

The Diversity Assessment Tool App

Advancing Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Canada's Non-Profit Sector

TED ROGERS SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT | DIVERSITY INSTITUTE

Future Skills Centre | Centre des Compétences futures

CHARITY VILLAGE

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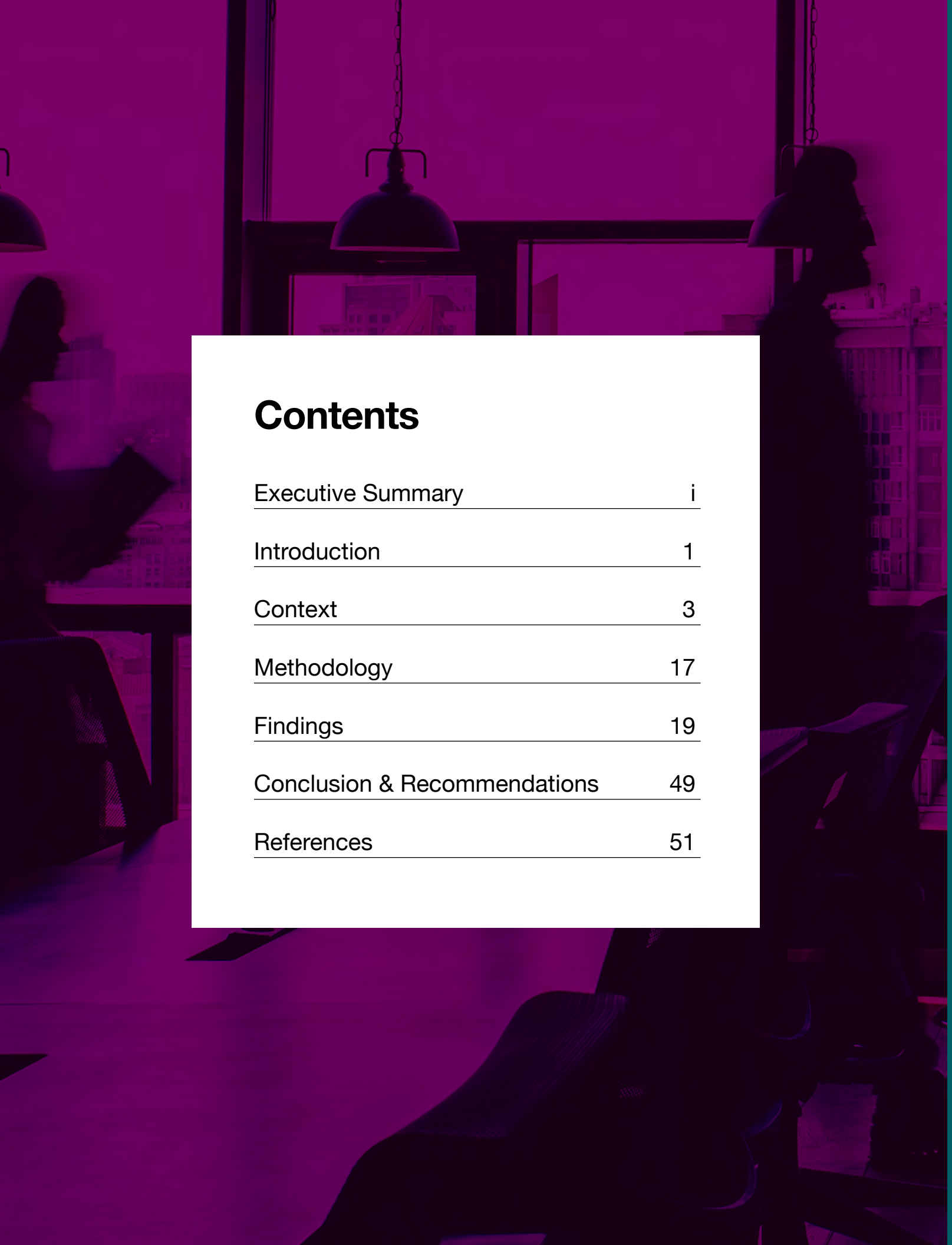
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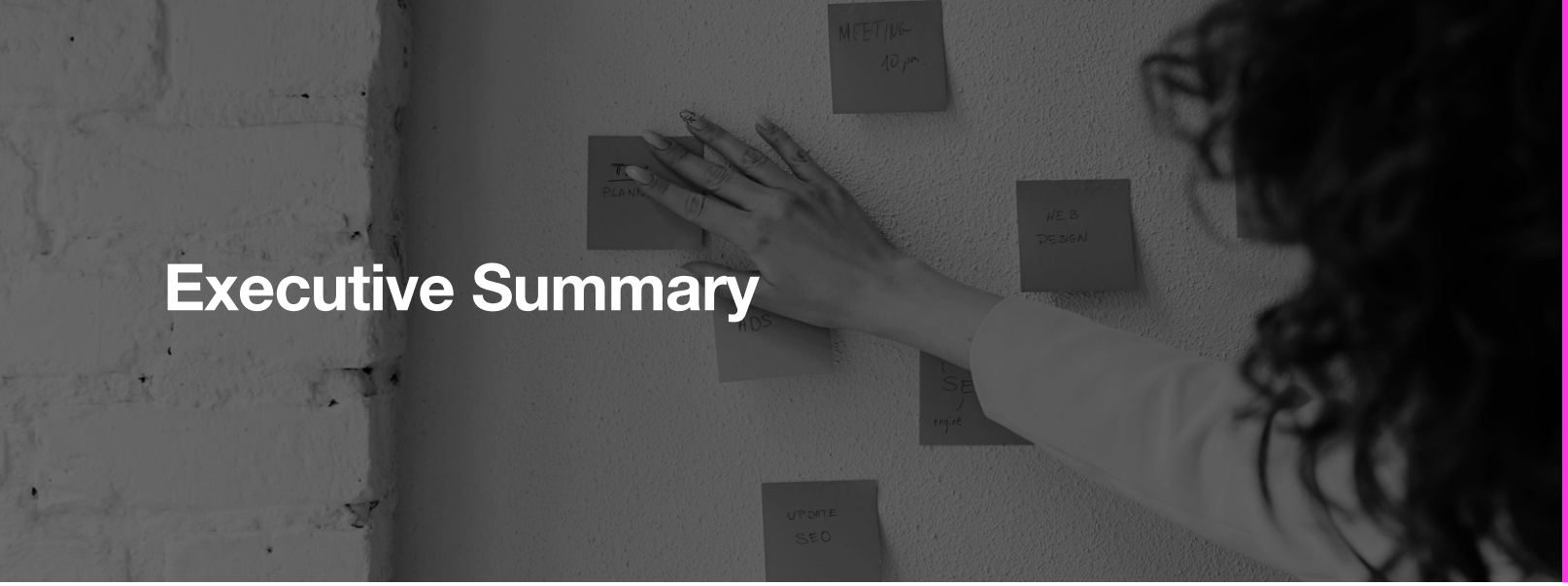
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Executive Summary

Context

Canada's non-profit sector is one of the country's largest employers and one of the least studied workplaces. In 2024, the sector employed about 2.87 million people and generated $244.2 billion in gross domestic product, with health, education, and social services accounting for nearly 87% of that output. Its workforce is majority women and draws substantially on immigrants, racialized and Indigenous labour. However, representation of Indigenous Peoples and equity-deserving groups in senior or leadership roles is disproportionate and uneven across diverse groups. Women hold 56.3% of senior management positions in the sector but only 47.9% of board seats, while racialized people hold roughly 10% of senior management roles and 9.4% of board seats, despite representing a far larger share of the sector's workforce.

Non-profits are motivated to advance equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). However, the sector is operating under sustained strain. Demand for services, job satisfaction, and turnover remain concerns. According to the Charity Insights Canada Project, 80% of Canadian charities reported actively pursuing EDI initiatives in 2023.A comparison of the 2023 and 2024 annual surveys also showed that the turnover rate climbed from 27% in 2023 to 39% in 2024. Non-profit organizations are, in short, navigating rising external demands and internal equity gaps, with shrinking capacity to manage either.

Methodology

The Diversity Institute's Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT) App offers organizations a structured, iterative way to assess their EDI practices across six dimensions: (1) Governance, Leadership and Strategy; (2) Human Resources Processes; (3) Values and Culture; (4) Measurement and Tracking of EDI; (5) Diversity across the Value Chain; and (6) Outreach and Expanding the Pool. Organizations that complete the assessment receive a report with tailored recommendations, a visual mapping of their performance against benchmarks, and curated examples of best practices. Each dimension is scored on a 0 to 5 maturity scale, including no EDI effort (0), minimal compliance (1), regulatory compliance (2), foundational demonstration (3), advanced implementation (4), and strategic integration (5).

The Diversity Assessment Tool's six key dimensions of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) performance



Governance, leadership and strategy | Human resource processes | Values and culture | Measurement and tracking of EDI | Diversity across the value chain | Outreach and expanding the pool

In 2025, DI launched the non-profit DAT Add-on, part of the DAT App, which includes two additional modules for non-profit organizations. The Add-on includes eight items on Accountability and Transparency to Funders and Beneficiaries, and nine items on Volunteer Engagement.

This report examines 148 non-profit organizations that completed the assessment provided by the DAT App between November 2023 and May 2026. Within this group, 18 completed the non-profit DAT Add-on. This report is guided by three questions:

> What characterizes the organizations using the DAT App tool?

> Where is EDI practice the most and the least mature across the six dimensions?

> What is the current status of EDI practices within the non-profit DAT Add-on dimensions of (1) Accountability and Transparency to Funders and Beneficiaries and (2) Volunteer Engagement.

Two key limitations shape how to interpret these results. First, organizations that seek out the DAT App do not represent the sector as a whole, and 61.2% had previously undertaken an EDI assessment or EDI training. Second, responses are self-reported rather than audited and tend to be more optimistic on questions of culture than on documented facts. The results therefore describe non-profits engaged in or seeking to improve EDI, which may not represent the entire non-profit sector.

Findings

The 148 responding non-profits are mostly small, with 42.2% employing fewer than 20 people, and roughly seven in 10 with revenue under $5 million. The central finding is that Values and Culture remains the sector's strongest dimension (mean of 2.99 of 5), while Governance, Leadership, and Strategy is the weakest (mean of 2.17), with Measurement and Tracking of EDI following closely (mean of 2.23). Diversity across the Value Chain and Outreach and Expanding the Pool, ranked third and second, respectively, show similar strengths: 68.9% actively draw on diverse user experiences for program and service design, and 64.8% weigh a potential partner's EDI record when deciding who to work with.

Human Resource Processes show progress at the beginning of the employee lifecycle, with 69.6% of job postings encouraging equity-deserving people to apply. However,



supporting employee progression needs additional considerations: only 12.8% offer individualized career planning, and just 4.1% have a funded mentorship program.

Non-profits have the most room to grow in translating EDI strengths and commitments into Governance, Leadership, and Strategy. Our analysis found that weak governance practices are nearly universal across the sample, rather than confined to organizations that are struggling generally. No non-profit scored above a 4 and none scored 0. For example, on board policies, 49.6% of non-profits with boards have no formal board policy, and only 5.8% set targets for diverse candidates. Measurement and Tracking of EDI shows similar areas for improvement: fewer than one in 10 tie performance measures to EDI outcomes, and just 10.6% conduct annual equal pay audits.

Taken together, the results describe a sector that is strongest where EDI shows up through culture, policy, and community-facing work; and weakest where it depends on formal governance machinery and systems for collecting and using data.

Conclusion and recommendations

Four patterns emerge from these results, and together they explain where the sector excels and where it can improve:

> **Commitment consistently outpaces infrastructure, resources, and capacity:** Non-profits show commitment to EDI; however, they may lack the capacity, resources, and time to formalize practices.

> **Formalization tracks organizational scale:** The EDI practices most likely to be missing are typically those that require dedicated staff, budget, or documentation.

> **Recruitment methods have outpaced progression:** Non-profits attract diverse talent; however, they need systems to support employees once hired, including mentorship, employee resource groups, and more.

> **External practice is ahead of internal machinery:** Non-profits work with communities, partners, and beneficiaries; however, internal systems to track and sustain this are largely missing.

Concluding observations



Commitment consistently outpaces infrastructure, resources, and capacity



Formalization tracks organizational scale



Recruitment methods have outpaced progression



External practice is ahead of internal machinery

These patterns point to a consistent conclusion: the sector's constraint is capacity, not commitment. Accordingly, the report recommends that non-profits build proportionate measurement and accountability infrastructure; formalize EDI within governance and board nomination practice; extend inclusive talent practices from recruitment into progression; and carry EDI into their funding, procurement, and volunteer relationships. It further recommends that funders treat the measurement gap as a capacity gap, since capacity is fundable in a way that commitment is not.



Introduction

Canada's non-profit sector employed about 2.87 million people in 2024,[1] generating 8.4% of Canada's GDP.[2] Statistics Canada divides the sector into three categories based on who they serve: community non-profits (e.g., religious, social services), business non-profits (e.g., chambers of commerce, condominium associations), and government non-profits (e.g., hospitals, universities).[3]

Non-profit organizations are expected to demonstrate not only what they deliver, but how equitably they deliver it. However, the sector is stretched with rising demand and capacity gaps,[4, 5] uncertainty around funding,[6, 7] and a policy environment in which equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) commitments are under scrutiny.[8] Within this context, the Diversity Institute's (DI) Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT) App gives organizations a structured, no-cost way to assess EDI policies and practices and help develop a customized strategy.

This report presents findings from the non-profit users of the DAT App. This builds on previous work that explored EDI practices across more than 200 small, medium, and large enterprises by examining EDI commitments and progress in the non-profit sector.[9] The analysis focuses on the state of EDI in the non-profit sector across the DAT App's six core dimensions: (1) Governance, Leadership and Strategy; (2) Human Resources Processes; (3) Values and Culture; (4) Measurement and Tracking of EDI; (5) Diversity across the Value Chain; and (6) Outreach and Expanding the Pool. Beyond these core dimensions, it also includes a smaller analysis of more recent data from the non-profit DAT Add-on: (1) Accountability and Transparency to Funders and Beneficiaries and (2) Volunteer Engagement. The analysis is based on 148 non-profit organizations that completed the assessment provided by the DAT App between November 2023 and May 2026 and 18 that completed the non-profit DAT Add-on.

The report begins with context, explaining why EDI carries distinct stakes in the non-profit sector and outlining the conditions under which these organizations operate. It then introduces the DAT App, including its core dimensions, EDI maturity scale, and the modules developed for the non-profit DAT Add-on. The methodology outlines the sample, data collection, and study limitations. The findings are presented in four parts: an

organizational profile, EDI maturity across the six core dimensions, a closer look at practice within each dimension, and the two modules from the non-profit DAT Add-on. The report closes with a discussion that draws these findings together into four cross-cutting patterns and a set of recommendations for organizations and funders.

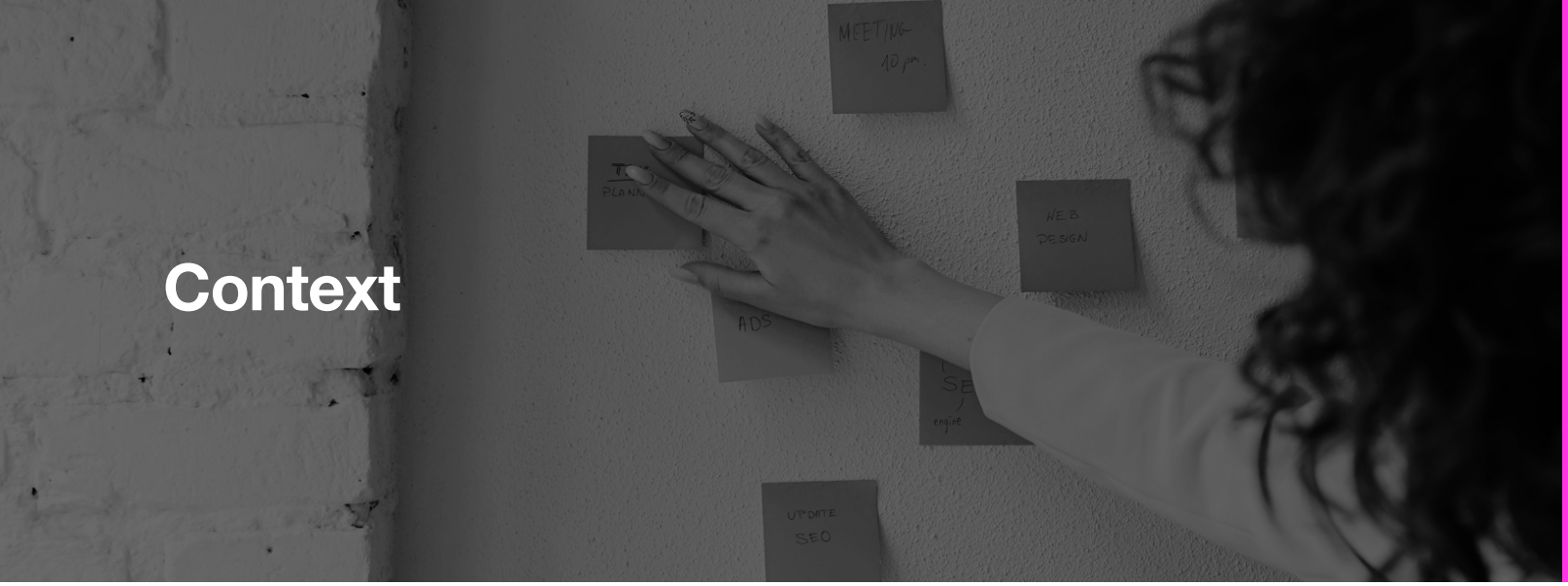
Three questions guide the analysis throughout:

> What characterizes the organizations using the DAT App tool?

> Where is EDI practice the most and the least mature across the six dimensions?

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Context

This section examines why EDI matters in the non-profit sector; the sector's scale and composition; the gap between workforce diversity and leadership representation; and the operating conditions shaping how non-profits advance EDI. It draws on a review of academic and sector-based sources covering the sector's funding landscape, service areas, and leadership.

Why EDI matters in the non-profit sector

Research consistently shows the business case for EDI, framed in terms of competitiveness, profitability, innovation, and access to talent.[10, 11, 12] However, this under-serves non-profit organizations, whose missions are often equity and inclusion-focused, and whose beneficiaries are disproportionately drawn from equity-deserving communities. Three important distinctions within this sector differentiate it from broader, for-profit organizations.

