Statistics Canada, 2022c). In these urban centres, urban Indigenous populations are more likely to experience core housing need than non-Indigenous populations (CMHC, 2024).
- In 2021, Inuit living in Inuit Nunangat and First Nations living on-reserve are more likely to be living in crowded housing and/or a dwelling requiring major repairs, compared to Inuit living outside Inuit Nunangat or off-reserve (Statistics Canada, 2022b).

Figure 6 displays the distribution of HIY internships over the six-year evaluation period, grouped into clusters to highlight regional concentrations of internships.⁷ The map illustrates the large geographic dispersion of HIY opportunities, particularly compared to general Canadian population trends of urban concentration in the Vancouver, Toronto, and Montréal CMAs.

Figure 6: Distribution of HIY internships by postal code across Canada (n=2,600)



Annex C details the methodology used for determining whether internships are inside URN areas, or in First Nation reserves and communities, modern treaty or self-governing territory, Inuit Nunangat, Métis settlement regions. Annex C also contains additional breakdowns of internships in and outside of URN areas.

⁷ This is mapped based on the postal code of the sponsor organization, used as a proxy for internship location.

Most HIY participants are First Nation youth. Métis youth are underrepresented in HIY, compared to other Indigenous distinctions.

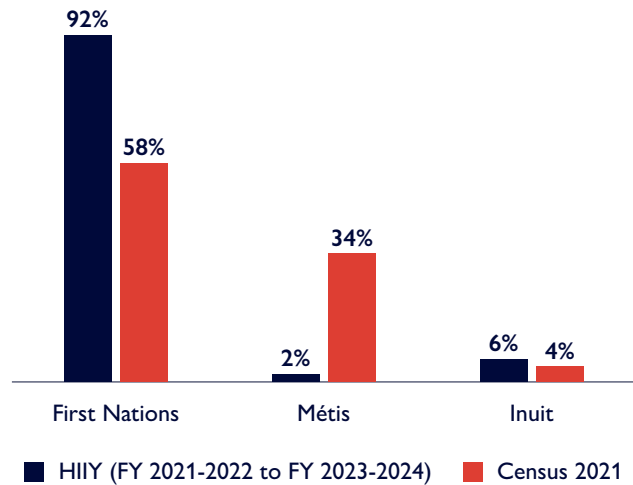
Table 4 breaks down the Indigenous identity of internship participants over the evaluation period. It shows that **over 90% of participants have been First Nations**.

In FY 2021-2022, the program changed from HIIFNIY (for First Nations and Inuit youth) to HIY (for all Indigenous youth). This change expanded eligibility to Métis youth. However, their participation remains very low. Figure 7 examines the Indigenous identity of HIY participants **after** this change and compares it to the Indigenous population, based on Census 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2023a).

Table 4: Indigenous identity of HIY participants

	% of Internships
First Nations	92.6%
Registered on-reserve	77.7%
Registered off-reserve	13.6%
Non status	1.3%
Inuit	6.2%
Métis	1.1%
	<i>n=2,323</i>

Figure 7: Indigenous identity of HIY participants (n=1,287) since program change, compared to the Indigenous population



Note: Percentages for the “Census 2021” category do not add up to 100% because only single-response Indigenous identities were included.

This graph shows that:

- **Métis youth are highly underrepresented** in HIY (at 2%, despite being around 34% of the Indigenous population); and
- **First Nations youth are overrepresented** (at 92% of internships, despite being around 58% of the Indigenous population).

As discussed later in Finding 10, this may be partly due to limited A-base⁸ funding, a high demand for the program, and the short notice given with top-up funds for the program. The latter poses a resource burden on CMHC staff, which then constrains proactive engagement with newly eligible organizations; but, First Nations and Inuit organizations have a history and legacy of applying to and using the HIY program. Furthermore, Finding 1 shows that Métis youth have comparable employment rates to the non-Indigenous youth population. Given their higher presence in urban centres, this likely results in a greater opportunity to participate in the urban economy.

⁸ A-base funding refers to permanent and on-going funding received by CMHC to conduct its program activities and does not sunset.

Other intern demographics: Most interns are male, with a high school education or less, and around 23 years old at the time of their internship.

Gender

Over one-third (35.5%) of the interns are female, and almost **two-thirds (63.8%) are male** (n=2,321).⁹ While not achieving gender parity, and thereby limiting equal opportunity, this is an improvement from the 1999 Evaluation, which found that men received 81% of the share of internships in 1998-1999.

Disaggregating the internship sectors by gender shows that:

- a higher proportion of construction and **trades-related**¹⁰ positions are occupied by **males**; and
- a higher proportion of **office-based positions**¹¹ are occupied by **females**.

Figure 8: Gender of internship participants



Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% since only male and female were illustrated in the graph.

These differences are **in line with industry norms**. Table 5 shows each HIY sector by gender, as well as a comparable industry for all Canadians based on Census 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2022d).

Table 5: HIY and related industry sectors, by gender

Sector	HIY		North American Industry Classification System (NAICS, Census 2021)		NAICS Number and Category
	F	M	F	M	
Administration & Management	60%	40%	67%	60%	6242 Community food and housing, and emergency and other relief services
			52%	48%	9141 Aboriginal public administration
Finance	71%	29%	62%	38%	5412 Accounting, tax preparation, bookkeeping and payroll services
Construction & Renovations	16%	84%	15%	85%	2361 Residential building construction
Maintenance & Repairs	19%	81%	16%	84%	811 Repair and maintenance
Mould	17%	83%			

⁹ 0.8% of interns identified as “other” or “prefer not to disclose”.

¹⁰ **Trades-related internships** include those in the following areas: maintenance and repairs; construction and renovations; mould issues; residential construction trades apprenticeship program.

¹¹ **Office-based internships** include those in the following areas: housing administration; finance.

Age

The average age of internship participants was **23.4 years old** at the end of the fiscal period (n=2,291).¹² Table 6 shows that most internship participants are over 20 years old.

In line with ESDC’s Youth Employment and Skills Strategy (YESS), the HIY program parameters limit participation to youth (aged 15 to 30). In interviews with Indigenous partners and sponsor employers, a few noted the **age limit of 30 as a concern**, with the consideration that Indigenous youth tend to think seriously about their long-term careers later than non-Indigenous youth (around age 30) and may have families to support as well. Becoming a mother before the age of 20 is much more prevalent among Indigenous women than non-Indigenous women (Boulet & Badet, 2017).¹³

Table 6: Percentage of internships at each age range

Age Range	Percentage of Internships
15 to 19	18%
20 to 24	41.6%
25 and over	40.3%
n=2,291	

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

“As we were recruiting and meeting individuals —overwhelmingly female—we heard, “I quit high school and went to work immediately. I had kids, and now I’m 32 and I want to actually learn.””

– Sponsor

As a comparison, other YESS initiatives that are open to non-Indigenous youth, such as ESDC’s Canada Summer Jobs and ESDC’s YESS Program, see a greater proportion of participants aged 15 to 19 (41% and 25%, respectively) and a lesser proportion aged 25 and over (15% and 31%, respectively) (ESDC, 2023b).¹⁴

¹² This was calculated using the intern’s birth date and the last day of the internship’s fiscal year (March 31). The age represents the intern’s age on this date.

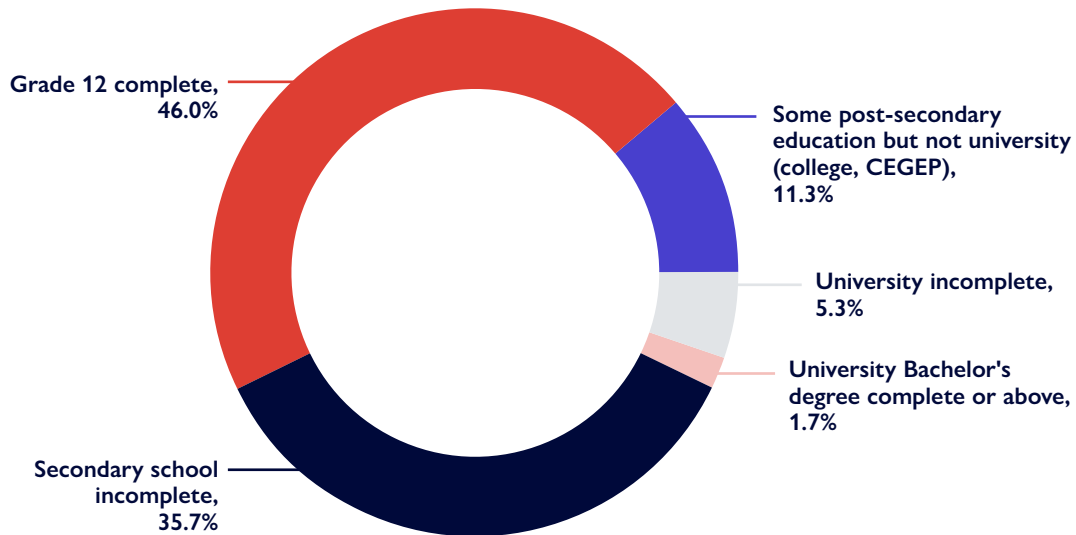
¹³ Based on a study released in 2017, with data from the 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey. The study shows that among Indigenous women aged 20 to 44, 45% of Inuit women, 28% of First Nations women living off-reserve, and 20% of Métis women became mothers before the age of 20. In contrast, this rate is 6% for non-Indigenous women.

