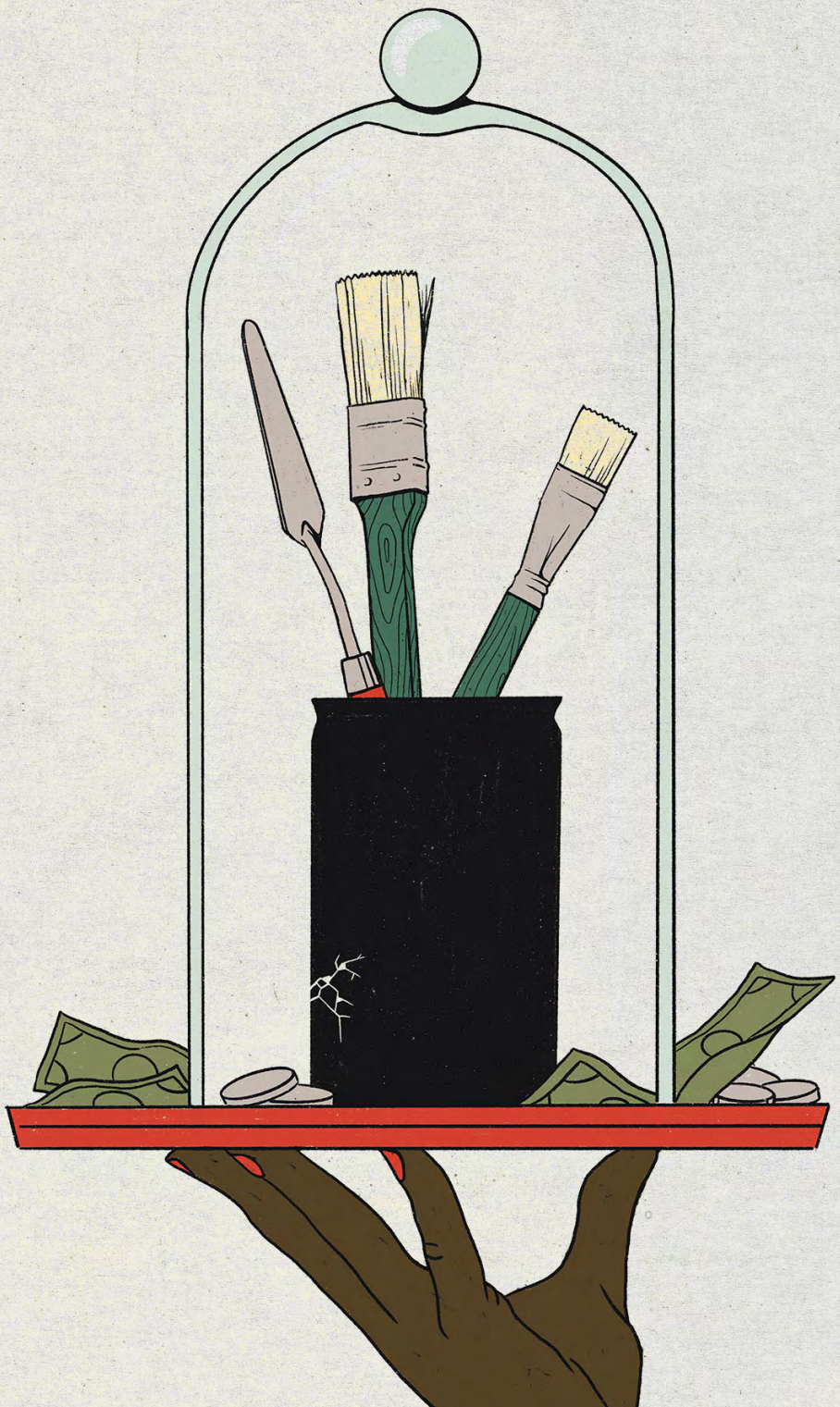
ARTSTATUS

Sector Equity for Anti-Racism in the Arts

Spring 2026



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Sector Equity for Anti-Racism in the Arts (SEARA) is a movement of Black, Indigenous, and racialized (BIPOC) BC-based artists and cultural workers to redistribute resources through data-driven action. SEARA is a malleable entity, continuously shaping itself in response to the emergent conditions defined by the needs of our communities. Catalyzed by the Black Lives Matter and Land Back movements in 2020, SEARA originally formed as a consortium of arts service organizations to address the rise in public demand for the arts, culture and heritage sector to address systemic racism. Prompting institutions to move beyond performative activism towards investing in actionable change, SEARA launched the POWERSHARE campaign to raise and distribute emergency funds for Black, Indigenous and racialized (BIPOC) artists in BC during the COVID-19 pandemic.

With $319K in microgrants delivered to 285 applicants, POWERSHARE revealed a persisting gap in research that is instrumental to policy development addressing racial equity. With funding from the Law Foundation of BC, and 221A's fiscal sponsorship, SEARA responded to this gap with its second initiative: ARTSTATUS.

This seminal research presents findings from a mixed-methods study examining equity, access, representation, and systemic barriers within BC's arts, culture, and heritage sector. The study integrates quantitative survey data from funding and programming organizations, independent artists, people working within the sector, and other stakeholders, with qualitative semi-structured interviews conducted with BIPOC artists and cultural workers.

While artists are actively participating in funding and programming systems, these data sources demonstrate that existing structures continue to reproduce inequities, particularly for BIPOC artists. The study reveals a sector characterized by high engagement but uneven access, increased visibility without corresponding power, and strong equity commitments that are inconsistently realized in practice.

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List of Acronyms

ARDP
Anti-Racism Data Project

BC
British Columbia

BIPOC
Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour

CASH
Cultural, Accessibility, Safety, and Humility

EDI
Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

JEDI
Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

NDA
Non-Disclosure Agreement

OLMC
Official Language Minority Communities

PAC
Performing Arts Category (funding classification)

SEARA
Sector Equity for Anti-Racism in the Arts

Preface/Executive Summary

The Anti-Racism Data Project examines how race, power, and accountability operate within British Columbia's arts, culture, and heritage sector. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study analyzes race-based demographic data, organizational policies, funding practices, and the lived experiences of Indigenous, Black, and racialized artists and cultural workers. The focus is not on ranking institutions, but on identifying structural patterns that shape access, representation, and decision-making across the sector.

The study is situated within a shifting policy context, most notably the introduction of British Columbia's Anti-Racism Data Act in 2022. The Act enables the collection and use of disaggregated race-based data to identify and address systemic racism, while establishing safeguards related to data governance, privacy, and community trust. Despite this legislative shift, expectations and practices related to race-based data collection in the arts, culture, and heritage sector remain inconsistent, particularly among organizations that operate at arm's length from government while relying on public funding.

Quantitative findings highlight persistent racial inequities across staffing, governance, and funding structures. Indigenous, Black, and racialized individuals remain underrepresented in senior leadership, board positions, and other decision-making roles within both grant-making organizations and large arts, culture, and heritage institutions. Where demographic data exist, they are often uneven, limited in scope, or introduced only recently, restricting the sector's ability to track change over time or assess accountability. Funding data further demonstrate a highly competitive environment, where demand significantly exceeds available resources, intensifying precarity for community-based and racialized artists and organizations.

Policy analysis reveals that while language about equity, diversity, and inclusion has become increasingly visible, equity is often framed as a value or initiative rather than a sustained institutional responsibility. Older policies tend to emphasize access and inclusion without explicitly addressing issues of race, power, or systemic exclusion. More recent policies show a shift toward explicitly addressing anti-racism, colonialism, and accountability, yet these commitments are not consistently embedded in governance structures, funding criteria, or employment practices.

Qualitative findings deepen this analysis by centring lived experience. Indigenous, Black, and racialized participants describe patterns of heightened visibility without corresponding power, emotional and cultural labour tied to equity work, and ongoing barriers to funding, career advancement, and institutional belonging. Participants consistently locate these experiences within broader structural conditions rather than individual interactions, pointing to governance models, assessment processes, and professional norms that continue to reproduce inequity.

Across data sources, a central finding was that representation alone is insufficient. Without clear mechanisms for responsibility, interpretation, and action, race-based data risks becoming symbolic rather than transformative. The study positions disaggregated data as a tool, not an endpoint, emphasizing the need for structural change in how equity is measured, operationalized, and enforced.

The report concludes with evidence-informed policy implications and recommendations aimed at strengthening race-based data governance, embedding equity within decision-making structures, and supporting more accountable funding and governance practices. Collectively, these findings underscore the importance of treating racial equity as a matter of power, not optics, and of grounding institutional change in both data and lived experience.

Chapter 1

Introduction

In British Columbia (BC), the arts, culture, and heritage sector occupies a powerful position in public life. It shapes how histories are told, whose stories are valued, and which communities are recognized as cultural producers rather than cultural subjects. With significant public investment and economic growth, the sector holds not only symbolic influence but material power. These conditions make questions of race, governance, and resource allocation central than peripheral to understanding how the sector functions.

Despite longstanding narratives of creativity, openness, and social progress, arts and cultural institutions in BC continue to reflect persistent racial hierarchies in leadership, decision making, and access to funding. Indigenous, Black, and racialized people remain concentrated in precarious roles, short term contracts, and community facing positions, while authority over budgets, programming priorities, and institutional direction remains largely concentrated elsewhere. These patterns are not accidental. They are produced through policies, funding criteria, professional norms, and organizational cultures that shape who belongs and who does not.

By examining racial composition, policy frameworks, funding distribution, and the experiences of those working within these systems, this research asks how equity is understood, enacted, and constrained in practice. Centering the voices of Indigenous, Black, and racialized participants, the study situates individual experiences within broader institutional patterns, foregrounding the ways power circulates through governance, employment, and cultural production in BC's arts ecosystem.

In recent years, equity, diversity, and inclusion have become increasingly visible within the sector. Organizations have issued public statements, adopted equity language, and developed internal frameworks intended to address racial inequities. While these commitments signal recognition of systemic harm, they have not consistently translated into sustained shifts in power, representation, or material conditions for Indigenous, Black, and racialized artists and cultural workers. Equity discourse has often expanded faster than the structures responsible for implementing change.

This study examines racial equity within grant-making organizations and arts, culture, and heritage organizations in British Columbia through a mixed methods approach. It analyses demographic representation, equity policies, funding practices, and lived experiences of Indigenous, Black, and racialized individuals working within and alongside these institutions. By centring both institutional data and participant narratives, the study treats racial inequity not as an individual failure but as a structural condition shaped by history, policy, and governance.

Grounded in the knowledge and experiences of those most affected, this research seeks to move beyond symbolic inclusion toward a clearer understanding of how racial power operates across the sector. Its purpose is not to rank institutions, but to document patterns, identify barriers, and support collective efforts toward accountability, transformation, and justice in BC's cultural landscape.

1.1 Policy Problem

The question facing British Columbia's arts, culture, and heritage sector is not whether equity matters. It is whose realities are legible within institutional systems, and whose experiences continue to fall outside what policy recognizes as evidence. For Indigenous, Black, and racialized artists and cultural workers, the gap between public commitments to equity and everyday institutional practice remains wide. This gap is not accidental. It is produced through governance structures, funding frameworks, and knowledge systems that determine what counts as value, merit, and success.

Grant-making organizations and large arts, culture, and heritage institutions play a defining role in this process. Through funding decisions, hiring practices, peer assessment, and board governance, they shape cultural narratives and material opportunities. Yet these sites of power remain disproportionately white, particularly at senior and decision-making levels. This concentration of authority influences not only who receives resources, but also which forms of cultural knowledge are affirmed and which are rendered marginal. In this context, equity cannot be understood as representation alone. It must be examined as a question of power.

One of the most persistent obstacles to accountability in the sector has been the absence of race-based demographic data. Without such data, inequities are easily reframed as anecdotal, individual, or incidental. Structural patterns remain difficult to name, and responsibility for change is frequently displaced onto individuals rather than institutions. This absence is not neutral. It reflects a long-standing reluctance to acknowledge how racism operates through systems rather than intentions.

The introduction of British Columbia's Anti-Racism Data Act in 2022 represents a significant policy intervention into this silence. The Act authorizes the collection and use of disaggregated race-based data across the public sector, with the explicit purpose of identifying and dismantling

systemic racism. Importantly, it also establishes protections around data governance, privacy, and community trust, recognizing that racialized communities have historically experienced harm through extractive or misused data practices. The Act signals a shift from symbolic commitments to evidence-based accountability. Yet the implications of the Anti-Racism Data Act for the arts, culture, and heritage sector remain unsettled. Many organizations operate at arm's length from government while relying on public funding. As a result, expectations around demographic data collection are inconsistent, and practices vary widely. Some organizations have begun to collect race-based data voluntarily, often through staff surveys or internal reviews. Others cite uncertainty, capacity constraints, or concerns about appropriateness. This fragmented landscape limits the sector's ability to assess progress or identify patterns of exclusion in a sustained way.

Federal policy frameworks, particularly the Employment Equity Act, offer a partial reference point. The Act requires federally regulated employers to address barriers faced by designated groups, including Indigenous peoples and members of visible minorities. While this framework has contributed to increased reporting, its broad racial categories often obscure differences in how power and exclusion operate across groups. Collapsing racialized experiences into a single category makes it difficult to examine how anti-Indigenous racism, anti-Black racism, settler colonialism, and other forms of structural racism function differently within institutions.

Within arts, culture, and heritage organizations, these policy limitations intersect with internal practices that locate equity work at the margins of organizational life. Equity is frequently framed as a value rather than a responsibility, and as an initiative rather than an obligation. Committees are formed, statements are issued, and time-limited programs are introduced, while governance structures, funding criteria, and employment pathways remain largely intact. This produces an environment where equity is visible but not embedded.

From an intersectional perspective, this pattern reflects a deeper problem about whose knowledge counts. When data are not collected, or are collected in ways that flatten difference, the experiences of Indigenous, Black, and racialized people are more easily dismissed. When equity is framed as optional or aspirational, institutional power remains unchallenged. Systems of domination persist not only through exclusion, but through controlling what is recognized as legitimate knowledge. In the arts sector, this control shapes both cultural production and organizational life.

The policy problem addressed in this study lies at this intersection of data, power, and accountability. Race-based data collection, as enabled by the Anti-Racism Data Act, creates the conditions for naming systemic patterns. But data alone does not produce change. Without clear mechanisms for interpretation, responsibility, and action, data risks becoming another symbolic gesture. This study responds to that risk by situating demographic data alongside policy analysis and lived experience, grounding evidence in the voices of those most affected. By examining how equity is measured, narrated, and operationalized across grant-making organizations and arts, culture, and heritage organizations in BC, this research seeks to make visible the structural conditions that continue to shape racialized outcomes. The aim is not to rank organizations, but to illuminate how policy frameworks, institutional practices, and everyday experiences intersect. In doing so, the study positions race-based data not as an endpoint, but as a tool in a broader struggle for structural change

1.2 Study Objectives

Building on the policy and sectoral context outlined above, this study examines racial equity within British Columbia's arts, culture, heritage, and grant-making organizations through the lens of race-based demographic data, institutional policy, and lived experience. The study is informed by recent developments in race-based data governance in BC, including the introduction of the Anti-Racism Data Act, which affirms the role of disaggregated demographic data in identifying and addressing systemic racism across public systems.

The central research question guiding this study is: **How do race-based demographic data, equity policies, funding practices, and institutional cultures shape racial equity outcomes within grant-making and arts, culture, and heritage organizations in British Columbia?**

To address this question, the study advances several interrelated objectives.

1. First, the study seeks to examine the racial composition of staff, boards, and where applicable juries and advisory bodies within BC-based grant-making organizations and arts, culture, and heritage organizations with annual operating budgets of CAD 2 million or more. This objective focuses on identifying patterns of representation across organizational roles, with particular attention to leadership and decision-making positions.

2. Second, the study aims to assess the presence, scope, and framing of racial equity policies and public commitments within these organizations. This includes analyzing how equity is articulated in formal policies, strategic plans, and statements, as well as how these commitments are understood, operationalized, and sustained over time.

3. Third, the study examines funding distribution practices within grant-making organizations. Drawing on available quantitative data and organizational documentation, this objective explores how funding decisions are made, what criteria shape eligibility and assessment, and whether current practices support equitable access for Indigenous, Black, and racialized artists and cultural workers.

4. Fourth, the study documents the lived experiences of Indigenous, Black, and racialized staff, former staff, and independent artists working within or alongside these organizations. Through qualitative surveys and semi-structured interviews, the study captures how participants experience organizational culture, inclusion, career advancement, and interactions with equity initiatives. This objective recognizes lived experience as a critical form of knowledge for understanding how policies and practices operate in practice.

Finally, the study aims to generate evidence-informed recommendations to support policy development and organizational change. These recommendations are intended to inform governance practices, funding frameworks, and approaches to race-based data collection within the arts, culture, and heritage sector in BC.

This study contributes to the literature on racial equity and cultural policy by centering disaggregated race-based data within a sector that has historically emphasized qualitative narratives while often lacking consistent demographic accountability. It also contributes to emerging scholarship on anti-racism data by examining how demographic data are collected, interpreted, and mobilized within institutional contexts shaped by public funding, policy mandates, and historical inequities.

Chapter 2

Background and Literature Review

The arts, culture, and heritage sector in British Columbia has long been characterized by systemic inequities in funding distribution, particularly affecting Black, Indigenous, and racialized (BIPOC) artists and organizations. Historically, funding structures have favored Eurocentric institutions and artistic practices, often marginalizing the contributions of BIPOC communities. This has resulted in limited access to resources, opportunities, and platforms for these artists to showcase their work and sustain their practices.

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of these disparities, leading to the implementation of equity-focused policies and strategic priorities by grant-making organizations. Initiatives such as the BC Arts Council's commitment to equity and the introduction of programs like the LEVEL BIPOC Grants by the Vancouver Foundation aim to address these systemic barriers. These efforts have led to a proportional increase in funding for BIPOC-led organizations and projects.

Despite these positive developments, significant gaps remain. BIPOC artists and organizations continue to face challenges in accessing equitable funding, with disparities evident in both the number of grants awarded and the total funding amounts received. For instance, while BIPOC applicants may represent a substantial portion of total applicants in certain funding categories, the proportion of funding allocated to their projects often does not reflect this representation.

Challenges faced by Black Indigenous and racialized artists due to poor funding policies are compounded by bureaucratic systems that often overlook the unique cultural contributions of these artists. Many funding agencies continue to operate under rigid criteria that fail to recognize the distinct value that diverse voices bring to the sector. Furthermore, without sufficient advocacy for inclusive practices, minority groups remain at the mercy of decision-making processes that do not reflect their realities or understand their needs. Economic constraints as a result of insufficient funding support for BIPOC artists often necessitate part-time non-artistic employment, limiting the time available for creative pursuits and professional development.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Quantitative Phase 1

3.1.1. Data Collection

The quantitative phase of this study was designed to document and analyze racial representation, governance practices, and equity-related policies within grant-making organizations and arts, culture, and heritage organizations in British Columbia. The primary focus was on the representation and experiences of Black, Indigenous, and racialized individuals across staffing, governance, and funding structures.

Data collection occurred in two stages. The first stage involved independent data gathering by the research team. Publicly available information was systematically reviewed to construct an initial dataset on organizational governance, staffing, and equity commitments. Organizational websites, annual reports, board listings, staff biographies, exhibition records, policy statements, and other publicly accessible materials were examined. Where available, these sources were used to identify staff and board members, outline organizational structures, and document stated commitments to equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Recognizing the methodological and ethical limitations of relying on publicly available information to infer racial identity, all data collected in the first stage were treated as preliminary. These estimates were not assumed to be accurate representations of racial composition, but rather as working hypotheses intended to guide a second, more rigorous validation phase. Consistent with best practices in race-based research, self-identification was treated as the gold standard for demographic data collection, both to improve accuracy and to respect individual agency.

The second stage of data collection centred on direct engagement with organizations to validate, correct, and supplement the preliminary dataset. A formal outreach process was led by a management engagement lead, who contacted organizations to explain the purpose and scope of the Anti-Racism Data Project and to invite participation in data validation. Organizations were informed that the project was data-driven and sector-focused, with the aim of informing policy-relevant recommendations related to governance, funding, and operational practices that shape racially equitable conditions for Black, Indigenous, and racialized artists and cultural workers.

Organizations were provided with a data request outlining the type of information sought. For grant-making organizations the information requested included the following:

Table 1: Data Requested from Grant-Making Organizations

Racial Composition Data (2012 – 2024/25)	Funding Data (2012 – 2024)	Granting Decision Making (2012 - 2024/25)	Policies (2024/25)
○ Staff ○ Board or Council members ○ Peer jurors or assessors ○ Disaggregated racial composition data of the above-mentioned groups if available	○ A list of Black, Indigenous, and racialized groups and other organizations that applied for funding ○ A list of Black, Indigenous, and racialized groups and other organizations that received funding ○ Comparative data of successful BIPOC applicant organizations relative to other groups	○ Grant decision-making processes and review criteria ○ Grant application eligibility criteria	○ Equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) policies or public commitments related to: ○ Funding distribution, Programming support ○ Board, staff and peer jurors or assessor's diversity and representation

Table 2: Data requested from Arts, Culture, and Heritage Organizations

Racial Composition Data (2024/25)	Exhibition Statistics	Policies (2024/25)
○ Staff ○ Board members ○ Community Advisory Committees (specifically, BIPOC representation in arts-based operations and governance)	○ BIPOC led exhibitions and public shows	○ Equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) policies or public commitments related to: ○ Board and staff composition; Programming support ○ Internal assessments, evaluations, or reports related to racial equity (e.g., audits, surveys, or learning reviews)

Organizations were explicitly invited to share information in formats that were most accessible to their teams, acknowledging differences in internal capacity, data infrastructure, and reporting practices.

As part of the validation process, organizations were asked to review and confirm the accuracy of the preliminary information compiled by the research team, and to provide corrections, updates, or missing data where applicable. Follow-up questions addressed whether organizations collected racial demographic data, since when such data collection had occurred, and whether historical data were available for staff composition, governance roles, jurors, or funding distribution. A non-disclosure agreement was provided to participating organizations to support confidentiality and to encourage participation in the sharing of internal data.

In total, 21 arts, culture, and heritage organizations and 9 grant-making organizations were invited to participate in the management engagement phase. The scope, depth, and time span of data ultimately provided varied significantly across organizations. These differences reflect the different data collection practices within the sector, including variation in when organizations began collecting race-based data, the purposes for which data were originally gathered, and internal policies related to data governance and disclosure.

Only data that were directly provided or explicitly validated by organizations were included in the final quantitative analysis. Where organizations did not respond, declined to participate, or indicated that data were unavailable or not collected, preliminary estimates derived from public sources were not reported as confirmed findings. This approach prioritized data integrity and minimized the risk of misrepresentation, while also making visible the gaps and limitations that characterize race-based data infrastructure in the sector.

The findings presented in subsequent sections reflect the data that were available through this two-stage process. Variations in data completeness, reporting periods, and levels of disaggregation are noted throughout the analysis. Rather than treating these limitations as methodological shortcomings, they are understood as substantive findings in their own right, reflecting variation in data practices, accountability mechanisms, and institutional readiness for race-based equity work across the arts, culture, and heritage sector in British Columbia.

Chapter 4

Findings and Analysis: Organizations

Out of the 21 arts, culture, and heritage organizations and 9 grant-making organizations engaged in the management engagement phase, a subset provided data for inclusion in the study. The information shared varied by organization type and by internal data collection practices.

The table below provides an overview of the scope and type of information received.

Table 3: Summary of Organizational Participation and Data Provided
(Management Engagement Phase)

Organization Type	Organizations Invited	Organizations Responded	Data Provided
Arts, Culture, and Heritage Organizations	21	7	○ Racial equity assessments (4 organizations) ○ Exhibition and programming statistics (2 organizations) ○ Racial composition data for staff and/ or boards (4 organizations) ○ EDI policies or public equity commitments (7 organizations)
Grant-Making Organizations	9	3	○ EDI policies (3 organizations) ○ Funding data from 1 federal-level funder, 1 provincial grant-making organization and 1 large municipal funder for arts and cultural activities to non-profit organizations. ○ Racial composition data from the federal-level funder and municipal funder ○ Racial equity assessments from two organizations

Subsequent sections of the report present a more detailed analysis of these materials, beginning with findings from the grant-making organizations, followed by arts, culture, and heritage organizations.

4.1 Racial Composition of Staff in Grant-making Organizations

This section presents findings on the racial composition of employees within designated groups as reported by the one grant-making organization and one large municipal public-sector organization that provided data. Designated groups as defined in the Employee Equity Act include Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, members of visible minorities, and women. Findings are presented for the 2021 to 2023 period and examined comparatively across years.

