CANADA FOUNDATION FOR INNOVATION

2025 Innovation Fund competition: By the numbers

March 2026

INNOVATION
Canada Foundation for Innovation
Fondation canadienne pour l'innovation

Table of contents

About the Canada Foundation for Innovation

With a bold, future-looking mandate, the CFI equips researchers to be global leaders in their fields and to respond to emerging challenges. Our investments in state-of-the-art tools, instruments and facilities at universities, colleges, research hospitals and nonprofit research institutions underpin both curiosity- and mission-driven research that cuts across disciplines and bridges all sectors. The research infrastructure we fund mobilizes knowledge, spurs innovation and commercialization, and empowers the talented minds of a new generation.

The Canada Foundation for Innovation respectfully acknowledges that its head office is located on the traditional, unceded territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin People.

What is the purpose of the Innovation Fund?

The Innovation Fund supports a broad range of research programs including those in natural sciences and engineering, health, social sciences, humanities and the arts, as well as interdisciplinary research. Projects funded through the Innovation Fund will help Canada remain at the forefront of exploration and knowledge generation while making meaningful contributions to generating social, health, environmental and economic benefits and addressing global challenges, such as the ones defined by the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

What were the objectives of the 2025 Innovation Fund competition?

The objectives of the 2025 Innovation Fund competition were to:

- Enable internationally competitive research or technology development through the equitable participation of expert team members
- Enhance the capacity of institutions to conduct the research or technology development program over the useful life of the infrastructure
- Generate benefits for Canadians.

What was the competition timeline and review process?

The CFI released the draft call for proposals for the 2025 Innovation Fund competition in April 2024 and launched the competition with the final call for proposals in June 2024. Notices of intent were due in October 2024 and proposals were due in February 2025.

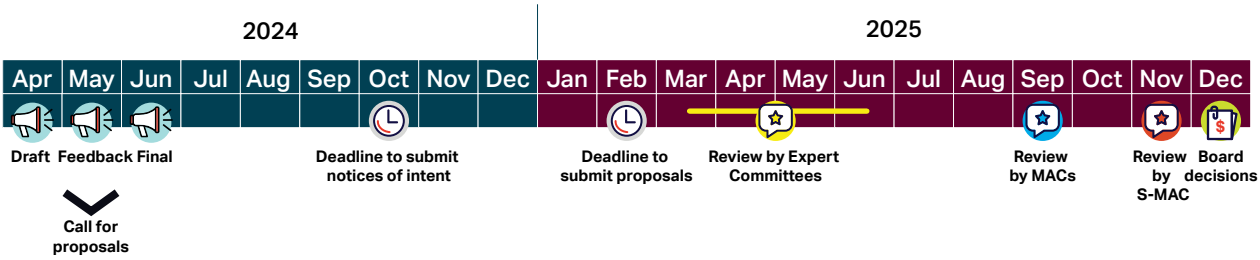
Proposals underwent three stages of review to ensure a fair, competitive, transparent and in-depth process. Between March 2025 and July 2025, 112 Expert Committees reviewed small groups of proposals from the same area of research to assess their strengths and weaknesses in relation to the assessment criteria for the competition. Only proposals that the Expert Committees found to meet the competition's threshold of excellence advanced to the Multidisciplinary Assessment Committees (MACs).

In September 2025, 10 MACs reviewed groups of proposals for research infrastructure projects of similar size and/or complexity and assessed them against the competition objectives.

In November 2025, a Special Multidisciplinary Assessment Committee (S-MAC) reviewed reports for the proposals that the MACs had recommended for funding to make sure the committees were consistent in their assessment. Since recommendations from the MACs exceeded the available budget, the S-MAC recommended to the CFI Board of Directors the proposals that best supported the CFI's mandate, met the objectives of the competition and represented the most beneficial portfolio of investments for Canada.

Final funding decisions were made by the CFI Board of Directors in December 2025.

Figure 1: Competition timeline

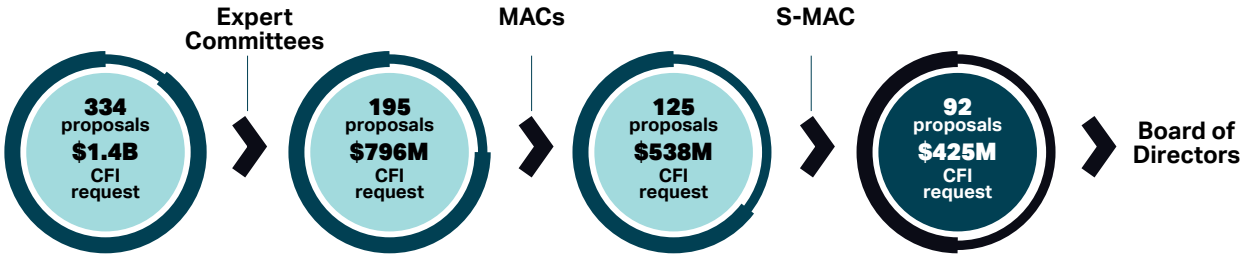


What were the results of the competition?

