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The
EQUITY ↔ EXCELLENCE
TRADE-OFF

A study of EDI in the Canada Research Chairs Program

September 2026



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Contents

Executive summary /sommaire.....	4
Introduction.....	8
Race and gender discrimination in Canadian academic hiring.....	13
The hidden cost of scholar activism in the social sciences and humanities.....	35
Conclusion.....	43
About the authors	45
References	46
Endnotes.....	52

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Executive summary | *sommaire*

Is diversity truly our strength? Does equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) improve excellence?

Since 2017, the prestigious Canada Research Chairs (CRC) program, which sets the agenda for Canadian academic research, has moved dramatically in the direction of implementing EDI ideology and quotas.

Regrettably, prioritizing EDI results in an “equity-excellence trade-off”: Canadian taxpayers are funding cultural socialist activism among elite professionals at the expense of the disinterested pursuit of truth.

And, Canadian research is paying a high cost for its this unfettered embrace of EDI, both through the non-meritorious appointment of less qualified Black, Indigenous, and female chairs, and by diverting millions of dollars to left-wing scholar-activist research.

According to our analysis — the first of its kind — EDI ideology is costing approximately \$36 million per year, equivalent to a 12 per cent “tax” on the CRC’s \$300 million annual budget.

While previous studies have examined demographic differences and the effects of EDI on organizational and team performance, none has examined its organizational-level consequences in academic research. This study fills that gap by testing EDI’s impact on research output in the CRC holders program from 2016 to 2025. It turns out, diversity is not merely neutral — it can *actually lower performance*.

To determine the scope of the EDI problem, we measured all award holders listed on the CRC site using the industry standard publication metric, the h-index, which combines both the number of articles a scholar has written or co-written with the number of times those articles have been cited by other researchers.

Our analysis reveals that EDI has actively weakened Canadian research and reduced overall academic performance at Canadian universities. Specifically, we find that:

- The average h-index of publication impact for Black or Indigenous chairs is 18, for female chairs is 28, and for White or Asian males is 38.
- The proportion of chairs who are White males declined from approximately 80 per cent in 2000 to around 25 per cent in 2025.

- EDI hiring resulted in lost productivity equivalent to 10 to 15 per cent per “equity-deserving” (female, Black, Indigenous) Canada Research Chair between 2016 to 2025.

We also found that EDI language is pervasive throughout the descriptions for CRC positions, albeit with differentiation from agency to agency. Notably:

- EDI content throughout all CRC appointee descriptions has doubled since 2016.
- EDI is ubiquitous in descriptions for SSHRC (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council) research chairs. The average SSHRC Canada Research Chair used two EDI research terms in their research description.
- SSHRC chairs are 17 times more likely to describe their work using social justice activist terms than CIHR (Canadian Institutes of Health Research) or NSERC (Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council) chairs. Black or Indigenous chairs are four times more likely to do so than White or Asian chairs.
- Across the wider tri-council agencies, EDI in the form of hiring discrimination and scholar-activist content costs the government an estimated \$100 million per annum.

EDI in American federal grants peaked in 2021 and collapsed after 2024, but kept on rising in Canada, reaching record-setting levels by 2025.

EDI initiatives in Canadian research impair excellence and discriminate against Whites, men, conservatives, and classical liberals. Ending such initiatives should be a top priority for any responsible government. This could be accomplished by proactively terminating scholar-activist grants as well as by eliminating diversity targets, statements, and advertising at the research councils.

The EDI ethos is politically toxic, racially and sexually discriminatory, and a waste of scarce public resources. The legitimacy of Canada’s government-funded research base cannot be taken for granted. It hinges on federal research councils returning to their prior focus on the disinterested pursuit of truth.

The goal for the social sciences and humanities must be to study the most pressing social problems for all Canadians, not just those occupying the leftmost end of the political spectrum. [MLI](#)

La diversité constitue-t-elle notre atout ? L’équité, la diversité et l’inclusion (ÉDI) contribuent-elles à l’atteinte de l’excellence ?

Depuis 2017, le renommé Programme des chaires de recherche du Canada (CRC), qui établit les orientations de la recherche universitaire, a pris un virage radical en faveur de l’idéologie et des quotas en matière d’ÉDI.

Malheureusement, l’ÉDI pose un « compromis entre équité et excellence » : les contribuables canadiens financent l’activisme socialiste culturel d’une élite de professionnels, au détriment de la quête désintéressée de la vérité.

Et, la recherche canadienne paie le prix fort pour cette adhésion sans réserve. Cela se voit tant par la désignation, sans normes de sélection, de titulaires aux qualifications moindres issus de la communauté noire ou autochtone et de femmes, que par le détournement de millions de dollars vers les travaux des universitaires de gauche.

Selon notre analyse — la première du genre —, l'idéologie de l'ÉDI coûte environ 36 millions de dollars par année, ce qui équivaut à une « taxe » de 12 % sur le budget annuel de 300 millions de dollars du CRC.

Bien que des études antérieures aient analysé les disparités démographiques et les effets de l'ÉDI sur les performances des organisations et des équipes, aucune n'a exploré ses répercussions organisationnelles sur la recherche universitaire. La présente étude comble cette lacune en évaluant son impact sur la production scientifique dans le cadre du programme des titulaires de bourses des CRC entre 2016 et 2025. Il apparaît que la diversité n'est pas simplement neutre : elle peut en réalité réduire les performances.

*Dans le but d'évaluer cet enjeu, nous avons calculé l'indicateur de publication de référence, soit l'indice *h*, pour l'ensemble des titulaires de bourses répertoriés sur le site des CRC. Cet indice intègre à la fois le nombre d'articles rédigés ou corédigés par un chercheur et cités par ses pairs.*

Notre analyse révèle que l'ÉDI a notoirement compromis la recherche au Canada et réduit les performances académiques globales de ses universités. Nous observons plus précisément que :

- L'indice *h* moyen s'élève à 18 pour les personnes issues de la communauté noire ou autochtone, à 28 pour les femmes et à 38 pour les hommes blancs ou asiatiques.*
- La représentation des hommes blancs parmi les titulaires de chaire a considérablement diminué, passant d'environ 80 % en 2000 à 25 % en 2025.*
- L'ÉDI dans les pratiques d'embauche a entraîné une baisse de productivité de 10 à 15 % par chaire de recherche « intégrant l'équité » (femme ou, encore, personne noire ou autochtone) entre 2016 et 2025.*

La terminologie liée à l'ÉDI est omniprésente dans les descriptions des postes de chaire de recherche du Canada, malgré les écarts entre organismes. On constate notamment ce qui suit :

- Sa fréquence a doublé dans l'ensemble des postes depuis 2016.*
- Elle est omniprésente dans les descriptions de postes du Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines. En moyenne, chaque titulaire d'une chaire de recherche reprenait deux termes liés à l'ÉDI dans la description de ses travaux.*
- Les titulaires de chaire du Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines sont 17 fois plus susceptibles de décrire leurs travaux en reprenant des termes militants que les titulaires de chaire des instituts de recherche en santé du*

Canada ou du Conseil de recherches en sciences naturelles et en génie. Les titulaires de chaire issus de la communauté noire ou autochtone sont quatre fois plus susceptibles d'agir de même que les titulaires blancs ou asiatiques.

- *À l'échelle des trois grands organismes subventionnaires, l'ÉDI coûte au gouvernement, par le biais des avantages préférentiels à l'embauche et du contenu « universitaire-militant », environ 100 millions de dollars annuellement.*

Les subventions fédérales américaines ont atteint leur sommet en 2021 avant de s'effondrer après 2024. Elles ont continué d'augmenter au Canada, atteignant des niveaux records dès 2025.

L'ÉDI dans la recherche au Canada nuit à l'excellence et constitue une discrimination à l'encontre des Blancs, des hommes, des conservateurs et des libéraux classiques. Y mettre fin devrait être une priorité absolue de tout gouvernement responsable. Cela pourrait se faire en éliminant de manière proactive les subventions accordées aux universitaires militants, ainsi que les objectifs, les déclarations et la publicité en matière de diversité au sein des conseils de recherche.

La philosophie de l'ÉDI est politiquement toxique et discriminatoire, et elle gaspille les ressources déjà limitées de l'État. La légitimité de la recherche financée par le gouvernement canadien ne saurait être considérée comme acquise. Elle est conditionnelle à la restauration de l'objectif principal des conseils de recherche fédéraux, soit la recherche désintéressée de la vérité.

L'objectif des sciences sociales et humaines devrait consister à analyser les problématiques sociales les plus urgentes pour l'ensemble des Canadiennes et Canadiens, et non pas uniquement pour celles et ceux qui se situent à l'extrême gauche du spectre politique. [MLI](#)

Introduction

The Canada Research Chairs Program

Canada's federal research funding councils are responsible for allocating funds to nominated federal research professorships, also known as Canada Research Chairs (CRCs). These professorships are highly sought-after. The federal government established the CRC program in 2000 to help Canadian universities attract and retain talent. The program is jointly administered through Canada's three federal "tri-council" granting agencies: the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). The tri-council agencies collectively administer approximately \$4.5 billion annually in research funding (2026–27 Main Estimates), of which the Canada Research Chairs (CRC) program accounts for roughly \$300 million. While CRCs comprise only a small share of total federal research spending, they occupy an influential position within Canada's research system because they influence recruitment, enhance prestige, and shape institutional priorities (Snow 2025).¹

CRCs are not awarded on the basis of individual scholars applying directly to Ottawa. Rather, they are allocated to universities according to a formula based largely on the amount of tri-council funding each institution already receives. Research-intensive universities therefore receive the largest number of chairs. Universities then conduct searches and nominate candidates internally, after which the federal CRC Secretariat reviews and approves the nominations.

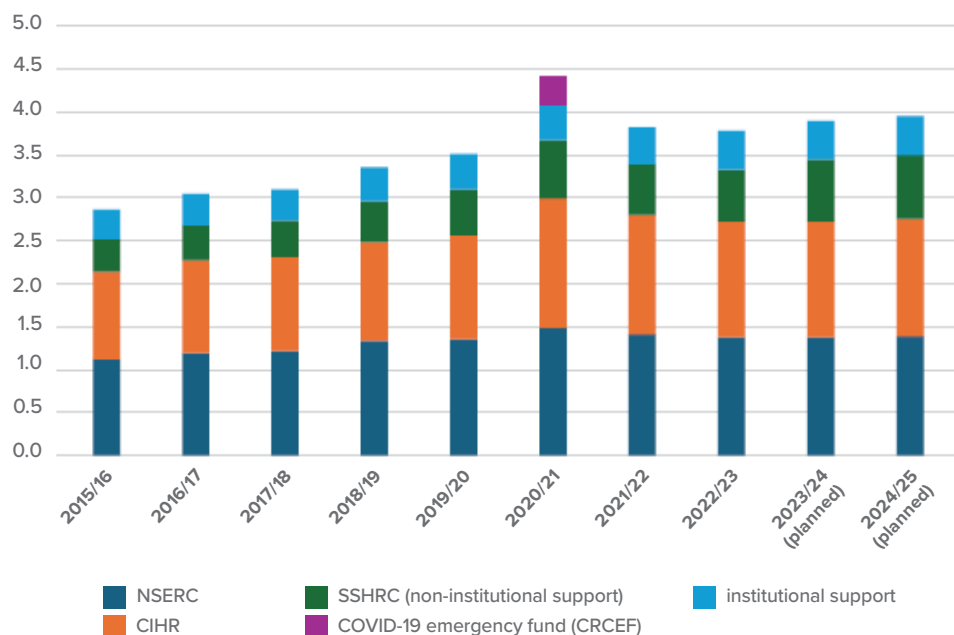
The program is divided into two tiers. Tier 1 Chairs are intended for internationally recognized senior scholars with established records of research leadership. They are worth approximately \$200,000 annually for seven years and are renewable. Tier 2 Chairs are aimed at emerging or mid-career

scholars who have shown they have great potential for garnering international recognition. These Chairs come with about \$100,000 in funding annually for five years and are renewable once. Tier 1 Chairs therefore function as elite prestige appointments, while Tier 2 Chairs are more developmental and often used to recruit rising academics.

CRCs are extremely important within Canadian academia because they also bring prestige, research infrastructure, graduate students, and institutional status. Chair holders often receive reduced teaching loads, enhanced laboratory or research support, and priority access to institutional resources.

