

# CivicAction Report

Diversity and Inclusion in Non-profit  
Leadership in Ontario:  
Are We There Yet?



# Partners



The Diversity Institute undertakes research on diversity in the workplace to improve practices in organizations. We work with organizations to develop customized strategies, programming and resources to promote new, interdisciplinary knowledge and practice about diversity with respect to gender, race/ethnicity, Indigenous Peoples, abilities and sexual orientation. Using an ecological model of change, our action-oriented, evidence-based approach drives social innovation across sectors.



CivicAction is an action-oriented leader of social change in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA). With its network of over 15,000 diverse partners, CivicAction aims to create more inclusive cities through its work with governments and communities. CivicAction has created Inclusion Ontario, Summit, the ReAction Forum, HireNext and YouthConnect to help address equity, diversity and inclusion issues in the GTHA.



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# Executive Summary

This report is a collaboration between the Diversity Institute (DI) and CivicAction aimed at promoting equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in non-profit sector boards and executive teams across Ontario. As one of the fastest-growing sectors of the Canadian economy, non-profit organizations create employment opportunities and make a significant contribution to Canada's gross domestic product. Research indicates that diverse leadership in non-profit organizations fosters inclusivity and innovation in achieving the organization's goals. While women and 2SLGBTQ+ individuals have strong representation in non-profit board leadership, there is still inadequate representation at executive and board levels for immigrants, racialized people, persons living with disabilities and Indigenous Peoples.

Despite efforts over the last 10 years to advance diversity in boards and executive teams, non-profit organizations in Ontario have been criticized for their inadequate representation of immigrants, racialized people, persons living with disabilities and Indigenous Peoples in leadership teams. This report examines the state of diversity and inclusion in non-profit board and executive leadership teams in

Ontario, the most populous and culturally diverse province in the country. The study identifies the challenges and factors that impede equity-deserving people's access to leadership positions and determines the critical factors and skills required for success in these roles. The report is guided by the following research questions: What is the representation of equity-deserving groups in senior leadership roles in the non-profit sector in Ontario, and what are their experiences in these positions? What are the challenges they face and what essential factors and skills are needed to achieve success in these positions?

## Diversity in non-profit leadership

This study focuses on people in equity-deserving groups who work in leadership positions within non-profit organizations and the unique challenges they face advancing their careers within the sector and in the Canadian labour market. For example, persons living with disabilities face challenges relating to accessibility, as well as employers' lack of knowledge and awareness in accommodating their needs. Indigenous Peoples face discrimination, stereotypes and stigma that create an

uncomfortable environment for self-identification and inclusion in the workplace. Racialized leaders encounter obstacles such as smaller networks and biased perceptions of skills training, hindering their chances of advancement. 2SLGBTQ+ executives face miscommunication in organizational messaging, knowledge gaps and stigma that make them feel uncomfortable sharing their identities with colleagues and therefore impede their abilities to communicate their creative ideas and leadership thoughts. Research on the experiences of Black individuals is generally lacking and, if described, is often portrayed in a negative light compared with other groups of employees in this sector. Immigrants and refugees face challenges due to their limited social and professional networks; however, the research on immigrant leadership, representation, barriers and challenges in non-profit organizations is inadequate.

## Methods

The DI team developed an online data collection method that captured gender and race data of leaders (i.e., board directors and senior management) in 803 non-profit organizations in Ontario. A comprehensive 25-question survey was also created to gather diverse leaders' perceptions of success factors; their board and executive team's culture; and EDI awareness and challenges, including those caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey was distributed to 1,346 non-profit organizations in Ontario, and 185 responses were received between February 2 and April 19, 2023.



***Racialized leaders encounter obstacles such as smaller networks and biased perceptions of skill training, hindering their chances of advancement.***

## Findings

According to data collected from the websites of non-profit organizations, women hold the majority (56.6%) of director and senior management positions in the non-profit sector in Ontario, regardless of organization size. This representation is consistent across large and small cities. Racialized people comprise 18.2% of non-profit board members and senior managers in Ontario, with a greater representation in larger cities. Indigenous Peoples represent a small percentage (1.6%) of non-profit leaders in Ontario and are more likely to serve in leadership roles for small non-profit organizations and those that receive government funding. Black leaders are more commonly found on small non-profit boards, and one-half of Black board members and senior management team members report experiencing discrimination at work based on their skin colour.

Racialized women constitute the majority (57.3%) of racialized non-profit leaders, and Indigenous women account for 71.5% of Indigenous non-profit leaders. These groups face specific barriers related to their intersectional identities, such as racism and gender discrimination.

Formal training in EDI was common among survey participants; more than 80% of members of equity-deserving groups reported receiving formal training during their board terms and were familiar with how to identify and handle discrimination and harassment in the workplace. However, individuals from equity-deserving groups with hidden identities, such as 2SLGBTQ+ and persons living with disabilities, reported feeling the need to hide part of their identities to fit in with other board members (40.9% and 48.1%, respectively).

When asked about key skills for success in the non-profit sector, participants across equity-deserving groups generally agreed that adaptability and flexibility, problem solving, and developing organizational goals, objectives and values were the most crucial. To create a successful long-term board career in the non-profit sector, Black women leaders noted that fundraising skills and financial and business acumen were of particular importance, while racialized non-profit leaders highlighted the importance of strong community development skills. Generally, non-profit leaders across equity-deserving groups found spiritual and religious empowerment in the workplace to be an unimportant factor in the development and maintenance of a successful board career.

## Recommendations

This study offers recommendations to promote diversity and inclusion in non-profit leadership by addressing challenges and opportunities at the societal, organizational and individual level.

### Societal level

- > Governments should require non-profit organizations to collect data on equity-deserving groups and report on EDI policies on a regular basis.
- > Diversity initiatives, such as Bill C-25, should be expanded to include federally incorporated non-profit organizations.
- > Because successful EDI policies improve representation in organizations and service to diverse communities, government and donor funding should be awarded based, in part, on EDI performance.
- > Governments should promote policies and invest in programs that address barriers to the inclusion of equity-deserving groups; for example, improving access to child care, elder care, parental leave and associated tax incentives can create opportunities for individuals who may not otherwise have the time or resources to pursue leadership roles at work.
- > All levels of government (federal, provincial, regional, municipal and Indigenous) should work together to address systemic discrimination and challenge negative stereotypes of leaders from equity-deserving groups.



## Organizational level

- > Non-profit organizations should collect demographic data on their boards and leadership and implement strategies to ensure their senior management is representative of the populations they serve.
- > Non-profit organizations should integrate an EDI lens to all aspects of their corporate strategy and every level of their processes, such as procurement, service design, fundraising, marketing and delivery.
- > Human resources' policies and processes—including job design, recruitment, training and advancement—should incorporate EDI best practices.
- > Organizations should ensure they have policies and processes in place to promote an inclusive culture.

- > Organizations should ensure they benchmark key EDI dimensions, including representation, engagement and participation.
- > To build their talent pool and design and deliver programs and services, organizations should engage authentically with equity-deserving groups.

## Individual level

- > Individuals at all levels of non-profit organizations should be engaged in training programs to promote knowledge, attitudes and behaviour that advance EDI in the workplace.
- > Employees from equity-deserving groups should have access to training and support to advance their leadership opportunities.



# Introduction

This report is a collaboration between the Diversity Institute (DI) and CivicAction that promotes equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in non-profit boards and executive teams across Ontario. The Canadian non-profit sector is a rapidly growing sector that employed 2.5 million people and contributed around \$146.8 billion to the country's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2020. With a higher representation of women, immigrant, racialized, Black and Indigenous workers, the non-profit space is more diverse than other industries in Canada; however, there is still a lack of diversity at the leadership level.

Diversity has been linked to increased access to talent, improved performance and reduction of financial risks for organizations. Diverse boards can broaden decision-making perspectives, inspire staff and community members, and demonstrate commitment to diverse communities. Furthermore, board diversity is beneficial in carrying out a non-profit organization's mission of interacting with underserved communities and relying on philanthropic resources. Given the benefits of diversity and inclusion at the organizational level, board diversity is a priority for non-profit organizations. The National Council of Nonprofits promotes the value of diverse

perspectives in carrying out a non-profit organization's mission by supporting programs that increase diversity across sectors, especially at the executive level.

Government initiatives also seek to increase board and executive-level diversity and representation of equity-deserving groups across Canadian workplaces, including the non-profit sector. One such initiative is the federal government's 50 – 30 Challenge, which calls for gender parity (50% women and/or nonbinary people) and 30% representation of other equity-deserving groups on boards and/or in senior management. However, there are systemic barriers to achieving these goals that affect equity-deserving groups' experiences in the Canadian labour market, including the non-profit sector.

While research on labour market outcomes and the career development of equity-deserving groups in Canada is rich, more research is needed to understand the experiences of diverse leaders. For example, their perception of the key skills for success in the non-profit sector and the challenges faced when ascending to and serving in their leadership roles is often absent. Therefore, this study has two main aims:

To examine the diversity and inclusion data regarding race and gender of leaders (i.e., board directors and senior management) in non-profit organizations in Ontario

To investigate the experiences of leaders from equity-deserving groups in non-profit organizations and their perceptions of the skills needed for a successful career in the sector.

We also explore the challenges faced by non-profit leaders who identify as belonging to equity-deserving groups, including women, racialized people, Indigenous Peoples, persons living with disabilities, people who identify as 2SLGBTQ+ and immigrants.

This report is organized into the following sections: first, we review the existing research and data about individuals belonging to equity-deserving groups in non-profit leadership roles across Canada. Then, we explain our research methods. To deepen our understanding, we collect data about non-profit leaders from their organizations' websites and through a survey. Using the data collected, we provide a thorough discussion of research findings. Finally, based on the results of data analysis, we offer recommendations at various levels for non-profit organizations and their stakeholders to advance diversity within the sector.

## Terminology

Prior to the review of research and data on diversity and inclusion in the non-profit sector, it is critical to establish clear definitions of terms being used in the report. Creating a common definition of diversity and equity-deserving groups is also key to representing these groups at the executive level in the non-profit sector.

As equity-deserving groups evolve and new barriers and challenges emerge, the terminology used to refer to equity-deserving groups needs to adapt. In this report, we use the most recent definitions of gender, sex, racialized people, 2SLGBTQ+ and other terms as defined in the 2021 population census.

### **Non-profit:**

Statistics Canada defines non-profit organizations as “associations, clubs, or societies that are not charities and are organized and operated exclusively for social welfare, civic improvement, pleasure, recreation, or any other purpose except profit.”<sup>1</sup>

### **Indigenous Peoples:**

This includes people who identify as First Nations, Métis and Inuit.<sup>2</sup>

### **2SLGBTQ+:**

This acronym is an umbrella term that is used to refer to multiple gender and sexual communities such as two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex and more.<sup>3</sup>

**Racialized people:**

“Racialized” is a term used to describe people other than Indigenous Peoples who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour. Because the term “visible minority” has connotations that centre Caucasian as the norm or majority, “racialized” or “racialized person” is used throughout this report. “Racialized” is also preferred because it acknowledges that race is a social construct and is used by the Ontario Human Rights Commission;<sup>4</sup> however, we would like to acknowledge that no word can encapsulate all the diverse experiences and nuances of different racial groups.

**Persons living with disabilities:**

This term refers to people with “an impairment that includes a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment—or a functional limitation—whether permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, or evident or not, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person’s full and equal participation in society.”<sup>5</sup>

**Gender:**

This refers to the personal and social identity of an individual as a man, woman, non-binary person or other identities. Gender expression and sex can also be distinct from one’s gender identity.<sup>6</sup>

**Intersectionality:**

This refers to the experiences of equity-deserving groups that face multiple barriers and gaps due to compounding inequities. For example, Black women experience sexism in addition to racism, which makes their experiences distinct from that of Black men and white women.<sup>7</sup>





## Diversity in Non-Profit Leadership

In this section, we provide an overview of diversity in non-profit leadership in Canada and address the challenges faced by diverse leaders from equity-deserving groups including women, persons living with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, racialized people, 2SLGBTQ+ people and immigrants. This section conducts a literature review to understand how disparities in representation of equity-deserving groups occur at the executive and board level and to identify research gaps related to the experiences of equity-deserving groups. We use data from Statistics Canada and recent studies conducted at DI to examine the experiences and representation of non-profit leaders from equity-deserving groups.

The differences between representation on boards and executive teams suggest that certain equity-deserving groups may not be proportionately represented on the boards of organizations compared to the populations they serve. According to the most recent statistics on non-profit board membership, women represented 59% of non-profit leadership in 2021,<sup>8</sup> while the population of women in Canada was at 51%.<sup>9</sup> For immigrant leaders, representation on Canadian non-profit boards was 18.9%,<sup>10</sup> whereas the population of immigrants

was 23% of all Canadians.<sup>11</sup> Racialized leaders represented 20.7% of non-profits boards in Canada in 2021,<sup>12</sup> while the three largest racialized groups in Canada represented 16.1% of the population in 2021.<sup>13</sup> 2SLGBTQ+ individuals represented 13.1% of non-profit leadership roles in the sector,<sup>14</sup> while their population in the country was at 4%.<sup>15</sup> Leaders living with disabilities represented 8.9% of non-profit board members in Canada in 2021<sup>16</sup> while they served the population of 22% of Canadians living with disabilities.<sup>17</sup> Finally, Indigenous representation on boards was 3.6%,<sup>18</sup> while this group represents 6.1% of the Canadian population.<sup>19</sup>

Representation is also uneven across non-profit industries in Ontario. A recent study conducted by DI found that women and racialized people were underrepresented in Canada's largest art and cultural non-profit organizations. In these organizations, executive positions like chief executive officer, executive director, artistic director and board chair or president were mostly held by non-racialized men (58%), followed by non-racialized women (34%). Racialized men (4%) were underrepresented compared to both groups, while racialized women (3%) had the least representation.<sup>20, 21</sup>

Underrepresentation of equity-deserving group members varies by an organization's geographic location. A study conducted in London, Ont., showed a low representation of racialized women in leadership roles in non-profit organizations in this region.<sup>22</sup> According to this study, only 11.7% of 419 organizations analyzed had racialized leaders, and only 5.5% had racialized women leaders.

Although these studies shed light on the issue of underrepresentation in the non-profit sector, much of the previous research was based on small sample sizes that do not capture the entire picture of diversity at the executive level in the non-profit sector. Previous studies also focused on either one specific equity-deserving group or a niche organization type within the non-profit sector.<sup>23, 24</sup> While these studies provide valuable insights on diversity and inclusion in the non-profit sector in Canada, more information is needed to understand the experiences of equity-deserving group members (such as women, racialized persons, persons with disabilities, Indigenous persons and 2SLGBTQ+ individuals) in non-profit sector leadership positions, including the challenges they face and the necessary skills and factors for success.

## Challenges of diverse leaders in the non-profit sector

In addition to making significant contributions to the national GDP, the non-profit sector plays a critical role in addressing social issues and promoting social justice. However, despite efforts to increase diversity and inclusivity in the industry, equity-deserving groups continue to face significant barriers to leadership roles that result in their underrepresentation in boardrooms and executive teams. This section examines the experiences of diverse leaders in Canada, focusing on women, persons living with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, racialized people, Black people, 2SLGBTQ+ people and immigrants. Our review reveals a paucity of research on the unique experiences of diverse leaders in Canadian non-profits. As such, the following literature assessment identifies knowledge gaps related to the experiences of equity-deserving groups and contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of equity and inclusion in Canada's non-profit sector.

### Women

Women leaders play a significant role in the non-profit sector. Despite their growing representation in leadership positions, women often experience systemic barriers that limit the progression of their careers; this is particularly true for women whose identities are located at the intersection of race, gender and disability. Research suggests that women—especially racialized women, Indigenous women and women

living with disabilities—hold lower-paying positions and face more challenges in advancing to senior management roles compared with their men counterparts in general and in the non-profit sector in particular.<sup>25</sup> Discrimination, stereotyping and biases in the board election processes often prevent women from being appointed and perpetuate a cycle of exclusion that limits women’s opportunities for advancement into leadership roles.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, long hours and lack of flexible work arrangements can make it difficult for women balancing personal and professional responsibilities,<sup>27</sup> which contributes to their underrepresentation in leadership roles.

### **Persons living with disabilities**

The research on leaders living with disabilities in non-profits in Canada is scarce. Thus, we provide a broader scope of literature review by identifying the challenges persons living with disabilities face while working and advancing their careers. Research shows that persons living with disabilities experience attitudinal barriers that affect their hiring, retention and career development in various industries, including the non-profit sector. Studies have found that the top reasons for not retaining employees with disabilities were lack of knowledge on handling their needs, concern over potential liabilities and cost of accommodations.<sup>28</sup> These findings indicate that persons living with disabilities face misconceptions and stereotypes that limit their job opportunities and career advancement to leadership roles not only in non-profit organizations but across industries in Canada.

### **Indigenous Peoples**

Racism is a significant obstacle for Indigenous Peoples seeking executive roles in the non-profit sector, despite their capacity for innovative leadership. Fear of racism and stigma, especially among young Indigenous adults, may discourage them from self-identifying, preventing them from seeking leadership roles and resulting in underrepresentation on executive boards.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, cultural practices in the non-profit sector are often defined by a homogenization of leadership styles and Western culture, which rejects Indigenous ways of knowing.<sup>30</sup> Yet, recognizing the value of Indigenous narratives and leadership styles not only cultivates a more inclusive environment for Indigenous employees, but it also enriches all communities with which they interact, fostering broader inclusivity and understanding.

### **Racialized people**

There are significant differences between the experiences of racialized and non-racialized leaders in non-profit boards and executive teams. Studies suggest that racialized leaders in executive positions face more challenges and frustrations than their non-racialized counterparts, mainly when their board of directors is predominantly non-racialized.<sup>31</sup> Racialized leaders perceive barriers to entry into executive roles related to the hiring process such as lack of effort from executive recruiters to find and support diverse candidates, limited networks, and biased perceptions of skill training. One study examining the experiences of racialized leaders with the hiring process in the non-profit sector showed that a high

percentage of racialized leaders felt that executive recruiters do not do enough to find a diverse pool of qualified candidates for top-level non-profit positions.<sup>32</sup> According to this study, racialized leaders noted other challenges in advancing their careers, such as small professional networks and the fact that they need more skills and training than their non-racialized peers to be considered for top-level positions.<sup>33</sup>

## Black people

The data regarding the representation of Black leaders in the non-profit sector is a significant issue. Most research that analyzes the racial composition of non-profit boards combines Black representation with that of other racial groups,<sup>34</sup> which inhibits the examination of the unique experiences of Black leaders in the non-profit sector.<sup>35</sup> For instance, a report by Statistics Canada called “Diversity of charity and non-profit boards of directors: Overview of the Canadian non-profit sector” solely examines “visible minority groups” and First Nations, Inuit and Métis people as racial categories without distinguishing Black people.<sup>36</sup>

The 2020 Diversity Leads project conducted by the Diversity Institute is the most notable source of data regarding the representation of Black people in the non-profit sector. The data shows that in eight Canadian cities—Calgary, Halifax, Hamilton, London, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto and Vancouver—only 2.2% of non-profit board members and 0.5% of senior managers were Black people.<sup>37</sup> These findings highlight the substantial underrepresentation of Black leaders in the non-profit industry.