4.1.1. Representation of Designated Groups

Figure 1. Representation of Designated Groups in Grant-making Organization A from 2021- 2023

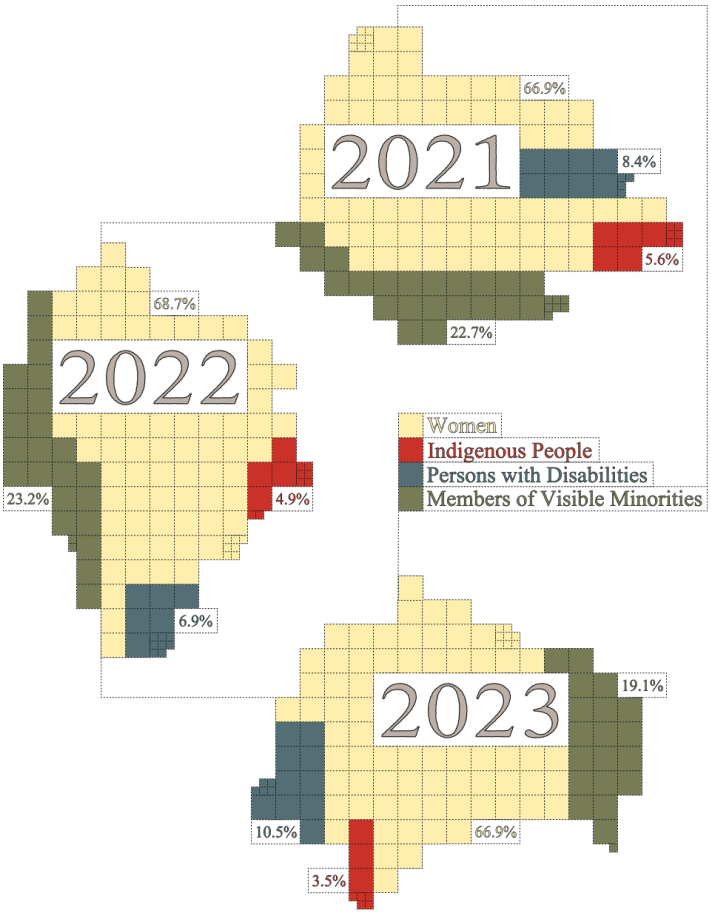


Figure 1 presents representation data for designated groups within grant-making organization A in 2021, 2022, and 2023. The data point to varying representation outcomes across groups, suggesting that progress in equity is not uniform and may be influenced by both internal practices and broader labour market dynamics.

Women account for the largest share of representation across all three years. Representation remains relatively stable, at approximately 67 percent in 2021, 68.7 percent in 2022, and 68.9 percent in 2023. This pattern is consistent with national employment equity reporting, which shows that women tend to have higher representation relative to other designated groups in many Canadian workplaces, particularly in professional and public-facing sectors (Employment and Social Development Canada 2024). The stability observed here suggests that gender equity initiatives may be more established within the organization, though stability alone does not indicate the absence of remaining barriers or intersectional gaps.

Representation of Indigenous peoples remains low and declines over time. The proportion decreases from 5.6 percent in 2021 to 4.9 percent in 2022 and further to 3.5 percent in 2023. This trend stands in tension with the emphasis placed on Indigenous inclusion within Canadian public policy frameworks, including the Employment Equity Act and the Federal Anti-Racism Strategy, both of which identify Indigenous peoples as facing persistent structural barriers in employment and leadership (Government of Canada 2022). The

downward shift raises questions about recruitment and retention practices, as well as the extent to which public commitments to reconciliation are reflected in workforce outcomes.

A different pattern emerges for persons with disabilities. Representation increases modestly over the three years, rising from 8.4 percent in 2021 to 10.5 percent in 2023, despite a slight dip in 2022. Although overall representation remains comparatively low, this upward movement aligns with federal employment equity guidance noting that disability representation is closely tied to disclosure practices and workplace accessibility (Employment and Social Development Canada 2024). Incremental changes may therefore reflect shifts in organizational culture or accommodation practices rather than significant changes in workforce composition.

Representation among members of visible minorities shows greater variability. The proportion increases slightly from 22.7 percent in 2021 to 23.2 percent in 2022 before declining to 19.1 percent in 2023. Fluctuations of this kind are reflected in federal employer reporting, where representation for visible minorities can change from year to year due to turnover, hiring patterns, and external labour market conditions (Government of Canada 2023). These shifts also occur against the backdrop of heightened public attention to systemic racism following 2020, when many Canadian institutions articulated or renewed equity, diversity, and inclusion commitments. While the data presented here do not allow for causal conclusions, the timing highlights the importance of examining representation trends over multiple years rather than relying on single-year snapshots.

Interpretation of these findings is shaped by labour market availability. Under Canada's employment equity framework, representation is assessed relative to the availability of qualified individuals from designated groups in the relevant labour market. Availability estimates published through federal reporting tools such as Equi 'Vision provide an important reference point for understanding whether representation reflects workforce demographics or potential barriers to inclusion (Government of Canada 2023). In the absence of comparable availability data for 2021 and 2022, the analysis focuses on internal changes over time rather than alignment with external benchmarks.

4.1.2. Racial Composition of Staff

This subsection presents findings on staff racial composition drawn from a large municipal public-sector organization operating within British Columbia. The organization collects employee demographic data through voluntary self-identification and reports results in aggregate form. Due to differences in data structure and reporting frameworks, the findings presented here are not intended for direct statistical comparison with grant-making organization data, but rather to provide interpretive context.

Across the reporting period, White employees comprise the largest proportion of the municipal workforce. Although the organization reports representation across multiple racial identity categories, White staff remain the dominant group, anchoring overall workforce composition. Racialized employees collectively represent a substantial minority of staff, but their presence is unevenly distributed across racial groups.

Disaggregated data reveal that representation among racialized groups varies considerably. Some racialized populations are present in moderate proportions, while others remain consistently underrepresented or intermittently represented. These internal differences are obscured when racialized employees are reported as a single aggregate category, reinforcing the importance of disaggregated data for equity analysis.

Indigenous and Black employees are persistently underrepresented within the workforce relative to broader population benchmarks. In some reporting years, representation remains static; in others, it fluctuates modestly without establishing a sustained upward trend. These patterns mirror those observed within grant-making organizations and align with broader public-sector employment research, which identifies recruitment, retention, and advancement barriers for Indigenous and Black workers as enduring structural issues rather than short-term anomalies.

The data indicate that representation for these groups is particularly sensitive to organizational turnover and hiring cycles. Small numerical changes result in noticeable proportional shifts, underscoring the fragility of representation gains when they are not supported by sustained institutional practices.

When read alongside grant-making organization data, the municipal workforce findings reinforce several core themes of this study. First, White employees continue to occupy the dominant social location within organizational employment, even in institutions with formal equity commitments and enhanced data capacity. Second, aggregate measures of racialized representation obscure persistent hierarchies within racialized groups, particularly the ongoing marginalization of Indigenous and Black employees. Third, representation gains are shown to be reversible, emphasizing that diversity outcomes depend on sustained institutional action rather than one-time initiatives or policy statements.

4.1.3. Racial Composition of Board Members

Only one federal grant-making organization provided validated racial composition data, and this information was limited to staff. No other grant-making organizations provided or validated racial composition data for board members. This includes both provincial grant-making organizations and the federal organization engaged in this phase.

Given the absence of validated board-level data, no analysis of board racial composition is presented for grant-making organizations. Preliminary estimates derived from publicly available sources were not included, as reporting unvalidated data would risk misrepresentation. Accordingly, this section documents the lack of confirmed data rather than presenting incomplete or inferred findings.

4.1.4. Racial Equity Assessments

As part of the management engagement phase, grant-making organizations were requested to share any internal racial equity assessments, engagement reports, or self-study materials relevant to equity, access, and inclusion. These materials were requested to understand how grant-making bodies conceptualize equity within their funding systems, engagement practices, and accountability frameworks, rather than to evaluate outcomes or compliance. Two grant-making organizations provided documentation for this phase. One is a federal-level funder with a national mandate, and the other is a provincial grant-making program operating within British Columbia. In keeping with the approach used throughout this study, findings are presented descriptively and in anonymized form. Organizations are identified using alphabetical labels to emphasize patterns and approaches rather than institutional attribution. The materials provided differ from those submitted by arts, culture, and heritage organizations in both scale and orientation. Rather than focusing primarily on internal workplace climate, the grant-making assessments centre on program access, applicant experience, policy alignment, and systemic barriers within funding structures themselves.

To support interpretation of these grant-making assessments, the study also reviewed a comprehensive racial equity assessment conducted by a large municipal public-sector organization operating within British Columbia. While this organization is not a grant-maker, its assessment is included as contextual comparator material, as it reflects how racial equity is conceptualized, measured, and addressed within a public institution operating in the same labour market and policy environment as municipal and provincial funders. Unlike the grant-making assessments, which focus outward on funding systems and applicants, the municipal assessment adopts an inward-facing institutional lens, examining workforce composition, employee experience, and structural conditions shaping recruitment, retention, and advancement. This distinction is analytically relevant and is taken up in the synthesis that follows.

Table 4: Summary of Grant-Making Racial Equity Assessments

Organization (Anonymized)	Year(s) Conducted	Type of Assessment)	Primary Focus Areas	Data Collection Methods	Key Data Elements Reported
Grant-Making Organization A (Federal)	Ongoing (public reporting cycles)	Equity and Inclusion Reporting and Self-Study	Funding access, representation, systemic barriers	Administrative data analysis; sector consultations; public reporting	Aggregated demographic data on applicants and recipients; narrative analysis of equity gaps
Grant-Making Organization B (Provincial)	2021–2023	Indigenous Engagement Project and Internal Review	Indigenous access to funding; relationship building; policy barriers	Application history analysis; engagement sessions with Indigenous organizations; jurisdictional scan	Application trends of Indigenous organizations; identified policy and outreach barriers; thematic findings across policy, outreach, relationships, and measurement
Municipal Public-Sector Organization	2021	Organizational Racial Equity Assessment	Workforce composition; employee experience; institutional systems	Employee self-identification survey; demographic analysis; staff engagement	Disaggregated racial identity data; representation trends; identified structural barriers

4.1.5. Key Observations Across Racial Equity Assessments

Across both grant-making organizations, equity assessments are framed as systems-level learning tools rather than one-time audits. The emphasis is placed on understanding how funding criteria, application design, feedback mechanisms, and institutional relationships shape access for equity-deserving communities.

The provincial grant-making organization undertook a sustained Indigenous Engagement Project that examined funding access through an Indigenous lens. This work included analysis of application histories, alignment with Indigenous rights frameworks such as UNDRIP and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, and direct engagement with Indigenous organizations. The findings are organized around four interrelated themes: policy development, outreach development, relationship building, and engagement

measurement. A notable feature of this assessment is its explicit recognition that data collection alone is insufficient without relational accountability and institutional change.

The federal grant-making organization's materials similarly emphasize systemic patterns rather than individual outcomes, documenting disparities in access and representation while acknowledging the limits of existing data categories. Equity is positioned as an ongoing process requiring structural reform, transparency, and sustained resourcing, rather than as a series of targeted initiatives.

Read alongside the municipal public-sector racial equity assessment, these findings highlight important differences in how equity is operationalized across public institutions. While grant-making organizations focus primarily on external systems of access and distribution, the municipal assessment foregrounds internal institutional dynamics, including workforce composition, organizational culture, and power relations. The municipal assessment's use of disaggregated racial identity data further reveals inequities that remain obscured in aggregate reporting, particularly the persistent underrepresentation of Indigenous and Black employees.

Overall, these materials demonstrate that racial equity assessments vary not only by jurisdiction but by institutional role. Funding-focused assessments prioritize eligibility, access, and program design, while organizational self-assessments interrogate how institutional norms and employment systems reproduce racial hierarchy. The absence of a shared framework across these approaches underscores a key finding of this study: racial equity in arts, culture, and heritage funding is shaped both by how resources are distributed and by who occupies positions of decision-making authority within the institutions that distribute them.

4.1.6. Funding Data

This section presents funding related findings drawn from three grant-making organizations that participated in the management engagement phase of the study. Given the British Columbia focus of this research, funding data are presented with careful attention to jurisdictional scope. One participating organization operates at the federal level and provided national funding data disaggregated by province and territory. These data are used to situate British Columbia within broader national funding patterns rather than to assess provincial level equity outcomes. The second participating organization is a provincial grant-making body operating exclusively within British Columbia and provided funding data specific to the province. The third participating organization is a municipal funder that supports arts and cultural activities through grants to non-profit organizations within a major urban centre in BC. Findings from each organization are therefore presented separately to maintain analytical clarity and jurisdictional accuracy.

Table 4: Summary of Grant-Making Racial Equity Assessments

Grant-making Organization (Anonymized)	Jurisdiction	Data Scope	Role in Analysis
Grant-Making Organization A	Federal	National data disaggregated by province and territory	Contextual framing of BC within national funding patterns
Grant-Making Organization B	Provincial (British Columbia)	BC specific funding data	Primary evidence for provincial funding analysis
Grant-Making Organization C	Municipal (British Columbia)	Municipal funding data for arts and cultural non-profit organizations within a major urban centre	Contextual and comparative evidence for municipal funding patterns

4.1.7. British Columbia in National Context

The federal-level grant-making organization provided multi-year funding data covering applications submitted, funding awarded, and total grant amounts, disaggregated by province and territory. For the purposes of this study, only data pertaining to British Columbia are presented and analyzed.

Table 6: British Columbia Share Of Federal Arts Funding (Selected Fiscal Years)

Fiscal Year	Number of Grants Awarded (BC)	Total Grant Amount Awarded (BC)	Percentage of National Grant Funding	Percentage of National Applications
2023-24	1,257	$48.3M	15.88%	17.42%
2022-23	1,501	$57.4M	15.90%	16.86%
2021-22	1,576	$72.9M	16.15%	16.77%
2020-21	1,091	$48.9M	15.77%	17.57%

Values reflect British Columbia's proportion of national totals as reported by the federal-level organization.

Across the period examined, British Columbia consistently accounted for approximately fifteen to sixteen percent of total funding awarded through this federal program. The proportion of applications originating from British Columbia was generally comparable to, and in some years slightly higher than, the proportion of funding awarded. While these data do not include race-disaggregated funding outcomes, they provide important context for understanding the scale and positioning of British Columbia within national arts funding systems. It is important to emphasize that these findings are presented for contextual purposes only. Because funding decisions are made at the national level and reflect priorities, peer assessment processes, and competition across all provinces and territories, the data cannot be used to draw conclusions about racial equity outcomes specific to British Columbia.

4.1.8. British Columbia Funding Patterns

The provincial-level grant-making organization operates exclusively within British Columbia and provided year to date funding data relevant to community-based programs, including arts, culture, and heritage initiatives. Unlike the federal-level data, these materials reflect funding decisions made within the provincial context and are therefore directly aligned with the geographic scope of this study. The data provided is presented below:

Table 7: Summary of applications and funding outcomes (Provincial Grant-making Organization)

Measure	Count / Amount
Total applications received	441
Applications submitted	277
Applications approved	47
Applications under assessment	18
Applications withdrawn	4
Total amount requested	$15,475,937.93
Total amount approved	$1,680,150.00

Of the 441 applications received during the reporting period, approximately 11 percent were approved, with approved funding representing a small fraction of the total amount requested.

Table 8: Applications and requested funding by program category.

Program Category	Applications Submitted	Total Requested Amount
Arts and Culture	264	$9,792,225.46
PAC	87	$1,046,620.00
Sport	86	$4,627,092.47
Other categories	Limited / none	$0.00

Funding data provided by a provincial grant-making organization illustrate the scale of demand placed on community-based funding programs. During the reporting period, total requested funding exceeded fifteen million dollars, while approved funding totalled approximately 1.68 million dollars. Application volume was concentrated in arts and culture programming, which accounted for the majority of submissions and requested funds. These data underscore the competitive funding environment in which artists and organizations operate and provide important context for qualitative findings related to precarity, access, and administrative burden.

4.1.9. Municipal Arts and Culture Funding Context

The municipal grant-making organization operates within a single urban jurisdiction in British Columbia and has provided sustained funding for arts and cultural activities for more than fifteen years. Its mandate is limited to supporting non-profit and community-based organizations located within municipal boundaries. As such, the funding data presented here reflect municipal-level decision-making shaped by local policy priorities and governance structures, rather than provincial or national funding dynamics.

For the 2024/25 fiscal year, the organization reported an overall arts and culture grants budget in the range of sixteen to twenty-five million dollars. Within this broader envelope, a subset of funding programs focused on equity, Indigenous-led initiatives, accessibility, redress, and cultural infrastructure was brought forward for Council approval in 2025. These program streams signal an institutional response to historical exclusion in cultural funding, while also illustrating how equity-oriented funding is structured and constrained at the municipal level.

Table 9: Municipal Arts and Culture Grants Overview (Municipal Grant-making Organization)

Measure	Description
Jurisdiction	Municipal (single urban centre in British Columbia)
Annual arts and culture grants budget (2024–25)	$16–25 million
Years active in arts and culture funding	Over 15 years
Eligible recipients	Non-profit and community-based arts and cultural organizations
Geographic eligibility	Municipal boundaries only

The scope of analysis is shaped by legislative and institutional constraints. The organization does not have permission to share applicant- or recipient-level demographic data disaggregated by racial, ethnic, or cultural background. This reflects privacy legislation governing public institutions and limits the extent to which equity outcomes can be quantitatively assessed at the municipal level. As a result, this section draws on aggregated and publicly reported data to describe funding patterns rather than to measure differential impacts across communities.

Publicly available municipal council documentation provides aggregate information on funding allocations by program stream. In 2025, a total of $1.18 million in cultural grants was recommended for forty-four organizations across several equity- and access-oriented programs. Funding allocations by program stream are summarized below.

Table 10: Aggregate Municipal Funding by Program Steam (2025)

Program Stream	Total Funding Disbursed	Number of Funded Organizations
Cultural Equity and Accessibility Funding	$505,500	24
Cultural Indigenous Funding	$324,500	11
Indigenous Language Revitalization Grants	$75,000	Not specified
Cultural Redress Grants	$70,000	Not specified
Arts and Culture Grant (REFLECT)	$30,000	Not specified
Making Space for Arts and Culture Capital Grant	$175,000	Not specified
Total (all streams)	$1,180,000	44

Note: Funding amounts reflect approved recommendations for 2025 and are presented in aggregate form to preserve anonymity and comply with privacy requirements.

Unlike federal and provincial funders, the municipal organization funds only organizations located within the city and therefore does not report funding distribution by region. Instead, funding allocation is tracked and reported by city neighbourhood, reflecting a place-based approach to cultural investment. This localized reporting structure foregrounds geography as a key axis of access while simultaneously obscuring comparative analysis across jurisdictions.

These municipal funding data illustrate both the material scale of local public investment in arts and culture and the structural limits of municipal equity analysis. While targeted funding streams direct resources toward equity-deserving and Indigenous-led organizations, the absence of applicant-level demographic and outcome data constrains assessment of proportionality, unmet demand, or differential access. Read alongside provincial and federal funding patterns, the municipal data point to a multi-level funding environment characterized by fragmented authority, uneven transparency, and cumulative administrative demands. This context is essential for interpreting the qualitative findings that follow, particularly those related to precarity, access, and organizational capacity within the arts and culture sector.

4.1.10. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Policies

Table 11: Summary of EDI Policies Provided by Grant-Making Organizations

Organization (Anonymized)	Jurisdictional Scope	Policy Type(s) Provided	Primary Equity Focus Areas	Populations Explicitly Named	Notable Policy Characteristics
Grant-Making Organization A	Federal	Equity Policy; Strategic Plan; Disability & Deaf Arts Strategy; Official Languages Policy	Funding equity; access; disability inclusion; language rights	Indigenous peoples; racialized communities; Deaf and disabled artists; OLMC communities	Multi-policy framework: equity embedded across governance, funding, and strategy
Grant-Making Organization B	Provincial	Program Guidelines; Equity Commitments within Funding Framework	Access to funding; inclusion; Indigenous engagement	Indigenous organizations; community-based non-profits	Equity addressed primarily through program design and eligibility criteria
Grant-Making Organization C	Municipal	City-wide equity frameworks; cultural policy; accessibility strategies; reconciliation and anti-racism commitments; equity-embedded funding program guidelines	Cultural equity; reconciliation; accessibility; anti-racism; redress of historical discrimination	Indigenous peoples; Black communities; South Asian Canadian communities; Trans, gender-diverse, and Two-Spirit people; people with disabilities*	Equity commitments articulated through multiple city-wide policy instruments and embedded within arts and culture funding priorities and assessment processes.

Across the three grant-making organizations, equity commitments are articulated through distinct policy architectures shaped by jurisdictional mandate and governance context. At the federal level, equity is addressed through a layered framework that includes standalone policies, strategic planning, and population-specific strategies. At the provincial level, equity is embedded primarily within program guidelines and funding criteria, emphasizing access and inclusion through eligibility design rather than consolidated policy instruments. The municipal organization reflects a third approach, in which equity commitments are established through multiple city-wide frameworks and translated into arts and culture funding through program priorities and assessment processes. These differences highlight the absence of a shared sector-wide model for operationalizing racial equity through grant-making policy and point instead to equity being governed differently across levels of public authority.

4.2 Racial Composition of Staff in Arts, Culture, and Heritage Organizations

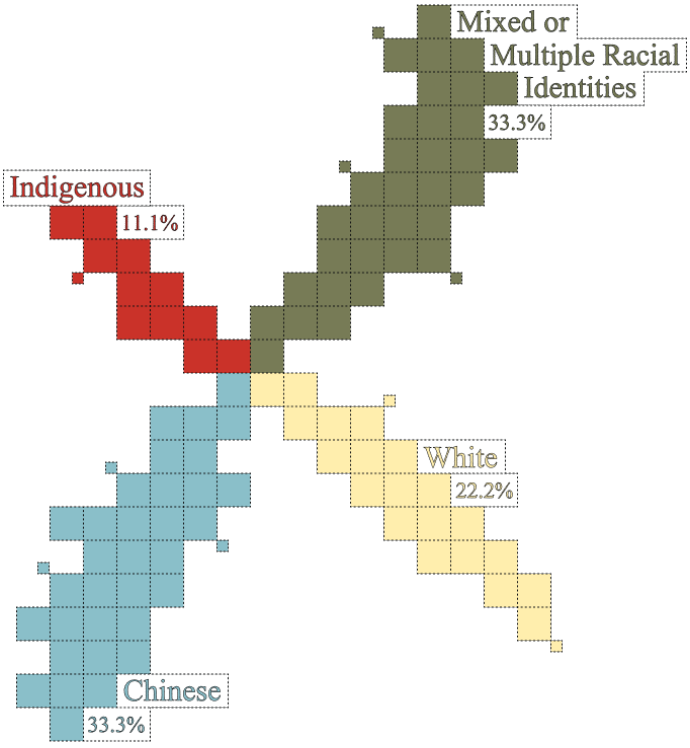
This section presents findings on racial composition of staff in arts, culture, and heritage organizations. As aforementioned twenty-one organizations were invited to participate in this study by sharing available racial composition data. Four organizations provided data that could be included in the analysis. The data received are not uniform. This reflects differences in when organizations began collecting demographic information, the purposes for which the data were initially gathered, and the internal capacity to sustain consistent reporting over time. In some cases, demographic tracking has been in place for more than a decade. In others, it was introduced much more recently, often in response to evolving equity, diversity, and anti-racism commitments within the sector.

As a result, reporting periods vary widely. Some organizations provided data beginning in 2012, while others reported data from later years, with the most recent information extending to 2025.

The scope of data collection also differs. Certain organizations shared workforce-wide employee data, while others provided information limited to leadership or senior staff. These differences are important, as they shape what the data can reasonably be used to show and where caution is required in interpretation.

Given these variations in timing, scope, and data collection practices, findings are presented on an organization-by-organization basis. Cross-organizational comparisons are not made, as differences in data availability and reporting approaches limit comparability and risk obscuring meaningful context.

Figure 2. Racial composition of Leadership Staff in Arts, Culture, and Heritage Organization A in 2024



Leadership staff self-identified their racial or ethnic identity. Individuals were invited to describe their identity in their own words. For reporting purposes, responses reflecting multiple racial, regional, or diasporic identities are grouped under "Mixed or Multiple Racial Identities." Percentages are based on a total of nine leadership staff.