334 proposals were submitted to the 2025 Innovation Fund competition. Each of these was assessed by Expert Committees during the first stage of the review process. 195 proposals (58 percent) advanced from the Expert Committee stage to the MAC stage. The MACs recommended 125 proposals for funding. These represented a CFI investment of $538 million, which exceeded the competition budget. The S-MAC recommended 92 proposals for the CFI Board of Directors to approve for funding, which they did. This represents an investment by the CFI of $425 million in research infrastructure at 32 research institutions (excluding collaborating or affiliated institutions) across Canada. In addition, $751 million was leveraged in matching funds from private-sector, provincial and other partners to bring the overall investment to $1.2 billion in support of Canada's research community.

The success rate, defined as the number of awards divided by the number of proposals submitted, was 28 percent. The funding rate, defined as the amount awarded divided by the amount requested, was 30 percent.

Figure 2: Overview of the 2025 Innovation Fund competition results



Results by stream

Figure 3: Percentage of total amount awarded by stream

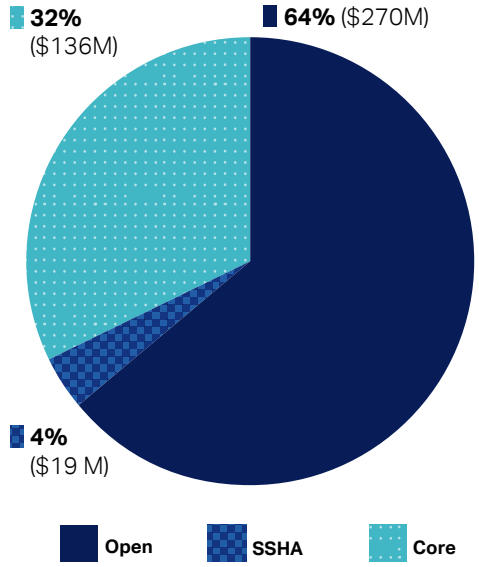
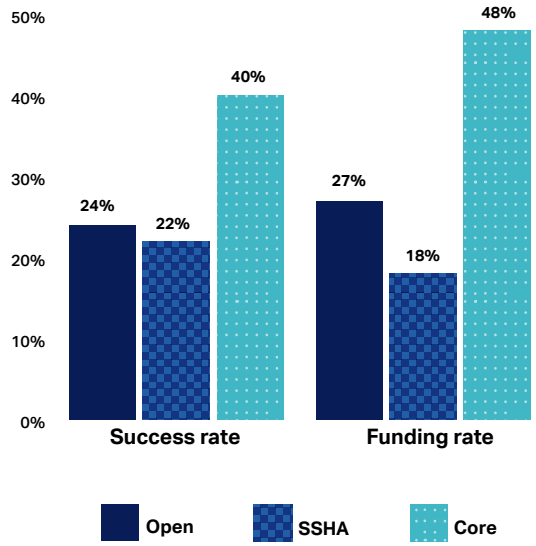


Figure 4: Success and funding rates by stream



For the 2025 competition, the CFI introduced three streams with tailored assessment criteria as well as some changes to cost eligibility. There was no predetermined distribution of funding among the streams. The streams were:

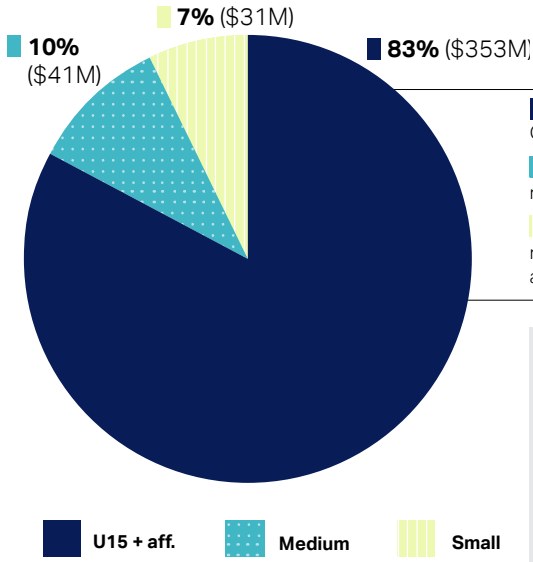
- Stream 1: Leading edge of exploration and knowledge generation (open)
- Stream 2: Leading edge of exploration and knowledge generation in the social sciences, humanities and arts (SSHA)
- Stream 3: Creation, renewal and upgrade of core facilities (core)

In the 2025 competition, stream 1 proposals received $270 million, which represents the highest share (64 percent) of the total CFI investment among streams. Stream 3 proposals received $136 million, and in some proposals to stream 1, applicants reported that a percentage of their requested infrastructure would be integrated into a core facility, which represents an estimated additional $117 million from the CFI to support core facilities. Stream 2 awards received $19 million. Additional information about stream 2 proposals is presented below in the field of research section.

