



**2025** REPORT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA  
TO THE PARLIAMENT OF CANADA

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# Recruiting for Canada's Military



Office of the  
Auditor General  
of Canada

Bureau du  
vérificateur général  
du Canada

**INDEPENDENT  
AUDITOR'S REPORT**

## **Performance audit reports**

This report presents the results of a performance audit conducted by the Office of the Auditor General of Canada (OAG) under the authority of the Auditor General Act.

A performance audit is an independent, objective, and systematic assessment of how well government is managing its activities, responsibilities, and resources. Audit topics are selected on the basis of their significance. While the OAG may comment on policy implementation in a performance audit, it does not comment on the merits of a policy.

Performance audits are planned, performed, and reported in accordance with professional auditing standards and OAG policies. They are conducted by qualified auditors who

- establish audit objectives and criteria for the assessment of performance
- gather the evidence necessary to assess performance against the criteria
- report both positive and negative findings
- conclude against the established audit objectives
- make recommendations for improvement when there are significant differences between criteria and assessed performance

Performance audits contribute to a public service that is ethical and effective and a government that is accountable to Parliament and Canadians.

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# At a Glance



## Overall message

Overall, the Canadian Armed Forces did not recruit and train enough applicants to meet its operational requirements. While thousands applied annually, only 1 out of 13 applicants were successfully recruited. The Canadian Armed Forces did not always know why applicants abandoned their applications during the recruitment process.

We found that the Canadian Armed Forces was experiencing a challenge of attracting and training enough highly skilled recruits to reach full staffing levels for many occupations, such as pilots and ammunition technicians.

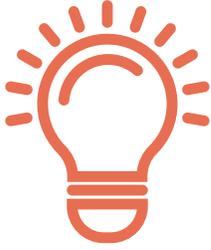
During our audit period, the Canadian Armed Forces implemented changes designed to increase the number of recruitments. It was able to recruit more Indigenous and visible minority members, but the representation of women remained below its goals.

We found ineffective decision making for recruitment and training. Committees and groups managing recruitment and training activities lacked authority and clear accountability, leading to disjointed ownership of the recruiting process. During the period of our audit, the Canadian Armed Forces implemented changes, such as creating the Recruiting Campaign Board in June 2024 to improve decision making for the recruitment process. The board started to transform and modernize recruitment, including amending the security screening requirements.

We also found that the information technology systems used to support recruitment and training activities were not linked and required staff to manually input significant amounts of information, which contributed to inefficiencies and bottlenecks. The Canadian Armed Forces' development and deployment of new systems for recruiting and training encountered significant delays and did not meet applicant and Canadian Armed Forces personnel needs.

The continuing gaps in Canadian Armed Forces personnel could affect the Canadian Army's, the Royal Canadian Navy's, and the Royal Canadian Air Force's abilities to respond to threats, emergencies, or conflicts and to accomplish their missions.

## Key facts and figures



- Almost 192,000 people applied to the Canadian Armed Forces between April 1, 2022, and March 31, 2025. Applicant numbers increased each year of the audit period.
- During the period of the audit, the Canadian Armed Forces planned to recruit just over 19,700 new recruits but recruited only around 15,000, falling short by about 4,700 recruits.
- The Canadian Armed Forces recruitment target time was between 100 and 150 days, but it often took twice as long to recruit. The median number of days it took for an applicant to be recruited for the 3-year period was between 245 and 271.
- During the period of the audit, the backlog of pending security quality checks rose from around 20,000 to almost 23,000

See [Recommendations and Responses](#) at the end of this report.

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# Introduction

## Background

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### The Canadian Armed Forces

1. The Canadian Armed Forces, established under the National Defence Act, is the unified military forces of Canada, comprising the Canadian Army, the Royal Canadian Navy, and the Royal Canadian Air Force. The Canadian Armed Forces has an authorized staffing level of 71,500 Regular Force members and 30,000 Primary Reserve members. As of April 30, 2025, there were 65,154 Canadian Armed Forces Regular Force members and 23,561 Primary Reserve members. The Canadian Armed Forces are tasked with defending Canada's security, protecting its citizens, and promoting strategic interests both domestically and internationally. To ensure its operational capability and readiness, the Canadian Armed Forces must annually recruit and train thousands of new members while retaining a substantial portion of its existing personnel.

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### Roles and responsibilities

2. **Department of National Defence.** The Department of National Defence is the civilian organization that supports the Canadian Armed Forces in its role of defending Canadian national interests domestically and internationally.
3. **Canadian Armed Forces.** The Canadian Armed Forces includes the Canadian Army, the Royal Canadian Navy, and the Royal Canadian Air Force, known as the 3 environments. It is responsible for commanding, controlling, and administering the Canadian military. It is also responsible for providing assistance to domestic and international partners, including conducting search and rescue operations; detecting, deterring, and defending against threats; and leading and contributing to international missions.

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## Previous audits

4. The Office of the Auditor General of Canada has conducted past audits of Canadian Armed Forces recruitment and retention, publishing its [report on recruitment and retention of military personnel in 2002](#), its [report on military recruiting and retention in 2006](#), and its [report on Canadian Armed Forces recruitment and retention in 2016](#). The audits revealed recurring issues and trends, including a persistent gap between recruitment targets and needs and the underrepresentation of women and other equity groups. Additionally, the lengthy and complex recruitment process, with significant delays, resulted in the loss of potential applicants.
5. Our previous audits also found that the training capacity and efficiency issues, including delays between training phases and a shortage of instructors, further impeded the Canadian Armed Forces' ability to adequately train new recruits to meet operational needs.

## Focus of the audit

6. This audit focused on whether the Canadian Armed Forces recruited and trained the members it needed to meet operational requirements.
7. This audit is important because the Canadian Armed Forces requires a sufficient number of trained members ready for duty to fulfill its domestic and international commitments.
8. More details about the audit objective, scope, approach, and criteria are in [About the Audit](#) at the end of this report.

# Findings and Recommendations

## Overall, the Canadian Armed Forces did not meet its recruitment and training goals

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### Why this finding matters

9. This finding matters because the Canadian Armed Forces' inability to recruit and train enough new members impacts its capacity to sustain operational readiness and respond to threats, emergencies, or conflicts and can jeopardize its ability to accomplish its missions.

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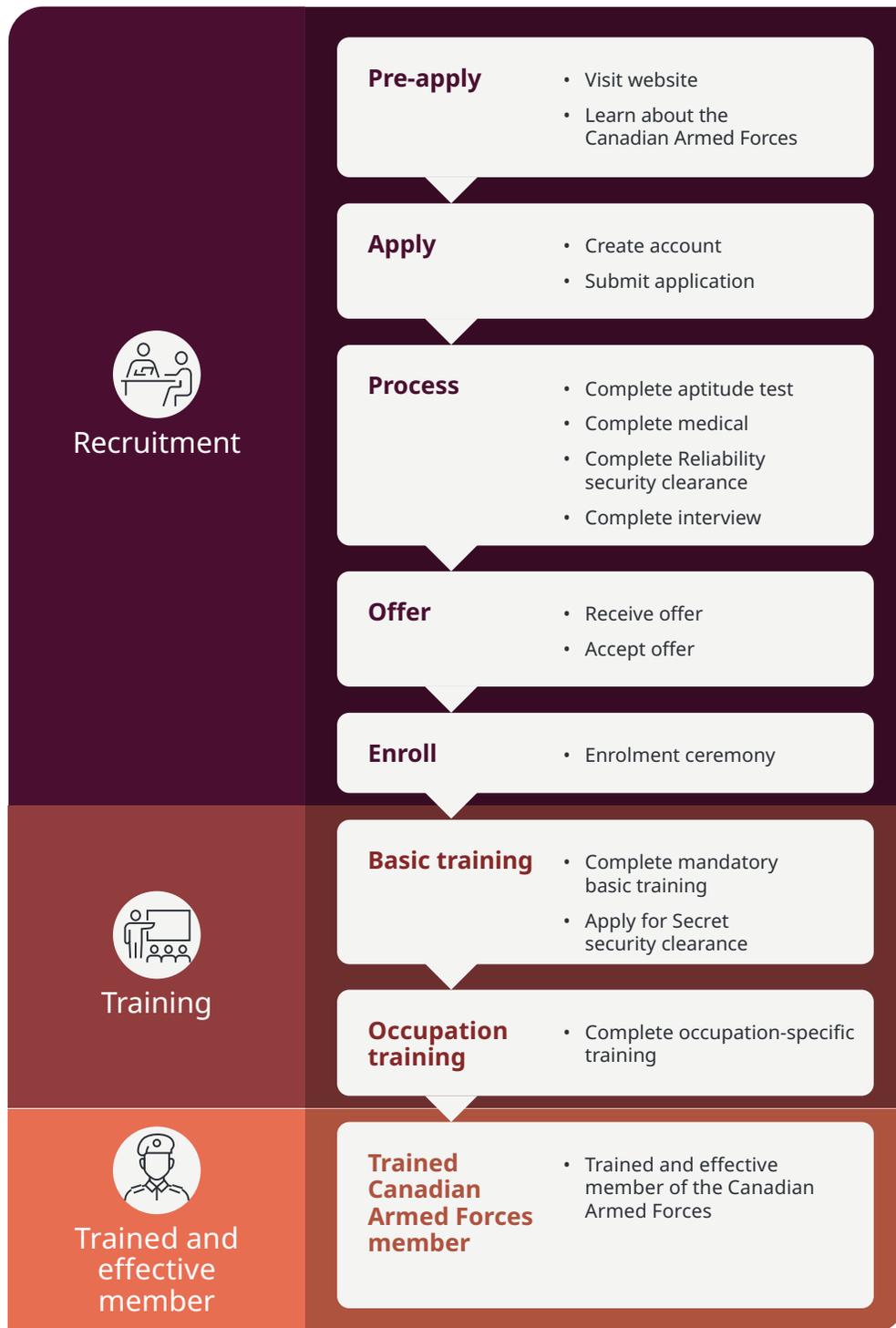
### Context

