

Diversity Leads Global

**Analysis of Black Leadership in
the Canadian, American, British,
and Australian Corporate and
Political Sectors**

Partners



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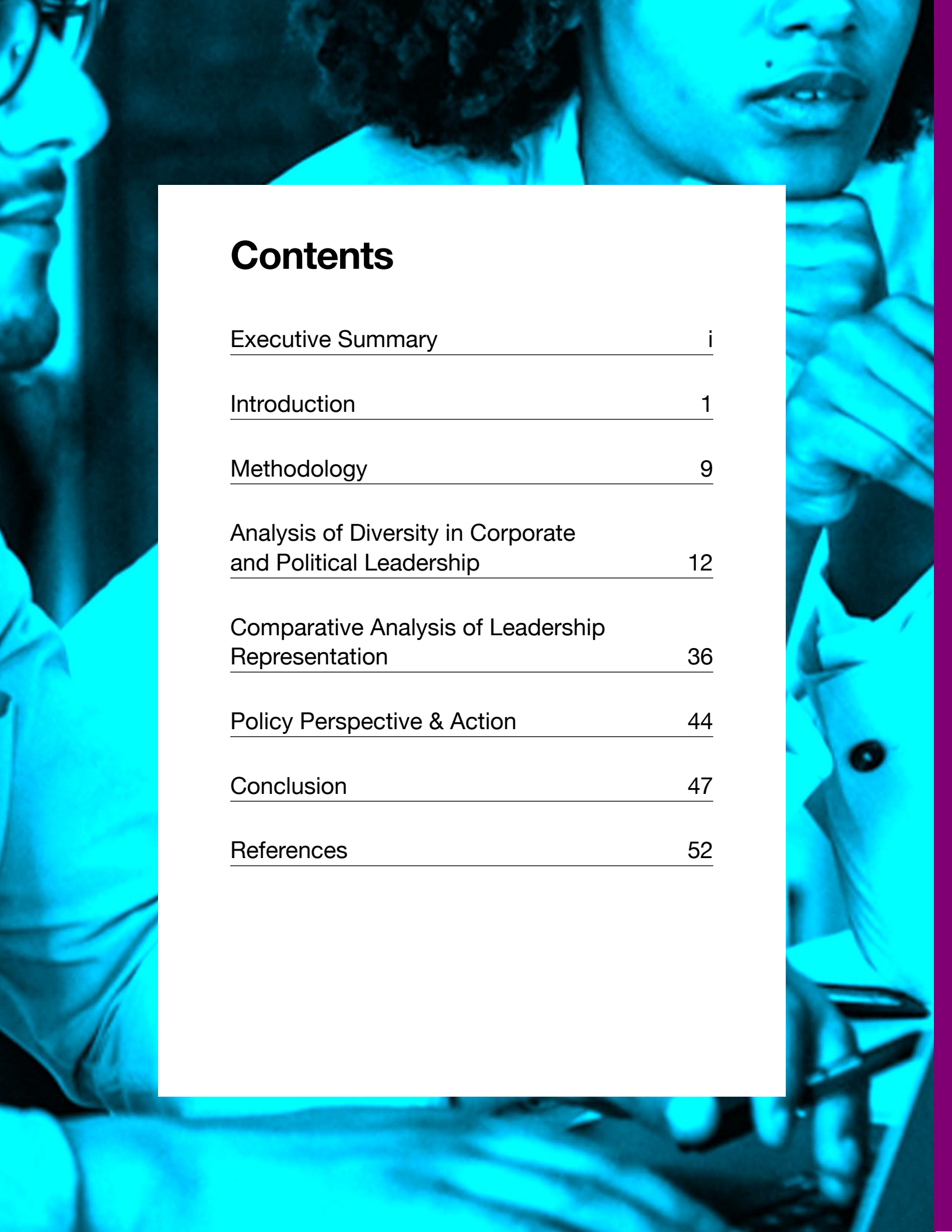
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A background image showing a close-up of two people in a professional setting. On the left, a man with glasses and a beard is looking towards the right. On the right, a woman with dark curly hair is looking down, with her hand near her chin in a thoughtful pose. They appear to be in a meeting or collaborative work environment.

Contents

<u>Executive Summary</u>	i
<u>Introduction</u>	1
<u>Methodology</u>	9
<u>Analysis of Diversity in Corporate and Political Leadership</u>	12
<u>Comparative Analysis of Leadership Representation</u>	36
<u>Policy Perspective & Action</u>	44
<u>Conclusion</u>	47
<u>References</u>	52

Executive Summary

This report is undertaken in cooperation with Gaynel Curry, Chair of the United Nations Permanent Forum on People of African Descent (PFPAD), in her personal capacity, and as a part of the Second International Decade for People of African Descent.

The analysis sets a benchmark for the representation of Black people, with a focus on Black women, in corporate and political leadership across Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia. It also makes comparisons with non-racialized people, and racialized persons.



This study is intended to serve as the first phase of a broader research initiative that assesses the progress of Black leadership globally.

These four countries were chosen based on their similar economic and governance systems, shared histories as settler or colonial societies, and established equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) frameworks.

Leadership representation was analyzed within two domains:

1. Corporate leadership: Boards of directors and senior management/ executive leadership of the top 25 publicly listed corporations by market capitalization in each country's main stock exchange
2. Political leadership: Senior elected officials of each country, which consists of heads of state and cabinet members

The dataset includes more than 2,300 business leaders across 100 companies, as well as 98 senior elected officials.

Using the DiversityLeads methodology, endorsed as a best practice by the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC), individuals were coded across gender, racial, and ethnic identity. Identified representation levels are benchmarked relative to the national population share of each demographic group to determine the extent of equitable representation, and the severity of under-representation in leadership.

Black leadership representation

The leadership representation of Black people in corporate and political spheres shows gaps in most countries relative to their respective national population shares.

In the corporate arena, board-level diversity gains were found. However, these have not translated into senior management representation across any of the four countries analyzed. Canada comes close to achieving parity on its boards at 4.1%, compared to its national Black population share of 4.3%. Nevertheless, representation levels fall in senior management to a greater extent in most countries, often by more than one-half, showing that progress at board tables has not been reflected in senior management positions.



The leadership representation of Black people in corporate and political spheres shows gaps in most countries relative to their respective national population shares.

Intersectional analysis shows that Black women are better represented on boards than Black men, implying that strategies focused on gender equality and intersectional identity may be benefitting this group. Conversely, Black women are less represented in senior management positions than Black men. This suggests that, for this equity group, board-level diversity gains have not yet translated into inclusive leadership pipelines or equitable opportunities providing the necessary professional and social capital.

One factor is the size and structure of boards and senior leadership teams. Senior management teams are often larger and embedded in the business operations, with positions typically attained through internal promotion pipelines that can reflect structural patterns and barriers within an organization. In contrast, boards are normally smaller in size, oversee governance rather than operational level processes, and often have externally recruited directors who possess extensive experience and qualifications gained at other organizations. This enables firms to pull from a wider candidate pool and make appointments to tailor the boards collective experience, knowledge, and diversity in order to address governance needs and broader strategic leadership objectives of the organization. Considering the difference in size, appointment, and composition, this allows for more rapid changes and improvements in board representation compared to senior management structures.

A “two-for-one” effect offers a further explanation. Black women have intersecting equity-deserving identities as members of under-represented racial and gender groups. Since boards of directors have public exposure, they are visible to external stakeholders, consumers, and media, and therefore more open to scrutiny and pressure to ensure diversity goals are achieved. However, this pattern does not necessarily extend to senior leadership. These pipelines remain governed by more entrenched organizational processes, including informal networks, social capital, sponsorship dynamics, and subjective assessment of

leadership “fit.” Even at the board level, there is a high “recycle rate” observed among Black women, indicating that the same diverse individuals serve on multiple corporate boards at the same time. This provides more opportunities for proven talent rather than improving the pipeline for more Black women.¹

Representation at the board level signals how inclusive the upper-end of decision making and high-level governance is within an organization or institution. However, it is less indicative of an equitable distribution of organizational power compared to measuring diversity in senior management. Diversifying senior leadership requires sustained change across internal pipelines, including recruitment, promotion, retention, and succession planning.

Consequently, it seems that gains in board diversity for Black populations coexist with persistent inequities in senior leadership, where daily decision making oversees organizational workflows and employees.

Canada

There is persistent under-representation within corporate leadership roles, with large discrepancies for women and racialized groups, while there is an almost equal representation of Black people at the board level compared to their national population share. Representation drops further in senior management positions. Non-racialized men form the majority across both tiers of corporate leadership analyzed, however representation of Black women was higher than their men-counterparts.

United States

Under-representation is pronounced across corporate leadership, particularly for women, who face the largest gaps at board and senior management levels. Black representation is closer to population parity on boards but drops significantly in senior management. Racialized persons approach parity only at the senior management level. Leadership remains heavily concentrated by men, especially for non-racialized persons.

United Kingdom

Representation levels were mixed across the demographic groups analyzed. Smaller gaps were found at the board level, with representation of racialized persons exceeding parity on boards and in senior management relative to their national population share. Black women continue to be more represented in board leadership than in senior management. Across both levels, non-racialized men held the majority of positions, while gender disparities remain consistent across all groups.

Australia

Significant under-representation exists across corporate leadership, with all groups represented below their respective national population shares. Even though Australia has the smallest population share of Black people compared to the other countries analyzed, Black representation was nearly absent. Gaps are large for racialized persons and women were under-represented across boards and senior corporate leadership.



Policy and action

The analysis revealed a number of interrelated challenges and issues that have contributed to existing imbalances in Black representation in leadership, as well as a tangible understanding of disparities. This is a result of a lack of quality, systemically collected disaggregated data. This information would allow for accurate and up-to-date monitoring and tracking of outcomes for racial and ethnic groups across key development areas in social and economic spheres, as well as intersectional dimensions.

Without accurate representation in statistical demographic data collection, assessment of equitable progress remains hindered. It also raises the risk of diverse under-represented and intersectional groups, like Black women, remaining “invisible” and weakening policymaking.

Constraints on ethnic- and racial-disaggregated data collection also hurts international cooperation. The effectiveness of global initiatives intended to drive transformative change, like the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, is undermined, rendering them more symbolic than impactful.

Even as under-representation occurs in a national context, it is essential to take into account these countries’ similar experiences of colonialism, slavery and systemic racism. It also must be noted how these factors have affected future generations and opportunities.

For instance, leadership representation is crucial as a marker of inclusion and influence, despite varying levels of success and its relationship to a range of legislative, economic and social forces.

Harnessing data through an ecological framework that recognizes sustainable development requires collective efforts at societal, organizational, and individual levels. Doing so can empower evidence-based policymaking and human-rights perspectives.

Consistent with international instruments like the UN Human Rights-Based Approach to Data and recent guidance from PFPAD findings, intersectional data collection is foundational to driving recognition, justice, and development of Black populations and equity-deserving groups as whole. Incorporating it across policy and organizational practice in the private and public sectors is key to building accountability, analyzing structural barriers, and improving the inclusiveness of leadership pipelines to address the intersectional impacts of systemic racism and gender discrimination.

Introduction

Understanding the representation of Black people in leadership roles is key. It reflects the extent to which Black communities are meaningfully included in shaping political, economic, and social decisions. Theories on representative bureaucracy and inclusive leadership suggest that when leadership reflects the populations it serves, it can improve policy responsiveness, institutional legitimacy, and equity outcomes for historically under-represented groups.^{2,3} Diverse leadership produces inclusive decision-making that leads to a positive impact on organizational culture and those belonging to it.⁴

International conventions have been created over the years to combat racial discrimination. The 1965 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, for example, serves as a cornerstone United Nations human rights treaty. In it, more than 182 ratifying states pledged to eliminate racial discrimination, prohibit hate speech, and ensure equality in civil, political, social, and cultural rights.⁵

Over time, growing emphasis has been placed on addressing anti-Black racism and breaking down barriers for people of African descent.



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The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, published in 2002, is one of the fundamental instruments in the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. The International Decade for People of African Descent was proclaimed in 2015 with a focus on the recognition, justice and development of people of African descent. The initiative aimed to make concrete global progress in dismantling centuries of systemic racism, colonialism and the global legacy of the transatlantic slave trade. It was renewed in 2025 as the UN declared the first decade's core goals remained unfulfilled.

The UN Permanent Forum on People of African Descent (PFPAD), as described in the General Assembly Resolution 75/314, has the following mandate:

- > Promote the full political, economic and social inclusion of people of African descent as equal citizens, ensuring equal enjoyment of all human rights.
- > Provide expert advice and recommendations to UN bodies on combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance affecting people of African descent.
- > Consider elaborating a UN declaration on the human rights of people of African descent.
- > Identify best practices, challenges and opportunities related to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.
- > Monitor implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent, gathering information from governments, UN bodies, NGOs and other sources.
- > Promote dissemination of information on people of African descent and recognition of their diverse heritage, culture and contributions.
- > Raise awareness and coordinate UN system-wide activities relating to people of African descent.
- > Advise on the protection and promotion of the human rights of people of African descent and carry out tasks as requested by the Human Rights Council or General Assembly.



- > Support socio-economic development programs and advocate for timely, disaggregated data collection by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability and geography. This can strengthen the creation and execution of public policy in relation to people of African descent.

The PFPAD's fifth session recommended focusing on addressing the intersectional position of women and girls of African descent for the Second International Decade. These women and girls face compounded discrimination rooted in enslavement, colonialism, and systemic racism, which results in exclusion from leadership, as well as economic marginalization, and persistent violence. Achieving justice and sustainable development for all people of African descent requires this intersectional approach. Critical to this effort is the systematic collection of disaggregated data to accurately assess the challenges (A/HRC/60/72, para. 62(c)) and design effective, evidence-based public policies that advance their human rights (A/HRC/60/72, para. 73) notably in leadership positions.⁶

Measuring existing gaps and progress toward equity is critical for sustainable change and to be achieved in several ways. For example, the World Bank's gender gap analysis considers a range of social and economic variables, including labour-force participation, employment characteristics, management and ownership of firms, access to finance, and wage data.⁷ Many individual countries collect gender disaggregated data across similar indicators.^{8, 9} However, few such measures currently exist for people of African descent. Historically the U.S. has led in the collection of race-based data, with Commonwealth countries like Canada, the U.K. and Australia also collecting and reporting on racialized populations. But at the global level, the practices are incomplete, inconsistent and in some instances impeded rather than facilitated by law.

