



**Women, Visible Minorities, and Indigenous Peoples in Leadership Positions
in London, Ontario, and in Ontario's Agencies, Boards and Commissions**

Alina Sutter and Victoria Esses

Pathways to Prosperity and Western University

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Executive Summary

The current project examines diversity in leadership positions in the non-profit and public sectors in London, Ontario, and in Ontario's agencies, boards, and commissions. The project consists of a quantitative and qualitative component. The goals of the quantitative component were: 1) to follow up the study conducted by Medianu and Esses (2016) by reassessing and comparing the level of representation of women and visible minorities¹ in leadership roles in the public and non-profit sectors in London, as well as in Ontario's agencies, boards, and commissions, four years after the earlier study, and 2) to assess and establish a baseline for the level of Indigenous representation in leadership roles in these same organizations. The goal of the qualitative component of the project was to determine what organizations in the public and non-profit sectors in London have done to improve the level of diversity in leadership positions, and the associated challenges and potential solutions.

Quantitative Component

A team of research assistants used publicly available information to identify and code members of the senior leadership teams and board of directors in organizations in London's public and non-profit sectors as well as in Ontario's agencies, boards, and commissions. In total, 1,729 leaders were identified of whom 1,723 were coded for gender, and 1,504 were coded for visible minority status and Indigenous status. The following figures show the results and compare these results to Medianu and Esses' (2016) findings as well as to population benchmarks.²

¹ This report uses the term 'visible minorities' as utilized by Statistics Canada (2020b) and Medianu and Esses (2016). However, we acknowledge that in the current discourse, the term racialized persons may be more appropriate. Indigenous Peoples are not included in this category.

² The population benchmarks for the city of London and Ontario are based on the 2011 NHS Profile (Statistics Canada, 2013a, 2013b) and the 2016 Census (Statistics Canada, 2017c, 2017d).

Figure 1. Representation of women in leadership positions by year and sector in London, Ontario

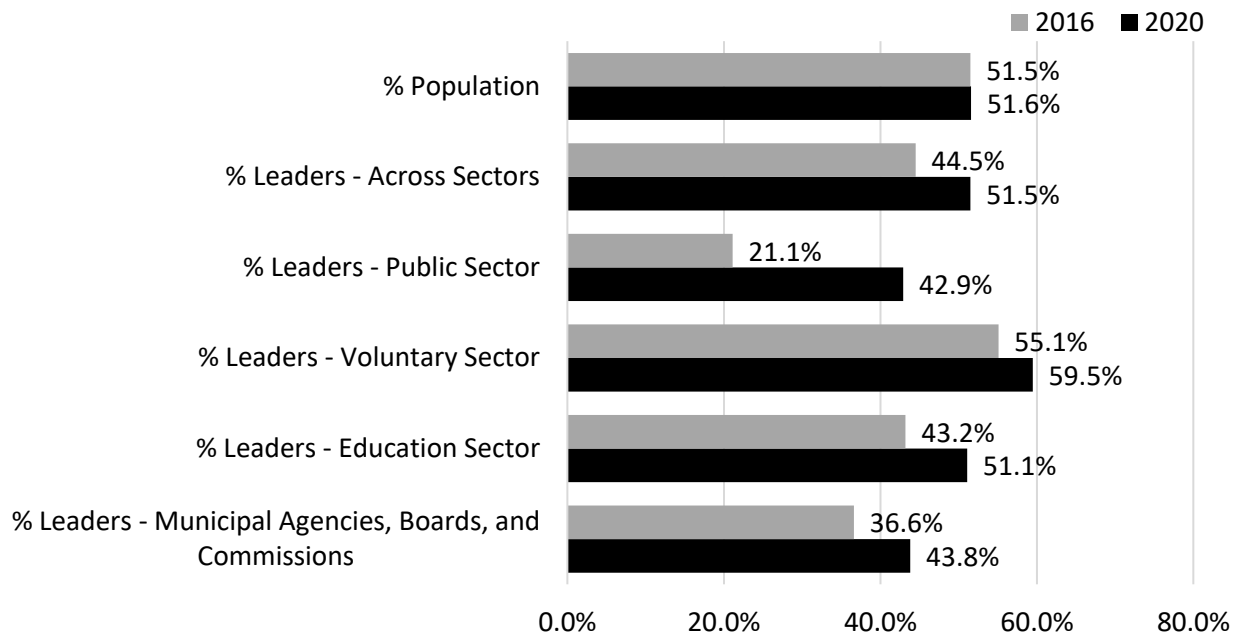


Figure 2. Representation of visible minorities in leadership positions by year and sector in London, Ontario

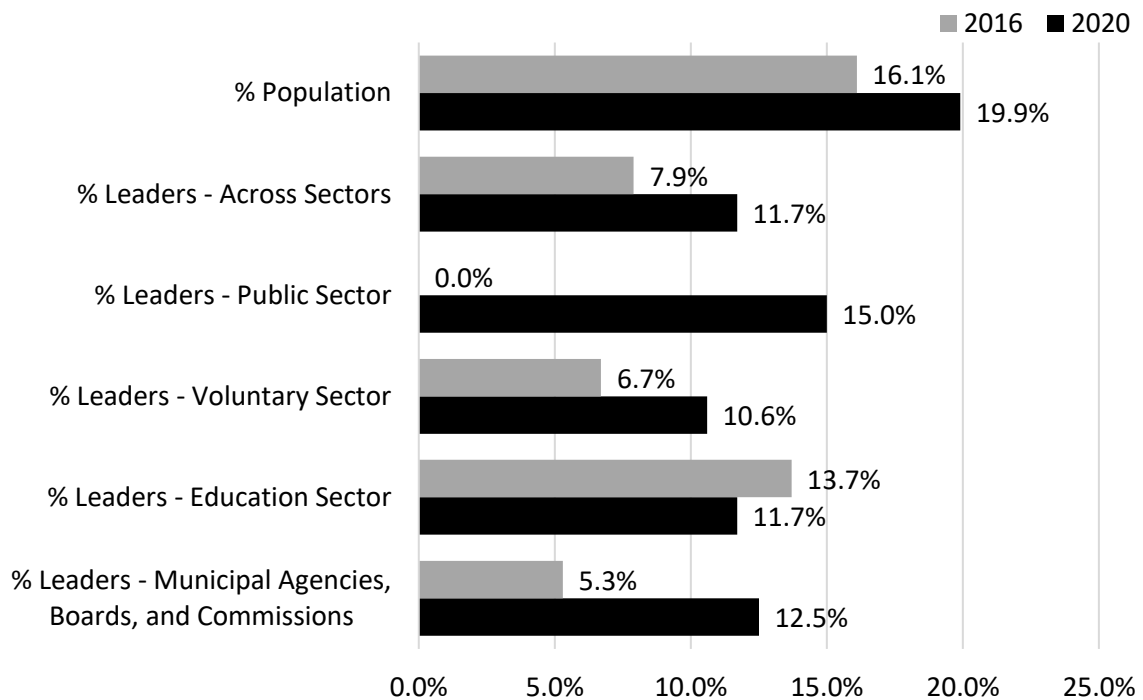


Figure 3. Representation of female visible minorities in leadership positions by year and sector in London, Ontario

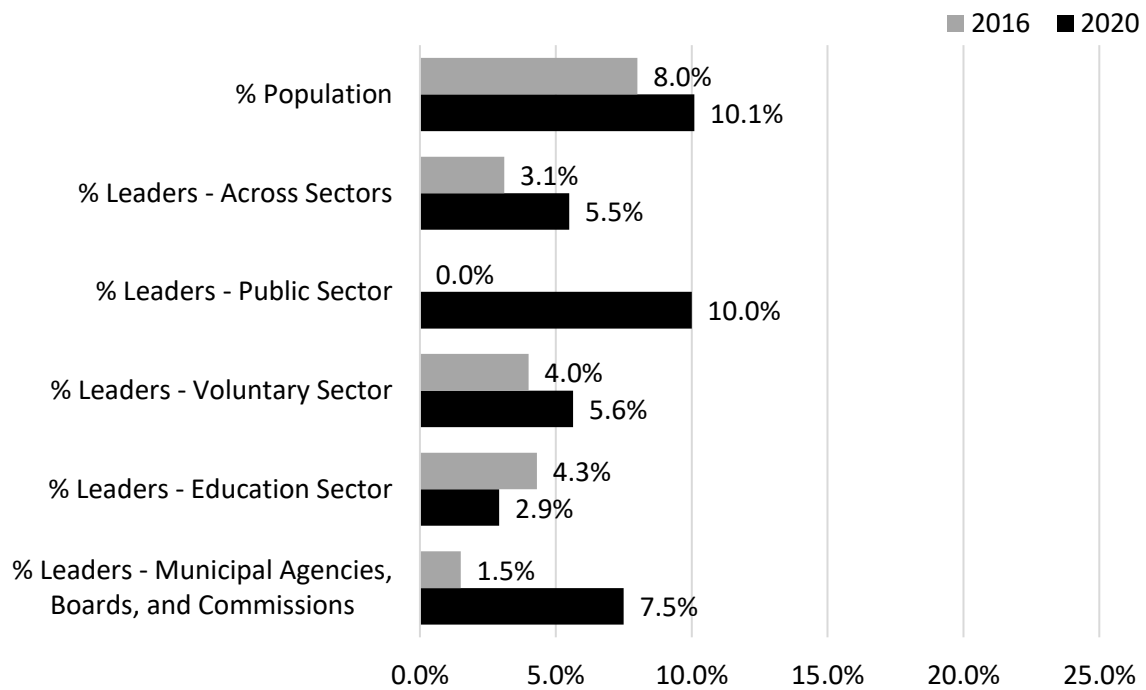


Figure 4. Representation of women, visible minorities, and female visible minorities in leadership positions by year in Ontario's agencies, boards, and commissions