10. Every year, the Canadian Armed Forces plans to recruit and train enough applicants to meet its annual Strategic Intake Plan and operational needs. Once applicants are recruited and complete both basic and occupational training, they reach their Occupational Functional Point and become fully trained and effective members of the Canadian Armed Forces ([Exhibit 1](#)).

11. Applicants can select up to 3 occupations they are interested in. Each occupation has different requirements and recruitment targets.

12. An applicant can ask a recruiter to close their file, and it will be labelled "voluntarily withdraw." If a recruiter does not hear back from an applicant after 2 months, the recruiter closes the file and labels it as "no further contact."

Exhibit 1—The Canadian Armed Forces recruitment and training pathway



Note: This was the process for successful applicants for the majority of our audit period. Changes to the process are discussed in [paragraph 39](#).

Source: Based on information from the Canadian Armed Forces

[Read the Exhibit 1 text description](#)



14. We found that the Canadian Armed Forces conducted surveys during some steps of the recruitment process to understand prospect and applicant experiences. This included a survey for those who:

- visited the recruitment website
- completed the recruitment interview
- voluntarily withdrew from the recruitment process (November 2023–November 2024)

However, during the audit period, the Canadian Armed Forces did not do analyses to understand why applicants might start the recruitment process but drop out along the way. Without knowing why applicants left, it was difficult for the Canadian Armed Forces to identify what was needed to increase the number of applicants who complete the recruitment process.

15. We took a sample of applications, between April 1, 2022, and August 31, 2024, for all occupations to identify bottlenecks in the process. Only 8 out of the 51 applicants (16%) were recruited, and we found that issues with communication by recruiters and applicants, documents submitted by applicants, assessments, and applicant inactivity adversely affected the applicants' recruitment.

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#### Recommendation

16. The Canadian Armed Forces should collect and analyze information from applicants during the recruitment process to identify common reasons for "no further contact" and voluntary withdrawals and to adjust recruitment strategies where appropriate.

**The Canadian Armed Forces' response.** Agreed.

See [Recommendations and Responses](#) at the end of this report for detailed responses.

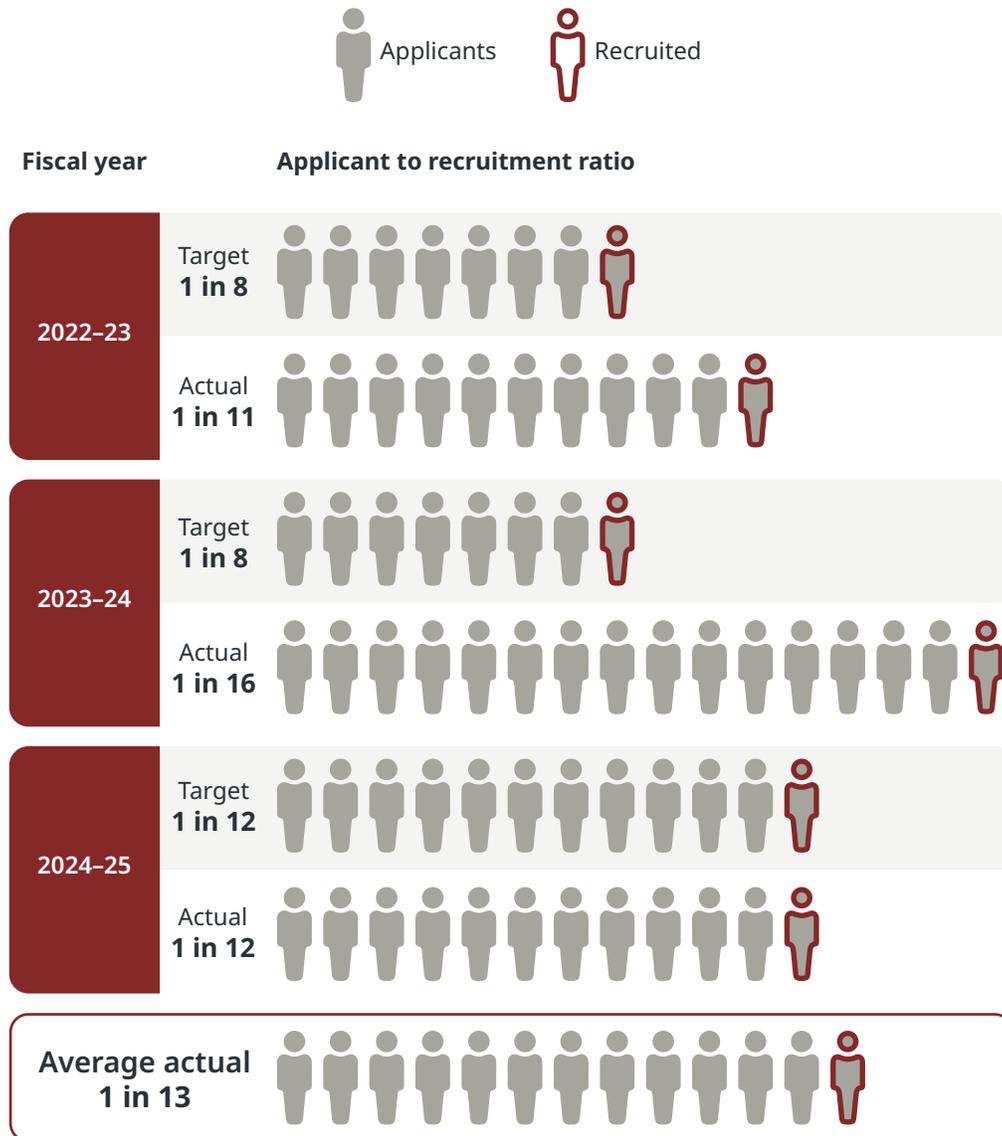
### **The Canadian Armed Forces was not able to recruit enough new members to reach the targets in its Strategic Intake Plan**

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#### Findings

17. We found that the average recruitment ratio between April 1, 2022, and March 31, 2025, was around 1 in 13—that is, for every 13 individuals who submitted an online application, 1 was recruited. The rate considered all applicants, including those who had no further contact with or voluntarily left the Canadian Armed Forces' recruitment process and those who were later screened out based on criteria such as age and citizenship status ([Exhibit 3](#)).