Figure 2 presents the racial representation of leadership staff in Arts, Culture, and Heritage Organization A based on self-identified data. Percentages are calculated using a total of nine leadership staff.

When collecting racial demographic data, self-identification is widely recognized as the gold standard, as it allows individuals to name their identity in ways that reflect lived experience rather than externally imposed categories. In this case, leadership staff were invited to describe their racial identity in their own words. The resulting data include detailed, specific, and multi-layered descriptions, rather than a single standardized set of categories.

Three leadership staff members, representing 33.3 percent, self-identified as Chinese-Canadian. The repeated use of this specific identifier, rather than a broader category such as "East Asian," reflects how individuals locate themselves within both racial and national contexts. The consistency of this self-identification across multiple individuals suggests a shared understanding of identity that is meaningful to those respondents.

Two leadership staff members, accounting for 22.2 percent, identified as White. One of these individuals further specified European ancestry, naming Italian, Irish, and German backgrounds. The inclusion of ancestry within the White category highlights how self-identification can capture nuance that is often lost when racial categories are treated as fixed or uniform.

One leadership staff member, representing 11.1 percent, self-identified as Indigenous, naming Haida, Squamish, and Musqueam Nations. The use of Nation-specific identification is significant. Indigenous identity is frequently generalized in administrative datasets, whereas Nation-based identification reflects Indigenous self-determination and aligns with best practices for respectful data collection involving Indigenous peoples.

The remaining 33.3 percent of leadership staff described their identity using multiple racial, regional, or diasporic terms. These descriptions included combinations such as Black, Asian, South American, diasporic; South East Asian, Central Asian/ Middle Eastern; and mixed heritage - European and South Asian. For reporting purposes, these responses are grouped under a mixed or multiple racial identities category. Importantly, this analytical grouping does not replace the original self-descriptions, which remain central to understanding the complexity of racial identity within leadership.

The diversity and specificity of these self-identifications are notable. Rather than compressing identities into a limited set of predefined categories, the organization preserved how individuals chose to name themselves. This approach supports accuracy, respects individual agency, and provides a more honest representation of racial identity within leadership.

Given the small number of leadership staff, these percentages should be interpreted cautiously and understood as descriptive rather than representative. Even so, the data offer meaningful insight into leadership composition and illustrate an approach to race-based data collection that prioritizes care, transparency, and respect.

Figure 3. Racial composition of Employees in Arts, Culture, and Heritage Organization B from 2022 – 2025

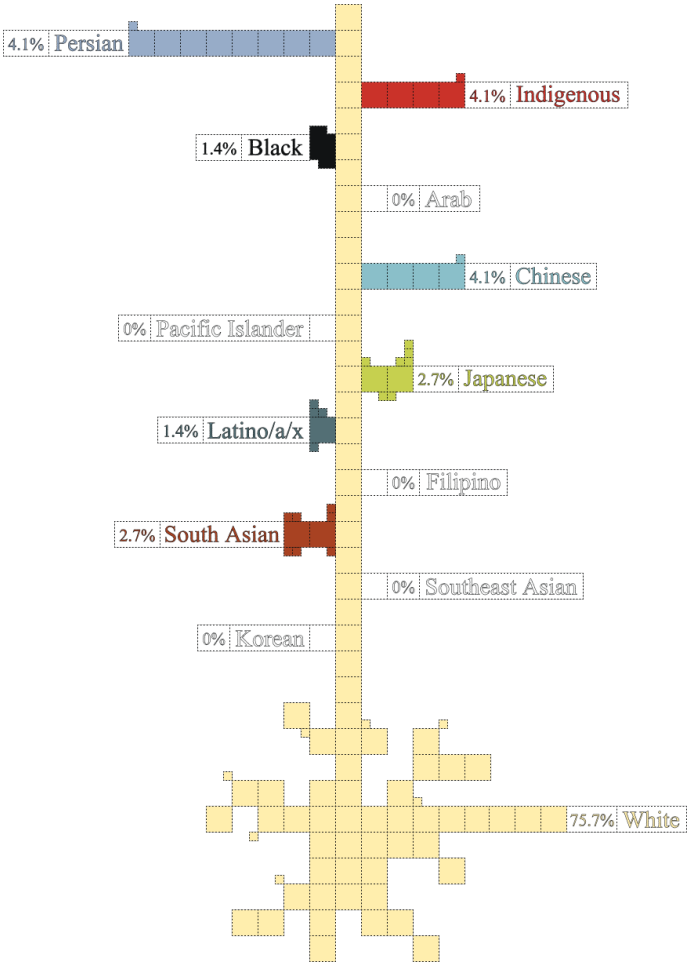


Figure 3 illustrates the racial composition of staff in Arts, Culture, and Heritage Organization B between 2022 and 2025. The distribution is highly concentrated, with one racial identity accounting for a substantial majority of the workforce and the remaining representation dispersed across multiple groups at comparatively low levels.

White staff make up 75.7 percent of employees, a proportion that shapes the overall demographic profile of the organization. This level of concentration is significant, as it sets the context within which all other representation must be understood. In practical terms, it means that racialized staff collectively account for less than one quarter of the workforce, even when multiple racial categories are considered together.

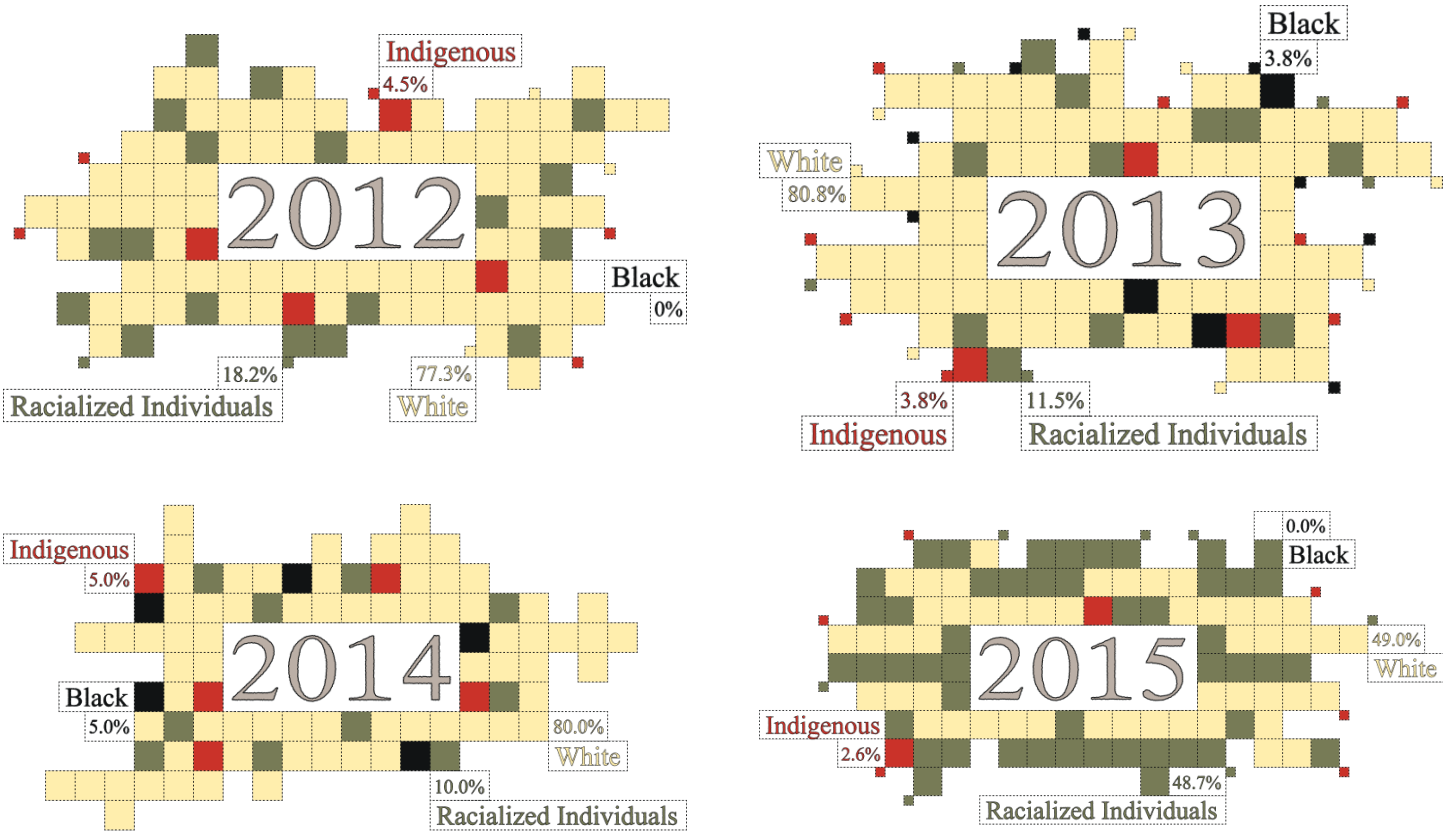
Outside of White staff, representation is uneven and fragmented. The largest racialized group identified in the data is Persian, representing 8.1 percent of staff. Several other groups appear at much lower levels. Indigenous and Chinese staff each account for 4.1 percent, while South Asian and Japanese staff represent 2.7 percent each. Black and Latino/a/x staff each account for 1.4 percent of the workforce. These figures suggest that racialized representation is distributed across many categories rather than concentrated in a small number of groups.

Equally important are the categories with no representation during this reporting period. No staff self-identified as Filipino, Arab, Southeast Asian, Korean, or Pacific Islander. The absence of these identities in the data does not indicate a lack of relevance or presence within the broader labour market, but it does highlight where representation is currently non-existent within the organization. In race-based reporting, absence is itself a meaningful finding and warrants attention alongside presence.

The breadth of categories included in the data collection is notable. Rather than relying on broad or aggregated racial groupings, the organization collected disaggregated racial identity data, allowing for more precise visibility into who is represented and who is not. This level of detail makes it possible to identify patterns of concentration, marginal presence, and absence that would otherwise be obscured.

These findings are best read as a snapshot of staff composition across the 2022 to 2025 timeframe. While the data do not capture change over time within this period, they provide a clear baseline against which future shifts in recruitment, retention, and workplace inclusion can be assessed. Interpreting these results alongside labour market availability data and qualitative information about staff experience would offer further insight into the factors shaping representation within the organization.

Figure 4. Racial composition of Employees in Arts, Culture, and Heritage Organization C from 2012– 2015



The employee racial composition data for Organization C from 2012 to 2015 provides an early snapshot of workforce demographics during a period when demographic data collection was still taking shape. As such, the data are best read as descriptive and contextual rather than as evidence of linear progress.

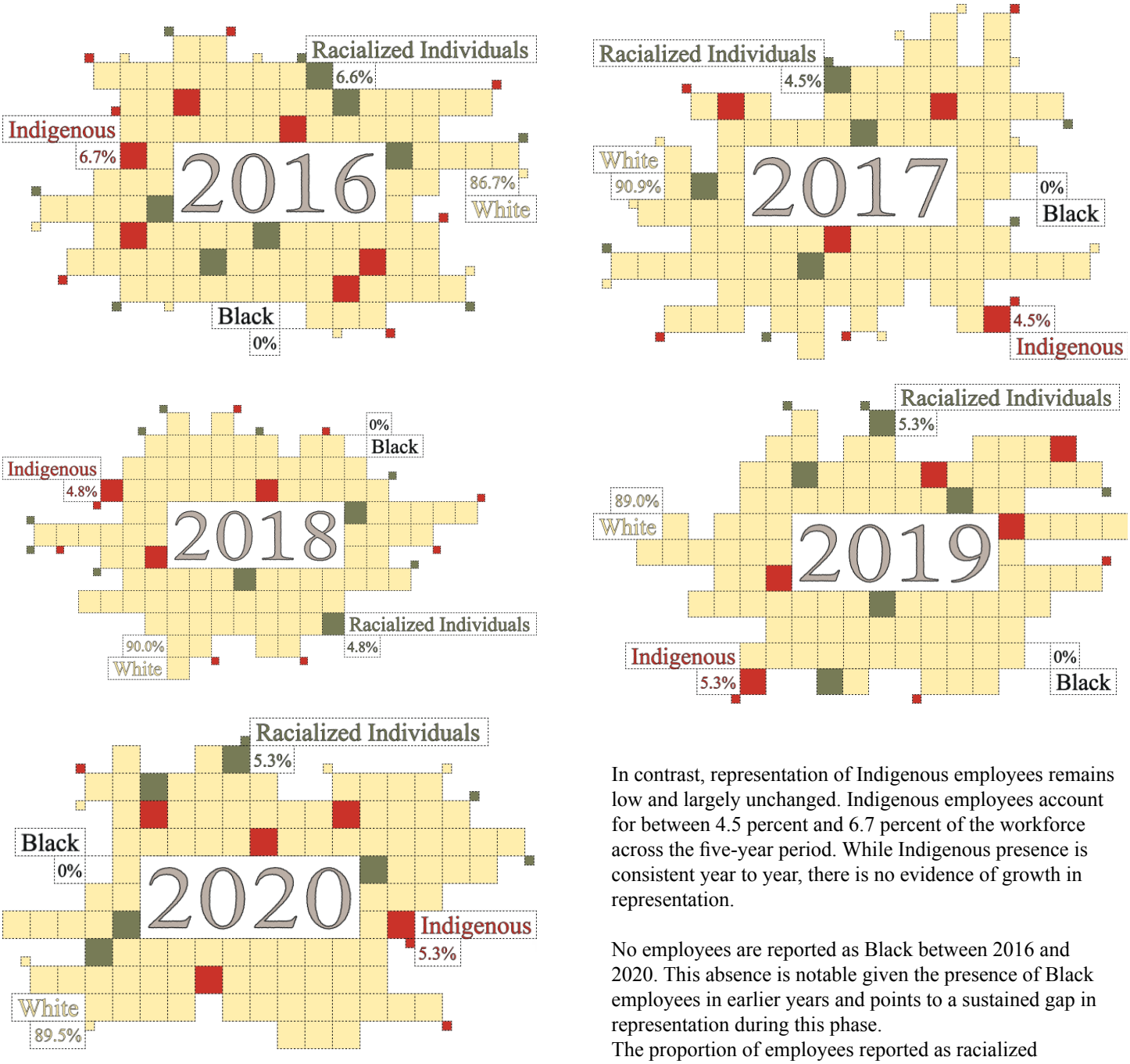
From 2012 through 2014, the employee composition is relatively stable. White employees consistently make up a large majority of the workforce, accounting for just over three quarters of staff in 2012 and increasing slightly to approximately 81 percent in 2013 and 80 percent in 2014. During these same years, representation of Indigenous employees remains low, fluctuating between 3.8 percent and 5.0 percent, without a clear directional pattern.

Black employee representation appears intermittently in this period. There are no Black staff reported in 2012, followed by modest representation in 2013 and 2014, before returning to zero in 2015. Given the small overall workforce size, these shifts likely reflect individual hiring and turnover decisions rather than sustained changes in organizational practice.

The most notable change occurs in 2015. In that year, White staff representation drops sharply to 49 percent, while the proportion of staff reported as racialized individuals increases to 48.7 percent. This represents a significant departure from the previous three years. Without additional contextual information, it is not possible to determine whether this shift reflects changes in hiring, changes in how staff self-identified, or changes in how racial categories were defined or reported. What is clear is that 2015 marks a break from earlier patterns and should be treated as such in subsequent analysis.

Overall, the 2012 to 2015 data highlight both concentration and instability in early staff representation. They establish a baseline against which later data can be assessed, while also underscoring the importance of interpreting early demographic reporting within its methodological and organizational context.

Figure 5. Racial composition of Employees in Arts, Culture, and Heritage Organization C from 2016– 2020



Employee racial composition data for Organization C from 2016 to 2020 show a highly concentrated workforce, with limited variation across years.

Across this period, White employees account for the vast majority of employees, ranging from 86.7 percent in 2016 to 90.9 percent in 2017, and remaining close to 90 percent through 2020. This consistency indicates a stable racial composition over time, with no meaningful shifts in overall representation during these years.

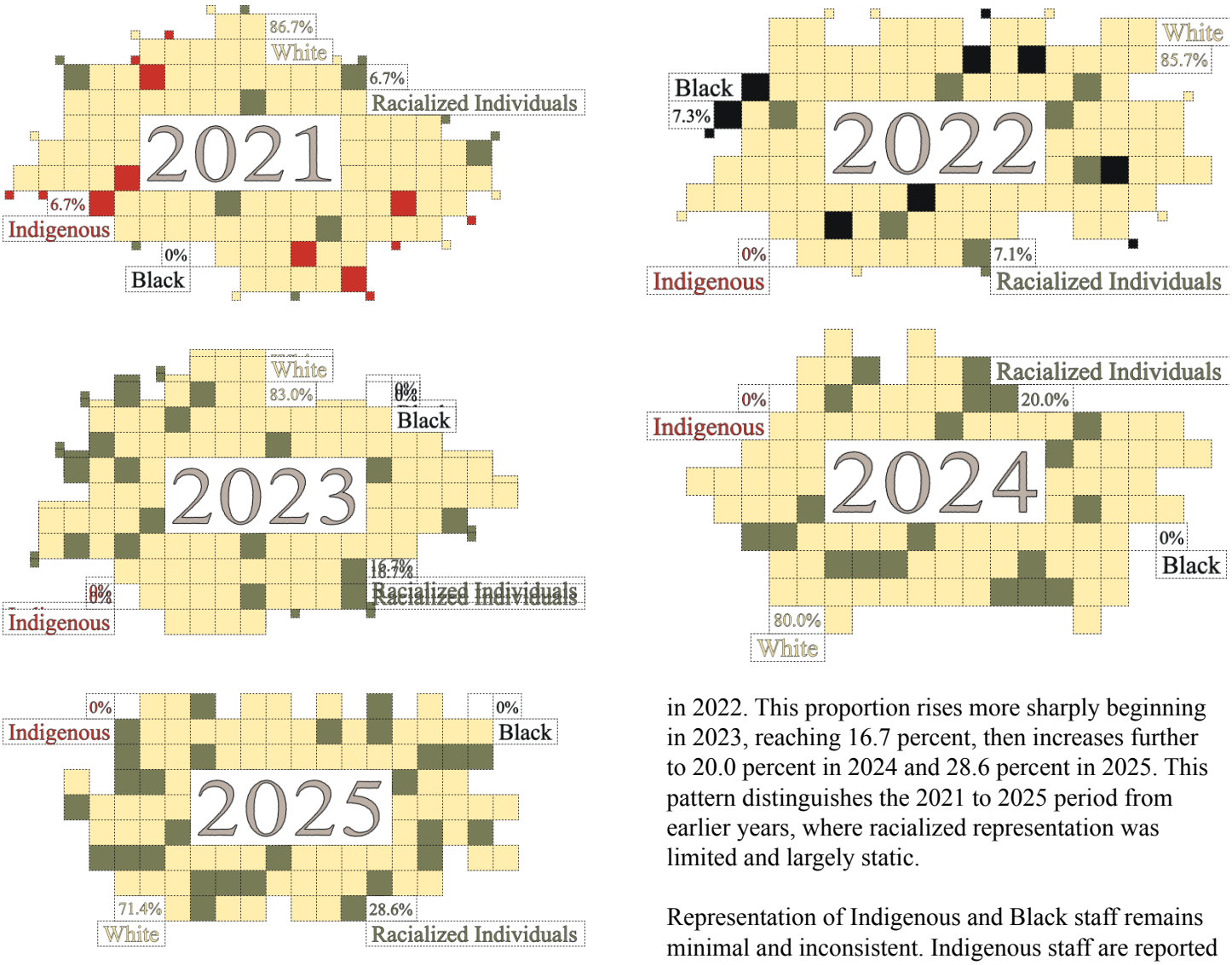
In contrast, representation of Indigenous employees remains low and largely unchanged. Indigenous employees account for between 4.5 percent and 6.7 percent of the workforce across the five-year period. While Indigenous presence is consistent year to year, there is no evidence of growth in representation.

No employees are reported as Black between 2016 and 2020. This absence is notable given the presence of Black employees in earlier years and points to a sustained gap in representation during this phase.

The proportion of employees reported as racialized individuals mirrors Indigenous representation exactly in each year, ranging from 4.5 percent to 6.6 percent. This pattern suggests limited racialized representation beyond Indigenous identity and indicates that racial diversity among staff remained narrow during this period.

Overall, the 2016 to 2020 data show a workforce characterized by demographic stability rather than change. Compared with earlier fluctuations, this period reflects a return to a highly concentrated staff composition, providing a clear baseline for assessing whether subsequent years mark a departure from this pattern.

Figure 6. Racial composition of Employees in Arts, Culture, and Heritage Organization C from 2021– 2025



Staff racial composition data for Organization C from 2021 to 2025 shows a clear change in workforce makeup, marked by declining White representation and increasing representation among racialized staff.

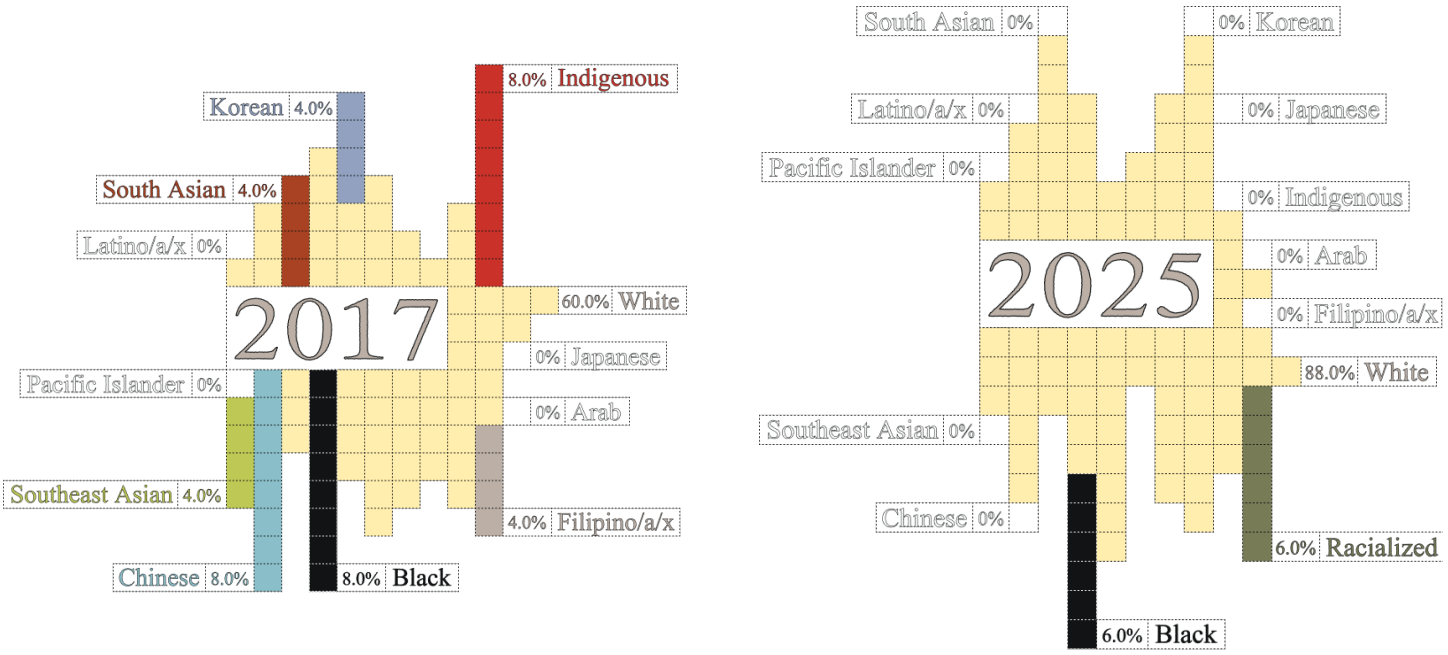
White staff remain the majority in every year; however, their share decreases steadily. In 2021, White staff account for 86.7 percent of employees. This proportion falls to 85.7 percent in 2022, 83 percent in 2023, 80 percent in 2024, and 71.4 percent in 2025. The consistency of this downward trend suggests a sustained shift rather than year-to-year fluctuation.

Over the same period, representation of racialized individuals increases each year. Racialized staff account for 6.7 percent of employees in 2021 and 7.1 percent in 2022. This proportion rises more sharply beginning in 2023, reaching 16.7 percent, then increases further to 20.0 percent in 2024 and 28.6 percent in 2025. This pattern distinguishes the 2021 to 2025 period from earlier years, where racialized representation was limited and largely static.