Disaggregated data is critical for identifying where progress has been made for the full inclusion of Black communities across social, political, and economic life – and where gaps persist. Intersectional data on the experience of race coupled with gender, immigration status, age, and other dimensions is key.

Currently, many countries collect gender-based data. As women generally represent one-half of the population across countries, assessing progress on gender equality in social and economic domains is easier to compare. Frameworks from the World Economic Forum,¹⁰ World Bank,¹¹ OECD¹² and UN Women Data Hub¹³ track global data on a range of variables, including wage gaps and equality, political empowerment, labour force participation, leadership representation, economic opportunity, sectoral representation, educational attainment, and gender-based discrimination.

Establishing metrics and benchmarks to track progress for people of African descent has been more challenging at global as well as national levels. Some countries have grown their collection of racial and ethnic data, though approaches remain uneven and context-dependent. The U.S. has long-standing, standardized data collection for population monitoring, primarily guided by the Office of Management and Budget and implemented through the U.S. Census Bureau. Agencies such as the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) track employment equity.^{14,15} These institutions gather race and ethnicity data in various areas including employment,¹⁶ income and poverty

rates, educational qualifications, health-care outcomes and criminal justice system statistics. This enables extensive intersectional analysis and longitudinal tracking of race and ethnicity to produce valuable insights about equitable progress across social and economic domains.

The practice of gathering race data in Canada dates back to the country's first census in 1871.¹⁷ Race- and ethnicity-based data has evolved gradually over time, with modern disaggregation first directly collected in the 1996 census and an expansion of ethnocultural and racial categories developed via Statistics Canada in the 2000s.¹⁸ The practice truly accelerated in 2017, through the introduction of anti-racism standards.¹⁹

Canada's census, alongside other data initiatives such as the Disaggregated Data Action Plan (DDAP), now collects demographic information on racialized persons, Black people, and Indigenous Peoples in areas such as labour market outcomes and income disparities.^{20, 21} The Longitudinal Immigration Database provides detailed and reliable information on socio-economic outcomes of immigrants.²²

Other Commonwealth countries, such as the U.K. and Australia, also collect data, albeit using different approaches. The U.K. makes use of ethnic classification in health, education, and labour force statistics generated by the Office for National Statistics as well as the mandated Race Disparity Audit for all governmental departments.²³ Australia,

on the other hand, relies on proxies like ancestry, place of origin, and Indigeneity via the Australian Bureau of Statistics.²⁴

However, there is a lack of global standardization due to methodological data collection variances and contextual differences between countries. This impedes cross-country analysis and global benchmarking of equity outcomes for all equity-deserving groups, despite advancements in some national practices. For example: In parts of the European Union, legal and cultural barriers, in combination with jurisdictional legal frameworks and constitutional protections, limit the routine collection of race and ethnicity data. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), specifically Article 9, is one of those barriers.^{25, 26}

Data collection on leadership representation is ongoing in the U.S., despite pushback on equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) at the federal level. It also occurs in Canada through regulatory disclosures. The data collected demonstrates persistent disparities, particularly in the U.S., where Black women continue to face a “concrete ceiling” reinforced by structural barriers to equitable representation in leadership.^{27, 28} The U.S. employs the EEO-1 model, which collects mandatory workforce and corporate disaggregated data by race, ethnicity, gender, and occupational level (including senior leadership roles) from all private sector employers with 100 or more employees, as well as federal contractors with 50 or more employees.²⁹

This is of significant importance in measuring labour market outcomes and trends. For example, Black women in the U.S. faced far greater employment losses in 2025 compared to other groups of women and Black men, as their employment rate fell by 1.4 percentage points, compared to 0.5 points for Black men and white women. This represents one of the sharpest year-over-year declines in the last quarter-century.³⁰ Furthermore, data shows that Black women were disproportionately affected by U.S. federal workforce layoffs in that year, with job losses in the public sector contributing to their unemployment rate of 7.5% in September 2025. This compares to 4.4% for all U.S. workers during the same period.³¹

Under the Canada Business Corporations Act (CBCA), Canadian federal distributing corporations must report on the representation of equity-deserving groups, as defined by the Employment Equity Act, on their boards of directors and senior management teams.³² Federally regulated financial institutions in Canada will soon need to complete similar reporting.³³ Publicly traded companies listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange (TSX) are required by the Canadian Securities Administrators (CSA) to disclose gender diversity on boards and senior leadership, but this does not include racial and ethnic representative data.³⁴



These two regulatory approaches use a “comply or explain” model rather than quotas and require companies to report on their diversity policies and target-setting – or lack thereof.³⁵ While board diversity has improved modestly, the senior management pipeline remains largely unchanged. This demonstrates that systems focused primarily on targets and public disclosure, rather than mandated outcomes and structural change, can generate only limited progress.

The U.K. has also advanced corporate reporting through initiatives like the Parker Review, an independent framework and voluntary initiative that aims to track ethnic diversity on boards of Financial Times Stock Exchange (FTSE)-listed companies by encouraging cooperation from business professionals.³⁶

However, despite these efforts, data remains inconsistent across countries, with limited standardization in definitions, metrics, and frequency of reporting that constrains comprehensive, comparable assessments of Black leadership representation globally.

Barriers to leveraging data to understand the experiences of people of African descent persist, notably:

- > Legal and politicized constraints in several European countries restrict the systematic collection and publishing of race or ethnic demographic data.³⁷ This is due to the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)'s Article 9 that designates racial and ethnic data as a "special category" and generally strictly regulates its collection in addition to national legal frameworks of European member states that further limit and constrain ethnic and racial collection and disclosure.^{38,39,40}
- > The historical trauma of race-data misuse has led to strong resistance. For example, citizens in France have been urging the government to collect race data to tackle discrimination, however board resistance remains high since they consider it a violation of the secular republican principles,⁴¹ recalling Vichy-era identity documents.⁴²
- > Many Black Americans mistrust research participation due to the legacy of the Tuskegee Study and lack of research integrity, the legacy of racism and discrimination, mistrust of the health-care system, and concerns related to the research process.⁴³ This mistrust can lower participation rates and cause under-reporting and incomplete samples, which creates concerns about data accuracy and reliability.
- > Inconsistency in definition and categorization. While some countries use race as a social construct, others consider it a biological term.⁴⁴ The categorization used in North American data collection measures

often fails to address the lived experiences of Black individuals (such as Caribbean vs. African vs. Black American), which leads to low quality data.⁴⁵

The following report is part of a larger research initiative by the Diversity Institute, in cooperation with Gaynel Curry, Chair of the UN PFPAD in her personal capacity.. It explores the ways in which progress for human rights of people of African descent, as reflected in their participation in leadership positions, can be assessed on a global basis.

The collaborative, multi-stage study examines existing data sources that can be used to benchmark the presence and progress of people of African descent, while recognizing the significant differences in context. The project focuses on data collection, comparative analysis and systemic insights to advance policy and practice in EDI globally.

It begins by reviewing the representation of the following groups (in the definitions section) compared to their representation in the population in two sectors for each country:

- > The largest private corporations (publicly listed and determined by overall market capitalization) including the board of directors and senior management or executive teams
- > Elected government officials, including national heads of state and cabinet ministers.

A focused analysis on the leadership representation of Black people and insights into outcomes is then provided in the following section.

Definitions

People of African descent/ Black people

This distinct group includes many elements of the African diaspora. It encompasses the descendants of the victims of the transatlantic slave trade as well as the more recent African migrants living in the diaspora (outside of the African continent). Their human rights promotion and protection necessitate acknowledging and addressing the marginalization they face stemming from racism and racial discrimination as part of the legacy of slavery and colonialism.⁴⁶

It is important to note that terminology related to race varies across national and social contexts. In the U.S., individuals may identify as “Black” or “African American,” while in Canada, “Black” is more commonly used. “African Canadian,” “Caribbean Canadian,” or “Black Canadian” are used less frequently. Research shows that racial self-identification is heavily context-dependent. Individuals immigrating from regions where Black communities are the majority, such as parts of Africa, the Caribbean, and South America, may not self-identify as “Black” due to it not being a salient or commonly used identity in their country of origin.

Racialized persons

There is no internationally agreed-upon definition of this term.

Common understandings indicate that “racialized persons” are people who are “affected by racism or discrimination.”⁴⁷ In Canada, per the Employment Equity Act (EEA), racialized persons are defined as “persons, other than Aboriginal Peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour.”⁴⁸ This may differ across other countries. For example, the U.S. uses the classifications of “race” and “ethnicity” to denote a person’s racialization through individual categories. In this report, we use the EEA definition of racialized or “visible minority,” while treating Black populations as a distinct group.

The term “racialized” is emphasized to denote the fact that the process of racialization is socially constructed. Race is not a biological fact, but instead a system to promote categorization, classification, and unequal treatment.⁴⁹

Women

The UN does not have a single universal legal definition for “women,” as the term is operationalized differently across statistical, policy, and human rights frameworks. For statistical and developmental purposes, the UN defines women as an adult female person (above the age of 15 or 18 years depending on the dataset). It uses sex-disaggregated data categories for data collection, while increasingly recognizing the inclusion of gender identity, where appropriate, as a part of the UN Human Rights-Based Approach to Data.⁵⁰

Equity-deserving groups

The term “equity-deserving groups” has been adopted in Canada to refer to “a group of people who, because of systemic discrimination, face barriers that prevent them from having the same access to the resources and opportunities that are available to other members of society, and that are necessary for them to attain just outcomes.”⁵¹ This framing is consistent with an international equity policy approach as it acknowledges that various, diverse groups face unique challenges and barriers rooted in historical and institutional inequalities. It provides a dynamic framework that includes under-represented groups (such as women, Black people, and racialized persons) while reflecting that, although definitions of identities vary globally, patterns of structural exclusion exist across different population groups.

Non-racialized

The term non-racialized is used in the Canadian context and defined by the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) as “... people who do not identify as Indigenous Peoples, or as a racialized person.”⁵² On a global level, it is a context-dependent definition, and within the scope of this analysis (across the four countries selected) it refers to “white individuals” for North American and European contexts.





Methodology

Objectives

The goals of this project's first phase are:

- 1** Benchmark representation by identifying the current representation of Black people, women, and racialized persons in corporate and political leadership across different countries.
- 2** Evaluate progress and identify persistent challenges. Apply the ecological model to systematically analyze opportunities and barriers, and inform the experiences reflected in the data. Interpret findings that capture the intersectional, systemic and structural nature of discrimination to generate actionable insights that support the effective advancement of relevant UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the objectives of the Second International Decade for People of African Descent.

National contexts

Canada, the U.S., U.K., and Australia are the first countries analyzed. They are all established Western liberal democracies, with shared trajectories involving market-based capitalist economies, comparable corporate governance structures (board-CEO models, shareholder primacy, and securities regulations standards), rule of law, and relatively stable political systems.

These countries also share histories as either colonizers or settler societies, as well as contemporary immigration-driven demographic diversity. While definitions and data collection differ, these countries all recognize equity-deserving or minority groups and have enacted EDI and anti-discrimination policies to improve labour market outcomes that have promoted discourse and shared onus on companies to diversify leadership to varying degrees.

Data collection

To collect data about the representation of people of African descent in corporate and political leadership, we used the following inclusion criteria:

- > Corporate leadership: Boards of directors and executive leadership teams of the top 25 publicly listed corporations (ranked by market capitalization) on each country's major stock exchange: The Toronto Stock Exchange (TSX - Canada), New York Stock Exchange (NYSE - U.S.), London Stock Exchange Group [LSEG] (U.K.), and Australian Securities Exchange (ASX - Australia).
- > Political leadership: Heads of state and cabinet members currently serving (as of late 2025) in each country's respective elected administration.

In total, this report collected the data of 1,082 board members and 1,225 executives from 100 companies across the four focal countries (Table 1). Companies were selected in November 2025 and taken from each stock exchange's official website.

1,082

board members

1,225

executives

100

companies

4

focal countries

Table 1

Sample sizes of board of director and senior management

Countries	Board of directors (#)	Senior management/Executive leadership (#)
Canada (TSX)	290	342
United States (NYSE)	279	400
United Kingdom (LSEG)	286	225
Australia (ASX)	227	258
Total	1,082	1,225

In addition, the report examines 98 senior elected officials, including national heads of state and cabinet ministers, from the four countries (Table 2). Data pertaining to these officials were taken from official government web pages.

Table 2

Sample size of senior elected officials

Countries	Heads of State & Cabinet Members (n)
Canada	29
United States	23
United Kingdom	22
Australia	24
Total	98



Analysis of Diversity in Corporate and Political Leadership

This section discusses findings from the data analysis, with a focus on members of the following equity-deserving groups, where available: women, Black and racialized persons, Black and racialized women, and Indigenous Peoples. Each country's data are presented in the following order:

- 1 The national population share for each demographic group
- 2 The number and percentage share of each group identified in the data sample
- 3 Representation levels benchmarked against national population share
- 4 Gender composition of each demographic group

This international, cross-country analysis reveals a consistent and systemic pattern related to the leadership representation of people of African descent.

Canada

In Canada, national population census data is collected every five years by the national statistical agency, Statistics Canada. It includes data disaggregated by gender, race, and ethnicity.

As of July 2025, women made up 50.04% of Canada's total population, or 20,841,344 of 41,561,623 people.⁵³ In 2021, Black people represented 4.3% of Canada's total population (or 1,547,870 of 36,328,480 total)⁵⁴ and racialized persons represented 22.2% (9,639,205 of 36,328,480 total.)⁵⁵

Table 3 details the representation data for the top 25 TSX-listed companies, as analyzed across boards of directors and senior management.