**Exhibit 3**—Average applicant to recruitment ratios did not always meet targets

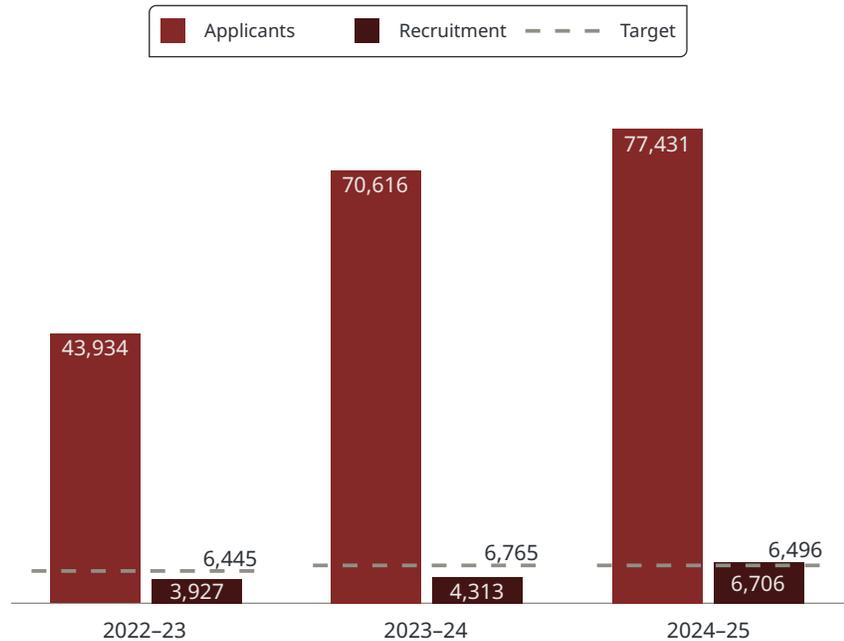


Source: Based on data from the Canadian Armed Forces

[Read the Exhibit 3 text description](#)

18. We also found that the total number of recruits between April 1, 2022, and March 31, 2024, was less than the Canadian Armed Forces' overall recruitment targets outlined in the Strategic Intake Plan. However, between April 1, 2024, and March 31, 2025, the Canadian Armed Forces surpassed its recruitment targets by 210 ([Exhibit 4](#)).

**Exhibit 4—Strategic Intake Plan recruitment targets were not met for most of our audit period**



Source: Based on data from the Canadian Armed Forces

**Read the Exhibit 4 text description**

19. Out of the 14,946 recruited over the 3 years, 14,046 recruits began basic training during the audit period. Of those who started basic training, about 14% (1,997) were unable to complete it due to issues such as voluntary release, training failure, and medical conditions and about 7% (925) had not yet completed it. This left 11,124 recruits graduating basic training and ready for occupational training. We were unable to determine the failure rate for occupational training because the data was fragmented and could not be consolidated due to the Canadian Armed Forces' information technology (IT) system limitations.

20. We found that the median number of days it took for an applicant to be recruited for the 3 years under our audit period was 271 days (for 2022-23), 245 days (for 2023-24), and 251 days (for 2024-25). The Canadian Armed Forces internal targets to recruit applicants was between 100 and 150 days.

## Planning for new recruits fell short of meeting demand and did not fully account for trained and effective members leaving

### Findings

21. We found that the Canadian Armed Forces had ongoing challenges in maintaining its workforce across various occupations. The targets set by the Canadian Armed Forces balanced long-term projections with existing training capacity, which was not enough to maintain the optimal workforce. Additionally, the targets did not always account for trained and effective members leaving the armed forces, such as voluntary releases or leaving for medical reasons, leading to staffing shortages and operational challenges. While recruitment improved over the audit period, the Canadian Armed Forces did not bring in enough new recruits to replace the people who left ([Exhibit 5](#)).

**Exhibit 5**—While recruitment improved over the audit period, the Canadian Armed Forces did not bring in enough new recruits to replace the people who left



Source: Based on data from the Canadian Armed Forces

[Read the Exhibit 5 text description](#)

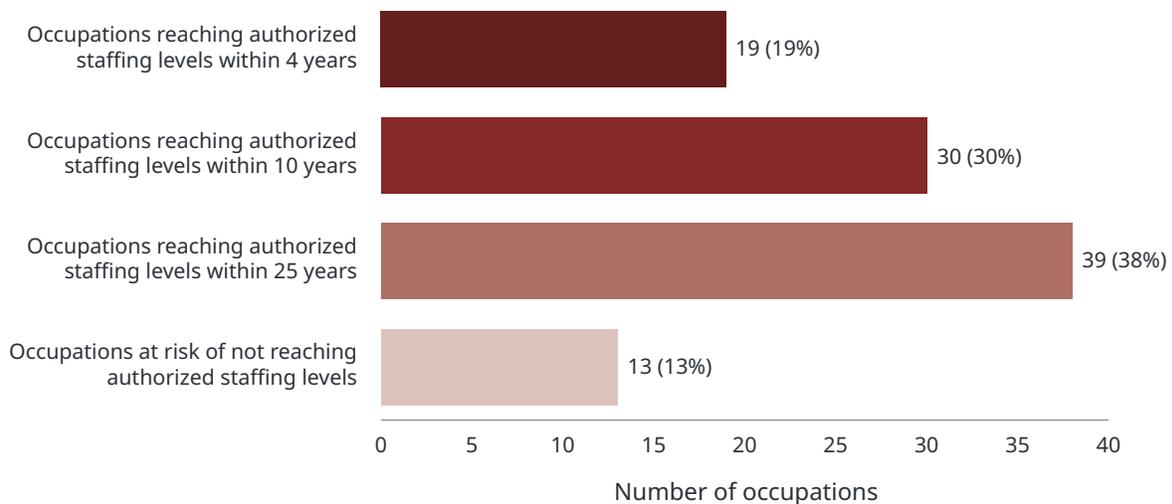
22. The Canadian Armed Forces' internal analysis showed that within the first 4 years after reaching their Occupational Functional Point, new members were most likely to leave the Canadian Armed Forces due to training delays, difficulty adapting to military culture, and dissatisfaction with their occupations.

23. The Canadian Armed Forces considers an occupation to be "distressed" when the number of trained personnel in the occupation:

- is less than 90% of the authorized staffing level
- is not forecast to reach the authorized staffing level within 2 years

The Canadian Armed Forces predicted that 13% of occupations were at risk of not reaching their authorized staffing levels unless key challenges were addressed ([Exhibit 6](#)).

**Exhibit 6**—As of June 30, 2024, 13% of occupations in the Canadian Armed Forces were at risk of not reaching authorized staffing levels



Source: Based on data from the Canadian Armed Forces

[Read the Exhibit 6 text description](#)

24. These key challenges included expanding training capacity and attracting enough highly skilled recruits. Examples of these in-demand roles included:

- Signal Technician
- Line Technician
- Combat Engineer
- Pilot
- Aircraft Structures Technician
- Aerospace Telecommunications and Information Systems Technician
- Ammunition Technician

25. We took a sample of 51 applications for in-demand occupations to see whether there were roadblocks to recruiting into those occupations. Thirty-seven files were closed (73%), 13 applications were still active (25%), and only 1 applicant was recruited (2%). We found that 78% of the file closures in the sample were "no further contact" with applicant, meaning after a recruiter made several attempts to contact an applicant, the applicant did not respond or reply over a 2-month period. Applicants voluntarily withdrew in 16% of the files. The remaining 6% of files were closed for other reasons, such as failing the aptitude test or the medical exam. We also found that the reasons for voluntary withdrawal were not documented because they were not easily accessible and required a line-by-line review of applicant logs and documents. This limited the Canadian Armed Forces' capacity to draw insights from withdrawals.

26. To attract more of the qualified applicants to fill these in-demand occupations, the Canadian Armed Forces highlighted these positions on its website as being more in demand and provided incentives, such as signing bonuses to those who were successfully recruited.

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## Recommendation

27. To support operational readiness, the Canadian Armed Forces should implement and monitor actions to address understaffed occupations, in particular those that are in demand.