Representation of Indigenous and Black staff remains minimal and inconsistent. Indigenous staff are reported in 2021 at 6.7 percent but are not reported in subsequent years. Black staff appear only in 2022, accounting for 7.1 percent of staff, and are absent in all other years. These patterns indicate that increases in overall racialized representation during this period were not evenly distributed across specific racial groups.

The 2021 to 2025 data therefore reflect a period of transition. Workforce composition changes are gradual and sustained, particularly with respect to racialized staff, while representation of Indigenous and Black employees remains limited. This combination points to growing overall diversity alongside persistent gaps for certain groups, underscoring the importance of examining disaggregated data rather than relying solely on aggregate measures when assessing change over time.

Figure 7. Racial composition of Employees in Arts, Culture, and Heritage Organization D in 2017 and 2025



The staff racial composition data for Organization D point to a clear change between 2017 and 2025. The difference is not only visible in overall proportions but also in the range of racial identities present within the workforce.

In 2017, the staff profile shows representation across several racial identity categories. White staff make up 60 percent of employees, while the remaining 40 percent are distributed across Indigenous, Black, South Asian, Chinese, Filipino/a/x, Southeast Asian, and Korean identities. Each group represents a relatively small share of the workforce, yet their combined presence indicates a level of diversity that extends beyond a single dominant category. The absence of aggregation in the 2017 data also allows for greater visibility into how representation is distributed across racial identities.

The picture changes considerably by 2025.

White staff account for 88 percent of employees in that year, reflecting a substantial increase over the earlier period. At the same time, many of the racial identity categories that appeared in 2017 are no longer reported. Indigenous, South Asian, Chinese, Filipino/a/x, Southeast Asian, and Korean staff are absent from the 2025 data.

Black staff remain represented, accounting for 6 percent of employees. An additional 6 percent of staff are reported under an aggregated racialized category. While this indicates the continued presence of racialized employees within the organization, the shift toward aggregation limits insight into the specific racial identities included within this group.
The change between 2017 and 2025 suggests a narrowing of staff diversity over time. This is reflected not only in the increased concentration of White staff but also in the reduced breadth of racial identities represented. Whether this shift reflects workforce turnover, changes in recruitment and retention, or differences in data collection practices cannot be determined from the available information.

What the data do show is that the organization's staff composition in 2025 differs in meaningful ways from that of 2017. The comparison highlights the importance of examining both proportional change and the visibility of specific racial identities when assessing shifts in representation across time.

4.2.1. Synthesis of Staff Racial Composition Across All Organizations

The staff-level findings across grant-making organizations and arts, culture, and heritage organizations reveal patterns of representation that are uneven, context-dependent, and shaped by institutional practice rather than steady progression. While the data provided vary considerably in scope, structure, and level of disaggregation, a consistent feature across organizations is the centrality of White representation within the workforce.

Within the grant-making context, analysis is limited to a single organization that provided staff racial composition data. Even within this narrow scope, the designated group data from 2021 to 2023 reflect familiar dynamics within Canadian employment equity reporting. Women account for the largest share of staff and remain relatively stable over time, while representation among Indigenous peoples declines. Representation among members of visible minorities fluctuates across years, suggesting that racial inclusion remains more vulnerable to organizational turnover and labour market conditions than gender representation. These patterns mirror broader federal trends, where gender equity has been more fully institutionalized, while racial equity, particularly for Indigenous peoples, remains uneven and fragile.

Across the arts, culture, and heritage organizations, differences in data collection practices shape what can be observed, but not the broader pattern that emerges.

Irrespective of whether organizations report disaggregated racial identities or rely on aggregated racialized categories, White staff consistently comprise the largest proportion of employees. In some cases, White representation exceeds three quarters of the workforce. In others, it declines modestly over time. Yet even where racialized representation increases, White employees remain the dominant group, anchoring organizational composition and shaping the context within which all other representation is situated.

Longitudinal data further complicate the picture. Organization C demonstrates that workforce composition can change meaningfully over time, with periods marked by declining White representation and increasing racialized presence. However, these shifts are neither linear nor permanent. Gains in diversity recede in later years, reinforcing that representation is contingent on sustained institutional practice rather than secured through one-time commitments.

Organization D illustrates a different but related pattern. Earlier data show staff representation distributed across multiple racial identity categories, offering visibility into a broader range of identities. By the end of the reporting period, that diversity contracts. White representation increases substantially, while many racial identity categories disappear from the data altogether. This narrowing underscores how diversity can diminish over time and how changes in reporting practices can further obscure who is included and who is no longer present.

Across organizations, aggregate measures of racialized representation obscure the persistence of racial hierarchy. While increases in overall racialized staff are visible in some contexts, disaggregated data reveal that Indigenous and Black staff remain underrepresented, intermittently represented, or absent altogether. Even where data structures differ, the outcome is consistent: representation continues to be concentrated within White groups, with racialized inclusion occurring at the margins.

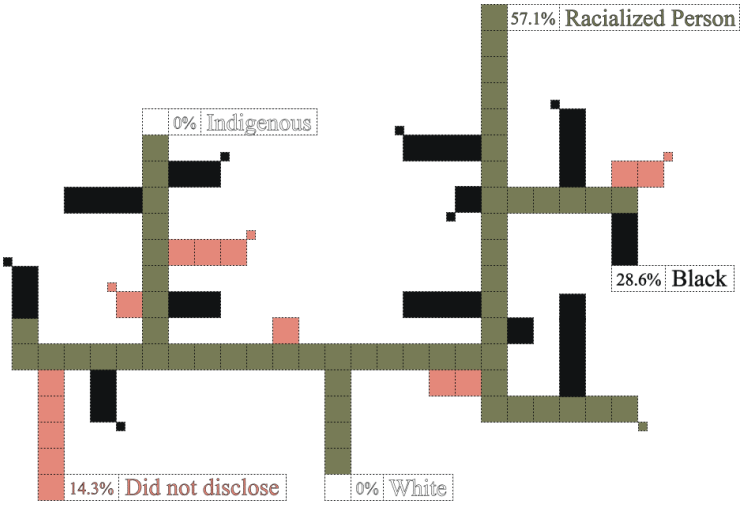
From a critical perspective, these findings highlight that representation is not simply a matter of numbers, but of power. We argue that institutions are organized around dominant social locations that shape whose presence is normalized and whose remains exceptional. The staff data presented here suggest that, despite variation in data availability and reporting practices, whiteness continues to function as the unmarked norm within organizational employment, framing both the possibilities and the limits of racial inclusion.

4.2.2. Racial Composition of Board Members

This section presents racial composition data for board members from four arts, culture, and heritage organizations that provided validated information as part of the quantitative phase of the study. The original data request sought board-level racial composition data covering the period from 2012 to 2025, with the aim of enabling longitudinal analysis and identifying potential trends over time. However, organizations differed in when they began collecting race-based demographic data and in the availability of historical records.

As a result, the data presented in this section reflect the time periods for which each organization was able to provide information. Board-level racial composition data are therefore reported by organization, rather than aggregated or compared across organizations. Given these differences in data coverage and collection practices, findings in this section are descriptive and contextual. Cross-organizational comparisons are not undertaken, as doing so would risk misinterpretation and obscure the limits of the available data.

Figure 8. Racial composition of Board Members in Arts, Culture, and Heritage Organization A in 2024



"Did not disclose" refers to board members who chose not to self-identify their racial identity.

Figure 8 presents the racial composition of board members in Arts, Culture, and Heritage Organization A in 2024, based on self-identified data. Percentages are calculated using the total number of board members.

Racial demographic data were collected through self-identification, allowing board members to name their identities on their own terms rather than through externally imposed categories. This approach matters. How people are counted shapes how institutions understand representation, belonging, and authority. In this case, the organization preserved the language board members used to describe themselves, rather than collapsing identities into a narrow set of standardized labels.

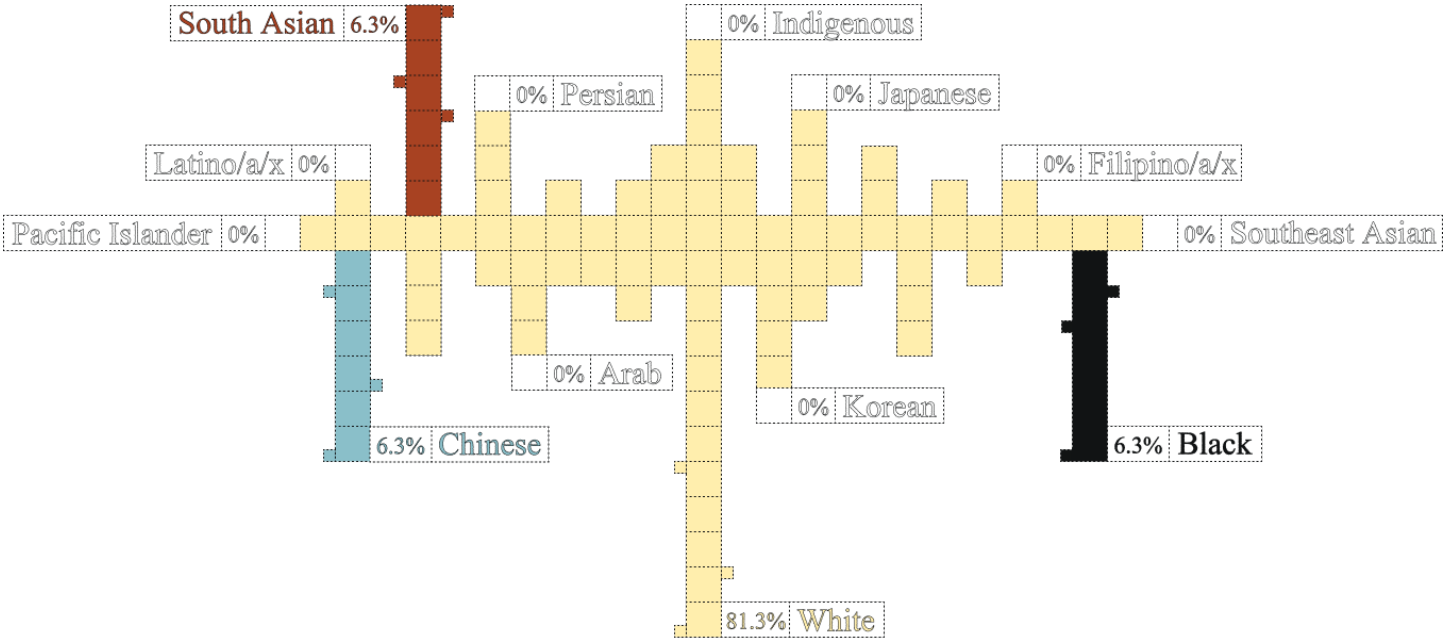
Racialized board members constitute the majority of the board, accounting for 57.1 percent. Within this group, individuals identified using descriptors such as racialized person or person of colour, as well as more specific identifiers including Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim. These self-descriptions reflect identity as relational and situated, shaped by history, geography, and lived experience rather than by fixed racial taxonomies.

Black board members represent 28.6 percent of the board. Self-identifications within this group included Black or person of African descent, sometimes alongside broader racialized or mixed-race descriptors. These responses underscore that Black identity is not monolithic and that individuals often locate themselves across multiple, overlapping social positions.

A further 14.3 percent of board members chose not to disclose their racial identity. Non-disclosure should not be read simply as missing data. It can signal the uneven terrain of institutional trust, privacy, and power that shapes decisions about whether and how individuals make themselves legible within organizational contexts.

No board members identified as Indigenous or White in the data provided. Given the small size of the board, these findings are descriptive rather than representative. Still, the data point to a board composition that challenges dominant patterns within the arts, culture, and heritage sector, where governance spaces have historically been shaped by whiteness as an unmarked norm. The use of self-identification here makes visible how race, identity, and power intersect at the level of governance.

Figure 9. Racial composition of Board Members in Arts, Culture, and Heritage Organization B from 2022 - 2025



Turning to Organization B, the board-level data presented for the 2022 to 2025 period reveal a highly concentrated pattern of representation.

White board members account for an overwhelming majority of the board, representing 81.3 percent. This level of concentration is notable, particularly within the arts, culture, and heritage sector, where public commitments to equity and inclusion are increasingly articulated, yet governance structures often remain resistant to change.

Representation among racialized groups is limited and uneven. Black, South Asian, and Chinese board members each account for 6.3 percent of the board. While the presence of these groups indicates some level of racial diversity, their representation remains marginal relative to the dominance of White board members. No board members identified as Indigenous, Filipino/a/x, Arab, Japanese, Latino/a/x, Southeast Asian, Korean, Pacific Islander, or Persian during the period captured.

What is most striking in this data is not only who is present, but who is absent. The absence of Indigenous representation is particularly significant given the organization's location within Indigenous territories and the broader sectoral emphasis on reconciliation.

These absences point to how institutional governance can continue to reproduce racial hierarchies even as equity language becomes more visible in organizational discourse. At the same time, the narrow distribution of representation across a small number of racialized categories underscores how diversity at the margins does not necessarily disrupt dominant structures. Representation without power risks becoming symbolic. In this case, the data suggest that racialized presence on the board exists, but within a governance context that remains largely shaped by whiteness.

Figure 10. Racial composition of Board Members in Arts, Culture, and Heritage Organization C from 2012 - 2015

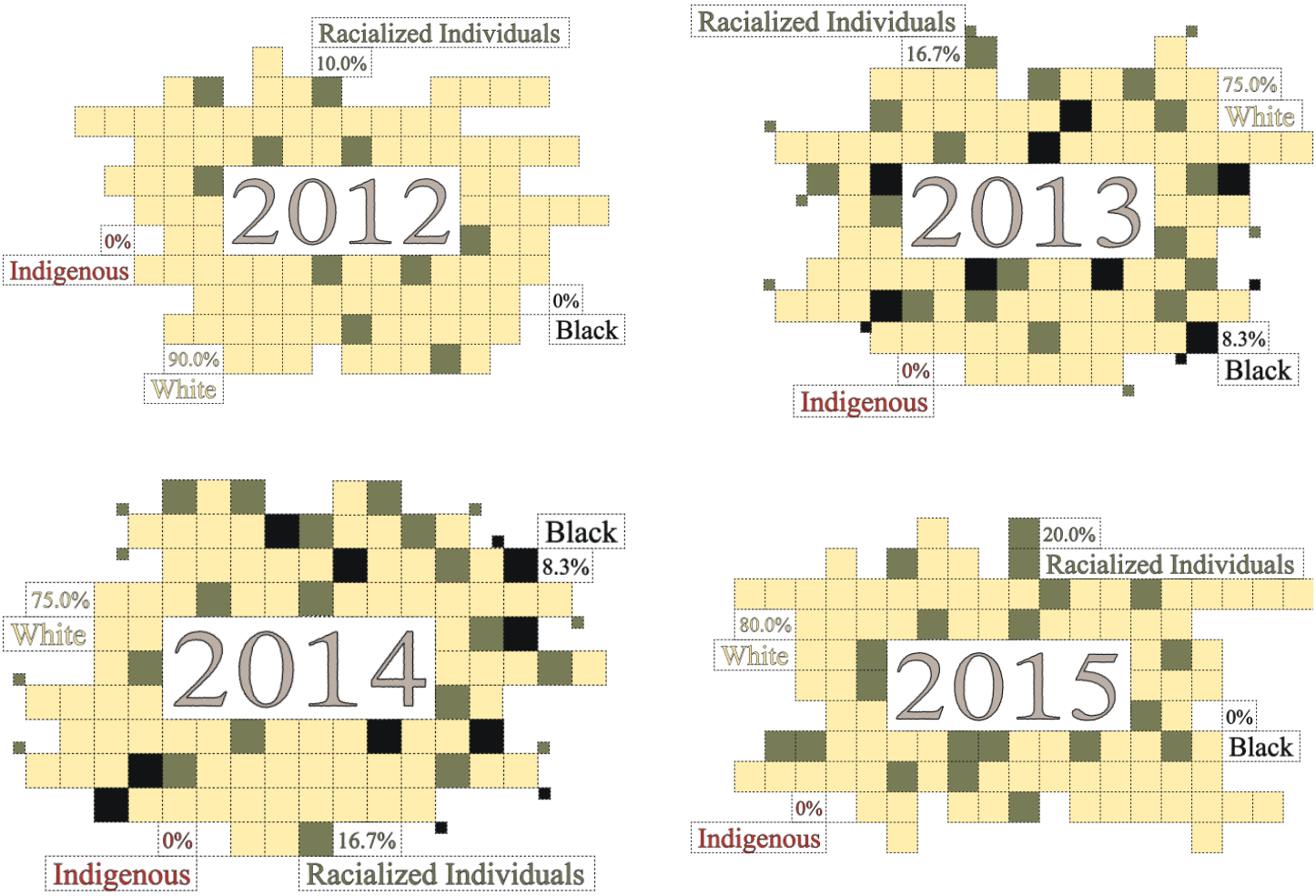


Figure 11. Racial composition of Board Members in Arts, Culture, and Heritage Organization C from 2016 – 2020

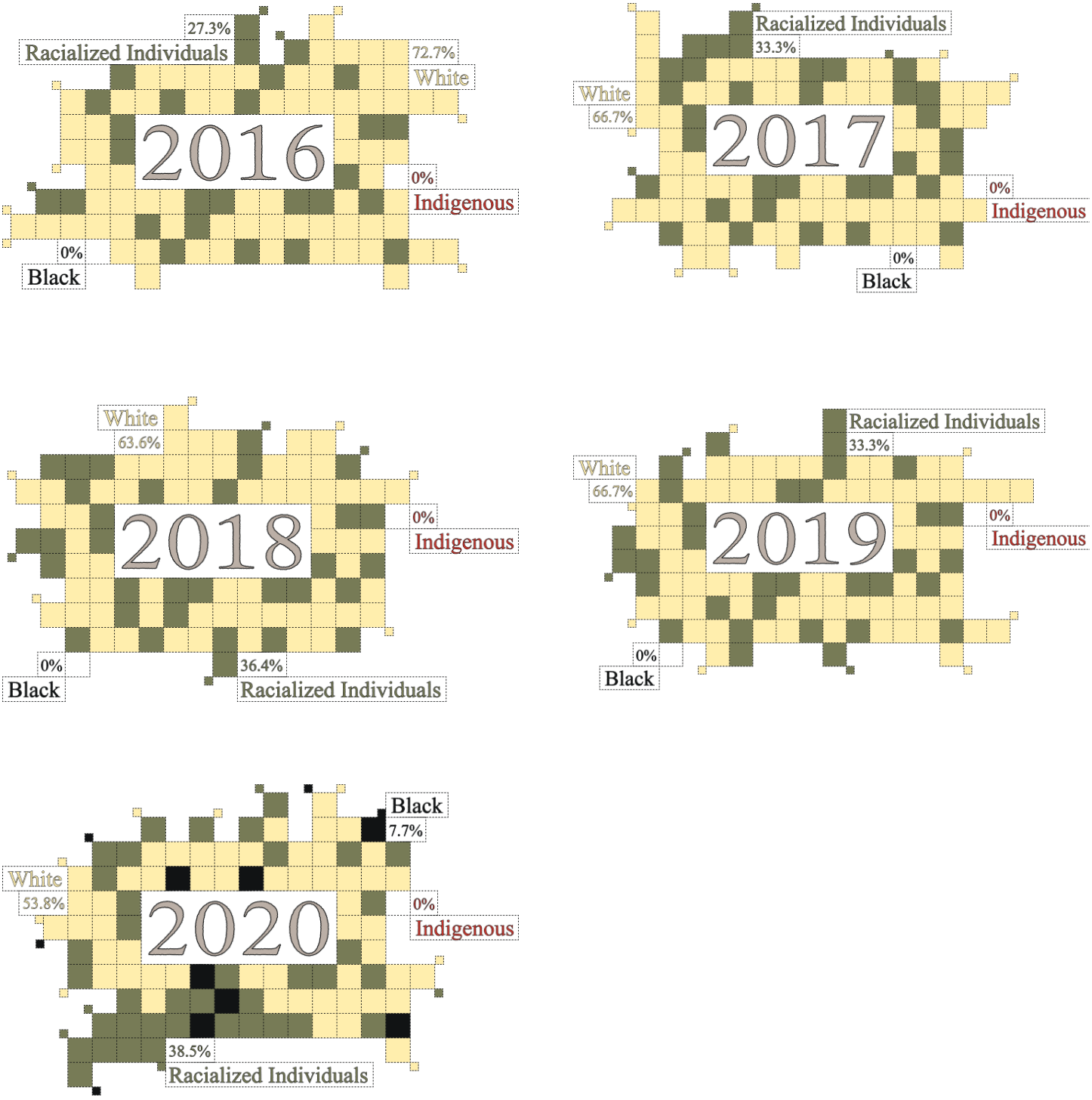
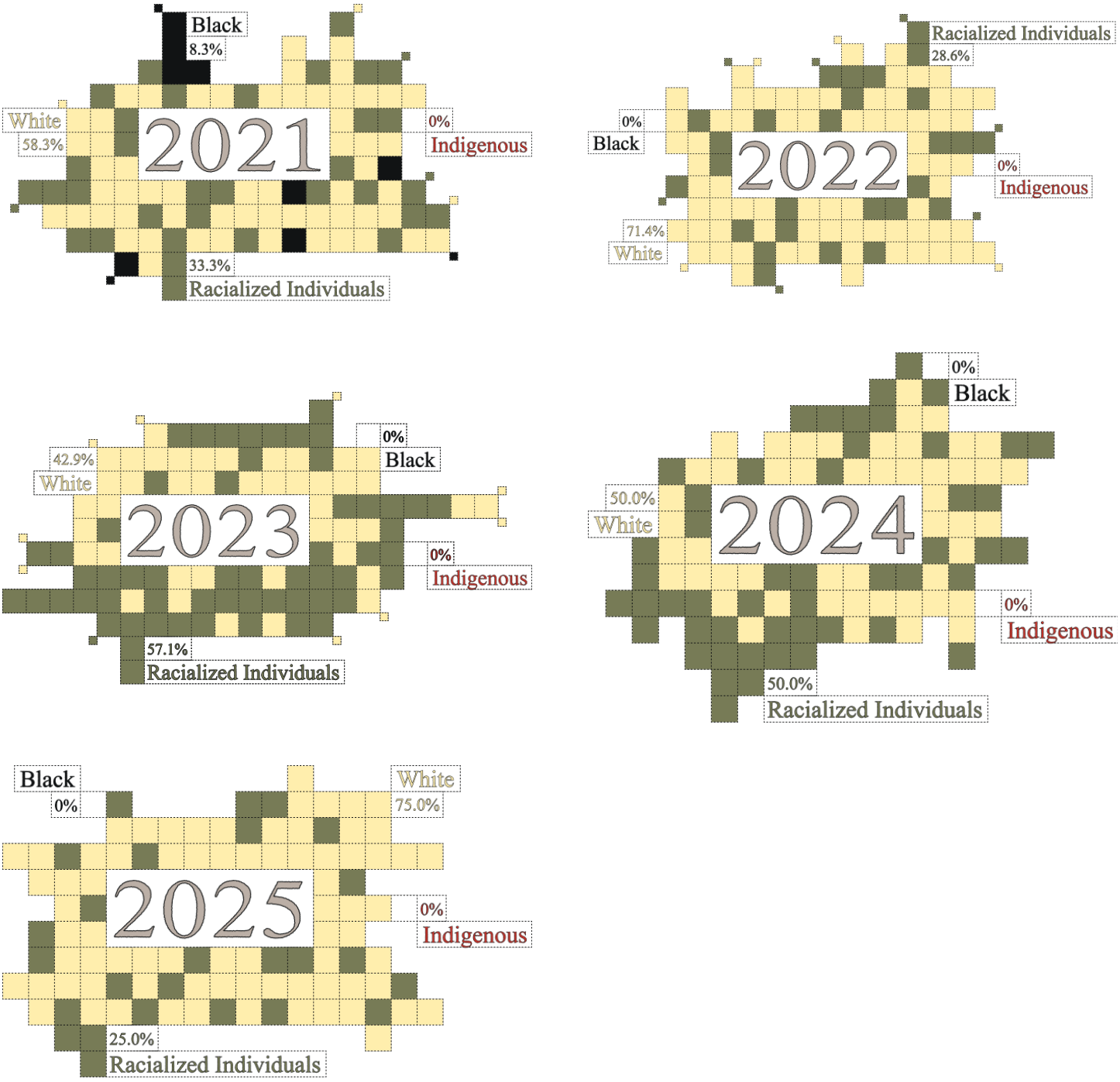


Figure 12. Racial Composition of Board Members in Arts, Culture, and Heritage Organization C from 2021 – 2025



Organization C is the only organization in the study that provided board-level racial composition data consistently from 2012 to 2025. This breadth allows for a more sustained examination of change over time, rather than reliance on isolated data points. Figures 10 to 12 present this data across three time periods, illustrating shifts in board composition over more than a decade.