Integrity

An organization that advances EDI externally while failing to practise it internally risks undermining the authority of its own claim. This is not an abstract concern; a study of Canadian charities shows that systems of inequity permeate the organizations working to dismantle them, shaping how they run programs, hire, and distribute authority.[13] Access Alliance's EDI Pyramid Model, developed specifically for non-profit and community organizations serving newcomers, reflects a similar logic, treating equity as the foundational lens through which the other layers must be built, rather than as one commitment among several.[14] The same tension carries through policy design. One study found that EDI policy in non-profit organizations is more effective when framed around mission attainment rather than around legal compliance, since members' voluntary participation is driven by a shared commitment to an organization's core purpose and values.[15]

Retention and sustainability

The sector competes for talent while paying less than the public and private sectors, and the resulting strain falls disproportionately on women. Women make up close to 80% of the non-profit workforce.[16] Yet according to the 2024 Canadian non-profit sector salary and benefits report, women in non-profit

executive positions earn about 18% less than their male counterparts.[17] Job satisfaction is also a concern. Environics' Survey on Employment and Skills (N = 12,285) found that about 26% of non-profit employees report job dissatisfaction, compared with 19% in the private sector.[18] Turnover is also rising. An analysis of the Charity Insights Canada Project data found that organizations reported worsening turnover, rising from 27% to 39% between 2023 and 2024, primarily driven by insufficient pay, thin benefits, and rising burnout.[19] Where organizational performance depends on employees going beyond minimum expectations, retaining them depends on whether they feel they belong, making inclusion a critical retention strategy.

Quality

Staff composition and cultural competence shape the outcomes for the communities served, so internal representation is a delivery question as well as an employment one. Research applying a critical mass perspective to ethno-racial diversity on non-profit boards finds that diversity is associated with perceived capacity to engage stakeholders and improve organizational responsiveness, but that the relationship depends on reaching a threshold rather than on token presence.[20] The corollary matters for how this report reads its own findings: a single diverse appointment does not deliver the benefit, and measuring representation as a single aggregate obscures whether the threshold has been reached anywhere.

These three stakes also explain a pattern that would otherwise look surprising. According to 2023 data from the Charity Insights Canada Project, about 80% of Canadian non-profit organizations were actively pursuing EDI initiatives (N = 716)[21] at a time when parts of other sectors, including the corporate sector, were retreating from them.[22] Imagine Canada's survey of 1,655 charity and non-profit leaders similarly found broad support for EDI principles and efforts to act on them; however, evidence of action that translated into sustained, structural commitment was limited.[23] The sector, in other words, does not need to be persuaded of the value of EDI. What it lacks is not motivation but resources, capacity, and infrastructure, and that distinction shapes the findings in this report.

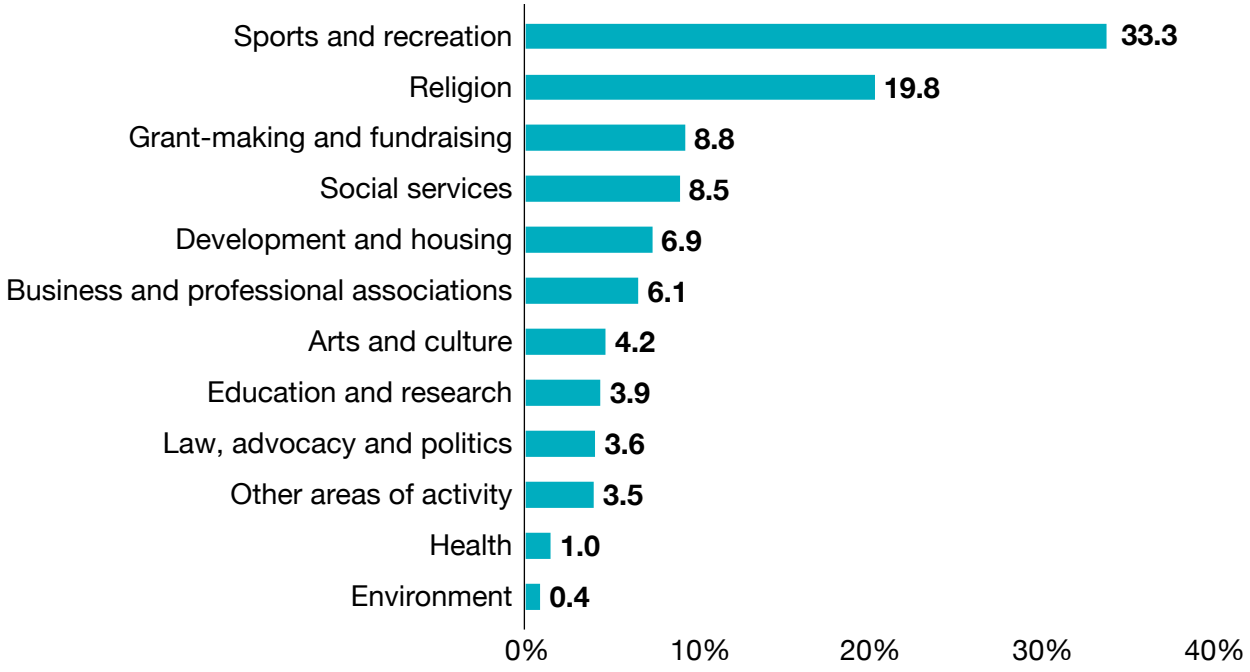
The sector at a glance

It is worth establishing the scale of the sector before introducing any results, because the constraints described later in this report reflect a very large sector composed of very small organizations.

Non-profit employment in Canada grew from 2.41 million jobs in 2020 to 2.87 million in 2024, an increase of nearly 463,000 positions. Health dominates the non-profit sector, accounting for about 1.32 million jobs, or nearly one-half of all non-profit employment, followed by education and research at 580,000 and social services.[24] The sector generated $244.2 billion in GDP in 2024, with health contributing $107.6 billion, education and research $67.2 billion, and social services $27.5 billion.[25]

Figure 1

Organizational profile of non-profits, 2023



Source: Statistics Canada. (2024). *Percentage of total non-profit organizations*, 2023. Government of Canada.

Together, those three activities account for nearly 87% of non-profit economic output, placing the sector's economic footprint squarely in social infrastructure.

The distribution of organizations across activity areas does not necessarily align with the distribution of jobs. In 2023, sports and recreation (33.3%) and religious (19.8%) organizations represented more than one-half of the sector. Grant-making and volunteerism follow at 8.8%, social services at 8.5%, and development and housing at 6.9%, while health organizations represent 1% and environmental organizations 0.4% (Figure 1).[26]

The sector is also characterized by a large number of small organizations, with more than one-half (54.7%) having one to four employees vs. 1.3% having more than 100 employees.[27] Almost one-quarter of all Canadian non-profits were located in rural or small communities.[28]

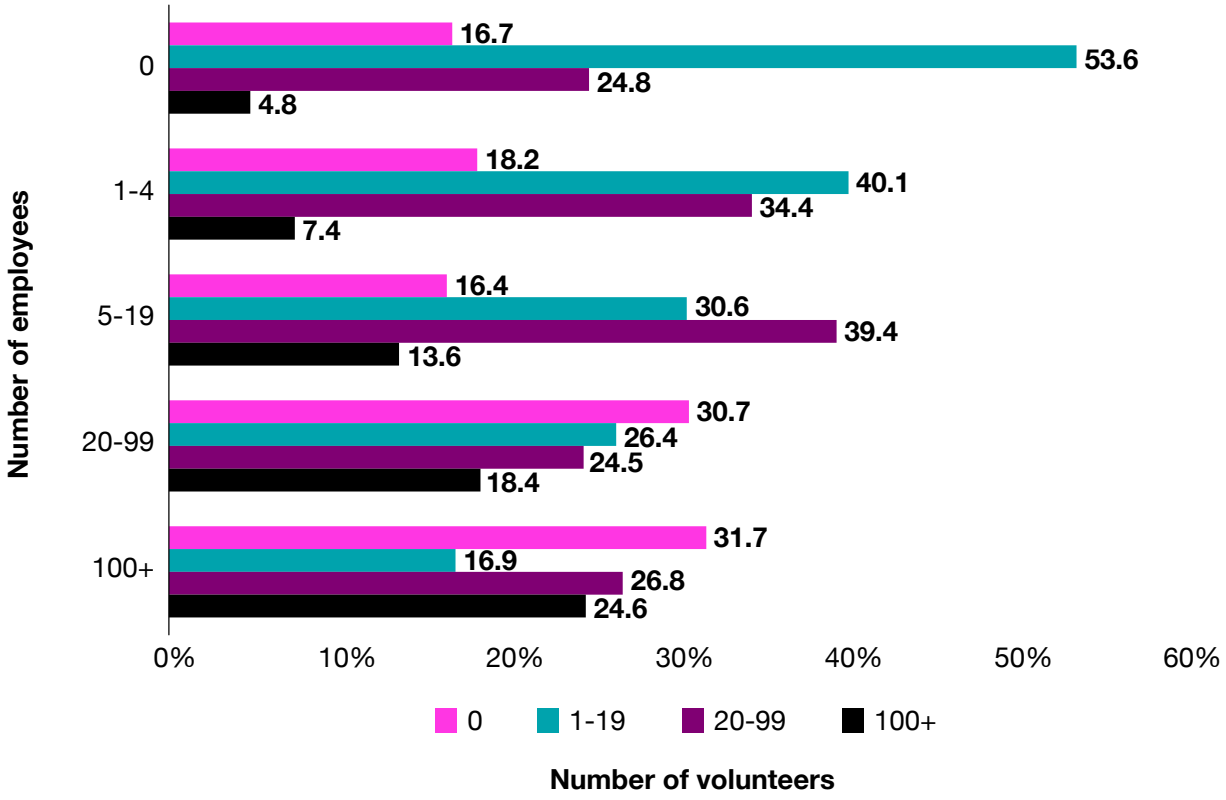
Two further structural features bear on the findings presented in this report. The first is the sector's reliance on unpaid labour. Non-profit organizations show wide variation in volunteer engagement. On average, non-profits engaged 32 volunteers in 2023. Nearly one-half (44.7%) engaged between one and 19 volunteers, 29.1% engaged between 20 and 99, and 8% engaged 100 or more, while 18.2% reported engaging none. Volunteer reliance also shifts with organizational size, as seen in Figure 2:[29]

> Among organizations with one to four employees, 40.1% engage one and 19 volunteers and 34.4% engage 20 and 99.

> Among organizations with five to 19 employees, this shifts further, with 39.4% engaging between 20 and 99 volunteers and 13.6% engaging 100 or more.

Figure 2

Volunteers in non-profits, 2023



Source: Statistics Canada. (2024). *Table 33-10-0795-01 on the percentage of total non-profit organizations in 2023*, Government of Canada.

> However, once organizational size exceeds 20 employees, the pattern changes. Among organizations with 20 to 99 employees, 30.7% report no volunteers, and among those with 100 or more employees, 31.7% report no volunteers, while 24.6% engage 100 or more.

Volunteer engagement is therefore not a peripheral activity for most organizations but a substantial component of their labour, and for many, it is the principal pipeline into paid roles.

The second is the composition of the sector's revenue. Individual donations account for 21.7% of funding and miscellaneous other sources account for 20%. They are followed by membership fees at 17.7%, and provincial or territorial government funding at 10.5%, with federal funding at 4.5% and municipal funding at 2.8%.[30] Funding is thus fragmented, largely short-cycle and heavily dependent on sources that can be withdrawn quickly, which shapes what an organization can commit to, and for how long.

The representation gap

Canada's non-profit sector easily attracts Indigenous Peoples and equity-deserving groups into its workforce. In 2021, the sector employed about 2.54 million people,[31] roughly 70% of whom were women. Immigrants held 677,000 positions, or about one in four jobs; racialized workers held 722,000 positions; and Indigenous workers held about 115,000, representing 4.5% of sector employment.[32]



Representation narrows as authority increases, and it falls away unevenly. In 2023, 92.6% of non-profit organizations had a board of directors, averaging seven filled positions and about one vacancy. Women held 47.9% of board roles, rising to 65.5% in social services non-profits. Representation of other designated groups was considerably smaller: 9.4% of board members were racialized, 3.2% were persons with disabilities, 2.8% were First Nations, Métis or Inuit, and 0.8% identified as non-binary.[33]

Among the 78.4% of organizations with senior management positions, women held 56.3% of those roles, while racialized people held 10%, persons with disabilities 2.7%, Indigenous Peoples 2%, and non-binary people 0.5%. [34] More recent data show the gender pattern strengthening at the management level, with women holding 57.6% of senior management positions and 71.8% of other management positions in non-profits in the first quarter of 2026, against 40% of senior management positions across the Canadian economy as a whole.[35]

These figures show that there are multiple gaps. The first concerns gender and is a governance pattern. As described above, women are strongly represented in the non-profit sector's workforce and in its executive and management ranks. They are also represented at or above parity in mid-level management. However, they hold a smaller share of board seats than of senior management roles. The shortfall therefore sits at the governance layer: the

level furthest removed from day-to-day operations and the level least responsive to operational practice. This matters because nomination and recruitment processes are typically informal, relationship-based, and rarely documented. Qualitative work with 26 Canadian board leaders concludes that board diversity is unlikely to be effective without a parallel commitment to inclusion; that success depends heavily on determined leadership from the chair; and that onboarding processes for new directors require rethinking if lived experience is to translate into influence.[36] Another study that examined the determinants of ethnocultural diversity across large Canadian non-profit boards similarly found that board diversity practices, rather than community demographics alone, predict the range of diversity achieved.[37] Governance diversity, in short, responds to deliberate process rather than organizational culture.



Qualitative work with 26 Canadian board leaders concludes that:

- board diversity is unlikely to be effective without a parallel commitment to inclusion
- success depends heavily on determined leadership from the chair
- onboarding processes for new directors require rethinking if lived experience is to translate into influence

The second gap concerns representation of racialized people, Indigenous Peoples, and persons with disabilities. Racialized workers hold a substantial share of sector employment[38] but under 10% of board and senior management positions;[39, 40] Indigenous representation falls from 4.5% of the workforce[41] to about 2% of senior management.[42] These are not variations on the gender pattern but a distinct problem, and treating representation as a single aggregate measure conceals it. An organization can have a woman as executive director and a board that does not reflect the community it serves, and reporting a single diversity figure would show neither. Representation should be reported separately for boards and for senior management, and separately by equity dimension, on the understanding that gender and racialized representation are disparate and carry different organizational consequences.

The literature supports treating these gaps as structural rather than attitudinal. The Race to Lead series, applying an intersectional analysis, documents how race and gender jointly shape the aspirations, experiences, and advancement of racialized women in the non-profit sector, producing barriers that neither a race-only nor a gender-only account would predict.[43] Qualitative research across 60 Alberta organizations identifies the feminization of equity-deserving work in the third sector, where the labour of advancing equity is disproportionately carried by the people most affected by its absence, often without corresponding authority or compensation.[44]

The Diversity Institute and Civic Action surveyed 8,902 senior managers and directors across 803 non-profit organizations in 25 Ontario cities, and the findings show persistent under-representation of immigrants, racialized individuals, persons with disabilities, and Indigenous Peoples at executive and board levels, despite the sector's scale and stated commitments.[45]

This gap motivates this research and report. Overall, the sector attracts people belonging to different equity-deserving groups and then loses them or retains them without advancing them; the mechanisms responsible sit in governance, progression, and measurement rather than recruitment.

Operating conditions

The environment in which non-profit organizations are trying to advance EDI is one of rising demand, limited capacity, and contracting resources. First, demand is outpacing the sector's ability to meet it. According to the 2023 Canadian Survey on Business Conditions, about 46% of non-profit organizations reported increased demand for their services, with 21.4% reporting significant increases and 24.7% reporting modest ones, while only 5.6% reported decreases. Over the same period, 62.4% reported that their capacity remained unchanged, with a combined 24.3% reporting increases. The mismatch was most pronounced in social services and health, the areas that statistically have the greatest share of sector employment.[46] Recent sector reporting describes the resulting position bluntly, characterizing a sector that is structurally underfunded and overlooked in federal policy while absorbing an expanding share of Canada's social contract.[47] Provincial evidence is consistent: the 2025 survey of British Columbia's non-profit sector found more than four in five organizations operating in a challenging fiscal environment while demand continued to rise.[48]

Workforce conditions also compound the problem. An Environics survey of data collected between February 2020 and April 2022 found that non-profit workers reported lower job satisfaction than workers in either the public or private sectors, alongside high rates of temporary and involuntary part-time employment.[49] Confidence has also softened, with the Charity Insights Canada Project finding a fall in the share of charities expressing optimism about the future, from 76% in 2024 to 71% in 2025, while the share expressing pessimism doubled from 5% to 10%.[50]

Technology and data capacity form a third constraint. Research on the Canadian non-profit sector identifies financial and resourcing constraints as the most common barrier to digital capability, followed by organizations simply lacking the capacity or knowledge to get started. The three largest identified skill gaps are data privacy and security, data-informed decision-making and strategy, and data management and analysis.[51, 52] An organization that cannot securely collect and analyze data cannot collect self-identification data, run a reliable pay equity audit, or track representation over time, despite how committed it is to do so.



Finally, the sector is operating in an environment of EDI rollbacks, whose effects are not evenly distributed. Reduced funding and political pressure fall hardest on organizations serving women, racialized people, and Indigenous communities, producing staff burnout, weakened community trust, and diminished capacity to address intersecting inequities.[53] As non-profits are organizations whose missions are often explicitly equity missions, the rollback affects their internal practices and programs.

Taken together, these conditions support the interpretive claim that runs throughout the remainder of this report. Where non-profit organizations underperform on EDI, limited capacity is a more plausible explanation than limited commitment. Establishing this here allows the finding to be applied in the results without being re-argued at each point. It also shapes what the recommendations can reasonably ask of organizations that are already stretched.

The case for measurement and assessment

In the previous section, the reporting established that non-profit organizations in Canada arrive at EDI already committed, and what constrains them is infrastructure, not intent. This section examines the consequences of that finding. If commitment is widespread but uneven in its expression, the question is no longer whether non-profits support EDI, but where their practice actually sits, and what would advance it. Answering that question requires structured assessment. As such, the case for assessment rests on three arguments.

> **Diagnostic**
Organizations cannot address barriers they have not identified, and self-perception is an unreliable guide. Imagine Canada's survey of 1,655 charity and non-profit leaders found broad endorsement of EDI principles and widespread belief that organizations were acting in accordance with them, alongside limited evidence that the practices were embedded structurally.54 The gap between believing and embedding is precisely what a structured instrument is designed to uncover.

> **Comparative**
A single organization reviewing its own practice has no external reference point and tends to benchmark against its own history, which flatters incremental change. An instrument administered across many organizations allows a given organization to see where it stands relative to others of similar size and type. It also allows the sector to see which practices are common, which are rare, and which are effectively absent.