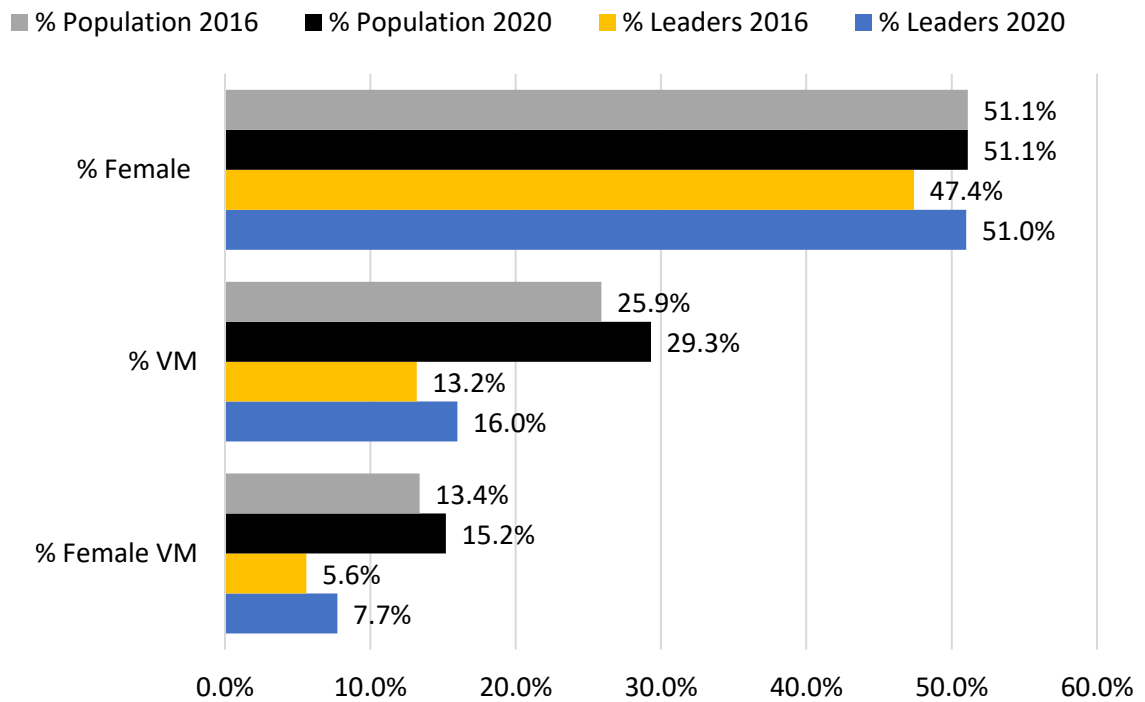
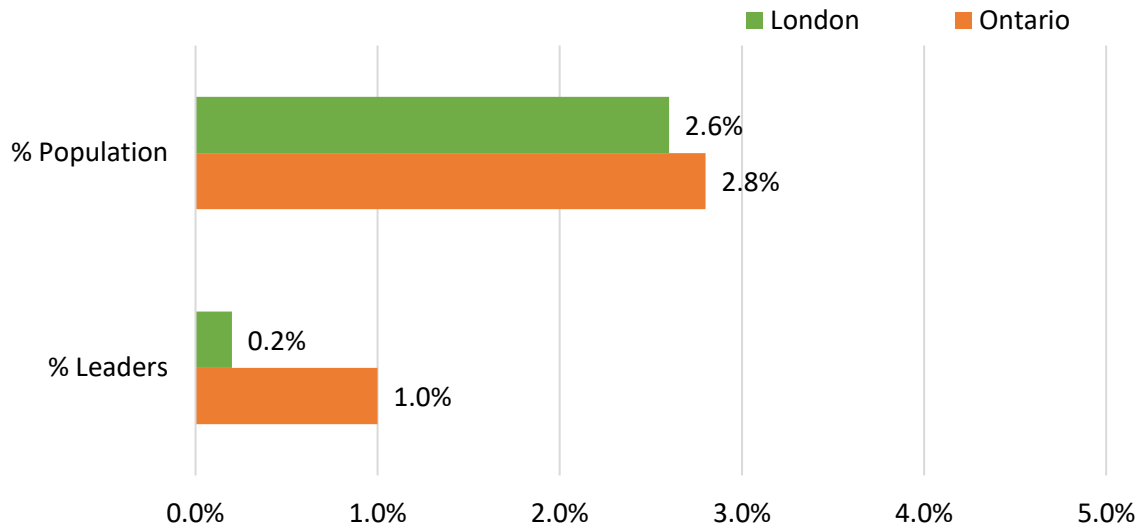


Figure 5. Representation of Indigenous Peoples in leadership positions across sectors in London and Ontario’s agencies, boards, and commissions



Overall, the results show that the representation of women improved the most over the last four years, reaching a level of representation that is similar to the population level in London (when all sectors are compared) and in Ontario’s agencies, boards, and commissions. However, while the level of representation of visible minorities and female visible minorities also showed some improvements over the last four years in both London and Ontario’s agencies, boards, and commissions, visible minorities and female visible minorities continue to be underrepresented compared to their representation in the population. Finally, the results also found that Indigenous Peoples are severely underrepresented in London (in all sectors) as well as Ontario’s agencies, boards, and commissions.

Qualitative Component

Interviews were conducted with seven executive directors and board members of six organizations in the public and non-profit sectors in London. The interviews were semi-structured and focused on key informants’ experiences with initiatives and programs designed to increase diversity in leadership positions, including perceived barriers to efforts to promote diversity and potential strategies to overcome these barriers.

Two key informants reported that diversity, inclusion, and equity were deeply embedded in their organizational culture and affected their work, including hiring decisions. The other key informants reported a heightened sense of awareness about the topic and that their organizations were in the process of developing new strategic plans with a diversity focus, reviewing policies, and/or strengthening their recruitment process. The following table

summarizes the perceived barriers and potential strategies to overcome these barriers that key informants identified.

Table 1. Barriers and strategies to overcome barriers as identified by key informants

Barriers	Strategies to Overcome Barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The challenging nature of the task: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The difficulty of breaking down diversity initiatives into actionable steps - The challenge of approaching diverse communities without appearing tokenistic - Mistrust within diverse communities • Overreliance on personal networks to recruit new board members • Limited time and setting of priorities • Insufficient funding • Recruitment challenges • Perceived lack of qualifications of diverse individuals • Preference for the status quo • Lack of inclusion and negative attitudes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to raise awareness • Demonstrate leadership at the organizational and sectoral level • Conduct diversity performance evaluations • Provide education and training • Develop and make accessible toolkits and a repository of best practices • Conduct action-oriented diversity training • Use of recruitment programs and mentorship

In conclusion, the current study sheds light on the level of representation of women, visible minorities, and Indigenous Peoples in London, Ontario, as well as in Ontario’s agencies, boards, and commissions. We hope that these findings as well as the insights gained from the key informant interviews provide useful information to organizations and sector leaders who aim to diversify their senior leadership teams.

Background

Several studies have investigated the level of representation of visible minorities, Indigenous Peoples, and women in leadership positions in Canada (e.g., Cukier et al., 2020, MacDougall et al., 2020, Medianu & Esses, 2016). The results of these studies show that these groups are often underrepresented when compared to their level of representation at the population level. Furthermore, the degree of underrepresentation often varies depending on the sector and geographical location investigated.

Most studies have investigated the level of representation of diverse groups in different sectors in large metropolises such as Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. There has been less of a focus on medium-sized cities such as London, Ontario. One exception is the study conducted by Medianu and Esses (2016) which examined the level of representation of women and visible minorities in senior leadership positions in London, including senior executive roles as well as board positions in organizations in the public and non-profit sectors. The study also investigated the level of representation of women and visible minorities in Ontario's agencies, boards, and commissions. The results showed that women and visible minorities were underrepresented in senior leadership positions. The study also found that female visible minorities were particularly underrepresented.

The goals of the current project were threefold. The first goal was to build on the past study conducted by Medianu and Esses (2016) by assessing the level of representation of women and visible minorities in leadership roles in the public and non-profit sectors in London, as well as in Ontario's agencies, boards, and commissions in 2020. In this way, the current project aimed to determine whether the level of representation of women and visible minorities in the most senior decision-making positions has changed over the last four years.

The second goal of the current project was to assess the level of Indigenous representation in senior leadership roles in the non-profit and public sectors in London and in Ontario's agencies, boards, and commissions. By also examining the level of Indigenous representation, the current study aimed to add to our understanding of diversity in organizations and to provide a baseline to assess changes in Indigenous representation in the future.

Finally, the third goal of the current project was to conduct in-depth interviews with key informants in London to determine what organizations in the public and non-profit sector in London have done to improve the representation of visible minorities, Indigenous Peoples, and women in their organizations, and associated challenges and potential solutions.

Benefits of Diversity

Diversity in leadership is important for several reasons. Diversity in leadership improves organizational and economic performance. A study found that organizations that are more likely to be racially and ethnically diverse have a 33% performance advantage compared to companies that are less diverse (Hunt et al., 2018). Similarly, another study examined 112 large U.S. companies and found that organizations with boards with ethnic and gender diversity had better returns on assets and investment (Erhardt et al., 2003).

Another benefit of diversity in leadership is that it allows organizations to establish connections to more diverse markets. For example, compared to organizations that do not actively hire and support individuals from underrepresented groups, diverse organizations are 70% more likely to enter new markets (Hewlett et al., 2013). One of the reasons for this is because organizations with a diverse leadership are more likely to leverage international connections, language skills and cultural competencies (Conference Board of Canada, 2008).

Furthermore, diversity in leadership positions allows for a broad range of perspectives to be included in the decision-making process (Cukier & Yap, 2009). This has important implications for an organization's ability to create innovative products and services. For example, a study found that organizations with more diverse management teams have 19% higher revenues due to innovation (Lorenzo et al., 2018).

Diversity in leadership also allows organizations to expand their access to talent pools both domestically and globally to recruit new employees to overcome skill gaps (Elias, 2020). Diversity in leadership is also important because it signals to the population that citizens have equal access to power (Evans et al., 2007).

Diversity in leadership also has additional benefits in specific sectors. For example, in the education sector, diversity in leadership is key because of the inspirational value it transmits to the younger generation, who will be our future leaders (Gurin et al., 2004). In the voluntary sector, diversity is important because it helps to better understand and meet the diverse needs and interests of clients, volunteers, and stakeholders (Guo & Musso, 2007).

Past Research on the Representation of Women in Leadership Positions

Several studies have investigated the level of representation of women on boards and executive roles in the corporate sector. For example, according to Zochodne (2020), the level of representation of women on boards of 230 S&P/TSX companies increased from 18.3% in 2015 to 27.6% in 2019. Similarly, the Canadian Board Diversity Council (2018) surveyed 17 TSX60 companies and found that 27.8% of the board positions were occupied by women. This level of

representation is below the percentage of women in Canada's population (50.9%, Statistics Canada, 2017b).

In another survey completed by 72 of Canada's 500 largest organizations (as measured by revenue and reported by the Financial Post), one in four board members were women (Canadian Board Diversity Council, 2018). The same study also found that the level of representation was lower at the executive level. Only 19.5% of senior executive roles were occupied by women.