In the early years of the dataset, from 2012 to 2015, the board is overwhelmingly White. White representation ranges from 75 percent to as high as 90 percent, while racialized representation remains limited, never exceeding 20 percent. Black representation appears intermittently and at low levels, and Indigenous representation is absent throughout this period. These early patterns reflect a governance structure aligned with long-standing sector norms, where boards are shaped by racial homogeneity and limited access to decision-making roles.

Change begins to emerge after 2016.

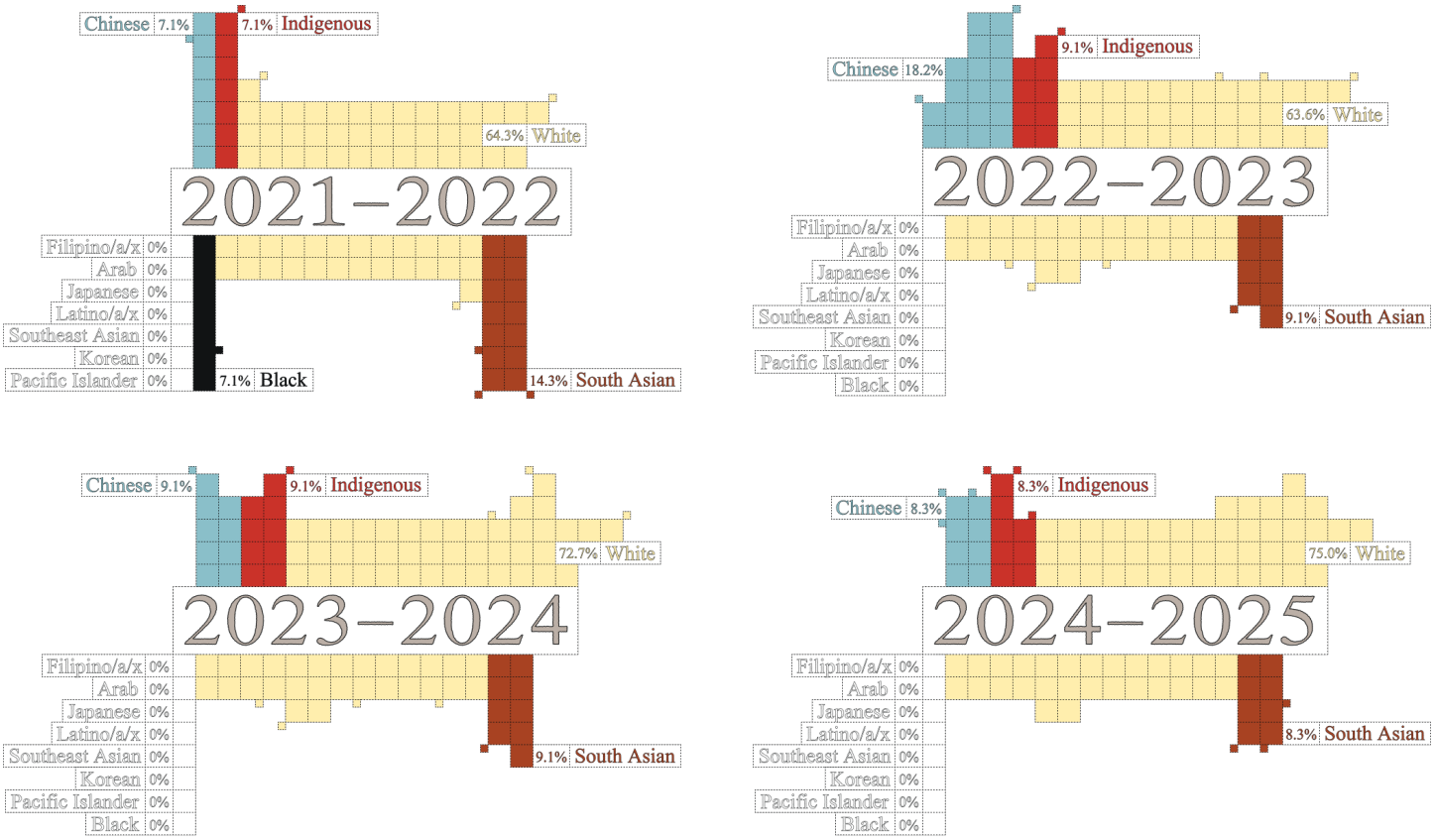
From 2016 through 2019, White representation declines gradually while the proportion of racialized board members increases. By 2018 and 2019, racialized individuals account for approximately one third of the board. This shift unfolds incrementally, suggesting a slow reconfiguration of governance practices rather than a rapid or singular intervention.

The most pronounced transformation occurs later in the time series. In 2023, racialized board members comprise a majority of the board, accounting for 57.1 percent, while White representation falls to 42.9 percent. This marks a clear departure from earlier years and represents the first instance in which racialized individuals outnumber White board members within this organization's governance structure. That shift does not remain stable.

By 2024 and 2025, White representation increases again, reaching 75 percent in the final year of reporting, while racialized representation declines to 25 percent. These fluctuations point to the fragility of gains in representation. Diversification at the board level is shown here not as a linear progression, but as a process subject to reversal.

The limits of the data must also be acknowledged. Organization C reports board composition using aggregated racial categories: Indigenous, Black, racialized individuals, and White. While this approach supports consistency across time and enables longitudinal analysis, it obscures which specific identities are represented within the racialized category and whether increases reflect broader inclusion or concentration within a narrower group. Even with these constraints, the value of this dataset lies in its duration. Spanning more than a decade, the data make visible how governance structures can shift, stall, and retrench. From a critical perspective, the findings illustrate that representation is shaped by ongoing institutional choices and power relations rather than by isolated commitments or symbolic gestures.

Figure 13. Racial Composition of Board Members in Arts, Culture, and Heritage Organization D from 2021 – 2025



Board-level racial composition data for Organization D are available for the period from 2021 to 2025 and are presented in Figure 13. What the data make immediately visible is a governance structure anchored by continuity rather than transformation.

Across the period, White board members consistently occupy the majority of seats, ranging from roughly two-thirds to three-quarters of the board. While the exact proportion fluctuates year to year, White representation remains structurally dominant. This stability matters. It signals that, despite minor variation, the centre of decision-making power within the organization remains largely unchanged. Racialized representation exists, but it is uneven and tightly bound.

Chinese board members account for the largest share of racialized representation, reaching a high of 18.2 percent in the 2022 to 2023 period before declining again in subsequent years. South Asian representation appears intermittently, ranging between 8.3 percent and 14.3 percent. Indigenous representation is limited, appearing at 7.1 percent in some years and absent in others. These patterns suggest selective inclusion, where some identities are periodically present while others remain marginal.

Absence is a defining feature of this dataset. No board members identified as Filipino/a/x, Arab, Japanese, Latino/a/x, Southeast Asian, Korean, or Pacific Islander at any point during the reporting period. Black representation appears briefly and at low levels. These sustained absences are not neutral. They reflect how governance spaces can remain closed to certain groups even as institutions articulate commitments to equity and diversity.

From a critical perspective, what emerges is a board that incorporates diversity without redistributing power. Representation is added at the edges, concentrated among a small number of racialized identities, while the overall structure of governance remains intact. Over time, the data show movement but not rupture. The board changes at the margins, yet the core remains stable. This pattern underscores how diversity in governance can be present without fundamentally altering whose knowledge, perspectives, and authority are centred in institutional decision-making.

4.2.3. Boards as Sites of Power: Patterns of Visibility and Absence

The board-level findings across grant-making organizations and arts, culture, and heritage organizations tell a story less about progress and more about exposure. What becomes visible through the data is not simply who sits at the table, but how unevenly institutions are willing or able to make that table legible.

In the grant-making sector, the absence of validated board-level racial composition data is itself a finding of consequence. Despite outreach to nine organizations, no confirmed data on board composition were provided. This silence matters. Boards occupy a distinct position within organizational hierarchies, often operating at a distance from the accountability mechanisms applied to staff. The lack of available data suggests that governance remains a protected space, where transparency is optional and demographic scrutiny is limited.

Arts, culture, and heritage organizations present a different, though still constrained, landscape. Where data are available, patterns of concentration quickly emerge. In several organizations, White board members continue to dominate governance spaces, often comprising a substantial majority of seats. Racialized board members are present in some cases, but their inclusion tends to be narrow in scope, unevenly distributed, and concentrated among a small number of identities. Indigenous representation, in particular, is frequently absent, even within organizations that operate on Indigenous lands and publicly affirm commitments to reconciliation.

What distinguishes the organizations is not simply the level of diversity, but how diversity is structured. Organization B exemplifies a model of minimal inclusion. A small number of racialized board members appear at the margins, while the overall composition remains firmly anchored in whiteness. Representation exists, but it does not disrupt the distribution of power. Organization D reflects a similar pattern over time, where modest fluctuations in board composition occur without altering the underlying structure of governance.

Organization A complicates this picture. Here, racialized and Black board members form a majority, and self-identification allows board members to articulate identity in layered and relational ways. The presence of non-disclosure alongside detailed self-descriptions underscores how power, trust, and choice shape demographic reporting. This board does not simply look different numerically; it operates with a different approach to how identity is recognized and recorded.

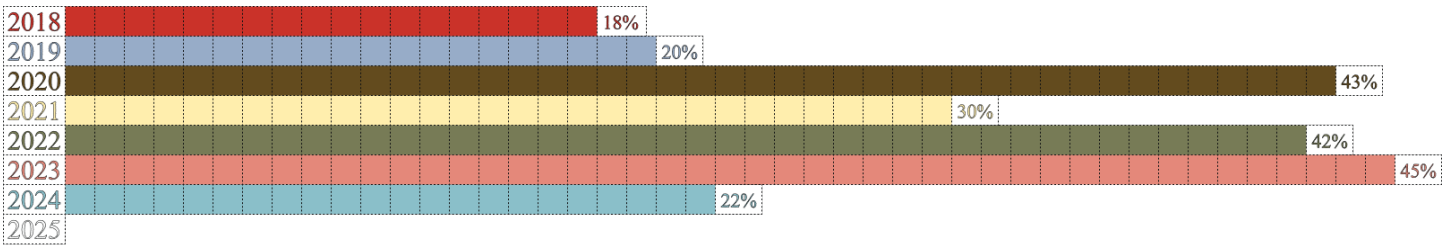
Organization C, with data spanning more than a decade, reveals the instability of governance change. Periods of diversification are followed by retrenchment, with White representation reasserting itself in later years. The data resist any narrative of steady progress. Instead, they show that representation expands and contracts, contingent on ongoing institutional decisions rather than secured through symbolic commitments or isolated reforms.

Across organizations, one pattern persists regardless of data structure or reporting practice. Whiteness remains the organizing centre of governance. Even where racialized representation increases, it does so within boundaries that leave core decision-making power largely intact. Aggregated racial categories further obscure which identities are present, limiting the ability to assess whether inclusion is broad or narrowly concentrated. Boards are not neutral sites. They are spaces where authority is produced, knowledge is legitimized, and organizational direction is set. The data presented here suggest that, while some boards are beginning to look different, the deeper work of redistributing power remains uneven and incomplete.

4.2.4. Representation of BIPOC Artists in Exhibitions

Exhibitions are not neutral sites of display. In the arts, culture, and heritage sector, they function as key spaces where cultural value is assigned, visibility is produced, and legitimacy is conferred. Decisions about who is programmed, whose work is showcased, and which narratives are centred shape not only public perception but also artists' access to professional opportunities, funding, and longer-term career sustainability. For BIPOC artists, exhibition inclusion is therefore closely tied to questions of equity, recognition, and structural access within the sector. As part of the quantitative phase of this study, arts, culture, and heritage organizations were invited to share available data on exhibition programming. Of the organizations engaged, only two were able to provide exhibition statistics These data are presented below on an organization-by-organization basis and should be read as descriptive rather than representative of the sector as a whole.

Figure 14. Exhibition representation of BIPOC-led groups in Organization C between 2018 - 2025



Percentages represent the share of exhibitions featuring BIPOC-led bands in each year. Data for 2025 were not available at the time of reporting.

Figure 14 presents the share of exhibitions featuring BIPOC-led bands at Arts, Culture, and Heritage Organization C between 2018 and 2025. The data show substantial fluctuation over time. In the earlier years of reporting, representation is relatively limited. BIPOC-led bands account for 18 percent of exhibitions in 2018 and 20 percent in 2019. These figures suggest modest inclusion, with BIPOC artists present but far from central within the organization's exhibition programming.

A sharp increase occurs in 2020, when the proportion of exhibitions featuring BIPOC-led bands rises to 43 percent. This increase coincides with a broader moment of reckoning across the arts sector, when many institutions publicly articulated commitments to anti-racism and undertook changes to programming practices. While the data do not allow for causal conclusions, the timing suggests that shifts in institutional priorities may have influenced exhibition decisions during this period.

Representation declines again in 2021, falling to 30 percent, before rising to 42 percent in 2022 and reaching a high of 45 percent in 2023. These swings point to the contingent nature of exhibition inclusion.

Gains are not automatically sustained year over year, and increased representation in one period does not guarantee continuity in the next. The most recent data indicate a reversal. In 2024, the proportion of exhibitions featuring BIPOC-led bands drops to 22 percent, returning close to pre-2020 levels. No data were available for 2025 at the time of reporting. The decline highlights a recurring pattern within the sector, where moments of increased inclusion are followed by retrenchment once institutional attention shifts or external pressure recedes.

4.2.5. Representation of BIPOC Artists in Solo and Group Exhibitions

Within the arts, culture, and heritage sector, solo exhibitions often carry greater symbolic and professional weight than group exhibitions. They confer visibility, signal institutional confidence, and shape how artistic authority is distributed. Examining representation across both solo and group exhibitions, therefore allows for a more textured understanding of how inclusion operates within programming practices, beyond headline commitments to diversity. Organization D reported data for selected years between 2014 and 2016, and again from 2023 to 2025. These data are presented as reported and should be interpreted within the limits of availability and organizational context.

Figure 15. Representation of BIPOC Artists in solo and group exhibitions at Organization D, 2014–2016 and 2023–2025

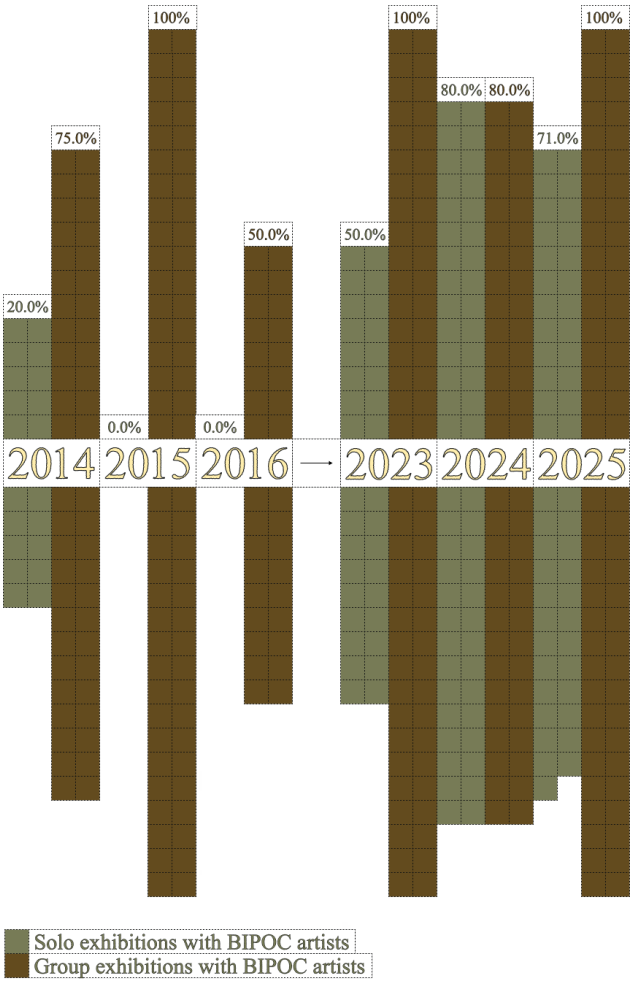


Figure 15 presents the representation of BIPOC artists in solo and group exhibitions at Arts, Culture, and Heritage Organization D across two distinct periods. The contrast between exhibition types, and between timeframes, is pronounced. In the earlier period from 2014 to 2016, BIPOC artists are more consistently represented in group exhibitions than in solo exhibitions. Group exhibition representation is high, reaching 75 percent in 2014 and 100 percent in 2015, before declining to 50 percent in 2016. By contrast, solo exhibition representation remains limited. BIPOC artists account for 20 percent of solo exhibitions in 2014 and are entirely absent from solo exhibitions in 2015 and 2016. This divergence suggests that while inclusion is present, it is largely confined to collective formats, where individual visibility and institutional endorsement are diffused.

The later period tells a different story. From 2023 to 2025, representation increases substantially across both exhibition types. In 2023, BIPOC artists account for 50 percent of solo exhibitions and 100 percent of group exhibitions. This parity in solo programming marks a notable change from earlier patterns, indicating a shift in how curatorial authority and artistic prominence are allocated. In 2024, representation remains high, with BIPOC artists comprising 80 percent of both solo and group exhibitions. Although solo exhibition representation declines slightly in 2025 to 71 percent, group exhibition representation remains at 100 percent.

The contrast between the two periods highlights how inclusion can shift from peripheral to central, but also how such shifts depend on sustained institutional commitment. Earlier reliance on group exhibitions as the primary site of inclusion reflects a common sector pattern, where racialized artists are present but not foregrounded. The later expansion into solo exhibitions signals a redistribution of visibility and symbolic capital, albeit one that remains vulnerable to reversal.

Figure 16. Percentage of events featuring BIPOC participants by program type at Organization D in 2016 and 2024

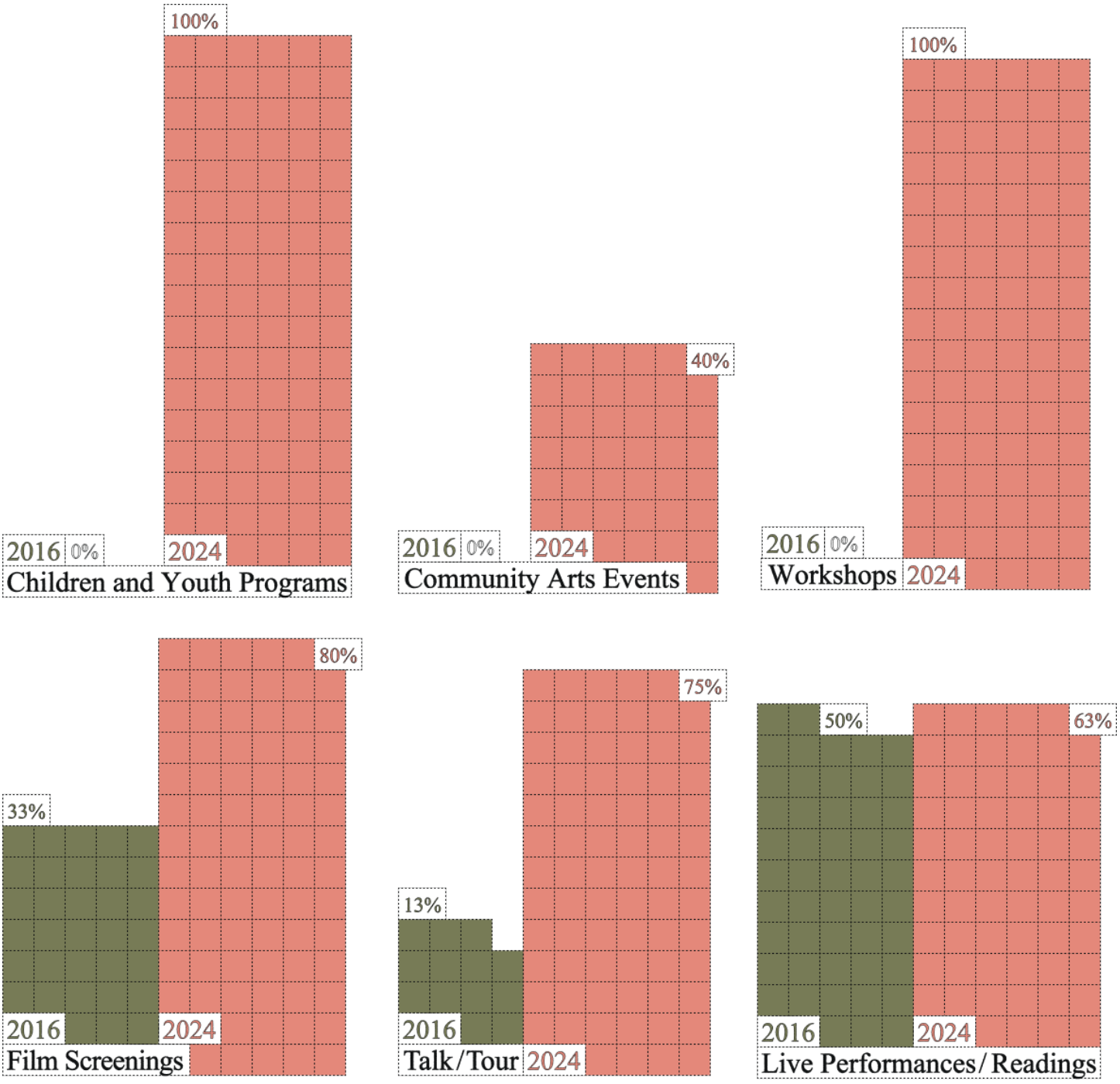


Table 12: Public Programs at Organization D: Number of Events and BIPOC Representation, 2016 and 2024

Program Type	2016 Events (BIPOC/Total)	2024 Events (BIPOC/ Total)
Children and Youth Programs	0 / 1	2 / 2
Community Arts Events	0 / 0	4 / 10
Live Performances / Readings	1 / 2	5 / 8
Film Screenings	1 / 3	4 / 5
Talk/Tour	1 / 8	9 / 12
Workshops	0 / 0	1 / 2

Percentages in Figure 16 are calculated based on the number of events in each program category. Event volumes vary by year and program type.

Figure 16 illustrates a substantial shift in the representation of BIPOC artists and curators across public programs at Arts, Culture, and Heritage Organization D between 2016 and 2024. In 2016, BIPOC participation was limited across most program types, often reflecting low representation. For example, Live Performances and Readings include BIPOC participants in one of two events, while Film Screenings include one BIPOC-led event out of three. Several program areas report no BIPOC participation, though in some cases this coincides with minimal or no programming activity.

By 2024, increased representation occurred alongside expanded programming. Community Arts Events grew from no events in 2016 to ten events in 2024, with four featuring BIPOC artists or curators. Talk and Tour programming increases from eight to twelve events, with BIPOC participation rising from one event to nine. Film Screenings show a similar pattern, with BIPOC representation increasing from one of three events in 2016 to four of five in 2024. In some program areas, such as Children and Youth Programs and Workshops, full BIPOC representation in 2024 reflects both inclusive programming choices and small event counts.

4.2.6. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Policies

As part of the management engagement phase, arts, culture, and heritage organizations were asked to share equity, diversity, inclusion, anti-racism, and related policy documents developed between 2012 and 2025. The intention was not to assess the quality of individual policies, but to understand how organizations formally articulate equity commitments over time, what forms of difference are made visible in policy language, and how responsibility for equity is located within institutional structures.

What organizations provided reflects different histories of policy development. Some were able to share comprehensive policy manuals or multi-year strategic plans that embed equity across governance, staffing, and programming. Others submitted stand-alone statements or more recent frameworks developed in response to heightened sector-wide attention to racism, colonialism, and exclusion.

Earlier documents tend to approach equity obliquely. Inclusion is often framed as a matter of values, tone, or interpersonal respect, folded into broader commitments to access, participation, or community engagement. Race, power, and systemic exclusion are rarely named directly. In these policies, inequity appears as something that can be mitigated through goodwill and openness rather than through structural change. This framing reflects a period in which cultural institutions could gesture toward diversity without being required to interrogate how they themselves produce and maintain exclusion.

More recent policies mark a discernible shift. Documents developed in the late 2010s and early 2020s more consistently name systemic racism, colonial histories, and institutional responsibility. Equity is no longer positioned solely as an aspirational value but increasingly as an organizational obligation. Several policies situate their commitments within broader social contexts, referencing public reckonings with racial violence, demands for accountability, and calls for structural reform across cultural sectors. This change in language is significant. It reflects an expanding understanding of how power operates through institutions, not just within individual interactions.