Table 3

Boards of directors and senior management of the top 25 TSX-listed companies, by gender and race

Demographic group	Board of Directors	Share of board of directors (%)	Senior Management (n)	Share of senior management
Women	120	40.7%	111	32.3%
Black people	12	4.1%	5	1.5%
Racialized persons	32	10.9%	41	12.8%
Non-racialized persons (white)	245	83.3%	274	81.3%
Men	175	59.3%	231	67.5%
Total	290		342	

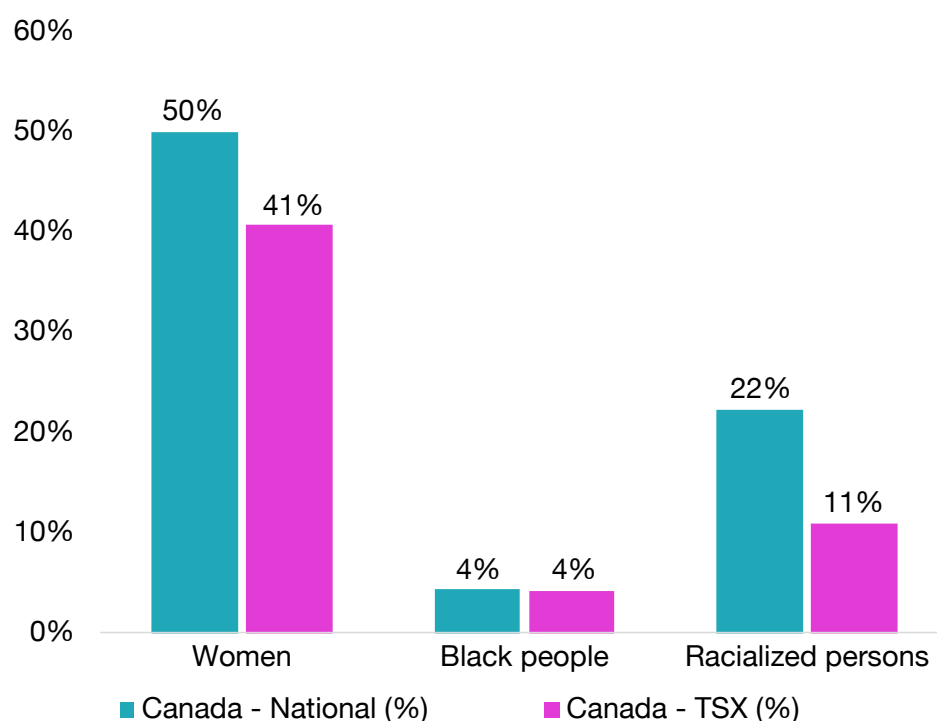
Boards of directors

When benchmarking representation on boards of directors against national population share levels, all equity-deserving groups are under-

represented to varying degrees. (See Figure 1.) The largest gaps are for women and racialized individuals (9.3 and 11.3 percentage points), while Black representation is near parity.

Figure 1

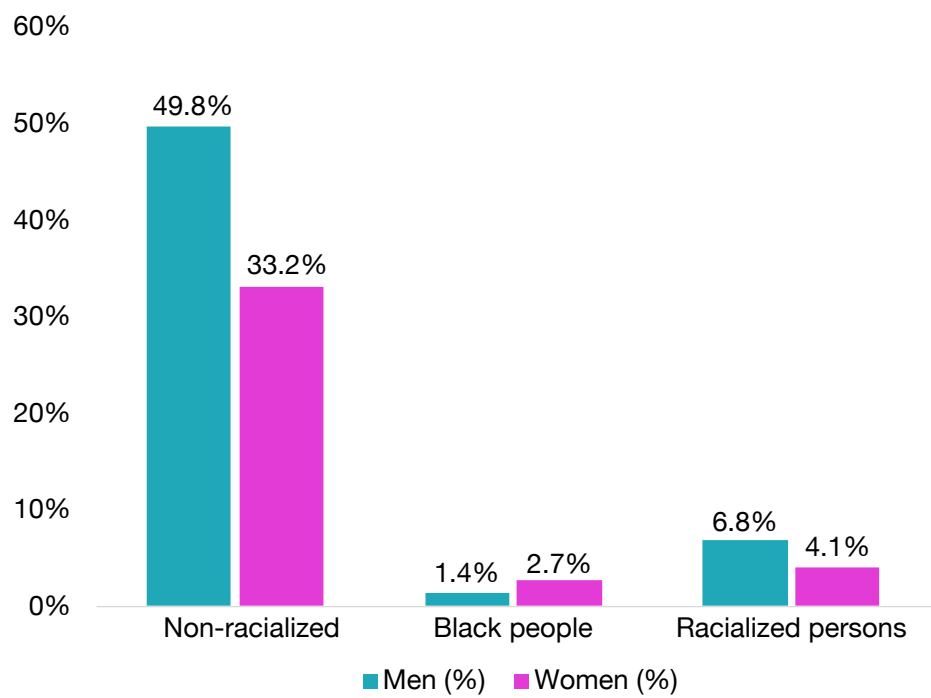
National population vs. board representation shares for TSX top 25 listed companies



Non-racialized individuals dominate TSX boards (83%), with men having a higher share than women. (See Figure 2.) Racialized individuals make up 10.9%, also with more

men than women. In contrast, Black and Indigenous representation skews toward women. Black women hold nearly twice as many positions as Black men.

Figure 2
Gender composition of demographic groups on boards of top 25 TSX-listed companies

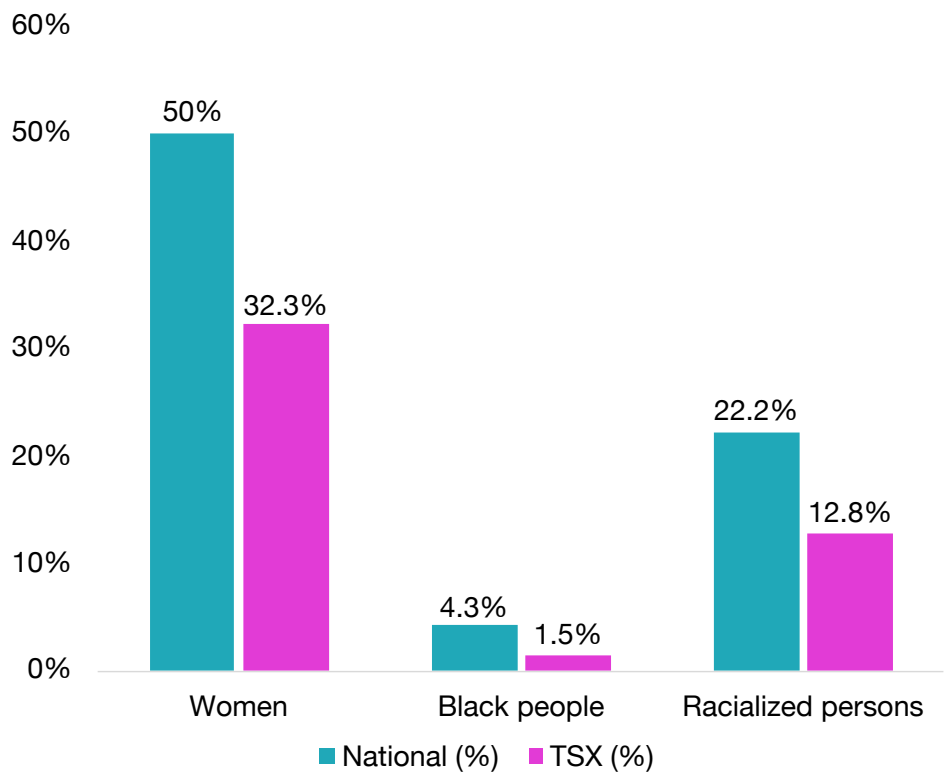


Senior management

All equity-deserving groups are under-represented to varying degrees where senior management is concerned, when benchmarked against population share. (See Figure 3.) With 32.3% representation, women

face a larger gap (17.7 points) here than on boards of directors. Black representation at 1.5% is significantly lower than national population share. Racialized individuals, with 12.8% representation, remain under-represented against population share by almost 10 points.

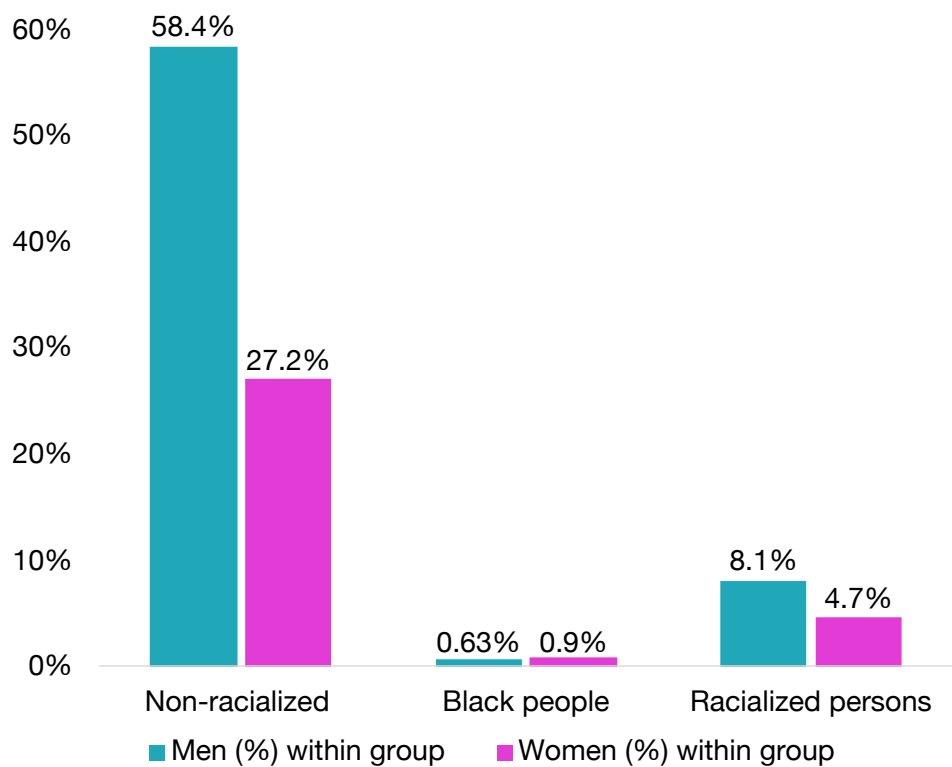
Figure 3
National population vs. senior management representation shares in top 25 TSX-listed companies



As Figure 4 shows, women in all demographic groups, except for racialized persons, were observed to have lower representation in senior management positions compared to board of directors. Non-racialized individuals formed the majority of senior management (85.6%), with a notable gender gap favouring men. Racialized individuals made up 12.8%, also skewed toward men, while Black representation is very low (1.5%) with a slight majority of women.



Figure 4
Gender composition of demographic groups in senior management in top 25 TSX-listed companies

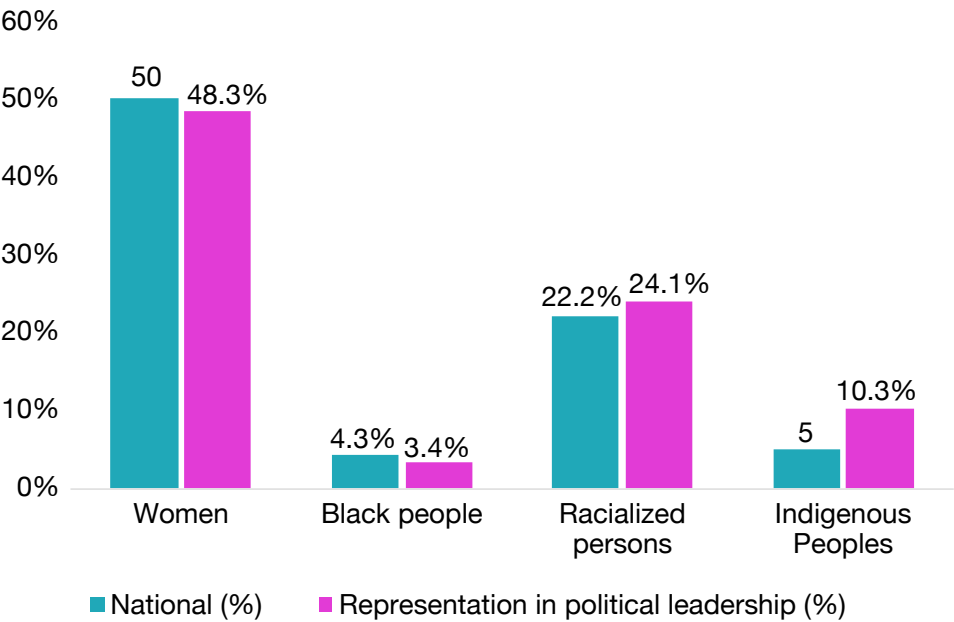


Political leadership

In Canada, all equity-deserving groups show mixed representation in senior political leadership. Women are near parity (48.3% vs. 50% in the national population). As Figure 5 shows, racialized individuals (24.1% vs. 22.2%) and Indigenous Peoples (10.3% vs. 5%) exceed expected representation, while Black individuals remain under-represented (3.4% vs. 4.3%).



Figure 5
National population share vs. representation in Canadian senior political leadership



United States

In the U.S., national population census data is collected every 10 years by the national statistical agency, the Census Bureau. It includes data disaggregated by gender, race and ethnicity. As of 2024, women make up just over one-half of the U.S. population, accounting for 50.5% (171,816,647 of 340,110,998 people). Black people made

up 13.9% of the population (47,239,672 of 340,110,998) and racialized individuals, which included Combined Asian, Some Other Race, Pacific Islander, White and Asian, White and Some Other Race, represented 23.1% (78,442,162 of 340,110,998).⁵⁶

Table 4 details the representation data for the top 25 NYSE-listed companies, as analyzed across board of directors and senior management.

Table 4
Boards of directors and senior management of top 25 NYSE-listed companies by gender and race (2025)

Demographic group	Board of Directors (n)	Share of board of directors (%)	Senior Management (n)	Share of senior management (%)
Women	93	33.3%	118	29.5%
Black people	31	11.1%	18	4.7%
Racialized persons	41	14.7%	90	23.2%
Non-racialized (white)	207	74.2%	280	72.1%
Men	186	66.7%	282	70.5%
Total	279		400	

Boards of directors

When board composition is compared to national population benchmarks in Figure 6, a clear pattern of under-representation emerges across all groups. Women face a substantial gap, 17.2 percentage points lower than their national population share. Racialized persons are under-represented by a total of 8.4 percentage points, while Black representation is closer to parity at a 2.8-point difference with their national population share.