In a similar study, McDougall et al. (2020) investigated the level of representation of women on boards in companies listed on the TSX subject to disclosure requirements. Among the 710 companies which disclosed the number of women on their boards, 19% of board seats were held by women. In terms of executive positions, 16.8% of executive officer positions were held by women. Among the S&P/TSX 60 companies, the level of representation of women on boards was higher (29.8%). McDougall et al. (2020) also found differences in the level of representation of women on boards and at the executive level across industries. For example, the three industries with the highest level of female representation on boards were 'utilities & pipelines' (30%), 'communication & media' (27%), and 'clean technology' (23%). The three industries with the lowest level of female representation on boards included 'mining' (13%), 'oil and gas' (12%), and 'energy services' (11%). The industry with the highest level of female representation in executive officer positions was 'real estate' (26%) and the industry with the lowest level of female representation in executive officer positions was 'energy services' (8%).

In terms of the level of representation of women in the public service, the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (2020) reported that 54.8% of public servants are women, which is above the percentage of women in Canada's population (50.9%, Statistics Canada, 2017b). Furthermore, the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (2020) found that women occupy 50.2% of executive positions.

In a study conducted by Cukier et al. (2020), the researchers investigated the representation of women in different sectors in eight Canadian cities. Across all sectors and cities, women were underrepresented on boards of directors holding 40.8% of board seats. However, the researchers found variations in female representation depending on the sector and city investigated. For example, the corporate sector had the lowest share of women on boards (25.3%). In contrast, school board directors (47.3%) and provincial agencies, boards, and commissions (46.2%) had the highest shares of women on boards. In terms of geographical location, Cukier et al. (2020) found that Halifax (46.6%) had the highest level of female representation and Calgary (33.7%) had the lowest level of female representation.

Using an intersectional lens, Cukier et al. (2020) pointed out that, in 2019, women who are not visible minorities outnumbered women who are visible minorities in board positions by a substantial margin. For example, in the corporate sector in Toronto, women who are not visible

minorities outnumber women who are visible minorities by a ratio of 12 to 1. This is significant given that in the population of Toronto there are more women who are visible minorities than women who are not.

In terms of the level of representation of women in leadership positions in London, Ontario, Medianu and Esses (2016) found that women were underrepresented in leadership positions (44.5%) compared to the proportion of women in the population (51.4%). Similarly, the Cukier et al. (2020) study found that women were underrepresented on boards in London.

The current research aims to investigate to what extent the level of representation of women has increased since Medianu and Esses' (2016) study four years ago and to also compare the current level of representation to the level of representation in the population. As a point of reference, according to the 2016 Census, 51.6% of the population in the city of London are women (Statistics Canada, 2017d) and 51.1% of the population of Ontario (Statistics Canada, 2017c) are women.

Past Research on the Representation of Visible Minorities in Leadership Positions

Overall, the results from past research suggest that visible minorities are underrepresented in leadership positions in Canada. For example, in a recent review of the disclosure provided by 270 publicly traded corporations governed by the Canada Business Corporations Act, MacDougall et al. (2020) found that board members who are visible minorities are surprisingly rare, given Canada's diverse population. Although visible minorities represent 22.3% of Canada's population (Statistics Canada, 2017b), MacDougall et al. (2020) found that only 5.5% of board positions are occupied by members of visible minorities.

In the case of non-profit organizations, Statistics Canada (2021) found that the number of visible minorities on boards of directors varies depending on whether the organization has a policy on board diversity or not. In their study, they found that if a non-profit organization had a policy on board diversity, then 14.2% of the board of directors were visible minorities. If the non-profit organization did not have a policy on board diversity, only 10.2% of the board of directors were visible minorities.

Regarding the level of representation of visible minorities in the public service, Griffith (2020) compared the level of representation of different visible minority groups to their share of the citizenship population. Griffith (2020) used the citizenship population as a benchmark given that citizens have priority in the staffing process for public service jobs. The results showed that, while most visible minority groups were represented according to their share of the citizenship population, this was not the case for South Asian, Chinese, and Filipino public servants. Furthermore, among *executive* public servants, Latin American, Black, Chinese, Filipino, and

South East Asian individuals were significantly underrepresented. Finally, Griffith (2020) also found that among the 335 Assistant Deputy Ministers, 9% were a visible minority which is below the citizenship population benchmark for visible minorities (17.2%).

In a study conducted by Cukier et al. (2020), the researchers investigated the representation of visible minorities in different sectors in eight Canadian cities. The researchers found that visible minorities were consistently underrepresented in board positions in all sectors (10.4% compared to 28.4% of the population of the eight cities studied). However, the degree of underrepresentation varied depending on the sector. For example, the corporate sector had the lowest level of representation of visible minorities in board positions (4.5%). In contrast, universities and colleges in the education sector (14.6%) and municipal agencies, boards, and commissions (13.1%) had the highest levels of representation of visible minorities in board positions.

Furthermore, Cukier et al. (2020) found that visible minorities were consistently underrepresented in board positions across several cities, though the extent of this underrepresentation varied. For example, in Toronto and Vancouver nearly half the population represents visible minorities (51.4% and 48.9%, respectively), whereas the share of visible minorities in board positions is 15.5% and 12.3%, respectively. In Montreal, where visible minorities represent 22.6% of the population, only 6.2% of board positions were held by visible minorities. This is lower than the percentage of visible minorities in board positions in Halifax, 6.7%, a city where visible minorities represent only 11.4% of the population.

In terms of past research on the level of representation of visible minorities in London, Ontario, Medianu and Esses (2016) examined the level of representation of visible minorities in senior leadership positions in London, including senior executive roles as well as board positions in organizations in the public and non-profit sectors. Medianu and Esses (2016) found that visible minorities (7.9%), and particularly female visible minorities (3.1%) were underrepresented in leadership positions when compared to their representation at the population level (13.1% and 6.5%, respectively). Similarly, the Cukier et al. (2020) study found that visible minorities were underrepresented on boards in London.

The current research aims to investigate to what extent the level of representation of visible minorities has increased since Medianu and Esses' (2016) study four years ago and to also compare the current level of representation to the level of representation in the population. As a point of reference, according to the 2016 Census, 19.9% of the population in the city of London is a visible minority (Statistics Canada, 2017d) and 29.3% of the population of Ontario (Statistics Canada, 2017c) is a visible minority.

Past Research on the Representation of Indigenous Peoples in Leadership Positions

According to the 2016 Census, 4.9% of the population identified as Indigenous (Statistics Canada, 2017a). This represents a 42.5% increase since 2006, a growth rate that is four times that of non-Indigenous individuals (Kirkup, 2017). Given this context, an important question that arises is whether Indigenous Peoples are represented in leadership positions.

A few studies suggest that Indigenous Peoples are strongly underrepresented in leadership positions in the corporate and public sector. In the corporate sector, the Canadian Board Diversity Council (2018) conducted a survey with 72 of Canada's 500 largest organizations as measured by revenue and reported by the Financial Post. The results showed that, in 2017, the representation of Indigenous Peoples on boards was 1.1% and, in 2018, it was 0.8%. Another survey completed by 17 TSX60 companies reported that 69.5% of their positions were filled by men, of which 0.7% were indigenous. Among the 30.5% of the positions occupied by women, 0% were filled by Indigenous women (Canadian Board Diversity Council, 2018). In a similar study, Zochodne (2020) analyzed the representation of Indigenous Peoples in 23 companies on the S&P/TSX 60 stock-market index and found that about 1% of all directors were Indigenous. Importantly, 20 of the 23 companies reported having no Indigenous representation on their boards. Finally, MacDougall et al. (2020) investigated 270 publicly traded corporations governed by the Canada Business Corporations Act and found that 0.5% of board positions were occupied by Indigenous Peoples.

Among public servants in general, Griffith (2020) found that Indigenous Peoples were represented according to their share in the population. However, when broken down by Indigenous groups, Griffith (2020) found that the Inuit, to some extent, and First Nations, in particular, were underrepresented compared to the population. In terms of *executive* public servant positions, Griffith's (2020) analysis showed that Métis and First Nations were clearly underrepresented (no data was available for other Indigenous groups). Finally, among the 335 Assistant Deputy Ministers, 2.7% were Indigenous which is below the population benchmark (4.9%).

To our knowledge, no study has investigated the level of representation of Indigenous Peoples in leadership positions in London, Ontario. The current study aims to address this gap in the literature. As a point of reference, 2.6% of the population of the city of London identified as Indigenous in the 2016 Census (Statistics Canada, 2017d). The current study also aims to investigate the level of representation of Indigenous Peoples in Ontario's agencies, boards, and commissions. In Ontario, 2.8% of the population identified as Indigenous in the 2016 Census (Statistics Canada, 2017c).

Terminology

The current report uses the Statistics Canada definitions for the terms ‘visible minority’ and ‘Indigenous Peoples’ (Statistics Canada, 2019, 2020b). These terms are defined as follows:

“**Visible minority** refers to whether a person belongs to a visible minority group as defined by the Employment Equity Act and, if so, the visible minority group to which the person belongs. The Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities as ‘persons, other than Indigenous Peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour’. The visible minority population consists mainly of the following groups: South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean, and Japanese.”

Indigenous Peoples include “those who are First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuk (Inuit) and/or those who are Registered or Treaty Indians (that is, registered under the Indian Act of Canada), and/or those who have membership in a First Nation or Indian band. Indigenous Peoples of Canada are defined in the Constitution Act, 1982, Section 35 (2) as including the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.”

Finally, this report also uses the term **gender** (women and men) instead of sex at birth to acknowledge the differences between the two concepts (Statistics Canada, 2020a).

Quantitative Component

Method

Coding Description

One of the goals of the quantitative component of the project was to determine if there have been any changes in the level of representation of visible minorities and women in leadership positions in London since 2016. For this reason, the focus of the current study was on the same organizations selected by Medianu and Esses (2016).

Medianu and Esses (2016) selected organizations in different sectors including the public sector, the voluntary sector, the education sector as well as municipal and provincial agencies, boards, and commissions. The public sector included municipal executives of London's City Hall as well as selected leaders in top paying positions according to Ontario's Public Sector Salary Disclosure. The voluntary sector included charitable organizations and foundations which were selected based on revenue reported to the Canada Revenue Agency. Importantly, the voluntary sector excluded ethno-cultural and indigenous organizations because the majority of the membership of these organizations tends to consist of ethnic and indigenous individuals. The education sector consisted of executives and board members (Presidents, Vice Presidents, Provosts and Vice Provosts) of Western University, Brescia University College, Huron College, King's University College, and Fanshawe College of Applied Arts & Technology. The municipal agencies, boards, and commissions were obtained from the official website of the city of London. For the selection of Ontario's agencies, boards, and commissions, Medianu and Esses (2016) used and supplemented the list of organizations identified by the Diversity Institute at Ryerson University in their study of leadership diversity in the Greater Toronto Area in 2009 (Cukier & Yap, 2009).