> **Longitudinal**
A single assessment provides a snapshot; repeated assessments produce a trajectory. The DAT App lets organizations complete the tool at regular intervals, helps determine whether their practice has advanced, and lets them share that trajectory with funders and stakeholders as evidence rather than assertion. This matters in a sector where accountability runs outward to funders and beneficiaries rather than inward to shareholders.

Policy has also moved in the same direction. Closed in March 2025, the Government of Canada's 50 – 30 Challenge invited organizations to work toward gender parity and significant representation of equity-deserving groups on boards and in senior management, and its accompanying Publicly Available Specification sets out what organizations are expected to have in place to make progress credible.[55, 56] Both operated on the premise that commitments become meaningful only when they are specified, measured and reported. The DAT App gives organizations a practical means of doing so, without cost.

The Diversity Assessment Tool and its non-profit adaptation

This section describes the origins of the DAT App tool, its six core dimensions, the maturity scale used to assess organizations, and what an organization receives upon completion. It also includes the two additional modules developed for the non-profit DAT Add-on.

The six core dimensions

The DAT App is grounded in evidence that EDI strategies are most effective when linked to organizational goals rather than pursued as a separate stream of activity. It is accordingly built around six dimensions, each corresponding to a core element of organizational strategy.

- **The Governance, Leadership, and Strategy** dimension addresses the composition of boards and senior management teams; the processes used to identify and nominate candidates; whether responsibility for EDI is formally assigned and resourced; and whether EDI appears in organizational goals and in mission, vision, and purpose statements. It establishes what is often described as the 'tone at the top,' and it is the dimension least responsive to informal effort.
- **Human Resources (HR) Processes** span the employment life cycle, from job design through recruitment, selection, training, performance evaluation, promotion, career planning, and mentorship. It has the most items, reflecting the number of decision points at which practice can widen or narrow access.
- **Values and Culture** as a dimension addresses the policy architecture and everyday conditions that determine whether people experience an organization as safe and equitable: EDI policy, harassment and abuse prevention, workplace safety, codes of conduct, accessibility, employee resource groups, flexible and family-friendly arrangements, and access to mental health support.
- **Measurement and Tracking of EDI** addresses whether an organization knows what it is achieving. It covers anonymous employee engagement surveys, awareness of the sensitivities involved in collecting self-reported demographic data, explicit representation goals for management positions, EDI-related key performance indicators, and equal pay audits.
- **Diversity across the Value Chai**n addresses whether EDI reaches the organization's external activity, including purchasing, research and development, the design of programs and services, accessibility of those services, marketing and communications, and training for client-facing staff. For non-profit users, this dimension covers programs, services, and beneficiaries rather than products and customers.
- **Outreach and Expanding the Pool** addresses how an organization engages beyond its own boundaries: connection to diverse supplier networks, consideration of EDI when selecting external partners, collaborative projects intended to improve representation in the sector, and the expression of EDI commitments in communications directed at stakeholders.



The EDI maturity scale

The maturity scale captures the state of an organization's EDI strategies, policies, and practices. Each dimension is scored on a maturity scale running from zero to five.

A **score of zero** indicates no EDI effort on that dimension.

Level one indicates minimal compliance.

Level two indicates regulatory compliance, meaning that an organization meets its legal obligations without going beyond them.

Level three, foundational demonstration, indicates that deliberate practice exists but is neither comprehensive nor systematically applied.

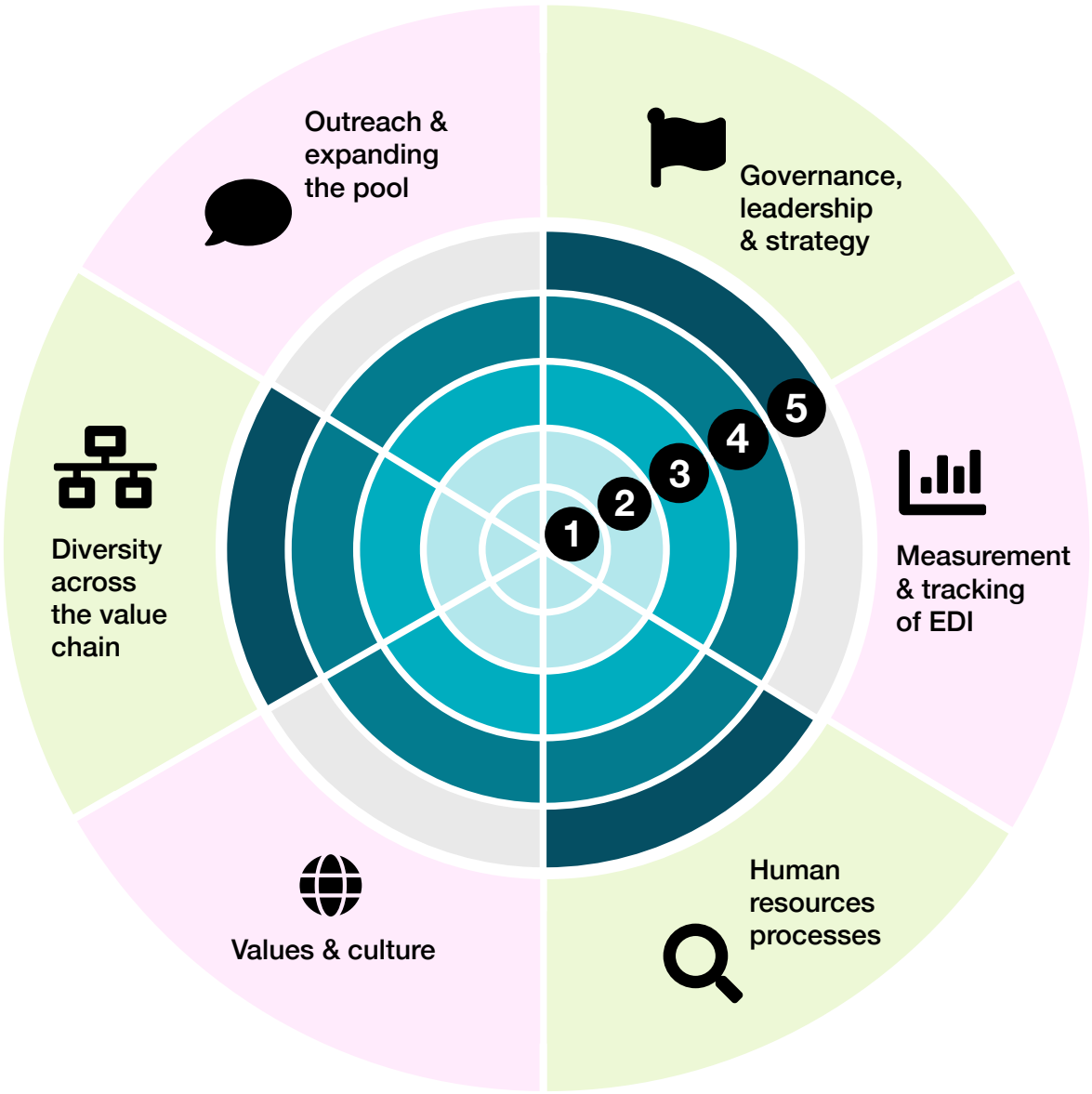
Level four, advanced implementation, indicates practice that is documented, resourced, and applied consistently.

Level five, strategic integration, indicates that EDI is embedded in how the organization sets direction and measures itself.

A spidergram helps visualize how an organization performs across the DAT App dimensions, and results are expressed as a mean score. The diagram is a useful tool because it helps organizations see current EDI performance and areas for improvement (Figure 3).

Figure 3

Sample of spidergram report for the DAT App



Levels

1 Minimal & 2 Regulatory Compliance	3 Foundational Demonstration	4 Advanced Implementation	5 Strategic Integration

A worked example within a single dimension illustrates the progression. For example, on board nomination practice, an organization at level one has no strategy for identifying or recruiting directors; at level two, it has a strategy for board composition that does not consider diversity; at level three, it has an informal strategy for recruiting a diverse board; at level four, it has a documented strategy under implementation; and at level five, it has a comprehensive strategy with targets and accountability attached. The jump from level two to three is where organizations have to start acting on intention, and the transition from three to four is where that action becomes formal and documented.

What organizations receive

After completing the DAT App, an organization receives a report structured around three components: a written report, a visual benchmark, and a set of best practices.

The written report describes the current state of its EDI practice and provides recommendations for improvement across all six dimensions.

A spidergram that displays an organization's performance across the six dimensions against benchmarks. This allows an organization to see at a glance where its practice is strongest and weakest, and to compare successive assessments over time.

A set of curated examples of practice drawn from organizations in Canada and internationally, allowing organizations to develop their own strategies, policies, and practices from first principles. These are important for small organizations, where the barrier is not an unwillingness but the time and capacity to draft and implement strategies, policies, and practices.

Adaptations made for non-profit organizations

The non-profit version of the instrument adds two modules that have no counterpart in the original DAT App. The first module comprises eight questions on Accountability and Transparency, covering the publication of annual impact reports and whether these include EDI commitments and progress; regular benchmarking of pay levels against sector averages; regular progress updates to funders and stakeholders; the collection of demographic data on beneficiaries and grantees; representation at public events; disclosure in fundraising materials of how donated funds are used; statements of EDI commitment in proposals; and mechanisms for collecting and responding to beneficiary feedback.

The second module comprises nine items on Volunteer Engagement, covering the channels used to recruit a diverse pool of volunteers; interview and screening processes; volunteer agreements setting out roles and the boundaries between volunteer and staff work; mandatory training, including EDI training; non-monetary recognition; progression opportunities from volunteering into paid employment; engagement programming; formal recognition of individual contributions; and the tracking of self-reported volunteer demographic information across the volunteer engagement cycle.

The rationale for both additions follows from the sector's structure. Non-profit organizations are accountable to funders and the communities they serve rather than to shareholders and customers, which means whether EDI commitments travel along those accountability relationships is a distinct question from whether EDI exists internally. Further, a substantial share of the sector's labour is unpaid, and for many, the volunteer base is the principal pipeline into paid roles. An instrument that assessed only paid employment would therefore miss the sector's primary accountability structure and a significant portion of its workforce. These two modules are what make this a report about non-profit organizations rather than a repetition of the enterprise report on a different sample.



***Non-profit organizations are accountable to funders and the communities they serve rather than to shareholders and customers**, which means whether EDI commitments travel along those accountability relationships is a distinct question from whether EDI exists internally.*



Methodology

This section sets out the evaluation questions, the sample and how it was collected, the construction of the composite scores, the analytic approach, and the study's limitations. It anticipates the three challenges a careful reader is most likely to raise: the composition of the sample, the changes made to the instrument over the collection period, and the comparability of the English and French versions.

Origins and evolution of the tool

The Diversity Institute created the DAT to help organizations pinpoint where their EDI practice stood and what to do next. It began as a tool focused on women's participation in the information and communication technology (ICT) sector, then refined and expanded across other sectors, including financial services, policing, education, health care, and non-profits. For most of its history, it was delivered only through consultancy engagements ($25,000 to $300,000+).[57] This created a gap for small organizations, with limited time, resources, and capacity, until the Diversity Institute launched the free DAT App in 2022. It has since moved to a survey platform, been translated into French, and expanded an industry-organized set of practice examples. The non-profit adaptation discussed in this report is a substantive extension of that tool, requiring translation of its corporate-sector vocabulary (e.g., value chain, products, customers) into terms that fit organizations serving beneficiaries and clients; this is also a notable finding about the tool's continued development.

Evaluation questions

The study is guided by three questions, including:

> What characterizes the organizations using the DAT App tool?

> Where is EDI practice the most and the least mature across the six dimensions?

> What is the current status of EDI practices within the non-profit DAT Add-on dimensions of (1) Accountability and Transparency to Funders and Beneficiaries and (2) Volunteer Engagement?

Sample and data collection

The study draws on 148 non-profit organizations that completed using the DAT App between November 2023 and May 2026, as well as 18 responses to the new non-profit DAT Add-on. The data includes organizational characteristics, such as size, structure, location, industry, revenue, and prior experience with diversity assessments or EDI training, along with EDI practices across the six core dimensions and, for the most recent cohort, the two non-profit modules.

Of the 148 organizations across the study period, 82 (55.4%) completed the English DAT App, and 43 (29.1%) completed the French version between November 2023 and May 2025. Four organizations (2.7%) completed using the App between July and September 2025. The remaining 19 organizations (12.8%) completed the questionnaire between October 2025 and May 2026. Respondents between October 2025 and May 2026 were the only ones who completed the additional non-profit DAT Add-on questions.

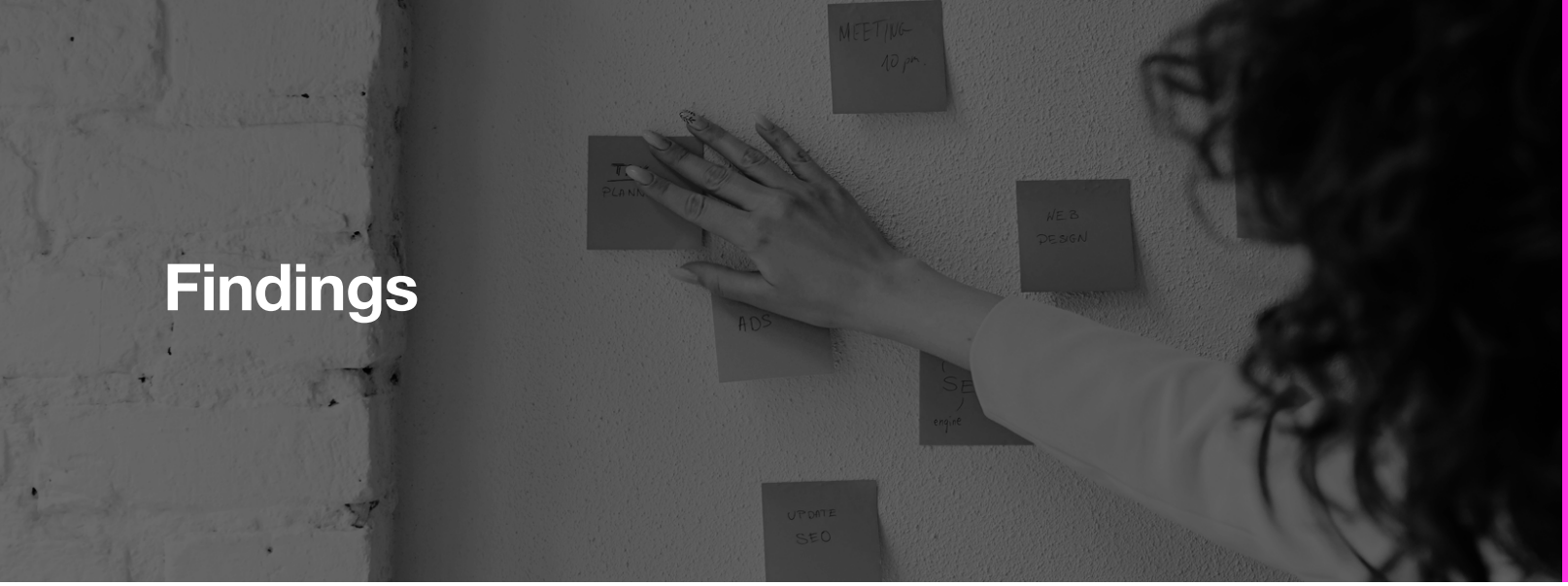
Limitations

Three limitations emerged during the data collection phase of this study, all of which are outlined in this section:

> **Self-selection**
Organizations that seek out and complete an EDI assessment tool are unlikely to represent the sector as a whole. They are, almost by definition, organizations for which EDI is already sufficiently salient to justify the time the assessment takes. The finding that 61.2% of respondents had previously undertaken a diversity assessment or diversity training confirms this. The results therefore describe engaged organizations rather than the average one, and the sector-wide position is likely less advanced than the figures reported. This limitation points to a broader picture within the sector: where these self-selecting organizations show gaps, the gaps are likely wider across the sector as a whole.

> **Self-reporting**
Responses reflect respondents' personal assessments of their organizations, which may be verified through internal audits or surveys. Self-reporting tends to run optimistically on questions of culture and intent, and more accurately on questions of documented facts such as whether a policy exists.

> **Updates to the DAT App**
The data was collected over roughly 30 months, and while the six core dimensions remained stable, response options were revised to improve the overall quality of the DAT App.



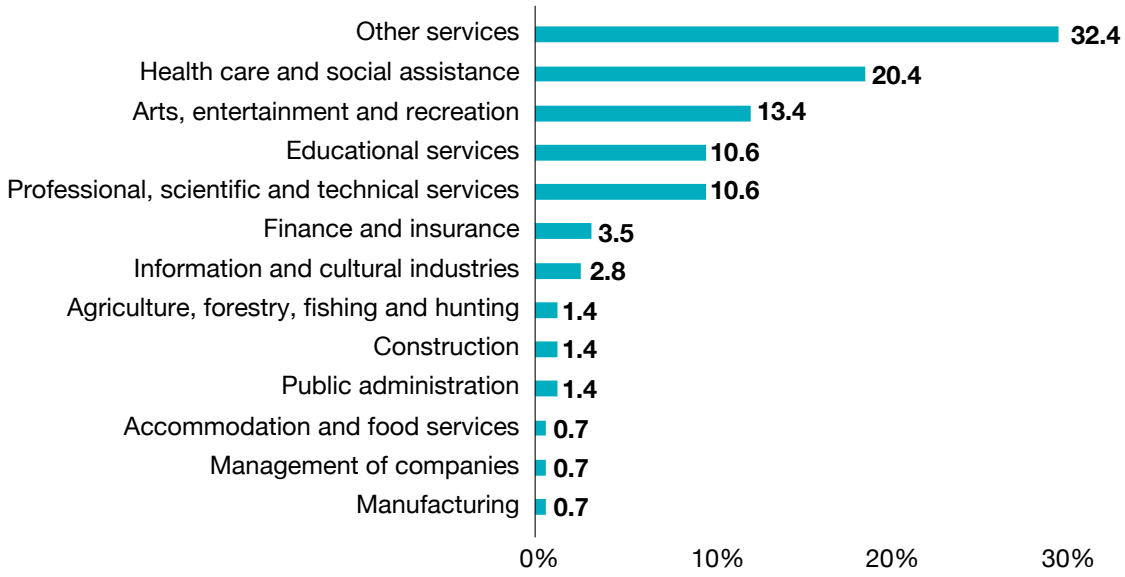
Findings

This section outlines the organizations that completed the DAT App, covering industry, size, revenue, location, and organizational readiness, along with their knowledge of EDI and EDI practices.

Industry profile

From an industry standpoint, 32.4% operate in other services, while 20.4% operate in health care and social assistance. For arts, entertainment and recreation, 13.4% identified in this industry, while 10.6% (each) operate in educational services and in professional, scientific, and technical services. The remaining industries include financial services and insurance, information and cultural industries, agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting, construction, and public administration (Figure 4).