Figure 6
National population vs. representation shares on boards of top 25 NYSE-listed companies

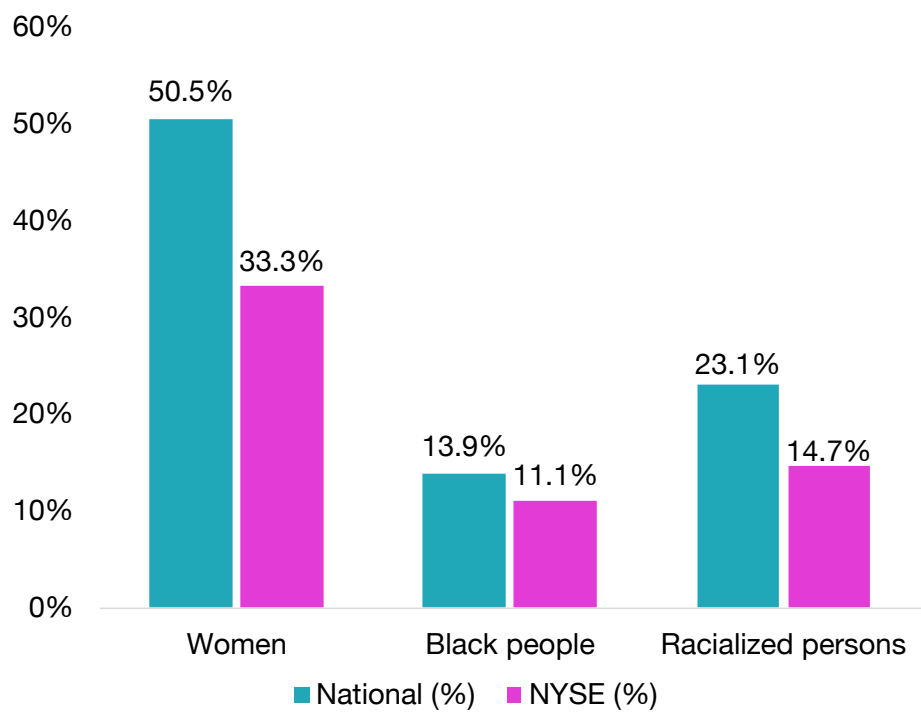


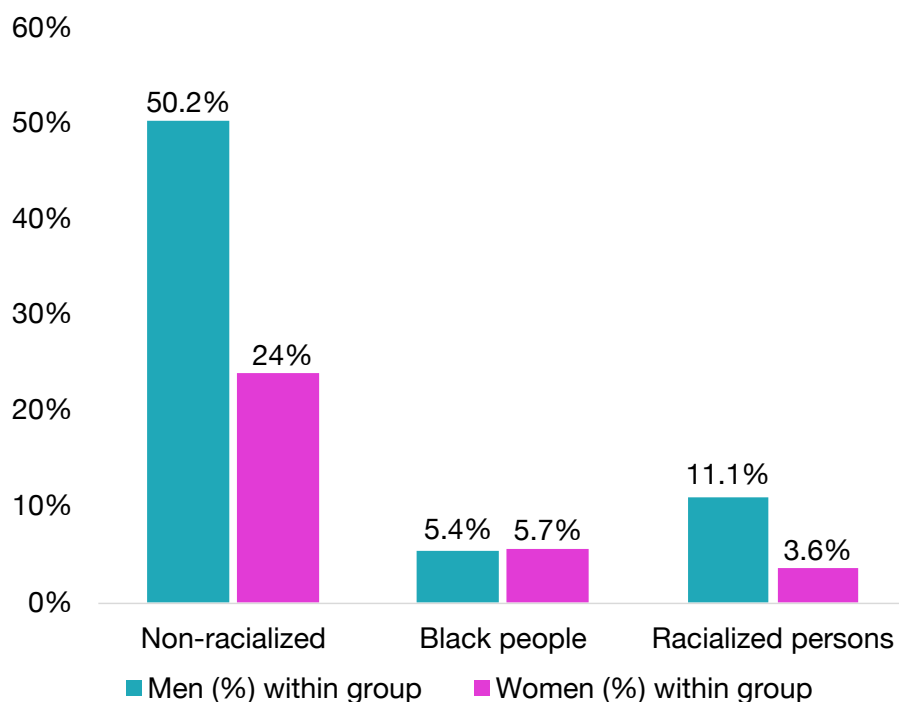


Figure 7 illustrates the gender composition within each demographic group on NYSE boards. Non-racialized individuals make up the majority of board members at 74.2%, with a strong gender imbalance favouring men.

Racialized individuals make up 14.7%, also heavily skewed toward men (11.1%) compared to racialized women (3.6%). Black representation is relatively gender-balanced with Black women slightly more represented by 0.3 percentage points over men.

Figure 7

Gender composition of demographic groups on boards of top 25 NYSE-listed companies

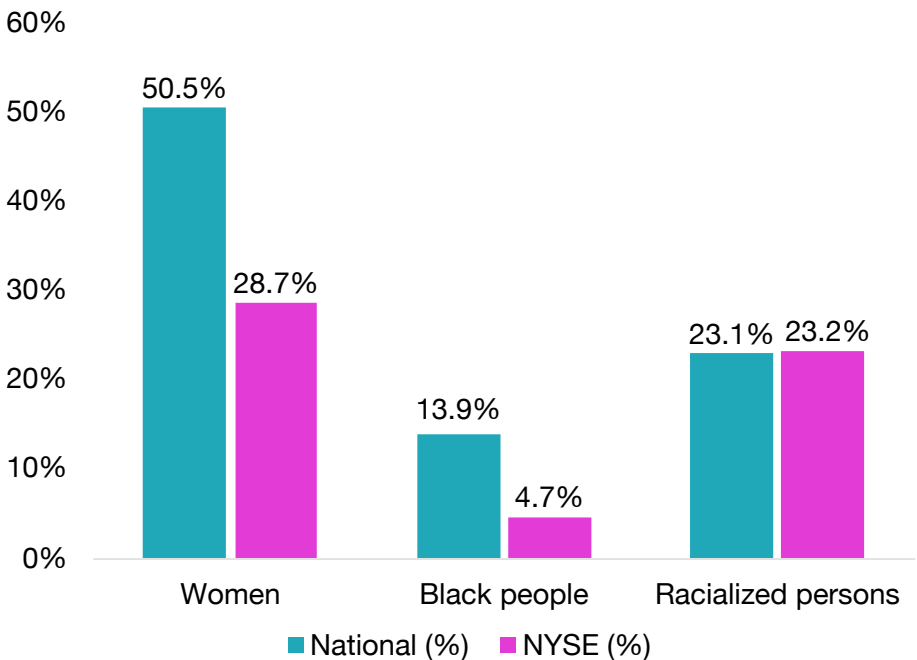


Senior management

Figure 8 shows that women and Black people are under-represented in senior management, as compared to their population share and representation on boards. Women face a gap of 21.8 percentage points to their representation in the overall population, while for Black people that gap sits at 9.2 points.

For Black people, their representation in management (4.7%) is about one-third of their share of the population (13.9%). However, racialized persons are slightly above parity (by 0.1 percentage point) and exceed their representation on boards by 8.5 percentage points.

Figure 8
National population vs. senior management shares in top 25 NYSE-listed companies



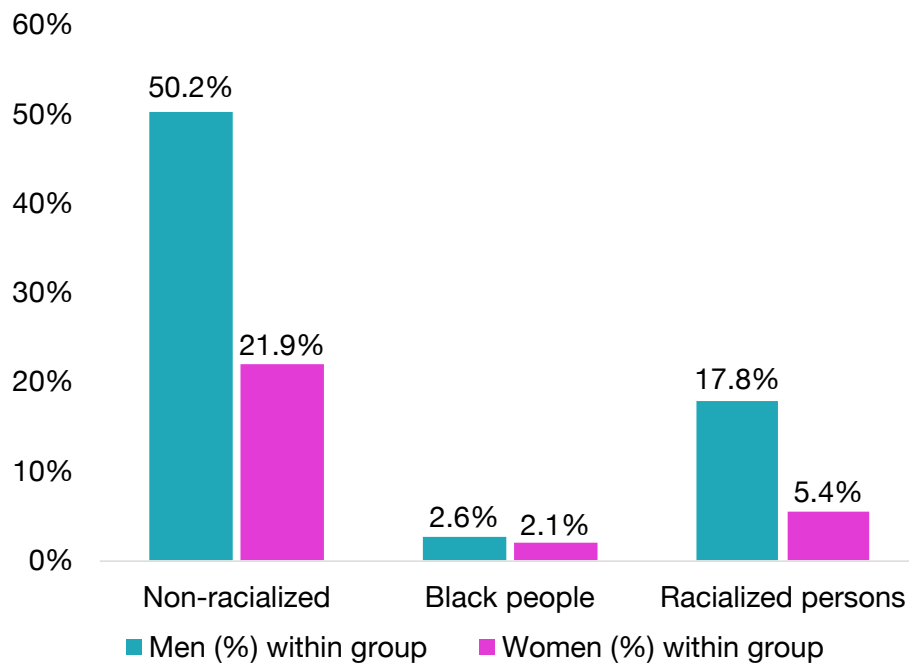


Black women are also under-represented, despite being more represented on boards of directors.

Women across most demographic groups have lower representation in senior management than men, with large gaps for racialized and non-racialized women. (See Figure 9.) Furthermore, Black women are also under-represented, despite being more represented on boards of directors.

Figure 9.

Gender composition of demographic groups in top 25 NYSE-listed companies

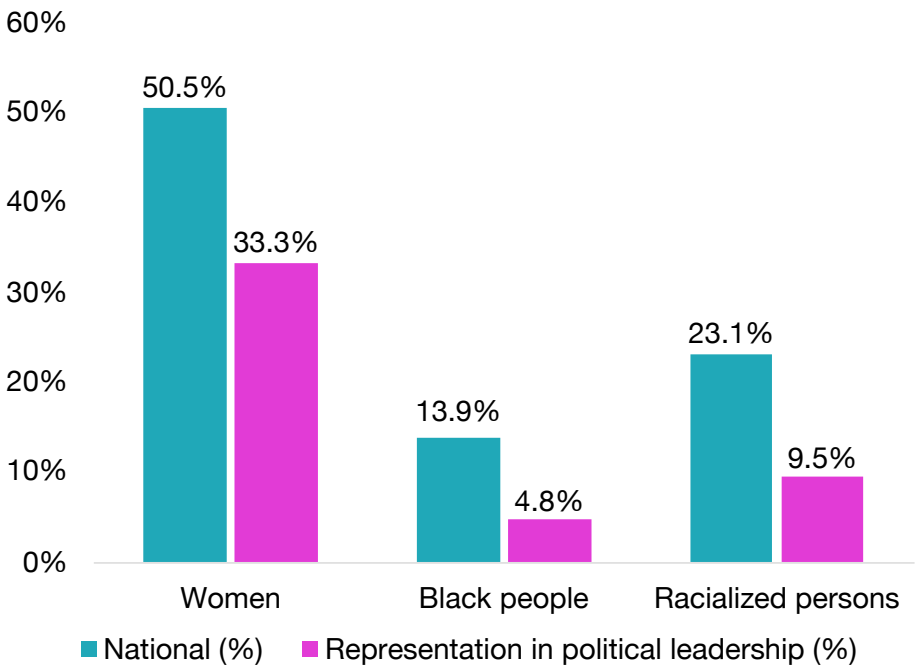


Political leadership

As Figure 10 shows, all equity-deserving groups are under-represented in U.S. political leadership. Women show a large gap (33.3% vs. 50.5% in the general population), as do Black people (4.8% vs. 13.9%) and racialized people (9.5% vs. 23.1%).



Figure 10.
National population share vs. representation in U.S. senior political leadership



United Kingdom

In the U.K., national population data is collected by the Office for National Statistics and includes information disaggregated by gender and ethnicity. As of 2024, women constitute 50.8% of the total population (35,138,272 of 69,226,000 people).^{57, 58}

According to 2021 data, Black people represented 3.7% of the national population (2,485,728 of 66,940,594), while racialized persons accounted for 13.2% (8,866,185 of 66,940,594).^{59, 60, 61}

Table 5 details the representation data for the top 25 LSE-listed companies, analyzed across boards of directors and senior management.

Table 5
Boards of directors and senior management of top 25 LSE-listed companies, by gender and race

Demographic group	Board of Directors (n)	Share of board of directors (%)	Senior Management (n)	Share of senior management (%)
Women	130	45.5%	82	36.4%
Black people	8	2.8%	3	1.3%
Racialized persons	40	14.0%	35	15.5%
Non-racialized (white)	236	82.5%	186	82.7%
Men	156	54.5%	143	63.6%
Total	286		225	

Boards of directors

Representation of equity-deserving groups on LSE boards is mixed, as Figure 11 shows. Women (45.5%) are under-represented compared to their share of the population by 5.3 percentage points, and the gap for Black people (2.8%) is 0.9 points. In contrast, racialized persons (14%) slightly exceed their expected representation by 0.8 percentage points.