Indigenous relations emerge across the documents as a distinct, and often parallel, policy stream. Many organizations acknowledge the Indigenous territories on which they operate and articulate commitments to reconciliation, relationship-building, and respect for Indigenous sovereignty. These commitments are frequently grounded in external frameworks such as UNDRIP. At the same time, Indigenous relations are often treated separately from broader equity and anti-racism initiatives, rather than as structurally interconnected. This separation mirrors wider institutional patterns and points to the ongoing challenge of addressing colonialism as foundational, rather than supplemental, to equity work.

Attention to accountability is also different. Some organizations clearly identify the role of boards and senior leadership in advancing equity commitments and describe review cycles or implementation responsibilities. Others rely on broad statements of intent, without specifying how commitments will be operationalized or evaluated. This distinction is consequential. Policies that lack accountability mechanisms risk functioning symbolically, while those embedded in governance structures are more likely to shape institutional practice over time.

Equally telling are the silences that run through the policy landscape. Explicit attention to anti-Black racism, disability justice, or intersectionality is inconsistent. While many policies speak expansively about inclusion, fewer grapple with how inequities are reproduced through hiring practices, governance norms, funding access, or curatorial authority. These absences are not neutral. What policies do not name often delineates the boundaries of institutional action, even where equity language is present.

Table 13: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy Documents Provided by Arts, Culture, and Heritage Organizations (2014–2025)

Organization (Anonymized)	Policy Document Title / Type	Year(s) Issued or Updated	Scope of Policy	Primary Thematic Focus
Organization A	Organizational Policy Manual	2016 (updated 2021)	Organization-wide governance and operations	Workplace conduct, inclusion, accessibility, anti-discrimination
Organization B	Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Statement	2020	Organizational values and public commitments	Equity and inclusion principles, community engagement
Organization C	Strategic Plan	2023–2026	Organizational strategy and priorities	Equity, anti-racism, reconciliation, community accountability
Organization D	Equity and Inclusion Framework	2019 (reaffirmed 2022)	Staff, programming, and governance	Anti-racism, representation, internal culture change
Organization E	Indigenous Relations and Land Acknowledgement Policy	2018	Indigenous engagement and partnerships	Reconciliation, Indigenous sovereignty, relationship-building
Organization F	Accessibility and Inclusion Policy	2015	Programs and public access	Disability access, inclusive participation, accommodations
Organization G	Anti-Harassment and Respectful Workplace Policy	2014 (revised 2020)	Staff and volunteer conduct	Workplace safety, equity, discrimination prevention

4.2.7. Organizational Racial Equity Assessments: Anonymized Findings

As part of the management engagement phase, participating arts, culture, and heritage organizations were invited to share any internal racial equity assessments, audits, or staff survey data conducted between 2012 and 2025. The intention was not to evaluate organizational performance, but to understand how equity is being measured, documented, and reflected upon within institutional settings. Organizations provided varying forms of documentation, including vendor diversity audits, internal workforce surveys, and reflective equity assessments. These materials differ in scope, depth, and methodological approach.

Not all organizations had conducted formal equity assessments. Among those that had, there was considerable variation in scope, methodology, and timing. The materials provided include staff climate surveys, organizational self-assessments, equity reflections embedded within strategic planning processes, and, in one case, a detailed supplier diversity audit. In keeping with the broader approach of this study, findings are presented descriptively and in anonymized form. Organizations are identified using alphabetical labels to protect confidentiality and to foreground sector-wide patterns rather than individual institutional performance.

The Table below summarizes the racial equity assessment materials shared by participating organizations, including the year(s) conducted, primary focus areas, and key data elements captured.

Table 14: Summary of Racial Equity Assessments Provided by Participating Arts, Culture, and Heritage Organizations

Organization (Anonymized)	Year(s) Conducted	Type of Assessment	Primary Focus Areas	Data Collection Methods	Key Metrics Reported
Organization A	2020; 2025	Staff EDI Climate Assessment; Supplier Diversity Audit	Workplace equity, psychological safety; vendor diversity	Anonymous staff survey; facilitated all-staff sessions; internal vendor audit	Staff perceptions of equity and safety; proportion of vendors that are women-owned, BIPOC-owned, or owned by other equity-deserving groups
Organization B	2021–2023	Internal Equity Review	Programming equity; organizational culture	Internal review and strategic planning process	Narrative reflections on inclusion, representation, and organizational priorities
Organization C	2022	Organizational Self-Assessment	Governance, staffing, and programming	Staff and leadership consultation	Qualitative identification of equity gaps and priority areas
Organization D	2023	Equity and Inclusion Reflection	Community engagement; institutional accountability	Internal discussion and reporting	Descriptive statements of equity commitments and perceived challenges

Across organizations, racial equity assessments were most often framed as tools for learning and reflection rather than as compliance mechanisms. Where quantitative data were collected, they were typically limited to staff surveys or vendor audits. Qualitative approaches were more common, particularly for examining organizational culture, governance, and relationships with communities. This reflects both capacity constraints and a broader tendency within the sector to rely on narrative and reflective methods when engaging with equity work.

4.2.8. Vendor and Supplier Diversity Audits

One organization provided detailed procurement and vendor diversity data, offering insight into how equity considerations are being applied beyond staffing and programming. The audit examined the ownership characteristics of vendors and suppliers across multiple operational areas. The table below presents anonymized results from this assessment.

Table 15: Anonymized Vendor and Supplier Diversity Audit Results (Selected Organization)

Department / Area	% Woman-Owned	% BIPOC-Owned	% Owned by Other Equity-Deserving Groups	% None of These
Administration	61%	7%	4%	39%
Curatorial	72%	35%	47%	16%
Development	67%	25%	14%	25%
Marketing	74%	11%	13%	26%
Operations	85%	7%	8%	23%
Production	71%	5%	12%	29%
Retail	84%	32%	35%	15%
Special Events	100%	67%	22%	0%
Venue Rentals	81%	27%	8%	16%
All Departments	77%	25%	27%	20%

Percentages reflect self-identified ownership categories as reported by vendors and suppliers. Categories are not mutually exclusive. Data were collected as part of an internal audit conducted in 2025.

4.2.9. Staff Survey Data: Lived Experience Within Institutions

Alongside quantitative audits, some organizations conducted anonymous staff surveys to assess internal culture, perceptions of equity, and experiences of inclusion. These surveys provide insight into how formal equity commitments are experienced by staff in day-to-day organizational life. Selected excerpts are presented below to centre staff voices and to illustrate recurring themes raised in these assessments.

Table 16: Summary of Racial Equity Assessments Provided by Participating Arts, Culture, and Heritage Organizations

Verbatim Staff Survey Excerpts
"There is a genuine intention to do better, but it often feels like the responsibility for change falls on individuals rather than systems."
"The organization talks about equity a lot, but it's not always clear how decisions are actually influenced by that language."
"I appreciate being asked for feedback, but I don't always know what happens after surveys are completed."
"Equity feels strongest when there is leadership buy-in. When that shifts, priorities seem to shift too."
"There is goodwill, but accountability feels informal and dependent on who is in management roles at the time."
"Sometimes it feels like the work stops at awareness, without moving into structural change."

Excerpts are reproduced verbatim from anonymous staff surveys. Identifying details have been removed to protect confidentiality.

4.2.10. Summary Observations

The organizational equity assessments shared during this phase reveal both movement and constraint. On one hand, organizations are collecting increasingly sophisticated data, extending equity considerations into procurement, staffing, and internal culture. On the other, staff reflections point to persistent gaps between measurement and material change. These findings align with themes raised in the qualitative interviews, particularly around performativity, uneven accountability, and the reliance on individual labour to sustain equity initiatives. While the assessments demonstrate an emerging infrastructure for equity measurement, they also highlight the limits of data collection in the absence of sustained structural transformation.

Chapter 5

Secondary Research Methodology

5.1.1. Study Design – Quantitative Phase 2

This study employed a cross-sectional quantitative research design using four distinct online surveys to examine experiences, perceptions, and structural barriers related to equity, representation, and access within the Arts, Culture and Heritage sector in British Columbia. The surveys were designed to capture perspectives across multiple roles within the sector, including independent artists and cultural workers, staff and board members of both grant-making and arts, culture and heritage organizations, along with jurors of grant-making organizations.

The research was conducted as primary data collection, with all surveys administered concurrently over the same data collection period.

5.1.2. Survey Development

Four separate but thematically aligned surveys were developed to reflect the different positions, responsibilities, and lived experiences of key stakeholder groups within the sector:

1. **Independent Artists Survey**
   Designed for artists working independently, including those applying directly for funding, public programming, exhibitions, and other opportunities.

2. **Artists Working Within the Sector Survey**
   Designed for artists who also work within Arts, Culture and Heritage organizations in professional or administrative capacities.

3. **Arts, Culture and Heritage Organization Staff and Board Members Survey**
   Designed for staff and board members of non-profit and community-based arts, culture, and heritage organizations.

4. **Grant-Making Organization Staff, Board Members, and Jurors Survey**
   Designed for staff, board members, and jurors involved in funding decision-making within grant-making organizations.

All four surveys were developed using SurveyMonkey, an online survey platform that allowed for structured question design, skip logic, multiple response formats, and secure data collection. While each survey was tailored to the specific role of the respondent group, all instruments shared a core set of aligned themes, including:

I. Demographic and equity-deserving identity indicators

II. Geographic location and sectoral role

III. Experiences with funding, public programming, and institutional engagement

IV. Perceptions of racial equity, representation, and inclusion

V. Barriers to access, including systemic and structural challenges.

VI. Perceptions of funding processes, transparency, and feedback

VII. Recommendations for improving equity and access across the sector

This approach enabled comparative analysis across respondent groups while ensuring that questions were relevant and appropriate to each group's context.

5.1.3. Survey Instrument Structure

Each survey included a combination of closed-ended questions, including multiple-choice, Likert-scale, and frequency-based items, multiple-response questions, allowing respondents to select all applicable options and open-ended questions, enabling respondents to elaborate on experiences, perceptions, and recommendations in their own words.

Likert-scale questions were typically used with five-point response options (e.g., *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*, or *Very Hopeless* to *Very Hopeful*), facilitating quantitative analysis of attitudes and perceptions.

Open-text responses were included to provide contextual depth and to capture experiences that may not be fully represented through structured response options.

5.1.4. Recruitment and Distribution

All four surveys were distributed using open survey links generated through SurveyMonkey. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. Survey links were disseminated broadly through social media platforms (including networks commonly used by artists and cultural workers, arts, culture, and heritage organizations, grant-making organizations and sector partners, as well as Informal professional and community networks within the arts sector. This open distribution strategy was used to maximize reach across diverse communities and geographic regions within British Columbia. Because the surveys were open-access, respondents self-selected into participation based on their eligibility and interest.

5.1.5. Sampling Approach

The study used a non-probability, convenience sampling strategy, supplemented by network-based dissemination. As participation was voluntary and recruitment occurred through open calls and organizational sharing, the sample is not statistically representative of the entire Arts, Culture and Heritage sector in British Columbia. However, this approach was appropriate given the study's objectives to; capture a wide range of lived experiences and perceptions, amplify voices of equity-deserving and underrepresented groups, identify patterns, gaps, and systemic issues across different roles within the sector.

5.1.6. Data Collection and Management

Survey responses were collected electronically through SurveyMonkey and stored securely on the platform. Responses were downloaded for analysis following the close of the data collection period. Incomplete responses were retained where sufficient data were available for analysis, particularly for demographic and perception-based questions. Sample sizes, therefore, vary slightly across questions due to item non-response. All data were anonymized before analysis, and no personally identifying information was collected.

5.1.7. Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and cross-group comparisons across survey populations. Results are reported separately for each survey group and, where relevant, compared across groups (e.g., Independent Artists versus Artists Working Within the Sector).

Open-ended responses were reviewed and synthesized thematically to contextualize quantitative findings. Selected quotes were used illustratively to highlight recurring themes and lived experiences but were not subjected to formal qualitative coding procedures.

5.1.8. Ethical Considerations

Participation in the study was voluntary, and respondents could skip any question or withdraw at any time by exiting the survey. All surveys included an introductory statement outlining the purpose of the research, how the data would be used, and assurances of confidentiality and anonymity. Survey participants were reimbursed with an honorarium of thirty Canadian dollars ($30) for their participation.

Chapter 6

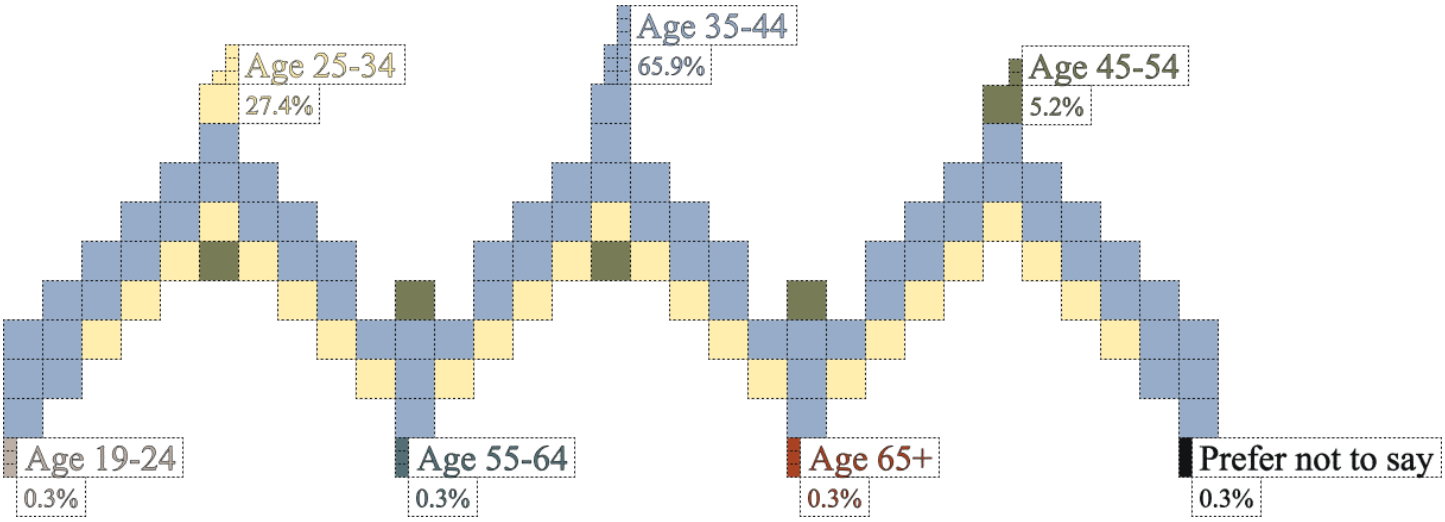
Findings and Analysis: Surveys

The quantitative component of the study included two primary artist-focused surveys with distinct sample sizes. The Independent Artist survey received responses from 327 participants, representing a broad cross-section of independent artists working across disciplines, career stages, and regions within British Columbia. The Artists Working Within the Sector survey had a smaller but more targeted sample of 25 respondents, reflecting artists who are employed or otherwise engaged within arts, culture, and heritage organizations in professional or administrative roles. While the Independent Artist survey provides a robust overview of experiences and perceptions among independent practitioners, the smaller sector-based sample offers focused insight into perspectives from within organizational and institutional contexts. While staff, board members and jurors who work with Arts organizations and Grant-making organizations were surveyed, survey responses were too low to report significant or meaningful data. The valid number (N) of responses from the two surveys are too low to risk identifying individuals who responded to the survey; as such no survey findings or data on staff, board and jurors is analyzed or reported below.

6.1.1. Age - Independent Artists and Artists working within the sector

Among independent artists, the age profile was strongly concentrated in mid-career groups.

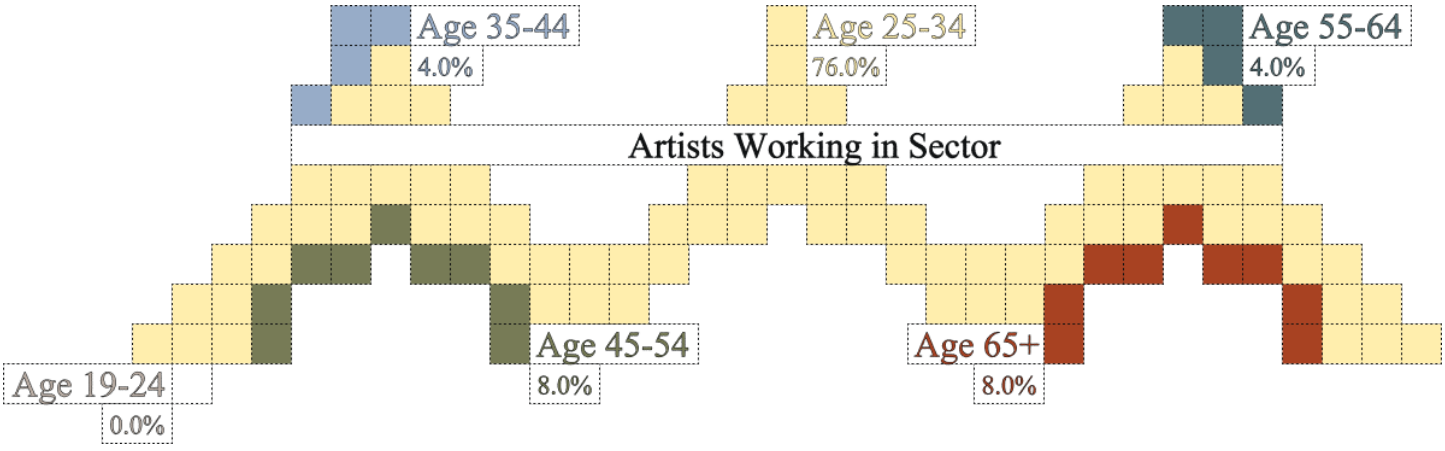
Figure 17: Respondent Age Groups: Independent Artists



This distribution indicates that independent artistic practice in the sector is overwhelmingly sustained by artists in their mid-career stages, with very limited participation from both early-career and later-career artists.

In contrast, the age distribution of artists working within the sector was more heavily skewed toward early-career artists.

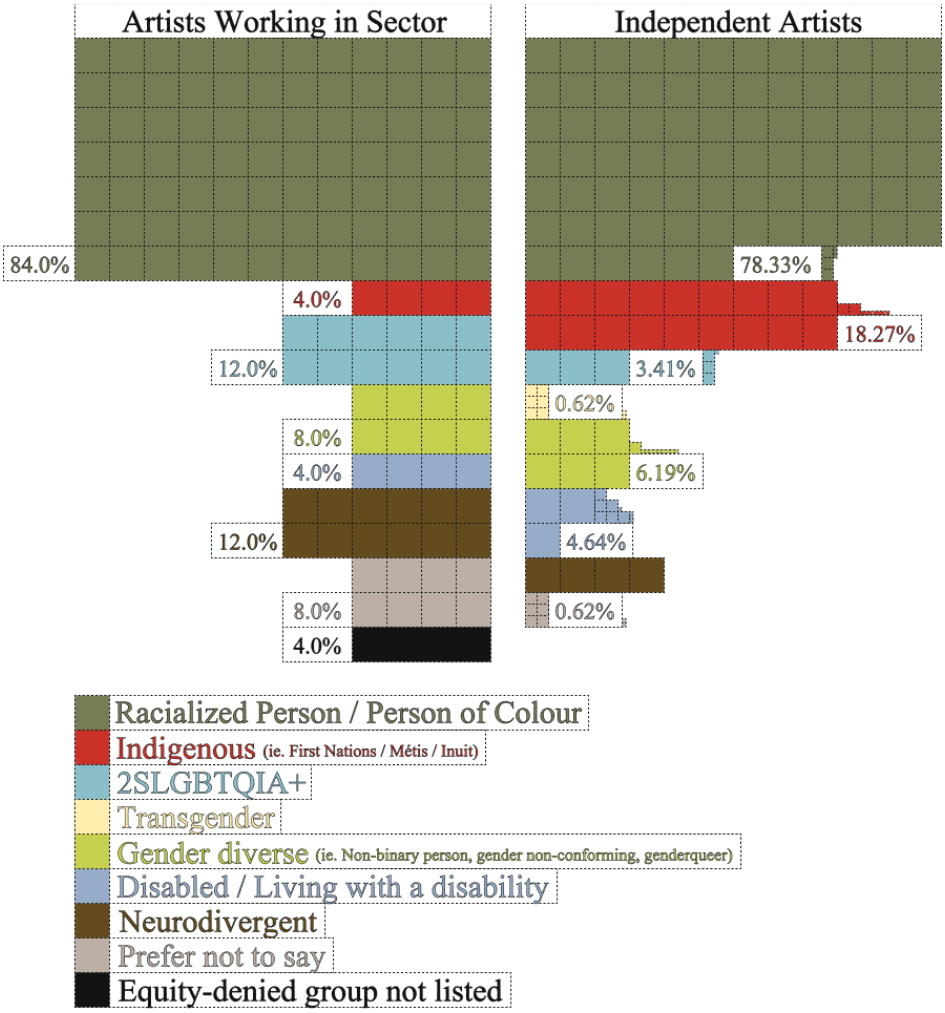
Figure 18: Respondent Age Groups: Artists Working Within the Sector



Overall, the comparison highlights a clear divergence between the two groups. Independent artists are predominantly mid-career, whereas artists working within the sector are more likely to be in earlier stages of their careers. This pattern suggests potential differences in access, sustainability, or retention across career stages, with independent practice appearing more common among mid-career artists and sector-based roles more frequently occupied by younger artists. These differences may reflect structural factors such as employment stability, funding access, institutional pathways, or the capacity to sustain independent practice over time.

6.1.2. Equity Deserving Group Among Independent Artists and Artists working within the sector

Figure 19: Representation of Equity Deserving Groups



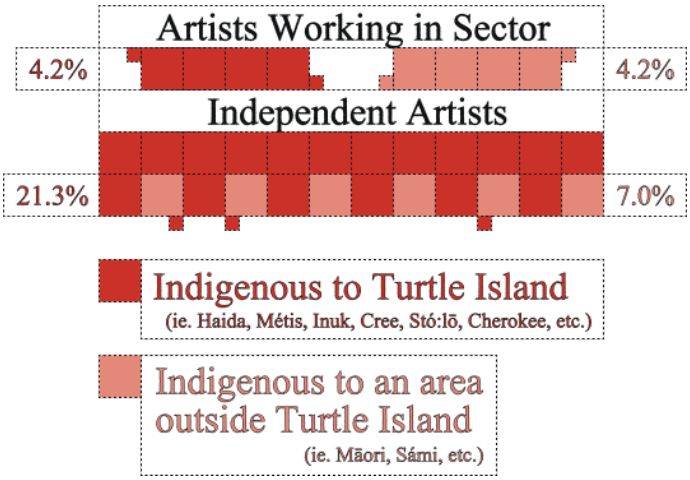
Racialized artists are strongly represented in both groups, with particularly high representation among those employed or engaged within sector-based roles. Representation of Indigenous artists differed substantially between the two surveys. Among independent artists, 18.27% (n = 59) identified as Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, or Inuit). In contrast, only 4% (n = 1) of artists working within the sector identified as Indigenous. This disparity suggests that Indigenous artists are more prominently represented within independent practice than within sector-based roles captured by the survey.

Patterns of gender and sexual diversity also varied between the two groups. Among independent artists, 6.19% (n = 20) identified as gender diverse and 0.62% (n = 2) identified as transgender, while 3.41% (n = 11) identified as 2SLGBTQIA+. Among artists working within the sector, 8% (n = 2) identified as gender diverse and 12% (n = 3) identified as 2SLGBTQIA+, with no respondents identifying as transgender (0%). These findings suggest relatively higher representation of 2SLGBTQIA+ identities among artists working within the sector compared to independent artists, while transgender identification was reported only among independent artists.

Differences were also observed in disability and neurodiversity. Among independent artists, 3.72% (n = 12) identified as disabled or living with a disability and 4.64% (n = 15) identified as neurodivergent. Among artists working within the sector, 4% (n = 1) identified as disabled or living with a disability and 12% (n = 3) identified as neurodivergent. While the absolute numbers in the sector-based sample are small, the proportion identifying as neurodivergent was notably higher than in the independent artist sample.