Success and funding rates were the highest for the core facility stream.

Results by size of institution

Figure 5: Percentage of total amount awarded by size of institution



U15 + aff.: Association of 15 leading research-intensive universities across Canada and their affiliated institutions, such as research hospitals

Medium: Institutions whose share of funding received from the three federal research funding agencies is at least 1%, but which are not members of the U15

Small: Institutions whose share of funding received from the three federal research funding agencies is less than 1%, as well as colleges, research institutes and not-for-profit organizations

U15 institutions and their affiliated hospitals (U15 + aff.) secured the highest share of funding ($353 million to 69 successful proposals).

The overall distribution by size of institution is generally aligned with the share of research funding received from the three federal research funding agencies (the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)). It is also similar to the distribution in the 2023 Innovation Fund competition.

Figure 6: Success rates by size of institution in competitions since 2017

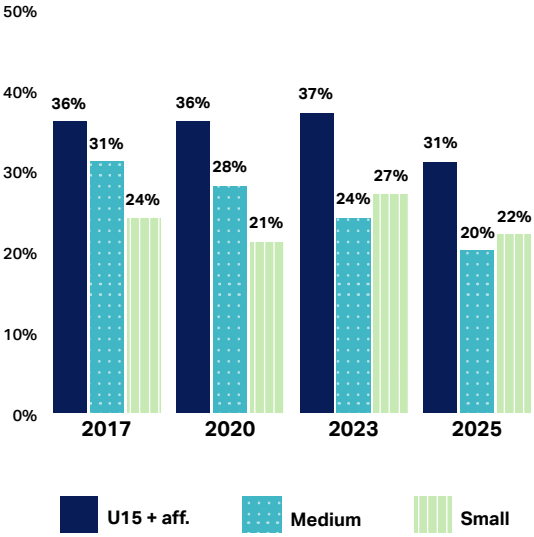
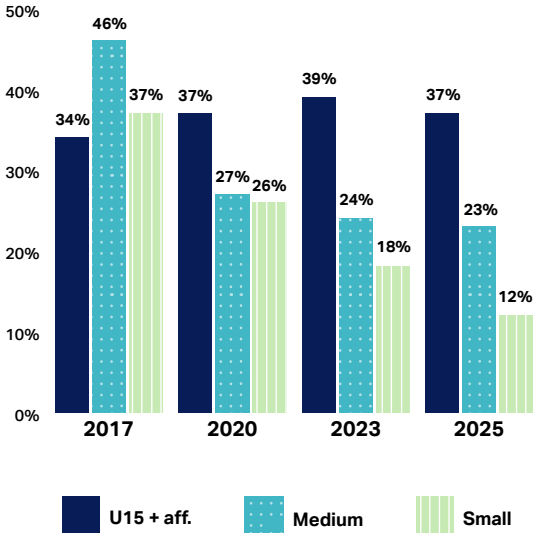


Figure 7: Funding rates by size of institution in competitions since 2017



The success rate of U15 institutions and their affiliated hospitals was higher than for medium and small institutions in the 2025 competition. This is in keeping with previous competitions.

Small institutions have experienced a steady success rate since the 2017 competition. This is the result of the introduction of MACs that specifically review proposals from small institutions.

The number of proposals from institutions other than U15 institutions and their affiliates is generally small (nine awards for medium and 14 awards for small institutions in the 2025 competition). Consequently, decisions on a few high-value proposals will have a considerable impact on the funding rates and will lead to greater variations across competitions.