Figure 11
National population vs. board representation shares at the top 25 publicly listed LSE companies

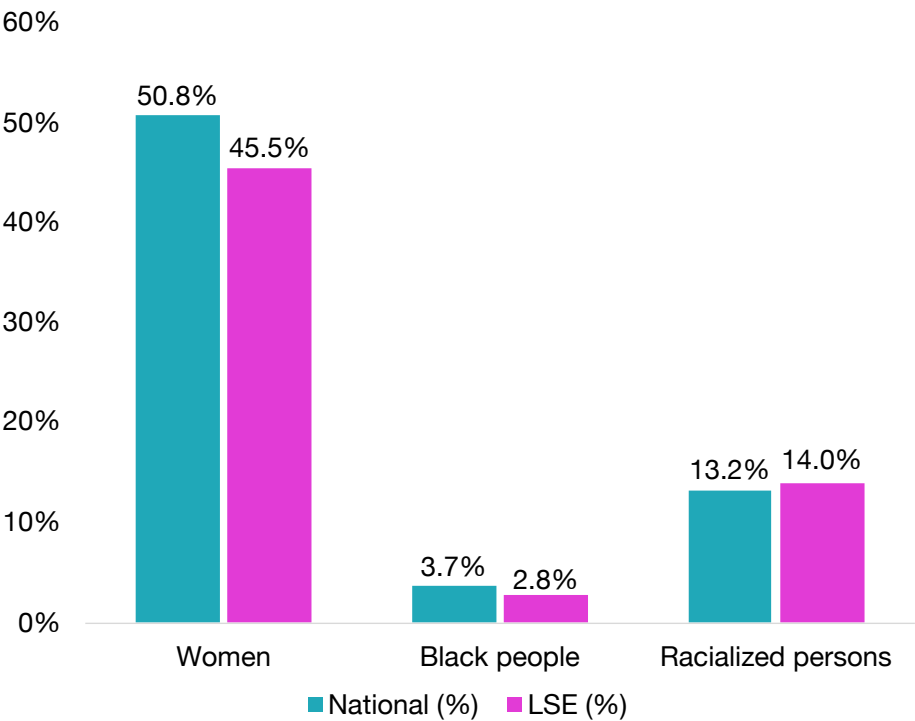
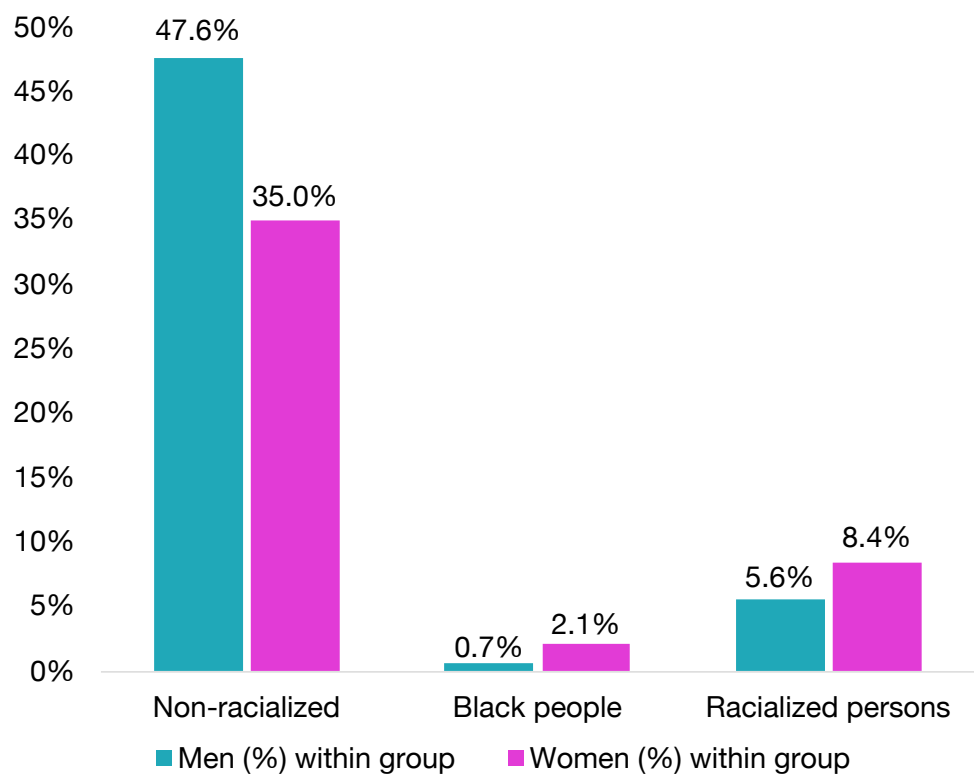


Figure 12 breaks down each demographic group by gender composition. Non-racialized people make up the clear majority of board members at 82.6%, with men leading women by 12.6 percentage points. Black women

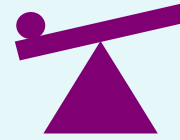
(2.1%), on the other hand, held three times the number of positions of Black men (0.7%). Similarly, racialized women (8.4%) exceeded the representation of their men counterparts by 2.8 percentage points.

Figure 12
Gender composition of demographic groups in top 25 LSE-listed companies



Senior management

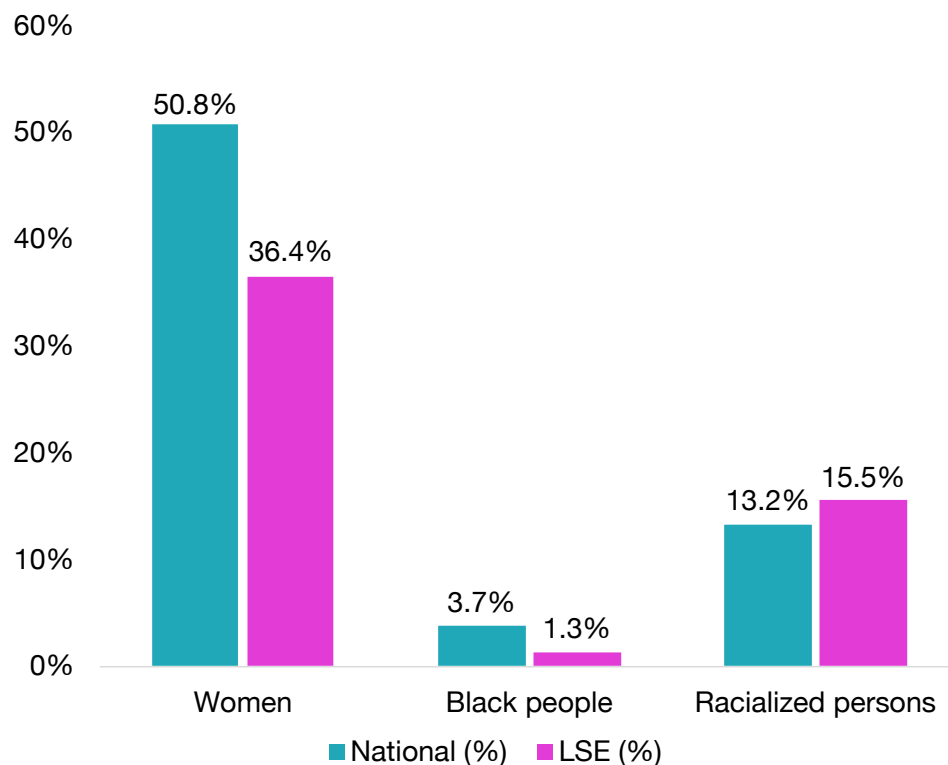
Women and Black people also continue to be under-represented in senior management, while racialized persons exceed expected representation. As Figure 13 shows, women face a large gap (14.4 percentage points) and are less represented than on boards. Black representation is notably lower in both cases as well, while racialized persons surpass their representation on boards by 1.5 percentage points and national population share by 2.3 percentage points.



Women and Black people also continue to be under-represented in senior management, while racialized persons exceed expected representation.

Figure 13

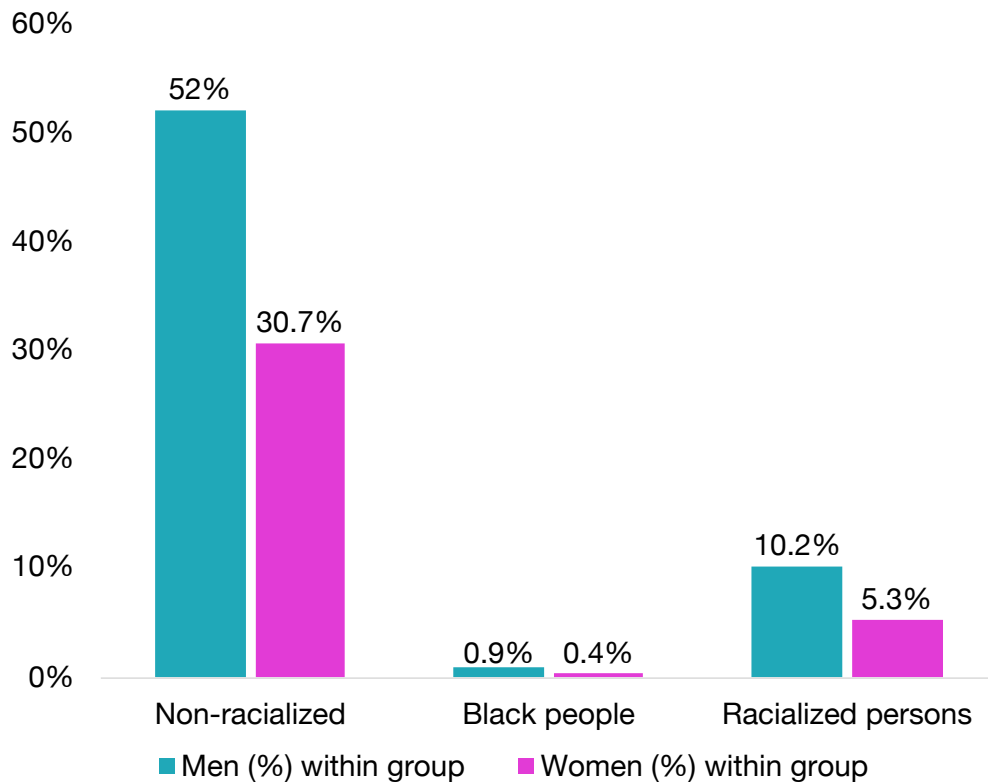
National population vs. senior management shares at the top 25 LSE-listed companies





Women in all demographic groups have lower representation in senior management positions than on boards of directors, as seen in Figure 14. Non-racialized individuals form the majority (82.7%) with a clear gender gap of 21.3 percentage points favouring men. Black and racialized women have about one-half the representation of their men counterparts.

Figure 14
Gender composition of demographic groups in top 25 LSE-listed companies



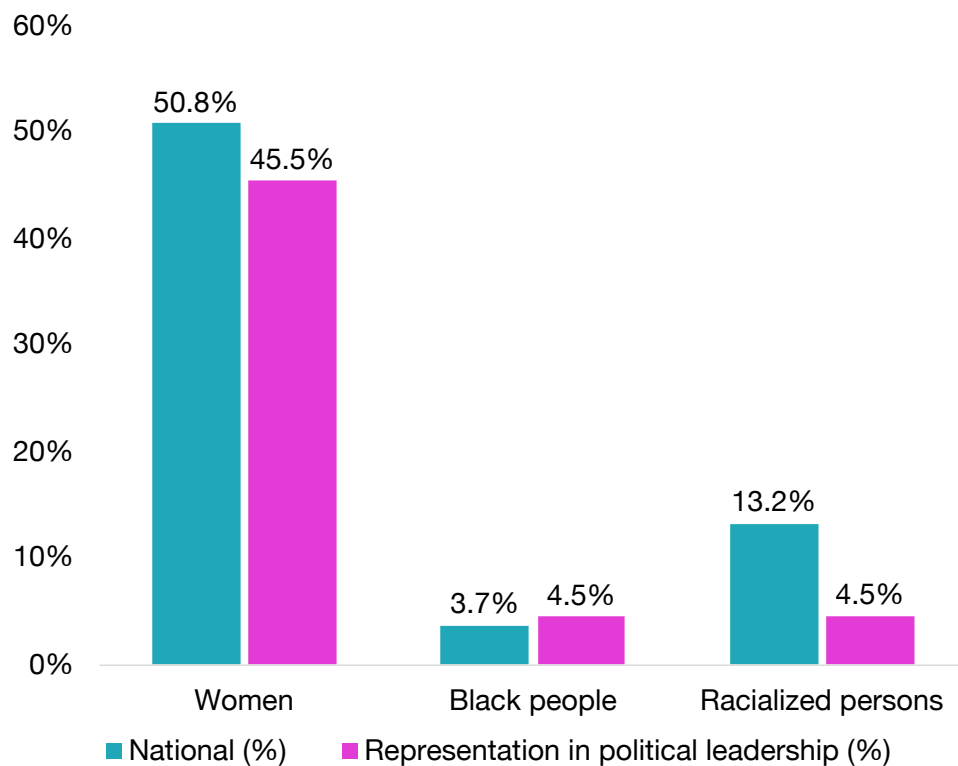
Political leadership

Figure 15 shows that representation in U.K. political leadership is mixed. Women are under-represented by 5.3 percentage points, and racialized persons are under-represented by 8.7 points, to their shares of the national population. Meanwhile, Black representation surpassed population share by 0.8 percentage points.



Figure 15

National population vs. representation shares in U.K. senior political leadership



Australia

In Australia, national population census data is collected every five years by the national statistical agency, the Australian Bureau of Statistics. It measures cultural diversity through reported ancestry, country of birth, language, and Indigenous status. As of 2025, women make up 50.4% of Australia's total population (13,918,078 of 27,594,464).⁶² In

2021, Black people represented 1.6% of Australia's total population⁶³ and racialized persons represented 22.3%.⁶⁴ As the Australian census does not officially track race, the figures for Black and racialized persons are a civil society estimates using ancestry and country-of-birth data.

Table 6 details the representation dataset for boards of directors and senior management for the top 25 ASX-listed companies.

Table 6

Boards of directors and senior management of the top 25 ASX-listed companies, by gender and race

Demographic group	Board of Directors (n)	Share of board of directors (%)	Senior Management (n)	Share of senior management (%)
Women	98	42.4%	102	39.6%
Black people	0	0%	1	0.4%
Racialized persons	18	7.8%	17	6.6%
Non-racialized (white)	209	90.1%	239	92.6%
Men	133	57.6%	156	60.5%
Total	227		258	

Boards of directors

All equity-deserving groups are under-represented on boards relative to their national population shares, as seen in Figure 16. Women hold 42.4% of board positions (eight percentage points below their national population share), and racialized persons are 14.5 percentage points below their population share. No Black representation on boards of directors was found.



All equity-deserving groups are under-represented on boards relative to their national population shares.

