



Health Leadership in Canada: 2025

Commissioned by the Canadian Health Leadership Network (CHLNet), this 2025 study provides an updated snapshot of how health leadership bench strength is perceived across Canada.

System demands are outpacing leadership capability



Fewer than 40% view leaders as highly capable; a growing gap between leadership skills and system demands

Development priorities: innovation, change, collaboration, and creating healthy organizational cultures

Emerging and mid-level leader pipelines are under pressure



Over 40% report moderate to large supply gaps in emerging and mid-level leadership

Pipelines are eroded by burnout, workload, and inconsistent succession planning

Leadership development is unevenly supported



Provide protected time *Evaluate development impact*

While many organizations offer formal development, only 26% provide protected time for development and 33% evaluate its impact

Leadership gaps are increasingly impacting organizations



Over 60% report that leadership gaps impact organizational performance

Over 55% report that the impact has increased over the past five years

Inconsistent support for engagement and psychological safety



Fewer than 50% report that organizations prioritize engagement

30% report no support for psychological safety

Diversity is growing at emerging levels, but not in senior decision-making



Representation is improving at emerging levels but not advancing to senior/executive roles



Call to Action

What's needed is coordinated, system-level investment in leadership development that is evidence-informed and accountable.

In parallel, leaders can act now within their own sphere of influence:



1. Protect time for leadership development work.

Carve out and defend time for leaders to focus on change, people leadership, and system improvement.



2. Strengthen leadership pathways.

Identify high-potential leaders and connect development to real roles, mentorship, and succession plans.



3. Focus on evidence-informed capabilities.

Prioritize skills like systems thinking, innovation and culture-building, aligning learning to real operational challenges.



4. Use engagement and psychological safety as leadership indicators.

Treat team engagement, trust, and psychological safety as leading indicators of leadership effectiveness.



5. Measure what changes.

Use practical measures of impact like retention, change in leadership behaviour and team outcomes.



6. Advance diversity through pathways and decisions.

Ensure diverse leaders are meaningfully included in succession planning, sponsorship, and senior leadership decisions.