Results by region

Figure 8: Percentage of total amount awarded by region

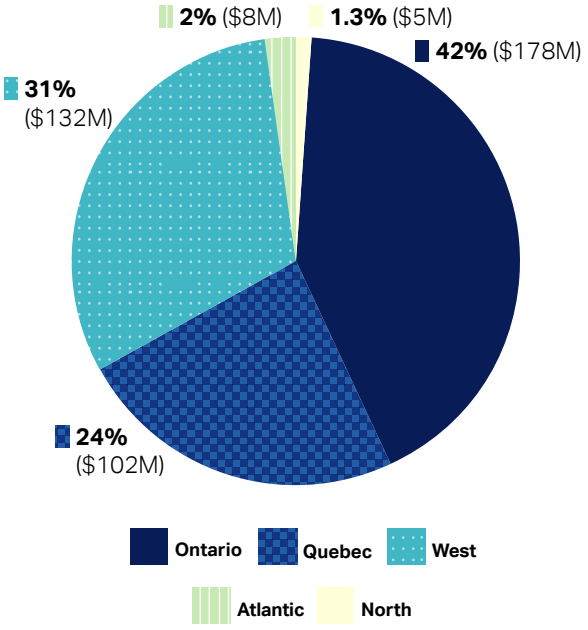
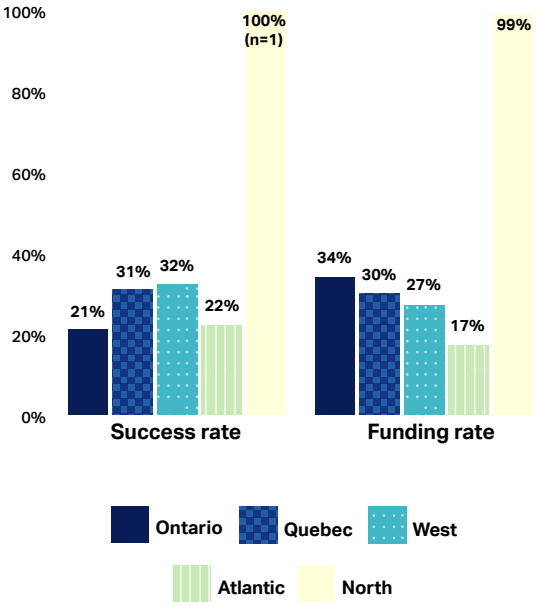


Figure 9: Success and funding rates by region



In the 2025 competition, Ontario received $178 million, which represents the highest share (42 percent) of the total CFI investment among regions. The distribution of the amount awarded by region is similar to the results of the 2023 competition and aligns with the overall distribution of funding from the three federal research funding agencies.

Of the $132 million CFI investment in the Western provinces, 56 percent went to British Columbia, while 100 percent of the CFI investment in the Atlantic provinces went to Nova Scotia.

Success and funding rates slightly vary from one region to the other. While Ontario has the lowest success rate at 21 percent, it has the highest funding rate at 34 percent, due to the success of some high-amount proposals. The success and funding rates in the Atlantic provinces are lower compared to other regions. The statistics for the North are the result of one successful proposal.

Results by size of proposal

Figure 10: Percentage of total amount awarded by size of proposal

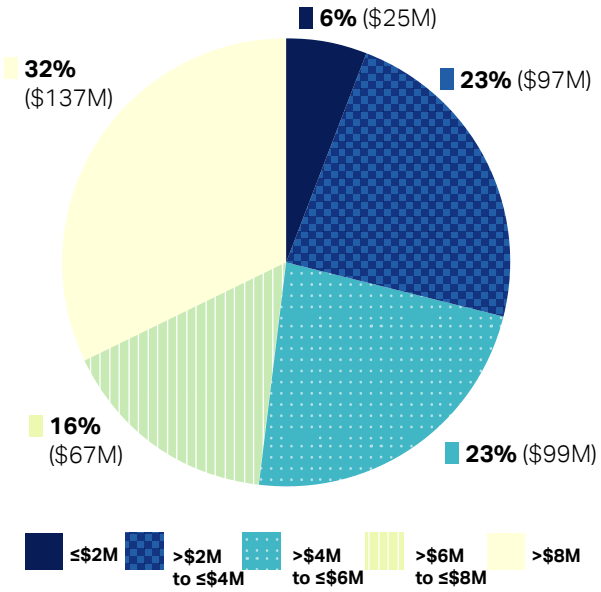
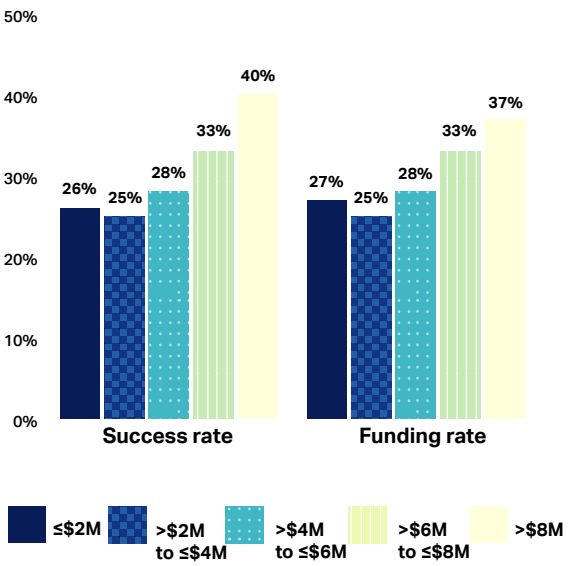


Figure 11: Success and funding rates by size of proposal



The amounts awarded to successful proposals in the 2025 competition range from $447,950 to $24.6 million, with an average of $4.6 million and a median of $3.6 million. This average was higher than the $3.9 million average in the 2023 competition. Proposals requesting between $2 million and $4 million from the CFI accounted for the largest share of both proposals and awards. They received $97 million, representing 23 percent of the total CFI investment. Although only seven percent of proposals requested over $8 million, that category accounts for 32 percent ($137 million) of the total CFI investment.