## 2SLGBTQ+ people

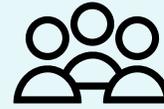
People who identify as part of the 2SLGBTQ+ community are significantly less likely than their non-2SLGBTQ+ peers to hold director and senior management positions.<sup>38</sup> The lack of representation at the executive level may be attributed to various organizational barriers, including communication issues and stigma. For example, some organizations with 2SLGBTQ+ champions in leadership positions may fail to communicate the significance of 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion in the workplace, which can lead to a lack of awareness regarding the challenges faced by 2SLGBTQ+ employees, including their career development. Additionally, due to miscommunication in organizational messaging and gaps in knowledge, many 2SLGBTQ+ executives may be deterred by stigma or feel uncomfortable revealing their identities at work.<sup>39</sup> In fact, a study conducted on 2SLGBTQ+ workers found that their identities were often viewed as “poor fits” for certain positions or organizations. This perception negatively affected their social and professional networks, as well as training and advancement opportunities, and in some cases, prompted them to leave their jobs.<sup>40</sup>

## Immigrants

It is common for immigrants and refugees to have intersecting identities, such as Black women, 2SLGBTQ+ individuals and racialized people. Research shows that immigrants and refugees with intersecting identities frequently encounter significant barriers in the Canadian labour market. They may lack the social and professional

networks needed to enter their profession and advance their careers and face a range of systemic barriers that prevent them from reaching their full potential.<sup>41</sup> Their experiences of discrimination and marginalization may differ from those of other groups, emphasizing the need for research that considers the unique experiences of immigrants and refugees in modern Canada. There is a significant gap in the literature on immigrant leadership, representation, barriers and challenges in the non-profit sector; the experiences of immigrant leaders in this industry, and the barriers they encounter, are not well understood, and research is needed to address this knowledge gap. Immigrants and refugees bring unique perspectives and experiences to the non-profit sector, and their representation and leadership is essential for the industry to operate effectively and equitably.

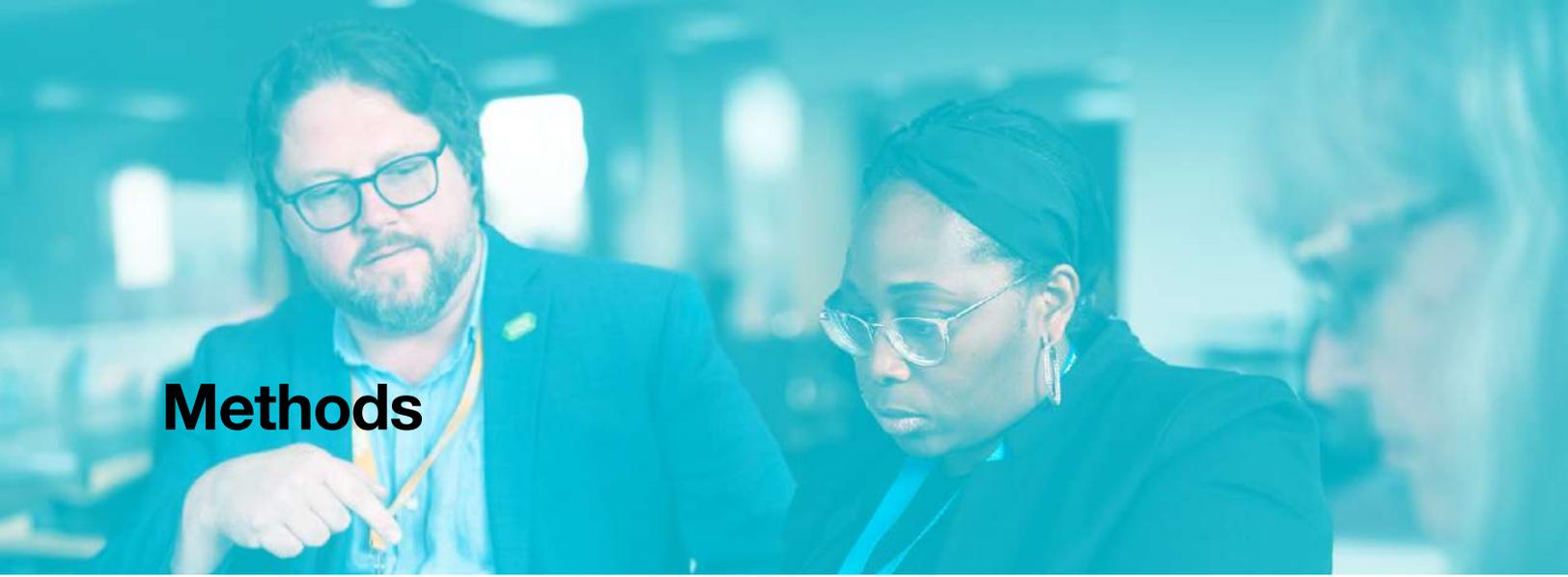
The literature review presented an overview of the challenges and broader issues faced by equity-deserving groups in leadership roles in the Canadian workforce; however, it is crucial to examine the distinct experiences of diverse leaders in the non-profit sector to identify the obstacles hindering their career development and learn about skills that enable them to succeed in their roles. This study sheds light on diversity among leaders in non-profit organizations across Ontario, which is the most populous and culturally diverse province in Canada. We aim to bridge the research gaps that have been identified in this section, specifically the lack of research on diverse leaders' individual experiences in the non-profit sector. To do so, this study is guided by the following research questions:



*This study sheds light on diversity among leaders in non-profit organizations across Ontario, which is the most populous and culturally diverse province in Canada. We aim to bridge the research gaps that have been identified in this section, specifically the **lack of research on diverse leaders' individual experiences in the non-profit sector.***

- > What are the representations of equity-deserving groups in senior leadership roles in the non-profit sector in Ontario?
- > What are diverse leaders' experiences in board or executive positions?
- > What are the unique challenges faced by diverse leaders in senior leadership roles?
- > What are essential factors and skills needed to achieve success in senior leadership positions?

By addressing these questions, our research provides valuable insights to promote equity and inclusion across non-profit boards in Ontario that can be used across Canada.



# Methods

This section outlines data collection in two phases: from non-profit organizations' websites and from a survey of senior leaders at non-profit organizations. We then introduce the quantitative data analysis that was employed for the two datasets. These research methods are used to investigate board diversity, along with the experiences and perceptions of diverse leaders regarding diversity and inclusion in non-profit organizations in Ontario.

## Data collection

This study used two methods for data collection: manual data collection from publicly accessible non-profit organization websites and an online survey developed by the DI team. Manual data collection allowed for careful selection of data to ensure accuracy, while the online survey facilitated quick distribution to many participants, providing deep insights into board diversity in non-profit organizations in Ontario. Together, these methods enabled the collection of data for rigorous analysis, which could contribute to achieving EDI goals and objectives in non-profits not only in Ontario, but across Canada.

The method of manual collection of board or senior management team data from publicly accessible websites was first used in the Diversity Leads project.<sup>42, 43, 44</sup> In 2020, this approach enabled the tracking of diversity in leadership among more than 6,000 senior leaders across six sectors in the Greater Montreal Area and Greater Toronto Area. This approach has been lauded by the Ontario Human Rights Commission, which used this method to review reports and concluded that “the strong, rigorous data collection methods gave the work more credibility.”<sup>45</sup> This method was effective in shaping Bill C-25, an act to amend the Canada Business Corporations Act, which aims to enhance diversity on corporate boards and in management positions.

To collect data, the researchers visited Ontario non-profit organization websites and gathered information about their board size, location and budget, along with photographs of the executive team and board members. After examining 985 non-profit organizations from 25 cities in Ontario—Barrie, Belleville, Burlington, Brampton, Cornwall, Guelph, Hamilton, Kenora, Kingston, Kitchener-Waterloo, London, Mississauga, Niagara Falls, North Bay, Oakville, Oshawa, Ottawa, Peterborough, Sarnia, Sudbury, Timmins,



Thunder Bay, Toronto and Windsor—we collected sufficient data from 803 organizations that published information about board members and senior leaders. Multiple coders coded the data to reduce bias, focusing on executive team and board size, organization location and budget. To ensure coding reliability, an intercoder reliability test was conducted; the result exceeded 95%, demonstrating strong reliability. For this report, we used CivicAction’s definition of non-profit organization size as categorized by annual budget size. Following the categorization of the government, organizations with an annual budget of less than \$500,000 were coded as “small,” those with a budget of \$500,000 to \$5 million were coded as “medium-sized,” and those with a budget of over \$5 million were coded as “large.”

Photographs of executive team and board members were coded for gender and racialized status, with a masculine gender expression coded as “man” and a feminine gender expression coded as “woman.” In

cases where gender and racialized status could not be determined from photographs alone, captions and biographies were used for coding. When there was insufficient information to determine an individual’s gender or racialized status, the individual was coded as “unsure” and excluded from analysis. Indigenous status was only coded when explicitly stated in an individual’s biography.

In addition to the data collected from websites, the DI team conducted a survey with directors on board or senior leaders at non-profit organizations in Ontario from February 2 to April 19, 2023. This survey gathered additional information about these leaders’ lived experiences and opinions related to diversity and inclusion, such as their perceptions of success factors, general board culture, EDI awareness and challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Among 803 organizations whose leaders’ online information was collected and analyzed, 715 organizations published their organizational or leaders’ email addresses



*Data was analyzed in two stages. Using information about non-profit boards and management collected from their organizations' websites, we conducted a **quantitative analysis of the diversity in gender and race among non-profit leaders in Ontario**. Then, we did a **quantitative analysis of the survey data about diversity and inclusion** about leaders from equity-deserving groups in non-profit organizations.*

online. CivicAction also invited about 500 additional participants through their email lists and industry partners such as the Ontario Nonprofit Network and the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants. After survey invitations were sent out, we received 146 complete responses.

The survey asked 25 questions about participants' leadership roles and experiences working in non-profit organizations across Ontario. Demographic characteristics and leadership roles were among the questions asked. Participants were also asked about success factors, their pursuit of board positions, perceptions of boards in various sectors and their experiences within boards.

## Data analysis

Data was analyzed in two stages. Using information about non-profit boards and management collected from their organizations' websites, we conducted a quantitative analysis of the diversity in gender and race among non-profit leaders in Ontario. Then, we did a quantitative analysis of the survey data about diversity and inclusion about leaders from equity-deserving groups in non-profit organizations.

First, we conducted a descriptive analysis of the manually collected online data to examine the representation of women, Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous women, racialized people and racialized women in leadership roles. Second, we undertook quantitative data analysis with the survey data. Descriptive statistics were conducted to summarize the demographic data and experiences of the participants. The 25-question survey includes demographic data, such as gender, the participants' roles in their organizations and the size of the boards or executive teams on which they worked. The survey also included questions about participants' experiences related to their work on boards and executive teams and their perceptions of EDI policies and practices. Another set of questions was analyzed to understand participants' perceptions about skills that allowed them to obtain leadership roles in their workplaces. The data were entered into Microsoft Excel and descriptive statistics were calculated. The analysis of the remaining survey questions was conducted using a descriptive statistics method and organized using bar charts to present results.

# Findings

In this section we explore our findings from two phases of investigation into the representation and experiences of non-profit leaders who identify as members of equity-deserving groups. In the first phase, we conducted a review of the online data to determine the representation of women, racialized people, racialized women, Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous women in board and senior management positions in non-profit organizations in Ontario. In the second phase, we provide the results of our online survey, focusing on the shared experiences of leaders from equity-deserving groups within the non-profit sector in Ontario. We focus on women, persons living with disabilities, racialized people, racialized women, 2SLGBTQ+ individuals, the Black community and Black women, and their experiences with EDI, discrimination and the COVID-19 pandemic. We also highlight key factors reported by diverse leaders, which are crucial to their success in the non-profit sector and their success in developing long-term board careers.

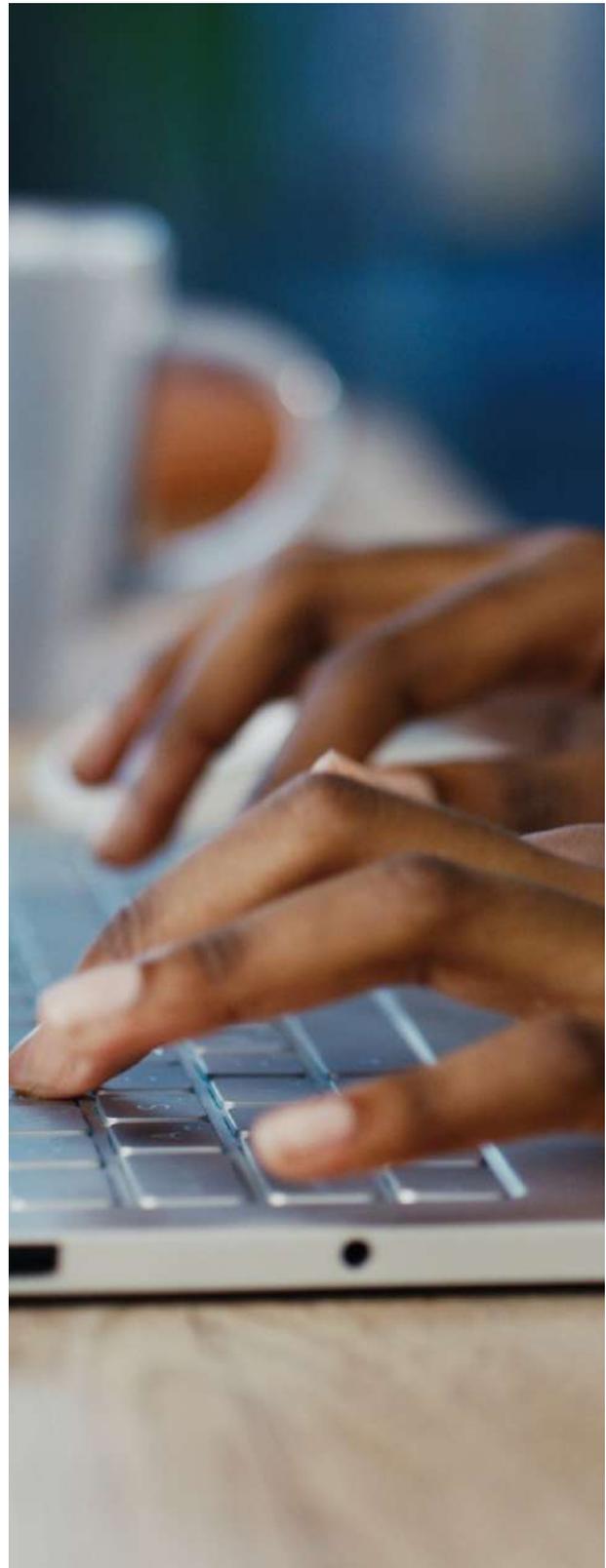


*We focus on women, persons living with disabilities, racialized people, racialized women, 2SLGBTQ+ individuals, the Black community and Black women, and their experiences with EDI, discrimination and the COVID-19 pandemic.*

## Representation of equity-deserving groups in leadership

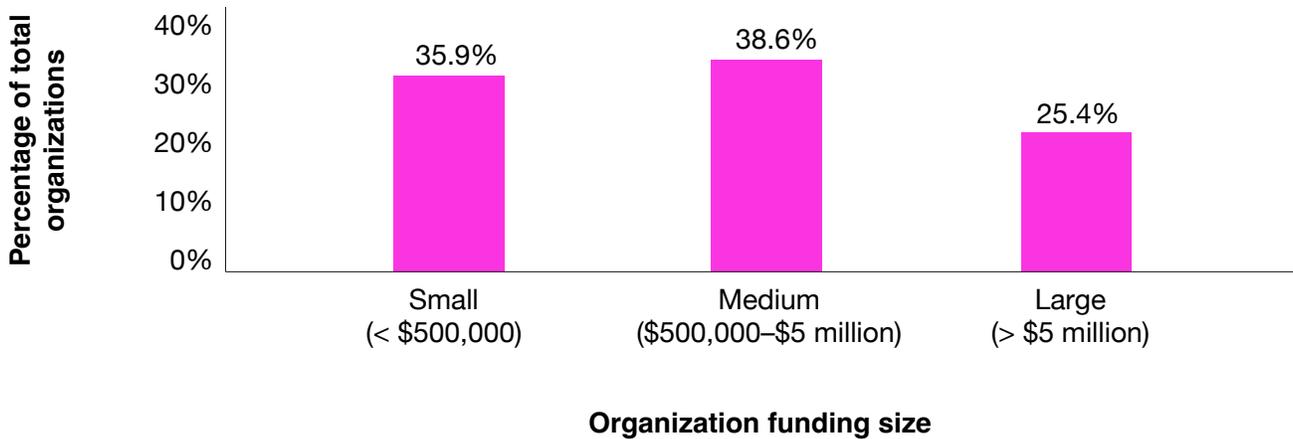
### Leadership demographics of non-profit organizations

Using manual data collection from non-profit organizations' websites, the DI team collected data on 8,902 senior managers and directors from 803 non-profit organizations in Ontario. Using coding methods described in the "Methods" section, organizations' sizes were determined based on their annual budgets. The distribution of non-profit organizations was categorized as 206 large organizations, 303 medium-sized organizations and 294 small organizations. The data originated from 25 cities in Ontario, including Barrie, Belleville, Burlington, Brampton, Cornwall, Guelph, Hamilton, Kenora, Kingston, Kitchener-Waterloo, London, Mississauga, Niagara Falls, North Bay, Oakville, Oshawa, Ottawa, Peterborough, Sarnia, Sudbury, Timmins, Thunder Bay, Toronto and Windsor.



**FIGURE 1**

Distribution of non-profit organizations' size by amount of annual funding, Ontario, Canada, 2022



The most common size category, at 38.6% of non-profit organizations, was medium-sized budgets ranging from \$500,000 to \$5 million annually (Figure 1).

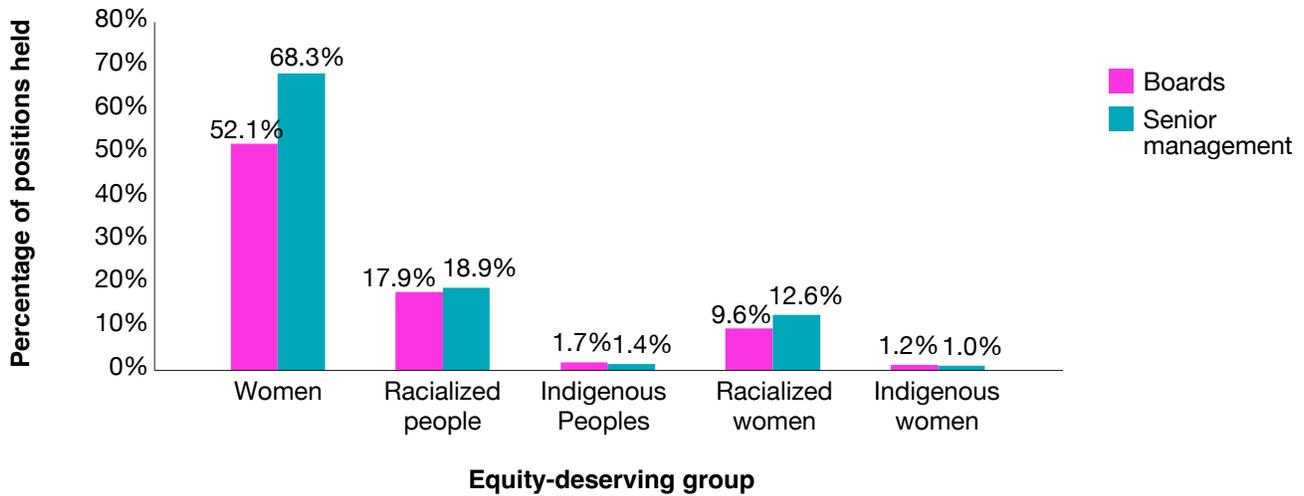
Next, we looked at the distribution of members of equity-deserving groups across executive teams and boards of non-profit organizations in Ontario. The results revealed that women represented the largest proportion (68.3%) in senior management roles, followed by racialized people (18.9%) and racialized women (12.6%). Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous women represented less than 2% of these jobs on boards (1.7% and 1.2%, respectively) and senior management teams (1.4% and 1%, respectively) (Figure 2). The data on leaders who identified as immigrants was not sufficient for analysis and therefore was not included in this report.