Figure 16
National population vs. representation shares on boards of top 25 ASX-listed companies

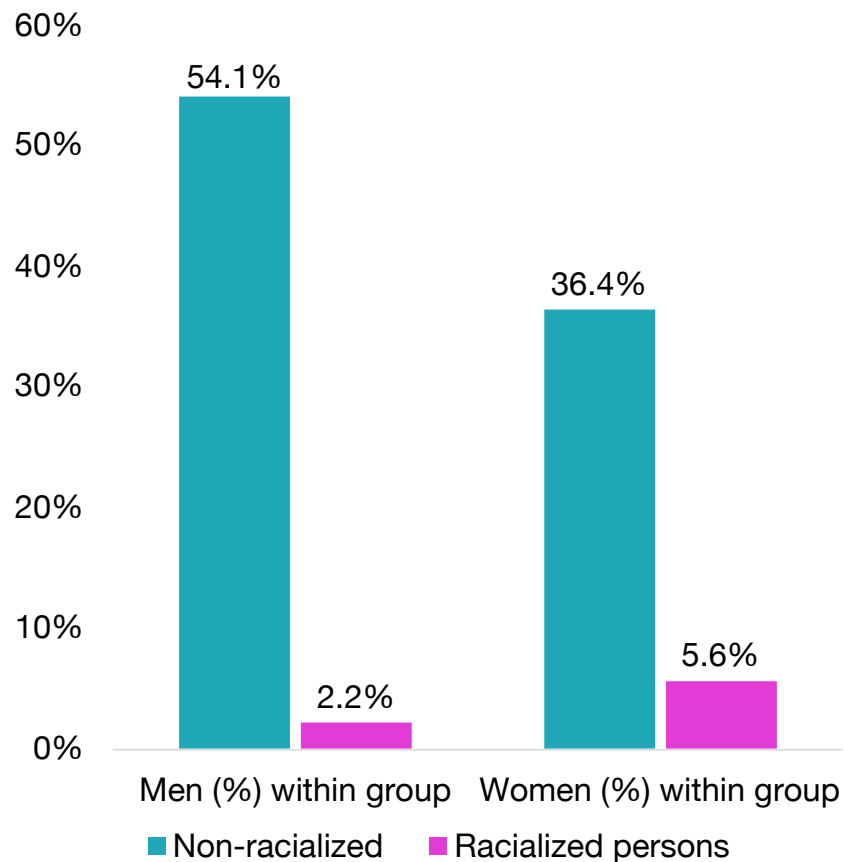




Figure 17 breaks down each demographic group by gender composition. Non-racialized persons make up the clear majority of board members at 90.5%, with a significant gender gap favouring men. Racialized persons have 7.8% representation, consisting of a majority of racialized women at 5.6% compared to 2.2% for racialized men. Again, no Black representation was found.

Figure 17

Gender composition of demographic groups in top 25 publicly listed ASX companies



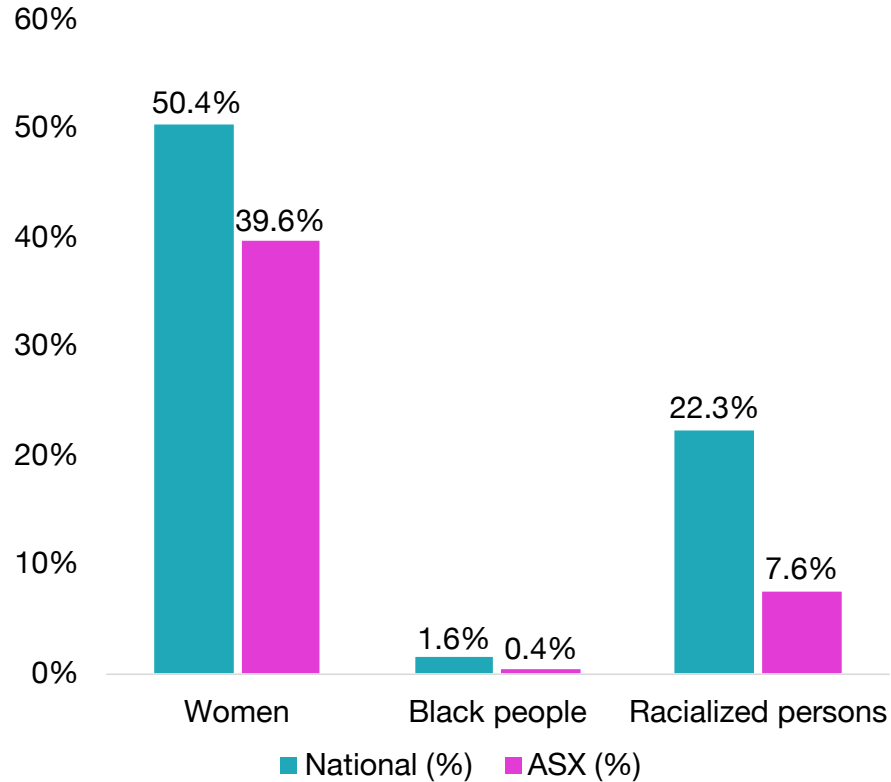
Senior management

Senior management across the top 25 ASX-listed companies has under-representation of all equity-deserving groups relative to national population shares. (See Figure 18.) Women hold 39.6% of roles (10.8 percentage points below population share), racialized persons 7.6% (14.7 points below), and Black representation is 0.4% (1.2 points below).



Figure 18

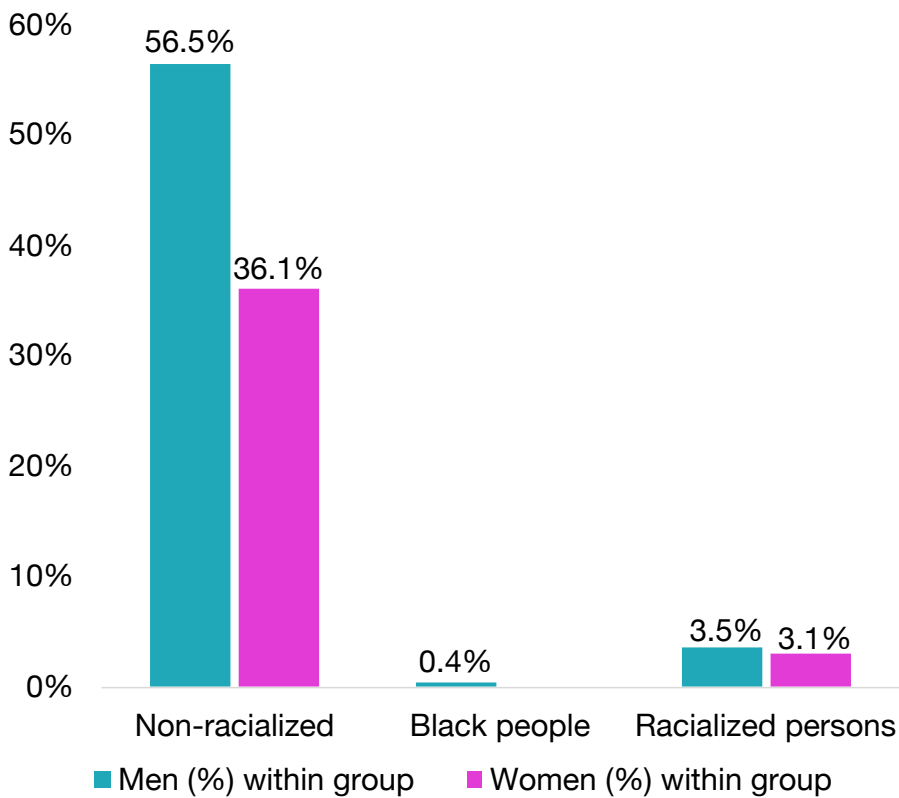
National population vs. representation shares in senior management of top 25 ASX-listed companies



Women across all groups were less represented in senior management than on boards of directors, and representation of Black women was absent altogether. Figure 19 shows that non-racialized persons make up the majority of senior management at 92.6%, including 56.5% non-racialized men and 36.1% non-racialized women, highlighting

a significant gender gap within this group. Black people account for 0.4% of senior management positions overall. All were Black men. Racialized persons represent the second-largest group at 7.6%, with racialized men slightly more represented (3.5%) than racialized women (3.1%).

Figure 19
Gender composition of demographic groups in top 25 ASX-listed companies



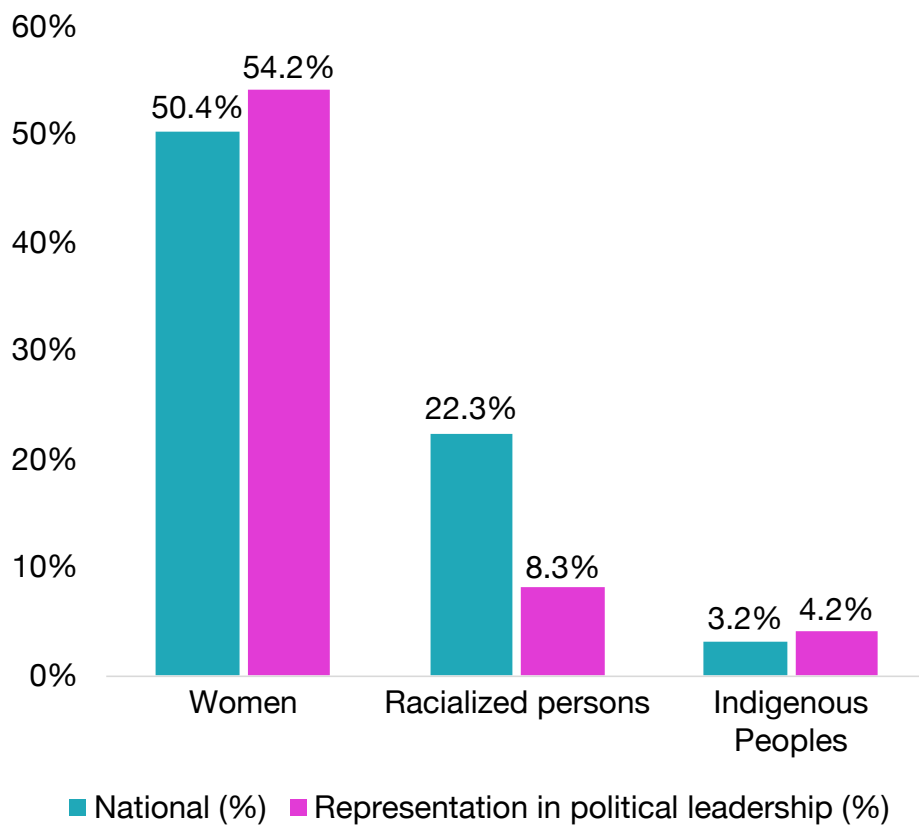
Political leadership

Representation in senior political leadership in Australia is mixed, as Figure 20 shows. Women slightly exceed population representation (54.2% vs. 50.4%) as do Indigenous Peoples (4.2% vs. 3.2%). Racialized individuals are notably under-represented (8.3% vs. 22.3%). There was no Black representation identified.



Figure 20

National population share vs. representation in senior political leadership in Australia



Comparative Analysis of Leadership Representation

Comparisons across the countries in this study are limited by varying national contexts and demographic compositions. Direct comparability and ranking cannot be conducted based on the data collected. However, representation can be benchmarked against national demographic shares of equity-deserving groups. This provides insight into groups' relative representation and helps to gauge parity, as well as observe current progress.

This section will provide an overarching analysis of the leadership representation levels pertaining to gender and people of African descent, as well as compare the differences between their representation on boards of directors and in senior management.

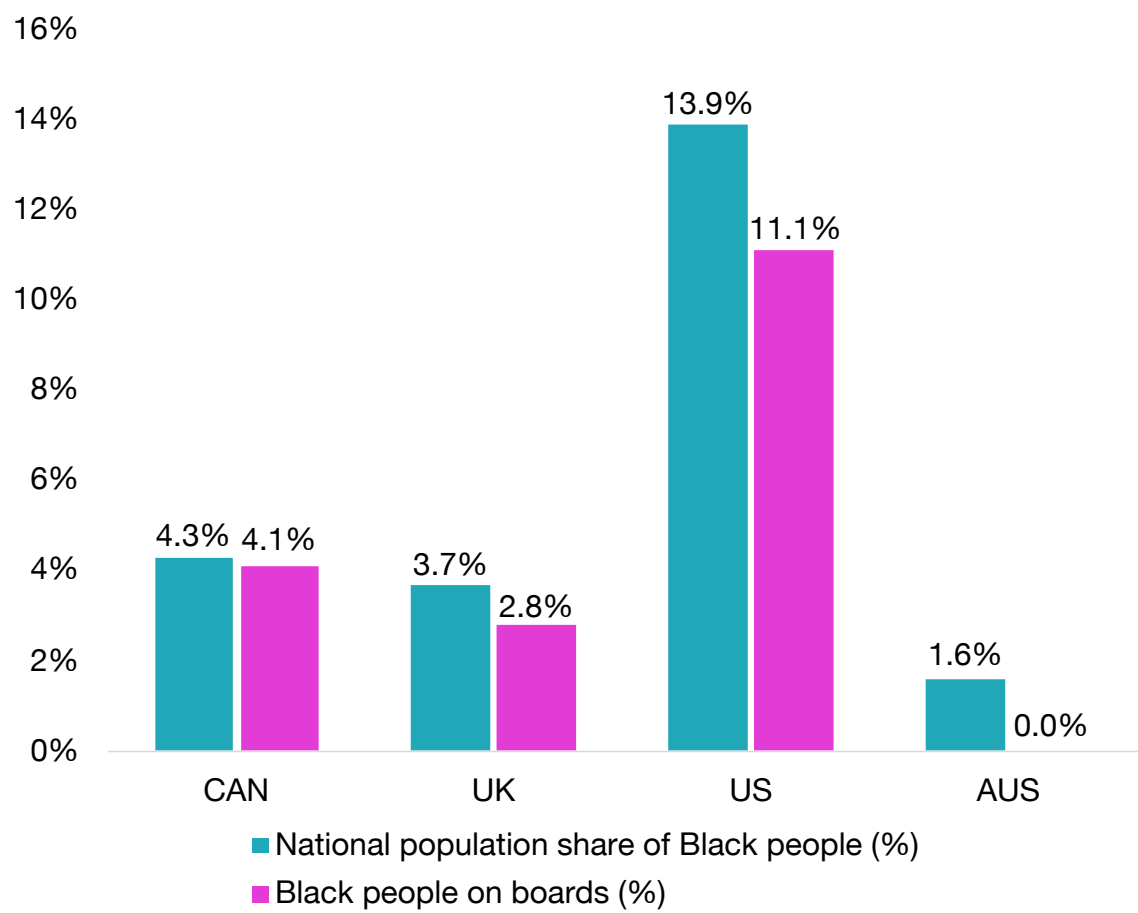


Black representation on boards of directors

Figure 21 positions the countries based on the gaps between the representation of people of African descent on boards of directors and their national population shares. Canada was found to be the closest to achieving parity on boards, with a participation gap of 0.2 percentage points for people of African

descent. This is followed by the U.K., with a gap of 0.9 percentage points. While the highest level of representation of Black people on boards of directors (11.1%) was observed in the U.S., this country also has the largest demographic share of Black people (13.9%), leaving a gap of 2.8 points.