The \$4.5 billion a year in research funding that the tri-councils spend is divided up amongst grants, institutional support, and administering these. **Figure 1** shows the distribution of total spending between the natural sciences/engineering/math, medical/health, and social sciences/humanities research councils. As political science associate professor Dave Snow has previously shown, growth in the social sciences and humanities (SSHRC) budget has been more rapid than for health (CIHR) and science (NSERC). The SSHRC budget doubled from \$380 million in 2014–15 to \$785 million in 2024–25 (Snow 2025, 16).

FIGURE 1: Tri-agency funding (in \$ billions)



Source: (Snow 2025, 16).

The EDI ethos of the Canada Research Chairs program

Among its other influences, the CRC program strongly shapes research priorities. Because chair allocations depend partly on prior success in obtaining tri-council funding, universities have an incentive to build strength in fields favoured by federal granting agencies. As well, since the late 2010s, EDI requirements have become integrated into CRC recruitment and oversight, making the program a central mechanism through which federal diversity policy has influenced Canadian university hiring and research governance.

The expansion of EDI within Canada's federal research system accelerated significantly after the late 2010s, resulting in EDI principles becoming increasingly embedded into grant allocation, hiring, training, and evaluation processes at all levels. Some of the most consequential changes occurred in the CRC program, which became the focal point for federal EDI reforms after lobbying from within and beyond the higher education sector.

The immediate trigger for this expansion was a long-running Canadian Human Rights Tribunal challenge against the CRC program. Beginning in the mid-2000s, several academics — supported by the left-leaning Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) — argued that the CRC program systematically underrepresented four federally designated employment equity groups: women, visible minorities, Indigenous peoples, and persons with disabilities. A complaint by eight female academics, first filed in 2003, led to a settlement agreement in 2006 requiring universities to collect demographic data, monitor representation, and undertake more active recruitment of members of the four federally designated employment equity groups (Canadian Human Rights Commission 2012).

A second complaint, brought to the tribunal by University of Ottawa professor Amir Attaran in 2017, argued that progress had been insufficient. Attaran alleged that racial discrimination by the university was the reason he was not nominated as a Tier I chair upon completing his Tier II chair. Alongside this claim, Attaran complained to the Canadian Human Rights Commission that the federal body administering CRCs had failed to enforce the existing equity requirements against universities, thereby permitting continued underrepresentation of women, minorities, Indigenous people and people with disabilities.

While the tribunal did not find the University of Ottawa or the tri-councils guilty, the CRC bent over backwards to mollify the plaintiffs.

In 2017, the federal government reached a settlement agreement with complainants before the tribunal process concluded. Under the settlement, universities were required to meet explicit representation targets for the four designated groups within their CRC allocations. Institutions that failed to comply could lose chair positions or face restrictions on future allocations. The federal government followed this up by introducing the *CRC Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan* in 2018, strengthened it in 2019 with an addendum that established progressively higher representation targets, and further enhanced it in 2021 with a settlement that introduced stronger enforcement mechanisms. These included restrictions on who could be nominated as well as threatening institutions that failed to meet their targets with losing their Chair allocations. Together, these measures transformed EDI from an aspirational objective into a binding governance framework for the CRC program (Tri-Agency Institutional Programs Secretariat 2017).

These changes took place alongside shifts in the broader political and cultural environment, notably the rise of the so-called “Great Awakening” after 2015 (Yglesias 2019). The Trudeau government, elected in 2015, strongly promoted EDI, both as a core aspect of its identity and in the practices of federal institutions. This emphasis aligned with a wider change in Canadian public administration toward “equity mainstreaming,” anti-racism initiatives, Indigenous reconciliation, and gender-based analysis. Research funding agencies increasingly argued that diversity was not merely a fairness issue but a component of research excellence itself.

As a result, in 2017, the federal government introduced sweeping reforms that required universities to meet demographic representation targets aligned with Canada’s Employment Equity categories. The tri-council agencies adopted broader EDI frameworks and integrated EDI considerations into grant adjudication, trainee programs, and institutional evaluations. Snow explains that race and sex quotas gain legitimacy from the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (which is part of the Canadian Constitution) and subsequent legislation that flows from its spirit: “The goal of Canada’s federal affirmative action policy, the *Employment Equity Act*, is to ‘correct the conditions of disadvantage in employment’ for women, visible minorities, persons with disabilities, and Indigenous peoples in a way that ‘requires special measures and the accommodation of differences experienced’

(s. 2). Section 15(2) of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* permits governments to engage in affirmative action for disadvantaged individuals or groups” (Snow 2025, 18).

Snow contends that activist EDI increasingly influenced funding priorities and even conceptions of research excellence itself. Meanwhile, targets shaped not only the selection processes but the language that prospective applicants were required to use in their applications. SSHRC introduced EDI requirements into doctoral scholarships, postdoctoral fellowships, and partnership grants, arguing that diversity enhances research quality and innovation. Snow’s work showed that EDI terminology, as measured in SSHRC grant titles, has surged since 2000. Activist terms such as “transphobia” (447 per cent growth), “Islamophobia” (667 per cent), “White supremacy” (828 per cent), and “hate speech” (1,894 per cent) grew fastest. Mentions of “diversity,” “equity,” and “inclusion” have also steadily risen within SSHRC grant titles. Snow found that of SSHRC’s major grants, 10 to 15 per cent of awards contained explicitly EDI activist language in their titles, reaching 63 per cent for particular grants programs. He adds that even CIHR encouraged research that is “anti-racist, anti-ableist, and anti-colonial in approach and impact,” thereby incorporating ideological commitments directly into definitions of excellence (Snow 2025, 23, 33–41).

Grants with titles such as the following show how SSHRC in particular supercharged scholar activism:

- *Discrimination, Ableism and Racism Hurt but Inclusion Can Heal: Listening to the Intersectional Lived Experiences of Youth with Disabilities and Co-Creating Solutions*
- *Racism and Systemic Discrimination Against Indigenous People in Quebec: Co-creation of Awareness Tools and (Re)appropriation of Urban Spaces*
- *Tackling Gender-Based Technology-Facilitated Violence and Abuse: Reimagining a Gender-Equitable World*
- *Our Roots in Activism: Finding Agency and Allyship in Histories of Anti-Racist Mobilizing in Canada*
- *Restorying Gender Through Community, Colonial, and Indigenous Archives”*

- *A Comprehensive Overview of Intersectional Marginalization in Physical Activity Among Equity Deserving Groups in Canada*
- *Dismantling White Supremacy Through Anti-Racist and Decolonial Pedagogies: Mapping Postsecondary Education's Capacity for Shifting Dynamics of Privilege and Marginalization* (Snow 2025, 43).

Beginning in 2018, the tri-council agencies adopted a *Tri-Agency Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan* (NSERC 2023), promoting institutional equity targets and specialized grants focused on marginalization, privilege, Indigenous knowledge, and social justice themes (NSERC 2022).

Race and gender discrimination in Canadian academic hiring

The new EDI initiative and the pro-affirmative action orientation of the Canadian constitution have led to the emergence of numerous nakedly discriminatory advertisements from Canada Research Chairs. On April 20, 2026, blogger Chris Brunet ignited a storm when he tweeted, “This week the only university in Newfoundland, @MemorialU, posted 5 tenured professor openings... Each job stipulates that no White men may apply.” The positions advertised were Tier 2 NSERC chairs, and the ad stipulated that “this competition is open only to applicants who... identify as members of one or more employment equity groups, including women; 2SLGBTQIA+ people; Indigenous peoples; racialized persons; and persons with disabilities as per approval by the Human Rights Commission pursuant to Section 8 of the *Human Rights Act*.” The story received widespread national and international coverage and condemnation (Brunet 2026a; Hopper 2026).

However, the Memorial post is only one of many CRC ads that ban White males from applying. Often the language in the ads is explicitly activist, as in the case of a Dalhousie CRC ad:

Dalhousie University ... is hiring a tenure-stream Assistant
Professor in Food Security and Sustainable Agriculture ...
This position is designated to candidates who self-identify

as members of one or more of the following groups: Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island (especially Mi'kmaq), persons of Black/African descent (especially African Nova Scotians), members of other racialized groups, persons with disabilities, women, and persons identifying as members of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. (Chris Brunet 2026b)

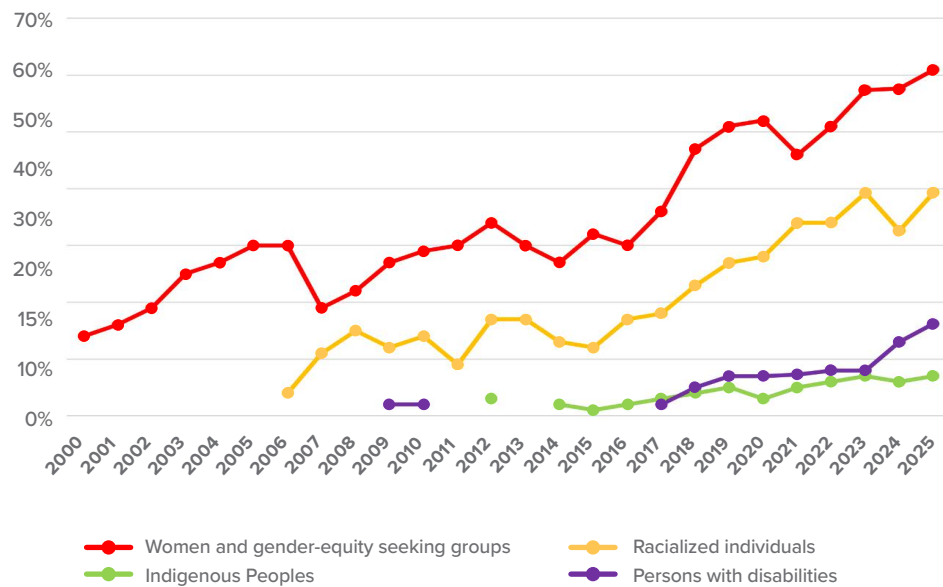
Canada Research Chairs are especially important because the program stands at the apex of the academic prestige hierarchy in Canada. Since CRC appointments affect salaries, recruitment, research infrastructure, and institutional rankings, EDI mandates within the CRC system have had cascading effects throughout universities. By the mid-2020s, EDI requirements had become deeply institutionalized across Canada's federal research architecture, transforming not only hiring practices but also the language and priorities surrounding research excellence itself (Canada Research Chairs 2026c).

Universities are now required to produce formal EDI action plans, create monitoring committees, collect demographic data, and alter recruitment procedures for CRC appointments. Many institutions established CRC EDI working groups and have integrated EDI oversight into senior administration and HR structures. Mandatory bias and diversity training for evaluators and applicants has also become common across the tri-council system. Institutions that fail to meet targets have faced penalties, including the loss or withholding of chair allocations. Thus, Canada Research Chairs lie at the epicentre of Canada's post-secondary institutional EDI-based value system and progressive identity.

Figure 2 illustrates how the 2017 EDI initiative has shaped nominations (most of which succeed) from universities for CRCs. The share of women rose substantially in the 2017–18 academic year and even more dramatically in 2018–19. The proportion of visible minorities rose slightly during 2017–18 then surged during 2018–19. The rise continued before plateauing in the 2020–21 academic year at which time the share of women (51.6 per cent) exceeded parity while the 27.2 per cent proportion of visible minorities overshot its 22 per cent representation in the population.

Indigenous representation expanded nearly threefold from 1.5 per cent in 2016–17 to 4.1 per cent in 2020–21, close to this group's share of the Canadian population. The 2023 CRC program evaluation report states, “In 2019–20, there was a noticeable jump in the number of researchers from one

FIGURE 2: Percentage of CRC nominations submitted for individuals who self-identified as members of the four designated groups, from 2000 to 2025



Source: Canada Research Chairs 2026a, Graph 1.

or more of the four designated groups who were nominated to the CRCP [a CRC program]. This is likely a response to the launch of the CRCP’s 2017 EDI Action Plan and the 2019 Addendum requirements” (Prairie Research Associates 2023, 35). The 2026 statistics report (Chart 1) shows that for 2025, women and “gender-equity seeking groups” made up 61 per cent of chairs, “racialized individuals” (i.e., non-Whites) 40 per cent, and Indigenous peoples at 5.1 per cent. The share of those with disabilities receiving chairs has risen steadily to 16 per cent. (It should be noted that the tri-council agencies operate with a very broad definition of disability based on the *Accessible Canada Act*, which encompasses both physical and mental, as well as permanent and temporary, impediments.)

The report states with pride that the CRC program has met or exceeded targets for such groups. Tellingly, it gives no consideration to what this means for any disfavoured group that is now underrepresented (i.e. White males). Among institutions receiving more than 40 chairs, the share that met all Tier I and II minority representation targets rose from 31 per cent in 2022 to a staggering 88 per cent by 2025. Nowhere is there mention of the socioeconomic background of chairs (Canada Research Chairs 2026a; Prairie Research Associates 2023).