Success and funding rates both ranged between 25 and 33 percent except for the proposals requesting over $8 million. Success and funding rates in this range were slightly higher (40 percent and 37 percent respectively). This category comprises the smallest number of proposals.

Results by field of research and socioeconomic objective

The Canadian Research and Development Classification (CRDC) provides a common approach to classifying research projects across institutions and governments. Using the CRDC, researchers self-classify their projects by fields of research (FOR) and by socioeconomic objectives (SEO). An FOR describes the type of research, while an SEO corresponds to the benefits the research generates. In the following analyses, researchers' selections of both FOR and SEO were grouped into the broad sectors of health, natural sciences and engineering (NSE), and social sciences, humanities and arts (SSHA) for reporting purposes. The results presented here only refer to the researchers' primary selections.

Figure 12: Percentage of total amount awarded by field of research (FOR)

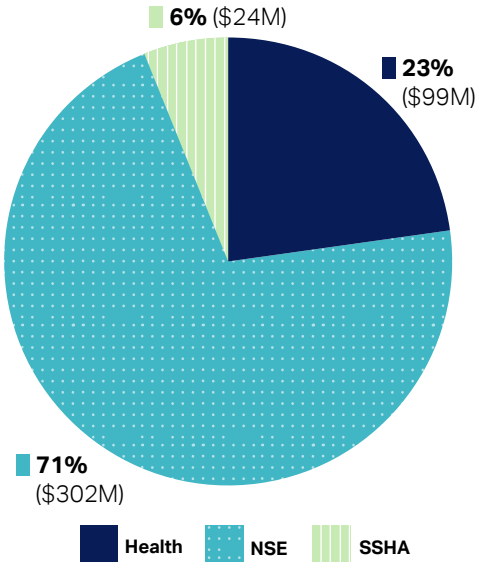
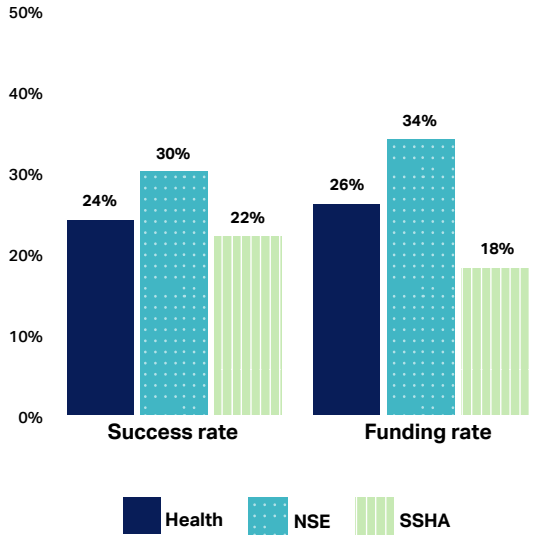


Figure 13: Success and funding rates by field of research (FOR)



The majority (71 percent or $302 million) of the total CFI investment made through the 2025 competition is associated with successful proposals where the primary field of research is in natural sciences and engineering (NSE). Conversely, a smaller fraction (six percent or $24 million) of successful proposals relates to social sciences, humanities and arts (SSHA). However, the awarded amount in SSHA went from $1.7 million (0.4 percent) in 2023 to more than $24 million (six percent) in 2025.

Success and funding rates are slightly higher in natural sciences and engineering, and the lowest in social sciences, humanities and arts (SSHA). However, the funding rate in SSHA went from four percent in the 2023 competition to 18 percent in the 2025 competition. Despite the sample size for SSHA being the smallest (41 proposals submitted, nine proposals recommended for funding), it tripled compared to the 2023 Innovation Fund competition (14 proposals and three awards). This is likely due to the option institutions had to submit one proposal with a primary field of research in SSHA outside their institutional envelope.