**The Canadian Armed Forces' response.** Agreed.

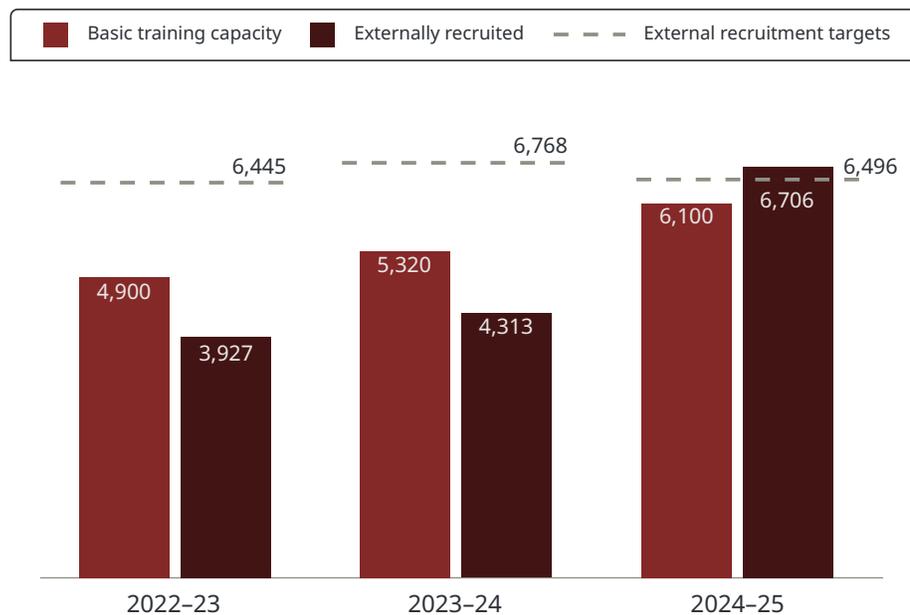
See [Recommendations and Responses](#) at the end of this report for detailed responses.

## Planned basic training capacity did not cover Strategic Intake Plan targets

### Findings

28. We found that the Canadian Armed Forces did not have sufficient basic training capacity to meet its recruitment targets as stated in its Strategic Intake Plan. Since the number of recruits was below recruitment targets for the first 2 years of our audit period, the Canadian Armed Forces was able to train all recruits. However, had the recruitment numbers met or exceeded the Canadian Armed Forces' targets, it would not have had the capacity to train all recruits ([Exhibit 7](#)). Since recruitment exceeded training capacity in 2024–25, the Canadian Armed Forces increased its capacity to train those who were recruited by increasing the number of cohorts and bringing in temporary instructors. However, the Canadian Armed Forces recognized that this was not a sustainable way to train new recruits.

**Exhibit 7**—Basic training capacity did not cover external recruitment targets



Source: Based on data from the Canadian Armed Forces

[Read the Exhibit 7 text description](#)

29. When the Canadian Armed Forces developed recruitment targets, training capacity was a key consideration. We found that the Canadian Armed Forces had a shortage of instructors, which was likely due to insufficient incentives and a demanding workload. As of March 31, 2025, the Canadian Forces Leadership and Recruit School, which conducts Basic Military Qualification and Basic Military Officer Qualification, was operating at only 80%.

30. We also found that as of March 31, 2024, there was not enough equipment to carry out training operations, with most areas having less equipment each year over the audit period. However, the Canadian Armed Forces told us that the shortage of equipment did not result in any cancelled training. In our opinion, continued shortages of equipment could put future training at risk.

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#### Recommendation

31. The Canadian Armed Forces should take action to ensure sufficient investments in instructors, training infrastructure, and equipment to increase the number of recruits who can be trained; create a more stable, long-term training system; and better align the Strategic Intake Plan with long-term personnel needs.

**The Canadian Armed Forces' response.** Agreed.

See [Recommendations and Responses](#) at the end of this report for detailed responses.

### Coordination and decision making for recruitment improved

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#### Findings

32. We found that within the Canadian Armed Forces, decision making for recruitment and training activities was disjointed and that accountability was dispersed among different groups and across the Canadian Army, the Royal Canadian Navy, and the Royal Canadian Air Force until the creation of the Recruiting Campaign Board in June 2024.

33. The board was created to allow senior leadership of the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces to start to transform and modernize recruitment. We found that the board received relevant information regarding recruitment and training and started making timely decisions to support recruiting enough new members to meet the Strategic Intake Plan, including removing the Canadian Forces Aptitude Test, introducing the Scored Employment Application Form, adjusting medical requirements, and addressing security screening delays and training capacity.

34. However, we also found that the primary group responsible for both recruitment and training, the Military Personnel Generation Group, was not given the authorities it needed to meet its objectives and implement the changes made by the board. This contributed to siloed decision making across the organization and conflicting priorities that stalled progress in improving the recruitment process. Before February 2025, the Military Personnel Generation Group operated informally and without the authority to make the decisions it needed to recruit and train new members. We were unable to determine the impact of the February 2025 change in authorities because it occurred at the end of our audit period.

## **Recruitment of women did not reach Canadian Armed Forces goals**

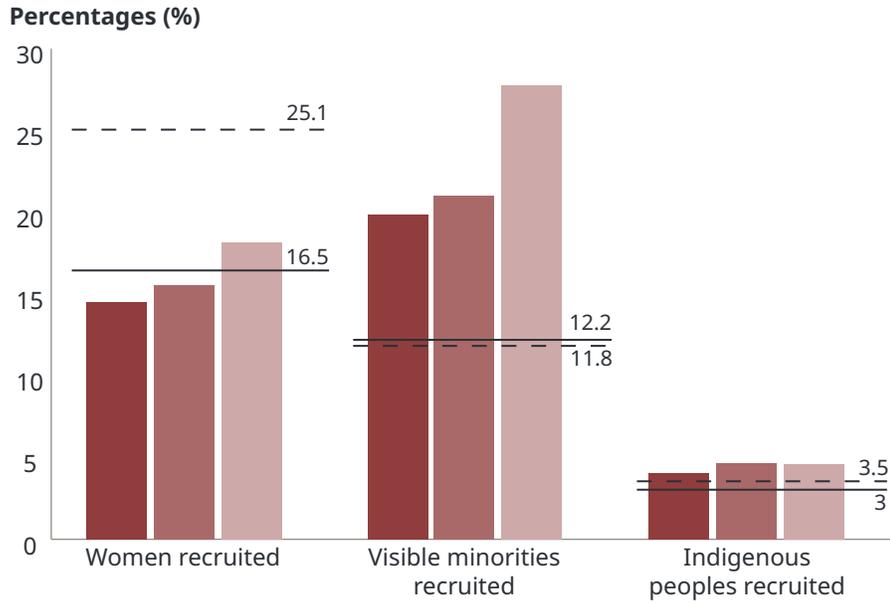
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### Findings

35. We found that the Canadian Armed Forces had strategies and programs in place to attract a diverse group of Canadians to join.

36. The Canadian Armed Forces was able to recruit more Indigenous and visible minority members than its goals during the audit period ([Exhibit 8](#)). However, the representation of women remained below its goals.

**Exhibit 8**—Not all Canadian Armed Forces employment equity goals were met from April 1, 2022, to March 31, 2025



Note: Current state is as of March 31, 2024.

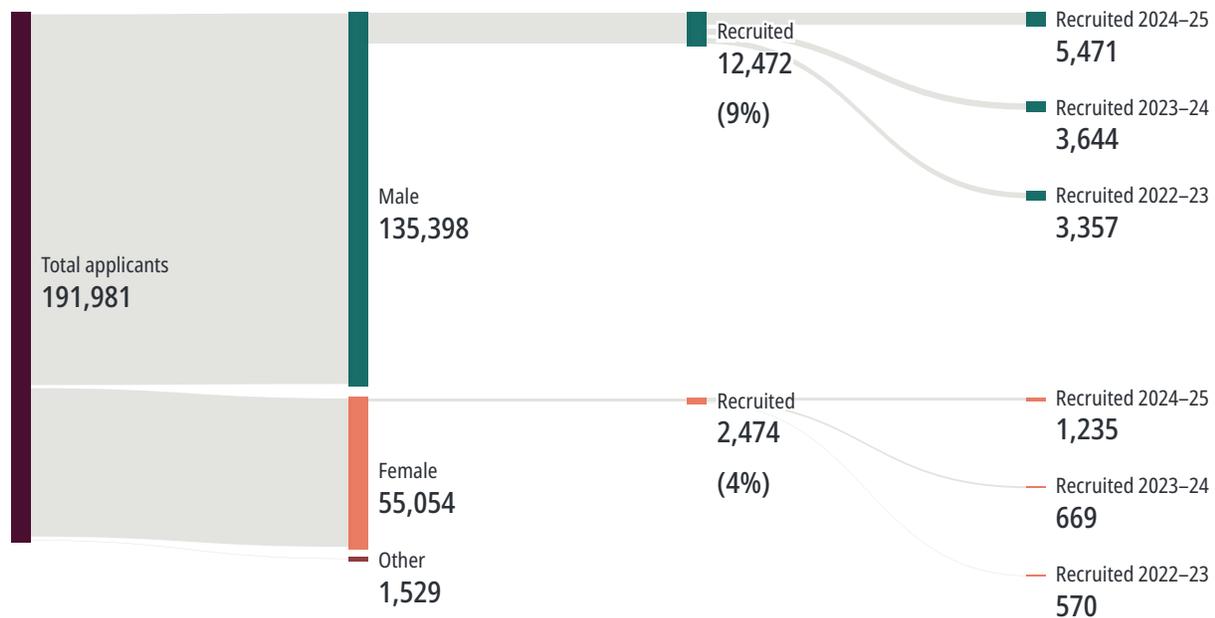
Source: Based on data from the Department of National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces 2023-24 Departmental Results Report. This data was used because there are no recruitment-specific goals.