6.1.3. Indigenous Identity and Gender Identity Among Independent Artists and Artists working within the sector

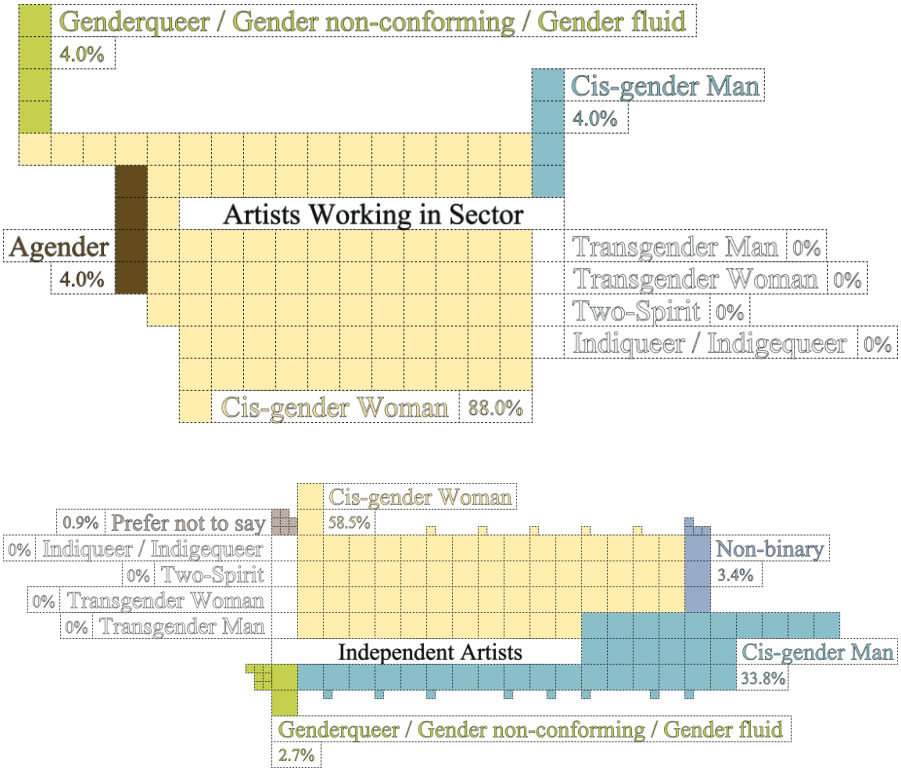
Figure 20: Representation of Indigenous Respondents



Independent artists demonstrated substantially higher Indigenous representation than artists working within the sector. Compared to independent artists, Indigenous representation among sector-based artists was therefore nearly 20 percentage points lower. This disparity indicates that Indigenous artists are significantly more represented within independent practice than within sector-based roles captured by the survey, suggesting potential barriers to access, retention, or inclusion within institutional or organizational settings.

Gender identity distributions also differed between the two groups, though both samples were predominantly cisgender.

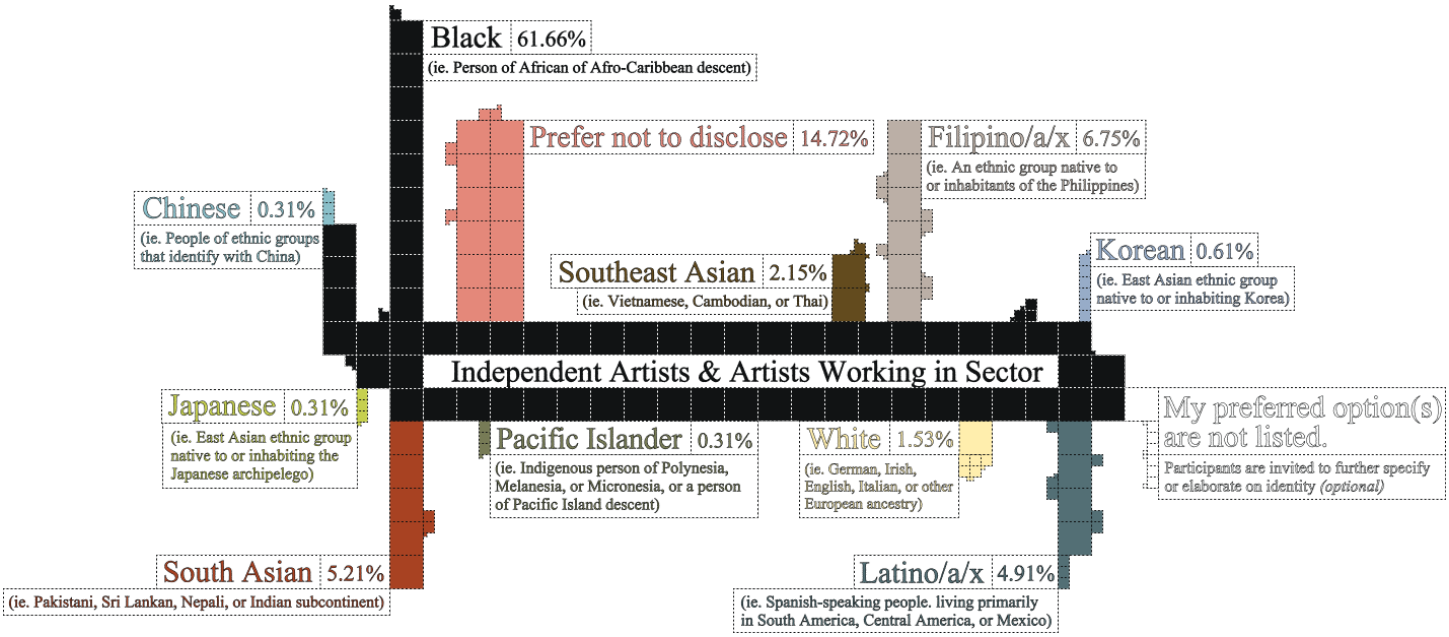
Figure 21: Representation of Gender Identity Among Respondents



While the overall proportion of cisgender respondents was similar across both groups, independent artists demonstrated slightly greater gender diversity, including representation of Two-Spirit and transgender identities that were absent among artists working within the sector.

6.1.4. Racial Identity and Place of Residence Among Independent Artists and Artists working within the sector

Figure 22: Representation of Racial Identity Among Participants



A comparison of racial identity across the two survey samples reveals both overlap and divergence in representation between Independent Artists and Artists Working within the Sector. The sample of Independent Artists was overwhelmingly composed of racialized artists.

Among Artists Working within the Sector, Black artists also constituted the largest racial group, though at a lower proportion than among independent artists. Black artists accounted for 52% of sector-based respondents. White artists comprised 24%, representing a substantially higher proportion than in the independent artist sample. Other racialized groups were represented in smaller proportions, including Filipino/a/x artists (12%), South Asian artists (8%), and Chinese, Japanese, and Latino/a/x artists (each 4%). Unlike the independent artist sample, no respondents selected "prefer not to say," though 8% indicated that their racial identity was not listed among the response options.

Overall, both samples demonstrate strong representation of racialized artists, particularly Black artists. However, Independent Artists show a higher concentration of Black representation and lower representation of White artists compared to Artists Working within the Sector. The sector-based sample, by contrast, exhibits a more pronounced presence of White artists and slightly higher proportional representation among some smaller racialized groups, such as Filipino/a/x artists.

Clear differences also emerged between the two groups in terms of geographic distribution across British Columbia. Among Independent Artists, respondents were geographically dispersed across multiple regions of the province, though urban concentration remained pronounced.

This distribution indicates that while Independent Artists are concentrated in urban centres, a meaningful proportion work in regional, rural, and northern areas of the province.

Figure 23: Geographical Distribution of Respondents: Independent Artists

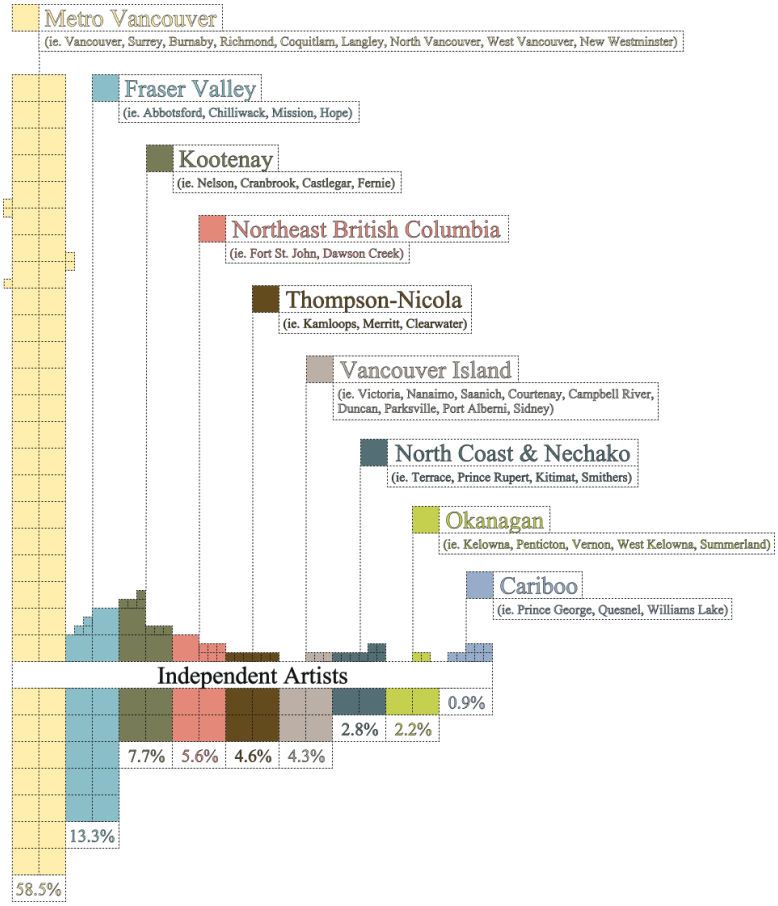
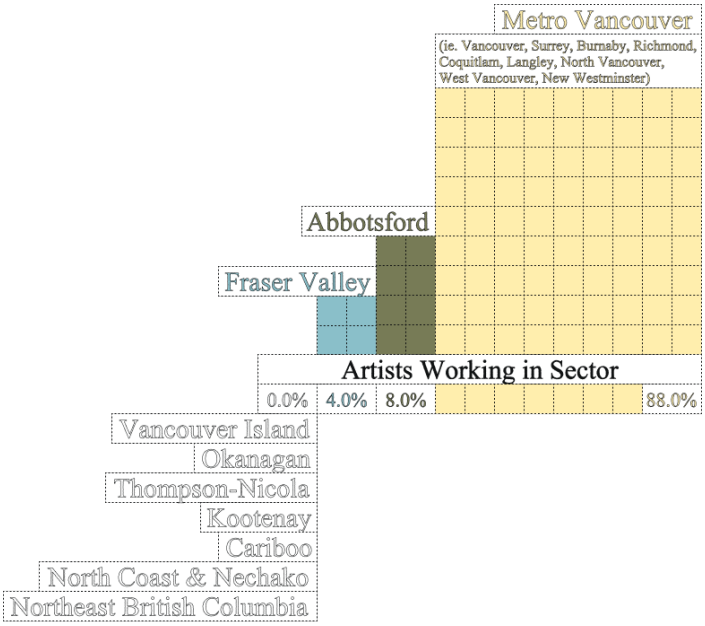


Figure 24: Geographical Distribution of Respondents: Artists Working Within the Sector

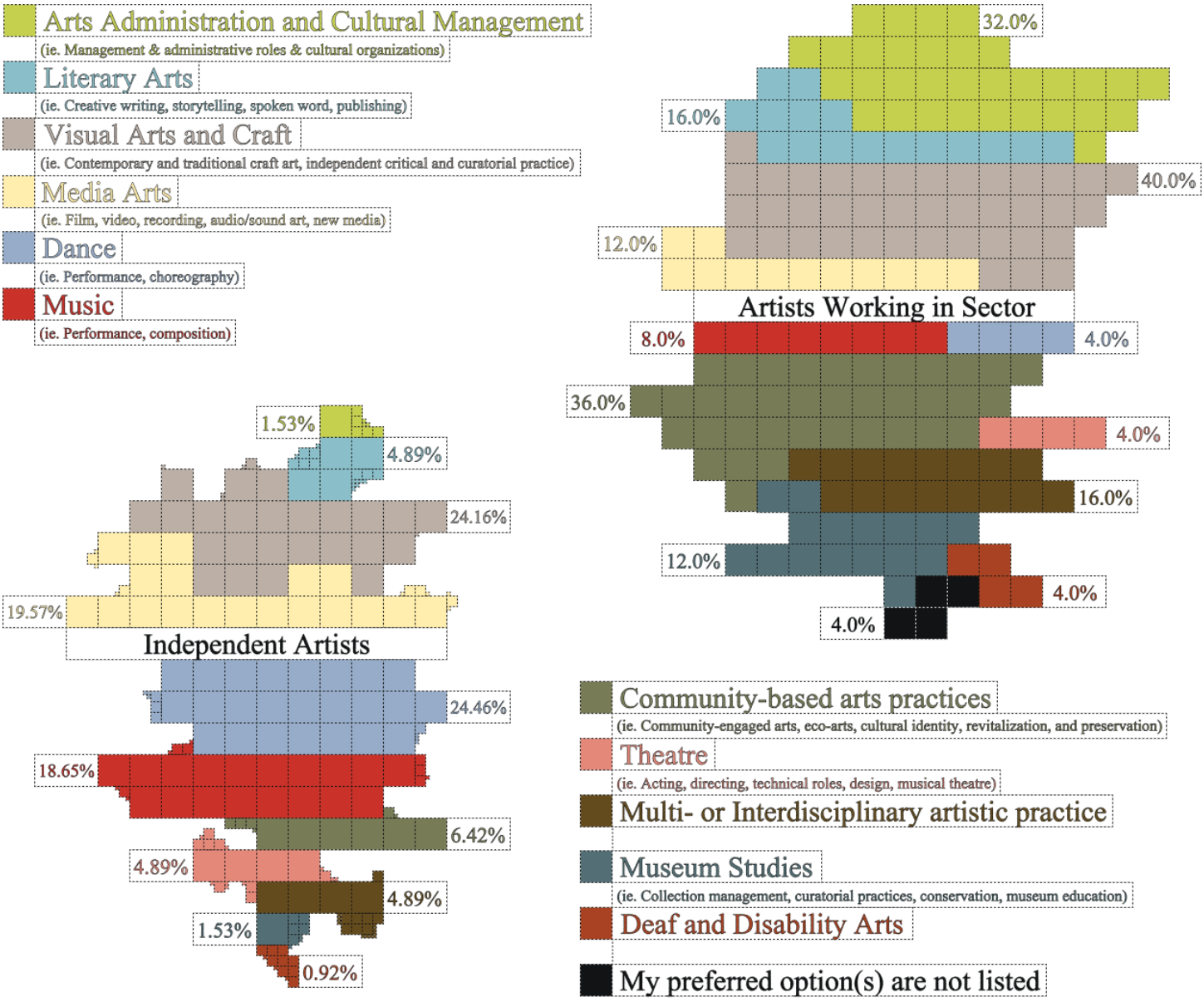


In contrast, Artists Working within the Sector were overwhelmingly concentrated in urban areas. No respondents working within the sector reported residing in Vancouver Island, the Okanagan, Thompson–Nicola, Kootenay, Cariboo, North Coast and Nechako, or Northeast British Columbia.

These findings indicate that Independent Artists are more geographically dispersed across British Columbia, while Artists Working within the Sector are heavily concentrated in Metro Vancouver. This contrast suggests potential regional disparities in access to sector-based employment, infrastructure, or institutional opportunities.

6.1.5. Role in the Arts, Culture, and Heritage Sector

Figure 25: Representation of Disciplines Among Respondents in the Arts, Culture, and Heritage Sector



Clear differences emerged between independent artists and artists working within the sector in terms of disciplinary concentration and patterns of practice. Among independent artists, disciplinary engagement was concentrated in performance-based, visual, and media-related fields. Smaller proportions of independent artists reported working in Community-based arts practices (6.42%), Literary Arts (4.89%), Theatre (4.89%), and Multi- or Interdisciplinary practice (4.89%). Disciplines such as Arts Administration, Museum Studies, and Deaf and Disability Arts were minimally represented, each accounting for less than 2% of responses.

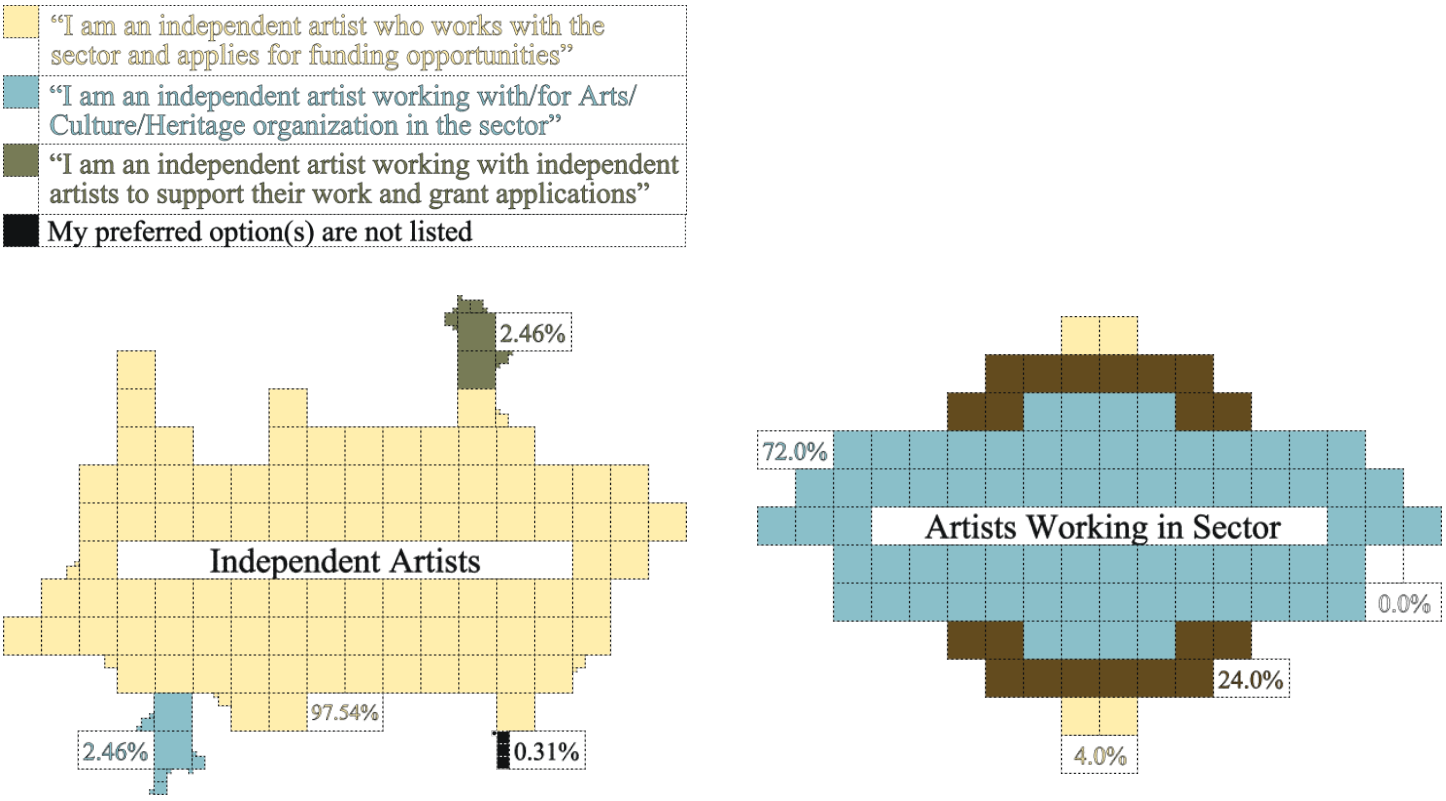
In contrast, artists working within the sector demonstrated a markedly different disciplinary profile. The most frequently reported discipline in this group was Visual Arts and Craft (40%), followed by Community-based arts practices (36%) and Arts Administration (32%). Performance-based disciplines such as Dance (4%), Theatre (4%), and Music (8%) were comparatively less represented. Media Arts and Museum Studies were each reported by 12% of respondents, while Literary Arts and Multi- or Interdisciplinary practice were each reported by 16%.

Overall, Independent Artists were more strongly concentrated in performance and media-based artistic disciplines, whereas artists working within the sector were more likely to be engaged in visual, community-based, and administrative forms of practice. This contrast suggests differing orientations toward creative production versus organizational, facilitative, or institutional work.

Role in the Arts, Culture, and Heritage Sector

Substantial differences were also evident in how respondents across the two groups positioned their roles within the sector.

Figure 26: Positionality of Participants in the Sector

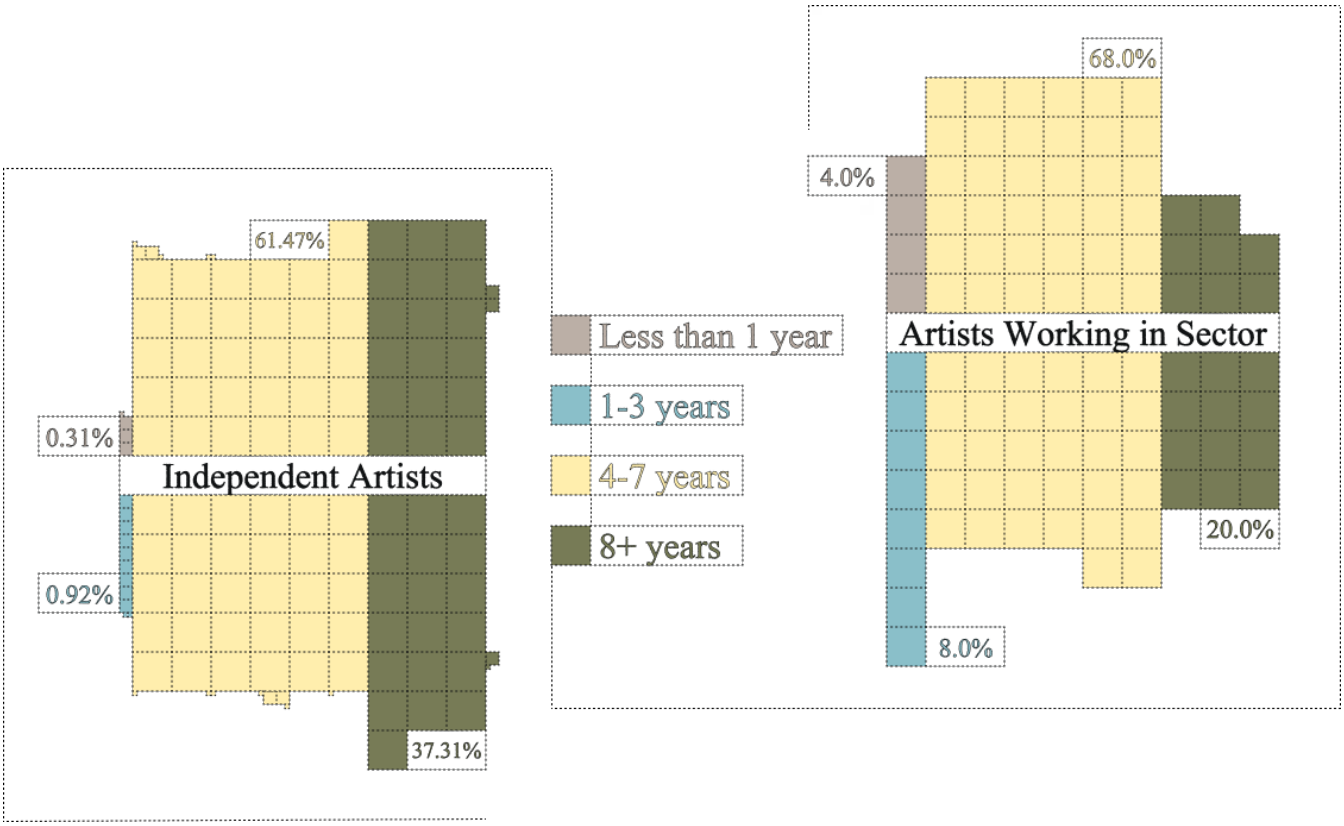


These findings indicate that Independent Artists primarily engage with the sector through project-based, funding-oriented relationships rather than formal employment or organizational roles.

Among artists working within the sector, roles were more varied and multifaceted. While 72% identified as independent artists, a substantial proportion (24%) selected "all of the above," indicating engagement across multiple roles, including independent practice and sector-based work. A smaller proportion (4%) identified with an alternative independent artist role. No respondents reported exclusively working with independent artists to support their work. Artists working within the sector are more likely than independent artists to occupy hybrid roles that span artistic practice, organizational engagement, and sector-based responsibilities.