Figure 14: Percentage of total amount awarded by socioeconomic objective (SEO)

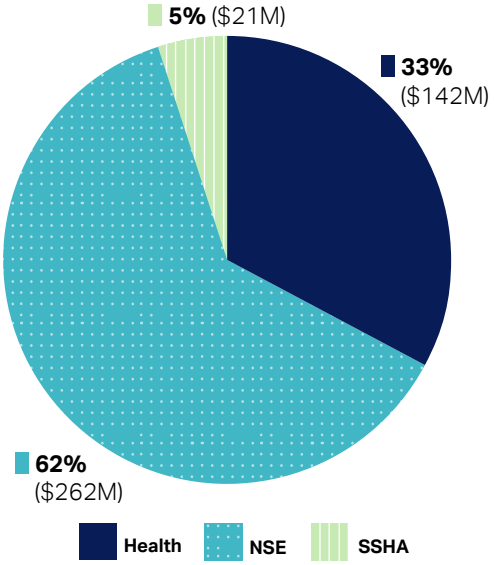
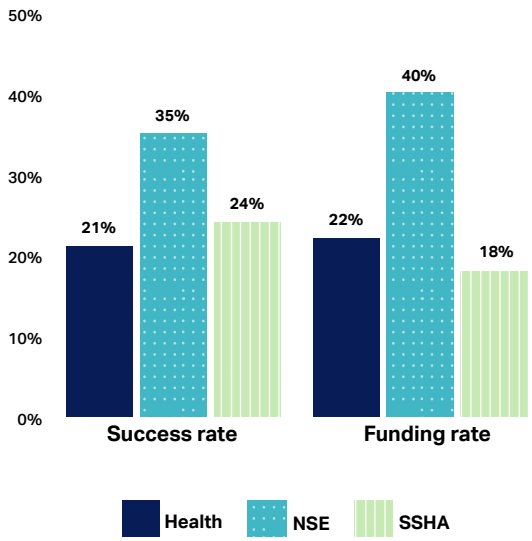


Figure 15: Success and funding rates by socioeconomic objective (SEO)



The largest amount awarded was in natural sciences and engineering. The share of the amount awarded in health increased compared to its share at the field of research level. This is likely because several proposals were multidisciplinary, with a primary object of interest or method in natural sciences and engineering and a primary purpose or outcome in health.

Success and funding rates for different socioeconomic objectives follow a similar pattern to fields of research, with success and funding rates for proposals in natural sciences and engineering being the highest.

Results by single versus multi-institutional projects

Figure 16: Percentage of total amount awarded for multi-institutional and single institution proposals

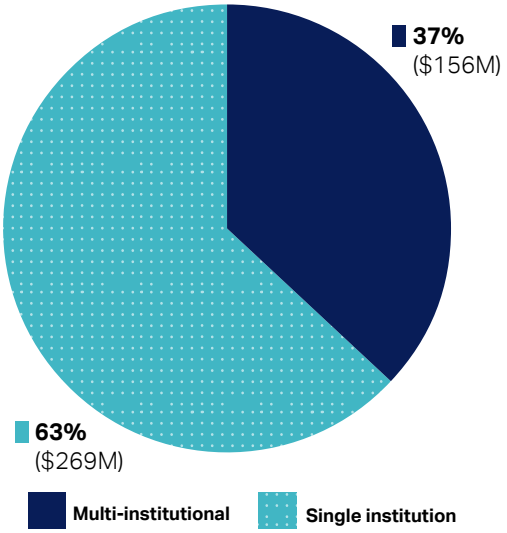
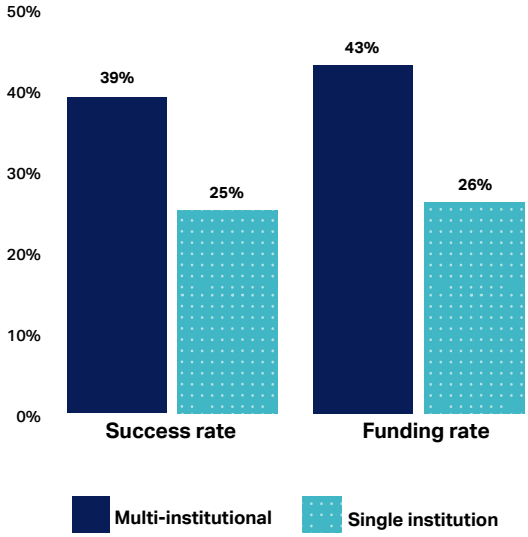


Figure 17: Success and funding rates for multi-institutional and single institution proposals