*The results revealed that **women represented the largest proportion (68.3%) in senior management roles, followed by racialized people (18.9%) and racialized women (12.6%).***

**FIGURE 2**

Proportion of board and senior management positions occupied by equity-deserving groups in the non-profit sector, Ontario, Canada, 2022



### Representation of women

Among equity-deserving groups, women had the most representation in the non-profit sector, including on boards (52.1%) and executive teams (68.3%) (Figure 2).

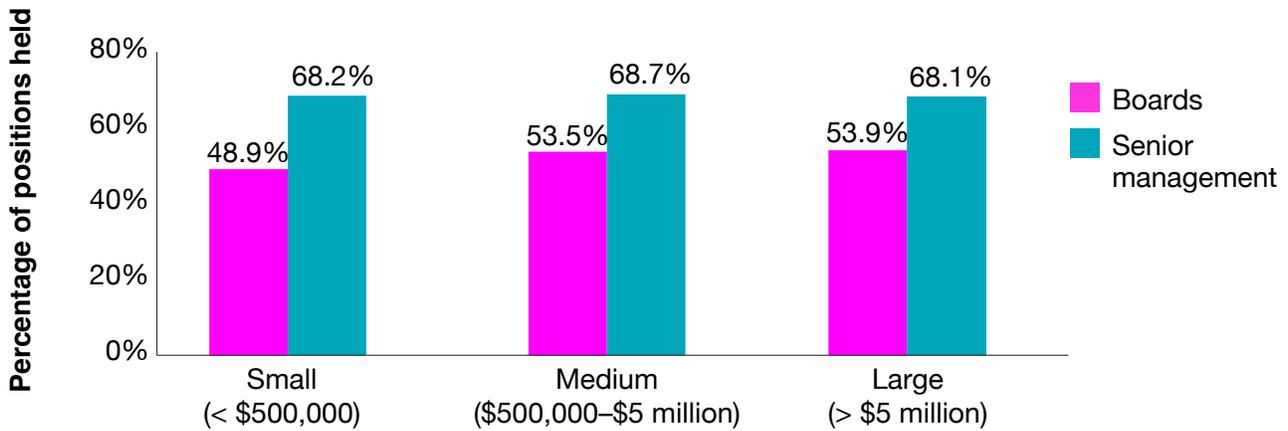
Representation varied based on the size of the city; however, women were well represented on boards of non-profit organizations in smaller cities, including Timmins (63.6%), Kenora (63.2%) and Belleville (56.6%). Considering that previous research has found that larger cities like Toronto or Ottawa are more likely to have diverse representation on boards owing to the increased diversity of the city's population,<sup>46</sup> it is significant that women had more than 50% representation on boards within smaller cities.



*Considering that previous research has found that larger cities like Toronto or Ottawa are more likely to have diverse representation on boards owing to the increased diversity of the city's population, it is significant that women had more than 50% representation on boards within smaller cities.*

**FIGURE 3**

Distribution of women on boards of directors and senior management teams by organizations' funding size, Ontario, Canada, 2022

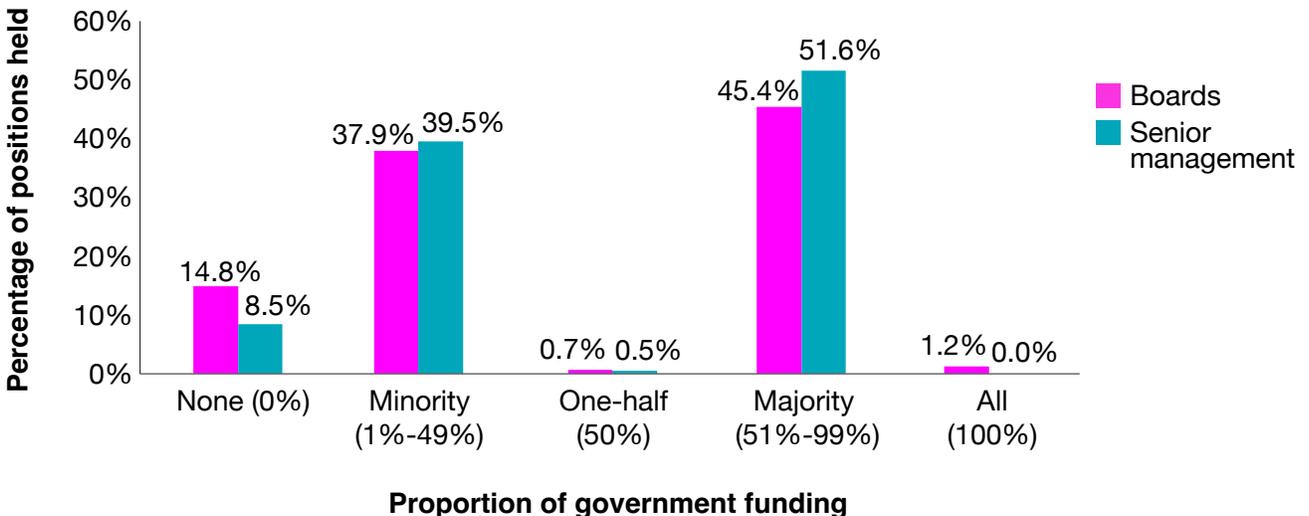


The representation of women was slightly higher on the boards of large organizations (53.9%) compared with smaller (48.9%) ones. However, the percentage of women in senior management was relatively stable across all sizes of organizations at about 68%. This indicates that while organization size may influence the representation of women on boards, it seems to have no impact on their presence in senior management (Figure 3).

An organization's source of the funding is another factor that affects women's representation on boards and executive teams in the non-profit sector. Most women who were identified in the first stage of our data collection (45.4%) held board positions within non-profit organizations that secured most of their funding from the government. When non-profits received funding from other sources, the representation of women on boards decreased (Figure 4).

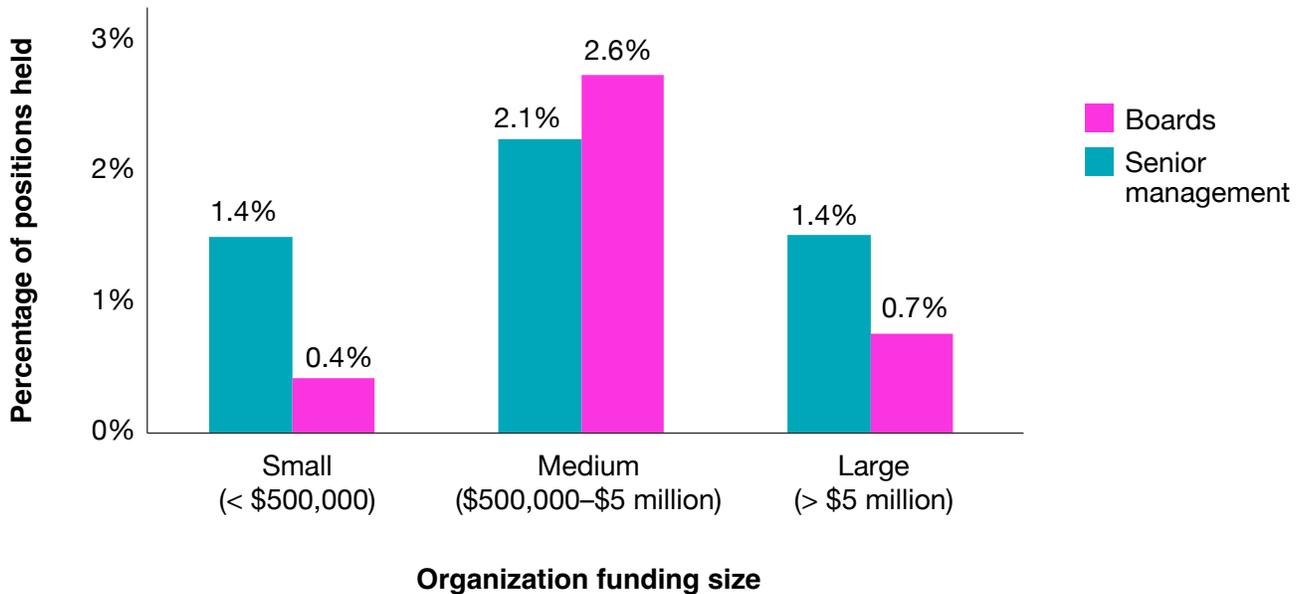
**FIGURE 4**

Distribution of women on boards and senior management teams by proportion of government funding, Ontario, Canada, 2022



**FIGURE 5**

Distribution of Indigenous Peoples on boards and senior management teams, by organizations' funding size, Ontario, Canada, 2022



Our analysis suggests that the representation of women on non-profit boards and executive teams may be influenced by the size of the organizational budget, amount of funding, the source of those fundings and the location. We found that women held executive and board positions in small and medium-sized organizations with funding ranging from \$500,000 to \$5 million per year and located in small cities.

### Representation of Indigenous leaders

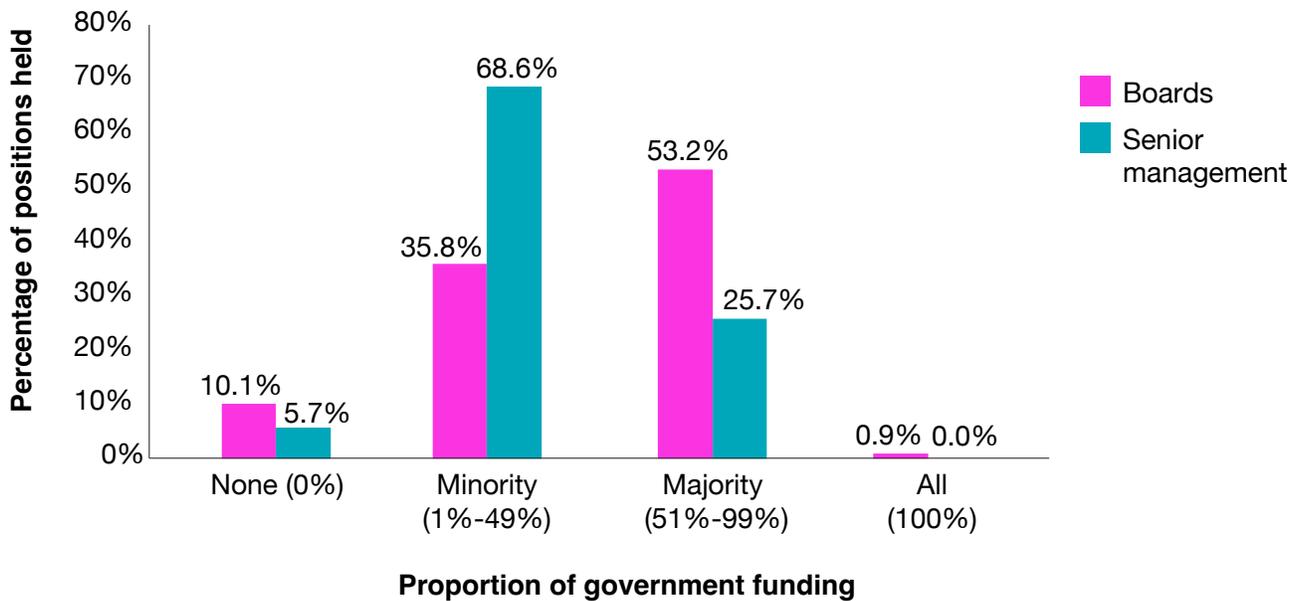
In 2022, Indigenous Peoples represented 2.9% of the population in Ontario.<sup>47</sup> Despite their presence in the local population, the representation of Indigenous Peoples on non-profit boards and senior management teams is low at 1.7% and 1.4%, respectively (Figure 2). The proportion of Indigenous non-profit leaders was highest in Timmins (7.6%), Peterborough (6.1%) and Mississauga (4.7%).

The low representation of Indigenous Peoples was also reflected in the distribution of Indigenous board and senior management members across funding size categories. Indigenous leaders were best represented in medium-sized non-profit organizations at 2.1% on boards and 2.6% on senior management teams. They were least represented in board and senior management positions in organizations with small budgets (1.4% vs. 0.4%) (Figure 5). The amount of the funding had no significant effect on the representation of Indigenous leaders, as it remained below 3% for all funding size categories.

Indigenous members of the senior management teams and boards who were selected for our study were from organizations that were funded by government. As with the representation of women and racialized people, the representation of Indigenous Peoples decreased as the proportion of the

**FIGURE 6**

Distribution of Indigenous Peoples on boards and senior management teams by proportion of government funding, Ontario, Canada, 2022



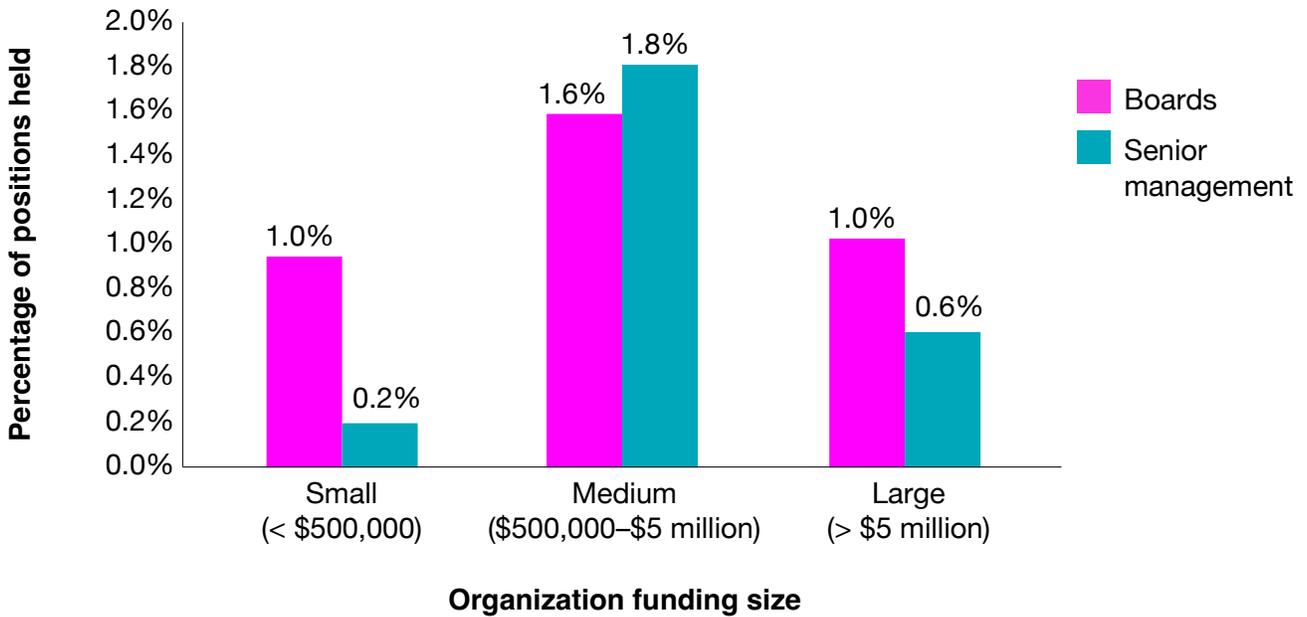
government funding decreased (Figure 6). However, our study found the representation of Indigenous Peoples in non-profit leadership roles in Ontario was the lowest out of all equity-deserving groups at less than 3%.

### Representation of Indigenous women leaders

Although more Indigenous women have been employed as board and senior management members than Indigenous men participating in our study, the overall proportion of Indigenous women is low compared to all other leader members of equity-deserving groups. As shown previously, Indigenous women represented 1.2% of boards and 1% of senior management teams (Figure 2). In our analysis, we identified three cities with the highest representation of Indigenous women holding leadership roles: Peterborough (4.2%), North Bay (2.8%) and Timmins (2.6%). All three of these cities have a relatively high population of Indigenous Peoples compared to the rest of Ontario. For example, Indigenous Peoples comprised 5% of the population in Peterborough, 10.7% in North Bay and 14.9% in Timmins, compared to Ontario's Indigenous population of 2.9%.<sup>48</sup>

**FIGURE 7**

Distribution of Indigenous women on boards and senior management teams by funding size, Ontario, Canada, 2022



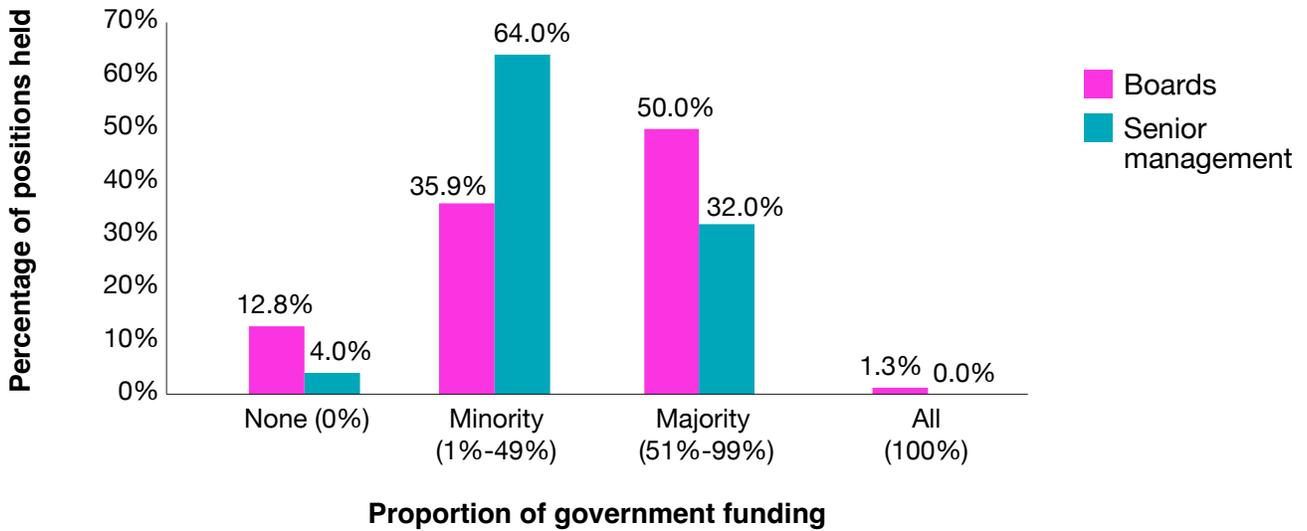
Although there were more Indigenous Peoples in these cities compared to the rest of Ontario, the representation of Indigenous women was disproportionate to the size of the population they were serving. The representation of Indigenous women in board and senior management roles also varied based on the amount of funding. Organizations with medium-sized budgets had the strongest representation of Indigenous women on their boards (1.6%) and senior management teams (1.8%), while organizations with small budgets had the lowest representation of Indigenous women leaders on their senior management teams at 0.2% (Figure 7).