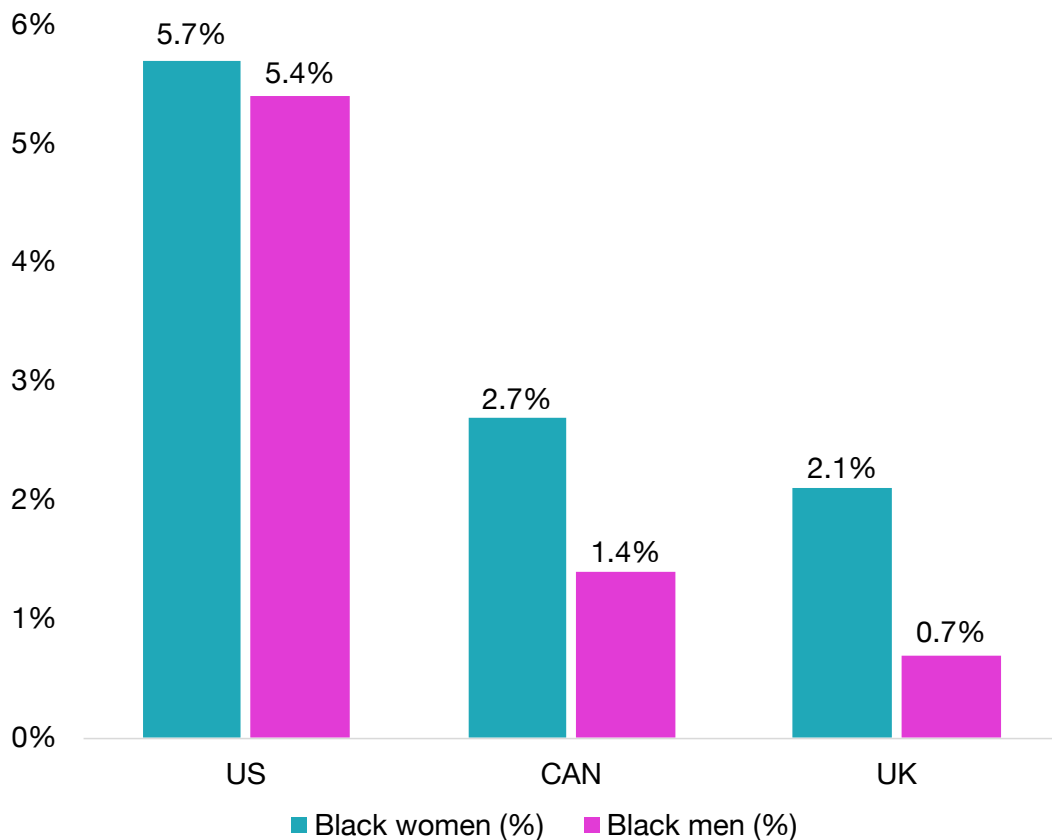
Figure 21
National findings for people of African descent on boards of directors vs. national population share





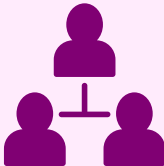
Black women make up the majority of Black representation on boards of directors, with representation between Black women and men being the closest in the United States. On Canadian boards, Black women's representation was nearly double that of Black men. This gap was even larger, at triple, in the U.K. In all three countries, Black women were better represented than their men counterparts, as shown in Figure 22.

Figure 22
Representation of Black women vs. Black men on boards of directors across countries



Black representation in senior management

Figure 23 positions the countries based on the size of the gap between Black representation in senior management and their national population share. Notably, gaps in representation were found to be larger in senior management than on boards of directors.



Gaps in representation were found to be larger in senior management than on boards of directors.

Figure 23
Representation of people of African descent in senior management across all countries analyzed

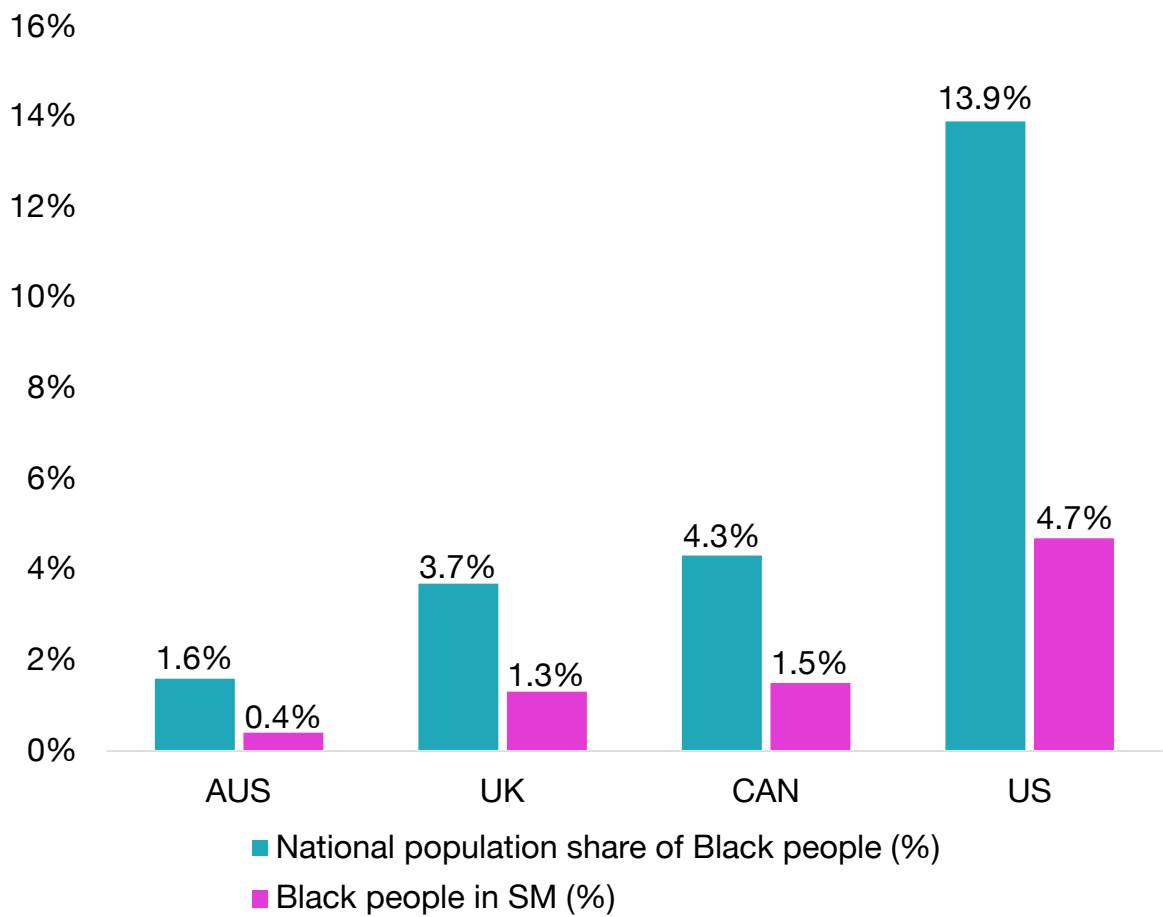
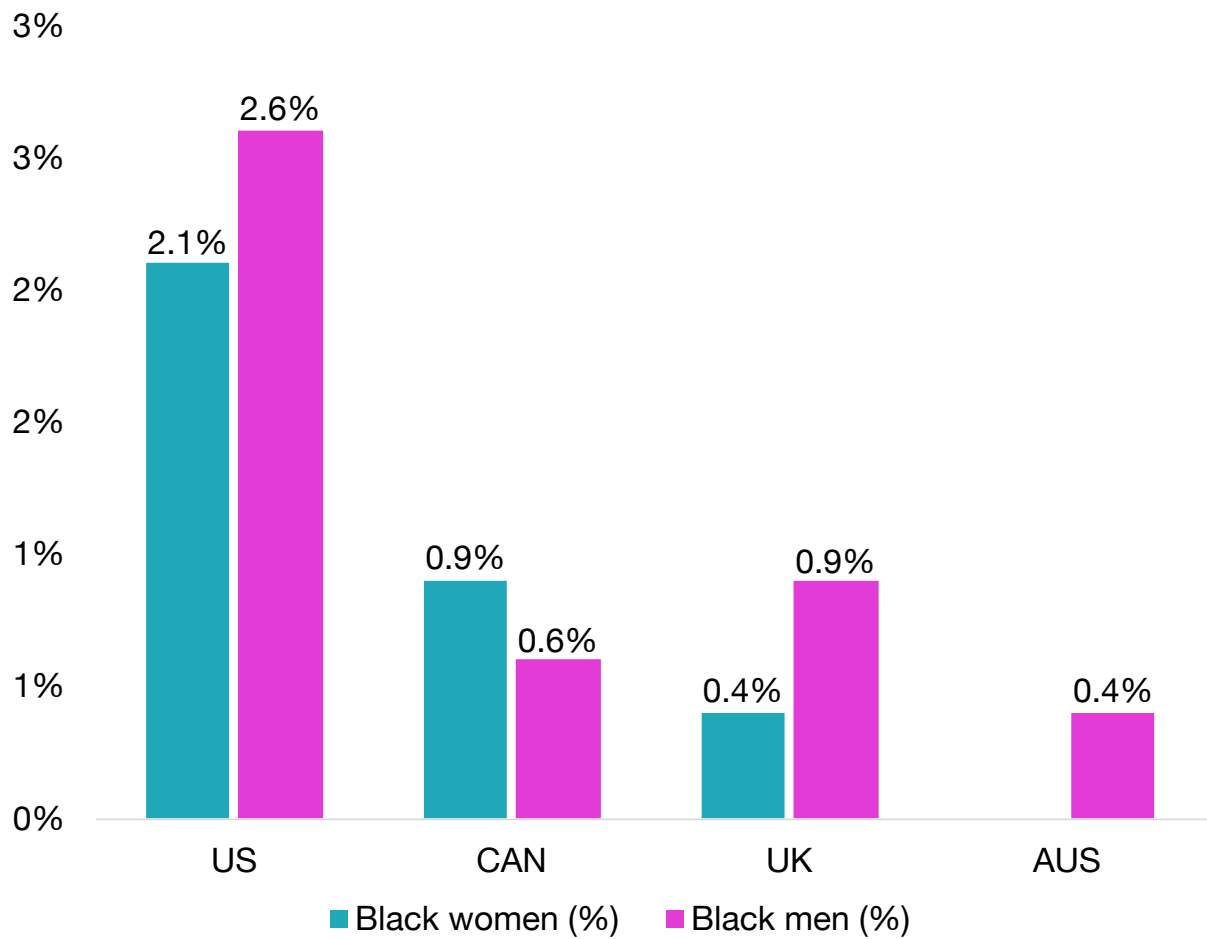


Figure 24 examines this data through a gender lens. Black men had a higher representation in the U.S., U.K. and Australia. Meanwhile in Canada, Black women led Black men by 0.3% but still had less representation in senior leadership than on boards of directors.



Figure 24
Representation of Black women vs. Black men in senior management across all countries analyzed

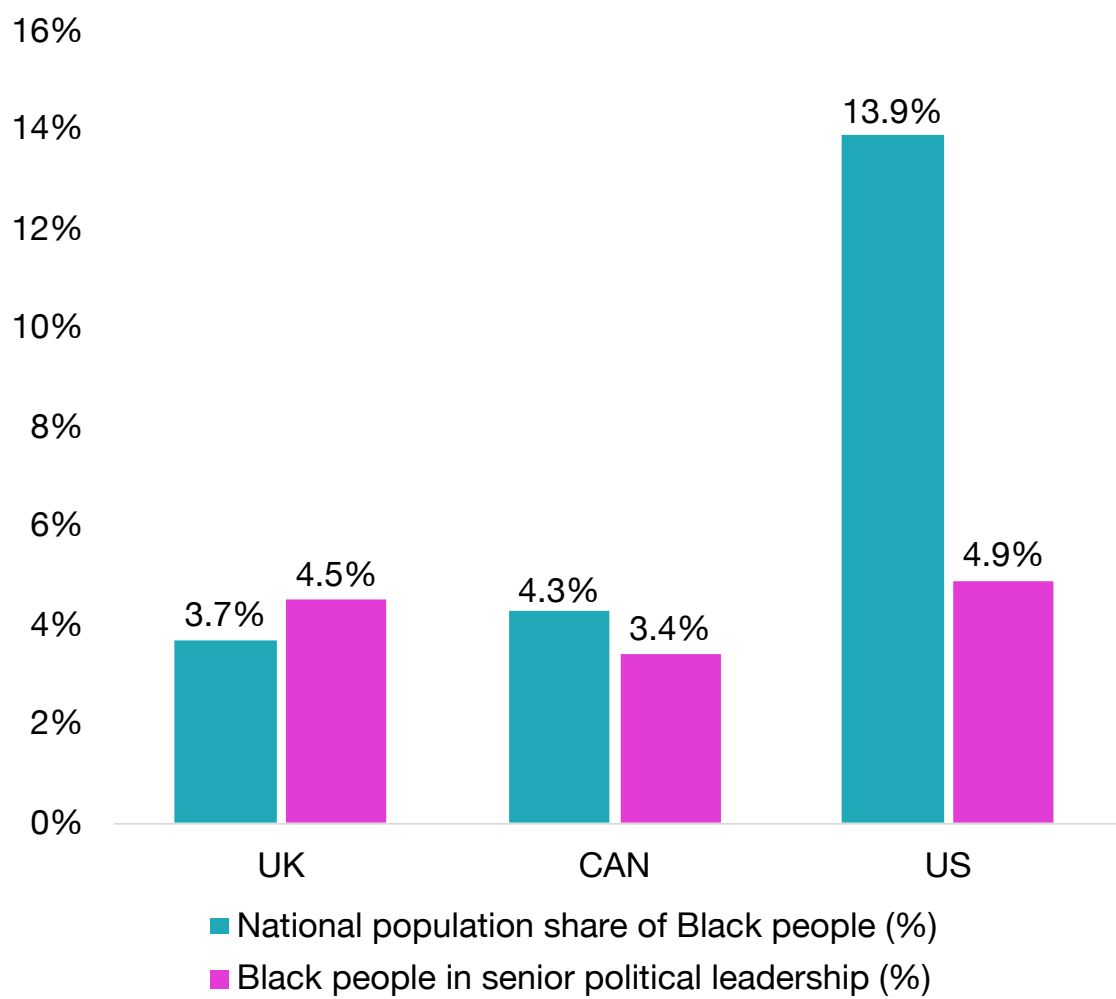


Black representation in political leadership

Canada and the U.S. each had one Black senior ranked official serving in a cabinet level role, while the U.K. had one Black senior ranked official serving as a head of state. Black representation in Canadian senior political leadership lagged population share by

0.9 percentage points, as Figure 25 shows. For the U.S, the gap was significant at nine percentage points. For the U.K., Black representation in political leadership reached 4.5%, exceeding national population share of 3.7%.