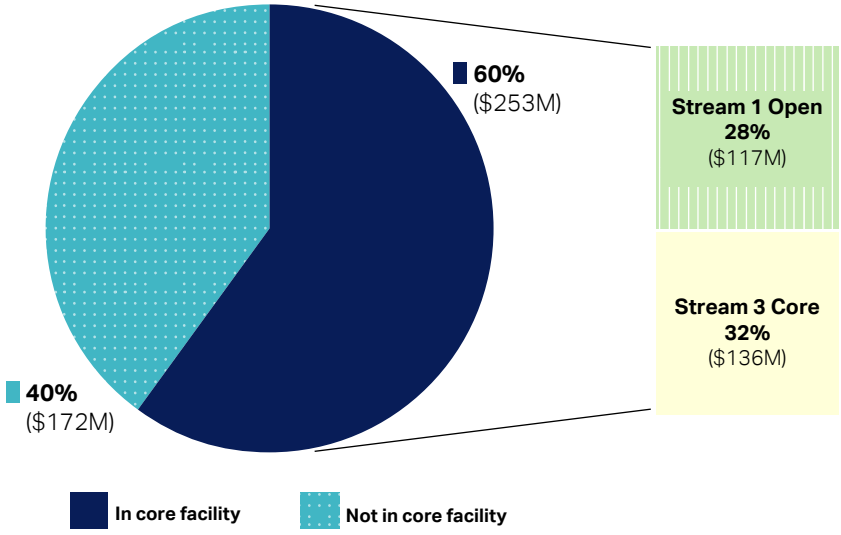
A multi-institutional proposal brings together two or more CFI-eligible collaborating institutions, in addition to the administrative institution, each contributing by housing part of the infrastructure and/or pooling resources.

Proposals that were funded and which involved a single institution received the majority of the total investment the CFI made through the 2025 competition ($269 million or 63 percent). This is aligned with the result from the 2023 competition ($250 million or 64 percent).

However, multi-institutional proposals had significantly higher success and funding rates in the 2025 competition.

Results by integration into a core facility

Figure 18: Percentage of total amount awarded by whether or not the research infrastructure will be integrated into a core facility



A core facility provides access to the following, which are generally too expensive, complex or specialized for researchers to cost-effectively provide and sustain themselves: state-of-the-art research services and analyses; instruments and technology; expertise; and training and education.

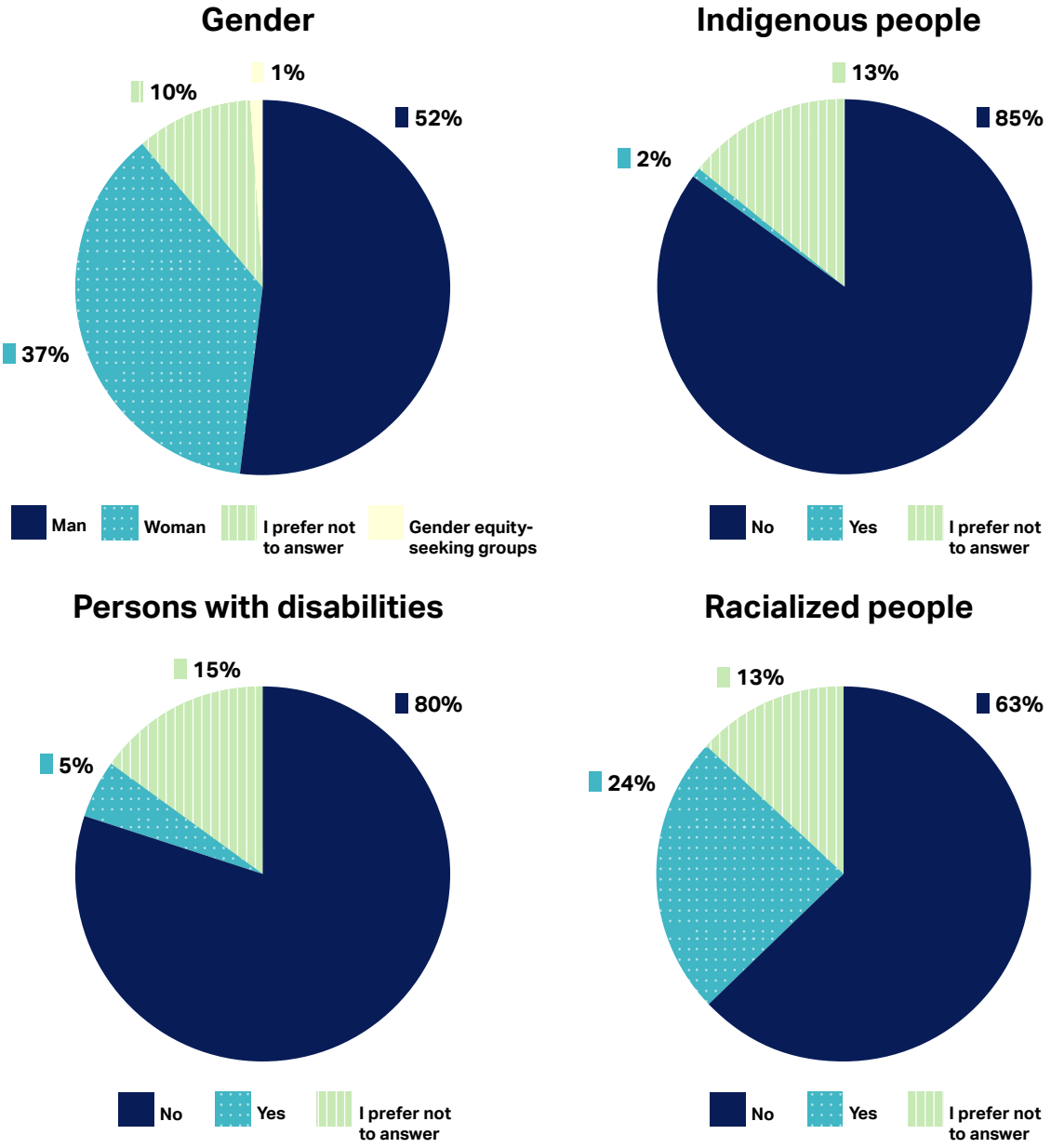
The CFI invested $253 million in core facilities through the 2025 Innovation Fund competition, which represents approximately 60 percent of the total CFI investment. This is an increase from the 2023 competition, when that amount was $167 million.