**Organizations with medium-sized budgets had the strongest representation of Indigenous women on their boards (1.6%) and senior management teams (1.8%), while organizations with small budgets had the lowest representation of Indigenous women leaders on their senior management teams at 0.2%**

**FIGURE 8**

Distribution of Indigenous women on boards and senior management teams by proportion of government funding, Ontario, Canada, 2022



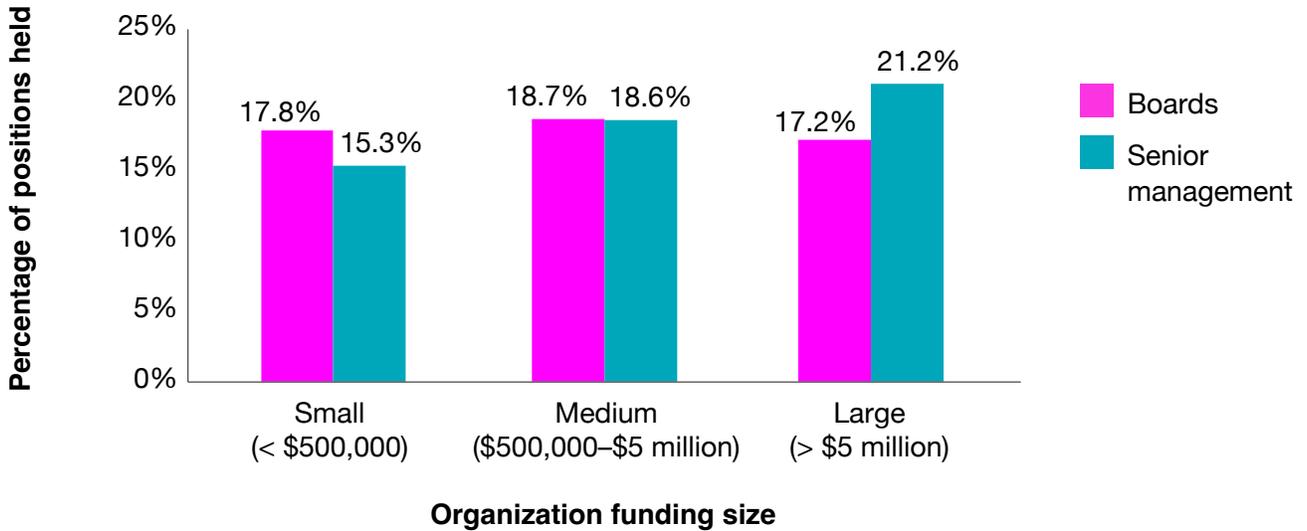
Indigenous women were also best represented on the boards (50%) of non-profit organizations that received most of their funding from government. However, non-profits that received a minority of their total budget from government funding had the strongest representation of Indigenous women on senior management teams at 64% (Figure 8).



*Indigenous women were also **best represented on the boards (50%) of non-profit organizations that received most of their funding from government.***

**FIGURE 9**

Distribution of racialized people on boards and senior management teams by funding size, Ontario, Canada, 2022



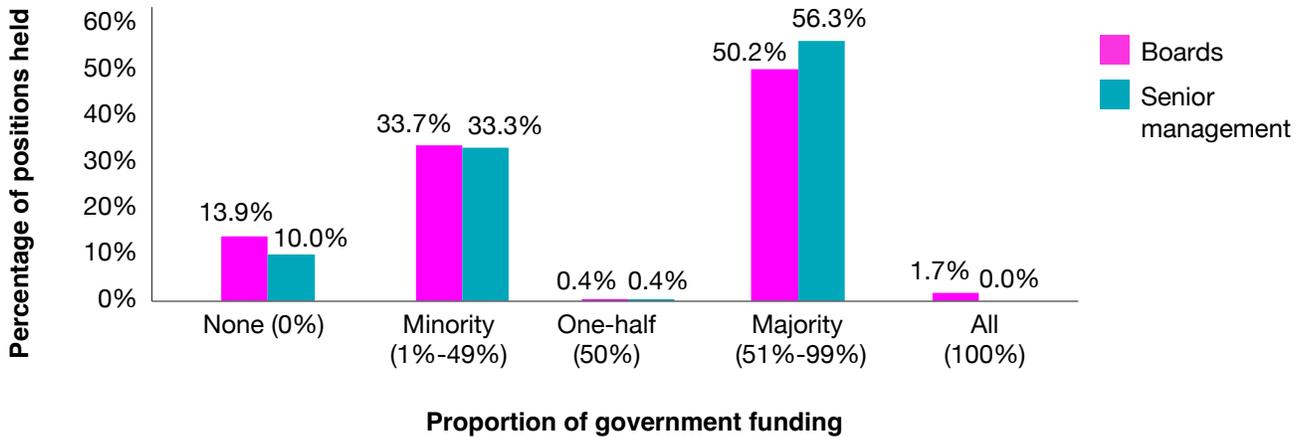
### Representation of racialized leaders

Although racialized people had the second highest representation after women on boards and senior management teams at 17.9% and 18.9%, respectively (Figure 2), their distribution in executive roles across Ontario was less consistent than that of women. For example, racialized people accounted for 64.6% of board appointments in Brampton’s non-profits and only 35.2% of board members in Mississauga, yet Mississauga was the city with the second largest proportion of Ontario’s racialized population.<sup>49</sup>

Representation of racialized people also varied based on an organization’s budget size. Racialized people were from small (17.8%) and large (17.2%) organizations; however, organizations with large budgets had the greatest representation of racialized people on their senior management teams (21.2%) (Figure 9).

**FIGURE 10**

Distribution of racialized people on boards and senior management teams by proportion of government funding, Ontario, Canada, 2022



Like women leaders, racialized people were best represented on the boards (50.2%) and senior management teams (56.3%) of non-profit organizations that received most of their funding from government. As the proportion of government funding fell, so did the proportion of racialized people on boards and executive teams (Figure 10).

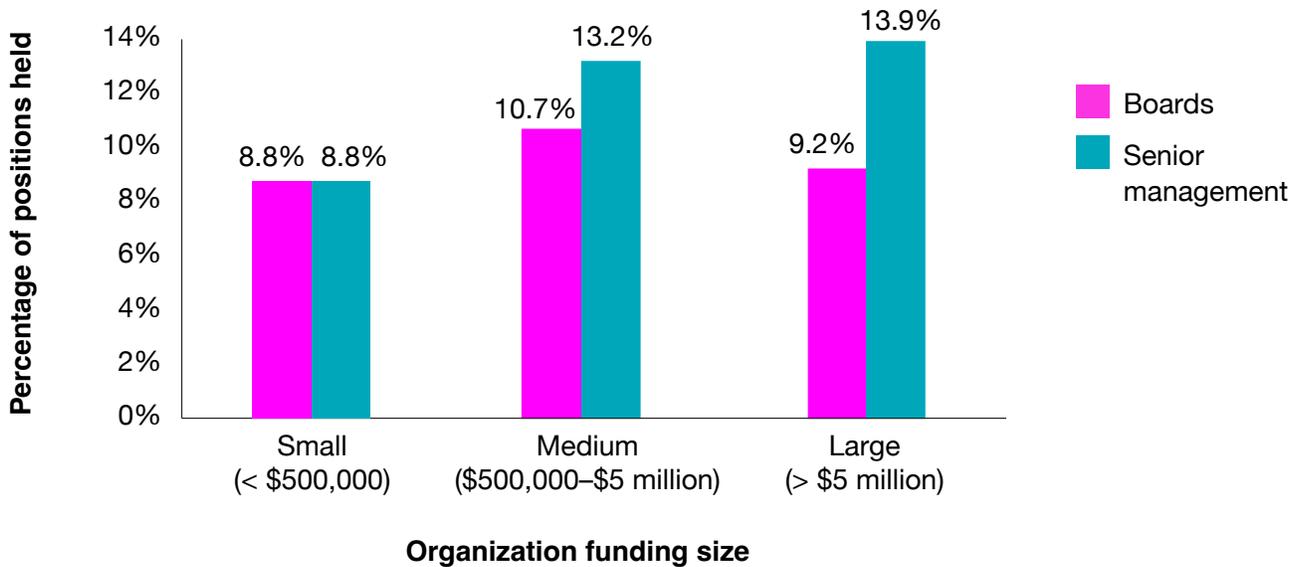
Taken as a whole, the results showed that, to some extent, the presence of racialized people on boards and senior management teams in the non-profit sector was defined by the organization's budget size and source of funding. Racialized people who participated in our study were leaders in organizations with medium-sized budgets that were funded by government.



*The **presence of racialized people** on boards and senior management teams in the non-profit sector was **defined by the organization's budget size and source of funding.***

**FIGURE 11**

Distribution of racialized women on boards and senior management teams by funding size, Ontario, Canada, 2022



### Representation of racialized women leaders

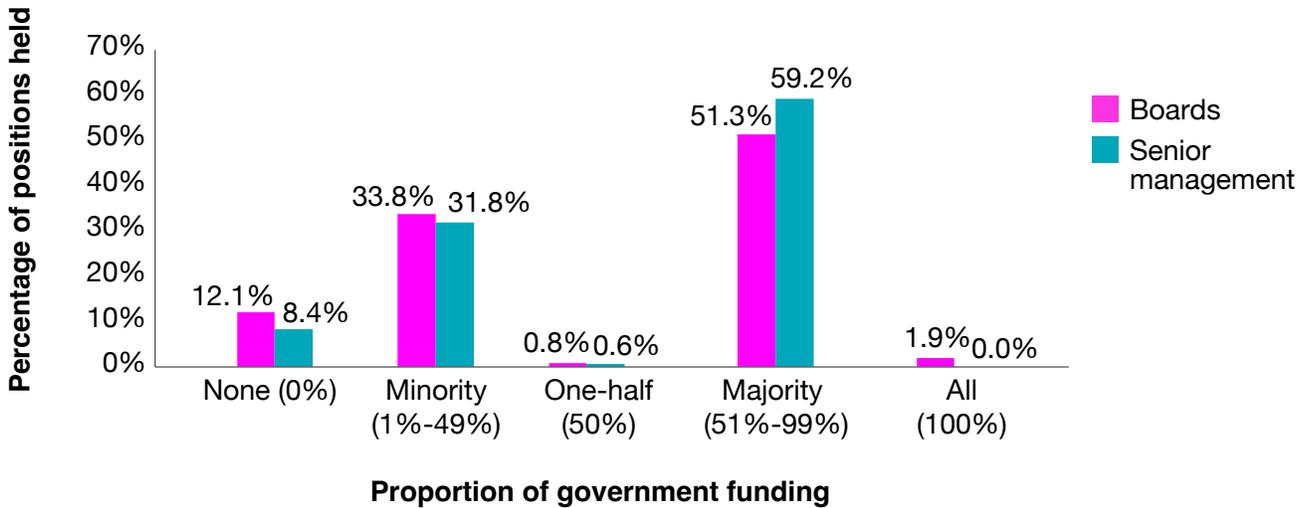
Racialized women who completed our survey represented 12.6% of executive team members and 9.6% of board members in the non-profit sector in Ontario (Figure 2). Our analysis showed that their representation varied based on the location, budget size and funding source of the organization. Racialized women leaders were from large cities such as Brampton (29.1%) and Mississauga (21.9%), two cities in Ontario with the highest representation of ethnically diverse populations. Racialized women leaders were best represented on the boards of non-profit organizations with medium-sized budgets (10.7%) and the senior management teams of non-profits with large budgets (13.9%) (Figure 11).



*Racialized women who completed our survey represented **12.6% of executive team members** and **9.6% of board members** in the non-profit sector in Ontario.*

**FIGURE 12**

Distribution of racialized women on boards and senior management teams by proportion of government funding, Ontario, Canada, 2022



Additionally, 51.3% of racialized women worked on boards and 59.2% on senior management teams serving non-profit organizations that received most of their funding from government.

Our analysis showed that the representation of racialized women in leadership roles in Ontario's non-profit sector was influenced by the location of the organization, the amount of its funding and the source of funding. Racialized women leaders worked in organizations with medium-sized budgets located in large cities with diverse populations. Racialized women leaders also tended to be in organizations funded by government.



*Our analysis showed that the **representation of racialized women in leadership roles in Ontario's non-profit sector was influenced by the location of the organization, the amount of its funding and the source of funding.***

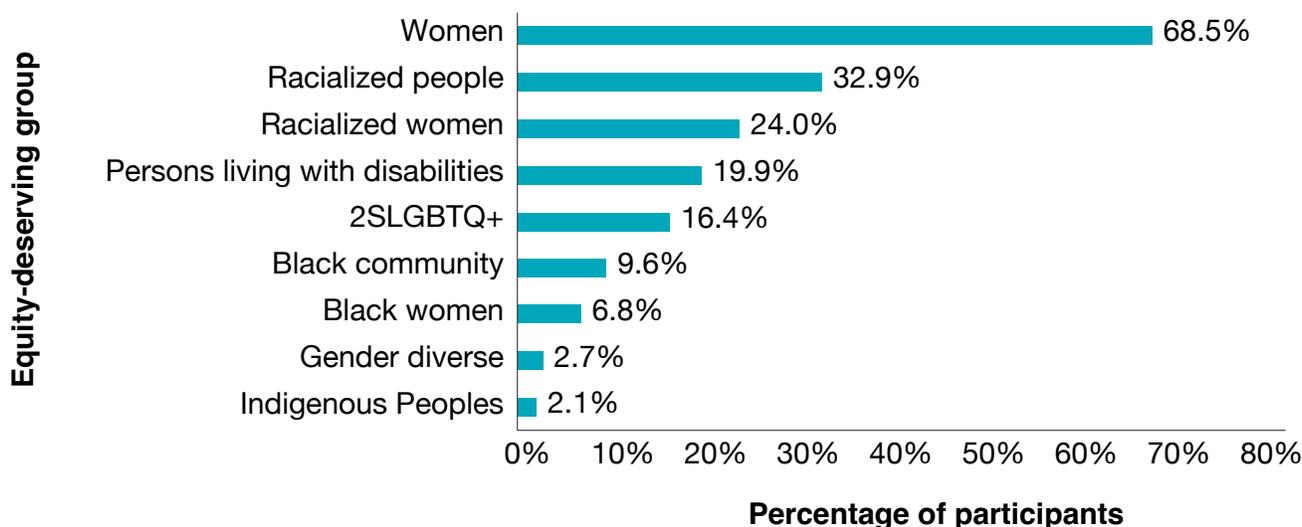


## **Experiences of leaders from equity-deserving groups**

In this section, we present the results of our DI-developed survey and discuss the experiences of non-profit board members and senior management from equity-deserving groups, such as women, racialized people and the Black community. Furthermore, we consider the unique experiences of some equity-deserving groups, such as racialized women and Black women.

**FIGURE 13**

**Representation of equity-deserving groups on non-profit board and senior management teams**



Note: Total does not equal 100% due to participants identifying as belonging to more than one equity-deserving group.

### Participant demographics

We received 146 complete responses from people on boards and in senior management positions to our survey on EDI policies within non-profit leadership teams. Of these participants, more than one-half (68.5%) identified as women and 2.7% identified as gender diverse (e.g., nonbinary or two-spirit). Almost one-third (32.9%) identified as racialized, and 9.6% identified as members of the Black community (Figure 13).

Racialized and Black women significantly outnumbered their men counterparts. Additionally, almost one-fifth (19.9%) identified as persons living with disabilities, while 16.4% identified as members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community. Most of our participants living with disabilities (82.8% of those who identified as doing so) revealed they live with non-evident or invisible disabilities.

Out of 146 participants, most (76%) were aged 35 to 64 years, with more than one-quarter (29.5%) aged 45 to 54 years. Considering that most of Canada’s labour force as of December 2022 was aged 25 to 54 years<sup>50</sup> and the age of retirement in Canada is 65 years old,<sup>51</sup> it is reasonable to consider such an age distribution within our sample to be representative of the Canadian population.

In the following sections, we discuss the responses equity-deserving groups in the study shared about their experiences with EDI when serving on leadership teams in their organizations. It is important to note, however, that analysis will not be provided for Indigenous Peoples due to insufficient data from Indigenous board directors and senior managers.

**FIGURE 14**

**Skills for success in non-profit leadership as identified by women leaders**



Note: Based on 100 respondents.

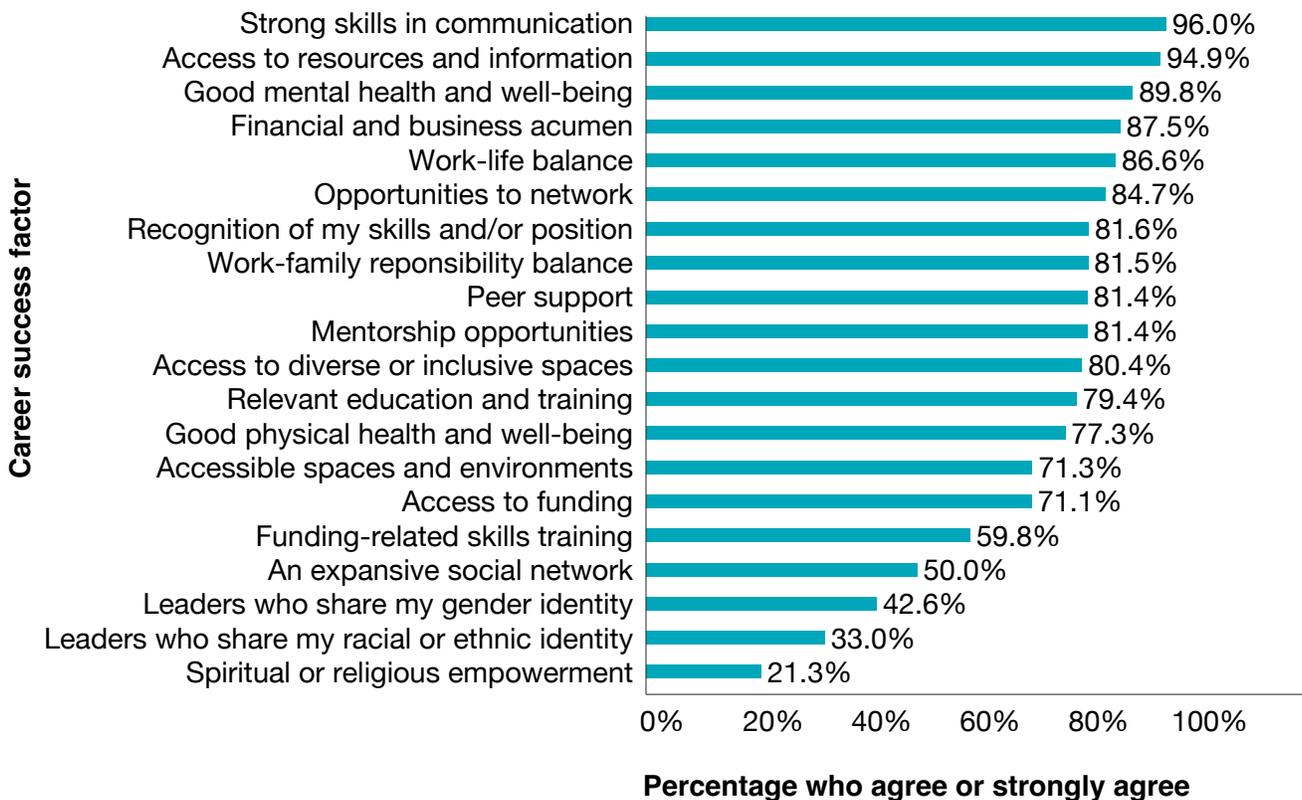
The results of our analysis are mainly applicable to the experience of non-profit senior management, rather than directors on boards, given that two-thirds (69.9%) of the participants held senior management positions at their non-profit organizations. Furthermore, as the survey predominantly attracted responses from non-racialized and non-disabled women, it would not be valid to generalize the results of our analysis to all leaders in the non-profit sector. Our survey also was not able to attract responses of leaders who identify as immigrants. Consequently, our findings should be construed as an endeavor to identify patterns and prospects for future research pertaining to EDI within the non-profit sector in Ontario (Figure 13).