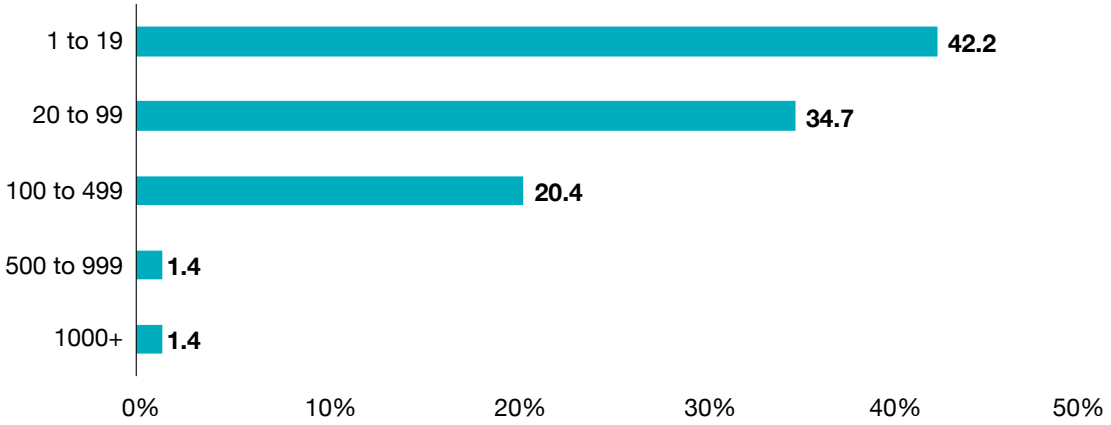
Figure 4
Industry profile of responding organizations



Source: Diversity Institute. Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT) App, non-profit responses, November 2023 to May 2026 (n = 142).

Figure 5

Responding organizations by number of employees

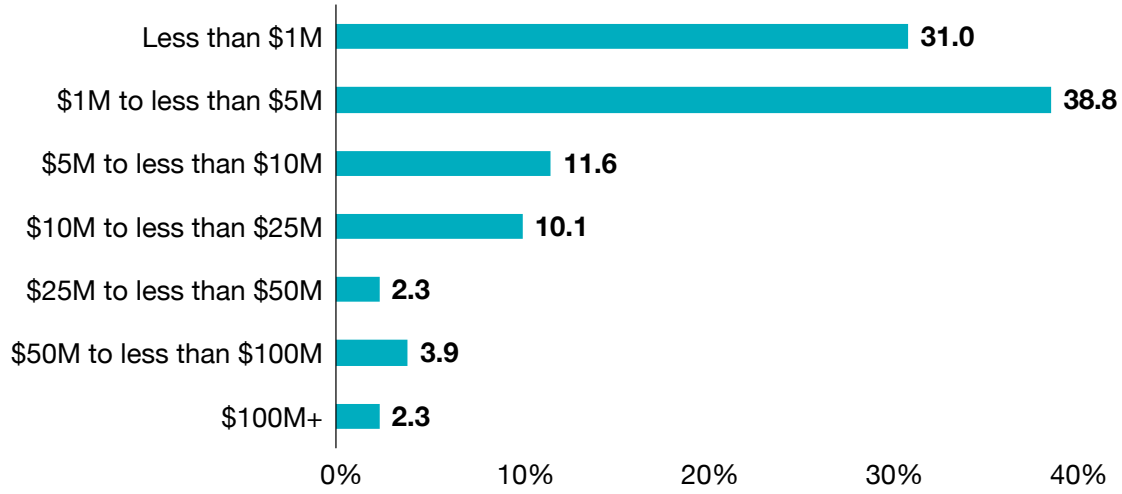


Source: Diversity Institute. Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT) App, non-profit responses, November 2023 to May 2026 (n = 147).

Most of the responding non-profits employ fewer than 20 people (42.2%), while 34.7% employ between 20 and 99. Further, 20.4% report employing between 100 and 499, accounting for 97.3% of respondents who fall below the threshold at which an organization would be defined as large (Figure 5).

Figure 6

Responding organizations by annual revenue



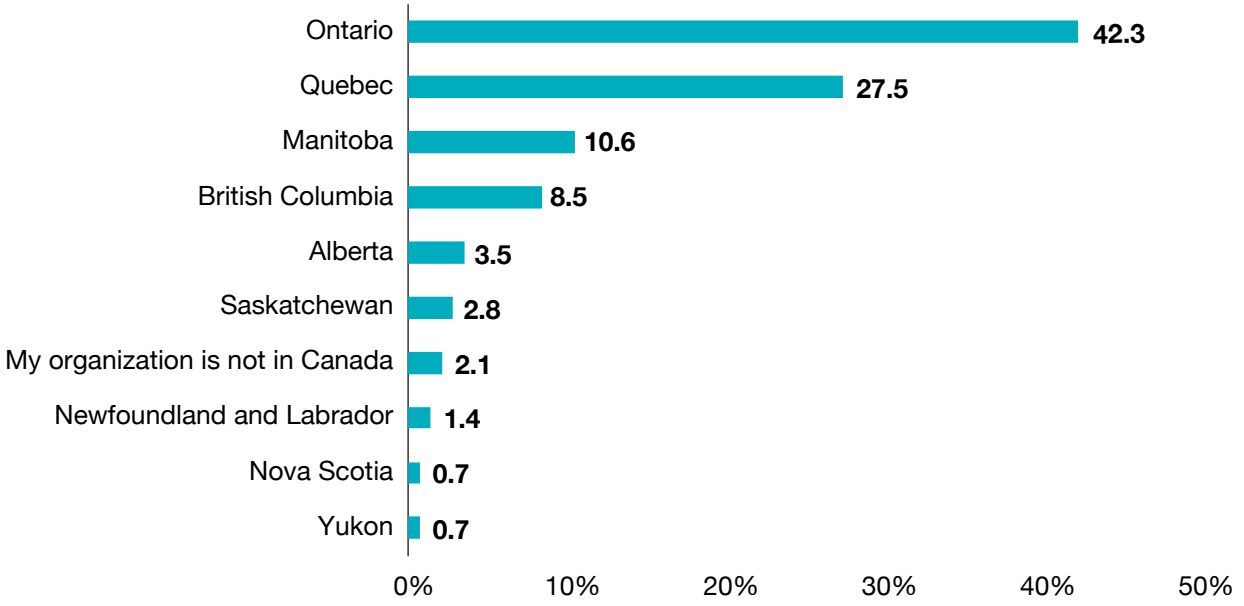
Source: Diversity Institute. Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT) App, non-profit responses, November 2023 to May 2026 (n = 129).

Revenue follows the same pattern: of the 129 organizations, 31% operate on less than $1 million annually and a further 38.8% on between $1 million and $5 million, so about seven in 10 operate on budgets under $5 million (Figure 6).

An overwhelming proportion of the non-profit organizations (98%, n = 148) that completed using the DAT App have a board of directors or other governing body; 87.8% have written human resources policies and procedures (n = 148); 76.9% have at least one employee dedicated to human resources (n = 147); 61.2% have previously undertaken a diversity assessment, audit, or training (n = 147); and 3.6% are registered with a supplier diversity program (n = 147).

Figure 7

Responding organizations by location



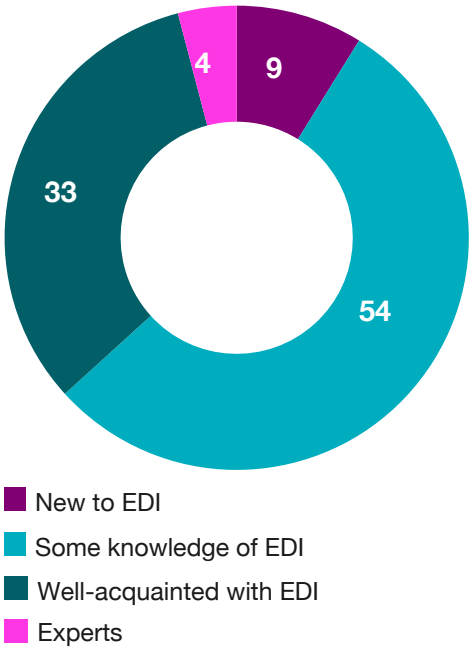
Source: Diversity Institute. Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT) App, non-profit responses, November 2023 to May 2026 (n = 142). "My organization is not located in Canada" was re-coded, as several respondents indicated their organization was in a Canadian province.

Geographically, 42.3% are in Ontario and 27.5% in Quebec, while 10.6% and 8.5% are in Manitoba and British Columbia, respectively; the remaining Canadian respondents are distributed across Alberta, Saskatchewan, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, and the Yukon (Figure 7).

Of the 147 non-profits that answered the items, 54.4% reported having some knowledge of EDI, 32.7% reported being well-acquainted with the topic, 8.8% reported being new to it, and 4.1% considered their organization expert. Taken together, 87.1% report at least working familiarity with EDI (Figure 8).

Figure 8

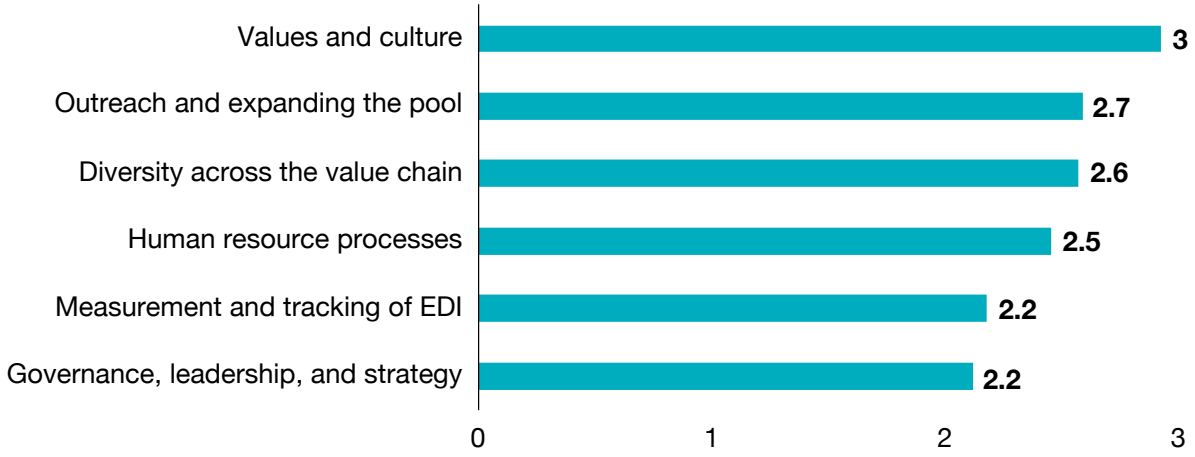
Self-assessed organizational knowledge of EDI (%)



Source: Diversity Institute. Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT) App, non-profit responses, November 2023 to May 2026 (n = 147).

Figure 9

Mean maturity score by DAT dimension (0–5)



Source: Diversity Institute. Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT) App, non-profit responses, November 2023 to May 2026 (n = 148).

Overall, responding non-profits had substantial familiarity with EDI and embedding these processes into HR policies, HR staff, as well as exposure to EDI audits or training. What follows is therefore not a portrait of organizations that have not thought about equity. It is a portrait of organizations that have, and that are nonetheless unable to convert that into governance and measurement practice. The size and revenue profile above is the most plausible explanation, and it is the premise on which the discussion section rests.

EDI maturity across the six dimensions

This section examines the composite maturity score for each dimension; whether the differences among them are systematic; how the dimensions relate to one another; and how non-profit organizations compare with the broader DAT user base.

Overall maturity

Values and culture are the strongest area, with an average score of 2.99 out of 5; however, it also has the widest spread of responses, indicating varied perceptions across organizations. Outreach and expanding the pool comes next at 2.65 (standard deviation (SD) = 1.18), followed closely by diversity across the value chain at 2.63 (SD = 1.10) and human resources at 2.51 (SD = 0.97). Measurement and tracking of EDI sits at 2.23, with the highest variability of all six dimensions (SD = 1.14), suggesting inconsistent practices or perceptions among respondents. Governance, leadership, and strategy is the weakest area at 2.17, but notably also the most consistent (SD = 0.63) (Figure 9).

In practice, this means the typical organization in this research has practices, but they are often not well-documented. On average, not one of the six areas reaches the level where practice is written down and applied routinely.



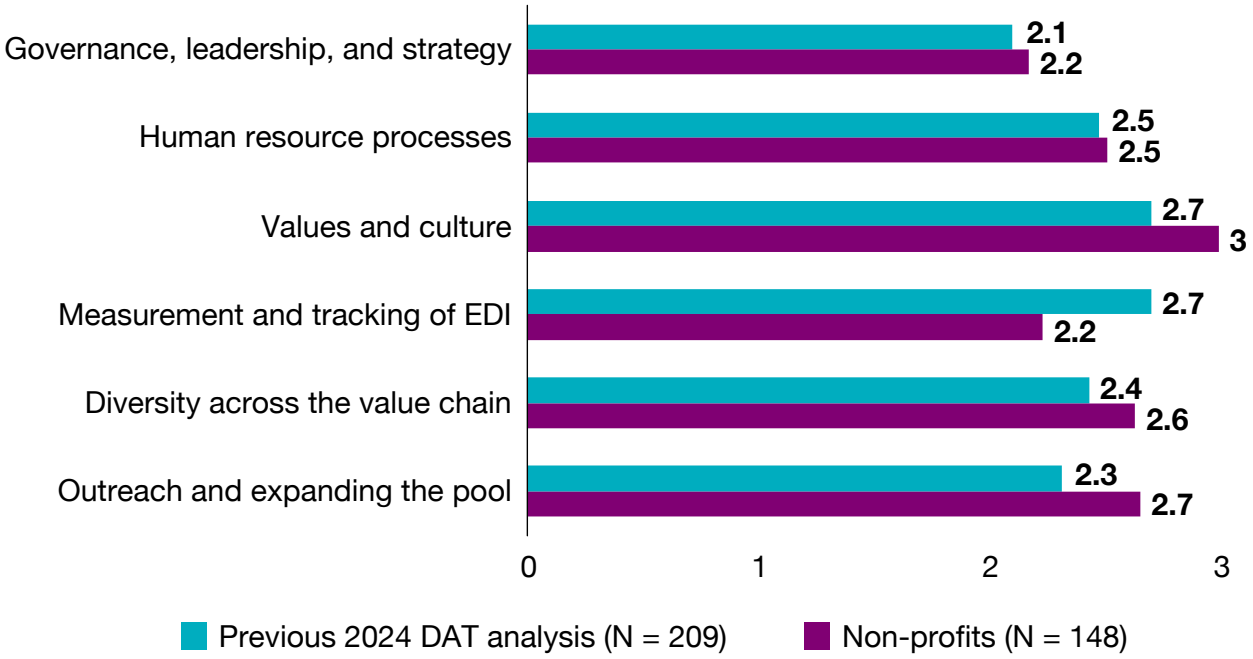
Variation in scores is equally as important for understanding the current state of EDI. In five of the six areas, the group includes organizations that scored 0 and organizations that scored 5, with a sector split between those who have built the capacity and those who have not begun. Governance, Leadership, and Strategy is the exception. No organization scored above 4, and none scored 0. Weak governance practice is therefore not confined to organizations that are struggling generally. It is close to universal in this group, and even the strongest performers have not gone all the way.

A ranking like this raises an important question: does it reflect something true about the sector, or does it just reflect which organizations responded? A Friedman test confirmed that maturity scores differ significantly across the six dimensions ($\chi^2(5) = 95.17$, $p < .001$). However, the effect size was modest (Kendall's $W = 0.13$), indicating that while the overall ranking is a real and reliable pattern in this sample, organizations vary considerably around it.

Non-profits were strongest where EDI was reflected in organizational culture, policy, and community-facing work, and weakest where it depended on formal governance structures and systems for collecting and using data. This pattern points less to a lack of commitment than to a lack of organizational capacity: these are organizations constrained by resources, not conviction.

Figure 10

Comparison of DAT maturity scores



Note: Previous DAT analysis was published in a 2024 report of 209 small, medium, and large organizations that used the DAT App between November 2023 and August 2024. About three-quarters (76.6%) were SMEs with fewer than 500 employees. The non-profit DAT examines 148 responses between November 2023 and May 2026.

Non-profit organizations against the broader DAT user base

Compared with the 209 organizations covered in the DAT report on small, medium, and large businesses, non-profit organizations do as well as or better on Values and Culture, Diversity across the Value Chain, and Outreach and Expanding the Pool.[58] They fall behind on Measurement and Tracking of EDI. In short, the sector's community-facing and culture-based work is a real strength compared to other kinds of organizations. The clearest area for improvement is in the internal systems used to measure progress, track outcomes, and support accountability (Figure 10).

A look at each dimension

In this section, we examine the six dimensions and highlight where organizations excel and where they fall short.

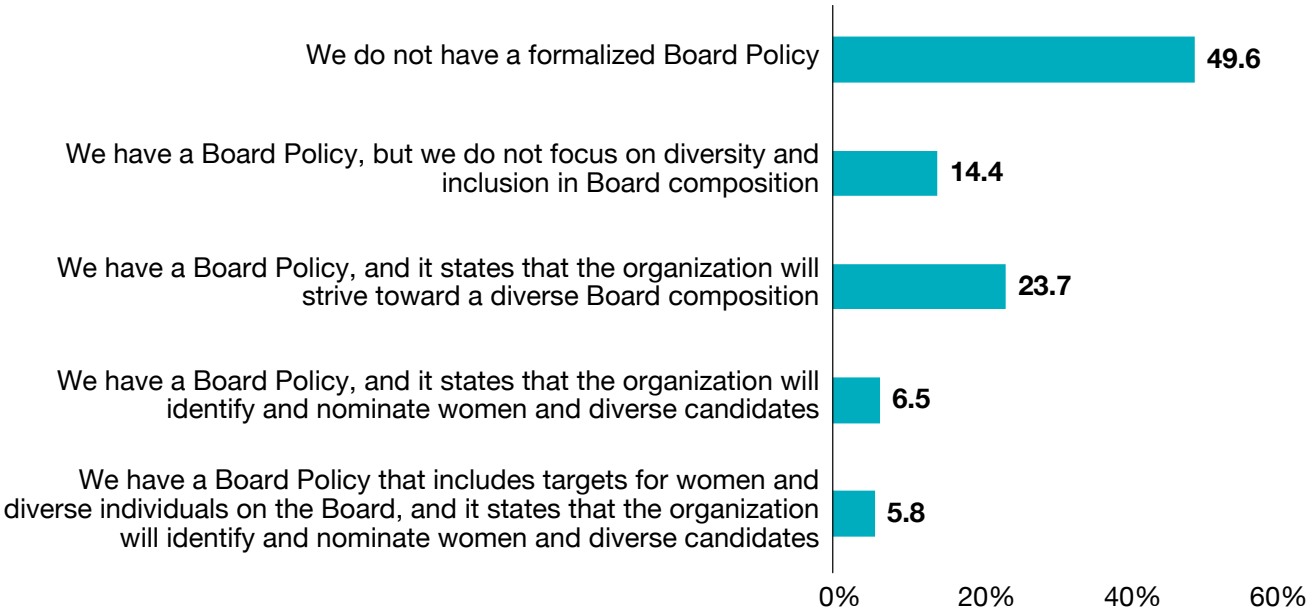
Governance, leadership and strategy

When leadership and decision-making teams reflect diverse representation, non-profits can benefit from a broad range of voices and perspectives. Tools like board policies can help support this effort by helping non-profits identify gaps and recruit a more diverse board of directors.