[\*\*Read the Exhibit 8 text description\*\*](#)

37. Since our [2016 report on Canadian Armed Forces recruitment and retention](#), the representation of women in the Canadian Armed Forces increased slightly, from approximately 14% to 18%, but was still below the organization's goals of 25%.

38. We also found that the percentage of women applicants that were recruited (4%) was less than the percentage of men applicants that were recruited (9%) ([Exhibit 9](#)). However, the Canadian Armed Forces prioritizes qualified women applicants during the selection recruitment process. Internal Canadian Armed Forces analysis showed that some of the reasons fewer women apply include doubts about meeting requirements, the dangers of combat service, and mental health concerns.

**Exhibit 9**—Fewer women than men were recruited between April 1, 2022, and March 31, 2025



Source: Based on data from the Canadian Armed Forces

[Read the Exhibit 9 text description](#)

## Changes were made to the recruitment process during the audit period

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### Findings

39. We found that during our audit period, the Canadian Armed Forces implemented changes designed to increase the number of recruits. These changes included the following:

- The Canadian Forces Aptitude Test, which evaluated verbal, spatial, and problem-solving skills, was removed.
- The Scored Employment Application Form was introduced to capture applicants' past education and experience to help determine work-related outcomes like job performance and training success.
- Some medical standards were changed, including aligning requirements across the Canadian Armed Forces. For example, prior to the changes, applicants with certain conditions were not allowed to be recruited, while trained and effective members with the same conditions were allowed to continue active duty.
- Those who completed basic training were allowed to start occupational training while Secret clearance was being assessed. If Secret clearance was still pending, they would not be allowed to access restricted areas and access controlled information. If they are unable to obtain and maintain the necessary security clearance level, they are subject to release from the Canadian Armed Forces.

We were unable to determine the impact of these changes to recruitment levels, as not enough time had passed since their implementation to the end of our audit period.

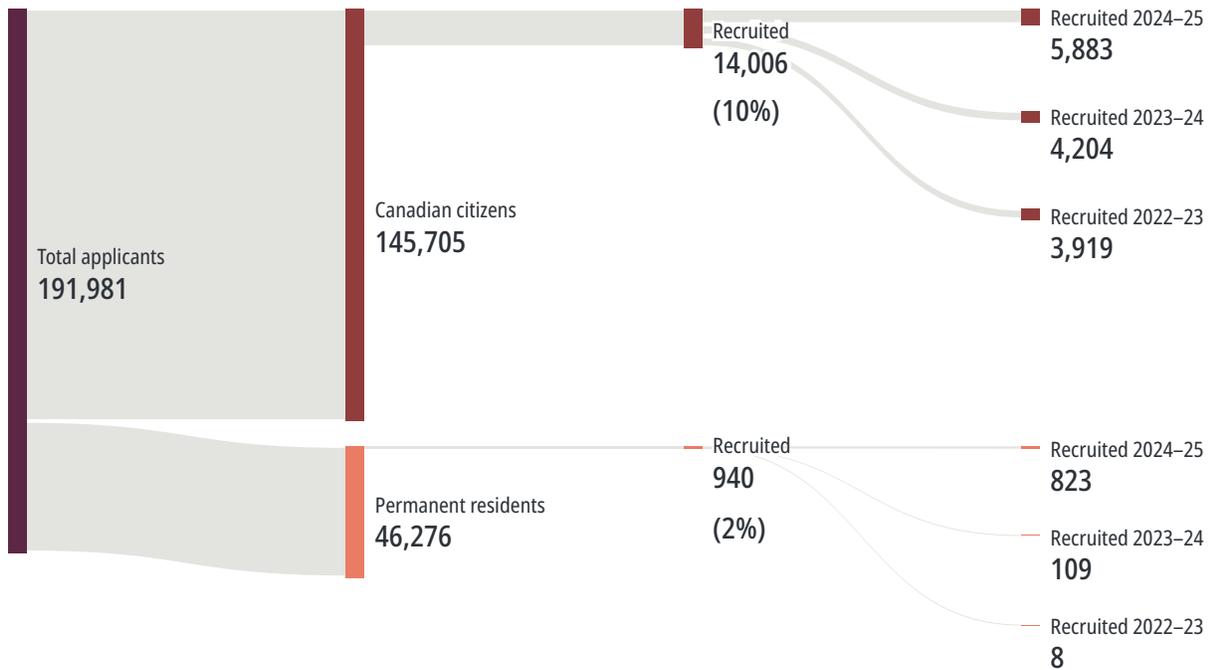
## Permanent resident recruitment increased

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### Findings

40. While the Canadian Armed Forces made a commitment to recruit more permanent residents, no specific goals were set. We found that over the audit period, the recruitment rate of permanent residents was significantly lower than that of Canadian citizens ([Exhibit 10](#))—only 2% of permanent residents who applied were recruited, compared with around 10% of Canadian citizens.

**Exhibit 10**—Fewer permanent residents were recruited compared with Canadian citizens



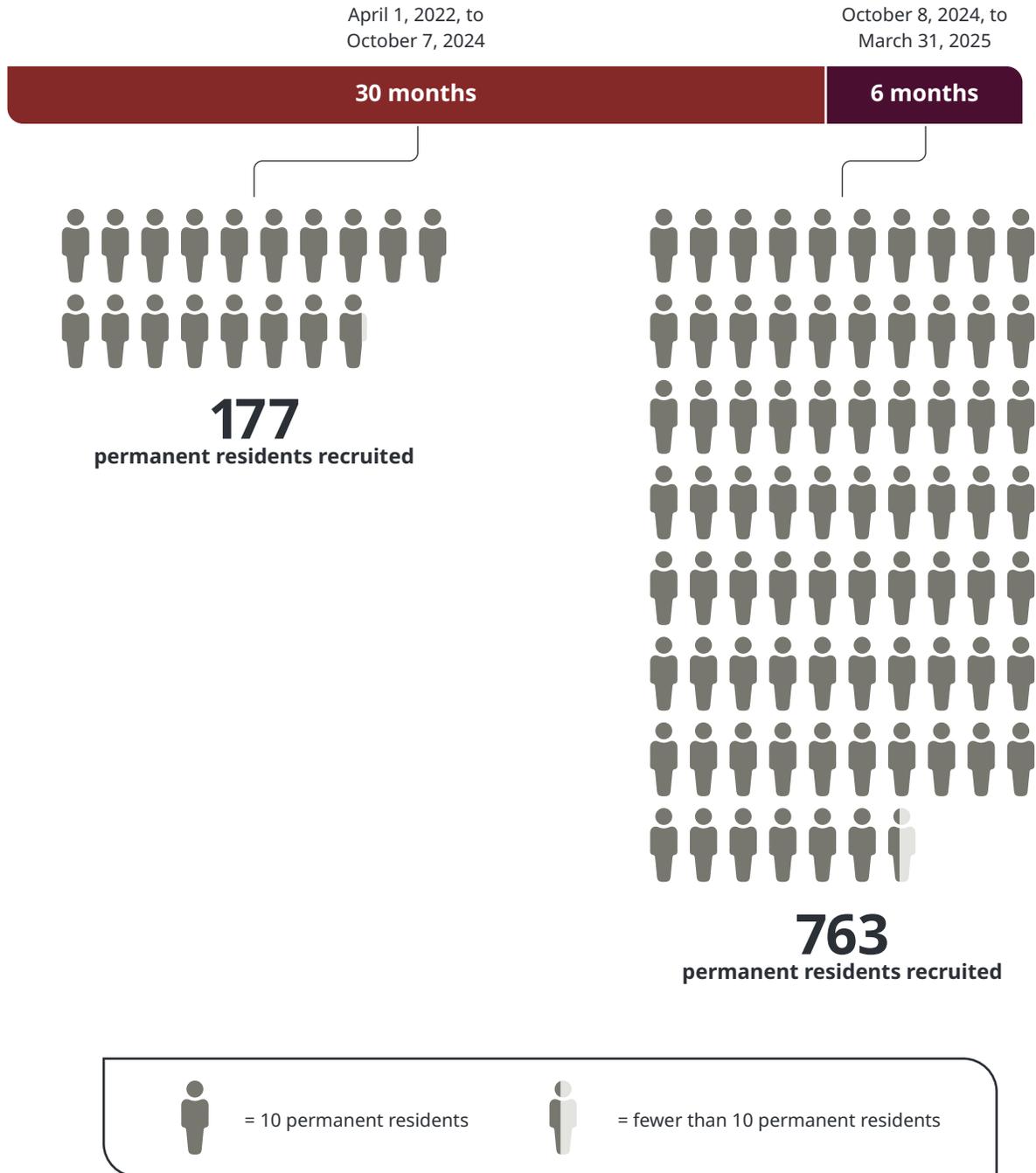
Source: Based on data from the Canadian Armed Forces