It should be noted that some of the organizations identified by Medianu and Esses (2016) underwent structural changes or were entirely dissolved.³ These changes were dealt with in terms of our coding as appropriate.

³ In June 6, 2019, the Connected Care Act came into effect to formally establish Ontario Health as the Crown agency overseeing six provincial agencies and the Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs, Government of Ontario, 2019). As a result, in 2020, the members of the board of directors of Ontario Health also constituted the boards overseeing Cancer Care Ontario, eHealth Ontario, and the LHINs included in this study. For this reason, the present study also included the Ontario Health Board as well as the leadership teams of Cancer Care Ontario, eHealth Ontario, and the selected LHINs in our coding. Furthermore, the Certified General Accountants Association of Ontario and Certified Management Accountants of Ontario were unified with CPA Ontario (CPA Ontario, 2016). For this reason, in 2020, CPA Ontario and the Council of the CPA Ontario were

The research assistants for this project worked on a multi-stage coding process. The first stage of the coding consisted of identifying all leaders of the selected organizations. To this end, the research assistants worked in teams, with two research assistants assigned to search the official websites of each of the relevant organizations. In particular, for each organization, the research assistants identified all members of the senior leadership team (i.e., employees in executive/upper management roles) and all members of the board. The research assistants compared the identified leaders to the list of leaders identified in Medianu and Esses' (2016) study. In this way, they were able to determine which of the 2016 leaders were still in a leadership role in the same organization. This information was collected to assess the level of turnover in the selected organizations. This coding produced two lists of leaders relevant to the current study: 1) 2016 leaders who remained in a leadership role in the same organizations, and 2) new leaders who joined the selected organizations sometime within the last four years. The inter-rater reliability for this coding step was high (list of 2016 leaders who remained in a leadership role within the same organizations: 92.0% and list of new leaders: 84.9%). When there was any uncertainty or a difference of opinion, another coder reviewed the available information and made a final decision.

Consistent with the methodological approach used by Medianu and Esses (2016), in the next coding stage, the research assistants searched for publicly available photographs and/or biographical notes to code the identified leaders. In particular, in teams of two, the research assistants used publicly available photographs and/or biographical notes to code the gender of the new leaders. To code the visible minority status (yes or no) of the new leaders, the research assistants used only photographs. To code the Indigenous status of all leaders (the new leaders and the 2016 leaders who remained in a leadership role in the same organizations), research assistants used photographs, and when they coded a leader as Indigenous (i.e., coded yes), they also looked for a biographical note to confirm the coding. The research assistants did not code the gender and visible minority status of the 2016 leaders as this coding was already completed in 2016.

To code the gender of the new leaders, the research assistants were instructed to first rely on publicly available photographs and/or biographical notes. When no photographs or biographical notes were available, research assistants coded, if possible, leaders' gender based on their first names. The inter-rater reliability for the gender coding was 98.5%.

To code the visible minority status of the new leaders (yes or no), the research assistants were trained on the Statistics Canada definition of visible minorities. According to Statistics Canada (2020b), the term "visible minority refers to whether a person belongs to a visible minority group

included in our coding. Finally, the 2020 analyses do not include the College of Trades Appointments Council as it was dissolved (Ontario College of Trades, 2020).

as defined by the Employment Equity Act... The Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities as ‘persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour.’” The inter-rater reliability for the visible minority status coding was 96.4%.

The research assistants coded all leaders’ Indigenous status (whether new or in the same position as earlier) by relying on publicly available photographs. Also, when the research assistants coded a leader as Indigenous (i.e., coded yes), they looked for biographical notes which clearly indicate that leaders identify as Indigenous to confirm the coding. Importantly, the research assistants were asked to document the following: 1) whether they coded leaders’ Indigenous status based on a photograph and/or a biographical note and 2) to indicate their level of confidence in their coding (on a scale ranging from 1 = not confident at all to 5 = completely confident). This information was collected to get an estimate of the quality of the coding given that the coding of Indigenous status may be more difficult. The inter-rater reliability was 99.6%. When there was any uncertainty or difference of opinion, another coder reviewed the photographs and biographical notes. Research assistants’ average confidence in their Indigenous status coding was between somewhat and fairly confident ($M = 3.85$, $SD = .58$).

Sample

In total, the research assistants coded 1,729 leaders. These include 477 leaders from different sectors in London and 1,252 leaders of provincial agencies, boards, and commissions. Leaders’ gender was coded in 1,723 instances (474 in London and 1,249 leaders of provincial ABCs). In 1,482 cases, this coding was based on photographs and in 241 cases the coding was based only on biographical information and/or first names. Visible minority status and Indigenous status was coded for 1,504 cases (419 in London and 1,085 leaders of provincial ABCs). This coding was based on photographs. In addition, for all cases coded as Indigenous (i.e., coded yes), the coding based on the photographs was confirmed with a biographical note clearly indicating that the leader in question identified as Indigenous.

Results

Total Number of Leaders in Selected Organizations in 2020 and Comparison to 2016

As can be seen in Table 2, the number of leaders in London coded in 2016 is very similar to the number of leaders in London coded in 2020. In terms of the number of leaders in Ontario's agencies, boards, and commissions, the 2020 sample included somewhat fewer leaders than the 2016 sample.⁴

Table 2. Frequency of leaders by sector included in the 2016 study and the current (2020) study

Sector	Leaders in 2016	Leaders in 2020
Total London	471	477
Public Sector	19	21
Voluntary Sector	174	170
Education Sector	120	139
Municipal ABCs	158	147
Provincial ABCs	1404	1252

Percentage of the 2016 Leaders from the Selected Organizations Who Were Leaders in the Same Organizations in 2020

In 2016, a total of 471 leaders were included in the sample for London. From these 471 leaders, 32.9% were still part of the leadership team in the same organizations in 2020 (see Table 3). When broken down by sector, there was a clear difference in the level of turnover between the public sectors and the other sectors. In the public sector, only 15.8% of the 2016 leaders were still leading the same organizations. In the voluntary sector, education sector, and in the municipal agencies, boards, and commissions, the percentage of 2016 leaders who were still leading the same organizations ranged between 31.6% and 36.2%. Finally, in Ontario's agencies, boards, and commissions, 21.6% of the 2016 leaders were still leading the same organizations in 2020.

⁴ As indicated in the method section, the current report coded the same organizations and used the same methodology for identifying leaders as Medianu and Esses (2016). One reason for the lower number of identified individuals in Ontario's ABCs in 2020 is that some of the organizations underwent structural changes (i.e., merged or downsized) or were completely dissolved.

Table 3. Percentage of 2016 leaders who were leaders in the same organizations in 2020

	Leaders in 2016	Number who were leaders in the same organizations in 2020	% who were leaders in the same organizations in 2020
Total London	471	155	32.9%
Public Sector	19	3	15.8%
Voluntary Sector	174	63	36.2%
Education Sector	120	39	32.5%
Municipal ABCs	158	50	31.6%
Provincial ABCs	1404	303	21.6%

Percentage of Women in Leadership Positions in 2020 and Comparison to 2016

In London, a total of 477 leaders were included in the sample (see Table 4). From these leaders, 474 leaders were coded for gender. Across sectors, 51.5% of leaders were women. This is comparable to the level of representation of women in the population of London⁵ (51.6%, Statistics Canada, 2017d).

The percentage of women in senior leadership positions in London varied depending on the sector. The highest percentage of women was found in the voluntary sector (59.5%), followed by the education sector (51.1%), the municipal agencies, boards, and commissions (43.8%) and the public sector (42.9%).

In terms of Ontario’s agencies, boards, and commissions, 1,252 leaders were included in the 2020 sample and 1,249 were coded for gender. Of these leaders, 51.0% were women, reflecting the percentage of women in Ontario’s population (51.1%, Statistics Canada, 2017c).

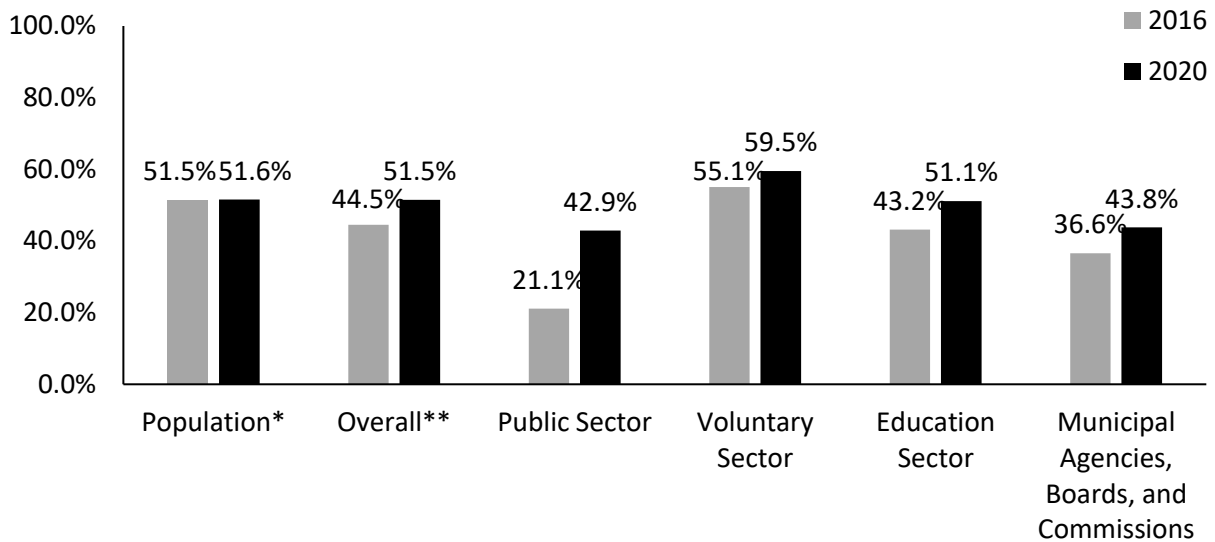
⁵ This report uses the population size for the city of London as a comparison.