Overall, the high proportion of targeted groups receiving chairs means that only a minority of CRCs — likely under a fifth — were White able-bodied males, that is, non-“designated groups” under the CRC’s EDI regime. This represents a stunning decline in the share of White male CRCs from roughly 80–85 per cent in 2000 to around 25 per cent by 2025. If we were to use White males without a disability as our measurement category, the decline would be even greater. This revolution cannot be explained by Canadian demographics, however fast-changing.

Data and methods

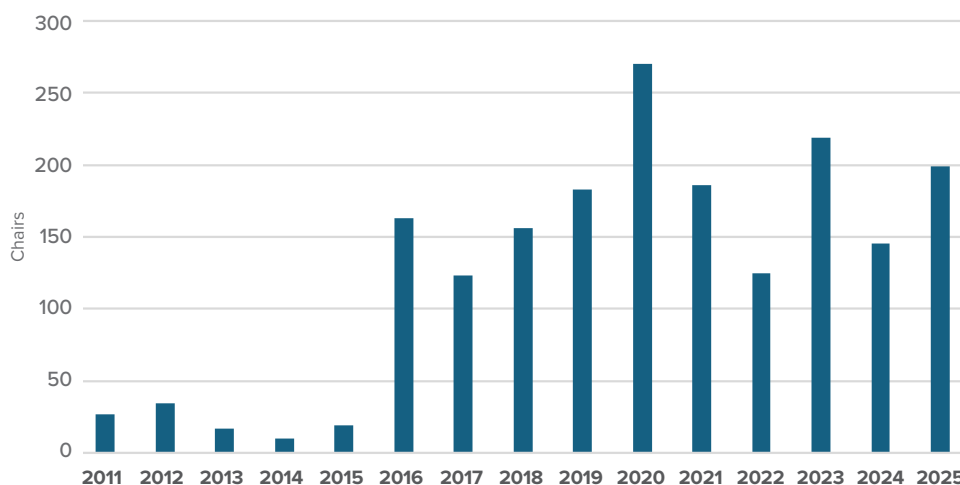
As of April 2026, the federal government’s CRC website had withdrawn the profiles of the posted chair-holders from its database of 2,008 (Canada Research Chairs 2026b). Soon after we acquired information from the profiles, the profiles (but not the names) were removed. The site has given no explanation as to the reason for this action, however the profiles are still accessible via Wayback Machine.

The publicly accessible CRC chair-holder database appears to function primarily as a registry of currently active chair-holders rather than a complete archival record of all historical appointments. Chairs expire, retire, are renewed and replaced, move institutions, or disappear once their term ends. When this happens, they are no longer on the database.

We have counted the number of CRC chairs currently in the system arranged by their appointment dates. The CRC database shows that the number of appointments spiked in 2017. Indeed, 318 chairs were added to the system in just one month, November 2017. Our search of public sources (CRC press releases, Google searches) finds that many of those listed as 2017 appointments were actually appointed in 2016. Using these alternative sources, we have adjusted the approximate date for each appointment — which mainly affects 2016 and 2017 appointments (see **Figure 3**).

In 2017–18, the CRC program underwent a major restructuring that affected its governance, reporting, transparency, and EDI. This reorganization appears to have led to a jump in the number of award holders on the public chair-holder database. Hence, analysts should not use the raw counts from the database to track the rate of appointments. Also worthy of note is the fact that there are very few additions to the database for 2026 as we obtained the data fairly early in 2026, before most of that year’s chairs were added.

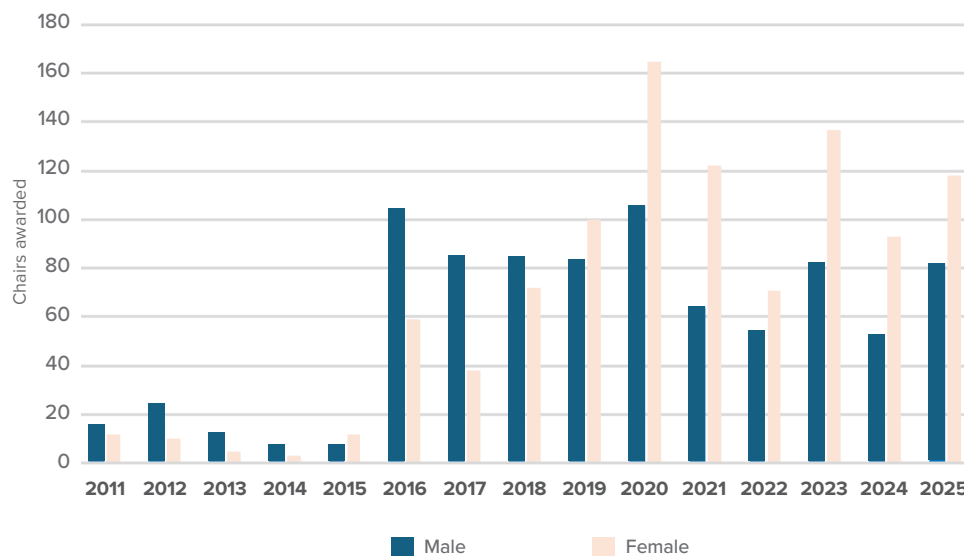
FIGURE 3: Canada Research Chairs on the CRC database, by year of appointment



Source: Canada Research Chairs 2026b, CRC data.

Figure 4 shows the demographic characteristics of CRC chairs. It indicates that male chairs predominated prior to 2019. Between 2000 and 2018, women comprised 38 per cent of chairs. However, from 2019 onward, after the reforms, women made up a consistent 58 to 61 per cent majority among chair appointments listed in the database.

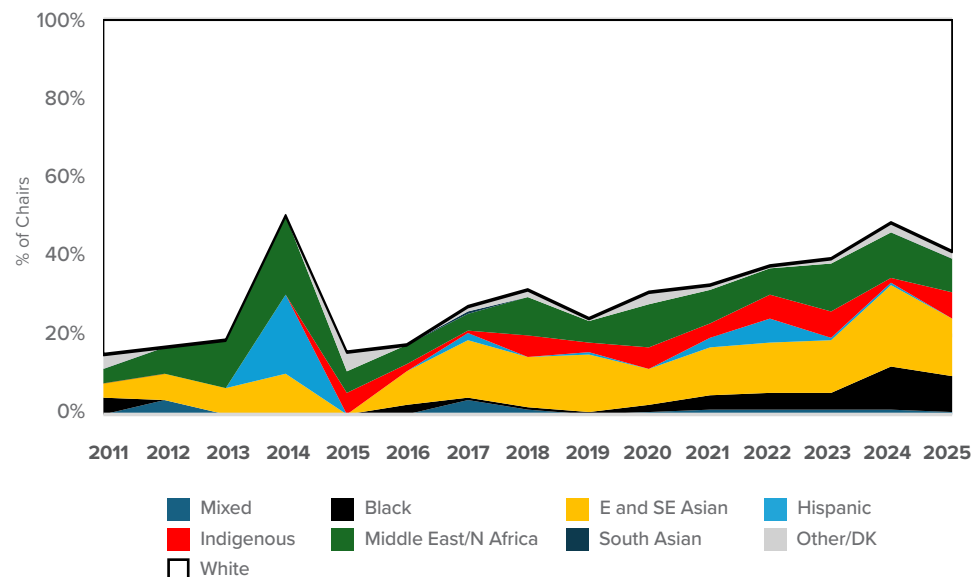
FIGURE 4: Canada Research Chair appointments, by year and sex, 2004–2025



Source: Canada Research Chairs 2026b, CRC data.

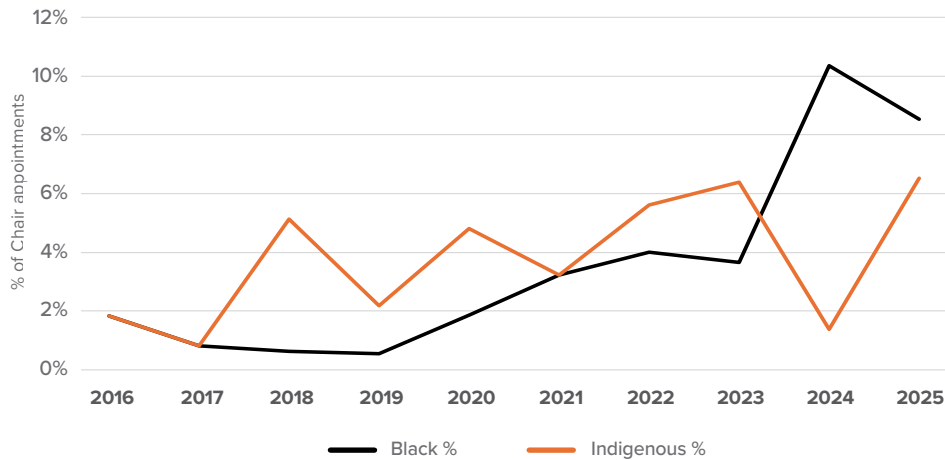
Figure 5 shows the same chart, but this time sorted by general ethnic categories. The CRC site does not display ethnic data. However, AI analysis of individuals' first and surnames, cross-referenced with ethnic surname dictionaries, can determine broad ethnic categories with a high degree of accuracy (Rosenman, Olivella, and Imai 2023). We used a combination of an AI-based surname and profile analysis with a human coder inspecting and manually categorizing profile pages to produce the ethnicity data. Prior to 2019, around one in four CRC appointments on the database hailed from a visible minority background. However, between 2019 and 2026, 39 per cent of CRCs in the system were visible minorities, and from 2022 to 2025 the share never falls below 44 per cent. Note that the CRC database numbers broadly mirror the official nomination data in Figure 2. Small sample sizes before 2016 mean that scholars must exercise caution in interpreting those earlier numbers. Nevertheless, the picture in **Figure 5** suggests a more gradual rise for visible minorities as compared with women, who experienced a step-change increase between 2017 and 2018. The post-2017 reforms, bearing fruit in 2018–19, appear to be more responsible for female than minority advancement in acquiring chairs. Having said this, a series of increases in EDI stringency ratcheted upwards between 2017 and 2021 makes it difficult to definitively assess the impact of specific EDI initiatives.

FIGURE 5: Canada Research Chair appointments, by year and pan-ethnicity, 2004–2025



Source: Canada Research Chairs 2026b, CRC data.
Note: We used artificial intelligence to assign chairs to ethnic categories.

FIGURE 6: Black and Indigenous share of chairs in CRC database, 2016–2025



Source: Canada Research Chairs 2026b, CRC data.

Two of the categories for which representation increased most in this period were Black and Indigenous applicants, reflecting the pattern in the official nomination statistics in **Figure 2**. **Figure 6** shows the percentage of applicants from these groups in the database between 2016 and 2025 when the number of appointments in the system becomes large enough to limit statistical noise. Indigenous share rises five-fold and the Black share six-fold over these years. While in any given year there is variability, the combined Black and Indigenous share grew steadily over this period. This broadly tracks the nominations data for those of Indigenous background in **Figure 2**. Here again, there is no discontinuity around 2018, 2019, or 2021, indicating that EDI efforts were likely already in process before the specific reforms were enacted.

Measuring excellence: The h-index

The h-index is the most commonly used measure of academic impact. It combines both the number of articles a scholar has written or co-written with the number of times those articles have been cited by other researchers (Hirsch 2005; Bornmann and Daniel 2007). This means that both the number of publications and the number of citations matter: publishing many lightly cited papers will not produce a high h-index, nor will publishing only one or two highly cited papers. The metric therefore rewards a sustained record of influential scholarship rather than isolated success. Because citations accumulate over time, the h-index tends to rise with career length, making it a

measure of lifetime achievement rather than recent performance. On the other hand, as a scholar's h-index rises, it is more difficult to increase their h-index, which exerts a counterforce biased against those who are well-established. For this reason, comparisons are most meaningful among scholars at similar career stages or when controlling for years since first publication.

Some deride the h-index as an overly narrow measure of research excellence. However, while the h-index may be reductive in individual cases, on average it aligns very well with qualitative measures of research performance. Studies comparing the UK's peer review-based Research Excellence Framework (REF) departmental scores with aggregate departmental h-index metrics show correlations in the high .6 to .9 range (Traag and Waltman 2019, 29).