Based on the results, Governance, Leadership, and Strategy is the weakest dimension, with an average score of 2.17.

Figure 11

Board policy and targets for diverse representation



Source: Diversity Institute. Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT) App, non-profit responses, November 2023 to May 2026 (n = 139).

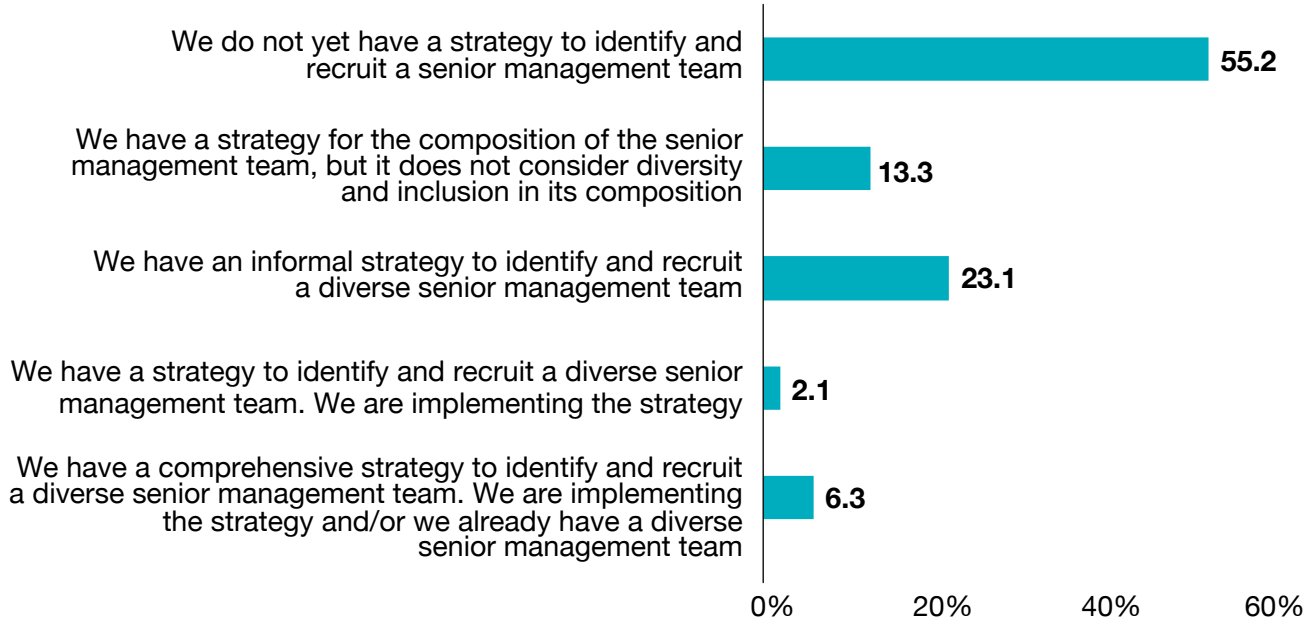
The questions in this dimension cover board policies for nominating diverse candidates; the distinction between resourced EDI leadership and informal champions; and how far EDI is embedded in organizational goals and mission statements.

Almost one-half (49.6%) of responding non-profits with established boards have no formal board policy, suggesting additional efforts are needed (Figure 11). Only 5.8% had a board policy that sets targets for women and diverse candidates.

However, board renewal does well, as 78.2% (n = 133) of responding non-profits with boards have term limits for directors, which is the mechanism that makes changing a board's composition possible.

Figure 12

Identifying and recruiting a diverse senior management team

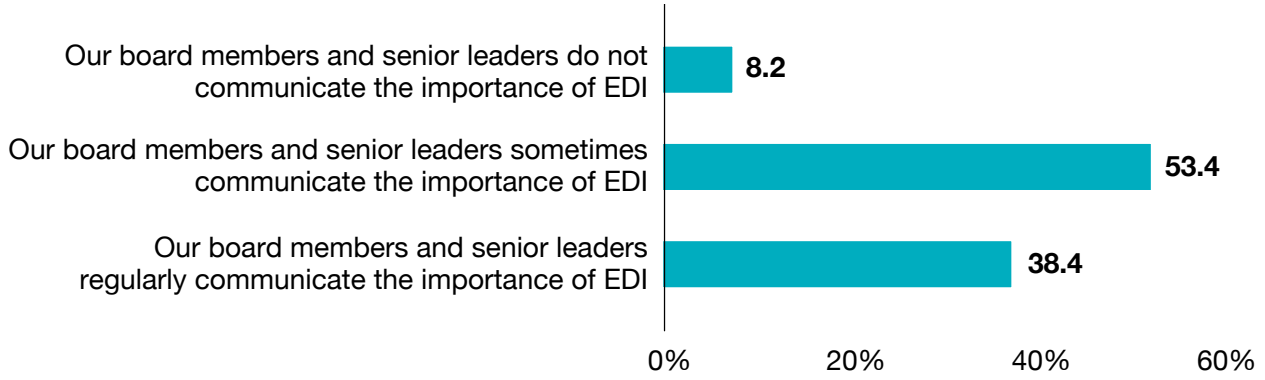


Source: Diversity Institute. Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT) App, non-profit responses, November 2023 to May 2026 (n = 143).

Non-profits exhibited similar gaps for recruiting diverse senior management teams. Among those with senior management teams, just over one-half (55.2%) of non-profits had no strategy or skills matrix for identifying and recruiting a diverse leadership team. The other 44.8% had informal or formal strategies in place. However, only 6.3% had a concrete strategy and a diverse senior management team (Figure 12). This suggests that where strategic recruitment exists, diversity considerations are an afterthought rather than built into recruitment and nomination processes.

Figure 13

Leadership communicating the importance of quity, diversity and inclusion



Source: Diversity Institute. Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT) App, non-profit responses, November 2023 to May 2026 (n = 146).

Non-profit leaders also demonstrate visible commitment to EDI. Among those with senior management or board members, 91.8% reported that their board members and senior leaders talk about the importance of EDI at least sometimes, including 38.4% who say this occurs regularly. Only 8.2% reported no such communication. While most communicate the importance of EDI, 53.4% do so sometimes, suggesting room for improvements to develop consistent messaging (Figure 13).

In terms of goal setting, just over one-half (58.1%) of non-profits have goals, with some or most already connected to EDI, including 12.2% with several EDI goals tied to an action plan or accountability measures. This suggests that while EDI integration is visible in strategic goal setting, formal accountability mechanisms still lag behind (Figure 14).

Figure 14

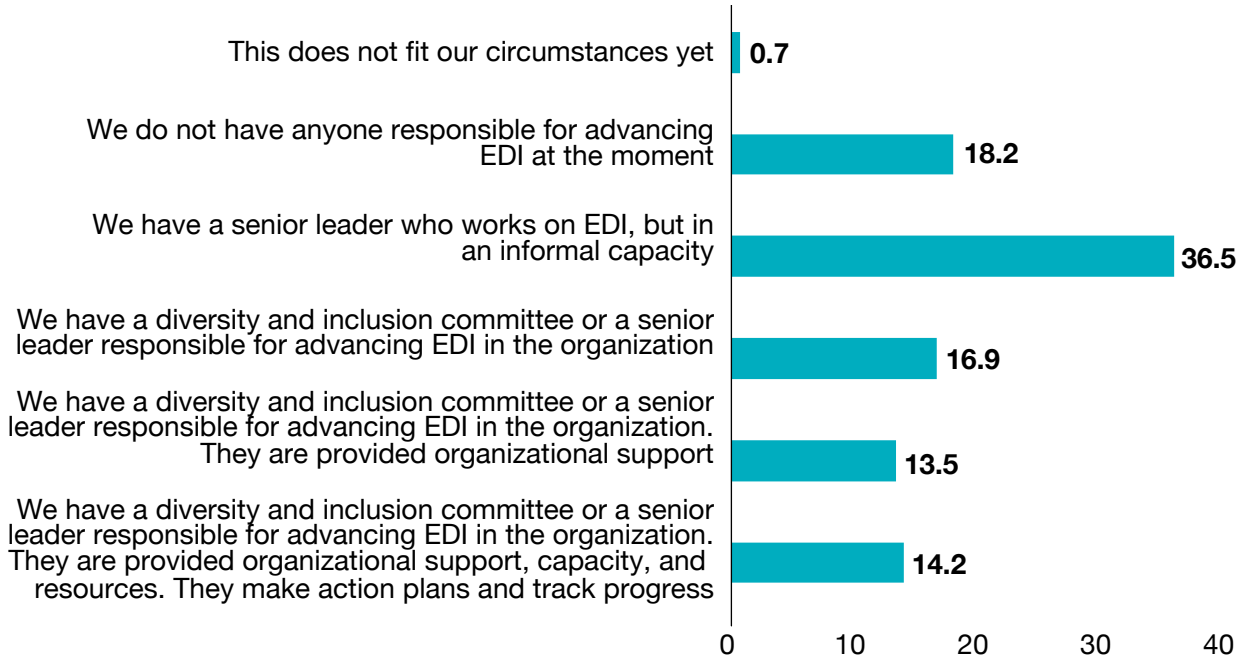
Equity, diversity and inclusion and organizational goals



Source: Diversity Institute. Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT) App, non-profit responses, November 2023 to May 2026 (n = 148).

Figure 15

Equity, diversity and inclusion committees



Source: Diversity Institute. Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT) App, non-profit responses, November 2023 to May 2026 (n = 148).

Responsibility for EDI shows the same pattern. Roughly one-third of organizations (36.5%) have a senior leader working on EDI informally, on top of their existing job. Nearly one in five (18.2%) have nobody responsible at all, and fewer than 30% have a committee or a leader with a formal mandate (Figure 15). This suggests that, while EDI responsibility exists, it is often informal or absorbed into an existing role rather than a distinct function.

Together, this shows that the sector has written EDI into its statements of purpose. However, it has not written EDI into the documents that govern how boards are filled or senior leaders are recruited, which demonstrates a representation gap and may explain why boards lag behind management teams on diversity.

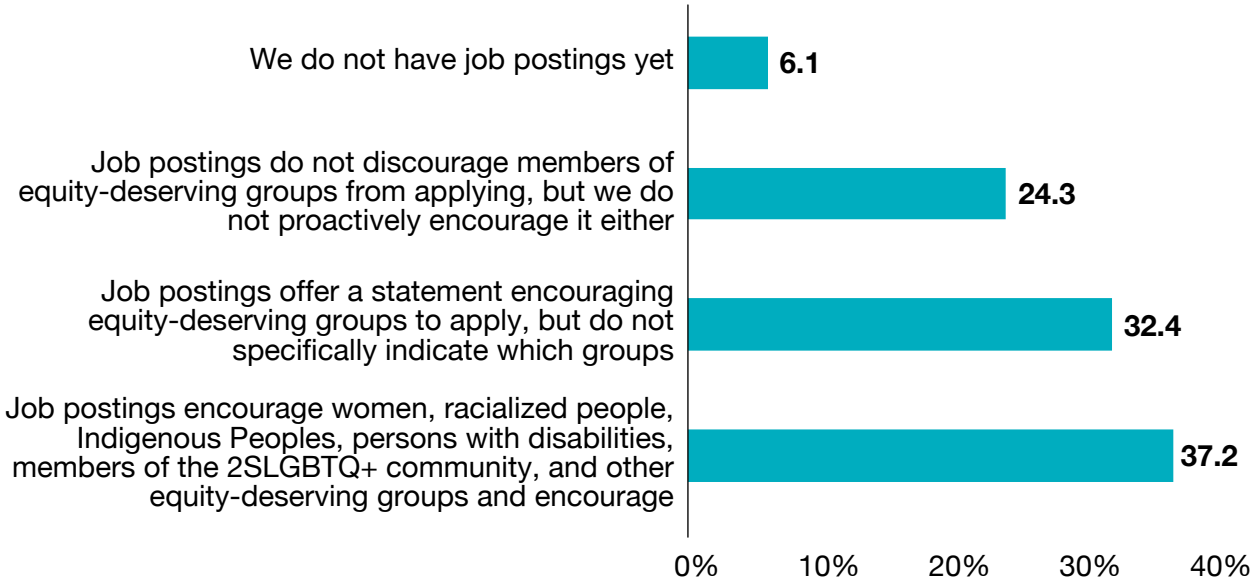
Human resources processes

Inclusive human resource processes help non-profits create and support a diverse workplace. This includes embedding EDI across the employment lifecycle, from job design to recruitment to professional development opportunities.

With 17 questions, the Human Resource Processes dimension ranks fourth (average score of 2.51). The questions focus on inclusive language and accommodation statements in job postings, pay transparency, diversity in selection committees, and the gap between recruitment practices, which are comparatively well-developed, and career development, mentorship, and progression, which are not.

Figure 16

Inclusive job postings



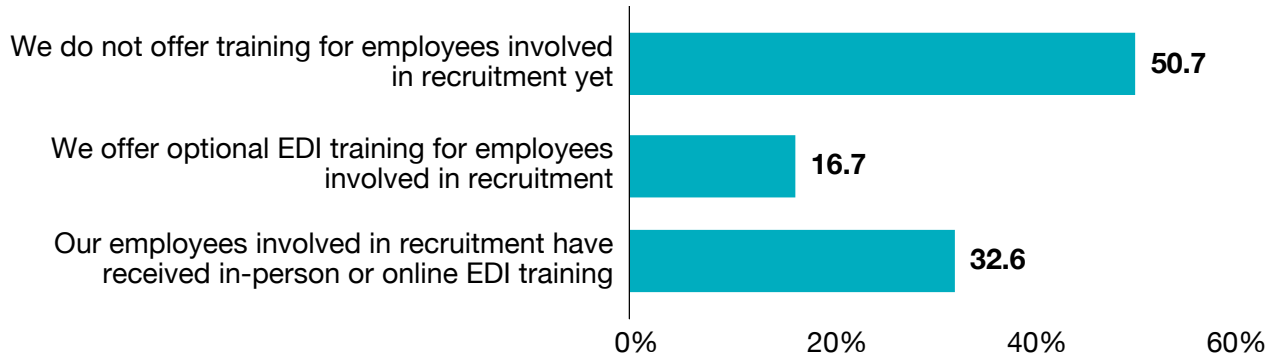
Source: Diversity Institute. Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT) App, non-profit responses, November 2023 to May 2026 (n = 148).

Hiring practices are reasonably well-developed. Among all 148 non-profits, 69.6% have job postings that at minimum include a statement encouraging people from equity-deserving groups to apply, and 37.2% name specific groups (Figure 16).

Among those with job postings (n = 137), just over one-half (51.1%) review postings to remove redundant requirements, those that go beyond what the job actually needs, and 70% check their postings for inclusive language at least sometimes. While strong practices exist, discrepancies persist in statements of reasonable accommodations. Roughly 51.1% of the 137 non-profits do not include a statement about accommodation in their job postings.

Figure 17

Equity, diversity and inclusion training for recruitment



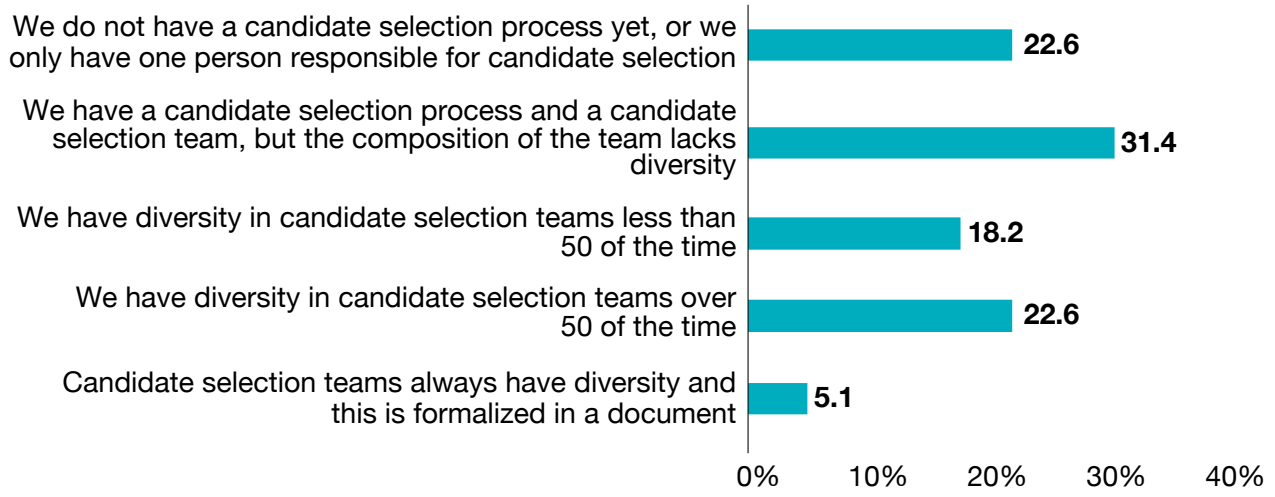
Source: Diversity Institute. Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT) App, non-profit responses, November 2023 to May 2026 (n = 138).

Inclusive HR practices are the strongest in the parts of hiring that involve wording, and weakest in the parts that involve people and process. For example, among non-profits recruiting candidates, one-half (50.7%) offered no EDI training to the people who make hiring decisions, and 16.7% offered optional training (Figure 17).

Diversity in hiring panels, or among those responsible for hiring, was also inconsistent. Among those recruiting and selecting candidates, 31.4% have a candidate selection process and team that lacks diversity. Only 22.6% reported having a diverse selection team more than one-half the time, and just 5.1% have this formalized in a policy (Figure 18).