### Experiences of women leaders

Our study investigated the experiences of equity-deserving groups in high-level positions within the non-profit sector in Ontario, including senior management and board director roles. The data revealed that almost all women leaders agreed on three competencies essential for success: problem solving and decision-making (99%), developing others through empowering and delegating (98%), and adaptability and flexibility (98%). The findings also revealed that women leaders in the non-profit sector in Ontario placed considerable importance on other skills necessary for success in leadership roles including fundraising (75%), proposal and grant writing (73.2%), social media and marketing (69.1%), and volunteer management (61.1%). These skills were deemed crucial for effective leadership by women leaders (Figure 14).

**FIGURE 15**

**Career success factors identified by women leaders**



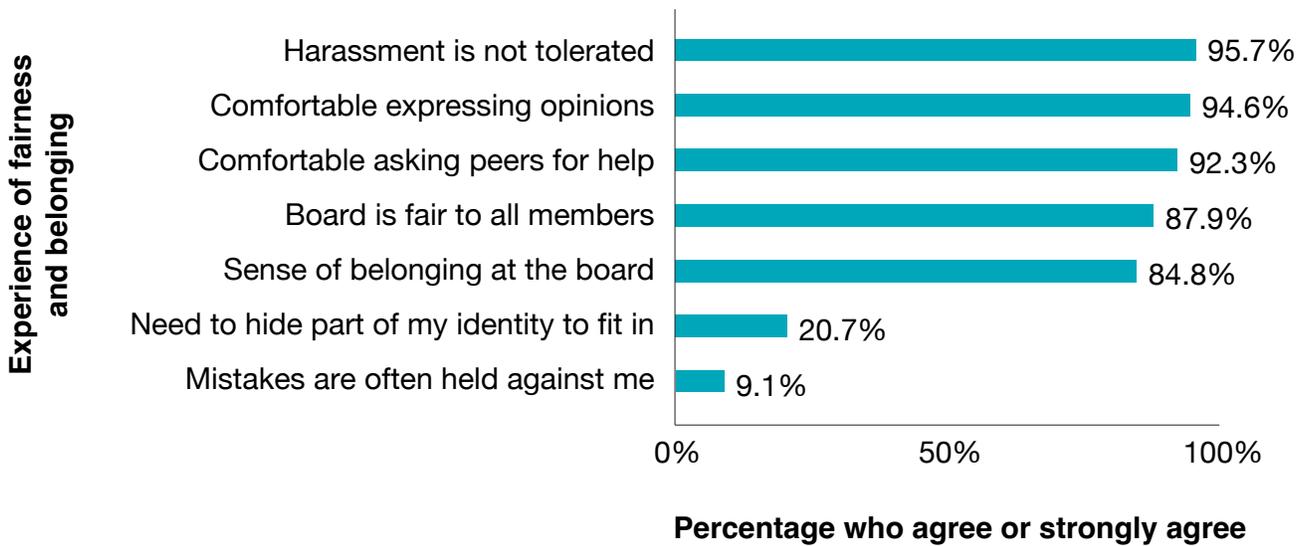
Note: Based on 100 respondents.

The vast majority (91.9%) of women leaders surveyed had a comprehensive understanding of systemic discrimination and its manifestations. Moreover, a significant proportion (85.9%) of women leaders demonstrated knowledge of what harassment and microaggressions are and could easily identify such behaviour in workplaces. Furthermore, a considerable number (77.8%) have received formal EDI training. Women leaders, therefore, are well-informed and well-equipped to navigate the complex landscape of EDI in their work.

The analysis shows that women leaders believed that the success of their careers in the non-profit organizations in Ontario depended on the following factors: strong communication skills (96%), access to information and resources (94.9%), good mental health and well-being (89.8%), and financial and business acumen (87.5%). Many women leaders did not attribute their success in the sector to spiritual or religious empowerment (21.3%); having leaders and executives from a similar racial, ethnic and cultural background (33%); or having leaders and executives who share the same gender identity (29.8%) (Figure 15).

**FIGURE 16**

**Fairness and belonging on non-profit boards as experienced by women leaders**



Note: Based on 100 respondents.

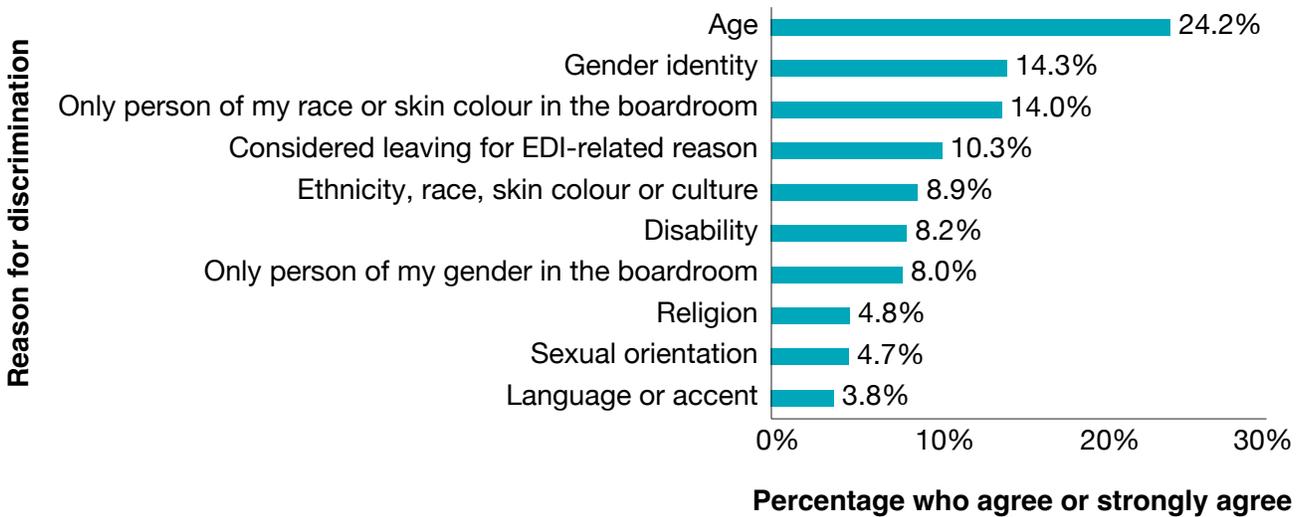
Most women leaders expressed that harassment was not sanctioned within their non-profit board during their work experience (95.7%). Additionally, 94.6% of respondents concurred that they were at ease voicing their viewpoints, and 92.3% expressed no issues requesting assistance from their colleagues. A minority of women leaders indicated that their errors were frequently held against them (9.1%), while one-fifth of respondents felt the need to conceal certain aspects of their identity to fit into the organization (20.7%) (Figure 16).



**95% of women leaders expressed that *harassment was not sanctioned within their non-profit board during their work experience.***

**FIGURE 17**

**Reasons for discrimination or unfair treatment on non-profit boards as identified by women leaders**



Note: Based on 100 respondents.

The survey asked about respondents' experiences of discriminatory practices while being employed in the non-profit industry. Most women leaders reported not encountering any discrimination or unjust treatment on their boards concerning their religion (94%), ethnicity, race, skin colour or culture (87.8%), or sexual orientation (91.8%). However, almost one-quarter of respondents (24.2%) revealed that they experienced discrimination due to their age, while 14% reported being the only representative of their race or skin colour in the boardroom. Additionally, 10.3% of the respondents considered stepping down from their positions on the board due to issues related to EDI. The women leaders divulged additional reasons for discrimination that they witnessed or experienced while working on non-profit boards and executive teams in Ontario, which are listed in Figure 17.

The survey asked questions that pertained to EDI practices on boards and executive teams in the non-profit sector in Ontario where women leaders were employed. A significant proportion of women (89.8%) reported their boards to be respectful of the cultural, ethnic, and religious differences and practices of their members, thereby fostering an environment of mutual respect among peers. Of the women leaders surveyed, 93.2% demonstrated an understanding of their rights and obligations as board members regarding diversity and inclusion practices; however, a notable 9.3% of respondents expressed their lack of awareness regarding how to address discrimination in the workplace.

We asked women leaders about their experiences working in non-profit organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic. An analysis of their responses showed that 47.8% of women leaders believed the pandemic created new barriers to a successful board career in the sector,

**FIGURE 18**

**Skills for success in non-profit leadership as identified by persons living with disabilities**



Note: Based on 29 respondents.

while 40.2% believed that attracting board members became more difficult compared with being able to do so before the pandemic.

Women leaders who participated in our study were primarily from boards of directors with 11 to 15 members, and they predominantly held roles within executive teams. Many of them had formal training in diversity and inclusion and could recognize discrimination and harassment behaviour. While most respondents indicated that they had never experienced any discrimination based on their gender identity, race, skin colour or religious affiliation, some women stated that they experienced ageism, and some were considering leaving boards because of the issues related to diversity and inclusion.

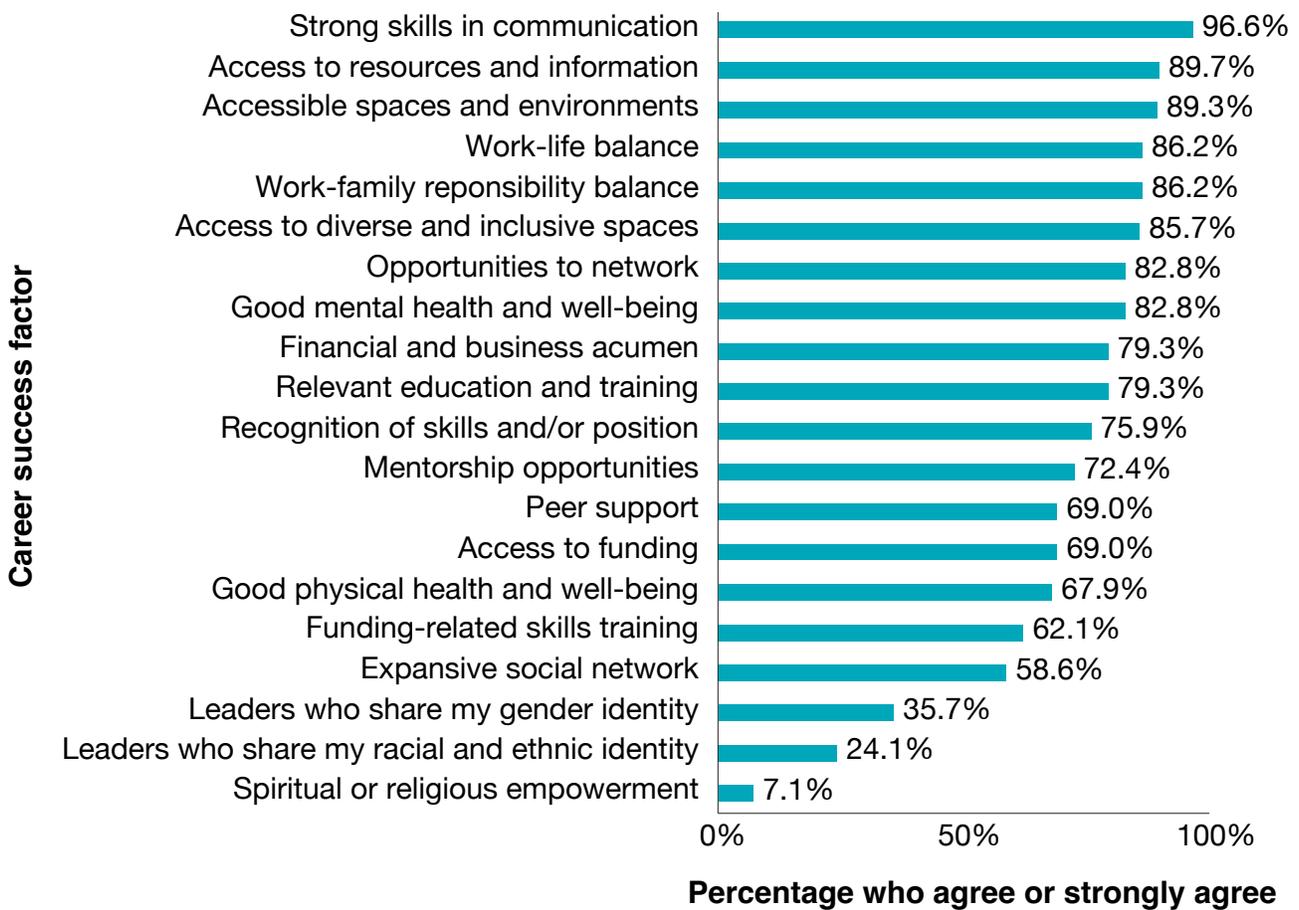
### Experiences of leaders living with disabilities

We asked non-profit leaders living with disabilities about factors that contributed to their career success. Most respondents (96.6%) agreed that adaptivity and flexibility and developing others were important success factors, while 96.4% attributed similar importance to problem solving and decision-making. The factors that leaders in this equity-deserving group felt were least important to their career success were volunteer management (63%), social media and marketing (65.5%), and monitoring and evaluating employees (67.9%) (Figure 18).

The vast majority (96.6%) of leaders with disabilities understood the dynamics of systemic discrimination. In addition, 79.3% of leaders living with disabilities agreed they had a clear understanding of harassment and microaggressions, while 72.4% stated they had received formal EDI training.

**FIGURE 19**

**Career success factors identified by persons living with disabilities**



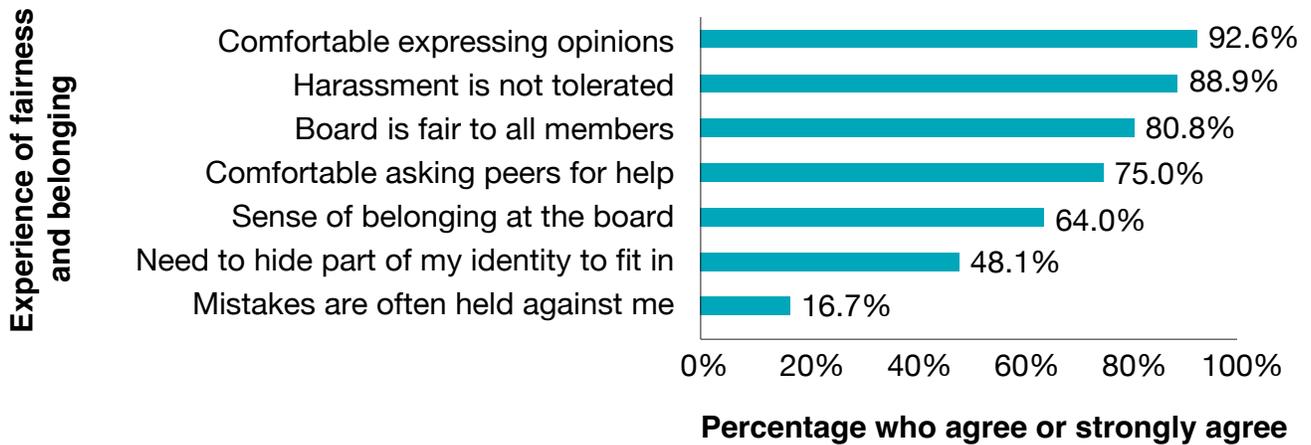
Note: Based on 29 respondents.

Leaders living with disabilities identified the factors that significantly influence the success of their careers in the non-profit sector in Ontario. Strong communication skills (96.6%), access to resources and information (89.7%), and accessible spaces and environments (89.3%) were crucial factors. Only 7.1% considered spiritual or religious empowerment important in their professional lives. A minority of participants agreed that leaders who shared their racial or ethnic identity (24.1%) or gender identity (35.7%) were critical to their success at work (Figure 19).

Participants were asked about the sense of fairness and belonging they experienced while working on non-profit boards and executive teams in Ontario. The vast majority of leaders living with disabilities (92.6%) agreed that they were comfortable expressing opinions; 88.9% agreed that harassment is not tolerated; and 80.8% agreed that the non-profit boards with which they work were fair to members. However, one in six (16.7%) agreed that mistakes were often held against them, and almost one-half (48.1%) felt that they needed to hide part of their disability identity to fit in (Figure 20).

**FIGURE 20**

Fairness and belonging on non-profit boards as identified by persons living with disabilities



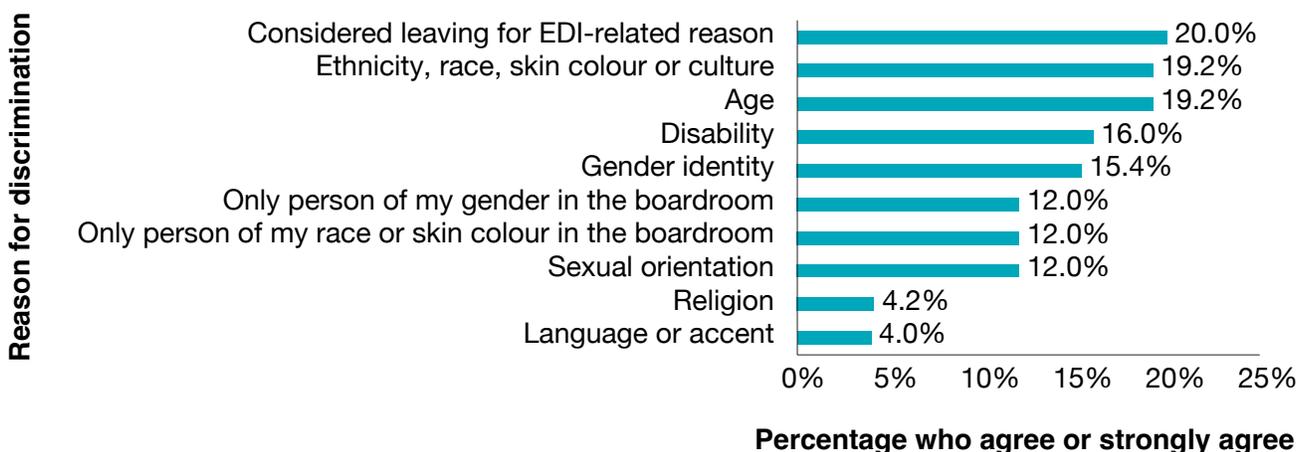
Note: Based on 27 respondents.

When asked about perceived reasons for discrimination or unfair treatment on non-profit boards, one in five leaders with disabilities (20%) considered leaving their position for EDI-related reasons, while 19.2% believed that age, along with ethnicity, race,

skin colour or culture, were reasons for discrimination or unfair treatment. The least commonly cited reasons for discrimination or unfair treatment were language or accent (4%) and religion (4.2%) (Figure 21).

