

# INDUSTRY ANALYSIS & THE VALUE OF BLACK MUSIC

**ADVANCE**  
CANADA'S BLACK MUSIC BUSINESS COLLECTIVE

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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.



# ADVANCE

CANADA'S BLACK MUSIC BUSINESS COLLECTIVE

ADVANCE is Canada's Black music business collective. They are a community leading the change in developing an infrastructure for the betterment, upliftment, and retention of Black people in the music business. They strive to help foster an environment within the Canadian music industry that improves, promotes, and better retains Black employees and partners. They create conditions for long-term success by addressing racial equality and inclusivity through three areas: Advocacy, Mentorship, and Community Outreach.



With Support From:

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# INDUSTRY ANALYSIS & THE VALUE OF BLACK MUSIC

Black music's economic and social value has consistently proven to be a driving force in Canada's music industry. Black music generates significant revenue through record sales, streaming services, live performances and more. Beyond music, the economic impact is evident in fashion, advertising and film, with collaborations between Black musicians and major brands enhancing profitability for both. Additionally, Black music's global appeal promotes cultural tourism, contributing to the global economy and cultural enrichment. Despite this, Black musicians and industry professionals face systemic racism and underrepresentation.<sup>1</sup> Using a societal and organizational lens, this report discusses the inequalities and prejudices faced by Black music industry workers and musicians offering critical recommendations to address disparities.

At the societal level, Black musicians and industry professionals face challenges rooted in policies, legislation, culture, media, social norms and systemic and historical inequities.<sup>2</sup> In Canada, this is evident in Black musicians being underrepresented in the industry, stereotypes of Hip Hop culture to violence, under-compensation, appropriation of works, and a lack of support.<sup>3 4</sup> Due to the Black Lives Matter movement, there has been increased awareness of systemic racism, including in the music industry. For instance,

the City of Toronto, the Slaight Family Foundation, and ADVANCE, Canada's Black Music Business Collective (ADVANCE), have collaborated to pledge over \$2 million in investments to support the entry, retention, and advancement of Black professionals in Toronto's music industry.

At the organizational level, Black musicians and industry professionals are faced with barriers tied to education, media representation, and a lack of Black representation in senior roles. Increased awareness of racial discrimination following George Floyd's death in 2020 and the wider Black Lives Matter movement prompted organizations to speak out in solidarity with Black people. Nevertheless, these actions have been mainly performative. As music journalist Bianca Gracie aptly observed, "They may be posting these things, but if you look at the [corporate] suite, if you look at the execs, they are predominantly white. So it's a mismatch of info."<sup>5</sup>

More recent actions against anti-Black racism in Canada's music industry include panels and roundtables such as the weekly ADVANCE supported Breaking Down Racial Barriers panel focusing on the lived experiences of Black people in the music industry.<sup>6</sup> Yet, in the Canadian context, there is a noticeable lack of data and initiatives addressing racial barriers compared to those focusing on gender equality.



# SURVEY RESULTS

In our survey, 55.3% of participants (1,702 responses) reported ethnicity-based discrimination, and 54.7% indicated race-based discrimination. Additionally, 48.4% experienced discrimination based on culture, and 40% due to their language or accent. These figures surpass the reported 50% of Black Canadians who experience discrimination in Canada.<sup>7</sup> Of the participants who shared experiences of racism, 43% reported specific instances of racism, with 6% specifically citing anti-Black racism. Moreover, one-third of respondents reported facing discrimination for their gender identity, sexual orientation, age, religion, disability, and hair. Discrimination has impacted one-half of the respondents' personal life, work relationships, mental health, self-esteem, and productivity. Additionally, one-half said it affected their creative process and physical health. Overall, these findings underscore the need for targeted solutions in the music industry to address discrimination in the music industry.

Survey participants identified investment and financial support and mentorship as key to success. Black men and women both prioritized funding, but women also highlighted physical health/wellness while men stressed financial and business acumen.