¹⁴ Based on the mid-cycle assessment of the Youth Employment and Skills Strategy, covering June 2019 to December 2022 for Canada Summer Jobs, and April 2020 to December 2022 for the YESS Program.

Education

Most interns (81.7%) have a **high school education or less** (n=2,274). Figure 9 shows the breakdown of educational attainment.

Figure 9: Educational attainment of internship participants



The education levels of those who participated in the HIY are **aligned with the Census 2021 on Indigenous youth** aged 15–29, where 77.5% have a high school education or less (Statistics Canada, 2022e).



Persons with disabilities

Most internships are not occupied by those identifying as a person with a disability, with only 2.9% of interns (of total n=1,282) noting this on their application.¹⁵ However, this is likely underreported at the time of application, as post-internship surveys from a sample of interns¹⁶ and Statistics Canada data indicates this is higher (Statistics Canada, 2024a).



Language minority

Less than 5% of internships go to youth that are members of official language minorities (total n=1,271; data available for FY 2021-2022 to FY 2023-2024 only).¹⁷ Almost all official language minorities are in Quebec.

Data from 2021 shows that 93% of Inuit in Nunavut can converse in English (Fernandes et al., 2024). However, one instance was noted in interviews, where the sponsor noted that the youth they hired primarily spoke Inuktitut, while the foremen on construction sites only spoke English or French, which hindered communication and engagement.

¹⁵ Data available for FY 2021-2022 to FY 2023-2024 only.

¹⁶ n=110. In 2023-2024, respondents noted the types of disability they had; the most prevalent were mental health-related disability, invisible/non-apparent disability, learning disability, and neurodivergence.

¹⁷ Official language minorities are used to describe a preferred official language of English if in Quebec, or of French if outside of Quebec.

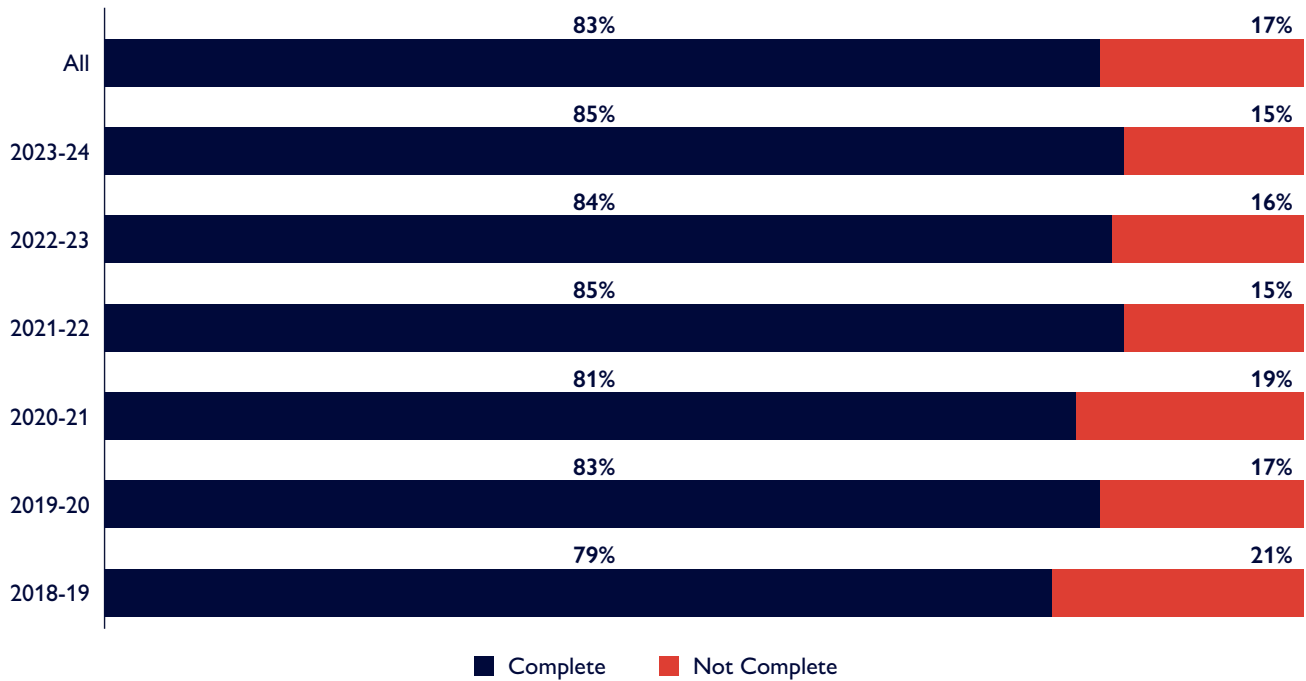
FINDING 4:

Most HIY internships are completed in full. While incomplete internships still represent participation in and benefiting from the intervention, they also highlight some challenges faced by interns and sponsors.

Most interns complete their internship in full.

83% of interns complete their internship (of n=2,021). This is relatively consistent year by year (see figure 10).

Figure 10: Internship completion rate, by fiscal year



An “incomplete” internship represents an early termination of the internship. As a comparison, Innovation Science and Economic Development’s Computer for Schools Intern program (another YESS program), saw a 26.3% incomplete rate (ISED, 2023).¹⁸

Incomplete internships still represent participation in and benefiting from the intervention, as noted by the following statistics:

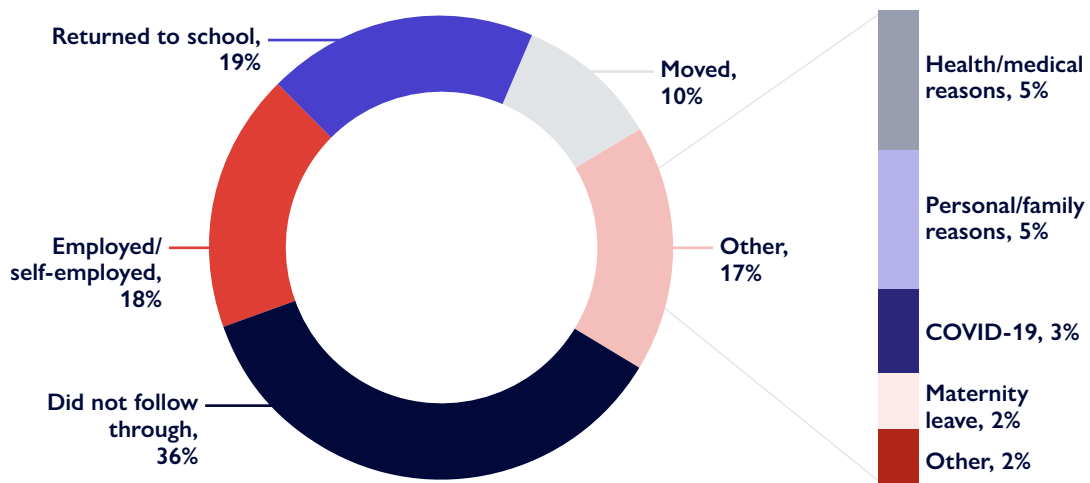
- 83.2% of incomplete internships **meet the minimum 8-week period** of HIY internships.
- On average, **incomplete internships run for 22 weeks** (about 10 weeks shorter than complete internships, at 31.8 weeks).

¹⁸ Based on the 2023 Evaluation of Computers for Schools Plus (CFS+) and Computer for Schools Intern (CFSI) programs. The CFSI had 440 interns drop out over the evaluation period, of the 1,674 hired youth interns. This program was one of the only ones within the YESS program that discussed completion/incompletion in the evaluation. See ISED (2023): <https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/audits-evaluations/en/evaluation/evaluation-computers-schools-plus-cfs-and-computer-schools-intern-cfsi-programs>

Quitting, termination, school, and other employment are common reasons for incomplete internships.

Of those who did not complete the internship, common reasons were due to **not following through** (that is, early termination by sponsor or due to the intern quitting), returning to **school**, finding **other employment**, or **moving** (see figure 11). A sample of internship outcome forms show that attendance issues or absenteeism was a reason for some sponsors to terminate an intern. The “other” category demonstrates common personal reasons, as well as the impact of COVID-19 (see below for more details).

Figure 11: Reasons for incomplete internships



Sponsor employers sometimes face challenges with interns’ substance abuse and mental health issues.

Furthermore, some sponsors described that **substance use, mental health and trauma were challenges that accompanied some Indigenous youth into their internships** and the workplace. Some interviewed sponsors experienced violence in the workplace resulting from intern’s substance use or had interns that were homeless. However, they acknowledged their role in supporting interns through these challenges and in developing “soft” employment skills (for example, communication, problem solving) by having systems in place to help youth understand acceptable workplace behaviour. Program staff have received feedback from Indigenous communities that the acronym is insensitive to substance use issues.

“For us, we try to have a good system in place so that when challenges come up, we can keep and retain those youth. You know, it’s something that is sometimes beyond our control.”

– Sponsor

A note on COVID-19:

The evaluation’s scope period included the COVID-19 pandemic. Interviewed sponsors with interns during the pandemic reported having to **cope with added pressure** and ensure compliance with pandemic measures.

- A few sponsors noted that youth lost out on opportunities for **construction-related experiences** because of restricted access to rural/remote communities, and building projects were ceased or limited. This reflects the data, where COVID-19 was the reason for 17.5% of incomplete internships in FY 2020-2021.
- Some sponsors provided **remote work experiences** for their interns and felt this was beneficial for their organization and for the interns, despite having to manage the transition to a different model of work.