[Read the Exhibit 10 text description](#)

41. The security screening process takes into account whether applicants have visited or lived in countries that are considered higher-risk. Prior to October 2024, all permanent resident applicants were screened under the process used for higher-risk countries, which caused delays in their recruitment. However, in October 2024, similar to Canadian citizens, permanent residents who had not visited or lived in higher-risk countries would not have to follow that process.

42. We found that there was an increase in the number of permanent residents recruited after this change was made. Over most of the audit period, 177 permanent residents were recruited. In the last 7 months of the audit, after the change to security requirements, 763 permanent residents were recruited ([Exhibit 11](#)).

**Exhibit 11**—Permanent resident recruitment increased after the Canadian Armed Forces aligned its security screening process



Source: Based on data from the Canadian Armed Forces

[\*\*Read the Exhibit 11 text description\*\*](#)

## Recruitment and training processes were inefficient

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### Why this finding matters

43. This finding matters because the Canadian Armed Forces needs to recruit and train enough members while maintaining well-functioning operations. Recruitment and training need to be done in a way that does not waste time, effort, or resources.

## The recruitment process lacked electronic forms and automation

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### Findings

44. We found that the Canadian Armed Forces used more than 8 different IT systems for managing recruitment and training data, including different systems for recruitment, medical, security screening, basic training, and occupational training. These IT systems had minimal data integration and siloed processes.

45. We also found that the Canadian Armed Forces IT systems required significant manual intervention to input and interpret data across and within systems. The IT systems were not designed to produce reports for strategic decision making. IT systems involved multiple users and fragmented databases, resulting in discrepancies in data collection, quality, and interpretation. For example, there is no database or process to track occupational training across the Canadian Armed Forces.

46. We found that recruitment processes lacked electronic forms and automation that would increase efficiency. For example, medical and security forms were paper-based and needed to be manually added into the systems by recruiters. On March 3, 2025, the Canadian Armed Forces introduced a new system, the Online Applicant Portal (OAP) 1.0, to electronically capture applicant information and streamline the application process. However, not all of the required forms, such as the security clearance forms, were able to be integrated into the new system, and recruiters continued to input that information manually. We were unable to determine the impact of OAP 1.0 because not enough time had passed.

47. The new OAP 1.0 system was not able to automatically validate or verify the information provided by applicants. Recruiters must assess and follow up on each application, regardless of whether it meets the basic eligibility criteria. For example, the system does not have the ability to pre-fill forms with existing

applicant information, resulting in applicants needing to provide information more than once, which could result in discrepancies that require recruiter follow-up.

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## Recommendation

48. The Canadian Armed Forces should modernize the information technology systems supporting recruitment activities by implementing tools and processes that improve data quality, integration, and usability for recruiters and applicants. This should include best practices such as:

- automated controls, such as completeness checks and input validation to ensure accurate and efficient data entry
- electronic forms that applicants complete once and that can be transferred seamlessly across systems
- access to complete, real-time recruitment data to support performance monitoring and strategic decision making
- standardized systems training and user support to promote consistent use across the organization

**The Canadian Armed Forces' response.** Agreed.

See [Recommendations and Responses](#) at the end of this report for detailed responses.

## A new training management IT system did not meet Canadian Armed Forces personnel's needs

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### Findings

49. We found that the Canadian Armed Forces used different IT systems for basic and occupational training, which contributed to issues with data collection. Basic training was managed by the Canadian Forces Leadership and Recruit School, while occupational training was managed separately by each of the 3 environments: the Canadian Army, the Royal Canadian Navy, and the Royal Canadian Air Force.

50. In 2018, the Canadian Armed Forces began to develop a new training management system, the Basic Training List Management System (BTLMS), to manage both basic training and occupational training consistently. Even though the BTLMS was live during the audit period, it had not been formally launched, did not meet the needs of Canadian Armed Forces personnel, and was not adopted across the organization. There was no clear direction for the army,

navy, and air force to use the BTLMS, and they continued to manage their training with other systems, including manual spreadsheets and databases.

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## Recommendation

51. The Canadian Armed Forces should adopt a consistent approach to manage basic and occupational training across the organization.

**The Canadian Armed Forces' response.** Agreed.

See [Recommendations and Responses](#) at the end of this report for detailed responses.

## The security screening process had significant backlogs

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### Findings

52. Canadian Armed Forces members require different levels of security to do their jobs. Clearance for higher levels like Secret and Top Secret require more time to process. Recruits fill out the security clearance forms, which then undergo a quality check by Canadian Armed Forces personnel to ensure they are complete. If the form has errors or is incomplete, it is returned to the recruit, who must submit it again. Once a Secret or Top Secret clearance form passes the quality check, it is transferred to the Canadian Security Intelligence Service to process.

53. Canadian Armed Forces internal data showed a backlog of approximately 20,000 security clearance applications waiting for quality checks in November 2024, which rose to almost 23,000 in March 2025. The percentage of files that failed quality checks and needed to be returned and resubmitted was approximately 37% in July 2024 and rose to 41% in March 2025.

54. Furthermore, Canadian Armed Forces internal data showed a backlog of 8,335 Secret clearance requests. However, since Secret and Top Secret clearance must be processed through the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, the Canadian Armed Forces has limited flexibility in improving the speed at which these files can be processed. With more new members being recruited, the number of security clearances required will continue to increase. After our audit period, the Canadian Armed Forces loaned 2 staff members, and was planning to loan 2 more, to work with the Canadian Security Intelligence Service to process the backlog of Canadian Armed Forces security clearance requests.

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## Recommendation

55. The Canadian Armed Forces should identify sustainable solutions to ensure the security screening process is efficient and timely to meet its needs.

**The Canadian Armed Forces' response.** Agreed.

See **Recommendations and Responses** at the end of this report for detailed responses.

## Conclusion

56. We concluded that the Canadian Armed Forces did not recruit and train the members it needed to meet operational requirements.

## About the Audit

This independent assurance report was prepared by the Office of the Auditor General of Canada on Canadian Armed Forces recruiting. Our responsibility was to provide objective information, advice, and assurance to assist Parliament in its scrutiny of the government's management of resources and programs and to conclude on whether Canadian Armed Forces recruiting complied in all significant respects with the applicable criteria.

All work in this audit was performed to a reasonable level of assurance in accordance with the Canadian Standard on Assurance Engagements (CSAE) 3001—Direct Engagements, set out by the Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada (CPA Canada) in the CPA Canada Handbook—Assurance.

The Office of the Auditor General of Canada applies the Canadian Standard on Quality Management 1—Quality Management for Firms That Perform Audits or Reviews of Financial Statements, or Other Assurance or Related Services Engagements. This standard requires our office to design, implement, and operate a system of quality management, including policies or procedures regarding compliance with ethical requirements, professional standards, and applicable legal and regulatory requirements.

In conducting the audit work, we complied with the independence and other ethical requirements of the relevant rules of professional conduct applicable to the practice of public accounting in Canada, which are founded on fundamental principles of integrity, objectivity, professional competence and due care, confidentiality, and professional behaviour.