*In this study, we define Black music as music that is created, produced, or inspired by Black people, people of African descent, including African music traditions and African popular music as well as the music genres of the African diaspora, including Afro-Caribbean music, Afro-Latino music, Afro-Brazilian music and African American music.*



# DISCUSSION

Canada ranks as the eighth largest music market with a valuation of \$608.5 million USD in 2022 and a growth rate of 8.12%.<sup>8</sup> Streaming dominates the sector, accounting for 74% of total revenues generated in Canada in 2020.<sup>9</sup> Our analysis shows that Black music has accounted for the majority of streams (65%) of the top Canadian charts on Apple Music and Spotify between 2019 and 2022. In 2022, streaming subscription revenues in Canada were reported to be around CA\$521.79 million.<sup>10</sup> Based on the 65% share of Black music in streaming, it is estimated that this genre accounts for approximately \$339.16 million CAD of these revenues. These figures are estimates subject to several assumptions and available data correlations.<sup>11</sup> By contrast, the most recent data shows that the proportion of Black music played on the radio has been in decline although it is climbing back up after 2019.<sup>12</sup> Newer platforms might be more in tune with current audience preferences. Artists, especially within Black music, should understand and leverage these platforms for broader reach.

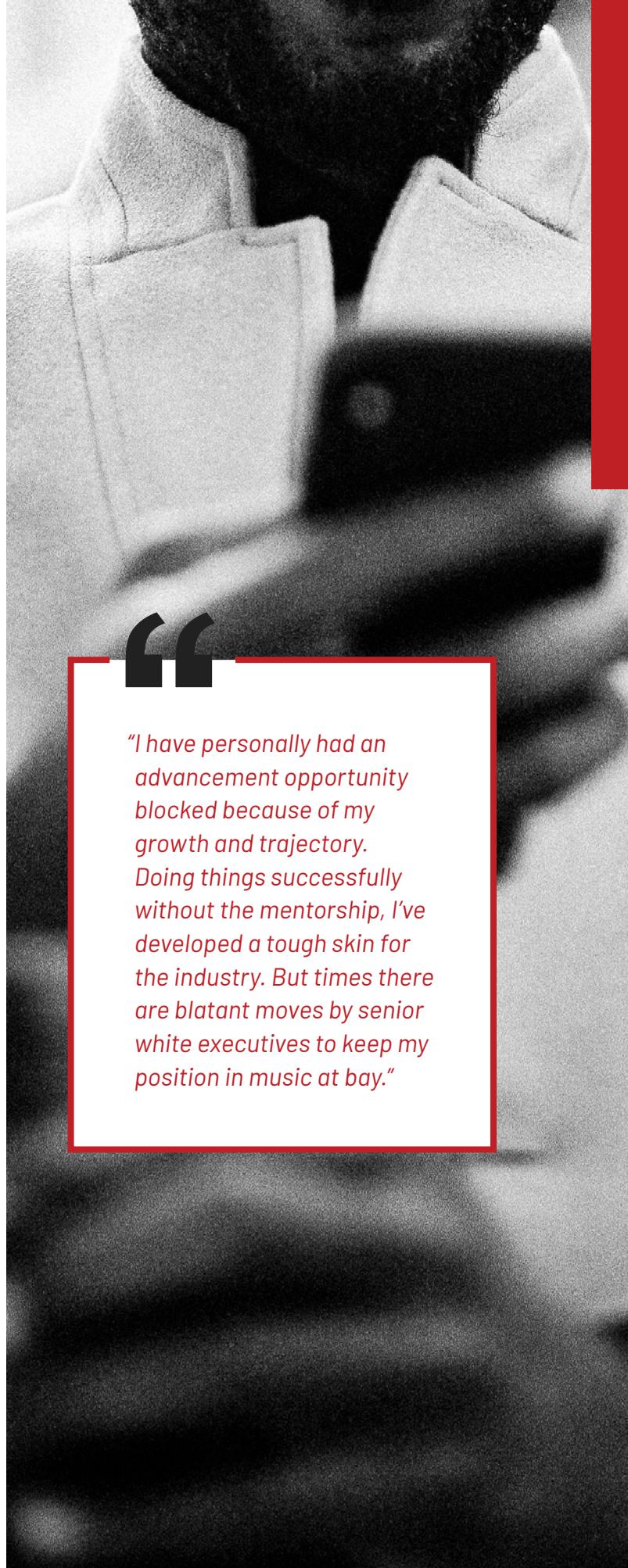
Survey results reveal that Black music professionals possess higher educational qualifications than the general Black population. Yet, these qualifications do not translate to higher levels of income. Most recently in 2020, only 15% of Black music professionals and artists report being able to support themselves and their families from music-related work.