FINDING 5:

The internship duration and wage constrain the impact, experience, and responsiveness of the HIY, but there are trade-offs to consider.

There is a preference for longer internships to better respond to the labour environment and priorities, and to provide a better internship experience.

The average duration of internships over the whole evaluation period is **29 weeks**. Table 7 shows that year over year, this has increased to over 35 weeks in FY 2023-2024.

Sponsors highlight that the length of internships may **constrain the program’s ability to fully respond to labour market demands and the priorities** of Indigenous communities:

- Longer internships were noted as helpful to overcoming **challenges that arise with recruiting** for temporary positions and to **reducing costs** associated with onboarding.
- It takes time to build relationships, onboard interns, and help them acclimate to their roles.

Table 7: Average internship duration in weeks, by fiscal year

Fiscal Year	Average Number of Weeks
2018-2019	26.1
2019-2020	25.5
2020-2021	27.0
2021-2022	28.1
2022-2023	35.1
2023-2024	35.8
All	29.3
	<i>n=1,821</i>

Intern feedback corroborates this preference: two-year internships were identified by some interviewees as offering a better overall experience. In addition, 39% of respondents to the 2023-2024 Intern Survey indicated that an ideal internship duration would be 52 weeks or more. However, an intern noted flexibility in duration was important to accommodate youth in various circumstances.

Internship data suggests a correlation between longer internships and positive outcomes. Interns with new or strengthened skills, those who completed their internships, and those who secured employment or returned to school all had longer average durations.¹⁹ Internships can be **up to two years**, with the approval of year two subject to funding. As per data from the sponsor, most (94.2%) internships are not intended to be two years.²⁰ Lack of funding and the intern’s pursuit of other opportunities are some reasons an intern is not considered for a second year.²¹

¹⁹ Interns who demonstrated new or strengthened job-related skills or soft skills had a longer average internship duration (32.8 weeks) compared to those who did not (21 weeks and 24.3 weeks, respectively). Completed internships were about 10 weeks longer than incomplete internships (31.8 weeks vs. 22 weeks). Furthermore, interns who completed their internship and found employment or returned to school/training had an average internship length of 34 weeks, while those who completed their internship, but was making career decisions, searching for employment, or not employed had a slightly shorter duration of 30 weeks.

²⁰ Available for FY 2021-2022 to FY 2023-2024 only.

²¹ Based on content analysis of open-ended responses, from sponsor-provided data. Lack of funding: 37.5%, n=15. Intern pursuit of another job/school/training: 20%, n=8.

The average hourly wage of internships across the evaluation period was \$15.30, which is above the minimum wage.

Table 8: Average hourly wage, by year

Fiscal Year	Average Wage
2018-2019	\$14.37
2019-2020	\$14.89
2020-2021	\$15.87
2021-2022	\$14.43
2022-2023	\$18.87
2023-2024	\$16.93
Total	\$15.30
	<i>n=662</i>

The wage subsidy provided by the HIY must be **at least the province’s or territory’s minimum wage**. Sponsors indicate their desired wage in the application; because funding is allocated at the regional level, each region then decides how much can be provided by sponsors based on the available budget.

Table 8 showcases the average internship wage by year.²² Please note this is based on limited available wage data (especially for later years); only Manitoba and Saskatchewan data was available for FY 2020-2021 for this evaluation.

Figure 12 shows that, on average, **trades-related internships earn statistically significantly more** than office-based internships.^{23,24} Other significant differences include the higher wage in **URN areas** (compared to in Indigenous communities)²⁵ and marginal significance for **Inuit interns** (compared to First Nation interns).²⁶ Nunavut and the Northwest Territories have had a higher minimum wage than the rest of Canada, a higher cost of living, and thus, a need to be competitive with other internship opportunities. These factors likely explain why Inuit youth earn higher average wages (Government of Canada, 2024).

Comparing the provincial or territorial minimum wage to the HIY internship wage at the time shows that **on average, internship wages are around \$3.17 higher than the minimum wage** of that time. This was highest in FY 2022-2023, where the difference was an average of \$5.61 higher than the minimum wage. Annex D details the minimum wage and this analysis.

²² Note that this wage analysis removed any cases where the wage offered was lower than minimum wage (of the province or territory at the time. See annex D for this calculation). This was due to an assumption of data entry error or data limitations, as program guidelines require an internship wage of at least minimum wage.

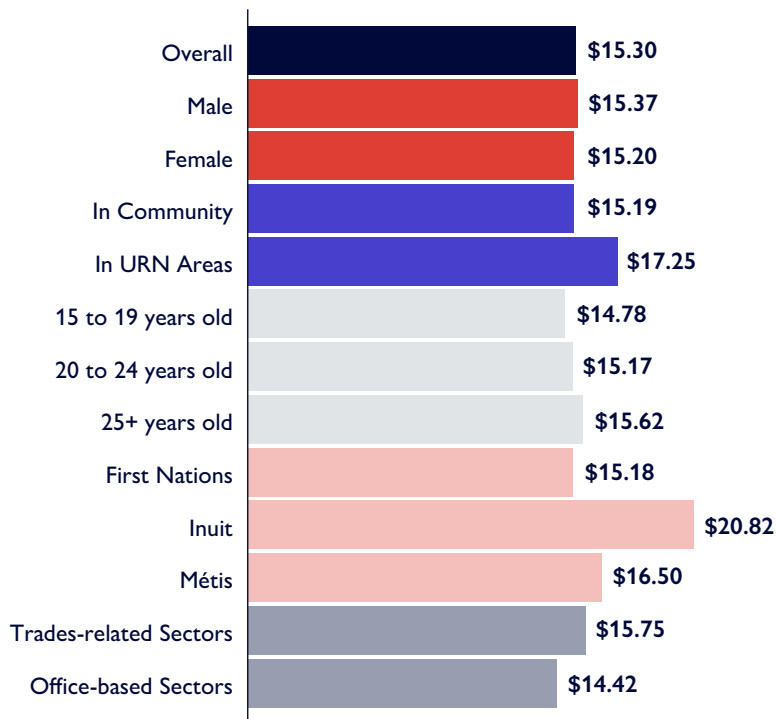
²³ Because of the multiple select option for the areas/sectors of internships, this average wage only includes internships that are **exclusively trades-related or exclusively office-based**. It does not include wages for internships that are both trades-related and office-based.

²⁴ Statistical significance was tested using an independent t-test, where equal variances were assumed (as Levene’s test of equal variance showed insignificantly different variances in means at $p < 0.05$). This tested the difference in wage between **office-based and trades-related internships**, $t(342) = -3.507, p < 0.01$.

²⁵ Statistical significance was tested using an independent t-test, where equal variances were **not** assumed (as Levene’s test of equal variance showed significantly different variances in means at $p < 0.05$). This tested the difference in wage between internships **in community and in URN areas**, $t(35.587) = -2.362, p < 0.01$.

²⁶ Statistical significance was tested using the Games-Howell post hoc test, where equal variances were **not** assumed (as Levene’s test of equal variance showed significantly different variances in means at $p < 0.05$). This tested the difference in mean wages between **Inuit and First Nations**, and indicated a marginally significant difference, $p = 0.051$. While the difference does not meet the conventional threshold of $p < 0.05$, it suggests a possible trend. The marginal significance is likely due to the small sample size of Inuit and uneven group sizes between Inuit and First Nation.

Figure 12: Average hourly wage, by gender, age, Indigenous identity, location, sector



Sponsors note that the wage is insufficient for the cost of living.

Some interviewed sponsors discussed that the HIY wage subsidy:

1. is **insufficient to allow for competitive wages**, especially due to increased cost of living, which makes it difficult for interns to make ends meet on around minimum wage; and
2. limits **the sponsor’s ability to attract interns with ideal qualifications** for the internship position. Indigenous partners recommended that the internship’s wage should match the community’s cost of living.

As discussed in Finding 3, 40% of HIY participants are 25 years old or older, and Indigenous youth tend to think seriously about careers later. Indigenous partners and a sponsor noted that interns sometimes have families to support and, thus, the wage offered needs to align with the expectations and living needs of older youth sufficiently. Data from the application portal shows that most funding comes from the HIY exclusively, rather than from the sponsor or other sources.



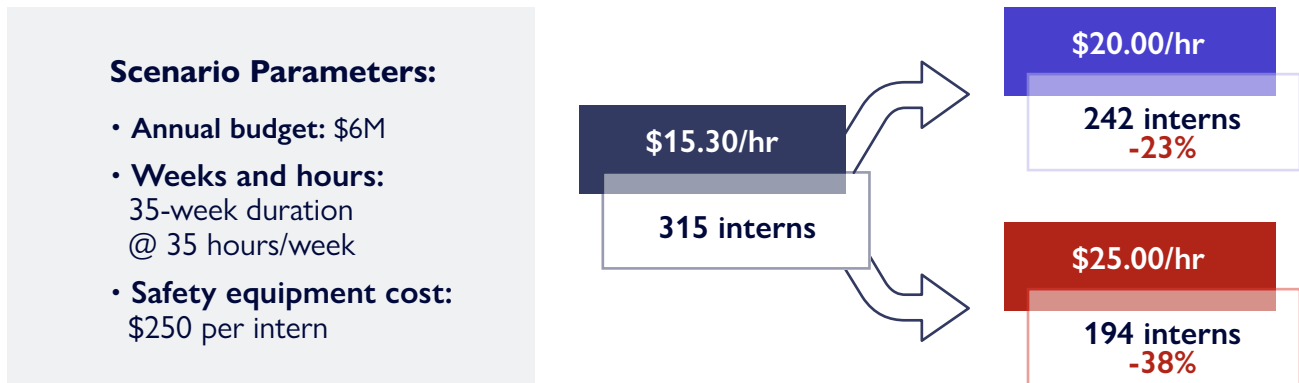
The **cost of living for Indigenous peoples varies by region, remoteness, and circumstances.**

In Inuit Nunangat, costs of living are higher than in other parts of Canada (Statistics Canada, 2025). For many remote Indigenous communities, underdeveloped infrastructure and distance makes delivering goods more difficult, and thereby, more expensive (Chernoff & Cheung, 2023). Food costs can be much higher for Indigenous communities, compared to their urban counterparts (Robitaille et al., 2018; Veeraraghavan et al., 2016).