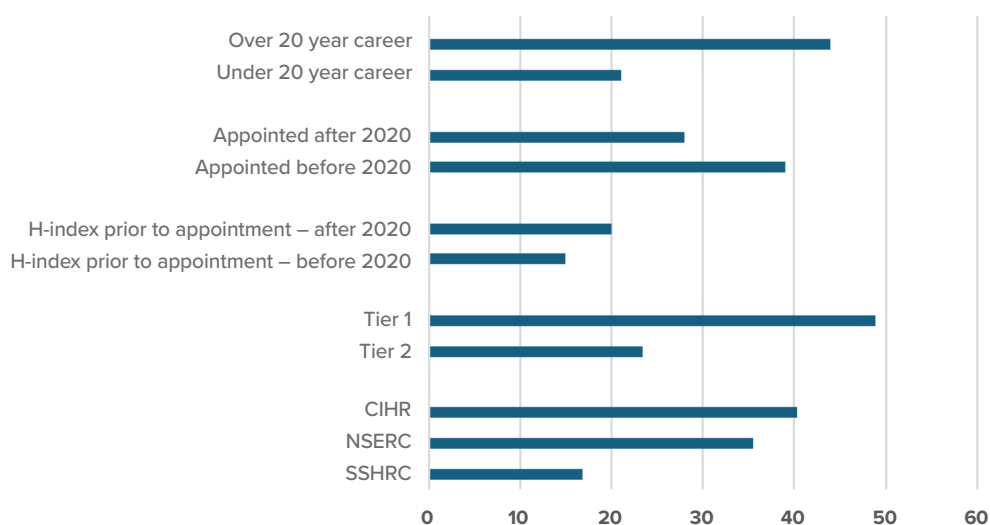
We measured the h-indexes of Canada's research chairs using the OpenAlex API, a widely-used catalogue of global research that contains hundreds of millions of entries. We calculated h-indices for Canada's chairs in the year before they received their CRC, then in 2017 before the government introduced more overt EDI, and then when we collected our data, in March 2026.

We determined a scholar's approximate career length by subtracting their first publication date from their most recent publication date – triangulating publication dates using both OpenAlex and Chat GPT 4. In the modest number of instances where the OpenAlex and GPT4 dates did not align, we manually examined the chair's Google Scholar profile to find the date of their first publication (scholarly article or book chapter). If the scholar did not have a Google Scholar profile, we cross-referenced other sources such as Research Gate, their own website, and PubMed.

Figure 7 shows the average current h-index for chairs by career length, date of appointment, tier, and research council. We do not know scholars' ages. Those with careers over 20 years, as measured by the time between their earliest and their most recent publication, have a median h-index of 44. Those with careers under 20 years average a median h-index of 21. This shows that career length matters greatly for a scholar's h-index.

The figure also shows that more recently appointed (post-2020) scholars, who tend to be younger and have shorter careers, report a median h-index of 28 while those appointed before 2018 average 39. This is as expected, because longer careers tend to mean a higher h-index as citations to earlier works accumulate.

FIGURE 7: The h-index average of current chairs, by tier and council



Source: Canada Research Chairs 2026b, CRC data.

On the other hand, there has been a steady long-term increase in h-indices, so someone entering the profession in 2026 tends to have a higher h-index than a new entrant did in 2016. Accordingly, the figure shows that those who obtained their chairs before 2020 averaged an h-index of 15 in the year before they were appointed whereas those appointed in the 2020s averaged 20, 5 points higher.

Why? Young researchers now publish more papers before entering the job market, spend longer in postdoctoral positions before appointment, collaborate in larger teams, and benefit from faster citation accumulation through digital databases and wider international dissemination. Reference lists have also grown longer, increasing citation rates (van Dijk, Manor, and Carey 2014; Fortunato et al. 2018).

Tier I chairs focus on established scholars and Tier II on emerging scholars. Unsurprisingly, the more senior, prestigious, and valuable Tier I chairs are held by scholars with higher h-indices than Tier II chair-holders: Tier I chairs average an h-index of 49 compared to 23 for Tier II chairs.

Finally, medical and scientific papers involve more authors and tend to be cited more often than papers in the social sciences and humanities. The median h-index for scholars in the health sciences (CIHR) is 40, and for STEM fields (NSERC) it is 36, while for the social sciences and humanities (SSHRC) it is only 17.

Age is clearly linked to a scholar's publication record, as the preceding discussion of career length and h-index showed. What of other demographic factors? **Figure 8** shows the current chairs' h-index by ethnicity and sex. Those who are East Asian or Southeast Asian have the highest average scores, at 36. Whites follow at 34, followed by South Asians (33), Middle East/North Africans (31), Hispanics (26), Blacks (23), and First Nations (15). (Note that an h-index of 36 is more than twice an h-index of 15 because the former is the equivalent of publishing 15 papers averaging 15 citations each while the latter represents 36 papers averaging 36 citations apiece.)

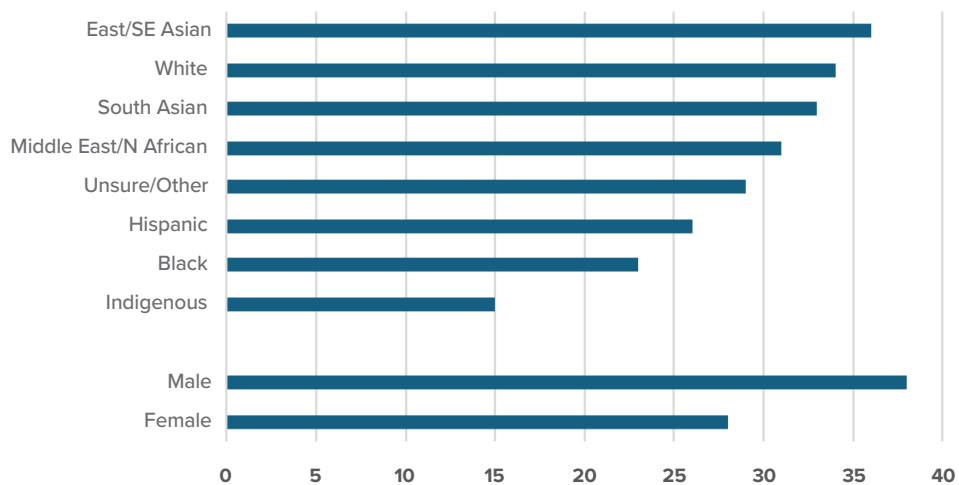
In what follows, we will examine Black and Indigenous scholars as an integrated category compared to others, as these have been the focus of EDI efforts. The h-index of women (28) is also considerably lower than that of men (38). Sex will also form the basis of analysis, as this category is also a focus of EDI efforts.

These results are not surprising. Those who have studied the grades of minorities at university, or in Advanced Placement (AP) high school examinations, find substantial racial attainment gaps (Sander 2004; Bleske-Rechek and Savolainen 2026). Moreover, there is already a considerable literature detailing the gender gap in scholarly output (Mulders et al. 2024; Kozłowski et al. 2022). More recent work finds a consistent racial disparity in publishing output between Black or Hispanic scholars and White or Asian scholars (Kaufmann 2024a; Savolainen and McCaffree 2026).

The cause of race or sex differences in the h-index is beyond the scope of this paper's analysis. We do not, for instance, have data indicating whether a chair has caring responsibilities or is parenting children, their socioeconomic background, or whether they have parents who are academics (Morgan et al. 2022).

Since the proportion of women and visible minorities in the CRC pool has increased over time, one may assume that minorities and women's average career length is shorter than that for other scholars. This also means there are likely to be race and sex differences by tier, and there may also be variation by research council. Hence any test of the statistical significance of race or sex differences for research productivity must control for career length, date of award, tier, and research council.

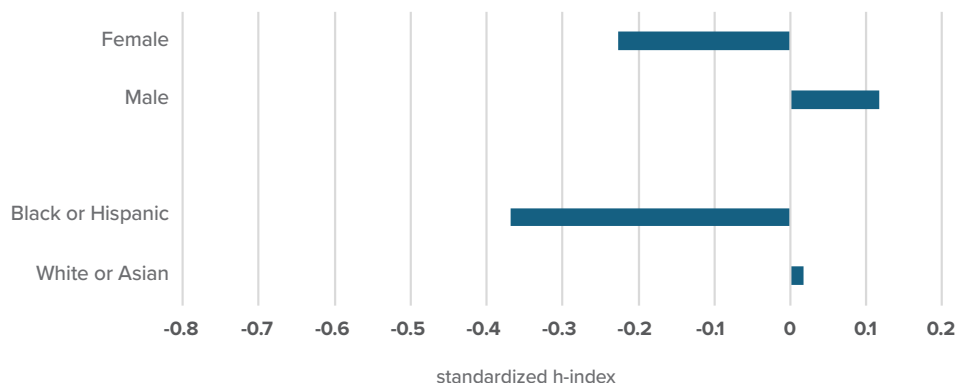
FIGURE 8: The h-index average of current chairs, by ethnicity and sex



Source: Canada Research Chairs 2026b, CRC data.

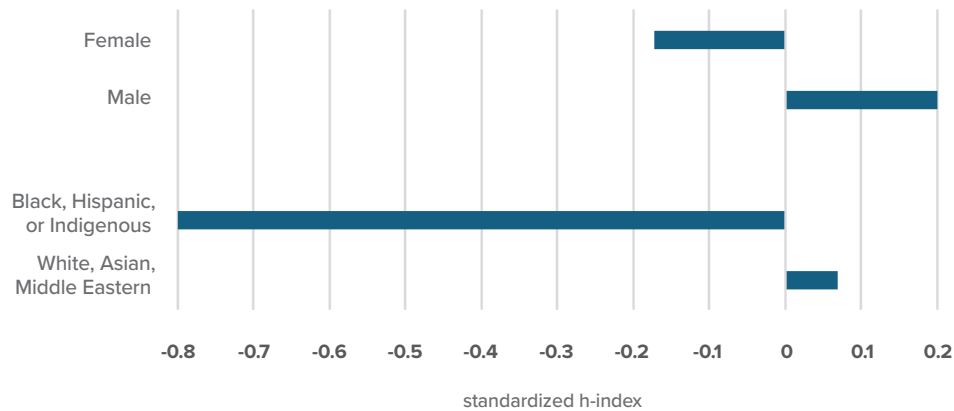
For comparison, a recent study in the prestigious journal *Nature Human Behaviour* examined tenure and promotion decisions at five research-intensive universities in the United States from 2015 to 2022. Of the 1,571 cases examined, 9 per cent were Black or Hispanic and 35 per cent were female (Masters-Waage et al. 2024). H-indexes were standardized to anonymize the data for public release. **Figure 9** shows that Black/Hispanic and female scholars had considerably lower h-indexes than White/Asian or male scholars. The scores were significantly lower even after controlling for discipline, STEM vs. non-STEM field and career length in academia.

FIGURE 9: Standardized h-Index by race and sex in a sample of 1,571 US academics in the *Nature Human Behaviour* Journal



Source: Calculated from data in Masters-Waage et al. 2024.

FIGURE 10: Standardized h-index by race and sex in a sample of 1,906 Canada Research Chairs



Source: Canada Research Chairs 2026b, CRC data.

Comparing the *Nature Human Behaviour* data from 2017 to 2022 with standardized h-indices for similar categories in the CRC data for 2016 to 2025 in **Figure 10** shows a high degree of similarity despite differences in country, institution, and outcome measures (promotions versus chair appointments). In both datasets, Black, Hispanic, and Indigenous applicants rank lower than others, as do women (note that the standardization formulas for transforming the h-indices differ so the numbers in each chart cannot be strictly compared).² Canadian data arguably show a larger minority penalty due to the inclusion of Indigenous scholars, who underperform Black and Hispanic scholars in the CRC data. We make no claims about the cause of such disparities. For instance, in neither dataset do we have data on the socioeconomic background or childcare status of the academics.

Existing research on citation gaps by race and sex

Academics have already observed that women have fewer citations than men. An overview of research on why this is the case finds that female-authored articles receive about as many citations as male-authored articles. However, in general, women publish less than men (Wu 2024, 9–11).

This finding casts doubt on several potential theories about the gender citation gap:

- *Discrimination or unconscious bias:* Studies find that the gender of the author does not generally play a role in which papers are cited.

- *Gender homophily in citing*: Men, who are more numerous, do not cite male authors more often once journal prestige, field of study, and other factors are controlled for.
- *Self-citation differences*: Men do not cite their own work more than women do.
- *Discrimination in collaborations*: While collaborating does boost citation output, and while men collaborate more with other men, there is no evidence that women publish alone more, or that the gender citation gap is smaller in female-dominated fields such as psychology and veterinary science. Indeed, the reverse appears to be true.

Overall, Wu's survey found that the citation gap appears to arise largely because women publish fewer papers over their career. Whether this is because of childcare duties, lower pay, socialization, or other factors that may be influenced by social policy is beyond the scope of this analysis.