In accordance with our regular audit process, we obtained the following from entity management:

- confirmation of management's responsibility for the subject under audit
- acknowledgement of the suitability of the criteria used in the audit
- confirmation that all known information that has been requested, or that could affect the findings or audit conclusion, has been provided
- confirmation that the audit report is factually accurate

### Audit objective

The objective of this audit was to determine whether the Canadian Armed Forces recruited and trained the members it needed to meet operational requirements.

## Scope and approach

We examined whether the Canadian Armed Forces planned, attracted, and recruited the members it needed to meet organizational priorities and operational requirements. We also looked at whether the new members completed basic and occupational training.

We examined the Canadian Armed Forces intake planning processes to determine how recruitment targets were developed, especially for the 3 environments (the Canadian Army, the Royal Canadian Navy, and the Royal Canadian Air Force), occupations, and employment equity groups. We also examined whether the Canadian Armed Forces had the capacity to recruit and train new members and whether effective governance mechanisms were in place. The audit also examined whether there were bottlenecks in the process that delayed recruitment and training, including technology limitations.

This audit considered previous audits' findings and recommendations and included a review of relevant documentation, interviews with entity officials, and data analysis of recruitment and training numbers. We also conducted a site visit to the Canadian Forces Leadership and Recruit School at Canadian Forces Base Borden and the Saint-Jean Garrison and to the Canadian Armed Forces Recruiting Centre in Ottawa.

Based on the population size, we selected 2 random samples of 51 cases. The samples were simple random samples with a 90% confidence level and 10% 1-sided margin of error. We reviewed samples from Canadian Armed Forces recruitment and training data. Recruitment data was obtained through the Canadian Forces Recruiting Information Management System database and training from the Guardian database. The first sample was from application to reaching Occupational Functional Point from a population of 53,499. The second sample was for those who applied for in-demand occupations during the audit period from a population of 25,194. Both samples were to determine whether and where delays, bottlenecks, and abandoned applications occurred in the process.

We did not examine recruitment in the Reserve Force, the process to transfer from the Reserve Force into the Regular Force, retention outside of the recruitment process, the content of training, efforts to change the Canadian Armed Forces culture, or the Naval Experience Program.

## Criteria

We used the following criteria to conclude against our audit objective:

Criteria	Sources
<p>The Canadian Armed Forces recruits and trains the right number of candidates with the right skills and aptitudes to support operational requirements and reflect Canada's diversity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our North, Strong and Free: A Renewed Vision for Canada's Defence, National Defence, 2024</li> <li>• Chief of the Defence Staff / Deputy Minister Directive for Canadian Armed Forces Reconstitution, National Defence, 2022</li> <li>• Defence Administrative Order and Directive 5002-0, Military Personnel Requirements and Production, National Defence, 2015</li> <li>• Defence Administrative Order and Directive 5002-5, Canadian Forces Personnel Selection, National Defence, 2011</li> <li>• Defence Administrative Order and Directive 5002-1, Enrolment, National Defence, 2018</li> <li>• Canadian Armed Forces Employment Equity Plan 2021–2026, National Defence</li> </ul>
<p>The Canadian Armed Forces recruits and trains candidates without undue delay by minimizing bottlenecks and by enabling seamless transitions to training.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our North, Strong and Free: A Renewed Vision for Canada's Defence, National Defence, 2024</li> <li>• Chief of the Defence Staff / Deputy Minister Directive for Canadian Armed Forces Reconstitution, National Defence, 2022</li> <li>• Defence Administrative Order and Directive 5002-0, Military Personnel Requirements and Production, National Defence, 2015</li> <li>• Canadian Forces Joint Publication 1.0, Military Personnel Management Doctrine, National Defence, 2008</li> </ul>

## Period covered by the audit

The audit covered the period from April 1, 2022, to March 31, 2025. This is the period to which the audit conclusion applies. However, to gain a more complete understanding of the subject matter of the audit, we also examined certain matters that preceded the start date of this period.

## Date of the report

We obtained sufficient and appropriate audit evidence on which to base our conclusion on October 14, 2025, in Ottawa, Canada.

## Audit team

This audit was completed by a multidisciplinary team from across the Office of the Auditor General of Canada led by Gabriel Lombardi, Principal. The principal has overall responsibility for audit quality, including conducting the audit in accordance with professional standards, applicable legal and regulatory requirements, and the office's policies and system of quality management.

# Recommendations and Responses

Responses appear as they were received by the Office of the Auditor General of Canada.

In the following table, the paragraph number preceding the recommendation indicates the location of the recommendation in the report.

Recommendation	Response
<p><b>16.</b> The Canadian Armed Forces should collect and analyze information from applicants during the recruitment process to identify common reasons for “no further contact” and voluntary withdrawals and to adjust recruitment strategies where appropriate.</p>	<p><b>The Canadian Armed Forces’ response.</b> Agreed. The Canadian Armed Forces’ (CAF’s) ability to understand why applicants stop responding or voluntarily withdraw from processing requires modernization. Enabling timely and evidence-based decisions are key factors driving the requirements of our new recruiting platform.</p>
<p><b>27.</b> To support operational readiness, the Canadian Armed Forces should implement and monitor actions to address understaffed occupations, in particular those that are in demand.</p>	<p><b>The Canadian Armed Forces’ response.</b> Agreed. In support of operational readiness, on 6 August 2025, the Government of Canada approved new compensation measures to support CAF recruiting and retention. The CAF will also continue to determine annually which occupations should be privileged to protect those that are forecasted to be understaffed.</p>
<p><b>31.</b> The Canadian Armed Forces should take action to ensure sufficient investments in instructors, training infrastructure, and equipment to increase the number of recruits who can be trained; create a more stable, long-term training system; and better align the Strategic Intake Plan with long-term personnel needs.</p>	<p><b>The Canadian Armed Forces’ response.</b> Agreed. The CAF agrees that to recover from the attrition impacts of COVID, reconstitute, and then grow the CAF, there must be increased instructor investment, infrastructure, and equipment holdings to meet the training demands both at the intake phase, and for the downstream continuous professional development of the growing force.</p>

Recommendation	Response
<p><b>48.</b> The Canadian Armed Forces should modernize the information technology systems supporting recruitment activities by implementing tools and processes that improve data quality, integration, and usability for recruiters and applicants. This should include best practices such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• automated controls, such as completeness checks and input validation to ensure accurate and efficient data entry</li> <li>• electronic forms that applicants complete once and that can be transferred seamlessly across systems</li> <li>• access to complete, real-time recruitment data to support performance monitoring and strategic decision making</li> <li>• standardized systems training and user support to promote consistent use across the organization</li> </ul>	<p><b>The Canadian Armed Forces' response.</b>            Agreed. CAF modernization efforts are in progress, as part of a phased approach, across multiple lines of effort that institutionalize these recommendations by embracing emerging technologies and integrating digital systems. Future-state systems will incorporate modern best-practice assessment and validation tools enabling automated assessment of completeness and accuracy, improving efficiency.</p>
<p><b>51.</b> The Canadian Armed Forces should adopt a consistent approach to manage basic and occupational training across the organization.</p>	<p><b>The Canadian Armed Forces' response.</b>            Agreed. The CAF will develop and implement a policy instrument to ensure consistency across the organization. In addition, the CAF has started the development of a more efficient and effective Initial Developmental Period for members. This will include a CAF-wide electronic management tool for the members' progress and to minimize any gaps in training.</p>
<p><b>55.</b> The Canadian Armed Forces should identify sustainable solutions to ensure the security screening process is efficient and timely to meet its needs.</p>	<p><b>The Canadian Armed Forces' response.</b>            Agreed. The CAF will leverage workforce growth, enhanced professionalization, business transformation and modernization, and a streamlined processing workflow to improve the efficiency and timeliness of the security screening process.</p>

## Appendix—Text Descriptions of Exhibits

Here are the text descriptions of the exhibits.

### Exhibit 1—The Canadian Armed Forces recruitment and training pathway—Text description

This flow chart shows the Canadian Armed Forces recruitment and training pathway from recruitment to training to trained and effective member.

The recruitment stage has 5 steps:

- Pre-apply—During this step, the applicant visits the website and learns about the Canadian Armed Forces.
- Apply—During this step, the applicant creates an account and submits an application.
- Process—During this step, the applicant completes an aptitude test, a medical, a Reliability security clearance, and an interview.
- Offer—During this step, the applicant receives and accepts an offer.
- Enroll—During this step, the applicant participates in the enrolment ceremony.