**FIGURE 21**

Reasons for discrimination or unfair treatment on non-profit boards as identified by persons living with disabilities



Note: Based on 26 respondents.



When considering respect and inclusion on non-profit boards, 92% of leaders living with disabilities understood board members' EDI rights and obligations; 86.2% identified, mentored and supported diverse colleagues; and 82.8% stated they were treated with respect by their peers and felt that their board respected differences in cultural, ethnic and religious practices. Furthermore, 75.9% of leaders living with disabilities agreed that they knew how to handle workplace discrimination; however, 17.2% did not feel that they knew how to handle workplace discrimination.

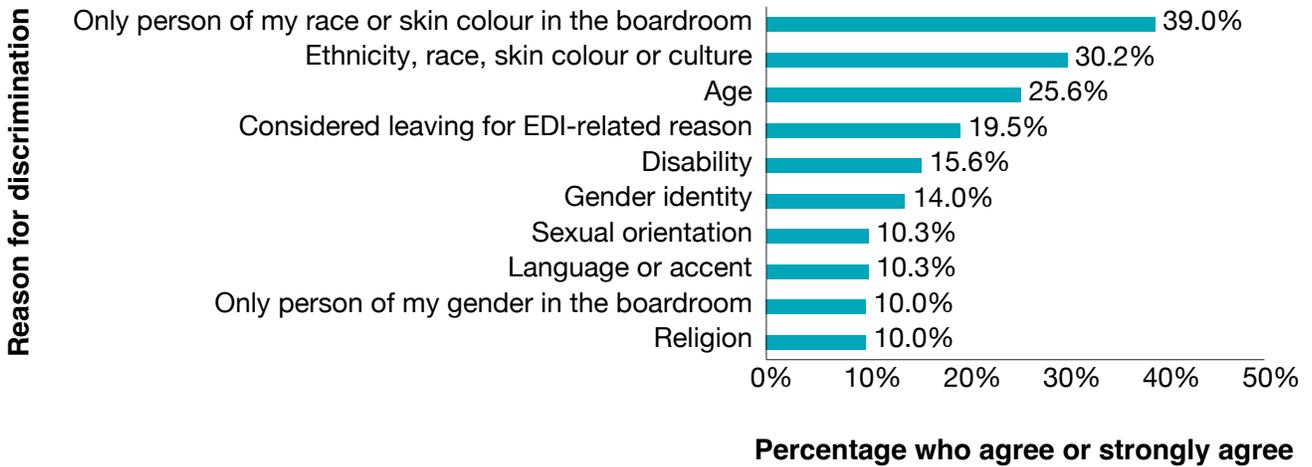
Finally, leaders living with disabilities were asked about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on non-profit boards. Slightly less than two-thirds (63%) agreed that the pandemic created new barriers to a successful board career, while 57.1% felt that the pandemic made attracting new board members more difficult.

### **Experiences of racialized leaders**

When asked about EDI practices and culture in their workplaces, racialized leaders of Ontario non-profit organizations provided positive feedback overall about diversity and inclusion on their boards and executive teams. Although one-quarter (27.1%) of racialized leaders reported having no formal EDI training, almost all of them (97.9%) showed a clear understanding of systemic discrimination, harassment and microaggressions (89.6%). Moreover, almost all (95.5%) racialized participants reported that harassment is not tolerated on their boards and executive teams. Many of them agreed that their boards were fair to all board members (88.1%), and many (84.1%) felt a sense of belonging to the boards and the executive teams. However, around one-third (31.1%) of racialized leaders admitted they needed to hide their identity to fit in, and almost one-fifth stated that they felt their mistakes held against them.

**FIGURE 22**

**Reasons for discrimination or unfair treatment on non-profit boards as identified by racialized people**



Note: Based on 100 respondents.

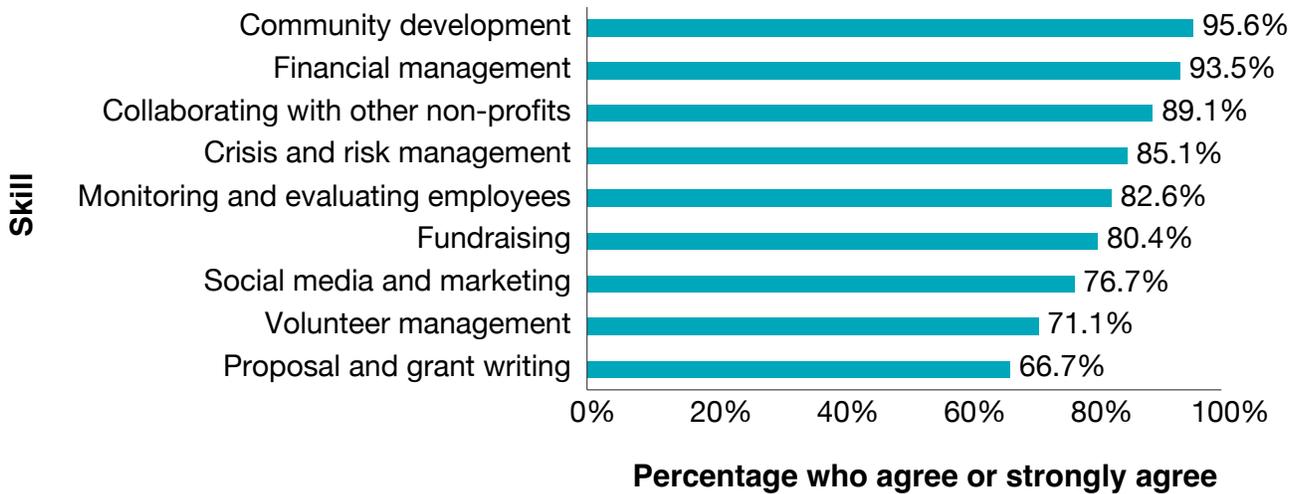
While most racialized respondents (more than 70%) stated that they had not experienced discrimination due to non-evident characteristics (e.g., religion or sexual orientation), some participants noted that there were instances when they experienced or witnessed discrimination while serving their terms on boards and executive teams. The reasons for discrimination that the participants named are summarized in Figure 22.



*While most racialized respondents (more than 70%) stated that they had not experienced discrimination due to non-evident characteristics (e.g., religion or sexual orientation), some participants noted that there were instances when they experienced or witnessed discrimination while serving their terms on boards and executive teams.*

**FIGURE 23**

**Skills for success in non-profit leadership as identified by racialized people**



Note: Based on 48 respondents.

Despite the lack of racial diversity reported in the boardroom by racialized respondents, they talked highly about EDI standards in their workplaces. Many (97.6%) stated there was a clear understanding of board members' EDI rights and obligations. Many boards where participants worked (91.7%) identified, mentored and supported diverse colleagues and were respectful of their members' cultural and ethnic differences (91.5%). The majority of the racialized leaders who participated (85.4%) confirmed that their peers treated them with respect.

We also asked which factors racialized participants felt were the most important to be successful leaders in the non-profit sector. The top three success factors identified by 100% of racialized leaders were adaptivity and flexibility, problem solving and decision-making, and contributing to the development of others. The factors considered important by the fewest number of racialized leaders were volunteer management (66.7%) and proposal or grant writing skills (64.3%) (Figure 23).

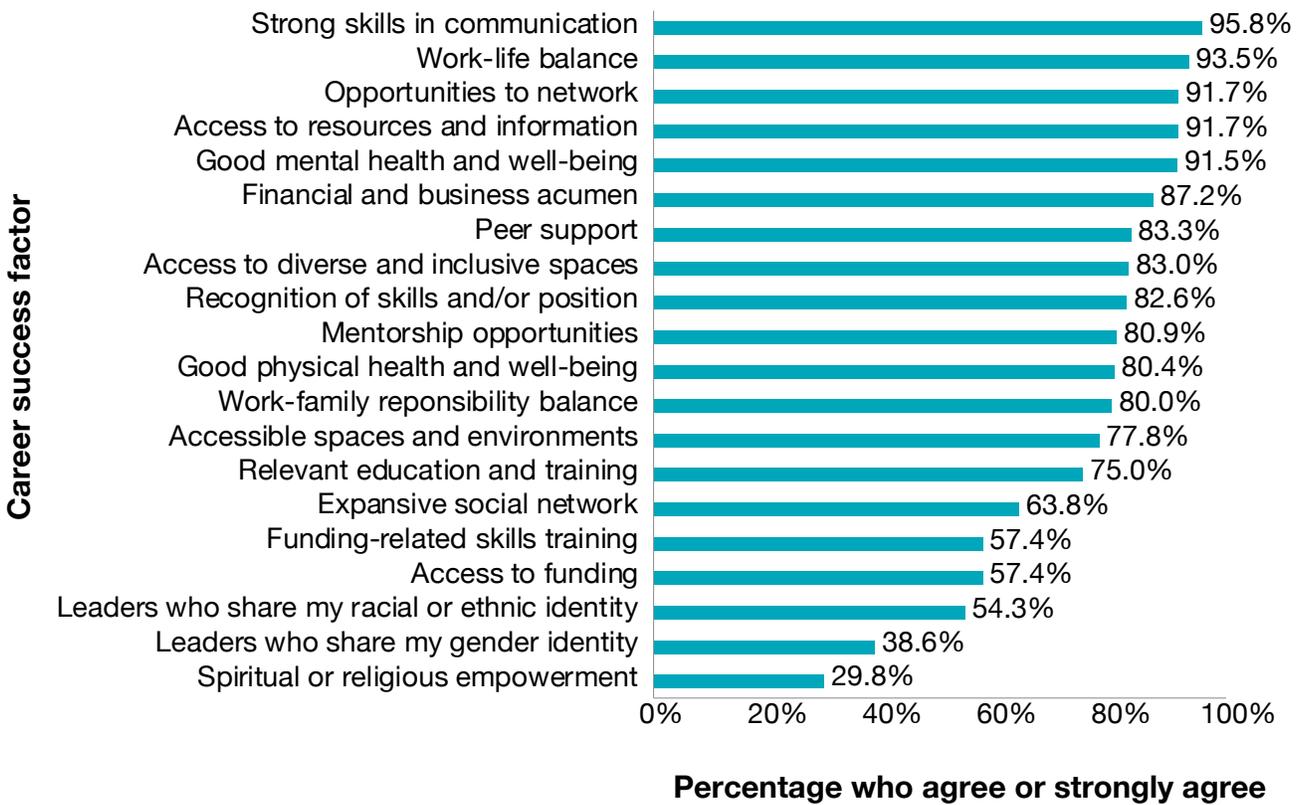


*The top three success factors identified by 100% of racialized leaders were:*

- > adaptivity and flexibility*
- > problem solving and decision-making*
- > contributing to the development of others*

**FIGURE 24**

**Career success factors as identified by racialized people**



Note: Based on 48 respondents.

When asked about factors for career success, racialized leaders were unable to agree unanimously on the importance of any factors; however, three top factors were identified: strong communication and language skills (95.8%), a good work-life balance (93.5%) and opportunities to network and access to resources (90%). The least important factors were having leaders that share the same ethnic identity (54.3%), having leaders that share their gender identity (38.6%) or spiritual and religious empowerment (29.8%) (Figure 24).

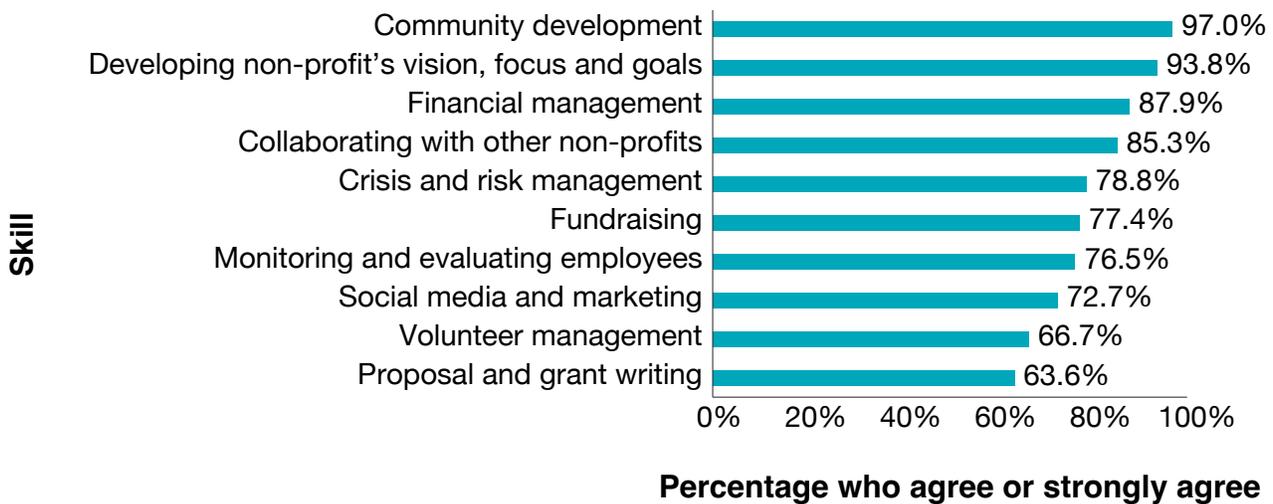


*Three top factors for career success were identified:*

- > strong communication and language skills (95.8%)*
- > a good work-life balance (93.5%)*
- > opportunities to network and access to resources (90%)*

**FIGURE 25**

**Skills for success in non-profit leadership as identified by racialized women**



Note: Based on 35 respondents.

According to almost one-half (46.5%) of participants, the COVID-19 pandemic negatively affected EDI practices on boards and executive teams where racialized leaders worked. The pandemic made attracting new board members in the non-profit sector more difficult. Similarly, many racialized leaders (45.5%) believed the pandemic created new barriers to successful board careers in the non-profit sector.

### Experiences of racialized women leaders

Racialized women were asked about skills they thought were the most important in their work as leaders in the non-profit sector. The three skills that racialized women unanimously agreed were crucial to success were adaptivity and flexibility, problem solving and decision-making, and developing others. There were other skills that many racialized women agreed were important for career success: community development (97%), developing the non-profits' vision,

focus and goals (93.8%), and financial management (87.9%). Our analysis therefore suggests that racialized women believed that a wide range of skills were important for success as a leader in the non-profit sector; all skills we inquired about were identified as important by most respondents. These skills are shown in Figure 25.

Racialized women leaders were asked about formal EDI training they received and their knowledge about discrimination, EDI principles, systemic discrimination, harassment and microaggressions. The results show that the majority (97.1%) of racialized women understand systemic discrimination, despite only two-thirds (71.4%) having received formal EDI training.

The survey also asked about racialized women leaders' experiences of harassment, fair treatment, support and feelings of belonging to the board. The results show that 96.8% of racialized women leaders believe that harassment is not tolerated on

**FIGURE 26**

**Skills for success in non-profit leadership as identified by 2SLGBTQ+ people**



Note: Based on 24 respondents.

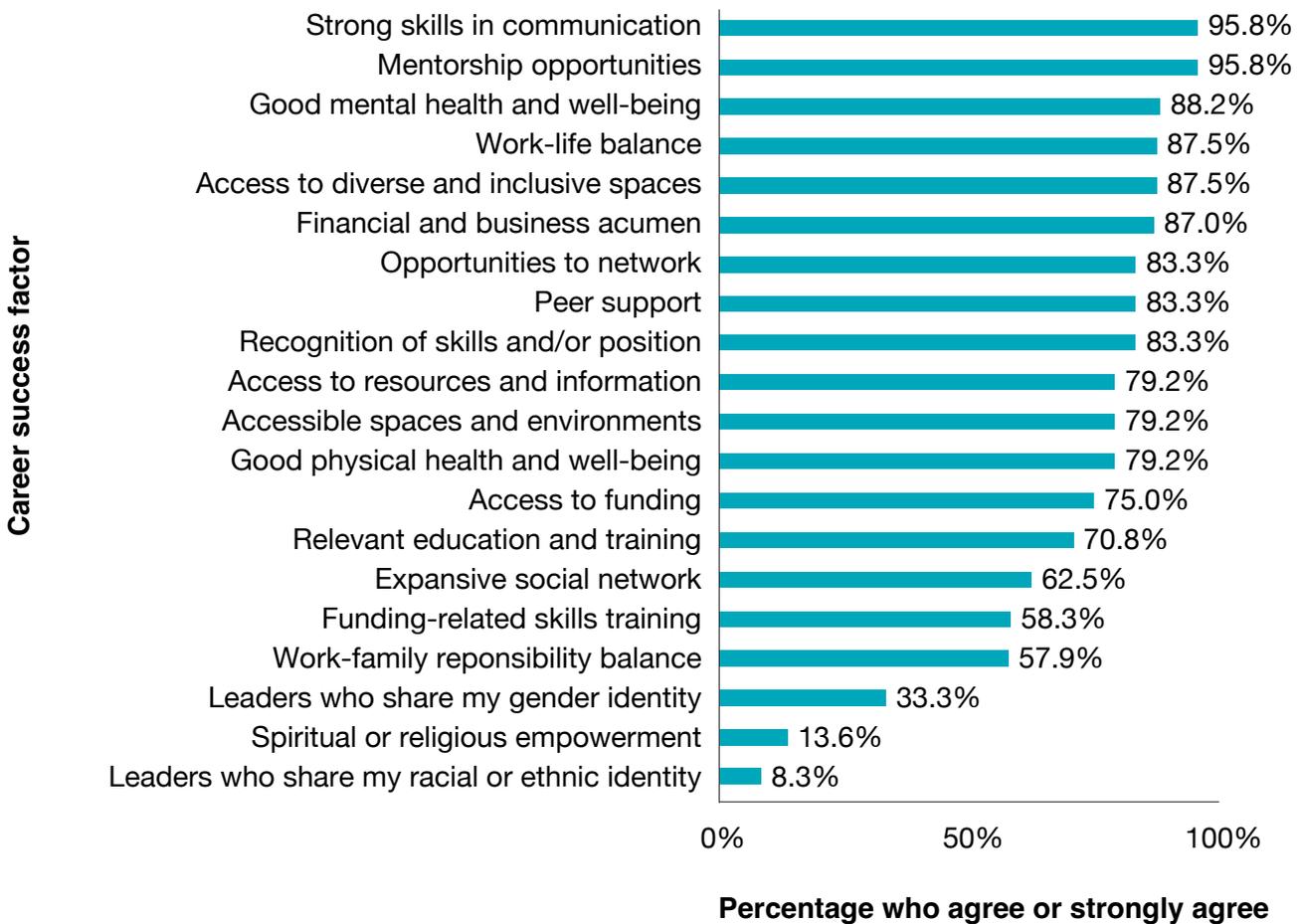
their boards. Most also stated that they felt comfortable expressing their opinions on the board. The majority (90.3%) felt comfortable asking other board members for help, and 89.7% believed that their board was fair to all board members. More than two-thirds of racialized women respondents (77.4%) stated that they felt a sense of belonging at the board; however, one-quarter (25%) felt they needed to hide themselves or part of their identity to fit in on their boards. Some racialized women leaders (13.8%) revealed that they found their mistakes were often held against them when serving their board terms.

### Experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ leaders

2SLGBTQ+ non-profit leaders who participated in our study were asked to identify skills that they believed were most crucial to their career success. Every 2SLGBTQ+ leader surveyed identified adaptivity and flexibility, problem solving and decision-making, and developing others as crucial skills. In addition, 58.3% of 2SLGBTQ+ leaders indicated that volunteer management was crucial, 63.6% felt that proposal and grant writing was important, and 65.2% stated that social media and marketing was essential. Slightly over one-quarter of respondents felt that social media and marketing skills were not needed to succeed in their careers (Figure 26).