On race, extant research shows that White and Asian authors tend to be cited more often than Black and Hispanic authors. Black and Hispanic PhD-holders take longer to produce academic papers and leave the profession earlier than Whites. A recent analysis of all hires in the top 50 American sociology departments between 2019 and 2024 shows that White men averaged eight publications when hired while Black women averaged only two. Whereas 40 per cent of newly appointed White men had published in a top-two journal, just four per cent of Black women had (McCaffree and Savolainen 2026). Some argue that a possible explanation for minority underperformance is discrimination, but this is not backed by robust quantitative evidence of discrimination. Nor is it the case that such studies can properly address counterarguments (Mulders, Hofstra, and Tolsma 2024; Kozlowski et al. 2022).³ Clearly, for example, any explanation based on racial exclusion must grapple with the relative success of academics of Asian and Middle Eastern origins, who often outperform their White peers.

One possible theory is that some minorities opt for disciplines that have less prestige, such as racial studies, and thus produce papers that are rarely cited outside their speciality. In what follows, we attempt to evaluate this claim.

Statistical tests

We have seen that many forces affect h-index scores. These include the length of time a person has been an academic, whether they are a Tier I or II chair, their discipline, and when they became active in research. In order to screen out these confounding factors, we ran a series of multivariate Ordinary Least-Squares (OLS) models to assess the specific impact of race, sex, and EDI terminology on research output.

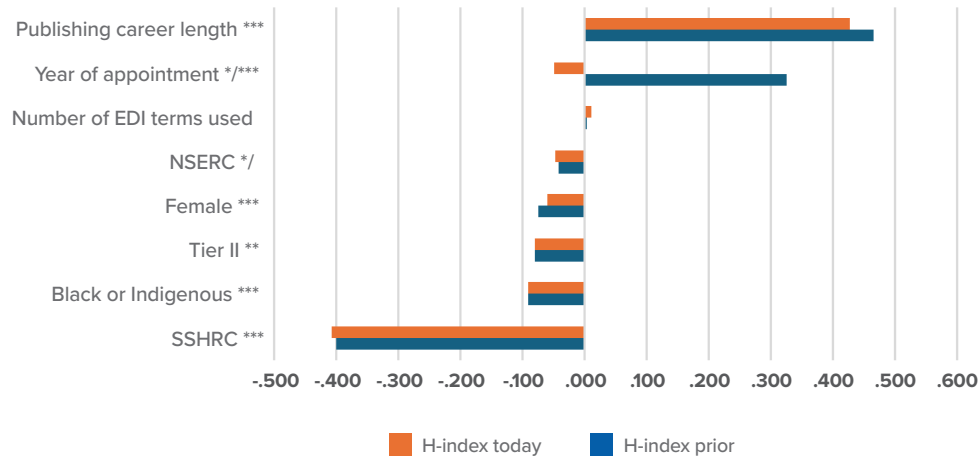
The first point to note is that a chair's h-index one year prior to their appointment strongly predicts their h-index today: the variation in h-indices prior to appointment accounts for 79 per cent of the variation in current h-indices.⁴ If we wish to focus on questions of equity and excellence, the first place to start is with the qualifications of individuals at the time they were appointed.

Figure 11 shows, first of all, that race and sex are statistically significant at the highest ($p < .001$) level for predicting the h-index, both currently and prior to appointment. This model uses a standardized h-index, but if we use raw h-indices, the regression coefficients show that — even when controlling for confounding factors — moving from a male to a female chair appointment results in an average loss of 4.8 h-index points of output. Moving from a White or Asian appointment to a Black or Indigenous appointment entails an average loss of 3.2 h-index points.

It is worth adding that the only major difference between the models (prior and current h-index) concerns the role played by year of appointment. The rising h-index of new entrants over time is an extremely powerful dynamic — as important as career length prior to appointment in predicting the h-index of chairs prior to appointment. This matters much less for those currently in a post as their publications will be rising along with the general h-index over time. Also important is the fact that Tier II chairs, who are more junior and receive less money, have fewer publications with generally less impact at the time of their appointment or currently.

Finally, compared to CIHR (medical council) awards, SSHRC (social sciences and humanities) award holders have considerably lower h-indices. This is largely because medical and scientific papers contain many more authors and are cited more often than social science and humanities papers. The latter also contains a more varied range of publications than the sciences, including

FIGURE 11: Predictors of research productivity



Source: Calculated from Canada Research Chairs 2026b, CRC data.
Note: Based on log transformed h-indices. N=1,788 for prior H model, 1,860 for current H model.
 $R^2 = .513$ for prior H model and $.526$ for current H models. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

books and reports. Books, for example, contain fewer authors and take longer to write than papers — which depresses h-index scores among social science and humanities scholars.

However, controlling for all of the above does not alter the finding that women and Black/Indigenous chairs are significantly less well-published and less-often cited — both at the time of their appointment and currently — than men and White or Asian chairs.

Researchers whose project keywords (i.e., “marginalize,” “equity”) indicate more of a “woke” social justice focus (see next section) are not less productive. However, the h-index does not discriminate between citations in journals which prize rigour and the scientific method, and journals that value ideological alignment with social justice or EDI-based values (Mounk 2018). Women and minority researchers who mention EDI (or mention such terms often) are also no less productive than women and minorities who do not mention EDI.⁵ Were we to discount EDI-based research, the productivity gaps could be even larger.

Race, sex, and discipline

Could it be that publishing norms differ across disciplines, and that women and minorities select fields with lower h-indices? For instance, historians write sole-authored books and artists create solo art portfolios. Some fields heavily

feature multi-authored papers while others mainly involve sole-authorship. Some disciplines permit longer reference lists than others.

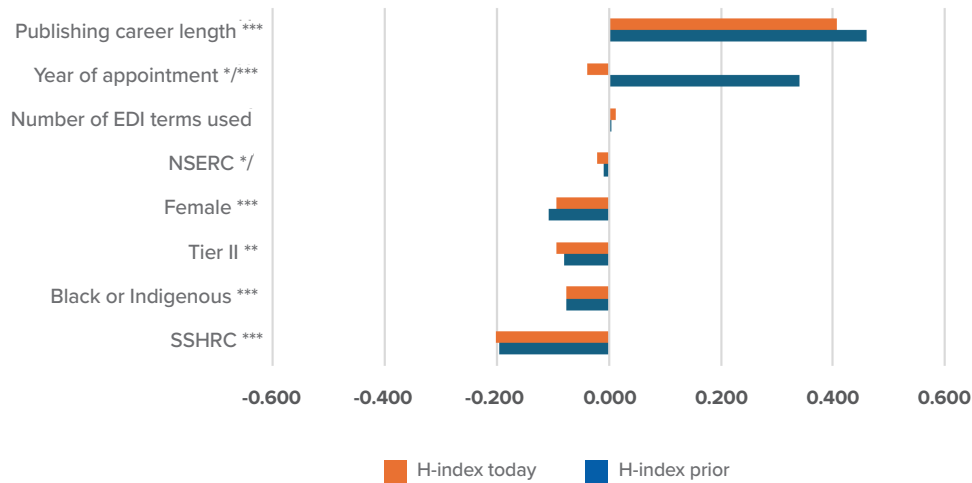
The Canada Research Chairs database assigns chairs to one of 178 disciplines. Within SSHRC, women are about 50 per cent more likely to be concentrated in education (8 per cent versus 6 per cent for men), political science (an 8:4 ratio) and psychology (7:4) while men more often concentrate in economics (10:6), history (7:4), philosophy (6:2), and literature (4:2). Ethnic differences are somewhat greater. Black and Indigenous SSHRC chairs disproportionately choose history (10:4), and “arts and crafts” (9:2) while Whites and Asians are more often found in economics (8:3), geography (5:1), philosophy (4:1), and psychology (7:1). Similar patterns emerge in the other councils. In NSERC, women are more likely to work in environmental engineering (4:2), environmental sciences (3:2), and biological sciences (3:1) whereas men are more likely to be in physics (6:2), mathematics (3:2), mechanical engineering (5:2), and artificial intelligence (2:1).

Black and Indigenous NSERC chairs lean toward food science and technology (12:1) and electrical engineering (8:5), whereas Whites and Asians incline toward biomedical engineering (6:4), chemical engineering (5:4), earth science (5:4), and physics (4:0). Within the medical (CIHR) stream, women are more concentrated in health sciences (11:3), health services research (9:3), and population health (5:3), while men are more concentrated in biomedical engineering (9:6) and biochemistry (4:2).

Black and Indigenous CIHR chairs are particularly concentrated in health sciences (16:7) and health services research (13:6), whereas Whites and Asians tilt more toward life sciences related to human health, biomedical engineering, and laboratory-based biomedical disciplines such as cell biology, genetics, molecular biology, and biochemistry.

To test whether minorities and women happen to be choosing disciplines with lower h-index norms and practices, we reran the models in **Figure 11** with a fixed-effect control for all 178 disciplines in the data. This technique screens out the possibility that minorities and women are publishing less because they concentrate in specialties whose publishing practices produce fewer citations. Results are shown in **Figure 12** and reveal little change in the significance of race and sex in predicting research output: both remain strongly significant negative predictors of (standardized) h-index, whether measured a year before appointment or currently.

FIGURE 12: Predictors of research productivity (with discipline in the model)



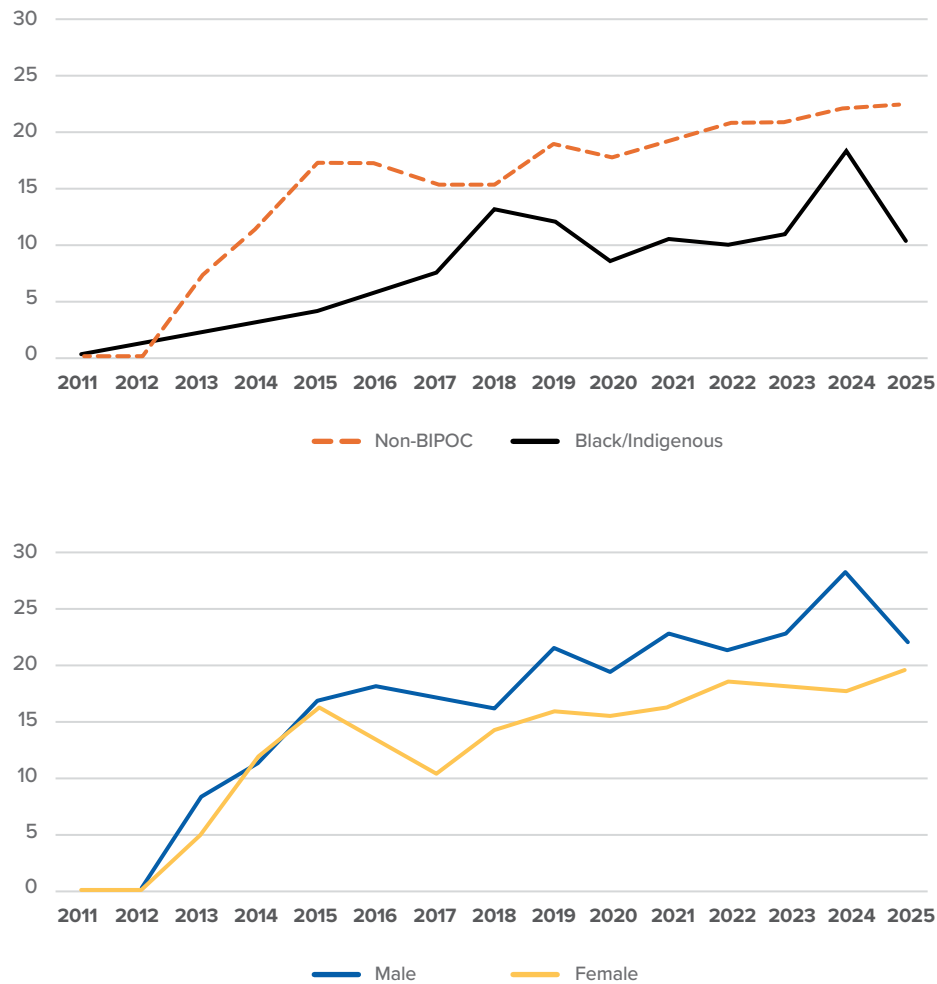
Source: Calculated from Canada Research Chairs 2026b, CRC data.
Note: Based on log transformed h-indices. N=1,781 for prior H model, 1,861 for current H model.
R²= .561 for prior H and .592 for current H models. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.