There are trade-offs between supporting more HIYY interns and providing higher wages and/or longer internships.

These challenges around internship duration and wage are not unique to the HIYY and have been reported in evaluations of other YESS programs (ESDC, 2020; ISED, 2023). Given limited funding, there are trade-offs to consider. **Higher wages and longer internships mean fewer funded internships** with the same amount of funding. For example, the hypothetical scenario below where the hourly wage is increased from \$15.30 to \$20 and \$25 shows that the total number of interns funded **decreases by 23% at \$20 and 38% at \$25**. Depending on the annual funding and internship targets set, there may be opportunities to increase wages while ensuring internship targets are met.

Figure 13: Hypothetical scenario of wage increase



FINDING 6:

HIY contributes to the development of soft skills and hard skills, by offering coaching, mentorship, and training.

As part of ESDC’s Youth Employment and Skills Strategy, the HIY has program outcomes tied to youth attaining skills that help them find and maintain employment (or return to school).

Literature notes that **early intervention skills training is fundamental to preparing Indigenous youth** for the changing labour market and equipping them with the tools needed for economic self-sufficiency (Handouyahia et al., 2022; National Indigenous Economic Development Board [IEDB], 2019). Incorporating training on soft skills into educational and employment programs can also significantly improve the employability prospects of Indigenous youth (Jewell et al., 2020).

- **Almost all interviewed sponsor employers and interns said that the HIY positively contributed to the development of hard and soft skills.**

Hard skills included	Soft skills included
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ computer skills ◦ managing funds ◦ other hard housing-related skills, such as construction, maintenance, how to use tools ◦ tenant relations ◦ grant writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ communication ◦ problem-solving ◦ teamwork ◦ time management

- This reflects program data, which found that **94% of internships** demonstrated new or strengthened **job-related skills**, and **93%** demonstrated new or strengthened **soft skills**.²⁷
- Post-internship surveys from FY 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 showed increased confidence in various skills. In both years, at least **80% of survey respondents who completed their internship noted more confidence**²⁸ **in all skills**, compared to the beginning of the program. Skills surveyed included: communication, collaboration/teamwork, problem-solving, technical skills, career navigation/job-seeking skills, critical thinking, and adaptability.

“I learned how [housing] is run and how they manage it in my community. There’s a lot of bad housing, like mould and things like that...they have a process for this that I didn’t know about.”

– Intern

²⁷ Data available for FY 2021-2022 to FY 2023-2024 only. Job-related skills had a total n of 1,166. Soft skills had a total n of 1,165.

²⁸ Due to slight differences in survey response options, this is defined as “I feel more confident” and “I feel much more confident” for the 2022-2023 survey, and as “fairly confident” and “completely confident” for the 2023-2024 survey. Critical thinking was asked only in the 2022-2023 survey. Adaptability was asked only in the 2023-2024 survey.

HIY internships provided training, mentorship, coaching, and other interventions and supports at varying levels.

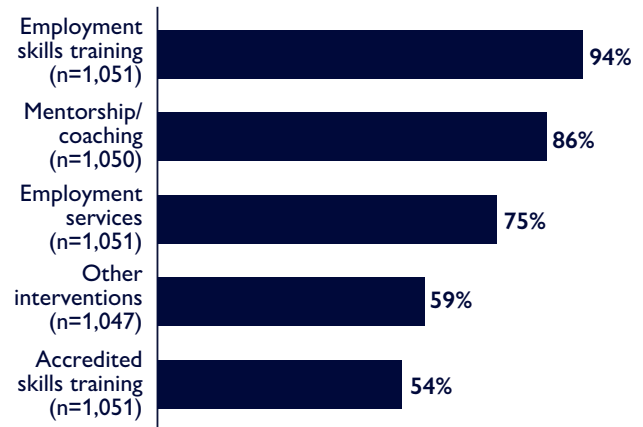
The post-internship youth surveys asked if interns received enough training to do their job effectively. While 72% said yes in FY 2021-2022, this increased to 94% in FY 2022-2023.²⁹ From interviews, around half of interviewed interns reported that they received on-the-job training and mentorship from their sponsor organizations, including self-led training.

- **On-the-job training and mentorship** were described as supervisors showing them how to complete tasks, being available to answer questions, and helping to understand operations;
- **Self-led experiences** were described as interns having the opportunity to apply their existing skills, participate in training from third-party course providers (for example, non-violent crisis intervention training, first aid), and self-directed learning related to social media management and computer software skills.

Figure 14 displays the rates of other trainings and internships offered per internship, based on outcome data (available for FY 2021-2022 to FY 2023-2024 only).

- **Employment skills training** refers to any technical or soft skills training, and interview or resumé writing skills.
- **Employment services** refer to any arrangements from the sponsor to help the intern search for longer-term employment, such as career or job fairs, referral services, etc.
- **Other interventions** refer to supports and services (for example, mental health supports, transportation subsidies, work equipment/clothing stipends, housing supports, childcare, addiction or disability supports, flexible work schedules and/or work from home). As Finding 1 discusses, Indigenous youth face barriers to employment, which these supports can help alleviate.
- **Accredited skills training** refers to any training involving licensing and certification (that are funded by the sponsor).

Figure 14: Percentage of internships offering services, supports, and training (FY 2021-2022 to FY 2023-2024 only)



The high rates of skills developed during HIY are explained by the high rates of **employment skills training** provided (including technical/hard, soft, or job-seeking skills training), as figure 14 shows. Some less frequent offerings, such as **accredited skills training and other interventions (such as supports)** echo interviewees' suggestions for enhancing the internship experience, including:

- offering a suite of orientation or training modules to help interns enter the workforce;
- fund additional training, conference attendances, and other opportunities; and
- ensure interns receive the tools and supports needed to succeed, such as a laptop, service subscriptions, and wrap-around employment supports (child care, transportation).

Through partnership with the First Nations Housing Professionals Association (FNHPA), interested HIY interns, with support from their sponsors, can also take the first 12-week online course in the First Nations Housing Professionals Program.³⁰ Minimum requirements for this course include being at least 18 years old, with 6 months housing experience or 1 year of college or university experience.

²⁹ In 2022-2023, the question was broadened to "training, mentorship, or coaching".

³⁰ See FNHPA (n.d.-a) for more information: https://fnhpa.ca/Housing_Internship_for_Indigenous_Youth_HIY_NEW.html

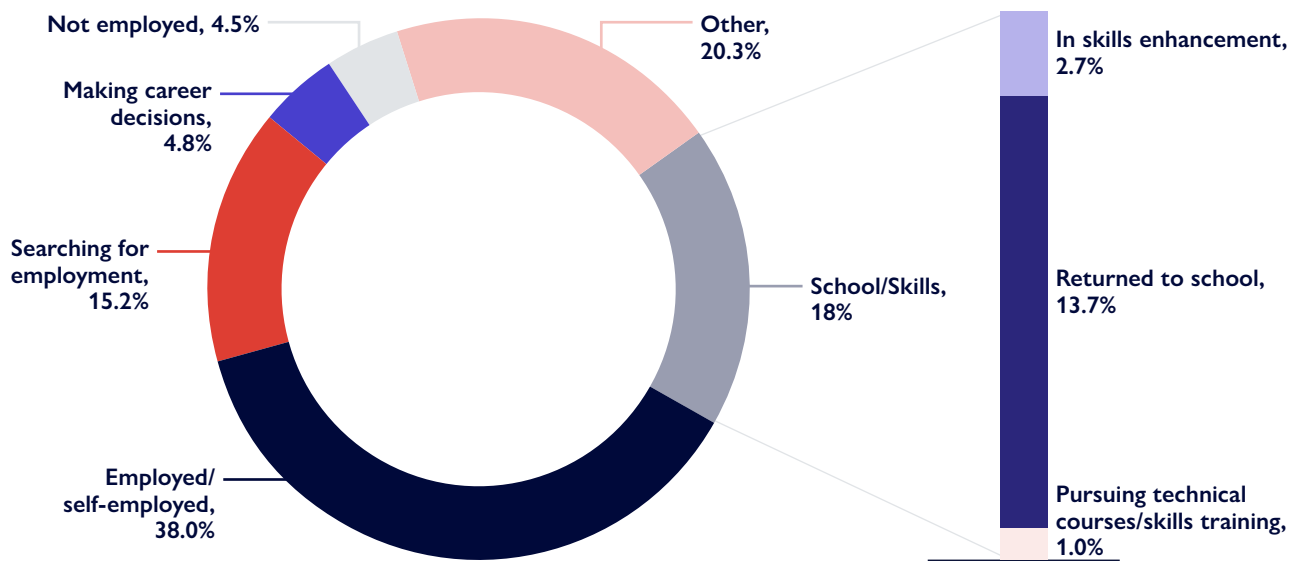
FINDING 7:

HIY supports employment outcomes and career advancement. More than half of the interns who completed the internship are employed or in school.