**FIGURE 27**

**Career success factors as identified by 2SLGBTQ+ people**



Note: Based on 23 respondents.

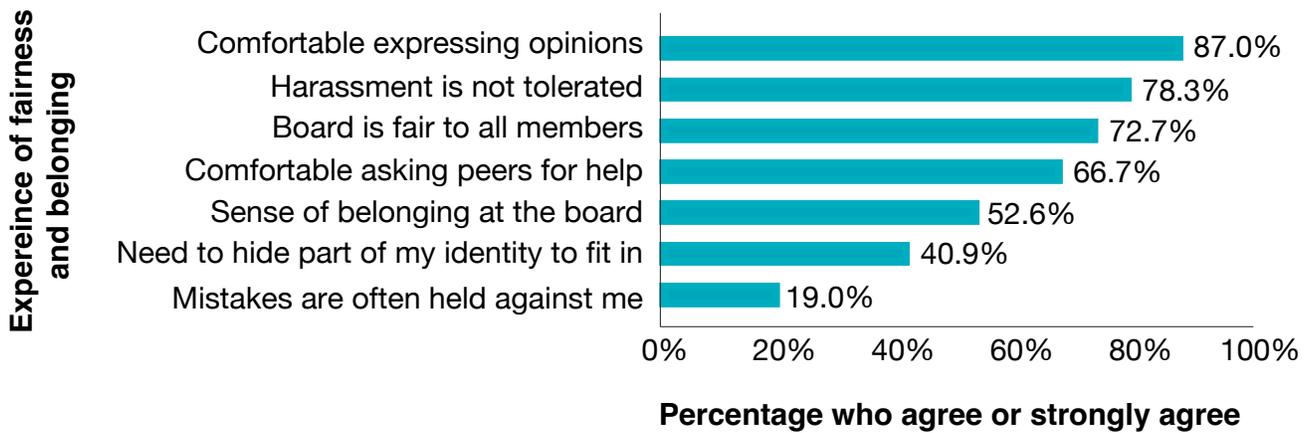
When we asked 2SLGBTQ+ non-profit leaders about EDI training and their understanding of EDI concepts, almost all (95.8%) understood the concept of systemic discrimination, 87.5% understood harassment and microaggressions, and 75% had received formal EDI training.

2SLGBTQ+ non-profit leaders were then asked to identify factors that were critical for career success. Almost all (95.8%) agreed that strong communication skills and mentorship opportunities were crucial.

In addition, 88.2% of respondents agreed that good mental health and well-being was important, while 87.5% agreed that work-life balance along with access to diverse and inclusive spaces were essential. Only 8.3% of 2SLGBTQ+ leaders indicated that working with leaders that share their racial or ethnic identity was important for career success, while 13.6% felt that spiritual or religious empowerment was critical, and 33.3% agreed that working with leaders who share their gender identity was essential (Figure 27).

**FIGURE 28**

Fairness and belonging on non-profit boards as identified by 2SLGBTQ+ people



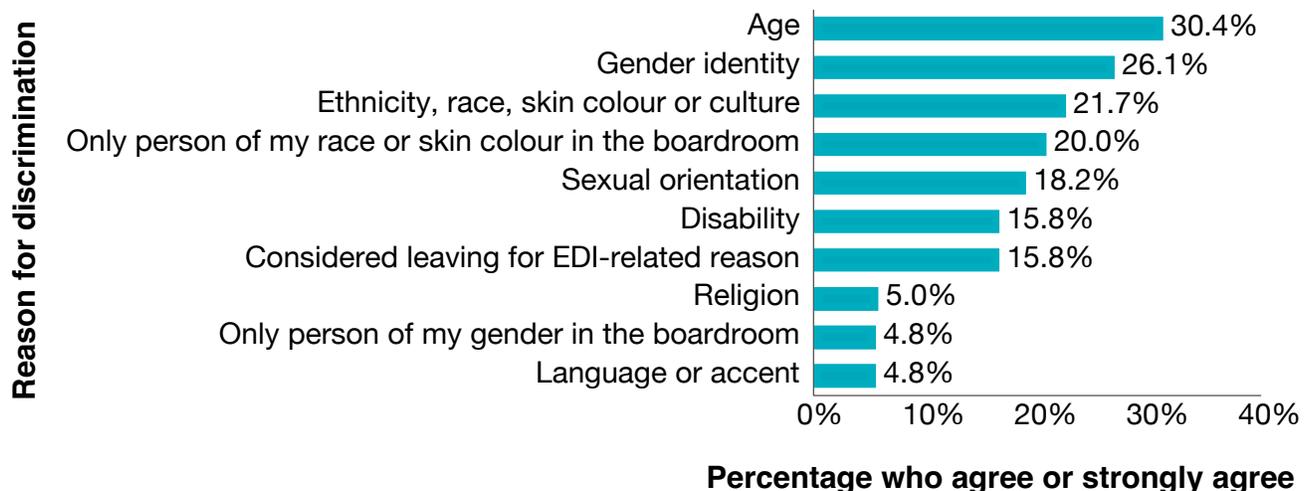
Note: Based on 23 respondents.

When considering their sense of fairness and belonging, 87% of 2SLGBTQ+ non-profit leaders felt comfortable expressing their opinions; 78.3% agreed that harassment was not tolerated; and 72.7% believed that the board they work with is fair to all members. However, 19% of 2SLGBTQ+ leaders felt that mistakes were often held against them, and 40.9% said they needed to hide part of their identity to fit in (Figure 28).

2SLGBTQ+ leaders were asked about perceived reasons for discrimination or unfair treatment on non-profit boards; 30.4% indicated that age was a perceived reason for discrimination or unfair treatment, while 26.1% felt that gender identity was a cause, and 21.7% felt that ethnicity, race, skin colour or culture were causes (Figure 29).

**FIGURE 29**

Reasons for discrimination or unfair treatment on non-profit boards as identified by 2SLGBTQ+ people



Note: Based on 23 respondents.



When asked about respect and inclusion on non-profit boards, 95.7% of 2SLGBTQ+ leaders agreed that they identified, mentored and supported diverse colleagues; 95.2% agreed that they understood board member EDI rights; and 91.7% believed that their board respected cultural, ethnic and religious differences. Further, 83.3% of respondents felt that they knew how to handle workplace discrimination, and 79.2% agreed they were treated with respect by their peers.

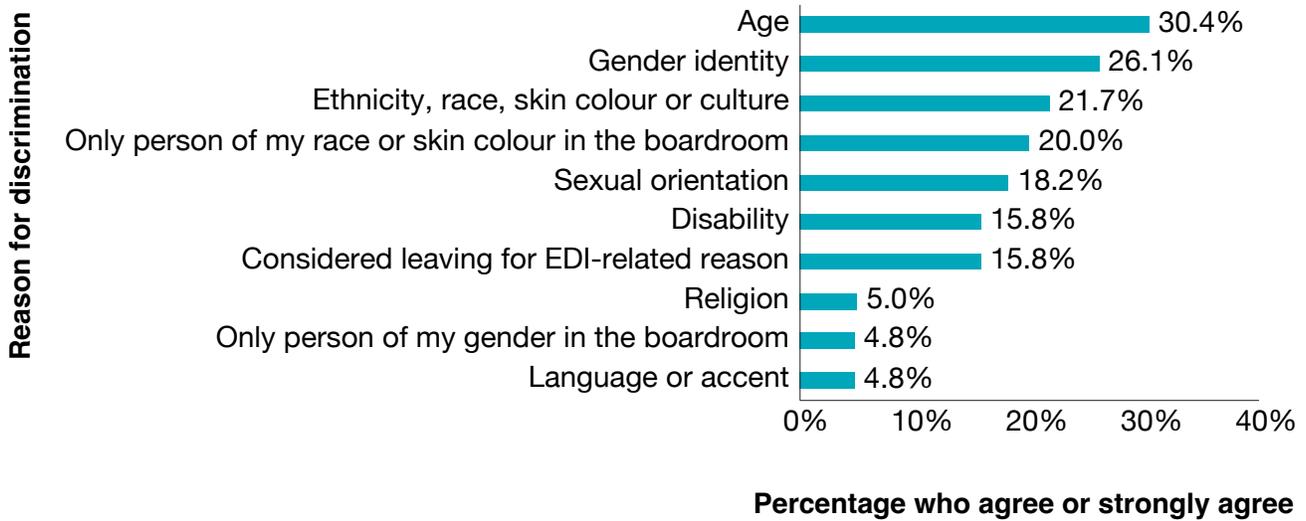
2SLGBTQ+ survey participants were also asked about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on non-profit boards. From our analysis, 68.2% of participants agreed that the pandemic created new barriers to a successful board career, and 56.5% agreed that attracting new board members became more difficult because of the pandemic.

## Experiences of Black leaders

In our review of the online data from non-profit organizations, we were unable to classify board and senior management position holders as members of the Black community due to limitations in the diversity data available to us. As such, we do not have current data on the representation of Black leaders with which to compare our response rate and determine if our current sample pool reflects representation within small and medium-sized non-profits. Overall, the response rate for our survey from members of the Black community was low, comprising 9.6% (n = 14) of respondents. Considering the low response rate from this community, it is important to be aware of how our small sample size could affect the distribution of the data discussed in this section.

**FIGURE 30**

**Reasons for discrimination or unfair treatment on non-profit boards as identified by the Black community**



Note: Based on 14 respondents.

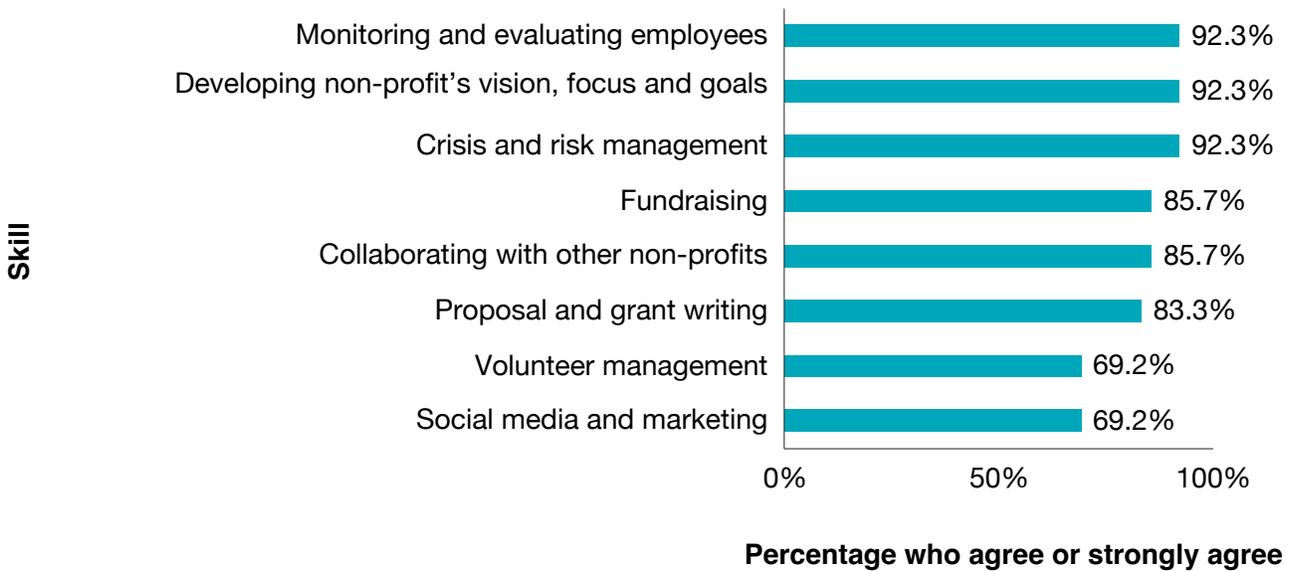
Regarding EDI training, more than three-quarters (78.6%) of participants from the Black community received EDI training and understood nuanced concepts such as systemic discrimination, harassment and microaggressions, as well as how they manifested and should be resolved. Additionally, 84.6% of Black leaders indicated that they felt a sense of belonging on their boards, 81.8% agreed that their boards were fair to all members, 91.7% felt their boards were safe spaces for them to share their opinion, and 92.3% agreed harassment was not tolerated. Almost two-thirds (61.5%) of respondents from the Black community said they did not feel the need to hide any part of their identity while serving on their boards; however, one-third (36.4%) revealed feeling as though their mistakes were often held against them throughout their board careers.

Furthermore, 50% of Black leaders indicated that they were often the only person of their race or ethnicity present in the boardroom, and 45.5% reported experiencing discrimination or unfair treatment due to their ethnicity, race, skin colour or cultural background. Additionally, 40% had considered leaving their board positions for a reason related to an EDI issue they were experiencing (Figure 30).

Regarding feelings of respect and inclusion, 75% or more of participants from the Black community felt that their boards and fellow colleagues respected member diversity. All the Black leaders who responded indicated that they understood their EDI obligations and rights as board members, in addition to identifying, supporting and mentoring colleagues and subordinates who identified as members of equity-deserving groups.

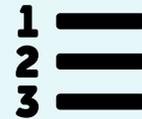
**FIGURE 31**

**Skills for success in non-profit leadership as identified by the Black community**



Note: Based on 14 respondents.

Beyond discrimination and EDI-related knowledge, we asked respondents about factors that contributed to their success achieving and maintaining leadership positions within the non-profit sector. The top success factors agreed upon by 100% of our Black respondents were adaptivity and flexibility, problem solving and decision-making, contributing to the development of others, community development and financial management skills. However, most Black leaders agreed that all factors of interest were important to a successful board career in the non-profit sector (Figure 31).

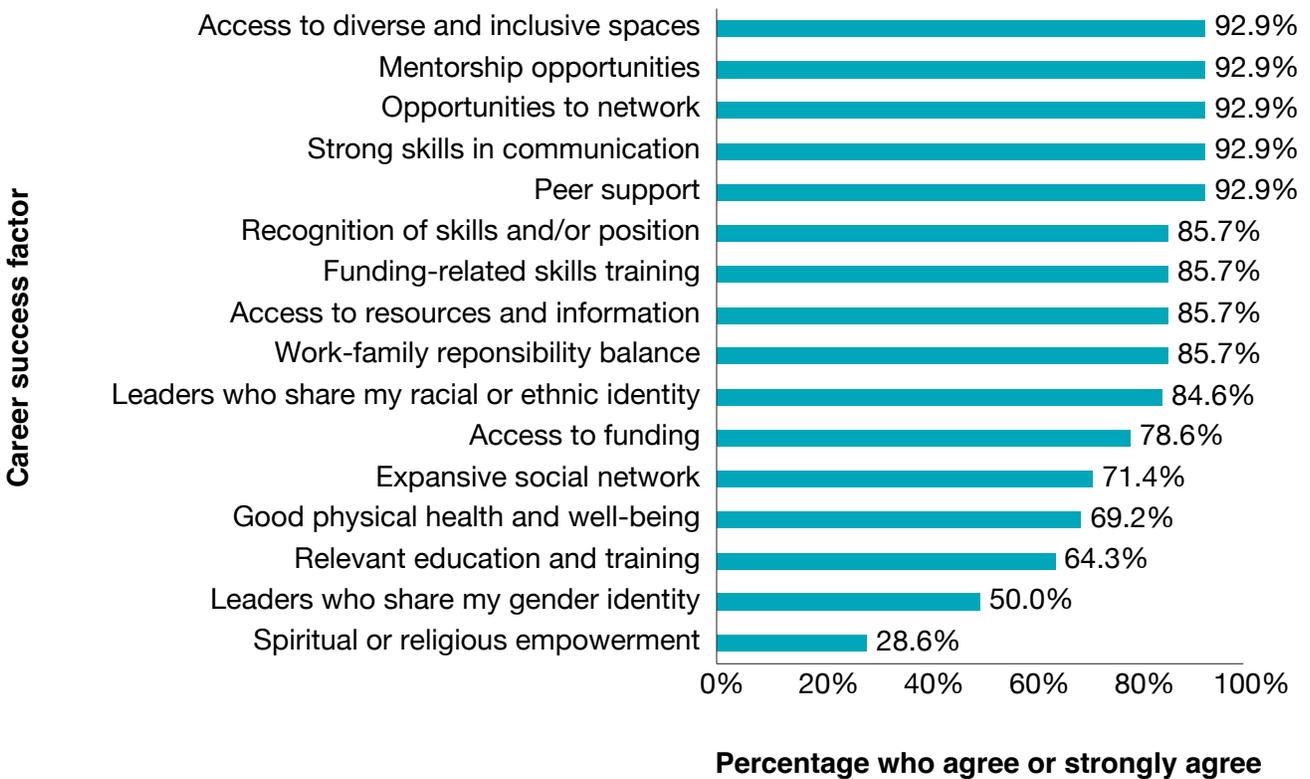


*The top success factors agreed upon by 100% of our Black respondents were:*

- > adaptivity and flexibility*
- > problem solving and decision-making*
- > contributing to the development of others*
- > community development and financial management skills*

**FIGURE 32**

**Career success factors as identified by the Black community**



Note: Based on 14 respondents.

Next, we asked respondents from the Black community about factors they felt contributed to their career success. The most important factors that all respondents agreed were important were knowledge of finance and business, good mental health and well-being, a stable work-life balance and access to diverse and inclusive spaces. Respondents considered leaders sharing their gender identity (50%) and spiritual or religious empowerment (28.6%) to be the least important factors (Figure 32).

Finally, we asked how the COVID-19 pandemic affected board hiring and retention for non-profit organizations. Many (61.5%) Black leaders agreed that the pandemic made attracting and hiring new board

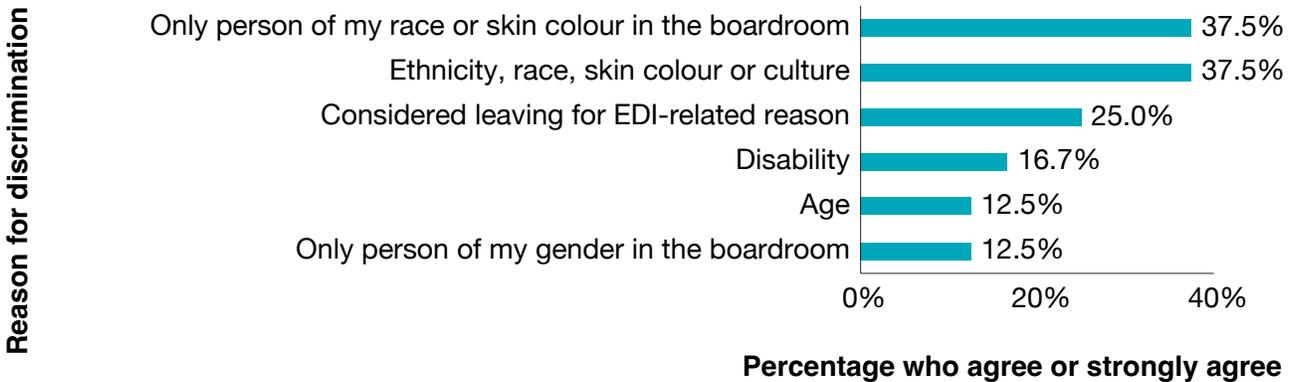
members more difficult, while 53.8% found the pandemic created barriers to developing a successful board career in the non-profit sector.