**\$339.16 million**

Black music streaming

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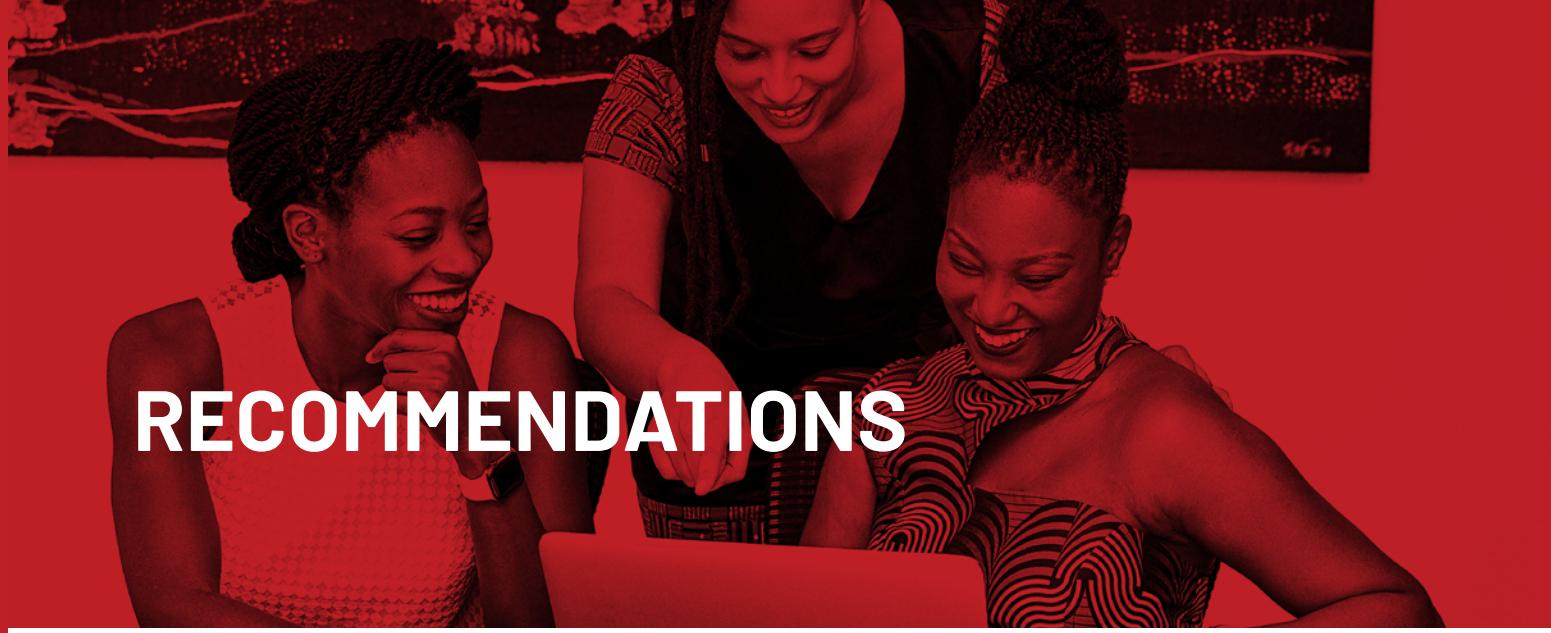
Black music industry professionals and artists encounter higher rates of discrimination than both the general and Black Canadian communities, affecting their well-being, job performance, and interpersonal relationships. They often find themselves as the sole person of their race or skin colour in professional settings. Yet, many maintain a sense of community and would endorse a career in the music industry, indicating a deep passion for their work. One respondent noted, "I have been humiliated but it does not affect my love of music and love of the world."

Our survey results demonstrate that barriers to success vary by gender. Women reported challenges in mentorship opportunities, accessing information, and building professional networks, whereas men did not. This highlights the need for intersectional analysis, especially gender, since Black women have different experiences from Black men. Both men and women, however, point to funding as a barrier. One-half of Black business owners surveyed haven't received financial aid and struggle more to secure bank loans, often at elevated interest rates, a problem particularly acute for Black women entrepreneurs.

investment and financial support opportunities for Black artists exist with The *Orion Program* with Radio Starmaker Fund, Ontario Creates' *AcceleratiON Program*, and the Toronto Arts Council's *Black Arts Projects*. Nevertheless, stark disparities exist. FACTOR (Foundation Assisting Canadian Talent On Recording) receives a disproportionate amount of Black music applications which it has to reject, demonstrating the patent need for funding and the inability to adequately support these artists. Recognizing and addressing these funding gaps is essential to support and promote Black music's growth in accordance with its significant contributions to the music industry.