Figure 18

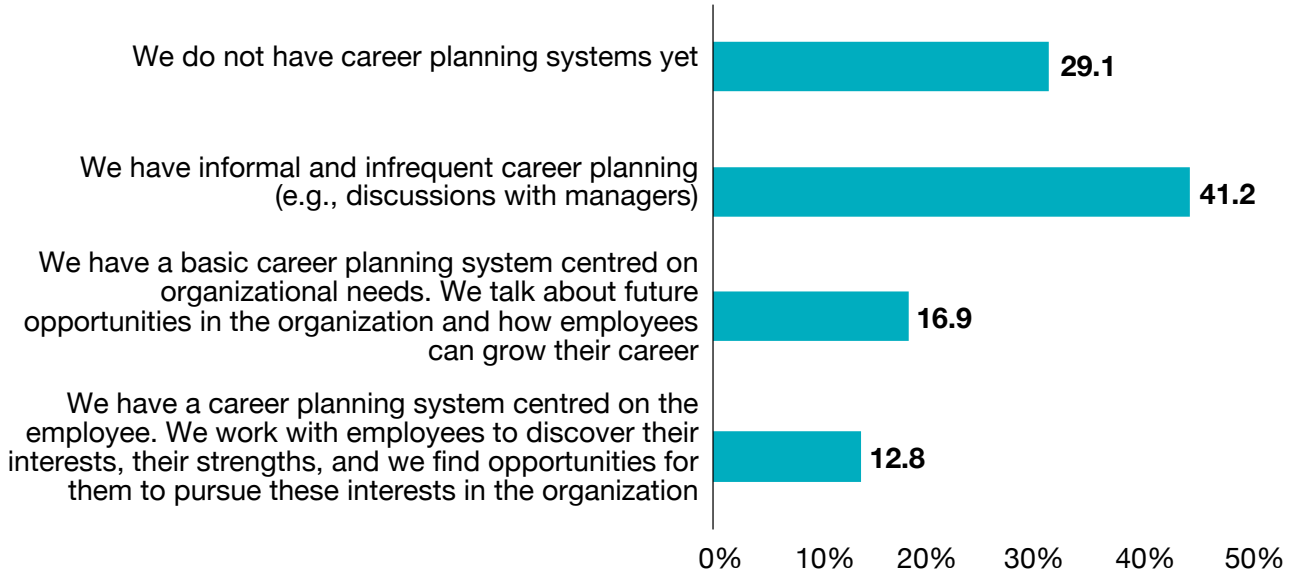
Diverse hiring panels



Source: Diversity Institute. Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT) App, non-profit responses, November 2023 to May 2026 (n = 137).

Figure 19

Career planning systems

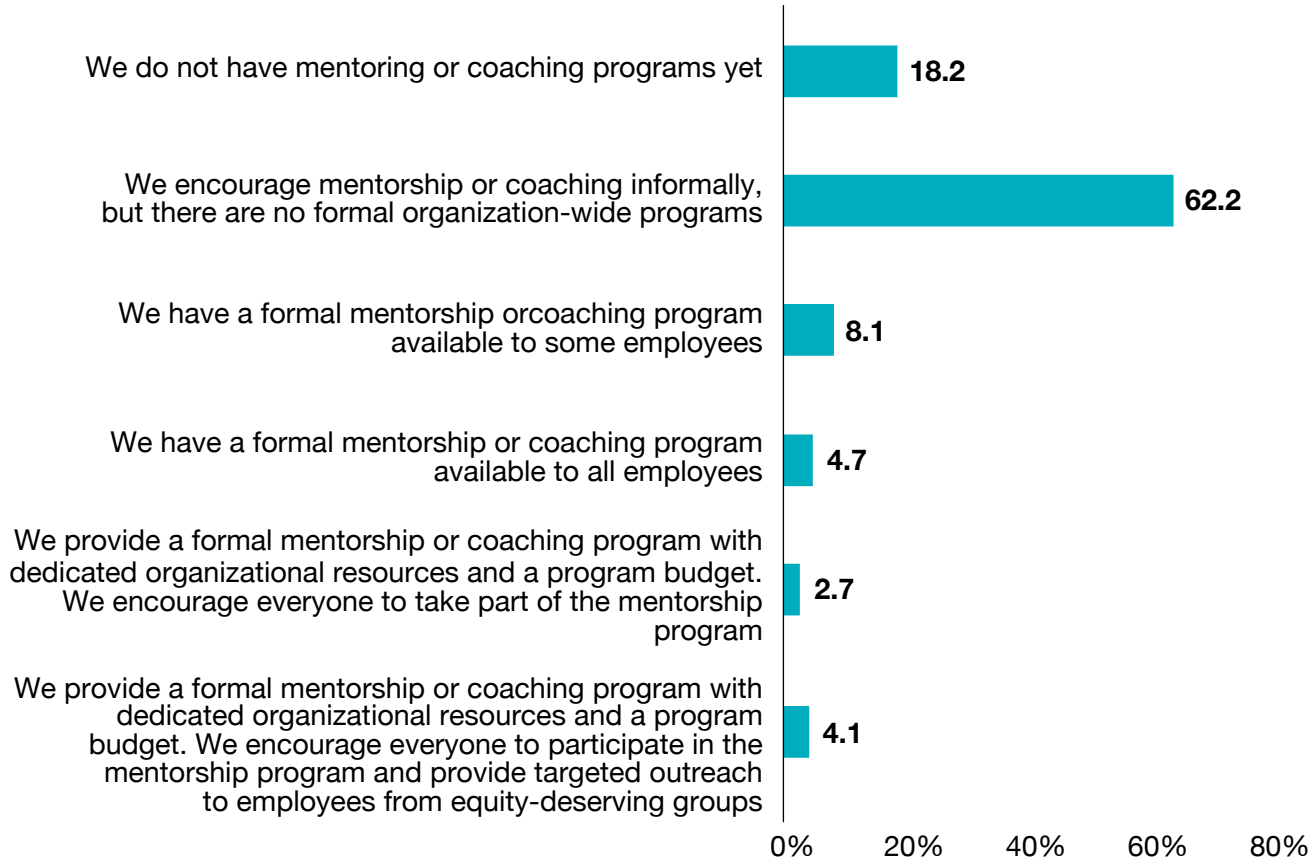


Source: Diversity Institute. Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT) App, non-profit responses, November 2023 to May 2026 (n = 148).

Onboarding and retention, however, have gaps in process, suggesting a need for more formal mechanisms to support employees at work. Only 12.8% of organizations have career planning built around the individual employee. Nearly one-third (29.1%) have no career planning at all, and 41.2% describe what they do as informal and occasional (Figure 19).

Figure 20

Mentorship and coaching opportunities

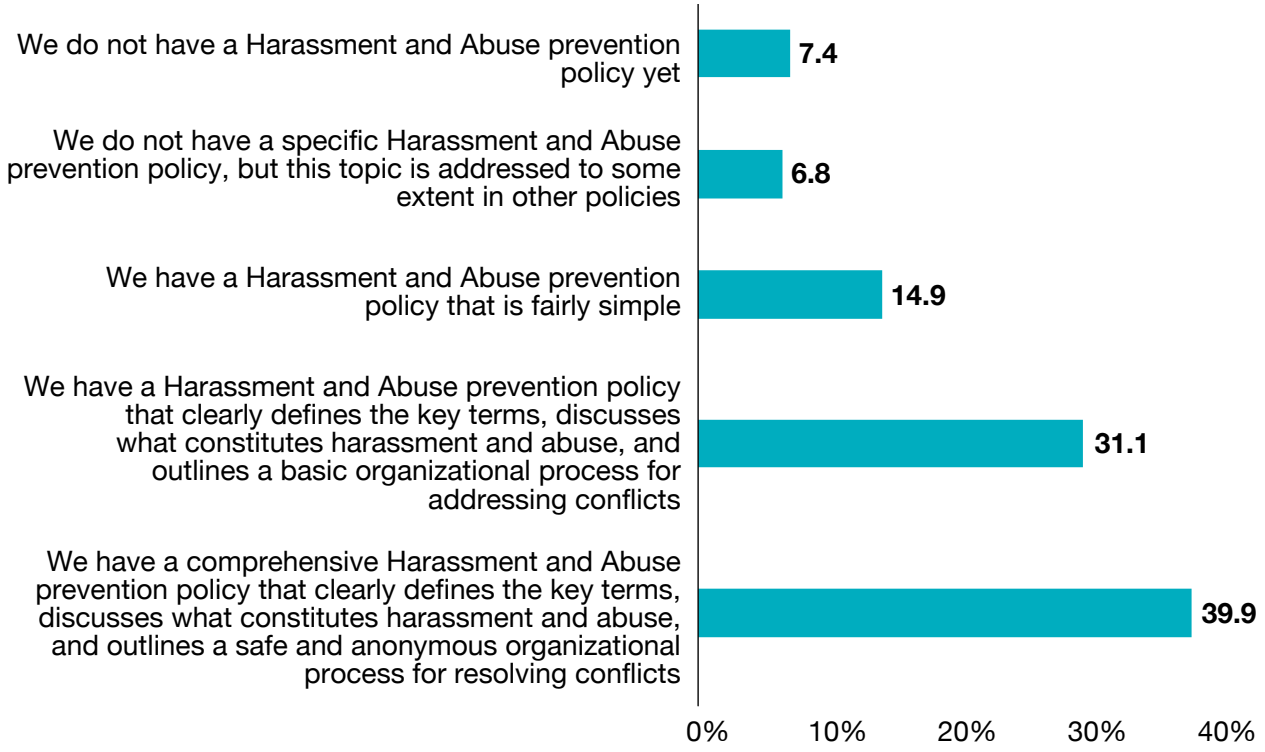


Source: Diversity Institute. Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT) App, non-profit responses, November 2023 to May 2026 (n = 148).

Mentorship follows the same pattern as career planning systems: 62.2% encourage informal mentoring with no program behind it, and only 4.1% have a formal program with a budget and deliberate outreach to employees from equity-deserving groups (Figure 20).

Figure 21

Harassment and abuse prevention policies



Source: Diversity Institute. Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT) App, non-profit responses, November 2023 to May 2026 (n = 148).

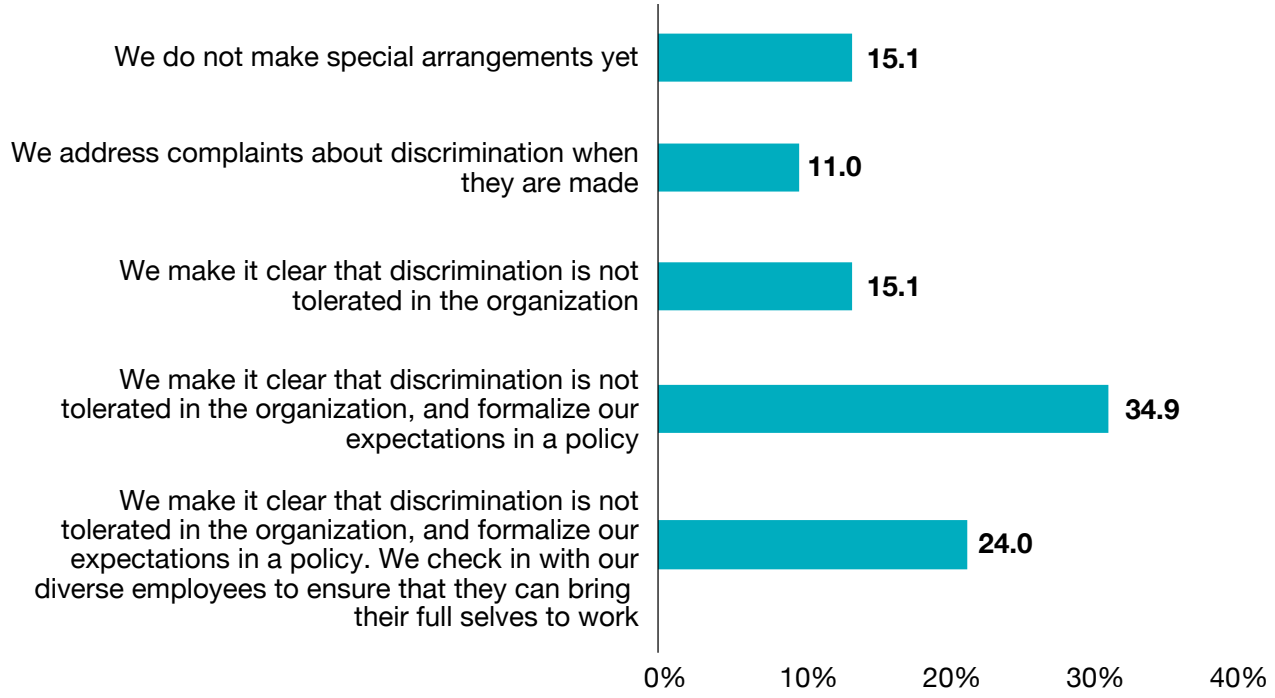
Values and culture

Inclusive organizational cultures value diversity and support environments where employees feel a sense of respect, belonging, and support. Non-profits can support this through several mechanisms, including flexible and family-friendly work environments, EDI policies, and employee resource groups.

The strength of the Values and Culture dimension is driven in part by policies. For example, among all 148 organizations, 71% have a harassment and abuse prevention policy that at minimum spells out what behaviour it covers, and 39.9% describe that policy as comprehensive (Figure 21). Other policy documents, such as codes of conduct and workplace safety policies, show a similar pattern, with most organizations having these policies in some form.

Figure 22

Safe spaces

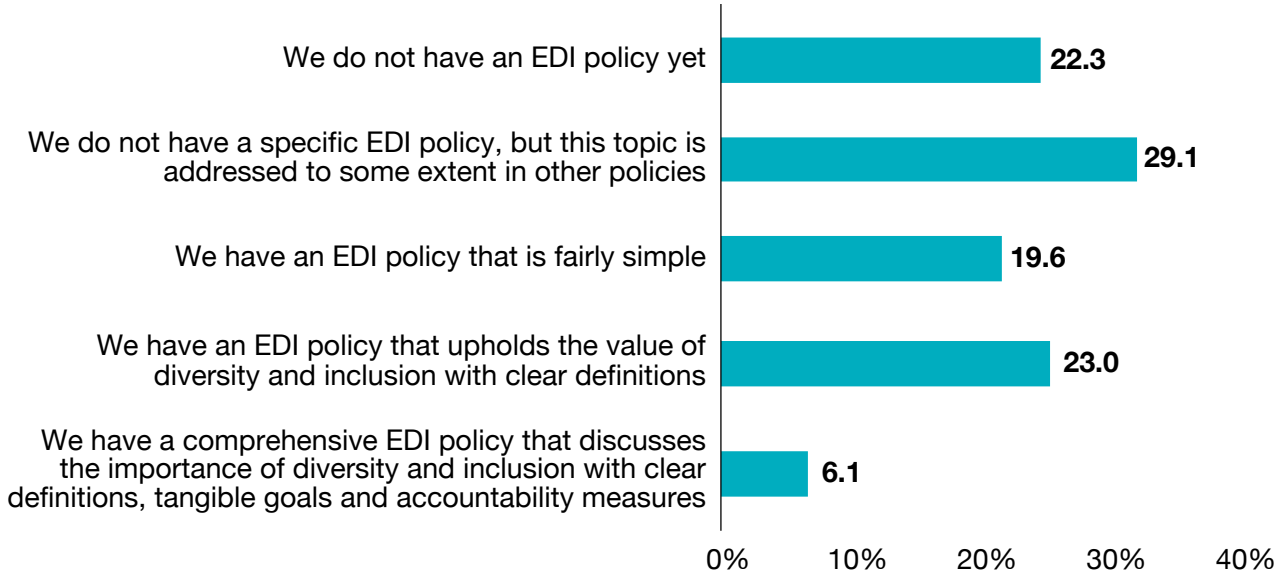


Source: Diversity Institute. Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT) App, non-profit responses, November 2023 to May 2026 (n = 146).

Among non-profits who had employees, nearly three-quarters (73.9%) do more than respond to complaints; they make clear in advance that discrimination will not be tolerated. Of these, 34.9% have formalized their expectations in a written policy, and 24% go further by checking in with diverse employees (Figure 22). Only 11% address discrimination after receiving complaints, suggesting that proactive prevention is more common than reactive responses.

Figure 23

Equity, diversity and inclusion policies

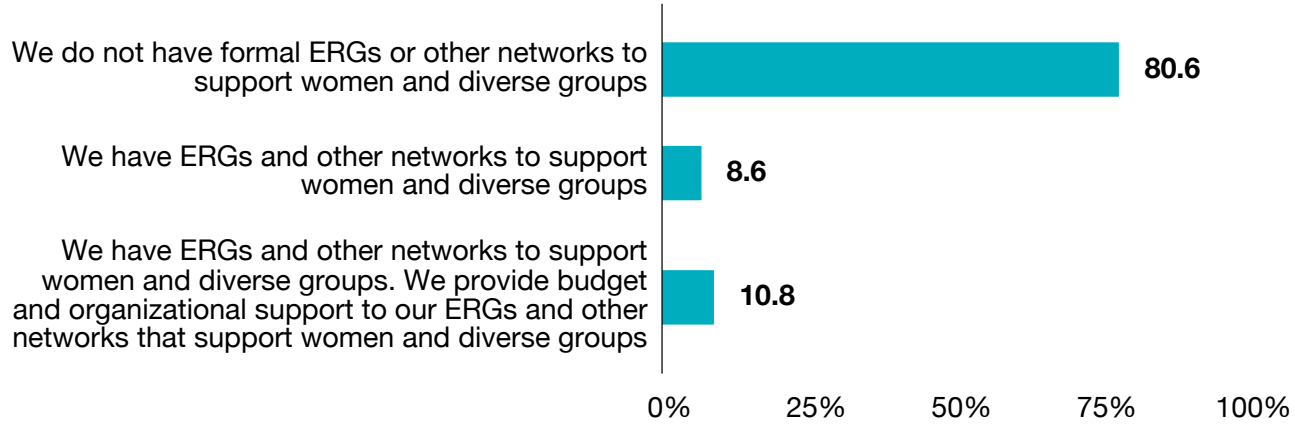


Source: Diversity Institute. Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT) App, non-profit responses, November 2023 to May 2026 (n = 148).

Policies built around EDI tell a different story. Only 29.1% of non-profits have an EDI policy that goes beyond a simple statement. Almost one-quarter (22.3%) have no EDI policy at all; and a further 29.1% say the subject is covered somewhere but not in a policy of its own (Figure 23). Accessibility policies are weaker: 41.2% of responding non-profits did not yet have one (n = 148).

Figure 24

Employee resource groups



Source: Diversity Institute. Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT) App, non-profit responses, November 2023 to May 2026 (n = 139).

One stark result concerns employee resource groups (ERGs), such as the networks that give staff from equity-deserving groups a place to connect and be heard. Among non-profits with employees, 80.6% have no formal resource groups (Figure 24). However, this may be explained by organizational size: almost one-half (42.4%) of non-profits being relatively small with one to 19 employees, which may make employee resource groups more difficult to establish.