### Experiences of Black women leaders

Like our analysis of Black leaders, we were unable to determine the current context of Black women holding board and senior management positions due to limitations in the diversity data available to us from non-profit organizations. As such, we were unable to determine if our survey response rate for our sample pool was reflective of the representation of Black women leaders in the non-profit sector. Black women accounted for 6.8% (n = 10) of our survey participants,

**FIGURE 33**

**Reasons for discrimination or unfair treatment on non-profit boards as identified by Black women**



Note: Based on 10 respondents.

which is 71.4% of our respondents from the Black community. It is important to remain aware that the number of Black women significantly outnumbers Black men in our sample size, which can affect our analysis of Black leaders and of Black women.

Although 90% of Black women agreed that they understood the concepts of systemic discrimination, harassment and microaggressions, as well as how such situations should be handled, almost one-third (30%) indicated not receiving formal EDI training while serving on a non-profit board.

Further, 77.8% of Black women agreed that they felt a sense of belonging on their boards, while 100% agreed that their boards were fair to all board members and did not tolerate harassment. However, 87.5% of Black women felt comfortable expressing their opinions on their boards, which is lower than the average for the entire Black community (91.7%). Additionally, fewer Black women (88.9%) than all members of the

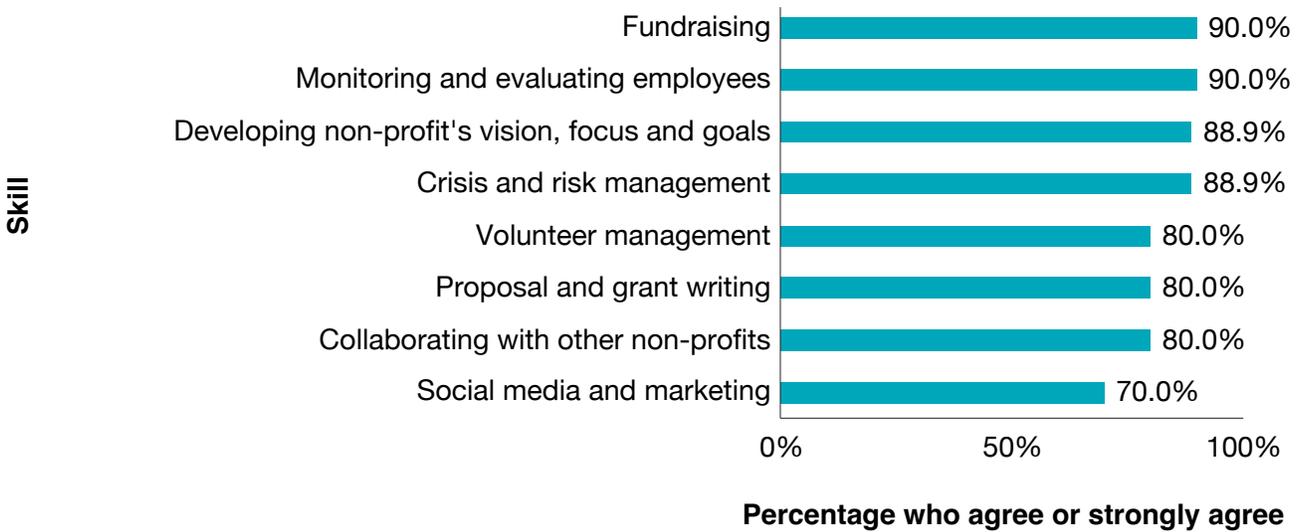
Black community (92.3%) reported feeling comfortable asking other board members for help when needed.

Like the trends identified for all members of the Black community, more than 60% of Black women leaders did not experience discrimination during their board terms; however, the most common cause among those who did experience discrimination or unfair treatment was ethnicity, race, skin colour or cultural differences (37.5%) (Figure 33).

A relatively smaller proportion of Black women (70%) than all Black leader respondents (78.6%) reported feeling like they were treated with respect by their peers; however, most Black women leaders (80%) still believed their boards to be respectful of differences in cultural, ethnic and religious practices.

**FIGURE 34**

**Skills for success in non-profit leadership as identified by Black women**

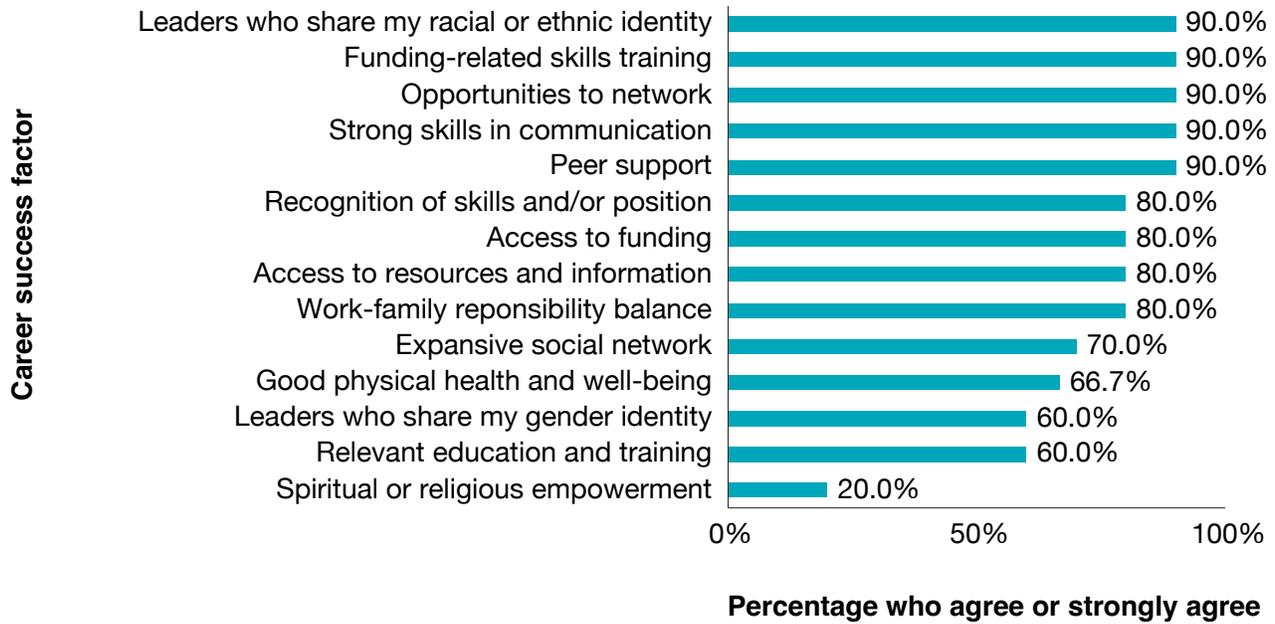


Note: Based on 10 respondents.

When asked about factors for success as a non-profit leader, Black women participants unanimously agreed that adaptivity and flexibility, problem solving and decision-making, contributing to the development of others, community development and financial management skills were crucial (Figure 34).

**FIGURE 35**

**Career success factors as identified by Black women**



Note: Based on 10 respondents.

Further, 100% of Black women leaders agreed that knowledge of finance and business, access to mentorship opportunities, good mental health and well-being, a stable work-life balance, accessible spaces and access to diverse spaces and inclusive environments were important factors for personal career success. Black women leaders felt that religious or spiritual empowerment at work (20%) was the least important factor (Figure 35).

Finally, Black women followed the same trend as all participants from the Black community regarding their perspective on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Among our Black women respondents, 55.6% felt that the pandemic had made attracting new board members more difficult and 44.4% believed it created new barriers to establishing a successful board career in the non-profit sector.



# Conclusion & Way Forward

This section summarizes key findings from our online data collection and survey. Our findings reflect two themes in Ontario's non-profit sector: the state of diversity and inclusion and the challenge and success factors for diverse leaders. Based on these findings, we propose the following recommendations at various levels for non-profit organizations and stakeholders to foster more diverse and inclusive leadership in the sector.

## Key findings

### Current state of diversity and inclusion in the non-profit sector in Ontario

- > In Ontario, the non-profit sector has made strides toward gender parity, with women representing 56.6% of directors on boards and in senior management roles in organizations with small and medium-sized budgets that are fully funded by government. However, in organizations with large budgets and those that have non-government funding sources, women had less than 50% representation in leadership roles. Notably, women had higher representation in leadership roles in small cities compared to large cities.
- > Racialized people occupy 18.2% of leadership roles in Ontario's non-profit organizations. Racialized individuals who participated in our survey were from non-profit organizations with small and medium-sized budgets located in large cities. Racialized women accounted for 10.4% of all leaders in non-profit organizations, mostly in organizations with small and medium-sized budgets located cities.
- > Indigenous Peoples represented 1.6% of all leaders in Ontario non-profit organizations, with a higher representation from small and medium-sized non-profit organizations located in cities with relatively large Indigenous populations; however, the representation of Indigenous leaders was not commensurate with the Indigenous population. Indigenous leaders in our study tended to work in organizations fully funded by government.
- > Racialized women accounted for 57.3% of all racialized non-profit leaders in our survey, demonstrating gender parity within their ethnic group. However, compounded barriers due to their intersectional identities (i.e., being racialized and identifying as a woman) created obstacles to their participation on non-profit boards.



***Indigenous women accounted for 71.6% of Indigenous board appointments and 71.4% of Indigenous senior management, surpassing the gender parity goal within the Indigenous demographic.***

Barriers due to their racialized identities were more prominent than for any other groups we analyzed.

- > Indigenous women accounted for 71.6% of Indigenous board appointments and 71.4% of Indigenous senior management, surpassing the gender parity goal within the Indigenous demographic. However, barriers attributed to Indigenous identity, such as racism and stigma, affected Indigenous women's participation in non-profit boards more than their gender identity.
- > In the case of Black leaders, our survey showed that they primarily served on small boards within the non-profit sector, with one-half of Black board members and senior management leaders employed by non-profit organizations. Black women leaders in our study worked at organizations focused on serving the Black community or Black-led non-profit organizations.

## **Diverse leaders of Ontario's non-profit sector: Challenges and success factors**

- > Overall, leaders from across all equity-deserving groups agreed that the COVID-19 pandemic made attracting and hiring new board members more difficult and created new barriers to developing a successful board career in the non-profit sector.
- > Formal training in EDI principles was common among survey participants; more than 80% of all members of equity-deserving groups reported receiving formal training during their board terms and were familiar with how to identify and handle discrimination and harassment in the workplace.
- > More Black women leaders than those from any other equity-deserving group reported that errors made at work were often unfairly held against them throughout their board terms.
- > Almost one-half of survey respondents from equity-deserving groups with hidden identities, including 2SLGBTQ+ or persons living with disabilities, reported needing to hide part of their identities to fit in with other board members (40.9% and 48.1%, respectively).
- > Study participants across equity-deserving groups generally agreed that adaptability and flexibility; problem solving; and developing organizational goals, objectives and values were the most crucial skills for success for leadership roles in non-profit organizations.

- > Regarding creating successful board careers, Black women non-profit leaders noted that fundraising skills and financial and business acumen were crucial to their long-term success.
- > Racialized non-profit leaders highlighted the importance of community development skills when they were seeking to build long-lasting board careers in the non-profit sector.
- > Generally, leaders from equity-deserving groups found spiritual and religious empowerment at work to be an unimportant factor in the creation and maintenance of a successful board career in the non-profit sector.

## Discussion

This study examined the representation of members of equity-deserving group members, including women, racialized people, Indigenous Peoples, members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community and persons living with disabilities in leadership roles in Ontario's non-profit sector. The study also aimed to understand their experiences, identify barriers faced while working on executive teams and boards of directors, and gather perspectives on the factors most crucial for achieving success in the sector.

The representation of equity-deserving groups on boards and executive teams in the non-profit sector in Ontario is uneven. Representation seems to vary based on an organization's budget size, source of funding and geographic location. Among the equity-deserving groups consulted for this study, women represented the highest

proportion (56.6%) in executive roles in this sector, followed by racialized people (18.2%) and racialized women (10.4%). Indigenous Peoples (1.6%) and Indigenous women (1.2%) each represented less than 2% of executive roles. Members of equity-deserving groups were more likely to work in organizations with small and medium-sized budgets funded primarily by government. We found that as the proportion of government funding decreased so did the proportion of equity-deserving group members on boards and executive teams. Women, particularly Indigenous women, often held leadership positions in organizations in small towns. In contrast, racialized people and racialized women were often leaders in organizations located in large cities in Ontario.

The experiences of equity-deserving group members working on boards of non-profit organizations in Ontario were mostly positive and highlighted a high level of EDI awareness, knowledge and practices in these organizations. More than 80% of all members of equity-deserving groups who participated were formally trained on EDI principles and were familiar with how to identify discrimination and harassment in the workplace. Most participants also stated that they felt that discrimination is not tolerated on their boards and have never experienced discrimination based on their religious affiliation or gender identity; however, our analysis uncovered systemic barriers that members of equity-deserving groups encountered in non-profit leadership positions. Around 10% of women surveyed felt discriminated against because of their age. More Black women leaders than those from other equity-deserving groups



thought that if they made an error at work, it would be unfairly held against them. Another notable finding was that more than 10% of racialized women leaders were not aware of where to go if they experienced or witnessed discriminatory behaviour. Several Black and racialized women leaders also stated that they experienced discrimination or considered leaving their jobs because of EDI issues at their workplaces. Finally, stereotypes about the perceived inability of equity-deserving group members to lead large organizations may be partially to blame for the underrepresentation of such leaders in non-profit organizations with large budgets and non-government funding sources.

Our analysis identified several skills that were crucial in helping equity-deserving group members achieve success in leadership roles in non-profit organizations. Almost all participants agreed that adaptability and flexibility, problem solving, and developing organizational goals, objectives and values were the most crucial skills for success. Black women non-profit leaders noted that fundraising skills and financial and business acumen were crucial to their success, while racialized non-profit leaders highlighted the importance of community development skills and Indigenous non-profit leaders emphasized the significance of monitoring and evaluating employee effectiveness.

## Recommendations

This section provides an overview of key recommendations and strategies that boards in non-profit organizations can adopt to help uplift equity-deserving groups in their leadership and mitigate barriers in their board processes. These recommendations provide solutions based on the ecological model of change, which breaks down the sphere of influence of barriers into three different levels: societal, organizational and individual.

### Societal level

Governments should require non-profits to collect data on equity-deserving groups and report on EDI policies on a regular basis. This requirement can help promote transparency and accountability, while also providing valuable information for policymakers, funders and other stakeholders. It can also encourage non-profits to prioritize EDI as a core aspect of their operations, and to assess and improve their efforts continually in this regard.

Current diversity initiatives, such as Bill C-25, should be expanded to include federally incorporated non-profit organizations. This can help promote greater diversity and inclusivity in the non-profit sector, which plays a crucial role in advancing social justice and equity. Expanding diversity initiatives can also help address the historical underrepresentation of equity-deserving groups in positions of power and influence within federally incorporated non-profit organizations and contribute to building a more equitable and representative society.



*Current diversity initiatives, such as Bill C-25, should be expanded to include federally incorporated non-profit organizations. This can help **promote greater diversity and inclusivity in the non-profit sector**, which plays a crucial role in advancing social justice and equity.*

Governments and donors should tie funding to EDI performance and policies that shape representation in organizations and service to diverse communities. Making EDI part of eligibility requirements for funding can also serve as a powerful tool for holding non-profit organizations accountable, especially at the leadership level. By setting clear and measurable benchmarks for EDI performance, governments and donors can ensure that resources go to organizations that are truly committed to advancing diversity and inclusion. This can also help foster greater public trust and confidence in the non-profit sector and promote a more accountable and transparent use of public and private resources.

Governments should promote policies and invest in programs that address barriers to the inclusion of equity-deserving groups, including access to child care, elder care, parental leave and associated tax

incentives, among others. Such policies and programs can alleviate the systemic challenges that prevent individuals in equity-deserving groups from fully participating and contributing to the sector and a broader society.

All levels of government (federal, provincial, regional, municipal and Indigenous) should work together to address systemic discrimination and challenge negative stereotypes of leaders from equity-deserving groups. Collaboration among all levels of government promotes coordinated and comprehensive approaches to advancing EDI and can leverage the unique strengths and resources of each level of government to achieve shared goals of diversity and inclusion at the leadership level across non-profit organizations in Canada.

## Organizational level

Non-profit organizations should collect demographic data on boards and leadership and implement strategies to ensure they are representative of the populations they serve. Collecting demographic data is crucial for identifying potential gaps in representation and understanding the diversity of perspectives and experiences that inform decision-making. Implementing strategies to ensure that boards and leadership are representative of the populations they serve can improve the credibility and effectiveness of non-profit organizations. Moreover, integrating an EDI lens into all aspects of corporate strategy ensures that an organization is attuned to the diverse needs and perspectives of the communities it serves and is well-positioned to address systemic barriers and inequalities.

Human resources policies and processes such as job design, recruitment, training and advancement should incorporate best practices for EDI; this practice can help non-profit organizations attract and retain top talent, particularly from equity-deserving groups. Incorporating EDI into recruitment can also help to build a more diverse and inclusive workforce; enhance employee satisfaction and engagement; and contribute to improved organizational performance and outcomes.

An inclusive culture is a crucial component for success in any non-profit organization. As such, organizations should develop comprehensive policies and processes that promote an inclusive culture, such as anti-discrimination policies, cultural competency training and flexible work arrangements that accommodate the diverse needs of their employees.

Benchmarking key EDI dimensions—such as representation, engagement and participation—is critical for monitoring progress and identifying areas for improvement in an organization's EDI efforts. These benchmarks should be reviewed and updated regularly to ensure that they continue to reflect the organization's goals and the evolving needs of the communities they serve.

Organizations should embed an EDI lens at every level of their processes, including procurement, service design, fundraising, marketing and delivery. Applying an EDI lens to every level of processes involves a fundamental shift in organizational culture and mindset that requires a deep commitment to understanding and

addressing systemic barriers and power imbalances. By doing so, organizations can better engage with diverse communities, hire their best talent for their executive teams and boards, and improve the quality and effectiveness of their programs and services.

Last, non-profit organizations should engage authentically with equity-deserving groups to build their talent pool and design and deliver programs and services. Authentically engaging with equity-deserving groups involves more than consulting them for feedback or input; it requires building meaningful relationships based on trust, respect and a shared commitment to advancing EDI. By doing so, organizations can tap into a wealth of knowledge, skills and lived experiences that can inform the design and delivery of programs and services, while also creating opportunities for leadership development and professional growth among equity-deserving groups.

### Individual level

The individual level of the ecological model is defined by individual attitudes, behaviour and choices, especially biases and actions that perpetuate discrimination and exclusion. Individuals at all levels in non-profits should be engaged in training programs to promote knowledge, attitudes and behaviour that advance EDI in the workplace. Such training programs should be designed to address barriers and systemic discrimination faced by equity-deserving groups and develop a shared understanding and commitment to advancing EDI in the workplace.



Employees from equity-deserving groups should have access to training and supports to advance their leadership opportunities. Employees that take part in initiatives such as mentorship programs, leadership development courses and specialized training can build the necessary skills and competencies required to succeed in leadership positions. By participating in these initiatives, employees from equity-deserving groups can help foster a culture of EDI that permeates all levels of their organization's operations, expand their professional growth and development, and serve as mentors and examples for other members of equity-deserving groups.



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