**"**

*"I have personally had an advancement opportunity blocked because of my growth and trajectory. Doing things successfully without the mentorship, I've developed a tough skin for the industry. But times there are blatant moves by senior white executives to keep my position in music at bay."*



# RECOMMENDATIONS

While Black music finds resonance across streaming platforms and cultural spaces, many Black music professionals in Canada face difficulties sustaining themselves solely from their craft. The following calls to action aim to catalyze change, fostering an environment where Black music doesn't just thrive but leads the way in shaping Canada's musical future.

## **1. Strategic Development for Black Music:**

Support for strategic initiatives and infrastructure to uplift Black music creators and professionals, addressing financial challenges and fostering global recognition.

## **2. Comprehensive Data Collection Framework:**

Collaborate with stakeholders, such as Luminate, Distributors, Collection societies and funding agencies to introduce a race-based data collection framework, providing insights on Black music consumption and outreach support in Canada.

## **3. Public Awareness:**

Amplify and initiate public campaigns to highlight the contributions of Black music to Canadian culture and integrate inclusive music education into schools that covers the history and influence of Black musicians.

## **4. Education and Professional Development:**

Curate continuous training and networking opportunities, addressing the expressed lack of support structure for Black professionals in the industry.

## **5. Quality Sponsorship:**

Create and implement a sponsorship program to support Black talent in Canada's music industry, tailored for Black talent to connect, collaborate, and meaningfully contribute to the music industry.

## **6. Governance Training:**

Establish governance training programs to ensure that Black professionals are well-positioned to serve on Boards within the creative ecosystem. Upon completion of the training, graduates could be included in a directory to encourage organizations to consider these trained professionals for Board appointments.

## **7. Cultivating the Next Generation:**

Create target programs and outreach initiatives geared towards cultivating the next generation of Black artists and music professionals aspiring to enter the industry.

## **8. Diversity & Inclusion in Organizations:**

Adopt diversity policies, revise hiring practices, introduce talent programs for Black professionals, offer training against anti-Black racism, and set clear diversity performance metrics.

### **9. Industry Conferences and Panels:**

Ensure diverse representation, particularly of Black professionals, in industry events, panels, and keynotes.

### **10. Wellness Programming:**

Inclusive wellness programs address unique challenges faced by women and gender-diverse individuals.

### **11. Mentorship:**

Mentorship has been identified as an enabler for Black professionals in the music industry, fostering inclusivity, nurturing talent, driving innovation, bridging knowledge gaps and amplifying underrepresented perspectives.

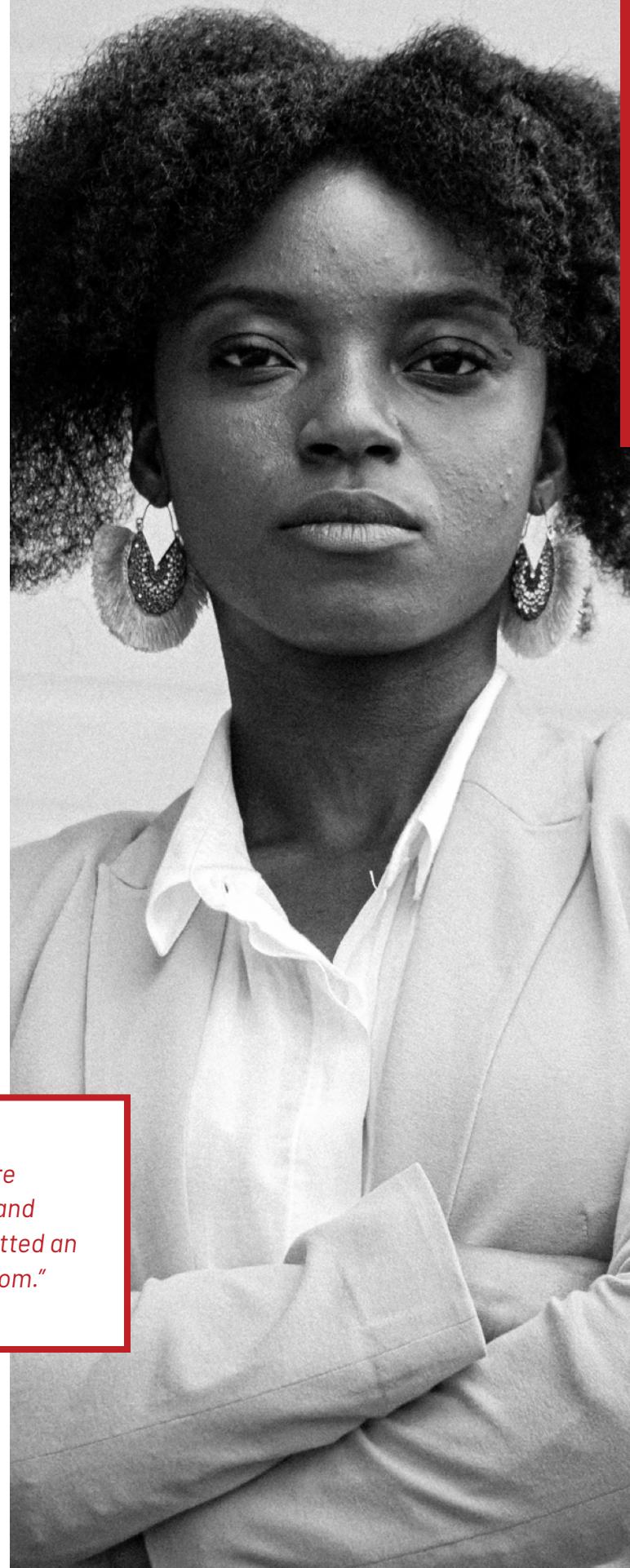
### **12. Advancement of a Black Music National**