Table 4. Representation of women in leadership positions in 2020 by sector

	Total Sample in 2020	Number Analyzed for Gender	Total Female Leaders	% Female Leaders
Total London	477	474	244	51.5%
Public Sector	21	21	9	42.9%
Voluntary Sector	170	168	100	59.5%
Education Sector	139	139	71	51.1%
Municipal Agencies, Boards and Commissions	147	146	64	43.8%
Provincial ABCs	1252	1249	637	51.0%

Overall, the level of representation of women in senior leadership positions in London increased from 2016 to 2020 (see Figure 6). While this increase occurred in all sectors included in this research, the biggest increase can be seen in the public sector, where the share of women in senior leadership positions increased from 21.1% to 42.9%.

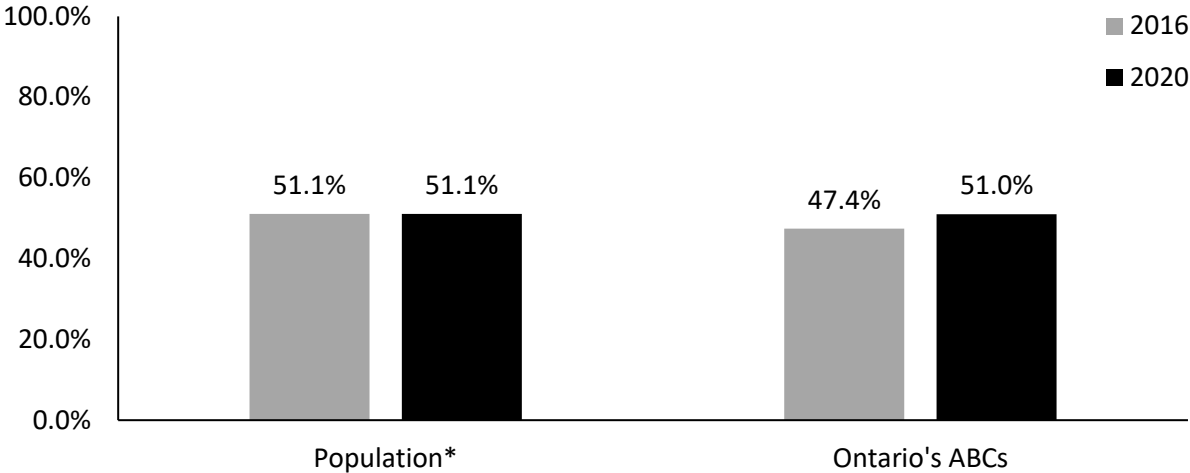
Figure 6. Percentage of women in leadership positions by year and sector in London, Ontario, compared to the percentage of women in the population of London



Note. *The population value used for 2016 is based on the 2011 NHS Profile for the city of London (Statistics Canada, 2013a). The population value used for 2020 is based on the 2016 Census (Statistics Canada, 2017d). **Across sectors analyzed.

In Ontario’s agencies, boards, and commissions, the percentage of women in senior leadership positions increased from 47.4% to 51.0% (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Percentage of women in leadership positions by year in Ontario’s agencies, boards, and commissions compared to the percentage of women in Ontario’s population



Note. *The population value used for 2016 is based on the 2011 NHS Profile for Ontario (Statistics Canada, 2013b). The population value used for 2020 is based on the 2016 Census (Statistics Canada, 2017c).

Percentage of Visible Minorities in Leadership Positions in 2020 and Comparison to 2016

In terms of visible minority representation in London, across sectors, 11.7% of the leaders were visible minorities (see Table 5). This percentage is lower than the percentage of visible minorities in London’s population (19.9%, Statistics Canada, 2017d).

When compared to the other sectors, the public sector had the highest percentage of visible minorities (15.0%). The voluntary sector had the lowest share of visible minorities (10.6%), closely followed by the education sector (11.7%) and the municipal agencies, boards, and commissions (12.5%).

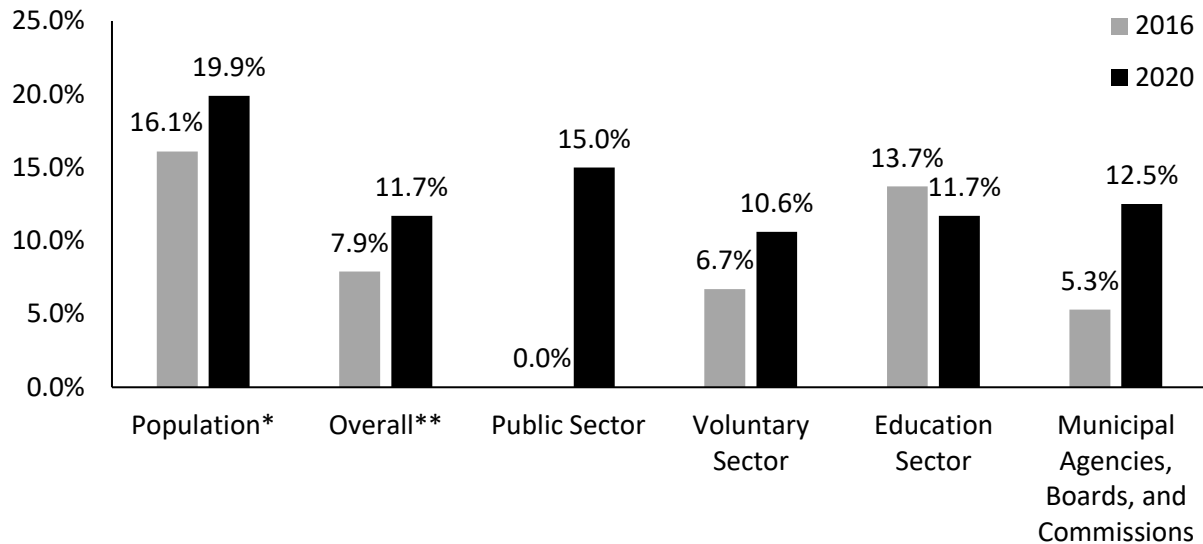
At the provincial level, 16.0% of the leaders were visible minorities. This percentage is lower than the percentage at the population level. In Ontario, 29.3% of the population is a visible minority (Statistics Canada, 2017c).

Table 5. Representation of visible minorities in leadership positions in 2020 by sector

	Total Sample in 2020	Number Analyzed for VM and Gender	Total VM Leaders	% VM Leaders
Total London	477	419	49	11.7%
Public Sector	21	20	3	15.0%
Voluntary Sector	170	142	15	10.6%
Education Sector	139	137	16	11.7%
Municipal Agencies, Boards and Commissions	147	120	15	12.5%
Provincial ABCs	1252	1085	174	16.0%

Across sectors analyzed in London, the percentage of visible minorities in senior leadership positions increased from 7.9% to 11.7% (see Figure 8). When broken down by sector, the largest increase can be seen in the public sector. In 2016, there were no visible minorities in senior leadership positions in the public sector. However, in 2020, there were three visible minorities in senior leadership positions in the public sector, accounting for 15% of the leaders. In the municipal agencies, boards, and commissions the share of visible minorities in senior leadership positions increased from 5.3% to 12.5%. In the voluntary sector, the increase was from 6.7% to 10.6%. Only the education sector showed a decrease (2%) in the level of representation of visible minorities (from 13.7% to 11.7%).

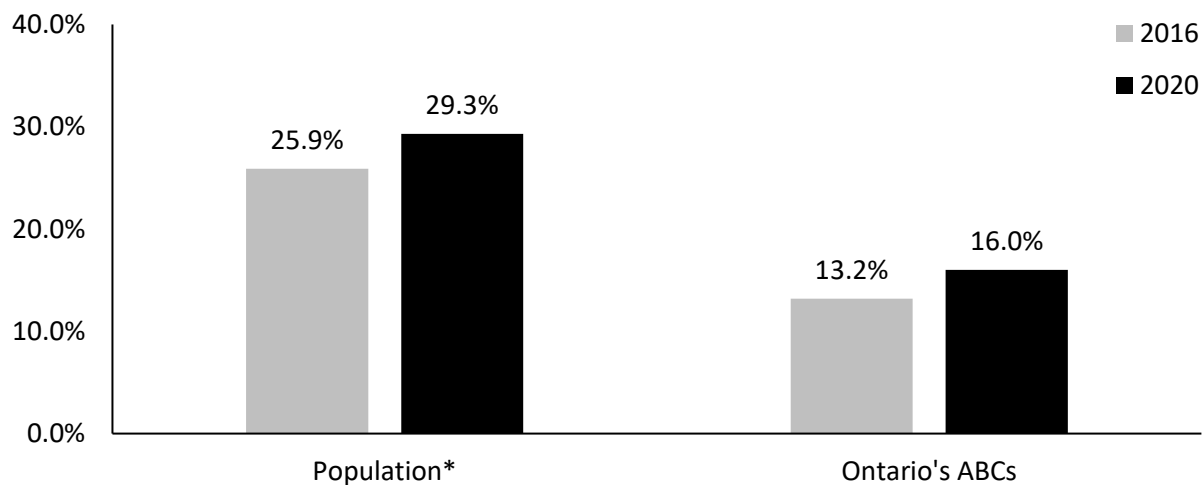
Figure 8. Percentage of visible minorities in leadership positions by year and sector in London, Ontario, compared to the percentage of visible minorities in the population of London



Note. *The population value used for 2016 is based on the 2011 NHS Profile for the city of London (Statistics Canada, 2013a). The population value used for 2020 is based on the 2016 Census (Statistics Canada, 2017d). **Across sectors analyzed.

In Ontario’s agencies, boards, and commissions, the percentage of visible minorities in senior leadership positions increased from 13.2% to 16.0% (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. Percentage of visible minorities in leadership positions by year in Ontario’s agencies, boards, and commissions compared to the percentage of visible minorities in Ontario’s population



Note. *The population value used for 2016 is based on the 2011 NHS Profile for Ontario (Statistics Canada, 2013b). The population value used for 2020 is based on the 2016 Census (Statistics Canada, 2017c).

Percentage of Female Visible Minorities in Leadership Positions in 2020 and Comparison to 2016

Across sectors in London, 5.5% of leaders were female visible minorities (see Table 6). This percentage is lower than the percentage of female visible minorities in London’s population (10.1%, Statistics Canada, 2017d).

When compared to the other sectors, the public sector had the highest percentage of female visible minorities (10.0%). The education sector had the lowest share (2.9%), followed by the voluntary sector (5.6%) and the municipal agencies, boards, and commissions (7.5%).