The only major difference is that controlling for discipline weakens the depressive effect of SSHRC on the h-index. This is because discipline is heavily correlated with research council (i.e., few sociologists get NSERC or CIHR chairs). Women and the minority groups under consideration publish significantly less than men and Whites or Asians across all councils, with the gap no more evident in the STEM or medical fields than in the social sciences and humanities.

In terms of the intersection between race and sex, the race gap is similar for male and female researchers, and the gender gap is of similar magnitude within the main racial categories.⁶ Hence results show independent race and sex effects on productivity. White and Asian female chairs in the data have a current h-index of 29, which exceeds the 25 for male Black and Indigenous chairs. White and Asian men average an h-index of 39 compared to just 14 for Black and Indigenous women. These results thus differ in this respect from the *American Nature Human Behaviour* journal data, where there was no significant gender gap in the h-index among Black and Hispanic academics — only among Whites and Asians (Kaufmann 2024a).

A chair's h-index when measured a year prior to their appointment is very highly correlated with their current h-index ($R^2=.78$). **Figure 13** shows

FIGURE 13: H-index prior to appointment, by race and sex



Source: Calculated from Canada Research Chairs 2026b, CRC data.
Note: These are raw counts, not predicted probability charts from models. Very few cases prior to 2016, so caution should be exercised in making claims based on early data.

that, despite the general increase in h-indices over time, a race and sex gap in the h-index at time of appointment has persisted for Canada Research Chairs. Black, Indigenous, and female appointments enter with consistently lower research output than White, Asian, and male appointments. When controlling for confounding factors, these gaps are stable over time. There is no statistical evidence that the new post-2017 targets widened output gaps at time of appointment — which we might have expected if new DEI targets led to a hiring push which sacrificed excellence for equity.⁷ This suggests that EDI was already being practiced prior to the new policy being formally announced.

The cost of EDI

Tier I chairs are worth \$200,000 per year while Tier II are worth \$100,000. Across the 2016–2025 period from which the bulk of the CRC data stems, the average h-index of a Tier I chair is 49, and average h-index of a Tier II Chair is 23. The mean h-index of a Tier I CRC a year prior to appointment is 25, and for Tier II chairs is 13. If we take the mid-point of the current and prior numbers, we arrive at a Tier I h-index of 37 and Tier II h-index of 18. Divided by their dollar value, both produce a ratio of around \$5,000 per h-index point. Put this way, \$5,000 from the Canadian government purchases one h-index point of productivity and scholarly impact.

Multivariate models of the current h-index (including disciplinary fixed-effects) show that moving from a male to a female chair appointment is connected with a loss of 5.8 h-index points of output. Moving from a White or Asian appointment to a Black or Indigenous appointment is associated with a loss of 3.4 h-index points. If we use h-index scores at the time of a chair's appointment, the respective numbers are a loss of 3.2 and 3.6 points, respectively. This suggests that female productivity tends to fall behind over a career (possibly due to child-care obligations), as previous literature notes, whereas the same is not true for Black or Indigenous scholars as a category. The mid-point between starting and current h-index is -4.5 for women and -3.5 for Black or Indigenous appointees. At \$5,000 per h-index point, this produces a shortfall of around \$22,500 for female appointments and \$17,500 for Black/Indigenous appointments. This translates to around 15 per cent and 12 per cent of the average annual value of a Canada Research Chair. The marginal EDI “tax” to produce an “equity-deserving” appointment is thus 12 to 15 per cent.

Between 2015 and 2025, the published share of female appointees rose from 30 per cent to 60 per cent while Black and Indigenous chairs increased from approximately 2 per cent to around 10–15 per cent. Compared to the demography of 2015, this shift in the race and sex composition of CRCs cost \$18 million per year, equivalent to nearly 6 per cent of the CRC's annual \$300 million budget.

The loss is markedly larger when compared with 2000. In 2025, recipients are 60 per cent female and 10 per cent Black or Indigenous. This has resulted in a productivity loss of 8 per cent — \$24 million — compared to 2000, when recipients were 80–85 per cent male with very few Black or Indigenous appointments.

A final technical point. More than half the decline in White CRCs (from around 80 per cent of the total prior to 2016 to just 60 per cent by 2025) is accounted for by an increase in the appointment of academics of Asian and Middle Eastern descent. Our calculations suggest that this transformation had no significant effect — negative or positive — on academic productivity.

The equity-excellence trade-off

The best way to think about the rise of “equity-deserving” groups in the CRC system is as a variant of what economists term “the equity-efficiency trade-off.” The equity-efficiency trade-off arises as taxation and welfare spending crowds out investment and effort, or unionization distorts market signals, reducing total output.

Cultural socialist values, which aim to redistribute social goods across cultural categories such as race and sex, function in a similar way to economic socialist principles. That is, equity reduces output, resulting in a trade-off. Think of this as an “equity-excellence trade-off” in which equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives impose a 12 to 15 per cent “tax” on marginal output each time an “equity-deserving” candidate takes the place of a non-EDI candidate.

The total cost to the budget is simply the marginal cost multiplied by the total number of substitutions — in this case about \$85 million as diversity increased over the decade from 2016 to 2025. If we take 2000 as our baseline, the loss from EDI hiring is twice as high: approximately \$300 million as diversity increased over 25 years. Again, there will be many cases in which female, Black, or Indigenous scholars will not impose a cost, but on average — under an EDI dispensation in which race and sex considerations can outweigh scholarly merit — this will be the case.

Has the cost of equity been worth it? This is a philosophical, not a technical, question. Cultural socialists believe that equal outcomes by race and sex are a moral imperative. Some, such as American historian and anti-racism activist Ibram X. Kendi, demand an entirely new branch of government to enforce equal outcomes by fiat. “Soft left” cultural socialists favour an evolutionary rather than revolutionary approach in which equity and diversity goals are steadily advanced through nebulous initiatives and moral suasion rather than hard quotas. They believe that disparities arise because of “systemic” discrimination. In practice, the hard and soft variants of cultural left activism tend to produce similar EDI endpoints.⁸

Against this, classical liberals hold that excellence and merit should prevail, that equal outcomes by social group are mathematically unusual, and that using power to engineer equal results is a violation of human freedom and equal treatment. Disparities in contemporary society typically do not signify discrimination. Over time, for cultural, economic or demographic reasons, groups — such as the Irish or Indians — rise or fall in their relative attainment compared to other groups (Sowell 2019; Jussim 2026).

Having said this, some classical liberals — and some conservatives — would accept that unobtrusive efforts at descriptive representation — such as broadening recruitment sources, mentoring, or using criteria such as socioeconomic background that correlates with ethnicity in some cases — have value. In addition, some realists believe that political circumstances may dictate the need for “mirror” representation (Kymlicka 1996, 137–41). For instance, if grant funding relied upon provincial contributions, and Alberta or Quebec recipients were persistently underrepresented, this could cause resentment, endangering Alberta and Quebec’s support for the CRC. In deeply divided societies (i.e. Northern Ireland, Lebanon) where group membership is an overriding political identity and a top consideration for maintaining order and system legitimacy, group proportionality may justifiably trump merit and equal opportunity (McGarry and O’Leary 2006). In such places, consociationalism — a non-territorial form of federalism based on allocating power and resources in proportion to a group’s share of the population — is practiced. Just as police in Northern Ireland are recruited on a 50–50 Protestant–Catholic basis, consociationalism’s sensitivity to conflict resolution might prompt the CRC to sacrifice excellence and merit for race and sex proportionality. However, it is far from evident that Canada’s social peace depends on keeping female, Black, and Indigenous Canadians content through a proportional spoils system. Canada is not Lebanon, Nigeria, or Northern Ireland.

An alternative rationale for the CRC to be implementing EDI initiatives might be based on collective aims. If women are less academically productive because they take time off to have children, a society concerned about its fertility rate may choose to accept women’s lower productivity as a price worth paying to maintain a healthier birth rate. However, if this was the rationale, CRC documents would have stated it. Rather than citing realist or national policy goals, or claiming it was implementing unobtrusive efforts to ensure equitable representation across all underrepresented categories, from

conservatives and working class individuals to Black or Indigenous people, the federal government's focus with the CRC program has been on "totemic" politically salient cultural left categories: race, sex, and sexuality.⁹ EDI has thus been justified on moral-ideological grounds based on two of seven possible moral foundations — that of equity and care or harm — and three out of a vast array of possible underrepresented identity categories, namely race, sex, and sexuality (Haidt 2012). Cultural socialism, not national flourishing, explains the CRC's adherence to EDI.

The CRC has likewise failed to admit that its EDI policy violates classical liberal principles of merit and equal treatment. Instead, it dishonestly conflates equal outcomes with equal treatment, using nebulous EDI language to conceal the occlusion. With this sleight-of-hand the CRC attempts to legitimize the infringement of applicants' equal rights.

Social sciences and humanities are most affected

A final point about EDI in appointments is that Black and Indigenous applicants are heavily concentrated in the social sciences and humanities. In official CRC data for 2026, Indigenous appointments made up zero per cent of NSERC, 3 per cent of CIHR and 13 per cent of SSHRC chairs. This is the case even as "racialized" individuals form a greater proportion of NSERC (40 per cent) and CIHR (33 per cent) than SSHRC (28 per cent) chairs (CRC 2026b). In the CRC data we analyzed for 2016-2025, Black and Indigenous individuals comprise 4 per cent of both CIHR and NSERC, and 17 per cent of SSHRC, chairs. Hence minorities in the sciences and medicine tend to be Asian or Middle Eastern rather than Black or Indigenous.

In terms of the sex composition of chairs, SSHRC is the most female (61 per cent), ahead of CIHR (56) and NSERC (44) (CRC 2026b). In the CRC data we analyzed for 2016-25, females make up 57 per cent of CIHR, 44 per cent of NSERC, and 65 per cent of SSHRC chairs.

Thus, it appears that demographics with lower-than-average outputs are concentrated in SSHRC chair appointments. The fact that CIHR and NSERC have strong Asian/Middle Eastern representation, combined with the fact that Indigenous representation is tabulated at the global CRC level rather than research council level, has shielded CIHR and NSERC from pressure to meet Indigenous targets.

The hidden cost of scholar activism in the social sciences and humanities

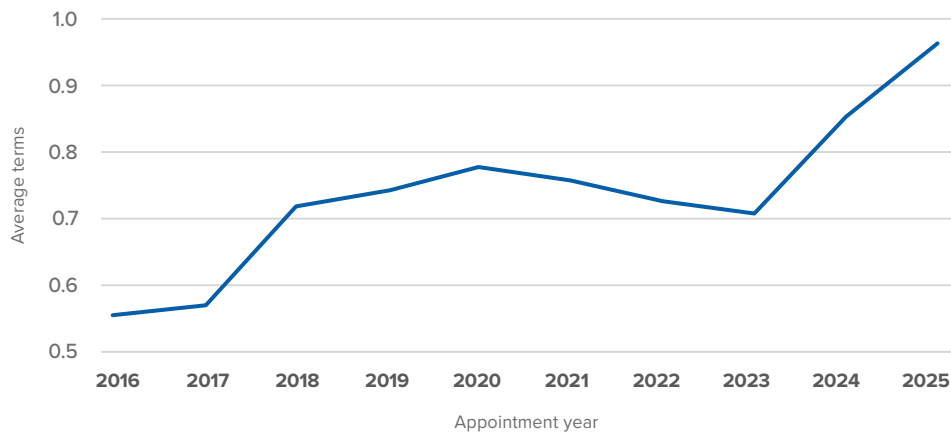
Thus far we have examined the cost of equity, diversity, and inclusion in the form of race- and sex-based affirmative action. However, to the extent that the content of research has shifted from what is interesting for knowledge and useful for society to what advances race-, sex-, and sexuality-based cultural socialism, this represents another loss for Canadian society.

To gauge the rise of EDI content in CRC research profiles, we catalogued the number of EDI terms used in the description for each chair position. Our list of search terms largely draws on words that academic big data researchers in this field use (Rozado 2022). It encompasses what Snow calls activist or critical theory terms, such as “decolonization” and “whiteness,” but also what he refers to as “mild EDI,” i.e., the EDI terminology that institutions use as a matter of course.