The training stage has 2 steps:

- Basic training—During this step, the applicant completes mandatory basic training and applies for Secret security clearance.
- Occupation training—During this step, the applicant completes occupation-specific training.

After training, the applicant is now a trained and effective member of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Note: This was the process for successful applicants for the majority of our audit period. Changes to the process are discussed in paragraph 39 of the report.

Source: Based on information from the Canadian Armed Forces

### [Back to Exhibit 1](#)

### Exhibit 2—From April 1, 2022, to March 31, 2025, most applicants voluntarily left the recruitment process—Text description

This flow chart shows the outcomes of applications to the Canadian Armed Forces during the recruitment process from April 1, 2022, to March 31, 2025. It shows that most applicants voluntarily left the recruitment process during the period.

During this period, there were 191,981 total applicants. Of these, there were 43,934 applicants in the 2022–23 fiscal year, 70,616 applicants in the 2023–24 fiscal year, and 77,431 applicants in the 2024–25 fiscal year.

Of the 191,981 total applicants, 73,196, or 38%, were viable; 103,684, or 54%, involved applicant-driven file closures (for example, voluntary withdrawal and no further contact); and 15,101, or 8%, involved recruiter-driven file closures (for example, applicants did not meet criteria).

Of the 73,196 viable applicants, 58,250, or 80%, were still going through the recruitment process and 14,946, or 20%, were recruited. There were 3,927 applicants recruited in the 2022–23 fiscal year, 4,313 applicants recruited in the 2023–24 fiscal year, and 6,706 applicants recruited in the 2024–25 fiscal year.

Source: Based on data from the Canadian Armed Forces

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#### Exhibit 3—Average applicant to recruitment ratios did not always meet targets— Text description

This chart shows the target and actual applicant-to-recruitment ratios by fiscal year.

In 2022–23, the target was to have a ratio of 1 in 8. The actual ratio was 1 in 11.

In 2023–24, the target was to have a ratio of 1 in 8. The actual ratio was 1 in 16.

In 2024–25, the target was to have a ratio of 1 in 12. The actual ratio was 1 in 12.

The overall average actual ratio was 1 in 13.

Source: Based on data from the Canadian Armed Forces

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#### Exhibit 4—Strategic Intake Plan recruitment targets were not met for most of our audit period—Text description

This graph shows the number of applicants and recruitments compared with the recruitment targets in the Strategic Intake Plan.

In 2022–23, there were 43,934 applicants. Of these, 3,927 were recruited. The recruitment target was 6,445. The target was not met.

In 2023–24, there were 70,616 applicants. Of these, 4,313 were recruited. The recruitment target was 6,765. The target was not met.

In 2024–25, there were 77,431 applicants. Of these, 6,706 were recruited. The recruitment target was 6,496. The target was met.

Source: Based on data from the Canadian Armed Forces

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#### Exhibit 5—While recruitment improved over the audit period, the Canadian Armed Forces did not bring in enough new recruits to replace the people who left

This graph shows the percentages of occupations with recruitments greater than losses and of occupations with recruitments less than losses for the 2022–23 to 2024–25 fiscal years.

In 2022–23, there were 106 occupations in the Canadian Armed Forces. Of these, 47% were occupations with recruitments greater than losses and 53% were occupations with recruitments less than losses.

In 2023–24, there were 105 occupations in the Canadian Armed Forces. Of these, 59% were occupations with recruitments greater than losses and 41% were occupations with recruitments less than losses.

In 2024–25, there were 104 occupations in the Canadian Armed Forces. Of these, 75% were occupations with recruitments greater than losses and 25% were occupations with recruitments less than losses.

Source: Based on data from the Canadian Armed Forces

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**Exhibit 6**—As of June 30, 2024, 13% of occupations in the Canadian Armed Forces were at risk of not reaching authorized staffing levels—Text description

This chart shows when occupations were expected to reach authorized staffing levels as of June 30, 2024.

Nineteen, or 19%, of occupations were expected to reach authorized staffing levels within 4 years.

Thirty, or 30%, of occupations were expected to reach authorized staffing levels within 10 years.

Thirty-nine, or 38%, of occupations were expected to reach authorized staffing levels within 25 years.

Thirteen, or 13%, of occupations were at risk of not reaching authorized staffing levels.

Source: Based on data from the Canadian Armed Forces

### [Back to Exhibit 6](#)

**Exhibit 7**—Basic training capacity did not cover external recruitment targets—Text description

This chart shows the basic training capacities, external recruitments, and external recruitment targets for the 2022–23 to 2024–25 fiscal years.

In 2022–23, the basic training capacity was 4,900. The number of people externally recruited was 3,927. The external recruitment target was 6,445. This target was not met.

In 2023–24, the basic training capacity was 5,320. The number of people externally recruited was 4,313. The external recruitment target was 6,768. This target was not met.

In 2024–25, the basic training capacity was 6,100. The number of people externally recruited was 6,706. The external recruitment target was 6,496. This target was met.

Source: Based on data from the Canadian Armed Forces

### [Back to Exhibit 7](#)

### Exhibit 8—Not all Canadian Armed Forces employment equity goals were met from April 1, 2022, to March 31, 2025—Text description

This chart shows the goals and actual percentages of people recruited who were women, visible minorities, and Indigenous peoples.

Women were 15% of people recruited in the 2022–23 fiscal year, 16% of people recruited in the 2023–24 fiscal year, and 18% of people recruited in the 2024–25 fiscal year. The current state as of March 31, 2024, was 16.5%, which was below the goal of 25.1%.

Visible minorities were 20% of people recruited in the 2022–23 fiscal year, 21% of people recruited in the 2023–24 fiscal year, and 28% of people recruited in the 2024–25 fiscal year. The current state as of March 31, 2024, was 12.2%, which was above the goal of 11.8%.

Indigenous peoples were 4% of people recruited in the 2022–23 fiscal year, 5% of people recruited in the 2023–24 fiscal year, and 5% of people recruited in the 2024–25 fiscal year. The current state as of March 31, 2024, was 3%, which was below the goal of 3.5%.

Source: Based on data from the Department of National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces 2023–24 Departmental Results Report. These figures were used because there are no recruitment-specific goals

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### Exhibit 9—Fewer women than men were recruited between April 1, 2022, and March 31, 2025—Text description

This flow chart shows the outcomes of applications to the Canadian Armed Forces for male and female applicants between April 1, 2022, and March 31, 2025.

During this period, there were 191,981 total applicants. Of these, 135,398 were male, 55,054 were female, and 1,529 were other applicants.

Of the 135,398 male applicants, 12,472, or 9%, were recruited. There were 3,357 recruited in the 2022–23 fiscal year, 3,644 recruited in the 2023–24 fiscal year, and 5,471 recruited in the 2024–25 fiscal year.

Of the 55,054 female applicants, 2,474, or 4%, were recruited. There were 570 recruited in the 2022–23 fiscal year, 669 recruited in the 2023–24 fiscal year, and 1,235 recruited in the 2024–25 fiscal year.

Source: Based on data from the Canadian Armed Forces

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### Exhibit 10—Fewer permanent residents were recruited compared with Canadian citizens—Text description

This flow chart shows the outcomes of applications to the Canadian Armed Forces for Canadian citizens and permanent residents for the 2022–23 to 2024–25 fiscal years.

During this period, there were 191,981 total applicants. Of these, 145,705 were Canadian citizens and 46,276 were permanent residents.

Of the 145,705 Canadian citizens, 14,006, or 10%, were recruited. There were 3,919 recruited in the 2022–23 fiscal year, 4,204 recruited in the 2023–24 fiscal year, and 5,883 recruited in the 2024–25 fiscal year.

Of the 46,276 permanent residents, 940, or 2%, were recruited. There were 8 recruited in the 2022–23 fiscal year, 109 recruited in the 2023–24 fiscal year, and 823 recruited in the 2024–25 fiscal year.

Source: Based on data from the Canadian Armed Forces

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**Exhibit 11**—Permanent resident recruitment increased after the Canadian Armed Forces aligned its security screening process—Text description

This chart shows the number of permanent residents who were recruited in the 30 months from April 1, 2022, to October 7, 2024, and the number who were recruited in the 6 months from October 8, 2024, to March 31, 2025.

During the 30-month period, from April 1, 2022, to October 7, 2024, 177 permanent residents were recruited.

During the 6-month period, from October 8, 2024, to March 31, 2025, 763 permanent residents were recruited.

Source: Based on data from the Canadian Armed Forces

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