Intern participants show positive internship outcomes following the internship.

Figure 15 displays the internship results immediately following the internship, showing that of the interns who fully completed the internship (n=1,428), more than half (55.4%) are employed (38%), in further skills training (3.7%), or in school (13.7%).

Figure 15: Initial results of completed internships



These results are not exclusive to those who completed internships. As discussed in Finding 4, a reason some interns did not complete their internship was **because of other employment opportunities or returning to school**. There are also a few disaggregations to note.

- **Indigenous identity:** a larger proportion of **Inuit youth are employed/self-employed** (62.1% of Inuit participants) after the internship, but they are less likely to have returned to school (6.1%).
- **In Indigenous community** (reserves, settlements, MTSGIG, and Inuit Nunangat):
 - Internships in land-based communities are **less likely to have participants returning to school** (10.1% of internships, compared to 35.5% of internships in URN areas).

- Internships located **in community** are much **more likely to have participants searching for employment, not employed, or making career decisions** (compared to internships in URN areas). However, there is not much difference in the employment results.
- This reflects the literature, which point to a **trend of a lack of socio-economic opportunities and insufficient training opportunities in Indigenous communities** (Expert Panel on Youth Employment, 2017; NIEDB, 2019; Skudra et al., 2020). Furthermore, the 2022-2023 post-internship survey shows that the program influenced around 69% of respondents on their decision to return to school (of total n=36).

Interviews with interns and sponsors and the post-internship surveys note that at least some interns have **continued employment within the organization** after their internship.

Interns note career clarity and advancement because of the internship.

All the interviewed interns reported career advancement. Data from internship outcome forms³¹ shows that 93% of sponsors (n=86) noted that the **internship improved the likelihood of further employment** for that intern. When surveyed, interns noted that the program helped them clarify:

- the sector or industry they wish (or do not wish) to work in (74%);
- the type of work they wish (or do not wish) to do (84%); and
- the characteristics they are looking for in an ideal role or employer (89%).³²

Most surveyed interns indicated their **internship motivated them or encouraged them to pursue a longer-term career in housing**.³³ Interns and staff noted **networking opportunities** with the housing industry as a way to enhance this. While the motivation to stay in the housing sector is promising for building capacity in Indigenous housing, all sponsors agreed that the internship was **valuable for youth regardless of whether they stayed employed in the housing sector**. Finding 8 will discuss the benefits of the internship from the perspective of the organizations.

“The internship gave me the opportunity to not have a graduate degree to become a policy analyst.”

– Intern

Many internships are rated as very successful by employers.

Figure 16 illustrates that **most internships (78%) were considered very successful**, as rated by the sponsor organization (n=986).³⁴ Most of the 4% of internships rated as “not at all successful” are incomplete internships due to not following through or being terminated by the sponsor.

Figure 16: Internship success, as rated by sponsors



³¹ Available for FY2021-2022 to FY 2023-2024 only.

³² Based on the 2022-2023 post-internship survey, n=19.

³³ From the 2021-2022, 2022-2023, and 2023-2024 post-internship survey.
 2021-2022 (n=16): 62% selected either “Strongly Agree” or “Agree” that the knowledge and training they gained during the internship motivated them to pursue a longer-term career in housing.
 2022-2023 (n=19): 69% selected either “Strongly Agree” or “Agree” that the knowledge and training they gained during the internship motivated them to pursue a longer-term career in housing.
 2023-2024 (n=23): 91% selected either “Very Encouraging” or “Somewhat Encouraging” that the internship encouraged them to pursue a long-term career in housing.

³⁴ Due to available data, most (87%) of the 986 internship success data points came from the first three years of the evaluation period (FY2018-2019 to FY 2020-2021).

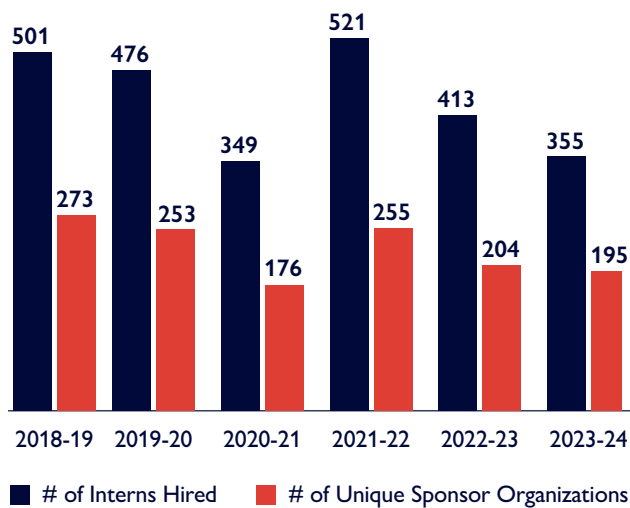
FINDING 8:

HIY builds capacity in the Indigenous housing sector by developing the workforce and investing in communities.

A total of 544 unique organizations participated in HIY as sponsors. Most sponsor organizations are First Nation governments.

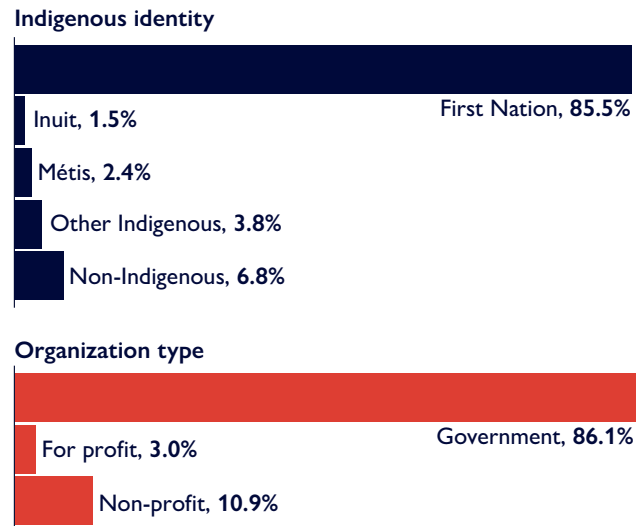
HIY sponsor organizations are varied, particularly with the expansion of the program that enabled more organizations to be eligible, including non-Indigenous organizations. In total, there were **544 unique organizations** that hired 2,615 interns between 2018-2019 and 2023-2024 (based on available data). Figure 17 breaks this down by fiscal year.

Figure 17: Number of unique sponsor organizations and interns hired, by fiscal year



Most sponsors (83.1%) were **First Nation governments (including First Nations, tribal councils, MTSGIGs)**.³⁵ This reflects the historic eligibility of the program, as under HIIFNIY. Figure 18 shows this information by distinction and organization type. This reflects earlier findings around the Indigenous identity of interns and the location of internships (see Finding 3).

Figure 18: Sponsor’s Indigenous identity and organization type, unique sponsors only, FY 2021-2022 to FY 2023-2024 (n=338)



HIY benefits organizations and Indigenous communities by developing the workforce, providing support and capacity, and promoting community relations.

The goals of the HIY, as part of YESS, are focused on enabling youth to acquire skills, experiences, and opportunities needed to find and maintain employment (or return to or remain in school). However, with the focus on housing sector opportunities and the large proportion of Indigenous government sponsors, the program also serves to build housing capacity within Indigenous communities.

Sponsor organizations (n=83) identified **four key themes** on how and where internships benefited organizations (figure 19). These themes align with interviews, where the HIY was described as providing opportunities for sponsor organizations and Indigenous communities to invest in both people and housing, thus allowing HIY funding to be used strategically to align with housing projects.

³⁵ Out of the 338 unique sponsor organizations between FY 2021-2022 and FY 2023-2024, as organization type data was only available for these years.

“[The HIY] was targeted at Indigenous youth, so it was a good fit for our Indigenous housing organization. Having this funding for extra manpower is always important, especially for unfunded organizations.”

– Sponsor

Figure 19: Key themes on the benefits of internships to sponsor organizations

1. Skilled Staff and Workforce Development

- Funding from HIY allowed sponsor organizations to hire staff that they would not otherwise have had the budget for. As a result, youth who lived in the community were hired, providing skill development and mentorship particularly across trades such as carpentry and plumbing.
- Having the ability to hire and foster skill development among youth meant increasing the number of skilled staff to retain in the community and increased knowledge of the housing sector.

2. Community Support and Engagement

- HIY enabled interns to deepen their connections to the community, bridging generational gaps and offering support to elders. Overall, sponsor organizations felt that the internships strengthened community relations, which served to strengthen operations and priorities.

3. Program Development and Capacity Building

- Internships helped improve organizational capacity. This allowed sponsors to improve the efficiency of program and service delivery, expand existing services, introduce new services, and re-direct base funding to improve housing conditions for tenants.

4. General Administrative and Operational Support

- The HIY provided general operational assistance with day-to-day functions of an organization, such as office and administrative tasks, client relations, rent collection, unit repairs, and new housing construction.



Findings: Efficiency

FINDING 9:

Sponsors and interns generally have a positive impression of the HIY and find the application and reporting process straightforward.

Most sponsors and interns recommend the program, though isolated feedback highlighted the importance of a safe and respectful workplace.