The list of terms we searched for in the descriptions of chair positions is as follows: diversity, equity, inclusion, rights, diverse, equality, inclusive, justice, advocacy, affirmation, allyship, sensitivity, identity, safety, empowerment, liberation, decolonization, emancipation, empathy, community, compassion, solidarity, sustainable, awareness, safe space, victimized, abused, traumatized, offended, marginalized, discriminated, bullied, humiliated, wronged, harmed, stigmatized, insulted, ridiculed, oppressed, racialized, slandered, defamed, persecuted, mistreated, denigrated, harassed, intimidated, betrayed, underrepresented, disenfranchised, disrespected, dehumanized, silenced, disadvantaged, alienated, colonized, deprived, segregated, enslaved, exploited, White privilege, whiteness, White supremacy, bias, patriarchy, toxic masculinity, rape culture, objectification, inequality, discrimination, marginalize, microaggressions, police brutality, body shaming, heteronormativity, victim blaming, slut shaming, cultural appropriation, colonialism, displacement, hate speech, xenophobia, exclusion, inequity, oppression, injustice, racism, racist, xenophobic, sexism, sexist, misogyny, misogynist, homophobia, homophobic, transphobia, transphobic, Islamophobia, Islamophobic, antisemitism, antisemitic, ageism, ageist, ableism, ableist.

Figure 14 plots the average number of EDI terms contained in each chair description from 2016 to 2025 where we have sufficient data to avoid

FIGURE 14: Average number of social justice terms included in the description of each chair position, 2016–2025



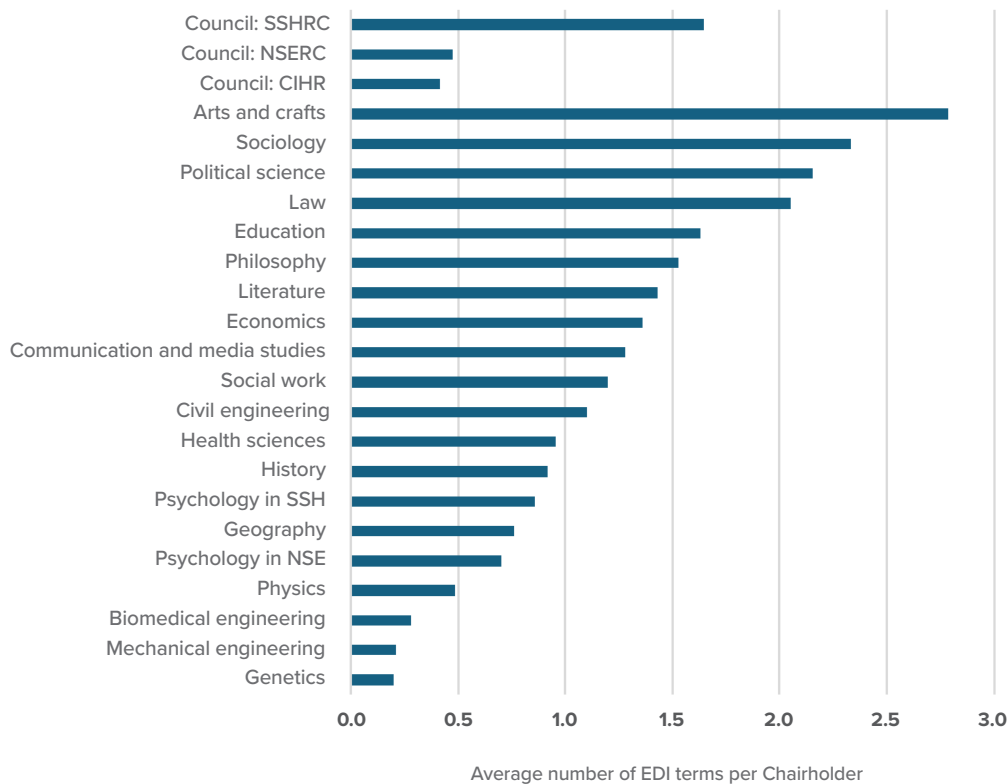
Source: Canada Research Chairs, 2026b, CRC data.

statistical noise. Notice that the average number of terms rose substantially after 2017, when EDI priorities became more overt in the CRC program. After a modest decline from 2020 to 2023, the average number of terms spiked again in 2024 and 2025 to the point that the average number of social justice terms per chair description approached one. That is, on average, every chair description contains at least one EDI term. There is no evidence of “peak woke” happening here.

Across the dataset, there is an average of 0.73 EDI terms per chair-holder’s profile. However, as **Figure 15** highlights, this varies considerably by research council and subject. Across the tri-councils, there is a noticeable difference in the frequency of terms used between the CIHR (.42 terms per appointee), NSERC (.48), and SSHRC (1.65). Though numbers in each discipline are too small to provide a definitive score that is statistically significant, it is nonetheless clear that SSHRC grants contain significantly more EDI terms than NSERC or CIHR grants. Shifting from an individual with an NSERC to a SSHRC chair predicts a significant increase of 1.2 EDI terms ($p < .001$).

While Snow found that CIHR “had by far the most EDI-activist definition of research excellence” in its official documents, the content of health research (typically diagnosing and treating measurable biological phenomena) is far less amenable to political distortion than the social sciences and humanities (Snow 2025, 26). Thus, despite the CIHR’s EDI

FIGURE 15: Mean number of EDI terms used in Canada Research Chair profiles, by council and discipline

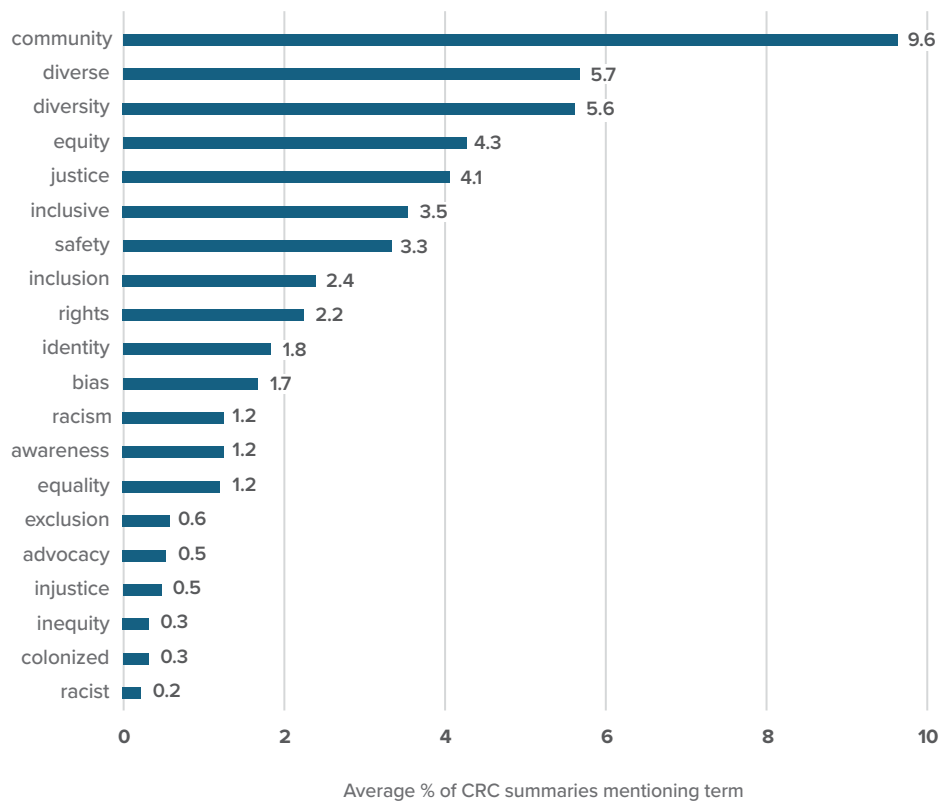


Source: Canada Research Chairs 2026b, CRC data.
 Note: "Psychology SSH" refers to Psychology as a discipline among SSHRC chairs, and "Psychology NSE" to Psychology among NSERC chairs.

signalling, cultural socialism permeates the content of SSHRC-funded social science and humanities research to a much greater extent. Social science and humanities scholars are much more likely to be conducting politicized research than those in STEM or the health sciences.

The doubling in EDI terms reveals a significant shift of focus for CRC research. It has transitioned from the disinterested pursuit of knowledge or excellence toward satisfying the race/gender/sexuality-based EDI aims of cultural socialist politics. While the CRC is signalling a considerable increase in EDI focus, it is worth noting that much of this concerns the “soft EDI” that Snow noted. **Figure 16** presents the top 20 terms by frequency. Terms such as “diverse,” “equity,” and “inclusive” are the most frequently mentioned while the more radical terms such as “colonized,” or “racist,” some linked to the cultural socialist tradition (i.e., critical race and gender, and queer theory), are less common.

FIGURE 16: Top 20 EDI terms used in summaries of CRC positions



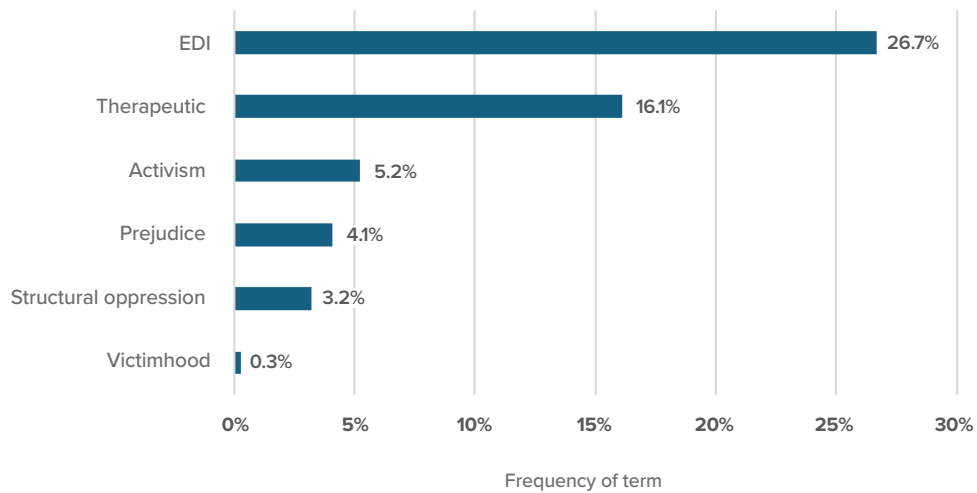
Note: Due to rounding, bars may have slightly different lengths at the same number.

Source: Canada Research Chairs 2026b, CRC data.

Based on the full list of EDI words, we used factor analysis to derive six distinct clusters of terms that appointees tend to use together: EDI/inclusion; victimization/harm; structural or systemic oppression; prejudice/discrimination; advocacy/justice/rights/activism; and a factor capturing therapeutic and emotional-safety language. Words like equity, inclusion, and diversity correlate most strongly with EDI/inclusion; racism, bias, and sexism with prejudice; justice, rights, and advocacy with activism; trauma, empathy, safety, and compassion with therapeutic language; oppression, colonialism, and White privilege with structural oppression; victimized, harmed, abused, and marginalized with the victimhood factor.

While, as **Figure 17** shows, single terms such as “diversity” appear in no more than 10 per cent of CRC descriptions, mentions of at least one term from one of the EDI themes is more frequent. **Figure 17** illustrates that over a quarter of descriptions use at least one EDI term (diversity, equity, inclusion,

FIGURE 17: Frequency of EDI term in CRC descriptions, by type



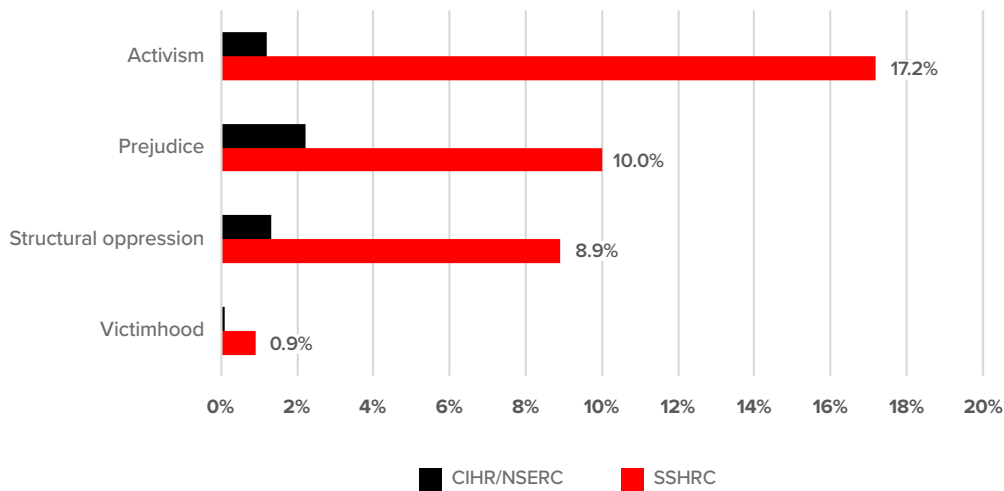
Source: Canada Research Chairs 2026b, CRC data.

diverse, equality, inclusive, justice, allyship, affirmation, empowerment, community, solidarity, awareness, safe space, underrepresented, inequality, inequity, exclusion, injustice). A further one in five uses at least one therapeutic term (victimized, abused, traumatized, offended, bullied, humiliated, wronged, harmed, stigmatized, insulted, ridiculed, slandered, defamed, persecuted, mistreated, denigrated, harassed, intimidated, betrayed, disrespected, dehumanized, silenced and alienated).