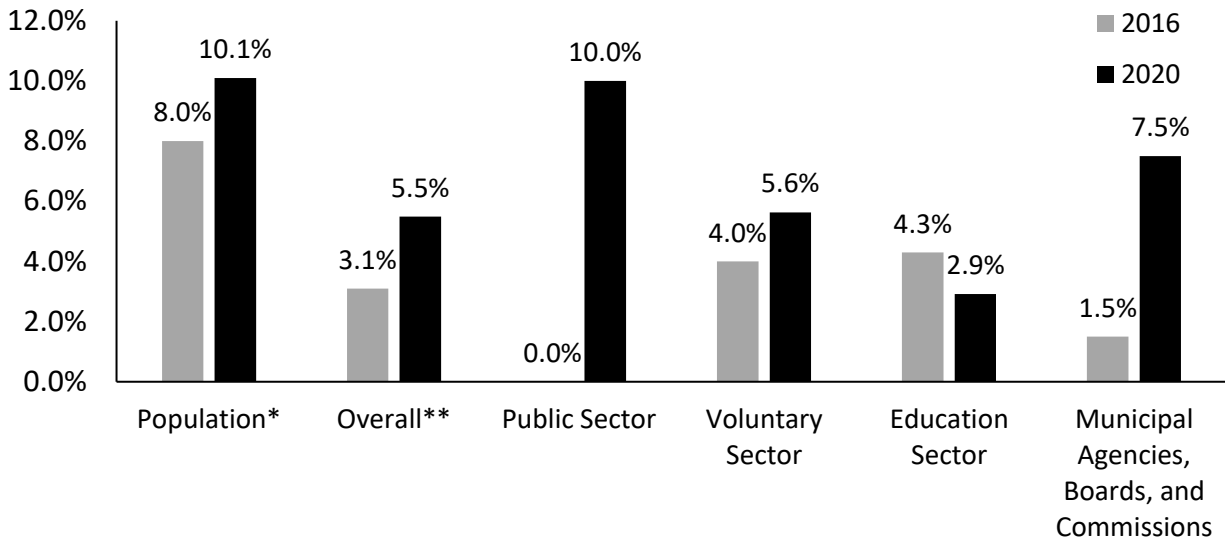
The results for Ontario’s agencies, boards, and commissions showed that 7.7% were female visible minorities. This percentage is lower than the percentages at the population level. In Ontario, 15.2% of the population is a female visible minority (Statistics Canada, 2017c).

Table 6. Representation of female visible minorities in leadership positions in 2020 by sector

	Total Sample in 2020	Number Analyzed for VM and Gender	Total Female VM Leaders	% Female Leaders
Total London	477	419	23	5.5%
Public Sector	21	20	2	10.0%
Voluntary Sector	170	142	8	5.6%
Education Sector	139	137	4	2.9%
Municipal Agencies, Boards and Commissions	147	120	9	7.5%
Provincial ABCs	1252	1085	84	7.7%

Across sectors in London, the level of representation of female visible minorities increased from 3.1% to 5.5% (see Figure 10). When broken down by sector, the largest increase occurred in the public sector (from 0% to 10.0%) and in the municipal agencies, boards, and commissions (from 1.5% to 7.5%). The increase in the voluntary sector was smaller by comparison (from 4.0% to 5.6%). Finally, the level of representation of female visible minorities in the education sector decreased by 1.4% (from 4.3% to 2.9%).

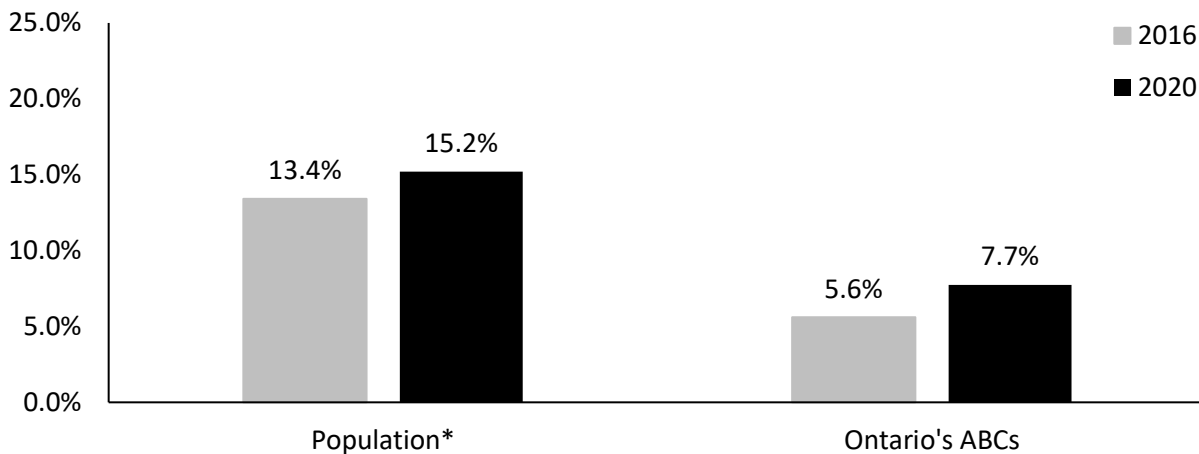
Figure 10. Percentage of female visible minorities in leadership positions by year and sector in London, Ontario, compared to the percentage of female visible minorities in the population of London



Note. *The population value used for 2016 is based on the 2011 NHS Profile for the city of London (Statistics Canada, 2013a). The population value used for 2020 is based on the 2016 Census (Statistics Canada, 2017d). **Across sectors analyzed.

In Ontario’s agencies, boards, and commissions, the percentage of female visible minorities in senior leadership positions increased from 5.6% to 7.7% (see Figure 11).

Figure 11. Percentage of female visible minorities in leadership positions by year in Ontario’s agencies, boards, and commissions compared to the percentage of female visible minorities in the population of Ontario



Note. *The population value used for 2016 is based on the 2011 NHS Profile for Ontario (Statistics Canada, 2013b). The population value used for 2020 is based on the 2016 Census (Statistics Canada, 2017c).

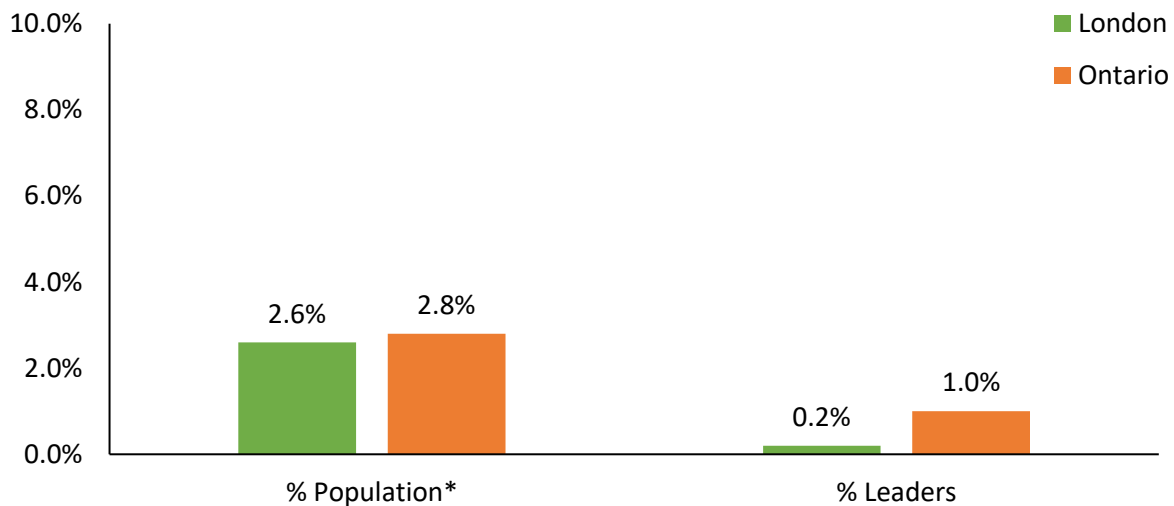
Percentage of Indigenous Peoples in Leadership Positions in 2020

Among all the leaders in London, only one leader was coded as Indigenous (0.2% of all leaders, see Table 7). This leader was working for an organization in the education sector. This is below the percentage of Indigenous Peoples in the population of London (2.6%, see Figure 12, Statistics Canada, 2017d). In Ontario’s agencies, boards, and commissions, 1% of the leaders were coded as Indigenous. This is below the level of representation of Indigenous Peoples in Ontario’s population (2.8%, Statistics Canada, 2017c).

Table 7. Representation of Indigenous Peoples in leadership positions in 2020 by sector

	Total Sample in 2020	Number Analyzed for Indigenous Status	Total Indigenous Leaders	% Indigenous Leaders
Total London	477	419	1	0.2%
Public Sector	21	20	0	0.0%
Voluntary Sector	170	142	0	0.0%
Education Sector	139	137	1	0.7%
Municipal Agencies, Boards and Commissions	147	120	0	0.0%
Provincial ABCs	1252	1085	11	1.0%

Figure 12. Percentage of Indigenous Peoples in leadership positions across sectors in London and Ontario’s agencies, boards, and commissions compared to the percentage of Indigenous Peoples in the population of London and Ontario



Note. The population values used are based on the 2016 Census (Statistics Canada, 2017c, 2017d).

Qualitative Component

Method

Another goal of this study was to determine what some of the organizations in the public and non-profit sector in London have done to improve the representation of diverse individuals in their leadership positions, challenges in this regard, and potential solutions. To this end, several executive directors and board members in the public and non-profit sector in London were invited to participate in the study. Seven individuals from six organizations accepted the invitation and were included in the study. These key informants had been in their positions between 20 months and 22 years.

The interviews were conducted online via Zoom due to the COVID-19 pandemic. All interviews were recorded (with interviewees' permission) for detailed notetaking and analysis. The interviews were semi-structured. We developed an interview guide with central questions and follow-up probes. The questions focused on key informants' experiences with initiatives and programs designed to increase diversity in leadership positions. We also asked key informants about the effectiveness of these initiatives and programs as well as the perceived barriers to any efforts aimed at increasing the level of diversity in leadership positions in the public and non-profit sectors in London. Finally, we also asked key informants about strategies that they would ideally like to see to increase the level of diversity in leadership positions in the public and non-profit sectors in London.

Results

Key Informants' Experiences with Diversity Initiatives and Programs in their Organizations

In the case of two of the six organizations, diversity, equity, and inclusion have been deeply embedded in the organizational culture since the founding of the organization due to the nature of their work and the values instilled by the founders of the organization. One of these organizations also invested in marketing materials for recruitment to promote the progressive nature of the organization and its commitment to diversity. Furthermore, in response to the Black Lives Matter activism in the summer of 2020, this organization created a staff-led anti-oppression and inclusion committee to review all of their policies. While this work was not specific to hiring and recruitment, it has contributed to the organizational culture as well. As one of the leaders of the organization mentioned:

“When you work in that way and you live those values, it will also transcend into who you hire as well.”