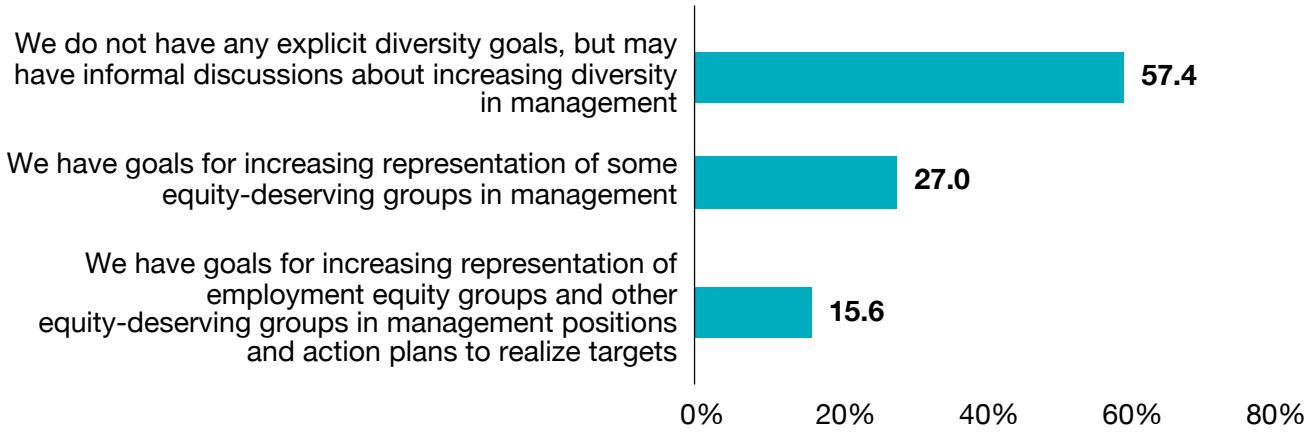
Measurement and tracking of equity, diversity and inclusion

Non-profits should establish clear targets and monitor results to help build a culture of accountability and transparency. By measuring outcomes of policies, programs, and initiatives, non-profits can ensure their EDI commitments move beyond intention toward practice.

This dimension shows gaps in the size of non-profits and organizations' intent to do EDI work. The strongest point is that fewer than one-half (43.2%, N = 148) of participating organizations run anonymous staff surveys. Additionally, 25.7% report that they do not have enough employees to keep a survey anonymous. Measurement, therefore, has to account for organizations where anonymity is simply not achievable.

Figure 25

Diversity goals for management

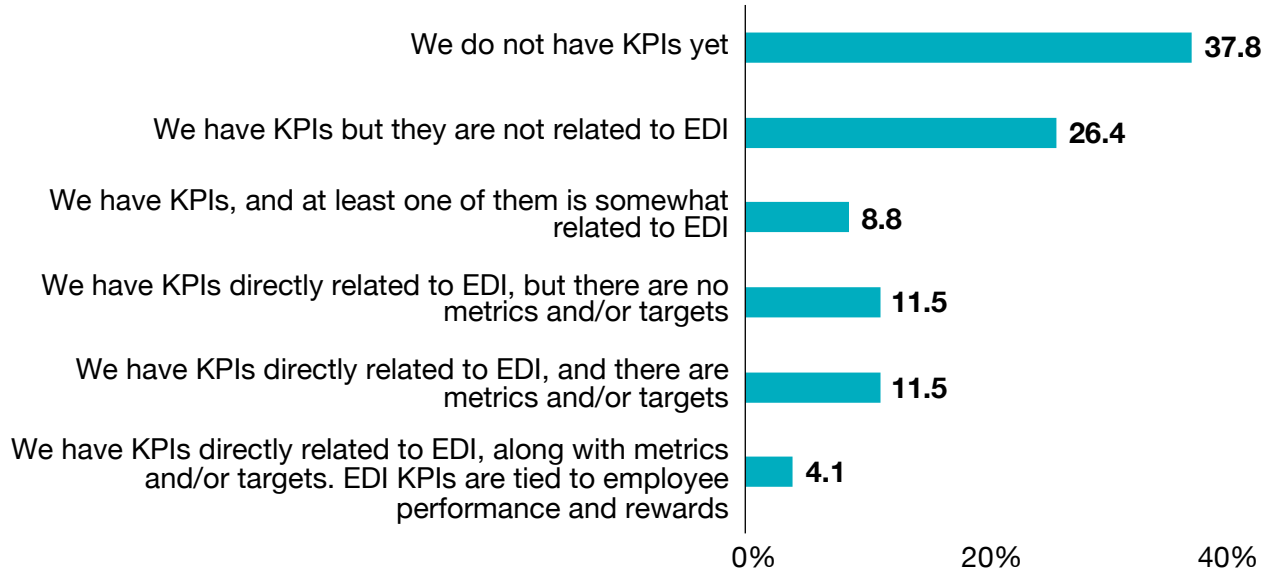


Source: Diversity Institute. Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT) App, non-profit responses, November 2023 to May 2026 (n = 122).

Explicit diversity goals for management remain uncommon for responding non-profits. Among non-profits with employees (n = 122), almost three-fifths (57.4%) have no stated goals for representation in management. Only 27% have set goals to increase representation of some equity-deserving groups, and 15.6% pair these goals with action plans to achieve them, suggesting that where diversity ambitions for management exist, they are more often stated informally than backed with a concrete plan (Figure 25).

Figure 26

Key performance indicators

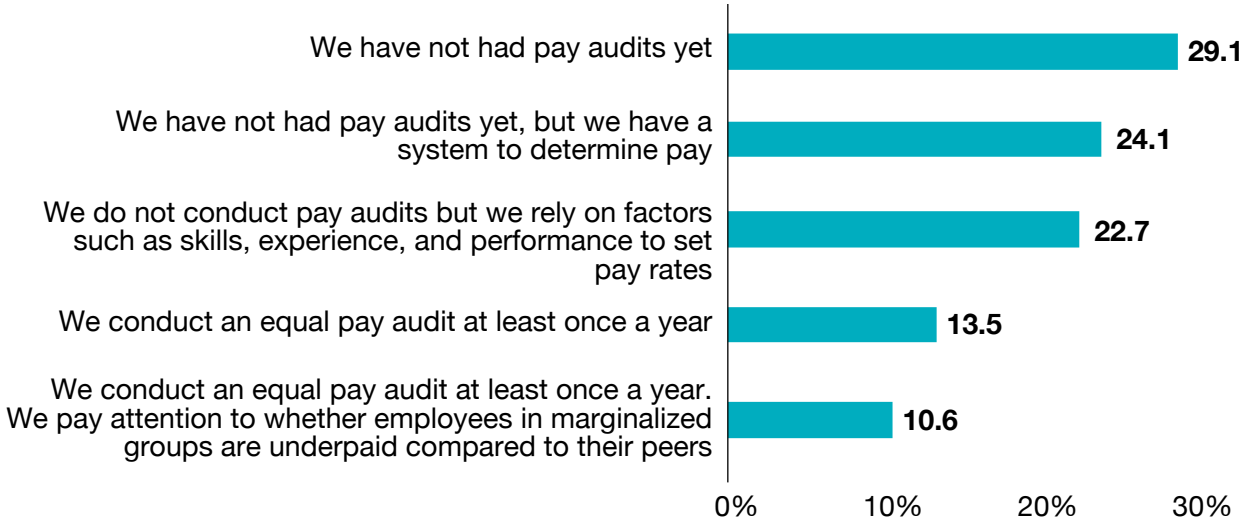


Source: Diversity Institute. Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT) App, non-profit responses, November 2023 to May 2026 (n = 148).

Key performance indicators tied to EDI are also uncommon. Nearly two-thirds of non-profits have no EDI-related performance measures, 37.8% have no performance measures at all, and a further 26.4% have measures unrelated to EDI. Only 4.1% have EDI measures connected to how staff are evaluated and rewarded (Figure 26). This suggests that even among non-profits that formally measure performance, EDI is rarely built into these metrics.

Figure 27

Equal pay audits



Source: Diversity Institute. Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT) App, non-profit responses, November 2023 to May 2026 (n = 141).

Formal pay equity audits are also rare, with 75.9% not conducting pay audits. However, many rely on other mechanisms to set pay rates, including a defined pay system (24.1%) or factors like skills, experience, or performance (22.7%). Few organizations conduct annual equal pay audits to check for disparities affecting equity-deserving groups (10.6%) (Figure 27).

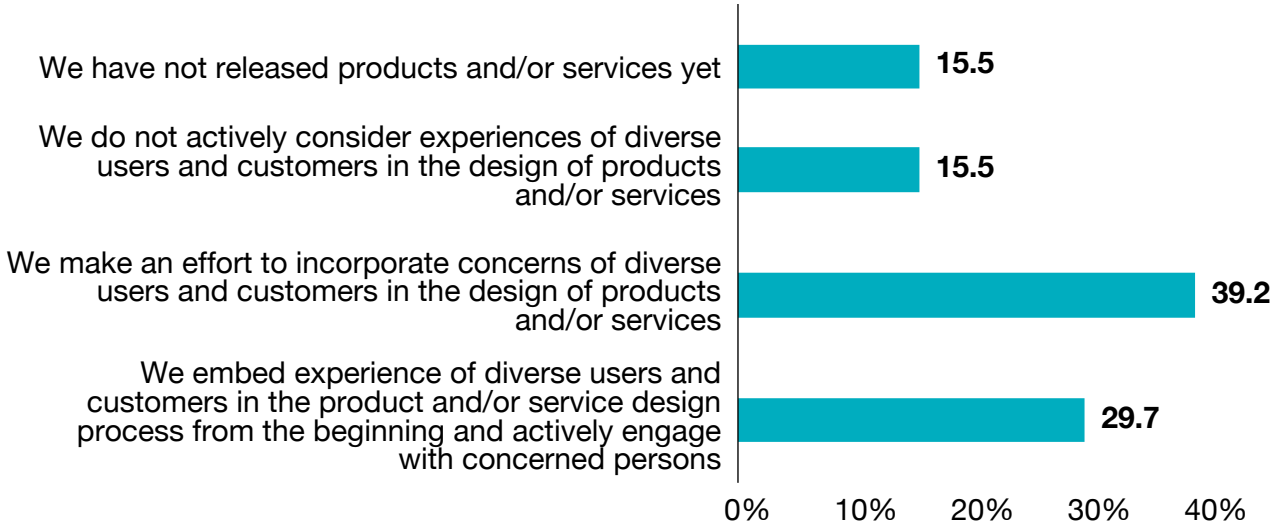
Diversity across the value chain

EDI can be embedded into every stage of a non-profit's value chain, from procurement to how services are designed, delivered, and communicated. This approach ensures that diverse audiences and users are considered throughout the process.

This area ranks third, with respondent feedback on accessibility and inclusive design in programs and services, EDI in marketing and communications, the avoidance of stereotypes, training for client-facing staff, and diversity in purchasing.

Figure 28

Considerations for diverse users in the design of products and services

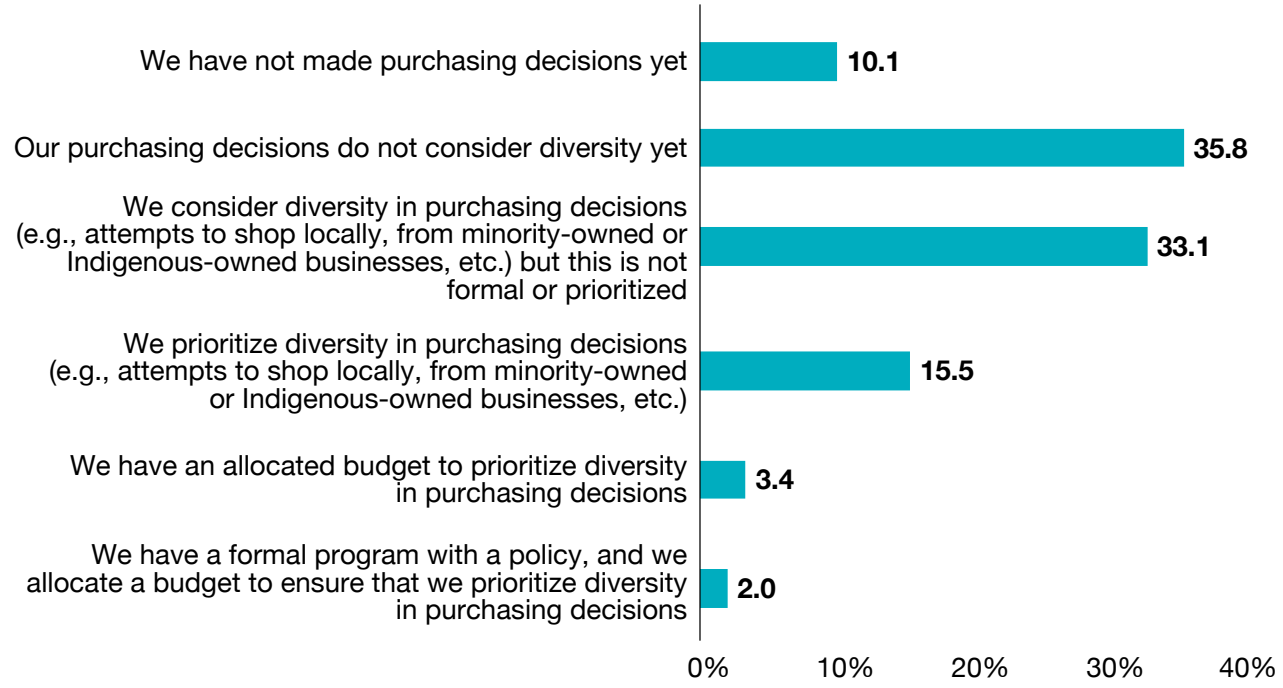


Source: Diversity Institute. Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT) App, non-profit responses, November 2023 to May 2026 (n = 148).

Program and service design is where organizations excel: 68.9% consider or build in the experiences of diverse users when designing programs and services. Only 15.5% do not actively consider diverse users in the design process (Figure 28). This fits the sector's purpose. Organizations that exist to serve particular communities tend to design with those communities in mind.

Figure 29

Supplier diversity

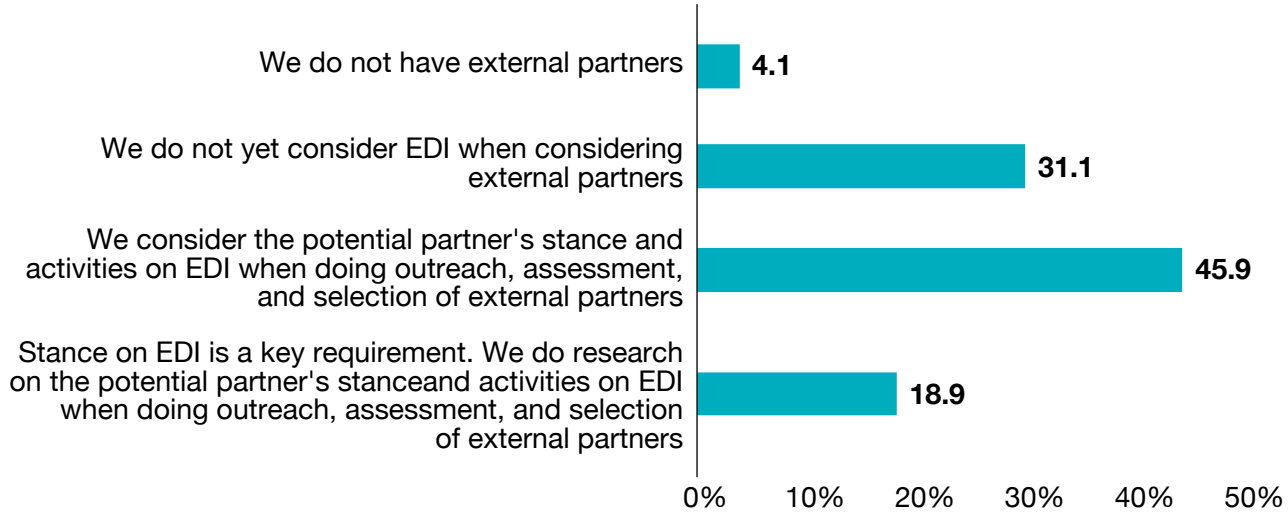


Source: Diversity Institute. Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT) App, non-profit responses, November 2023 to May 2026 (n = 148).

Purchasing, like supplier diversity, was not common among responding non-profits. Just over one-third (35.8%) say purchasing decisions do not yet take diversity into account, and only 5.4% have either a budget or a formal policy attached to it (Figure 29).

Figure 30

Equity, diversity and inclusion considerations when selecting external partners



Source: Diversity Institute. Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT) App, non-profit responses, November 2023 to May 2026 (n = 148).

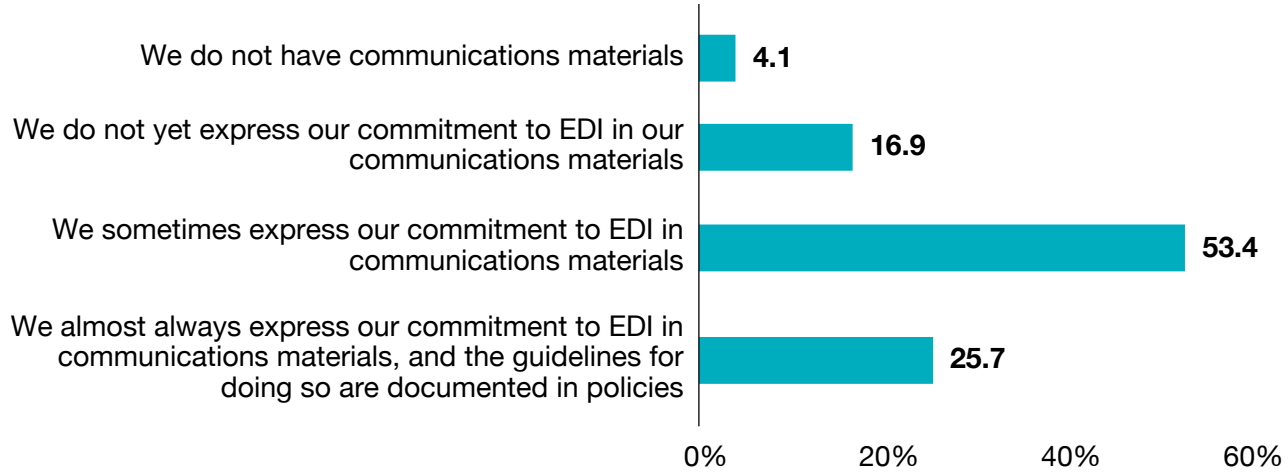
Outreach and expanding the pool

Non-profits can build relationships with community members and other stakeholders to advance EDI. This might include raising awareness of and connecting to diverse supplier councils, incorporating EDI into partner selection, pursuing joint projects to improve representation in the sector, and including EDI commitments in communications materials. This dimension ranked second, with an average score of 2.63.