In addition to $136 million invested through stream 3, an estimated additional $117 million through stream 1 will also support core facilities.

The CFI expanded eligible costs in stream 3 to include scientific and technical personnel for the operation and management of core facilities. Sixteen of the 29 projects funded through stream 3 included costs for scientific and technical staff, totaling about $37 million in eligible expenses, including roughly $15 million from the CFI.

Results by gender and representation of Indigenous and racialized people and persons with disabilities

Figure 19: Distribution of team members by gender and representation of Indigenous and racialized people and persons with disabilities



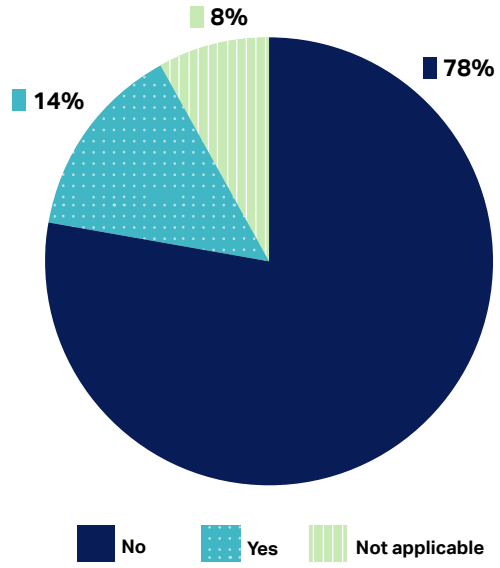
The proportion of the total number of team members (892 team members) listed on all successful proposals who self-identified as women; Indigenous or racialized people; and persons with disabilities is generally aligned with the proportions of these groups among Canadian faculty according to Statistics Canada.

Compared with the results of the 2023 competition, the percentage of women (35 percent in 2023 and 37 percent in 2025), Indigenous people (one percent in 2023 and two percent in 2025), persons with disabilities (four percent in 2023 and five percent in 2025), and racialized persons (22 percent in 2023 and 24 percent in 2025), slightly increased.

Similar proportions were observed when considering all the 334 successful and unsuccessful proposals submitted to the 2025 competition, suggesting there was no apparent bias in the review process.

Results by career stage

Figure 20: Distribution of team members listed in successful proposals by career stage (early-career researchers)

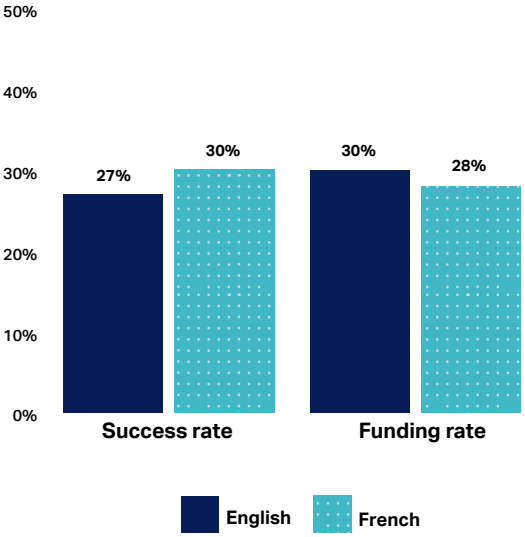


An early-career researcher (ECR) is defined as a researcher who is within five years of the date of their first independent research-related appointment.

14 percent of individuals listed as team members on successful proposals are early-career researchers. This is a slight decrease from the 2023 competition. Overall, 77 percent of successful proposals had at least one early-career researcher as a team member (ranging from one to four per proposal).

Results by language of proposal

Figure 21: Success and funding rates by language of proposal



Success and funding rates were similar for proposals submitted in French and English.

The number of proposals submitted in French doubled compared to the 2023 competition but remained small (23 proposals).