One of these organizations was also in the process of organizing anti-racism training for their board members. Similarly, a third organization organized external presentations on racism and diversity for board members and senior staff.

The other three organizations reported having limited experience with formal diversity initiatives or programs. However, all three of these organizations reported a heightened sense of awareness about the topic. One organization was in the process of reviewing their policies, including their diversity and inclusion policy. The same organization also intentionally recruited a new diverse board member by sending the job posting to community organizations serving newcomers and religious groups.

The second organization with limited experience with formal initiatives was planning to develop a new strategic plan with a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion. The interviewee described the plans of the organization as follows:

“In 2021, we will be undergoing a new strategic planning process and I want it to focus on equity, diversity, inclusivity, and how we can weave these concepts into everything we do. This includes hiring practices, recruiting, and nominating people to our board of directors, partnership development, images and languages we use on our website, and how we market the place. For the first time in the organization’s ... history, we are going to start putting emphasis in that area, fully aware that it is a long-term process. We are at the very beginning of this journey.”

To this end, as a first step, the organization put together a small group of people to discuss how to best approach the topic. The organization was also planning to conduct a survey with stakeholders to assess their knowledge on the topic.

The last organization with limited experience with formal initiatives recently updated their term policy for board members and was actively trying to recruit diverse board members.

In terms of future steps, the key informants mentioned that they would be reviewing and updating their policies and/or work on strengthening their recruitment process. This includes addressing questions such as: 1) What are the best strategies to recruit diverse individuals? 2) Where should organizations advertise their job postings? and 3) Are there any other ways to reach out to diverse individuals?

None of the organizations reported a formal evaluation of their efforts to promote diversity in their leadership positions. One of the key informants explained this as follows:

“We've never explicitly done an evaluation of our efforts in that sense. In terms of evaluation, we haven't really set the target specific enough for us to be able to evaluate.

Type of Diversity

All organizations reported having worked with skills matrices to recruit new board members. The skills matrices included traditional skills such as field-of-expertise and education. However, they often also included demographic characteristics such as: gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, persons with disabilities, Indigenous status, and member of a Francophone community.

Perceived Value of Diversity

When asked about the value of diversity for their organizations, the key informants provided several reasons for promoting diversity within their organizations including:

- Diversity allows for a variety of perspectives and, thus, fights groupthink.
- Diversity allows for an improved decision-making process because it allows the consideration of different perspectives. Diversity also improves organizations' ability to innovate.
- Organizations pursue diversity because they want to represent the people they are serving. This way, they can connect with their clients in a more meaningful way, establish trust, and provide a better service.
- The focus on diversity is important to stay relevant given that society is becoming more and more diverse. It gives organizations the capacity to increase their numbers, impact, their ability to raise money, and to attract volunteers.

Key Informants' Experience with Diversity Initiatives and Programs in General

When asked about other diversity initiatives and programs in the sector, key informants mentioned the following:

- The DiverseCity onBoard program which intentionally aimed to recruit diverse people and to find opportunities for them to serve on boards.
- The London Life Young Leaders program which is a board training program directed towards youth and diversity within those youth. The program teaches them the skills to serve on a board as well as how to approach a board to serve on it.
- A course called 'Women in Civic Leadership' offered at King's College. The key informant described it as follows:

“The intention of the course was to have mentorship for female students with mentors who were politicians, senior-level, or management-level city staff. I

know they now expanded it to people who are executive directors and are in senior leadership positions within non-profits, too. Some people who have come out of that program, such as myself 3 years ago, probably wouldn't have joined the board before that course."

Barriers to Efforts Aimed at Promoting Diversity in Leadership Positions

The key informants interviewed in this study identified a number of barriers to promoting diversity in leadership positions and boards. These barriers include barriers found in the particular organizations, but the interviewees also expressed their opinions about barriers to diversity in their sector in general.

The challenging nature of the task

Key informants talked about several factors that make the task of promoting diversity in their leadership positions challenging. This includes 1) the difficulty of breaking down diversity initiatives into actionable steps, 2) the challenge of approaching diverse communities without appearing tokenistic, 3) mistrust within diverse communities. Sample quotes include:

"Part of the challenge with the idea of tackling equity, diversity, and inclusion is that it is a difficult process. (...) We have a policy at the board level and we wrote it, but it's been sitting there ever since."

"Part of the challenge is to whom you make first contact, how do you do it in a meaningful way that doesn't seem like pandering, and the distrust of those organizations believing they are only reached out to since it's grant season."

"I am highly aware that for instance, everyone is scrambling to try to connect with Indigenous communities. These organizations are fatigued by the constant effort from other organizations to draw them in and be able to check off something on their grant application."

Overreliance on personal networks to recruit new board members

To recruit new board members, board members often reach out to their own networks which often consist of people who are similar to them.

"I think boards have always recruited people like themselves, whether it is consciously or subconsciously."

“Boards also tend to reach out to their own networks, partially out of necessity.”

“We have a tendency to recreate ourselves over and over again and it’s because there’s an absence of awareness of this fact. You attract people who look like you and think like you. Unless we make it a deliberate intent through policy, action steps, and committees, nothing will ever change.”

Time and setting of priorities

Another barrier to promoting diversity in leadership positions expressed by our key informants is limited time and the need to set priorities in terms of what issues are tackled first by the leadership of an organization. Two sample quotes include:

“Everyone’s got more work than they can manage, so if you throw in something that is not immediately concrete and is something that is difficult to do operational-wise, it is difficult to get your hands on it.”

“There have been other battles I have picked with them [the board] (...). Thus, I have not really pushed the envelope on this aspect [diversity] yet.”

Money

A barrier to promoting diversity in leadership positions expressed by our key informants is the lack of and/or inconsistent funding available to purchase services from consultants, including professional development training for board members and professional recruitment services. Sample quotes include:

“A lot of boards like ours don’t have thousands of dollars to spend on a coach or on special training for the board.”

“People in general don’t like the idea of overhead and if people are struggling to provide stable, full-time work, or better pay for work, then doing training with a board or having recruitment services seem like luxuries.”

“One of the things we could do is look into pockets of funding that would allow us to hire consultants or a staff position for a year or two to do some of the partnership development work that would be related to the strategic plan. One of my concerns with project-based funding is you get the thing set up, but don’t have continuing funding to keep the wheels turning, so the great work you did sits on the shelf somewhere.”

Recruitment challenges

Key informants also mentioned difficulties in attracting diverse individuals to serve on their boards. There are several reasons for this.

First, diverse individuals may not realize that these opportunities exist. For example, one key informant mentioned that younger people often do not know that there are these opportunities to serve on a board.

Second, diverse individuals may not know what it means to serve on a board and may feel that they do not have the qualifications for that. For example, one key informant mentioned the following:

“It's a challenge for people to even feel like they're qualified to be on the board to begin with and then even if they get to that point where they're on the board, getting through the process to be integrated is a challenge.”

Third, diverse individuals may be dealing with social disadvantages and may not be in the position to dedicate time to sit on a board without receiving compensation. A sample quote includes:

“So, you're asking people, especially people that don't necessarily have a lot of time and don't necessarily have a lot of money, or [you are] asking [for] their expertise at a time without any sort of compensation to it. So that's just part of how not-for-profit boards are structured and that's much bigger than me. That's a problem that's facing non-profits in general.”

Finally, diverse individuals may not respond to traditional recruitment methods. Organizations often lack knowledge of how to target diverse individuals in their recruitment efforts. Sample quotes include the following:

“I think there's a lot to be done in in terms of how people recruit and onboard people. Talking to employers, some people would say ‘we would love to hire newcomers, but they just don't apply.’ If diverse people don't apply, that doesn't mean that they're not interested, but shows that new approaches to recruiting should be introduced. Some of those resources could be mentorship or more recruiter type of organizations who find people who are interested and try to recommend candidates as a good fit.”

“One of the challenges that came up was the lack of applicants who were BIPOC, which made me wonder if our methods of recruitment were missing out on

something that would have given us more candidates. (...) How do you reach those potential candidates so that you are casting the net as wide as possible?"

"How do you target people within a community if there's no central board that you can post things up on? (...) The general kind of road is to just put up an advertisement, but really what's gotten the best results is to pointedly ask people how to get in touch with particular members of a community and get some representation there."

Perceived lack of qualifications

Some organizations may be reluctant to recruit newcomers because they are perceived as not having the qualifications or knowledge required for the job:

"Sometimes I feel that hiring a newcomer is like having a student intern, where there could be potential, but you must invest extra time to get them up to speed due to language or other barriers."

Preference for the status quo

Another barrier has to do with leaders' preference for the status quo. There may be different reasons for this. For example, as the following quotes show, some people may not see or understand the need for change.

"I believe it is fairly easy to agree in principle with something, but then it's the actions that come after which are important. (...) Our board team is willing to have that conversation, but there's a lot of education that needs to be done because these concepts are difficult and challenging."

"I would say that my sense with this board is that at a conceptual level, they would embrace it since it is the right thing to do. That being said, I don't think they truly understand it."

Furthermore, some people may be afraid of change, as illustrated by the following quote:

"It's human nature to know the right things to do and support them, but it's also a little bit scary for some people because it's uncharted waters for some organizations. It does take more effort and it could be easier to take the easy route out. (...) Thinking about it is more fearful than actually doing it. Once you do it, you see that those individuals are just as effective and as skilled as a board

member as everybody else. (...) Once you have taken the plunge and you see that it works, it makes things much easier the second, third, and fourth time around. Boards just need to have the courage to do it, but also do it wisely too."

Other people may show a preference for the status quo out of a fear of 'too much diversity'. A sample quote includes:

"I've also been on boards where I've been on the recruitment agency and hiring committees and they'll say: 'oh well, now we have too much diversity and now we don't have enough white people', just because there's five diverse people and four white people."

Lack of inclusion and negative attitudes

As the following quote shows, one key informant also mentioned that, once recruited, diverse board members may not receive the same level of attention as the other board members and may decide to leave.

"Some people as well feel like they're the token person and join a board to find that they are the only non-white, or non male (...) and leave."

Furthermore, there was also some concern about the perception that diverse individuals may not have language proficiency.

"So, in a lack of acceptance of all, [some people may say that] it's so difficult to understand them or they can't communicate very well. It's very easy to keep people out if you're expecting (...) perfect grammar and perfect articulation."