#### **Taskforce:**

Form a national task force with industry stakeholders to guide the music industry on how to sustain Black music in Canada.

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*“I’ve been in meetings with executives where afrobeat music was referred to as “jungle” and “vacation” music and nobody flinched or batted an eye. I was one of two Black people in the room.”*



# CONCLUSION

Black music has been instrumental in the development of culture, in breaking down barriers, and in promoting mutual understanding among people from different backgrounds. It has been a powerful voice for Black artists and communities, often articulating experiences, struggles, and triumphs of equity-deserving groups. Recognizing and celebrating Black music's impact in genres like jazz, blues, Hip Hop, R&B, and gospel paves the way for more diversity, empowerment, and innovation in the arts.

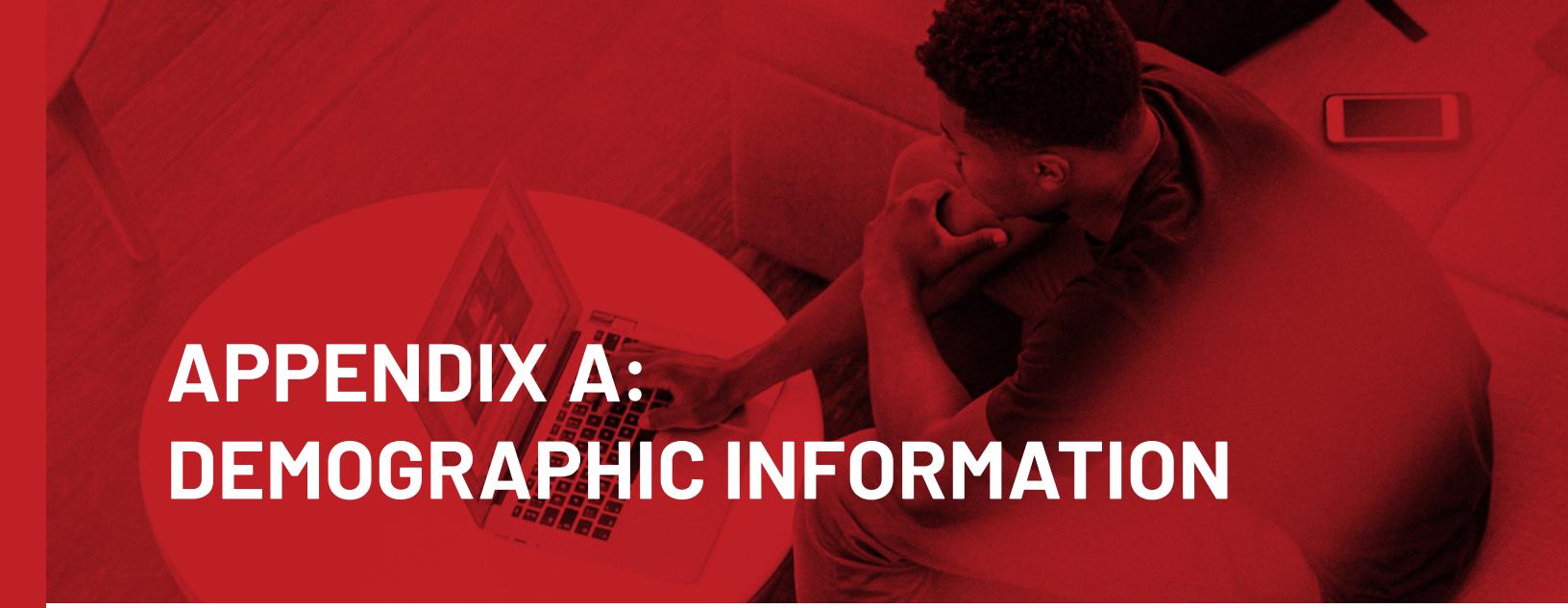
However, a deeper understanding is required, particularly regarding the intersectionality of race, gender, and other social identities. This study points to unique challenges faced by Black women, such as lack of mentorship, access to information, and professional networks. Addressing these disparities is essential for an equitable and inclusive music industry.