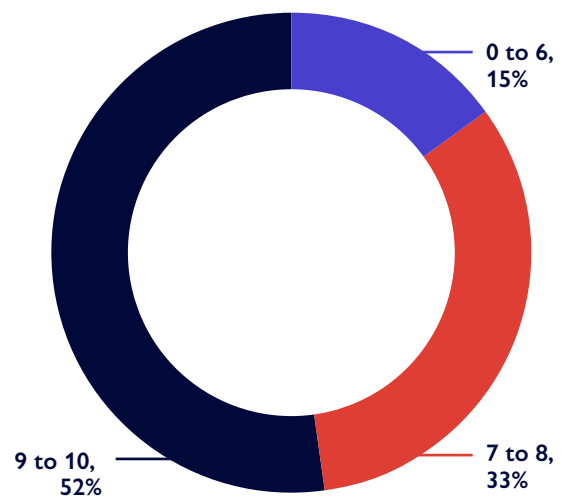
All interviewed **sponsors** said they would recommend or strongly recommend the program to other organizations. Most rated this as 10 on a scale of 1 to 10.

Most **interns' experience of HIY is positive**. Figure 20 shows the breakdown in interns' scores from the post-internship survey (across the last three years) and in interviews, when asked how likely they are to recommend the HIY program (n=67).

While the experience was generally positive and recommended, there were two instances where interns **did not** describe having a safe and respectful environment:

- One interviewed intern noted the environment was disrespectful, with many “backhanded comments,” intentional delays, and favouritism from their supervisor and other employees.
- One person in the 2021-2022 survey responded “no” when asked if they had a safe and respectful work environment that was free of harassment, abuse, and discrimination.³⁶

Figure 20: Intern survey and interview responses to: “On a scale of 1 to 10, how likely are you to recommend HIY?”



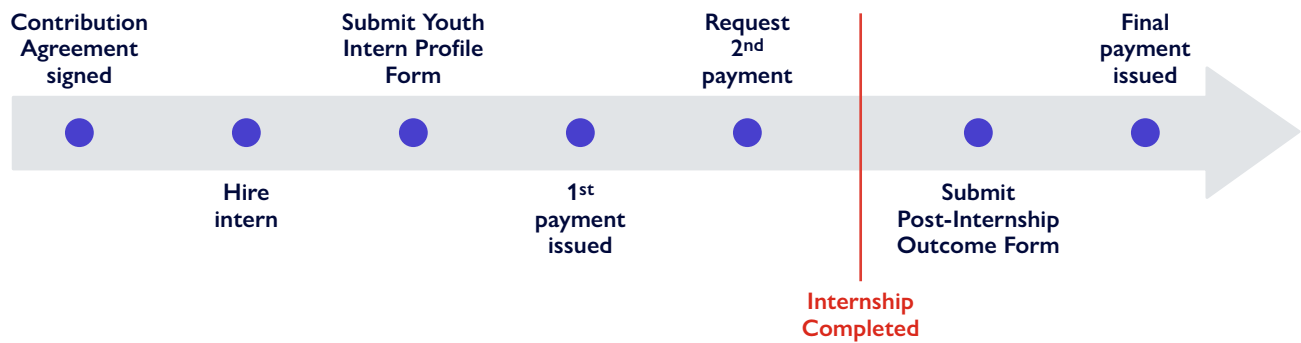
While isolated, these incidences are often under-reported. One internship suggestion was to **make CMHC known to interns and check in** with each intern to ensure the internship is running as expected. Currently, the interns only work with the sponsors and are not in touch with CMHC.

³⁶ In the following year, the 2022-2023 post-internship survey, 100% of respondents agreed that the work environment was safe, respectful, and free of harassment, abuse, and discrimination.

The process for the HIY is clear and well received by clients, with suggestions for the funding cycle to be improved.

In interviews, almost all sponsors described the **application and reporting process as easy and straightforward**. Starting in 2021-2022, the HIY launched an **online application** through CMHC's Housing Portal. Interviewed sponsors noted that the online system was easy to navigate, and the reporting requirements were not onerous. Figure 21 below summarizes the process for clients.

Figure 21: Post-approval process for sponsors



The figure shows that submitting **reporting requirements to CMHC** (that is, intern profile and internship outcome forms) occur **at defined stages and automatically triggers the issuance of payments**. This helps ensure sponsor organizations will provide necessary information, while avoiding too many information requests.

That said, sponsor organizations suggested **rolling applications or open applications** to be more responsive to interested youth, and **multi-year funding** of increased value. They also suggested more notice for funding to better align the funding to internal budgets and planning processes.



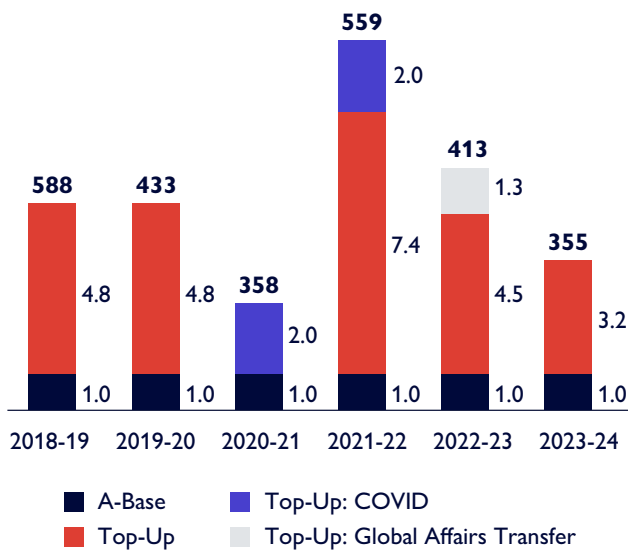
FINDING 10:

Top-up funding for HIY has enabled the program to increase reach and impact.

Top-up funding comprised most of HIY’s budget.

Throughout the period covered by this evaluation, the HIY program has received incremental top-up funding that exceeds its A-base funding³⁷ of \$1 million per year. Top-up funding comprised most of HIY’s budget. Figure 22 shows this **top-up funding represents 83% of the HIY’s budgeted funding** during this period (not including administrative costs). In other words, top-up funding has increased funding by 499%.

Figure 22: HIY budgeted funding (in \$ millions) and number of funded interns by year, not including administrative costs



The HIY had greater impact with this increased funding.

From interviews and program data and documentation, it is evident the top-up funding **helped increase the HIY’s reach by funding more intern positions to meet the program’s demand.** It also allowed for

innovative investments and partnerships to enhance the internships, such as training and partnerships through the First Nations Housing Professionals Association.

However, top-up funding has posed challenges for program administration.

While staff appreciated the additional funding, interviews also highlighted challenges stemming from the top-up funding’s **short notice and unpredictable nature** — notably, the **limited availability of additional resources** to manage the increased workload to meet condensed timelines created a burden. The actual administrative cost surpassed the budgeted administrative cost within the evaluation’s scope.³⁸ With this, the CMHC staff were constrained in their ability to proactively plan and conduct outreach and promotion activities ahead of the application cycle.

- Staff also hypothesized that the intended expansion of the HIY program to Métis and urban Indigenous communities may have **been tempered by the smaller amount of A-base funding** and the resource burden from the short notice of top-up funding. This limited proactive engagement with these groups. As discussed in Finding 3, there has been limited uptake of HIY internships by Métis youth.

CMHC staff and sponsor organizations shared their desire for more **long-term, stable and predictable funding** to:

- better plan and develop more meaningful internships;
- offer higher salaries, longer internships;
- enable more networking opportunities for interns;
- form more innovative partnerships; and
- provide greater access to wrap-around supports for interns (for example, transportation, child care).

Staff noted that a return to relying solely on the regular A-base funding of \$1 million per year would be difficult as it would result in greater competition for funding among the distinctions and communities.

³⁷ A-base funding refers to permanent and on-going funding received by CMHC to conduct its program activities and does not sunset.

³⁸ Financial data was available for FY 2021-2022 to FY 2023-2024 only. For these three years, the budgeted administrative cost was \$1.315M, whereas the actual administrative cost was \$1.938M

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The Housing Internship for Indigenous Youth program seeks to provide financial assistance through a wage subsidy for organizations and businesses in the housing sector to hire Indigenous youth. This evaluation examined the relevance, coherence, effectiveness and impact, and efficiency of the program between April 1, 2018, and March 31, 2024 (FY 2018-2019 to FY 2023-2024), and found the following:

- There is a **continuing need for the HIY**, due to the need for employment opportunities for Indigenous youth and the need to support housing capacity building in Indigenous communities.
- Overall, the HIY **demonstrates effectiveness** in providing Indigenous youth with access to programs that allow them to acquire skills, experiences, and opportunities needed to find and maintain employment or return to (or remain in) school. During the period examined by the evaluation, HIY supported over 2,500 internships in the areas of housing construction, renovation, maintenance, repairs, administration, management, and finance. It has contributed to the development of soft skills and hard skills, and supported employment/schooling outcomes and career advancement.
- The program change from HIIFNIY to HIY in 2021-2022 expanded the eligibility to all Indigenous interns and non-Indigenous and Métis sponsor organizations (employers). Although the program's top-up funding resulted in increased reach and impact overall, the uptake from Métis interns, communities, and sponsor organizations has been limited.
- Overall, the HIY is positively received and recommended, although there is a preference for longer internships and a higher wage offered, which would increase the program's impact and responsiveness. While most internships are completed in full, sponsor organizations have also noted substance abuse issues, mental health challenges, and absenteeism.