Strategies to Overcome Barriers

Key informants suggested several strategies that may be helpful to overcome the barriers that hinder efforts to promote diversity in leadership positions.

Continued awareness

Key informants talked about the importance of keeping the discussion on diversity, equity, and inclusion in the public eye. The following is a sample quote:

"If there is an annual report that is done to either show progress or the slipping back of diversity, it keeps the issue in the public eye. Like any issues, if you stop

talking about it, it magically goes away, even though the problem is still there. We have to find ways to keep that conversation in the public sphere.”

Leadership

Several key informants talked about the importance of demonstrating leadership to effect change. For example, key informants mentioned the following:

“It’s all about leadership. You need people in the staff or board members who are change makers and who are willing to speak up. Unless you have those kinds of people in your organization, I don’t think you will be seeing the kind of change that is necessary.”

“I think the only reason it [diversity on the board] has been implemented is because it’s been a priority for me.”

“I wish there was a way, where (...) somebody in a leadership convenient capacity could push the sector. This could start with diversity in boards. (...) Boards are responsible for hiring CEOs, so if they have diverse perspectives, they will approach the hiring process differently. They [somebody in a leadership capacity that could push the sector] should also push boards to hold people like me in account for recruiting more diverse people in senior leadership. It starts at the top and cascades down, where if you do not have a diverse leadership team, it would be harder to have a diverse staff group. Someone has to show that leadership and push that envelope. (...) I think we are one of the most diverse leadership teams and boards in our city, but I would love to be able to benchmark myself against boards of other non-profits in London and other cities of our size. We can set goals for ourselves to get better.”

Evaluations

A key informant also talked about the need for an external audit to assess all facets of their work. This way, they could obtain a report card which could inform what actions they should take next.

Education and training

Another strategy identified by key informants is to provide education and training to potential new board members and current board members. Two sample quotes include:

“We expected them [diverse individuals] to know things that there would be no real reason for them to know. You want to recruit people, but you also have to be aware of their circumstances. Whether it be somebody from a diverse community or not, if they're coming onto the board with little or no board experience, they will need to be nurtured and educated. If you don't bring them along the way that you should, you're setting them up to fail.”

“Having training easily accessible would help a lot. I don't find that there's amalgamated sources anywhere on how to facilitate boards, such as leading board meetings or making onboarding easier. I found some information here and there, but I wouldn't say that there's a lot of information that's easily accessible about how to operate a board in a way that has the lens in it too. All activities should have an equity, diversity, and inclusion lens applied to it, but I don't think there's generally a lot of it.”

Development of toolkits and a repository of best practices

Several key informants also expressed the desire to have access to toolkits and/or a repository of best practices in this area. This includes recruitment toolkits and toolkits for having conversations about these topics. For example, key informants mentioned the following:

“I never have seen a toolkit for how to properly and effectively recruit for diversity. It would be helpful if there was something like that out there. There are well-intentioned people out there who want to do the right thing but may not know exactly how to do it.”

“[It would be helpful to have] tools about how to have uncomfortable conversations and how to be comfortable in the uncomfortable.”

“Rather than every board in the city trying to figure out a process to do a better job in hiring their CEO, a repository of best practices and data would be great.”

Diversity training

A key informant also addressed the challenge of conducting diversity training, emphasizing the importance that the training should be action oriented.

“I don't know what it would look like, but an initiative or way to get the knowledge in the training to turn into actions would be a helpful tactic. In my experience, diversity training was always nice to have, but it never got turned

into real actions that I was a part of. It could be effective to connect with organizations one-on-one and get funding to hire diversity people within organizations, where the specific aspect of diversity is their job.”

Another key informant also talked about another challenge of diversity trainings:

“We had a couple board members who were furious at the presentation and you see this repeated when anybody feels like they're being called out and called a racist.”

Recruitment programs and mentorship

Key informants also thought that it would be useful to have an external organization that could facilitate the contact with diverse individuals. This could include, for example, a formal recruitment program. It could also include a two-step recruitment process where leaders of organizations are brought together at a networking event to build relationships with representatives of diverse communities. This way, leaders could tap into these new relationships to recruit diverse individuals.

“A conference, speed-dating concept, or a day dedicated to all organizations coming into the same room, where you have a formalized opportunity to reach out and connect with the representatives of diverse communities may be helpful.”

Furthermore, as illustrated by the following quote, another key informant suggested mentorship programs for new board members:

“The board needs to orient and educate. People being brought on should have a mentor, someone that they can talk with outside the board meetings to get a better understanding of the work of the board and how they can make a contribution.”

Discussion and Conclusion

The current study had three main goals: 1) To follow up the study conducted by Medianu and Esses (2016) by reassessing and comparing the level of representation of women and visible minorities in leadership roles in the public and non-profit sectors in London, as well as in Ontario's agencies, boards, and commissions, four years after the earlier study, 2) to assess and establish a baseline for the level of Indigenous representation in leadership roles in these same organizations, and 3) to determine what organizations in the public and non-profit sectors in London have done to improve the level of diversity in leadership positions, and the associated challenges and potential solutions.

Regarding the first goal, the current study found that in London and in Ontario's agencies, boards, and commissions, the level of representation of women in leadership positions clearly increased from 2016 to 2020. In fact, in 2020, the percentage of women in leadership positions overall was comparable to the percentage of women in the population. However, in London, there were differences in the level of representation of women in leadership positions depending on the sector. In particular, women were still underrepresented in the public sector and in the municipal agencies, boards, and commissions. In contrast, in the voluntary sector, women were overrepresented in leadership positions.

In terms of the representation of visible minorities and female visible minorities in leadership positions, the current study found that the level of representation improved from 2016 to 2020. This was the case for London across sectors and for Ontario's agencies, boards, and commissions. However, in 2020, visible minorities and female visible minorities were still considerably underrepresented in leadership positions when compared to the population level. There were some noteworthy sector differences in the level of representation of visible minorities and female visible minorities in leadership positions in London. The largest increases in the representation of visible minorities and female visible minorities were in the public sector and in the municipal agencies, boards, and commissions. In the voluntary sector, the increase was smaller. In contrast, the education sector was the only sector in which there was a small decrease in the level of representation of visible minorities and female visible minorities in leadership positions.

The second goal of the study was to assess and establish a baseline for the level of representation of Indigenous Peoples in leadership positions. The results showed that in London and in Ontario's agencies, boards, and commissions, Indigenous Peoples were underrepresented in leadership positions when compared to the population. In fact, the level of underrepresentation in London was particularly acute.

Overall, the results of the quantitative component of this project highlight differences in the level of representation of the three groups investigated. Compared to Medianu and Esses' (2016)

study and to the population benchmarks, the results of this study show that the level of representation of women has improved the most. This is consistent with other studies. For example, a study conducted by the Canadian Board Diversity Council (2018) found that 67% of the surveyed board members found that their board had made most progress in gender diversity. Similarly, Cukier et al. (2020) report that the level of representation of women in board positions has improved more than the representation of visible minorities. This trend is also found in corporate boardrooms in the United States where the level of progress in the representation of racially and ethnically diverse individuals falls behind the progress made in the representation of women (CBC, 2019). Similarly, the results of our study show ample room for improvement in the level of representation of visible minorities, female visible minorities, as well as Indigenous Peoples.

The last goal of the study was to collect qualitative data on the experiences with diversity initiatives of public and non-profit organizations in London. The experiences varied depending on the organization. Of the key informants interviewed, representatives of a couple of organizations reported that diversity, inclusion, and equity were deeply embedded in their organizational culture and affected their work, including hiring decisions. Other organizations reported a heightened sense of awareness about the topic and were in the process of developing new strategic plans with a diversity focus, reviewing policies, and/or strengthening their recruitment process. Importantly, none of the organizations conducted a formal evaluation of their efforts aimed at increasing the level of diversity in senior leadership positions.

Consistent with past research (Cukier & Yap, 2009, Guo & Musso, 2007, Lorenzo et al., 2018), key informants emphasized the value of diversity. However, key informants also identified several barriers that impact public and non-profit organizations' efforts to increase the level of diversity in senior leadership positions. These include, for example, time constraints, limited funding, the difficulty of breaking down diversity initiatives into actionable steps, the challenge of approaching diverse communities without appearing tokenistic as well as mistrust within diverse communities. Key informants also reported that boards often tend to over-rely on personal networks to recruit new members, a finding that is consistent with past research (Biggins, 1999, Van der Walt & Ingley, 2003). Furthermore, key informants talked about several recruitment challenges including the difficulty of attracting diverse individuals and the need to find ways to engage in more targeted outreach. Other barriers included the perceived lack of qualifications among diverse individuals, a preference for the status quo among current leaders and, and the lack of inclusion and negative attitudes toward diverse individuals once recruited into some organizations.

In terms of strategies to overcome these barriers, informants suggested that it is important to continue to raise awareness to keep the topic of diversity, inclusion, and equity in the public eye. Furthermore, key informants talked about the need to provide education and training to current board members/executive leaders as well as to newly hired board members. Newly hired board

members from underrepresented groups may not have sufficient experience and knowledge about the roles and tasks of a board member and may, thus, benefit from training. This training could be provided in the form of mentorship programs in which a senior board member guides the new board member into the role. In terms of education for current board members and executive leaders, key informants emphasized the importance of having access to toolkits and a repository of best practices as well as action-oriented diversity training that could support and direct them in their efforts to increase diversity in their leadership positions. Importantly, key informants also emphasized the importance of leadership to implement change. This is consistent with a study which found that when CEOs signal their commitment to diversity through actions, and HR managers perceive this commitment, then organizations are more likely to implement organizational diversity practices (Ng & Sears, 2018). Finally, key informants suggested that specialized recruitment programs could be helpful to overcome some of the recruitment challenges.

As mentioned by one of the key informants, it is important to keep the conversation about diversity in the public sphere. One way to do so is to continue to assess the level of representation of visible minorities, Indigenous Peoples, and women in senior leadership positions in key sectors to determine whether there is progress (or decline) over time. To aid organizations that are committed to increasing diversity but have little experience or knowledge in this regard, practical toolkits and a repository of best practices, as recommended by the key informants, would have considerable value. Importantly, the toolkit and library of best practices should also focus on identifying best practices for organizations of different sizes and sectors.

In conclusion, the current study sheds light on the current level of representation of women, visible minorities, and Indigenous Peoples in London, Ontario, as well as in Ontario's agencies, boards, and commissions. We hope that these findings as well as the insights gained from the key informant interviews provide useful information to organizations and sector leaders who aim to diversify their senior leadership teams.

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