Highlighting the importance of Black music to the Canadian market, this report brings attention to inequalities and prejudices that Black music industry workers and musicians face. The industry as a whole may therefore strive toward creating an environment that promotes diversity, inclusion, and equitable opportunity by not just simply recognizing these experiences and challenges, but also creating catered solutions, enriching both the music sector and wider society.



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*“Being the only BIPOC person in the boardroom that oversees a Black music business ... white executives dismissing Black people’s direct involvement with music/culture and gearing everything towards white people’s interests ... white executives dismissing the culture of Black people and Black community while running a Black Music business.”*



# APPENDIX A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

**Age:** just over one-half (51.8%) of respondents were aged between 25 and 34 years. Those aged over 55 constituted a mere 1.2% of the total.

**Ethnicity:** The vast majority, 76.6%, identified as African American/Canadian. Subsequent groups include African (12.2%), Caribbean (5%), African British (4.8%), Afro-Latin American/Black Hispanic (4%), and other (1.1%).

**Language:** 83% spoke English at home. 17% indicated they spoke French.

**Gender:** Men constituted 56.6% of respondents, followed by women at 40.1%. Only 1.4% identified as gender diverse.

**Sexual orientation:** 90.6% identified as heterosexual, 3% identified as gay or lesbian and 2% as bisexual.

**Geography:** Ontario was home to 24.5% of respondents, followed by 15.4% in New Brunswick, and 13.7% in British Columbia.

**Residency:** 65.5% of respondents were born in Canada, while under 5% of respondents have lived in Canada for two years or less.

**Education:** 52.6% of respondents indicated possessing an undergraduate degree, 5% had a master's degree, and 0.9% indicated they had a doctorate.

**Caregiving:** Almost 65% shouldered the primary caregiving responsibilities for dependents, with 45.5% having dependents under the age of 18. About 12% of survey respondents with dependents indicated that they were lone parents.

**Role in the music industry:** Artists constituted about 48% of respondents, closely followed by music-business professionals at 46%. 3.9% worked as an executive, about 41% worked in upper to middle management, 31.5% at the intermediate level, and 6.8% in an entry-level position.

**Self-employment:** approximately 17.5% of respondents identified as self-employed or business owners; 77.6% did not. Among those self-employed, 74.8% managed, supported, or had clients involved in creating Black music.

**Length of time in the Industry:** 40.7% of respondents indicated they had worked in the music business for three to five years, while 9% indicated they had done so for less than two years. About 36% worked in the music industry for six to 10 years, and 0.7% had worked in the industry for over 30 years.

**Entry into the music business:** 30.5% of respondents indicated personal connections as the point of entry, and 26% went through an internship or co-op.

**Genres:** Afro-pop (8.9%), pop (8.6%), and Afro-beats (8.2%) emerged as the dominant genres, whereas gospel (0.8%) and house (0.5%) were least popular.

**Incomes:** Income trends differ in significant ways between 2019 and 2020.

- In 2019, 21.2% of respondents reported incomes between \$80,000 to just under \$100,000. This percentage saw a drop to 16.3% in 2020.
- 4.6% of respondents earned over \$100,000 in 2019. This figure decreased to 3.4% in 2020.
- There was an increase in the number of respondents earning \$20,000 to under \$50,000 between 2019 (25.8%) and 2020 (31.4%).
- Below \$20,000 remained relatively consistent, with about 15% of respondents earning below \$20,000 in both 2019 and 2020.

**Income dependency on the music industry:** Before the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2019, 18.2% relied entirely on the music industry for their livelihood. This reliance saw a decline during 2020, dropping to 14.7%. Additionally, those attributing 75% to 99% of their personal income to music work decreased from 32.8% in 2019 to 26.7% in 2020.

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