- Beyond the benefits to the intern, the program also supports Indigenous housing capacity and benefits sponsor organizations and Indigenous communities in developing a skilled workforce, strengthening community relations, and providing operational support and capacity. Sponsor organizations find the application and reporting process straightforward.

Based on these findings, the evaluation proposes four recommendations.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Change the program name.

The acronym of HIY is **insensitive to communities that face substance abuse issues** (in its homonym with "high"). As Finding 4 discusses, substance abuse and related issues were present in internships and a challenge that some sponsor organizations had to deal with. **Changing the program name so that the program acronym is appropriate and sensitive is a direct solution** to this.

Recommendation 2: Implement an equity framework to encourage more equitable program participation.

The evaluation found that gender parity has improved since the last evaluation, but still employs almost two male participants for every female participant. Greater gender parity would involve increasing women's participation in HIY.

The evaluation also found that Métis youth are underrepresented among HIY interns. Until FY 2021-2022's program change, Métis youth were ineligible to participate in the program. While uptake has been low, there is less severity of need, as their labour statistics are comparable to the non-Indigenous population.

An equity framework would provide a more structured approach for the program to foster greater representation and inclusion across diverse demographic groups in the program, as needed and appropriate, such as regarding Indigenous distinctions (for Métis), gender (for women), disabilities, or other factors. Options include setting appropriate targets for representation considering the level of need, offering support for underrepresented groups, diversifying sponsor organizations, and/or addressing systemic barriers. It could also tie into annual reporting needs to the Youth Employment and Skills Strategy. At the same time, it would be important to **balance the actions of this recommendation with ensuring that the HIY does not pose unnecessary limits and constraints on sponsor employers and Indigenous communities**, particularly in the spirit of autonomy and flexibility.

Recommendation 3: Consider ways to increase the meaningfulness of internship opportunities.

The challenges noted throughout the evaluation represent a trade-off between supporting **many interns** each year and supporting **more meaningful internships** (to mitigate challenges and enhance the experience through longer internship durations, higher wages, greater supports and services, training, and networking opportunities, etc.). While HIY has contributed to skills and career advancement, there are variations in each internship's offerings of supports, interventions, and various types of trainings.

Future efforts should aim to balance the goal of supporting the targeted number of interns (particularly to address the continued need to support Indigenous youth employment and Indigenous housing capacity), with the need to enhance the depth and value of individual internships.

Options include: securing additional funding sources by **expanding the ISC partnership to other regions**, **offering consistent opportunities at the program-level** to save costs (for example, networking opportunities or general skills/computer skills training), or **furthering partnerships** (such as with FNHPA or other organizations that have prioritized housing skill development). It would be important to ensure flexibility remains for sponsors and interns, to meet their needs and unique situations.

Recommendation 4: Update the program guidelines to reflect the new program.

During the document review informing this evaluation, the evaluation team found that **program operational guidelines and policies were outdated and still reflected the HIIFNIY program instead of the HIY program** (which came into effect in FY 2021-2022). As a result, this evaluation recommends updating these guidelines to reflect the changes to HIY (such as expanded eligibility for sponsors and interns) and any other changes, including from this evaluation's other recommendations.

Annex A: Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation utilized multiple lines of evidence to triangulate and verify findings. At the time of the evaluation's planning, the scope was limited to FY 2018-2019 to FY 2022-2023. However, this was **later revised to include FY 2023-2024 to include more up-to-date data**. Data collection included the following activities:

Literature and documentation review

Background and program documentation was reviewed (around 40 documents), including policy documents, procedures, and CMHC research. Key external literature was also reviewed, including academic and grey literature, and data from CMHC, Statistics Canada, and other organizations.

Administrative data review

Program data was analyzed to examine several outcomes related to the evaluation questions, including intern demographics, internship information, and some outcomes (n=2,615). The data fields differ, and some data was only collected from FY 2021-2022 onward. Due to blank or missing data, the *n* is included for clarity throughout the report. Financial data was also reviewed to inform the analysis.

Post-internship youth survey

A survey was sent to interns by the program team after the internship for FY 2021-2022 to FY 2023-2024. A total of 110 respondents responded to the three surveys (25 in FY 2021-2022; 43 in FY 2022-2023; and 42 in FY 2023-2024). The evaluation used the survey results to understand the internship experience and results.

Key informant interviews

The evaluation team conducted in-depth interviews to gain insights from a wide variety of stakeholders (see table 9). The sample of sponsor organizations and interns came from FY 2018-2019 to FY 2022-2023 only. To encourage participation, an honorarium of \$50.00 was provided to intern interviewees.

Table 9: Number of key informant interviews by stakeholder type and Indigenous distinction

Stakeholder Type/ Indigenous Distinction	Number of Interviews	Number of Participants
CMHC staff	4	6
Sponsor organizations (employers)	12	12
First Nation	1	1
Inuit	4	4
Métis	2	2
Urban Indigenous	3	3
Non-Indigenous	2	2
Past HIY interns	7	7
First Nation	4	4
Inuit	1	1
Métis	2	2
Indigenous partners	1	2
Total	24	27

Annex B: Other Indigenous Youth and Housing Capacity Building Programs

Program Name	Organization	Geography	Only Eligible to Youth	Eligible Indigenous Identities	Paid Work?	Housing Related?	Description
Indigenous Skills and Employment Training Program	ESDC (2023a)	National	N	All	N	N	Funds Indigenous organizations providing job training (employment) services to Indigenous communities
First Nations and Inuit Youth Employment Strategy	ISC (2021)	National	Y (age 15–30)	First Nation and Inuit	Y	N	Funds initiatives aimed at providing First Nations and Inuit Youth with work experience and employment skills development
Indigenous Youth Employment Program	Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House (n.d.)	Vancouver	Y (16–29)	All	Y		Paid program, with workshops and practicum placement
Indigenous Youth Internship	BC Public Service (n.d.)	British Columbia	Y (19–29)	All	Y	N	One-year internship, through placements with the public sector and Indigenous organizations
Collective Impact for Inclusive Youth Employment	Centre for Employment Innovation (St. Francis Xavier University, n.d.)	Nova Scotia	Y (18–34)	All	Y	N	Provides eligible organizations with wage subsidies to hire Indigenous youth
Métis Youth Program	Métis Nation of Ontario (2023)	Ontario	Y (15–30)	Métis	Y	N	Paid work experience through internship
IndigiTECH	Indigenous Friends Association (2021)	National	N	All	Y	N	Training program (for technology skill-building), followed by paid internship with a leading tech company
Qikiqtani Skills and Training for Employment Partnership Program	Qikiqtani Inuit Association (2023) & Baffinland Iron Mines Corporation	Qikiqtani Region	N, but focus on youth (18–30)	Inuit	Unsure	N	Training program for mining-related industry
Apprenticeship Housing Maintainer Program	Aurora College (n.d.)	Northern	N		N	Y	Apprenticeship program (classroom and on-the-job training to become a journeyperson)
First Nations Housing Professional Certification	First Nations Housing Professionals Association (n.d.-b)	National	N	First Nation	N	Y	Certification Program
Housing Management Program	Native Education & Training College (2023)				N	Y	Diploma program
Indigenous Skills Training Program	CMHC (2023)	National, on-reserve		First Nation	N	Y	Supports partner-led activities to enhance skills and capacity development

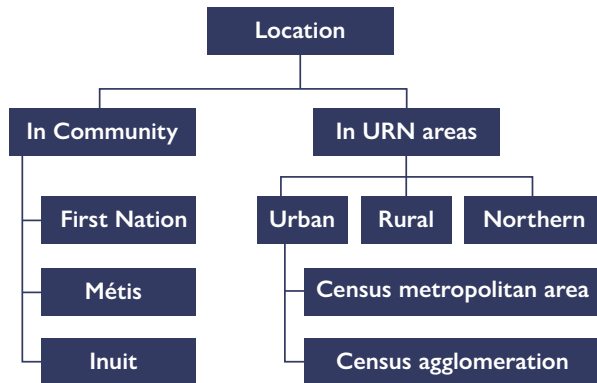
Annex C: Urban, Rural, Northern and In-Community Location Analysis

The locations of HIY internships can be categorized in two ways:

1. on-reserve, in settlements, in MTSGIG areas and inside Inuit Nunangat
2. off-reserve, out of settlement, away from MTSGIG areas and outside of Inuit Nunangat

For the purpose of this analysis, the former is referred to as “in community” (as these are formal land-based Indigenous communities), while the latter is known as in “urban rural northern” (URN) areas. The differences and breakdowns are illustrated in figure 23 and table 10.

Figure 23: In community and urban, rural, northern



To determine the location of internships, the sponsor **organization** and **organizational postal code** was used. Table 11 details the methodology for each of these categories.