Figure 25
Representation of Black people in senior political leadership across all countries analyzed



Overarching findings

Representation of people of African descent in corporate and political leadership trailed the share of the national population in many cases.

In Canada (4.1%), representation came closest to parity to population share (4.3%) at the board level, followed by the U.S., which had the highest absolute representation of Black board members (11.1%) while also having the largest Black national population share (13.9%).

However, Black representation drops sharply in senior management across nearly all countries, often by more than one-half. It is almost or entirely absent in some corporate contexts, as well as in political leadership, in Australia. This suggests that some board-level diversity gains have not yet translated into inclusive leadership pipelines or equitable opportunities that provide the necessary professional and social experience and capital.

Applying an intersectional lens further reveals that women of African descent are distinctly more represented on boards than their men counterparts in a majority of the countries, indicating that gender-focused diversity efforts may be benefiting this group. Despite this, findings show a reversed pattern in senior management, where women of African descent were less represented compared to their men counterparts. A similar trend was observed for racialized women in senior

management, where they were found to be less represented than racialized men in most countries. However, they generally held more senior management positions when compared to women and men of African descent.

The “two-for-one” effect provides an explanation as to why there is a greater level of representation of Black women on boards of directors than in senior management. Black women have intersecting equity-deserving identities as members of under-represented racial and gender groups. Boards of directors are public-facing, and diversity among this rank of corporate leadership is more visible to external stakeholders, consumers, and media. This would become relevant in the face of public scrutiny and pressure to ensure diversity goals are achieved.

However, this pattern does not necessarily extend to senior leadership pipelines, which remain governed by more entrenched organizational processes, including informal networks, social capital, sponsorship dynamics, and subjective assessment of leadership “fit.” Furthermore, there is a high “recycle rate” observed among Black women, indicating that the same diverse individuals serve on multiple corporate boards at the same time. Boards, then, rely on the same proven talent rather than opening the pipeline to advance more Black women.⁶⁵ Being representative of intersectional identities can help facilitate entry into board roles, while the same intersectional identities face compounded barriers to career advancement into senior leadership.

The size and structure of these groups is another factor, as senior management teams are often larger and more operationally embedded than boards. Representation at the board level can signal the inclusiveness of upper-end decision making and high-level governance. However, it is less indicative of an equitable distribution of organizational power than is senior management. Diversifying senior leadership requires sustained change across internal pipelines, including recruitment, promotion, retention, and succession planning.

Consequently, it seems that gains in board diversity for Black populations coexist with persistent inequities in senior leadership, where daily decision making oversees organizational workflows and employees.





Policy Perspective & Action

This preliminary research has identified a number of critical issues.

First, additional consistent and intersectional data is needed. This is to understand the levels of representation of people of African descent in national populations and their experiences with education, employment, leadership and entrepreneurship, as well as other important dimensions of economic, social and cultural life, including health, well-being, and safety. Measuring progress and identifying gaps can bolster accountability mechanisms.

It's also important to recognize the role of intersectional identities and the unique experiences of women, immigrants and different ethnic and religious groups within the African diaspora.

The absence of disaggregated data collection of equity-deserving identities (including race, ethnicity, gender, and other intersectional dimensions) weakens the incentive and ability of organizations and policymakers to diagnose barriers and measure real progress. Strengthening data infrastructure in this way, and integrating it with UN Sustainable Development Goals reforms, should be

considered a priority when analyzing how commitments are being fulfilled.

Second, while it is important to recognize national contexts, it is equally important to recognize common elements in the history of colonization, slavery, segregation and anti-Black racism. Their impacts on the intergenerational experiences of people of African descent and implications for their opportunities at a global level must be considered. To achieve substantive equality or equity, historic disadvantages must be considered and addressed.

As emphasized in the UN special rapporteur's critique, modern development strategies and frameworks, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, may not sufficiently address colonial processes and global economic structures and how they have created and maintain racial inequality.⁶⁶ For instance, while Black communities have been present in Canada for centuries and have played an important role in shaping the country, recent immigration trends have largely contributed to the growth and diversity of Canada's Black populations.^{67,68,69} In the U.S., Black populations have a long and complex history tied to the transatlantic slave

trade and centuries of institutionalized racial exclusion.^{70,71,72,73,74} Racial discrimination dynamics in Commonwealth countries show persistent racial and ethnic disparities in employment, career progression and workplace treatment, pointing to ongoing systemic and institutionalized racism despite formal equality protections.^{75,76,77} Various historical trajectories influence labour market integration, access to networks, and representation in leadership of equity-deserving groups. They demand a contextualized, universally connected approach to address barriers erected and evolved by time.

Third, representation in leadership is one of the most visible yet persistently constrained outcomes for people of African descent. This comes despite well-established measures existing for education, employment, entrepreneurship and other dimensions of economic opportunities and disadvantage. Although corporate leaders hold access to wealth, power and influence, representation on boards and in senior management teams are often treated as markers of social inclusion. Such representation must move beyond tokenistic or symbolic inclusion to ensure meaningful participation in decision-making.

Fourth, there are no simple solutions to complex problems. The research suggests many factors affect access to leadership roles. For example, laws (such as gender quota laws for corporate board representation introduced in European countries like Norway, France

and Iceland mandating a 40% threshold for women board representation) have been shown to improve opportunities for women in leadership.⁷⁸ However, the results are inconclusive overall and questions linger about the extent to which laws reflect and/or shape cultural values.^{79,80} There is also evidence that, in Canada, investor expectations related to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) standards have shaped commitments to representation. Voluntary codes such as the 30% Club⁸¹ or the BlackNorth Initiative⁸² also appear to have had a significant impact on the representation of women and Black people respectively. Market forces, consumer demands, corporate leadership, policies, culture, and individual beliefs and actions also shape commitments to improving representation, even in the face of backlash.

A way forward

Improving representation requires the application of a comprehensive framework to assess leadership structures, institutional paradigms, and pathways to advancement. The critical ecological model of change, as shown in Figure 26, is an integrated systems-based approach to eliminate barriers for equity-deserving groups and identify opportunities for progress at the societal, organizational and individual levels.

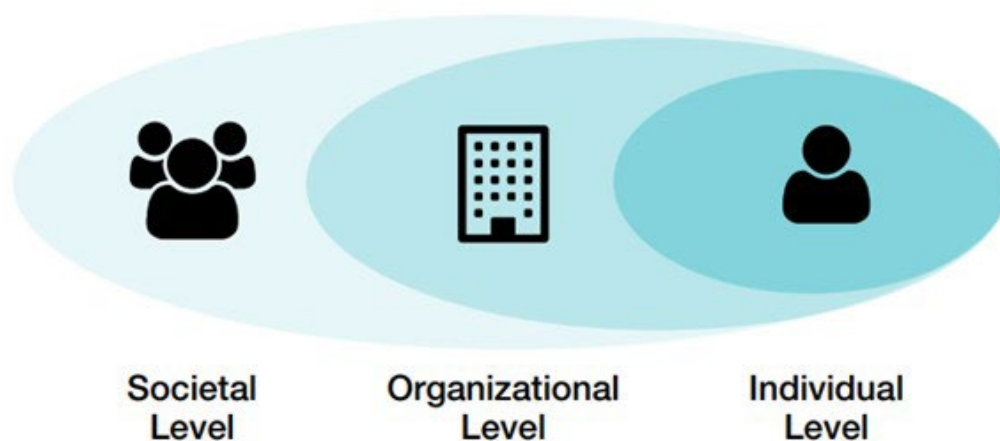
It offers a way to bridge ideological differences in change strategies between those focused on structural change, those focused on institutional and organizational

change, and those focused on individual empowerment. Drawing on public health models while bridging different disciplines and orientations, it offers an analytic, evidence-based framework that allows analysis of the complex barriers faced by members of equity-deserving groups and identify the levels for change.

On the societal level, historical and cultural factors have contributed to systemic discrimination over vast periods of time. For instance, underlying cultural values and belief systems often shape expectations, influencing leadership and access to executive roles.

Policy interventions, including legislative levers, have different levels of enforcement, transparency, and accountability that can limit regulatory efficacy in addressing disparities. Social infrastructure and socio-economic determinants stratify opportunity structures by shaping access to the type and quality of employment, education, health and social-capital outcomes. At the organizational level, change can be driven through leadership, strategy, policies and practices. At the individual level, change can come through building capacity in terms of knowledge, attitudes and behaviours for members of equity-deserving groups as well as decision-makers and gatekeepers.

Figure 26
Critical ecological model of change



Conclusion

As we look toward the next International Decade for People of African Descent, how do we build upon the pillars of recognition, justice and development? And how can this be done with greater alignment in policy, practice, and data within a coherent ecological framework? This requires moving beyond symbolically recognizing and acknowledging systemic and structural racism in organizations, political institutions and across national contexts.

To improve representation, countries that have signed on to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and advancing the goals of the Second Decade for People of African Descent must commit to concrete measures.

Collecting data to benchmark the current state and set goals for the future is a critical starting point. Unearthing disparities in leadership representation, along with other inequities, can be advanced by building a rich ecosystem of data to ensure that approaches and commitments to equity and inclusion are grounded in principles of collective participation, non-discrimination, transparency, and accountability. Disaggregated data is a vital. It acts as a tool to expose ongoing structural discrimination, drive action and change, and hold organizations accountable in building equitable leadership pipelines through mentorship, sponsorship, and inclusive succession planning. Without a data-informed approach, systemic barriers to advancement in hiring, promotion, and performance risk going undetected and structural biases perpetuated.



Collecting data to benchmark the current state and set goals for the future is a critical starting point.

The recommendations in Figure 27 share an alignment with the UN Human Rights-Based Approach to Data (HRBAD) and are shaped to promote equitable representation in the corporate sector. The HRBAD is grounded in the principles of participation, accountability, non-discrimination, transparency, and

privacy.⁸³ The HRBAD framework is designed to function as a mechanism to provide practical human rights guidance to data collection and disaggregation and reinforce the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Figure 27

Recommendations for policy and practice to improve diverse leadership representation



Leverage disaggregated data to improve monitoring and tracking of career progression, leadership development and representation



Strengthen transparency and celebrate diverse talent through leadership diversity reporting



Develop and support equitable leadership pipelines through mentorship, sponsorship, and inclusive succession planning



Audit internal career progression pathways for structural bias in hiring, promotion, and work performance evaluation



Set outcomes-based targets for leadership representation, link executive accountability and incentives to inclusion outcomes



Publicly report senior management composition disaggregated by both race and gender, above a defined size threshold

The use of racial and ethnic data can be kept consistent with human rights principles by robust safeguards that guide the collection, analysis, and reporting of sensitive data in a manner that respects privacy, minimizes harm, and maintains transparency. Therefore, these recommendations must be carried out with clear data-privacy safeguards. They must also promote a system of operational accountability grounded in meaningful consultation with, and the inclusion of, the groups they are intended to support.

Building on this, recent recommendations from the UN's Permanent Forum on People of African Descent (PFPAD) make clear that achieving equity necessitates a more deliberate, strategic and intersectional focused data. As noted in the 2025 report [A/HRC/60/72, para. 62\(c\)](#), UN member states are urged "to prioritize the systematic collection and presentation of comprehensive, disaggregated data-including by race, ethnicity, gender, and other relevant intersecting factors" to conduct accurate reporting driven by nuanced monitoring, assessment and evaluation of the lived realities of women of African descent. This echoes previous calls for the collection of race- and ethnicity-based data, and an intersectional approach to support evidence-based policy making and accountability measures toward equitable progress.

The PFPAD, and related human rights mechanisms like the HRBAD, clearly emphasize that structural inequalities may be insufficiently measured, or missed entirely, if there is a failure to collect and disaggregate data that accurately reflects diverse demographic makeups and applies an intersectional lens. Furthermore, as demonstrated by UN human rights reporting, deficiencies in data disaggregation contribute to the "invisibilization" of intersectional groups who face compounded barriers. As a result, a lack of data disaggregation can undermine and weaken the effectiveness of policy responses ([A/HRC/59/62, paras. 41-42](#)). Importantly, data is not only a technical instrument but a fundamental component in the application of a human rights-based approach to policymaking intended to address systemic and structural racism ([A/HRC/60/72, para. 66; para/ 70](#)).

The PFPAD's recommendations call for the meaningful participation of people of African descent in designing and implementing data systems. They recognize that inclusive data governance is critical to ensure accuracy, legitimacy, and accountability ([A/HRC/60/72, para. 62; para. 72\(b\)](#)). This aligns with broader human rights standards and data collection frameworks. These affirm that disaggregated data, collected in accordance with principles of self-identification, participation, and privacy, is crucial to reveal systemic discrimination and provide a basis for targeted intervention measures.

Figure 28
 Human-rights based approach to disaggregated data collection and international co-operation in measuring equitable progress for diverse populations

Disaggregated data is a mandatory tool for measurement that serves as a prerequisite for equity and impactful policy action	
Harmonized and flexible definitions	Advance internationally aligned guidance on race and ethnicity while allowing for state adaption to meet national context
Create safe, rights-based national data collection	Utilize legal pathways under frameworks (i.e., EU GDPR) to increase statistical equity research for public interest, embed safeguards, and align with UN HRBAD
Strengthen disaggregated data systems	Integrate race and ethnicity variables across labour market data, corporate reporting, and socioeconomic domains to drive insights and accountability

The recommendations outlined in figures 27 and 28 reinforce the PFPAD’s findings, which clearly indicate that strengthening of data systems (with an emphasis on intersectionality) through data disaggregation is not optional. Nor should it be strictly prohibited, as it is an indispensable requirement to achieving recognition, justice, and development during the Second International Decade for People of African Descent.

Embedding these principles within the ecological model would allow for more precise diagnosis of barriers and bolster the alignment of policy, organizational practice, and individual-level interventions to address the compounded effects of racism and gender inequality.

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