Non-profits were actively involved in working with partners. Two-thirds (64.8%) consider a potential partner's EDI record when deciding who to work with, and 18.9% treat it as a firm requirement (Figure 30). Interestingly, nearly two-thirds (62.1%, n = 148) have either finished or are planning a joint project aimed at improving representation in the sector or supporting Indigenous Peoples and equity-deserving groups. For example, Jump Math works with Indigenous communities to support mathematics learning in rural and remote communities across Canada.[59]

Figure 31

Equity, diversity and inclusion commitments in marketing materials



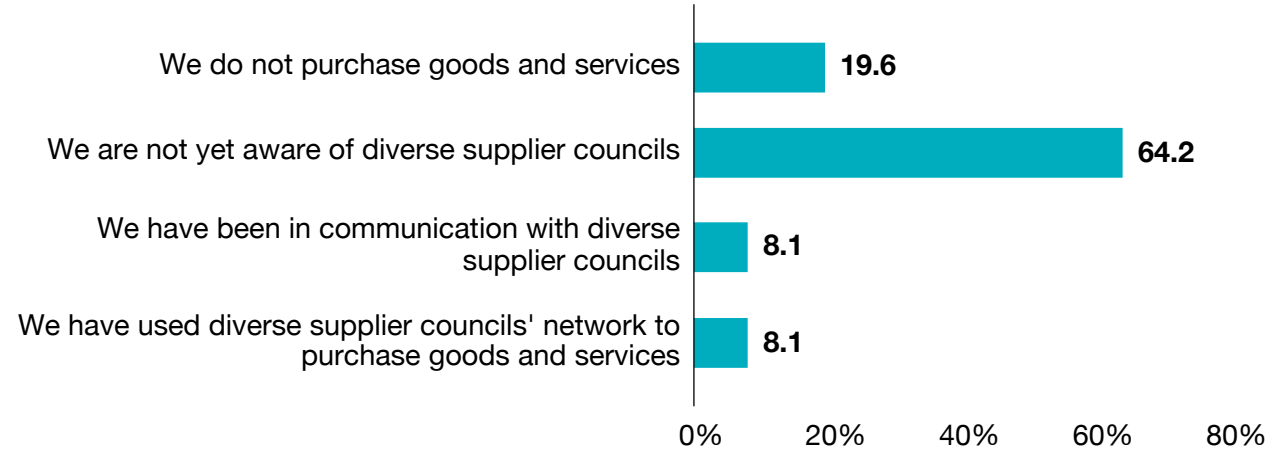
Source: Diversity Institute. Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT) App, non-profit responses, November 2023 to May 2026 (n = 148).

Most responding non-profits expressed some commitments to EDI in communication materials (79.1%), with 53.4% that did so sometimes and 25.7% that almost always did (Figure 31). This suggests that while public-facing EDI commitments are common, the documentation process is still underway.

Non-profits were also generally unaware of supplier diversity programs. Of all 148 non-profits, 64.2% say they are not yet aware that diverse supplier councils exist, and only 8.1% have ever used one to buy goods or services (Figure 32). This lines up with the 3.6% of organizations registered with a supplier diversity program. The barrier is that most organizations have never heard of these networks, which makes this one of the easiest gaps in the whole study to close.

Figure 32

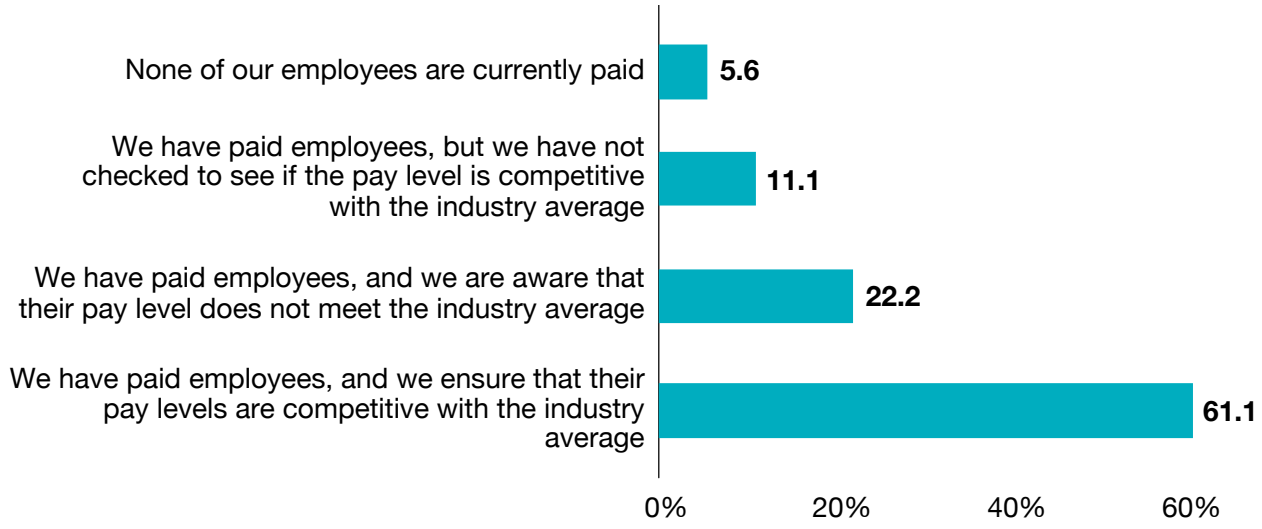
Supplier diversity programs



Source: Diversity Institute. Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT) App, non-profit responses, November 2023 to May 2026 (n = 148).

Figure 33

Pay levels against industry standards



Source: Diversity Institute. Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT) App, non-profit responses, October 2025 to May 2026 (n = 18).

Accountability and volunteer engagement

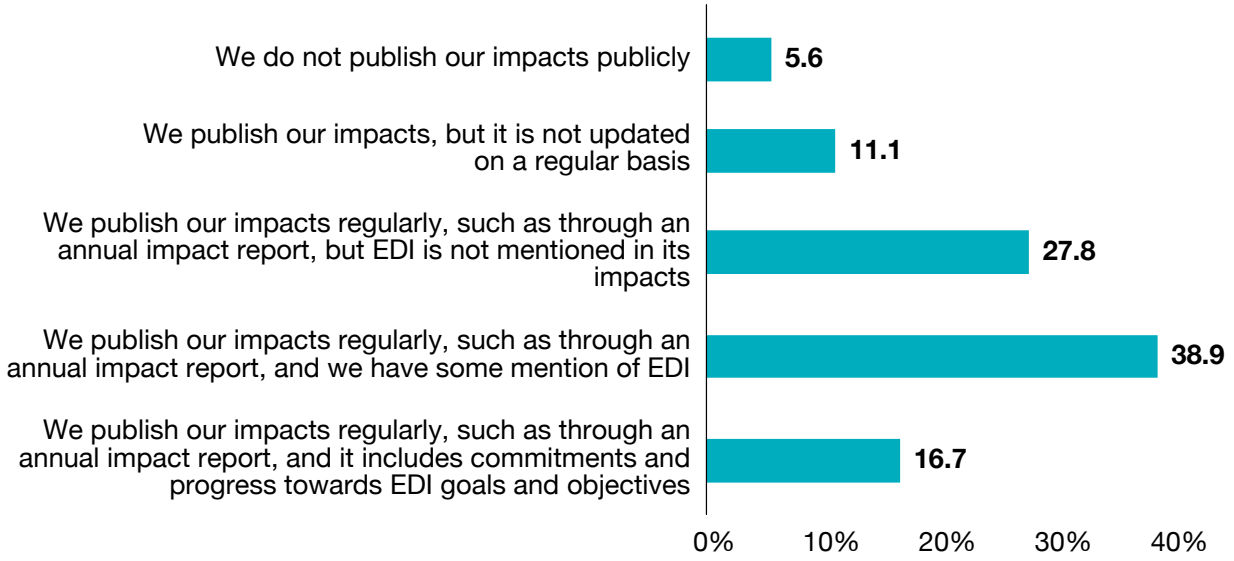
Accountability and transparency

This section reports on the two sets of questions written for non-profit organizations. They were answered by a smaller group of respondents and provide an opportunity to explore this dimension further. Public impact reporting and whether it includes EDI commitments, and regular benchmarking of pay against sector averages, are examined in this section. This section also examines the process of developing progress reports to funders; the collection of demographic data on beneficiaries and grantees; representation at public events; disclosure of how donated funds are used; EDI commitments in proposals; and mechanisms for beneficiary feedback.

Accountability practice is strongest where a system designed to track accountability is in place. Of the 18 responding non-profits, 94.4% check their pay levels against industry averages to some degree, with 61.1% doing so systematically to ensure alignment with industry standards (Figure 33).

Figure 34

Impact reports



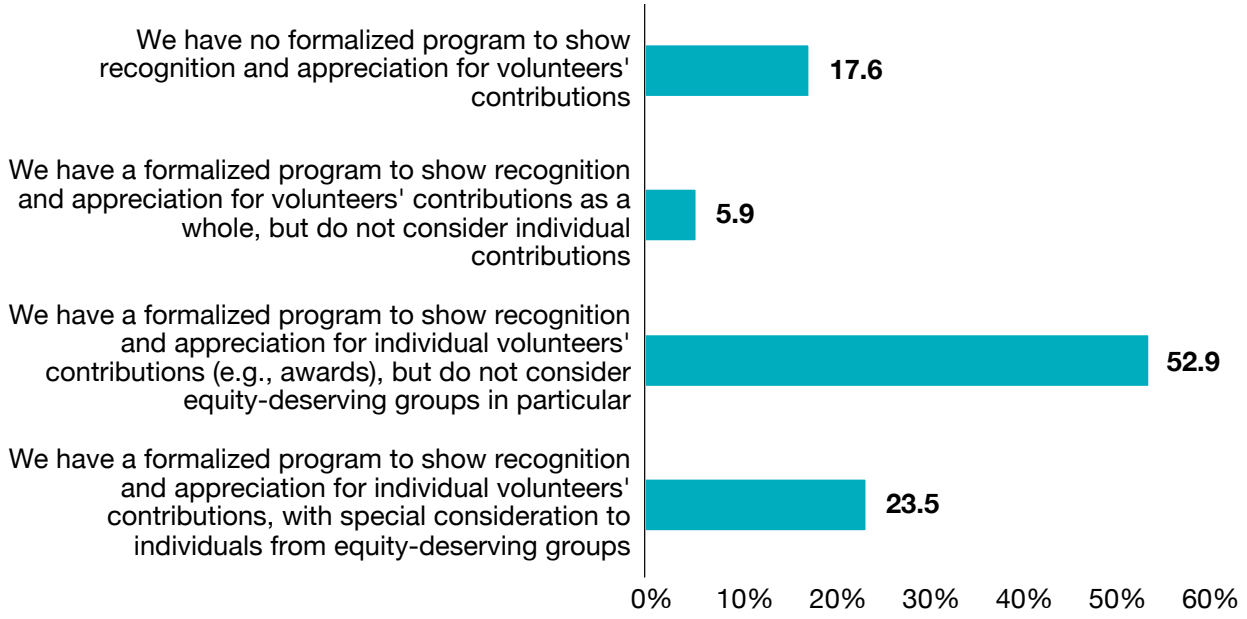
Source: Diversity Institute. Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT) App, non-profit responses, October 2025 to May 2026 (n = 18).

All 18 keep stakeholders and funders informed on EDI progress, with 55.6% doing so substantively, regularly, and directly through email and newsletter. However, the weakest items concern donors. Of the 18 organizations, one-half (50%) either do not report how donated funds are used, or report on this minimally. Public impact reporting is also mixed, with 55.6% (n = 18) providing information on EDI commitments and progress in a meaningful way in their publications (Figure 34).

Results also point to uneven but meaningful progress on accountability to the communities' non-profits serve. Of the 18 organizations, just over one-half (55.5%) collect demographic information about the people they serve and about grantees. Nearly four in five (77.8%, n = 18) also have one mechanism in place for beneficiaries to give feedback.

Figure 35

Recognition of volunteers



Source: Diversity Institute. Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT) App, non-profit responses, October 2025 to May 2026 (n = 17).

Volunteer engagement

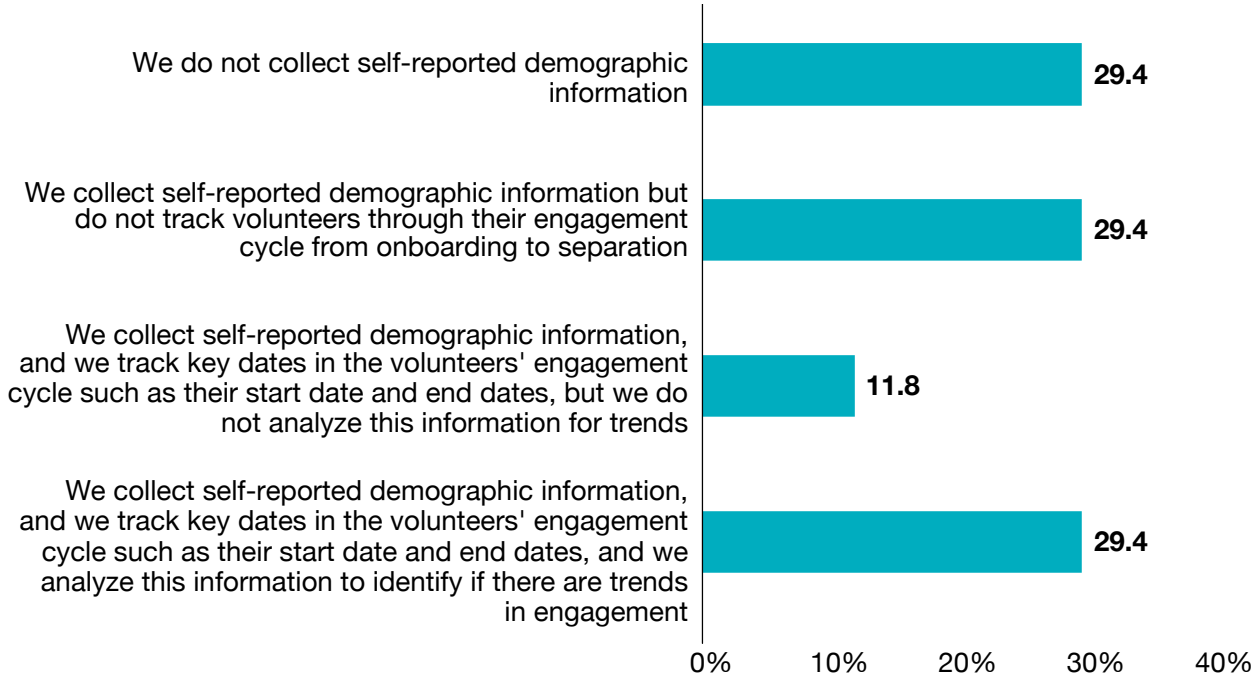
This section provides information on the channels used to recruit a diverse pool of volunteers; screening and interview processes; volunteer agreements and the boundaries they set between volunteer and staff roles; mandatory training, including EDI training; non-monetary recognition; progression from volunteering into paid employment; engagement programming; and demographic tracking across the volunteer lifecycle.

Volunteers make up a substantial share of the sector's labour and, for many organizations, its main pipeline into paid roles. Where volunteer recruitment, training, and progression are not held to the same EDI standard as employment, that pipeline will clearly reproduce a representation gap. Of the 17 responding organizations, 58.8% of responding non-profits use multiple channels and ensure that they are effective at recruiting a diverse pool of participants. Recognition is also reasonably common, with 64.7% receiving non-monetary compensation and 11.8% receiving non-monetary compensation based on their wants (n = 17).

Formal volunteer recognition is also common; however, it is rarely equity-focused. Roughly 82.4% have some form of formalized program to recognize volunteers; however, only 23.5% build in considerations for equity-deserving groups (Figure 35).

Figure 36

Demographic data of volunteers



Source: Diversity Institute. Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT) App, non-profit responses, October 2025 to May 2026 (n = 17).

Demographic data collection for volunteers is inconsistent, with 29.4% not collecting self-reported demographic data and an equal share (29.4%) collecting it but not tracking volunteers throughout the engagement lifecycle, from onboarding to separation. Only 29.4% collect data, track key dates, and analyze information to identify key trends (Figure 36).

Training, an essential part of the volunteer process, was also an area for improvement. The results show that almost one-half (47.1%, n = 17) of the responding organizations provide optional training that includes EDI. Only 29.4% indicated the training was mandatory and focused on EDI.



Conclusion & Recommendations

Together, these results describe non-profits that recruit volunteers using EDI practices; however, they do not apply these same principles to effectively retain and/or promote volunteers. The reporting also demonstrates that volunteers are trained less carefully than staff, tracked less consistently, and given less access to advancement. This section examines four main challenges identified in the results and sets out the recommendations that follow from them.

Four patterns

> **Commitment outpaces infrastructure**
The sector is familiar with EDI and scores strongest on values and culture but only reaches compliance-band levels on governance and measurement. The gap, therefore, is between intention and infrastructure.

> **Formalization tracks organizational scale**
The weakest practices consistently require dedicated staff, systems, or budget; with 42.2% of organizations employing fewer than 20 people, this reflects a capacity constraint, not a values deficit.

> **Recruitment has outpaced progression**
Inclusive hiring is comparatively well-developed, but career planning, mentorship, and pay equity monitoring lag. This means that non-profits are open to employing an EDI lens but have not built a pipeline for advancement.

> **External practice is ahead of internal machinery**
Non-profits match or exceed the broader DAT user base on the Diversity Across the Value Chain and Outreach and Expanding the Pool dimensions but fall behind on Measurement and Tracking of EDI. Community-facing equity work is a strength, while internal accountability infrastructure is the gap.

Recommendations

> Build measurement and accountability infrastructure through demographic data collection, regular equity assessment, and a small number of EDI performance indicators.

> Formalize EDI within governance practices, including board nomination practices, targets for diverse candidates, and skills matrices.

- Extend inclusive HR practices from recruitment into career progression by implementing career planning, mentorship programs, and other forms of professional development.
- Embed EDI into funding, procurement, and volunteer relationships through beneficiary feedback mechanisms; EDI commitments in proposals; and engagement with supplier diversity networks.
- Hold volunteer pipelines to the same EDI standard as employment, extending training and advancement opportunities to equity-deserving groups.

Taken together, these findings show a sector where EDI commitment is genuine, expressed through culture and community-facing practices. What remains underdeveloped is the infrastructure, resources, and capacity to translate EDI commitment into documented practices.





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