Table 10: Details on internships in community and in URN areas

Category	Count	Percentage of Total
In Community	2,337	89.5%
First Nation	1	1
First Nation	2,151	82.4%
Inuit	185	7.1%
Métis	1	0.0%
Urban, Rural, Northern	274	10.5%
Urban	213	8.2%
CMA	183	7.0%
CA	30	1.2%
Rural	45	1.7%
Northern	16	0.6%

Table 11: Methodology for determining each community and URN location category

Category	Method
First Nations communities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Statistics Canada’s Postal Code Conversion File (PCCF) 2021 Census (released December 2022) lists multiple characteristics associated with Canadian postal codes.³⁹ Sponsor organization postal codes were used to match with PCCF and determine if they were on-reserve, based on if the census subdivision type was associated with on-reserve areas (Statistics Canada, 2022a). 2. Sponsor organizations were a First Nation (with First Nation Code). 3. Postal codes and/or sponsor employers were listed under one of the Indigenous governments listed for tax administration agreements (Canada Revenue Agency, 2025). <p>*Note that tribal councils and First Nation associations were considered on-reserve if the postal code was determined to be on-reserve (through PCCF data). If not, they were part of URN.</p>
Inuit Nunangat territory	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If the internship was listed in the territory of Nunavut. 2. Postal codes were listed under the open government dataset on Inuit community locations (ISC, 2022). 3. Organizations were associated with any of the four Inuit Nunangat regions of Inuvialuit, Nunavut, Nunavik, or Nunatsiavut.
Métis settlements	The sponsor organizations were one of the eight listed Alberta Métis Settlements (Government of Alberta, n.d.).
Northern	The location was in the territories , but not in First Nation communities, Inuit Nunangat territory, or Métis settlements.
Urban	The sponsor organization’s postal code matches PCCF postal codes where the Statistical Area Classification type was a census metropolitan area (population of 100,000+) or a tracted or non-tracted census agglomeration (population of 10,000+).
Rural	The location is not in First Nation communities, Inuit Nunangat territory, or Métis settlements, not in a CMA or CA, and outside of the territories.

³⁹ Downloaded from the University of Toronto Libraries (n.d.): <https://mdl.library.utoronto.ca/collections/numeric-data/census-canada/postal-code-conversion-file/2021>

Annex D: Provincial and Territorial Minimum Wage

Table 12 outlines the minimum wage as of the start of the fiscal year for each year covered by the evaluation period, for each province or territory.⁴⁰ For example, for FY 2018-2019, the minimum wage is considered to be the wage as of April 1st, 2018.

Table 12: Minimum wage, by province or territory and fiscal year

	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
AB	\$13.60	\$15.00	\$15.00	\$15.00	\$15.00	\$15.00
BC	\$11.35	\$12.65	\$13.85	\$14.60	\$15.20	\$15.65
MB	\$11.15	\$11.35	\$11.65	\$11.90	\$11.95	\$13.50
NB	\$11.25	\$11.50	\$11.70	\$11.75	\$12.75	\$14.75
NL	\$11.15	\$11.40	\$11.65	\$12.50	\$13.20	\$14.50
NS	\$11.00	\$11.55	\$12.55	\$12.95	\$13.35	\$14.50
NT	\$13.46	\$13.46	\$13.46	\$13.46	\$15.20	\$15.20
NU	\$13.00	\$13.00	\$16.00	\$16.00	\$16.00	\$16.00
ON	\$14.00	\$14.00	\$14.00	\$14.25	\$15.00	\$15.50
PE	\$11.55	\$12.25	\$12.85	\$13.00	\$13.70	\$14.50
QC	\$11.25	\$12.00	\$12.50	\$13.10	\$13.50	\$14.25
SK	\$10.96	\$11.06	\$11.32	\$11.45	\$11.81	\$13.00
YT	\$11.51	\$12.71	\$13.71	\$13.85	\$15.70	\$16.77

This information is used to calculate the difference between the internship wage and the minimum wage (of that province/territory and that fiscal year). Table 13 presents this difference. Note that the analysis removed any cases where the wage offered was lower than minimum wage (affecting 7.2% of cases, or n=51). This was due to an assumption of data entry error or data limitations, as program guidelines require an internship wage of at least minimum wage.

Table 13: Difference between HIY wage and minimum wage, by fiscal year

Average Difference from Minimum Wage	
2018-2019	\$2.78
2019-2020	\$2.99
2020-2021	\$3.61
2021-2022	\$2.63
2022-2023	\$5.61
2023-2024	\$2.34
All	\$3.17
	n=662

⁴⁰ This information was retrieved from Government of Canada (2024): <https://minwage-salairemin.service.canada.ca/en/since1965.html>.

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Alternative text and data for figures

Figure 1: Labour force status by Indigenous and non-Indigenous identity (ages 15-29), 2021

	Participation Rate	Employment Rate	Unemployment Rate
First Nations	51%	39%	24%
Métis	69%	57%	18%
Inuit	52%	40%	23%
Non-Indigenous	70%	59%	16%

Figure 2: Labour force status for First Nations youth (ages 15 – 29) on- and off-reserve, 2021

	Participation Rate	Employment Rate	Unemployment Rate
Off-Reserve	70%	59%	16%
On-Reserve	38%	29%	24%

Figure 3: Proportion of Indigenous (by distinction) and non-Indigenous youth (ages 15-29) by highest level of educational attainment, 2021

	No Certificate, Diploma or Degree	High School Diploma or Equivalency Certificate	Post-Secondary Certificate, Diploma or Degree
First Nations	43%	37%	20%
Inuit	57%	30%	13%
Métis	31%	41%	28%
Non-Indigenous	22%	35%	43%

Figure 4: HIY internships and budgeted funding, by province (FY 2018-2019 to FY 2023-2024)

	Budgeted funding	Number of internships
Territories:	\$3.7M	
YT		22
NT		30
NU		144
BC	\$5M	449
AB	\$5M	230
SK	\$4.7M	310
MB	\$5.1M	457
ON	\$5.7M	465
QC	\$3M	277
Atlantic:	\$2.5M	
NL		33
PE		18
NS		66
NB		114

Figure 5: HIY Internships, inside and outside urban, rural, northern (URN) areas

	Location of Internships
On-reserve, in settlements, MTSGIG areas, Inuit Nunangat	90%
In URN areas:	10%
Urban	8%
Rural	2%
Northern	1%

Figure 7: Indigenous identity of HIY participants since program change, compared to the Indigenous population

	HIY (FY 2021-2022 to FY 2023-2024)	Census 2021
First Nation	92%	58%
Métis	2%	34%
Inuit	6%	4%

Figure 8: Gender of internship participants

	% of internships
Male	63.8%
Female	35.5%

Figure 9: Educational attainment of internship participants

	Educational Attainment
Secondary school incomplete	35.7%
Grade 12 complete	46.0%
Some post-secondary education but not university (college, CEGEP)	11.3%
University incomplete	5.3%
University Bachelor's degree complete or above	1.7%

Figure 10: Internship completion rate, by fiscal year

	Complete	Not Complete
2018-19	79%	21%
2019-20	83%	17%
2020-21	81%	19%
2021-22	85%	15%
2022-23	84%	16%
2023-24	85%	15%
All	83%	17%

Figure 11: Reasons for incomplete internships

	Reason for non-completion
Did not follow through	36%
Employed/self-employed	18%
Returned to school	19%
Moved	10%
Other:	17%
Health/medical reasons	5%
Personal/family reasons	5%
COVID-19	3%
Maternity leave	2%
Other	2%

Figure 12: Average hourly wage, by gender, age, Indigenous identity, location, sector

	Average Wage
Overall	\$15.30
Male	\$15.37
Female	\$15.20
In Community	\$15.19
In URN Areas	\$17.25
15 to 19 years old	\$14.78
20 to 24 years old	\$15.17
25+ years old	\$15.62
First Nations	\$15.18
Inuit	\$20.82
Métis	\$16.50
Trades-related Sectors	\$15.75
Office-based Sectors	\$14.42

Figure 14: Percentage of internships offering services, supports, and training (FY 2021-2022 to FY 2023-2024 only)

	Percentage of internships
Accredited skills training (n=1,051)	54%
Other interventions (n=1,047)	59%
Employment services (n=1,051)	75%
Mentorship/coaching (n=1,050)	86%
Employment skills training (n=1,051)	94%

Figure 15: Initial results of completed internships

	Percentage of Complete Internships
Employed/self-employed	38.0%
School/Skills:	18.0%
In skills enhancement	2.7%
Returned to school	13.7%
Pursuing technical courses/skills training	1.0%
Searching for employment	15.2%
Making career decisions	4.8%
Not employed	4.5%
Other	20.3%

Figure 16: Internship success, as rated by sponsors

	Not at all successful	Somewhat successful	Very successful
Proportion of internships	4%	18%	78%

Figure 17: Number of unique sponsor organizations and interns hired, by fiscal year

	# of Interns Hired	# of Unique Sponsor Organizations
2018-19	501	273
2019-20	476	253
2020-21	349	176
2021-22	521	255
2022-23	413	204
2023-24	355	195

Figure 18: Sponsor’s Indigenous identity and organization type, unique sponsors only, FY 2021-2022 to FY 2023-2024 (n=338)

	Percentage
Indigenous identity	
First Nation	85.5%
Inuit	1.5%
Métis	2.4%
Other Indigenous	3.8%
Non-Indigenous	6.8%
Organization type	
Government	86.1%
For profit	3.0%
Non-profit	10.9%

Figure 20: Intern survey and interview responses to: “On a scale of 1 to 10, how likely are you to recommend HIY?”

	Percentage of Respondents
0 to 6	15%
7 to 8	33%
9 to 10	52%

Figure 22: HIY budgeted funding (in \$ millions) and number of funded interns by year, not including administrative costs

	A-Base	Top-Up	Top-Up: COVID	Top-Up: Global Affairs Transfer	# of Interns
2018-19	\$1M	\$4.8M			\$588M
2019-20	\$1M	\$4.8M			\$443M
2020-21	\$1M		\$2M		\$358M
2021-22	\$1M	\$7.35M	\$2M		\$559M
2022-23	\$1M	\$4.485M		\$1.3M	\$413M
2023-24	\$1M	\$3.195M			\$355M