The more overtly radical family of words (i.e. activism, structural oppression, victimhood) appear less frequently. For instance, structural oppression terms appear in just 3.2 per cent of CRC descriptions. The full list of terms in the structural oppression category includes White privilege, whiteness, White supremacy, patriarchy, toxic masculinity, rape culture, objectification, microaggressions, heteronormativity, victim blaming, slut shaming, cultural appropriation, colonialism, colonized, decolonization, disenfranchised, segregated, enslaved, exploited and racialized.

This does not mean that radicalism is merely a minor theme in the CRC descriptions. Narrowing our scope to SSHRC appointees in **Figure 18** shows that over 17 per cent mention at least one activist term (advocacy, rights, liberation, emancipation, oppression, marginalized, marginalize, disadvantaged, deprived, police brutality, hate speech, displacement). A further 10 per cent mention at least one prejudice term (racism, racist,

FIGURE 18: Frequency of radical terminology, by council



Source: Canada Research Chairs 2026b, CRC data.

xenophobia, xenophobic, sexism, sexist, misogyny, misogynist, homophobia, homophobic, transphobia, transphobic, islamophobia, Islamophobic, antisemitism, antisemitic, ageism, ageist, ableism, ableist, bias, discrimination, discriminated). Nearly 9 per cent mention at least one structural oppression word. Only the victimhood lexicon is rare among social science and humanities CRCs. Combining activist, prejudice, structural oppression, and victimhood terms, fully 29 per cent of SSHRC chairs mention at least one of these terms in their description.

Snow found that 10 to 15 per cent of SSHRC grant titles contained EDI terms, while our analysis drawing on the fuller CRC project descriptions shows that 75 per cent of the descriptions of 2025 SSHRC chairs contain EDI terms. Germane to the above is that SSHRC has experienced the fastest budget growth of the three research councils during the EDI era, doubling from \$380 million in 2014–15 to \$785 million in 2024–25 (Snow 2025, 16). Of the SSHRC budget, just \$65 million is spent on CRCs. However, the CRC pattern echoes the wider SSHRC trends that Snow outlined in his content analysis of grant titles (abstracts were not available).

In 2025, the average number of EDI terms mentioned in the 55 new SSHRC chairs in our CRC data was 1.9, and 28 per cent of chair descriptions included activist terminology. To wit, \$18 million of SSHRC’s new spending

on CRC positions has been directed toward cultural socialist research that is not in the public interest and includes such job titles as “Canada Research Chair in Feminist Environmental Humanities,” “Canada Research Chair in the Radical Imagination,” “Canada Research Chair in Black Feminist Technologies and Artistic Praxis,” or “Canada Research Chair in Architectures of Spatial Justice.” Thus, spending on promoting aspects of EDI ideology and politics represents a significant outlay of federal government largesse alongside the non-meritorious funding of some female, Black, and Indigenous chairs.

There is also consilience between EDI hiring and activist research: Black and Indigenous chairs are four times more likely than Asian and White chairs to describe their work using an activist EDI keyword (i.e. from the victimhood, structural oppression, prejudice, and activism baskets of terms). This is mainly because the Black and Indigenous share is four times higher in SSHRC than in NSERC and CIHR, and because these groups are more concentrated in disciplines doing radical research.

A 15 to 30 per cent scholar-activist distortion away from the pursuit of excellence within SSHRC seems a reasonable lower-bound figure based on the CRC chair description data in the previous three figures as well as Snow’s content analysis of tri-council grant titles. This suggests that \$10 to \$20 million per year of taxpayer funds is being directed toward self-confirmatory ideological work that furthers the political agenda of a minority of the population — and in many instances runs counter to the values of most Canadians.¹⁰ This involves imposing a normative framework on the world, not as science should be — trying to better understand the world. Only the public’s ignorance of what is actually being funded by their tax dollars is insulating Canadian academic research from a collapse in conservative and moderate voter trust of the kind that has taken place in the United States since 2015 (Vanderbilt University and Washington University S. Louis 2026). The decline in trust of the CBC by Conservative voters (69 points less favourable than Liberal voters) may be a portent of things to come for Canadian universities (Pollara Strategic Insights 2024).

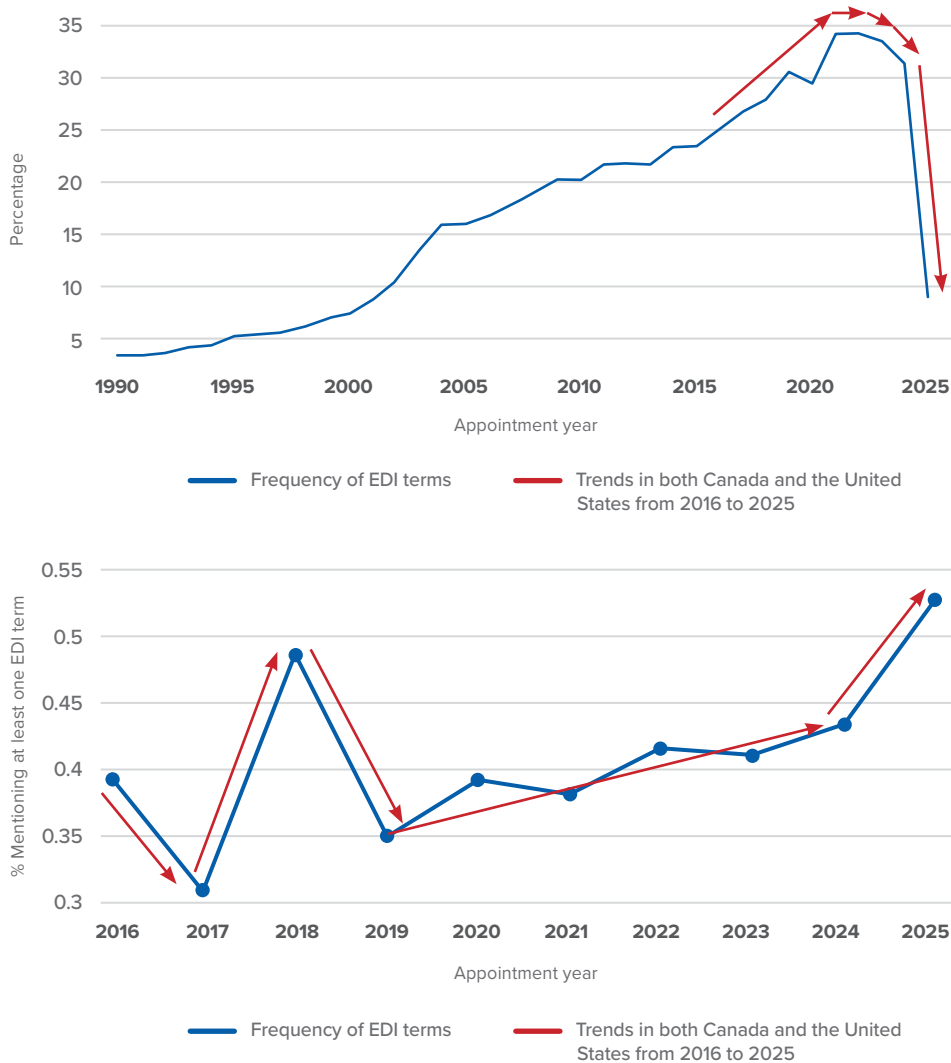
Beyond the CRC, the wider cost of EDI in terms of both the equity-excellence trade-off in hiring and SSHRC expenditure on scholar activism carries a cost that is likely well in excess of \$100 million. This focus actively contributes to the distortion of knowledge, damaging trust in research and deepening the political cleavage that is dividing the country. The fact

that the federal government’s signature research agencies are spearheading the radical politics of what the polling firm More in Common identifies as the “Progressive Activist” tenth of Canadians is likely to inflame populist resentment of cultural elites and their institutions, which are increasingly seen as unaccountable (Grossmann and Hopkins 2024; Hawkins et al. 2018).

We might go further and ask whether EDI is also distorting outcomes in the wider government and corporate sector. Research from the Aristotle Foundation suggests that major corporations place their thumb on the hiring scale through targets and monitoring (which also extends to suppliers) but have yet to institute hard quotas and requirements the way universities have. The potential cost of equity is, however, far larger given the amount of economic activity accounted for by the corporate sector and its supply chains. Our calculations for the tri-council agencies of a two per cent “tax” on output is likely too high for the rest of society, but the number is far from zero. The cost of EDI administrators, diversity trainers, and compliance policies must also be factored in. A recent report on British business, focusing only on the latter, puts the cost of corporate EDI at £11 billion per year (Revers et al. 2026; Marsh et al. 2026).

Despite the ebbing of EDI terminology in the media, and a decline in left-wing targeting of dissenting academics, woke is not only not dead, but is actively rising in Canadian academic research. **Figure 19** compares the frequency of EDI terms in American National Science Foundation (NSF) grants (the US counterpart to the tri-council agencies) and Canada Research Chairs. (The blue line indicates the frequency of EDI terms, while the red arrows identify the trend for the same time period in both countries.) The contrast is stark. In the United States, EDI in NSF grants peaked in 2021, fell slightly in 2023, declined faster in 2024 (before Donald Trump’s second presidency began), then collapsed to 2001 levels in response to the Trump administration’s cuts to EDI-themed grants in 2025. By contrast, the CRC program, which reflects comparable tri-council grants content, shows a surge following the EDI push in late 2017, then, after a modest fall-back, a steady increase and another boom in 2025. The lesson is that without political pressure — which in the United States came in the form of post-October 7, 2023, Senate hearings and a new Republican administration in late 2024 — very little changes. Such pressure does not currently exist in Canada.

FIGURE 19: Frequency of EDI terms in American National Science Foundation Grants and Canada Research Chairs



Source: Sibarium 2026.

Conclusion

Prior to 2023, the general — yet largely untested — consensus in academia was that equity, diversity, and inclusion improved excellence. However, academic research, such as that by Edmans et al. from 2025 and Wang et al. from 2019 illustrated that EDI does not further organizational productivity metrics such as stock performance. Studies of team performance within organizations find either no effect or small negative effects of demographic diversity on

performance (Bell 2011; van Dijk, van Engen, and van Knippenberg 2012). And while several studies find that Black, Hispanic, or female students and academics perform less well than their White, Asian or male peers (i.e. McCaffree and Savolainen 2026), there has been no assessment of the organizational-level impact — until now.

Our analysis of the research output in the Canada Research Chairs Program from 2016 to 2025 confirms that diversity is not merely neutral but can *lower performance*.

All told, ending EDI initiatives in Canadian research should be a top priority for any responsible government. Doing so would entail proactively terminating scholar activist grants and eliminating diversity targets, statements, and advertising at the research councils. The EDI ethos is politically toxic, racially and sexually discriminatory, and a waste of scarce public resources. The legitimacy of Canada's government-funded research base cannot be taken for granted. It hinges on federal research councils returning to their prior focus on the disinterested pursuit of truth. The goal for the social sciences and humanities must be to study the most pressing social problems for all Canadians, not just those occupying the leftmost end of the political spectrum. [MLI](#)

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Endnotes

- 1 For 2026–27 estimates, see Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (2026).
- 2 For these figures, the h-indices have been log transformed, then standardized around 0.
- 3 For a critique of the discrimination claim, see Jussim 2026.
- 4 With log transformation of both variables to account for their non-normal distribution, which affects OLS multiple regression.
- 5 As assessed by interacting variables for race or sex with the variable for EDI term count.
- 6 While some models in the CRC data show that race and sex interact significantly (Black and Indigenous women score notably lower than Black and Indigenous men), the effect is only at the statistical borderline and turns on a relatively small number of cases, affecting reliability.
- 7 Even as there appears to be no gender gap among the small number of cases from 2011 to 2015.
- 8 On the former, see Kendi (2019). For a discussion of the latter, see Kaufmann (2024b).
- 9 For more on totemic progressive groups, see Al-Gharbi (2024).
- 10 Two in three Canadians oppose the Critical Social Justice (i.e. woke cultural socialist) position on free speech, Canadian history, race, and trans issues (see Kaufman 2024).

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