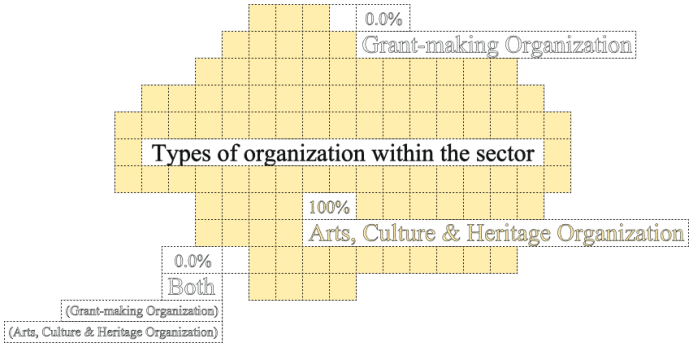
Years Practicing as an Artist or Cultural Worker

Figure 27: Representation of Respondents by Years of Practice



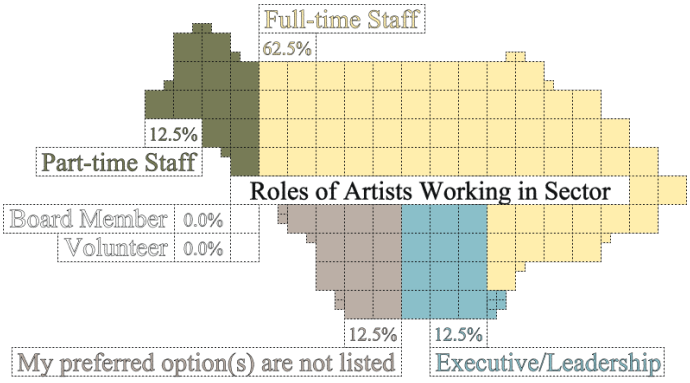
Both groups were predominantly composed of mid- to late-career practitioners, though notable differences in experience distribution were observed. Among independent artists, the vast majority reported substantial experience. This distribution indicates that Independent Artists in the sample are overwhelmingly established practitioners. Among Artists Working Within the Sector, experience levels were similarly concentrated in the mid-career range, though with a slightly broader distribution. Overall, both samples were dominated by artists with four or more years of experience. However, Artists Working Within the Sector included a slightly higher proportion of early-career practitioners compared to Independent Artists.

Figure 28: Representation of Respondents by Type of Organizational Engagement



Sector-based respondents in this survey were exclusively engaged in organizations whose primary mandate is arts, culture, or heritage programming rather than funding administration.

Figure 29: Respondent Roles within the Sector



Respondents reported holding a range of roles within arts, culture, and heritage organizations, with most occupying staff or leadership positions. Three-quarters of participants were employed in staff roles on either a full-time or part-time basis.

Artists working within the sector who participated in the survey are primarily engaged in paid staff or leadership roles within arts, culture, and heritage organizations, with limited representation of governance or volunteer-based positions.

6.1.6. Comparative Findings: Perceptions of Racial Composition and Representation in the Arts, Culture, and Heritage Sector

A comparison of perceptions between Independent Artists and Artists Working Within the Sector reveals both shared patterns and important differences in how racial composition, equity, and representation are understood and experienced within the Arts, Culture, and Heritage sector.

Figure 30: Perceptions of Racial Diversity in the Sector

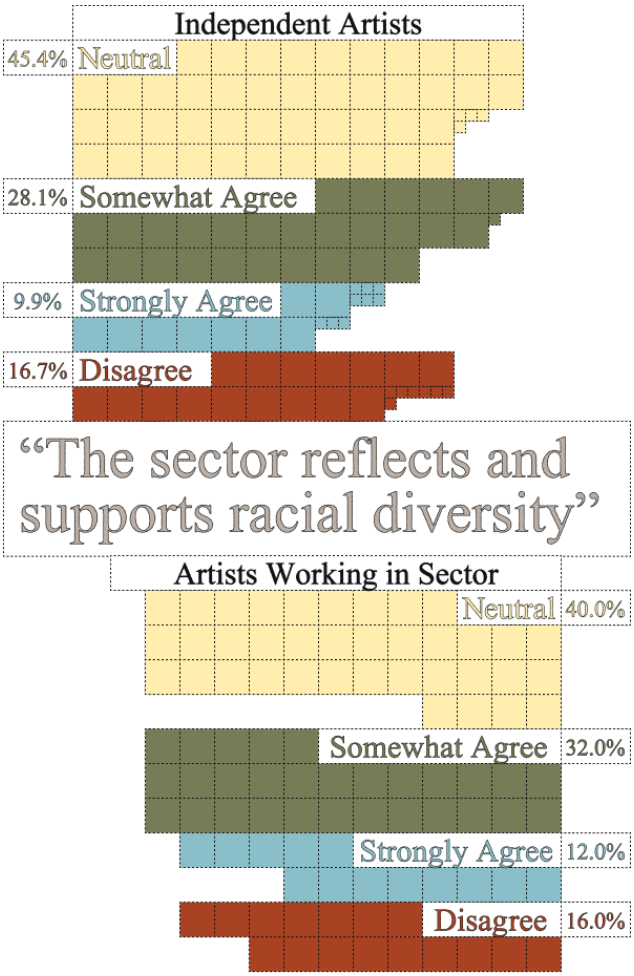


Figure 31: Perceptions of Barriers in the Sector

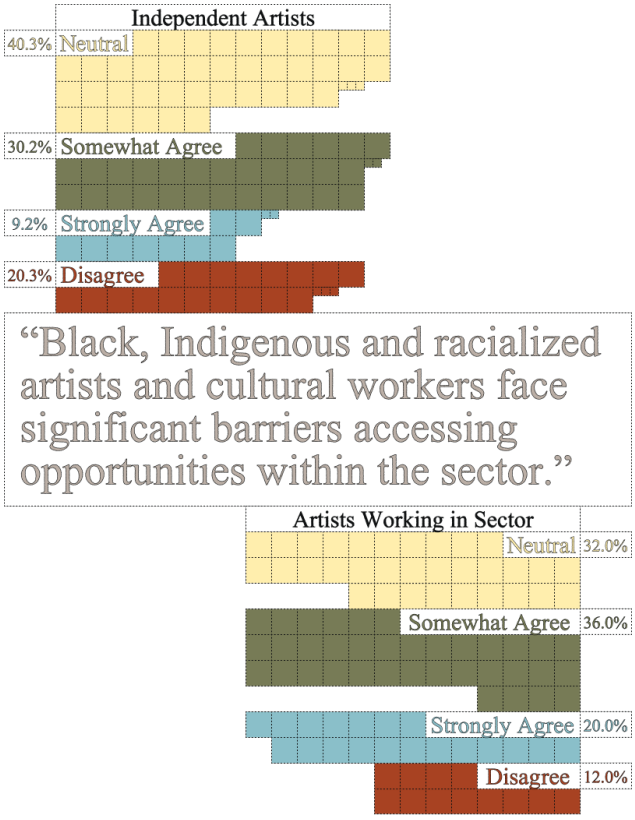
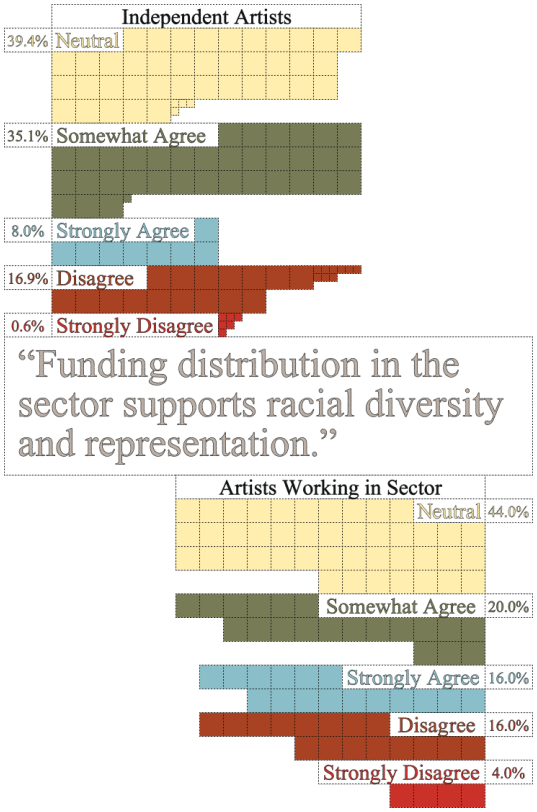
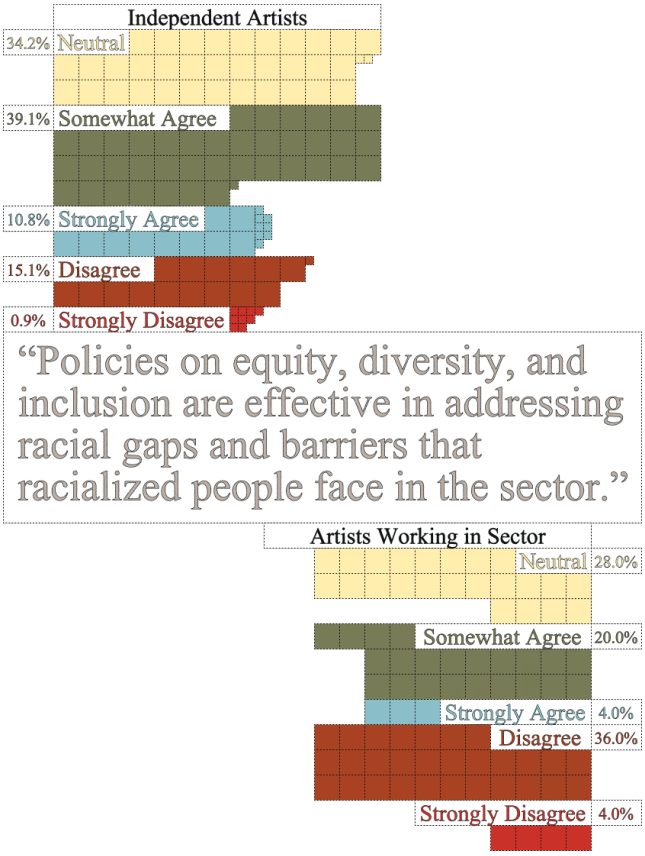


Figure 32: Perceptions on Funding Distribution



Both groups reported mixed perceptions regarding whether the sector reflects and supports racial diversity, though levels of agreement differed. Although neutrality remained prominent in both groups, sector-based artists were somewhat more likely to express affirmative perceptions. These findings indicate stronger recognition of systemic barriers among artists working within sector organizations compared to independent artists.

Figure 33: Perceptions on Policy Effectiveness



Perceptions of funding distribution and policy effectiveness were marked by ambivalence in both groups, though again with differing emphases. Among Independent Artists, views on whether funding distribution supports racial diversity were divided. Similar patterns were observed regarding whether funding to Black, Indigenous, and racialized artists aligns with equity policies, where neutrality (37.2%) and moderate agreement (47.4% combined) outweighed disagreement.

Among Artists Working Within the Sector, neutrality remained high for these items, particularly regarding funding supporting diversity (44% neutral). However, disagreement with the effectiveness of equity, diversity, and inclusion policies was more pronounced in this group. Notably, 40% of sector-based artists disagreed or strongly disagreed that EDI policies are effective, compared to 16% among independent artists. This suggests that artists embedded within organizations may be more critical of the operational impact of formal equity policies.

Representation in Programming, Governance, and Practice

Figure 34: Perceptions on Representation in Programming

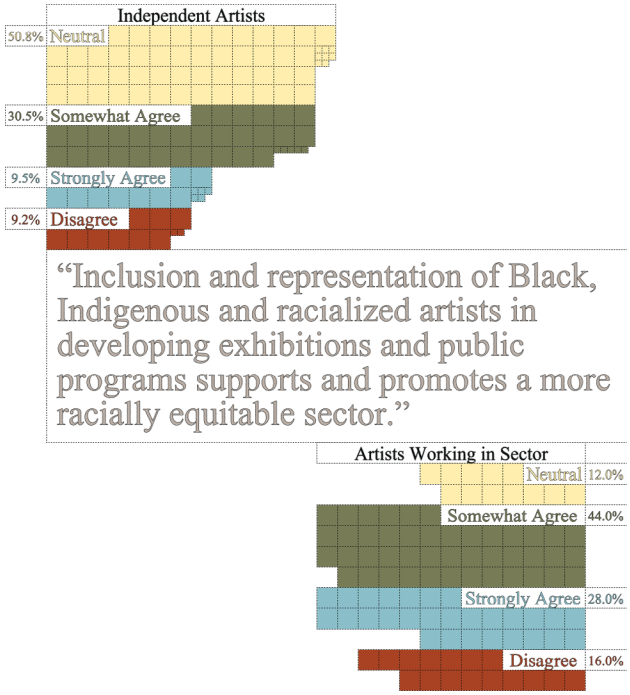


Figure 35: Perceptions on Representation in Governance

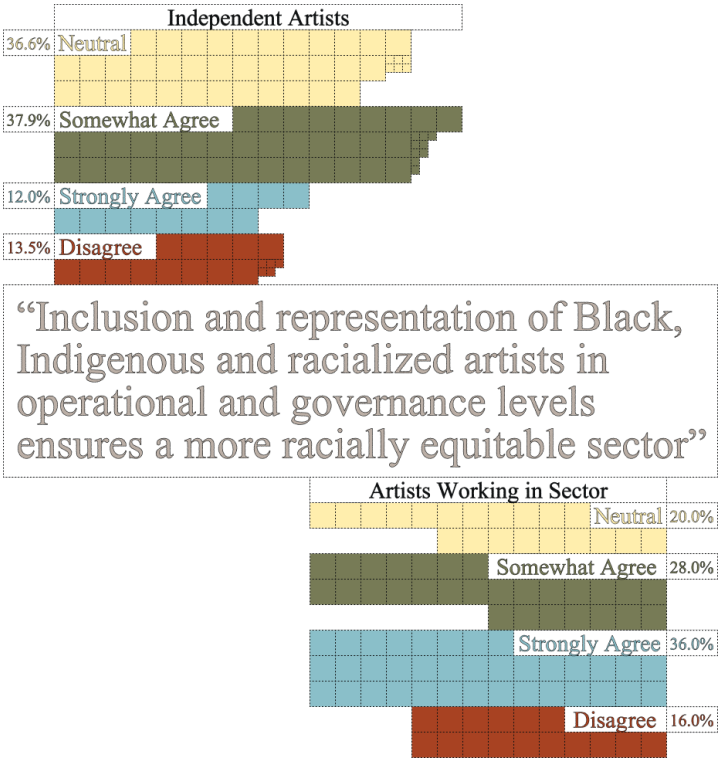
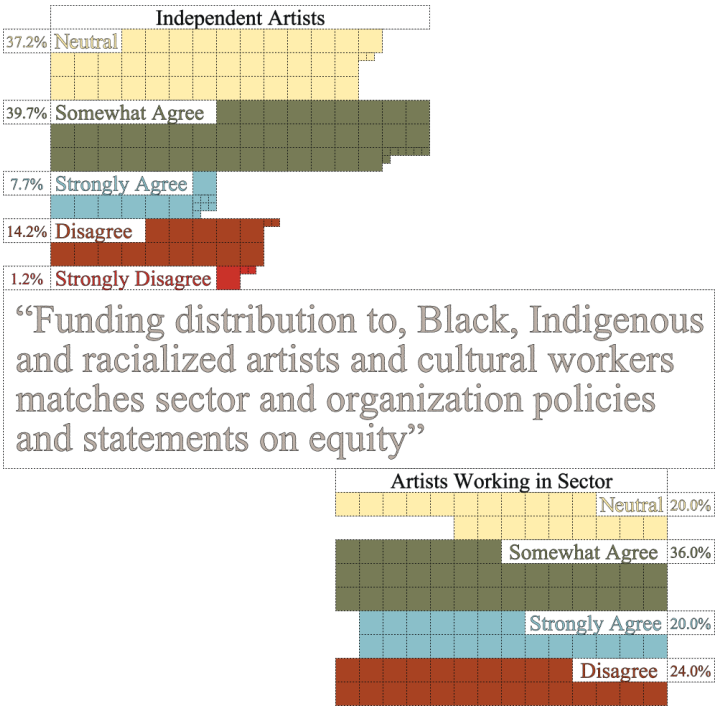


Figure 36: Perceptions on Funding and Organizational Policies



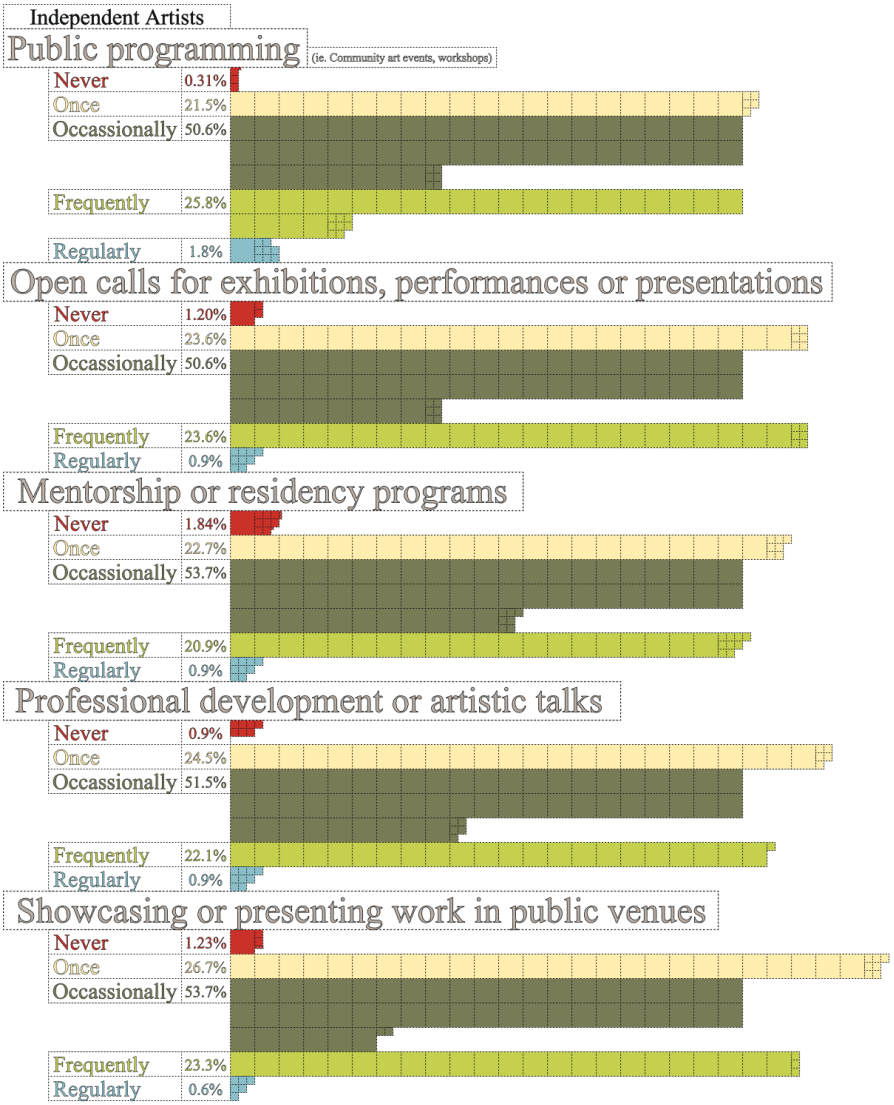
Differences were also evident in perceptions of representation in programming, governance, and decision-making. Independent Artists frequently selected Neutral across measures related to representation in public programming, transparency of selection criteria, and feelings of welcome in publicly funded opportunities, with neutrality often exceeding 50%. Agreement levels were modest, and disagreement remained present across all items.

By contrast, Artists Working Within the Sector reported higher levels of agreement on the value and impact of inclusion. For example, 72% agreed that inclusion and representation of Black, Indigenous, and racialized artists in developing exhibitions and public programs promotes a more racially equitable sector, compared to a combined 40% agreement among Independent Artists. Similarly, 64% of sector-based artists agreed that inclusion at operational and governance levels ensures greater racial equity, compared to 49.9% agreement among independent artists.

6.1.7. Experiences Applying for Funding in the Arts, Culture, and Heritage Sector

Independent artists reported high levels of engagement with funding, programming, and opportunity-based processes within the Arts, Culture, and Heritage sector, alongside varied experiences of access, success, and perceived barriers.

Figure 37: Frequency of Engagement with Opportunities



Respondents reported frequent engagement with sector opportunities across multiple formats. Participation was most commonly reported as occasional across all opportunity types. Specifically, 50.6% of respondents reported occasionally engaging in public programming (e.g., community art events and workshops), while 25.8% engaged frequently and 1.8% engaged regularly. Similar patterns were observed for open calls for exhibitions, performances, or presentations, where 50.6% reported occasional engagement and 23.6% reported frequent engagement.

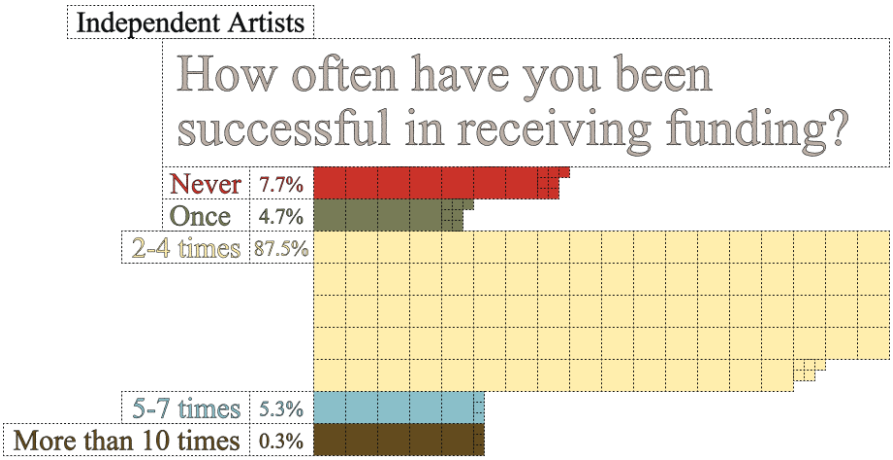
Engagement in mentorship or residency programs was also most commonly occasional (53.7%), followed by frequent (20.9%) and once (22.7%). For professional development or artistic talks, 51.5% reported occasional participation, while 22.1% engaged frequently. Engagement in showcasing or presenting work in public venues followed a similar pattern, with 48.2% reporting occasional engagement and 23.3% frequent engagement. Across all categories, fewer than 2% of respondents reported never engaging in these opportunities.

Figure 38: Influence of Racial or Cultural Identity

When asked whether their cultural or racial identity influenced how their artistic work was selected, framed, or presented in public settings, 64.4% (n = 201) responded Yes. A majority of independent artists perceived identity as a factor shaping their public-facing artistic opportunities.

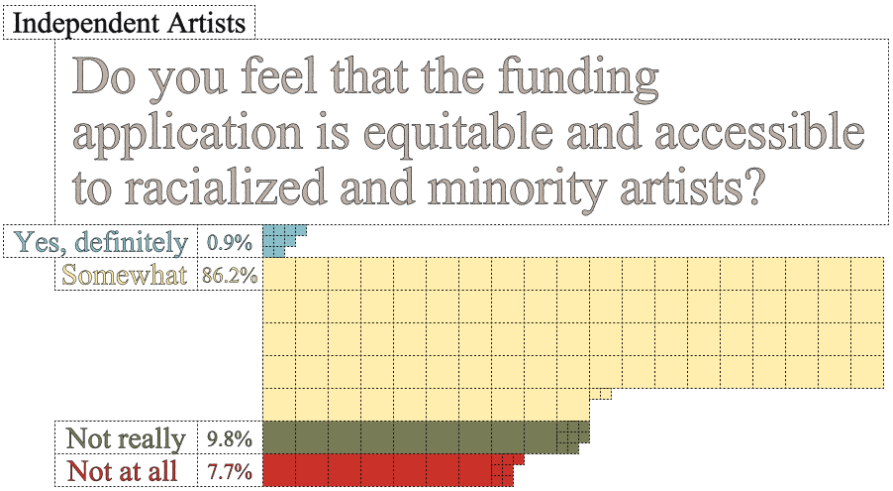
Open-text responses provided contextual detail to these perceptions, including references to tokenization, cultural framing expectations, and differential treatment based on race, ethnicity, age, disability, or immigration status. These qualitative data are not quantified and are therefore not reported numerically.

Figure 40: Experiences of Funding Success



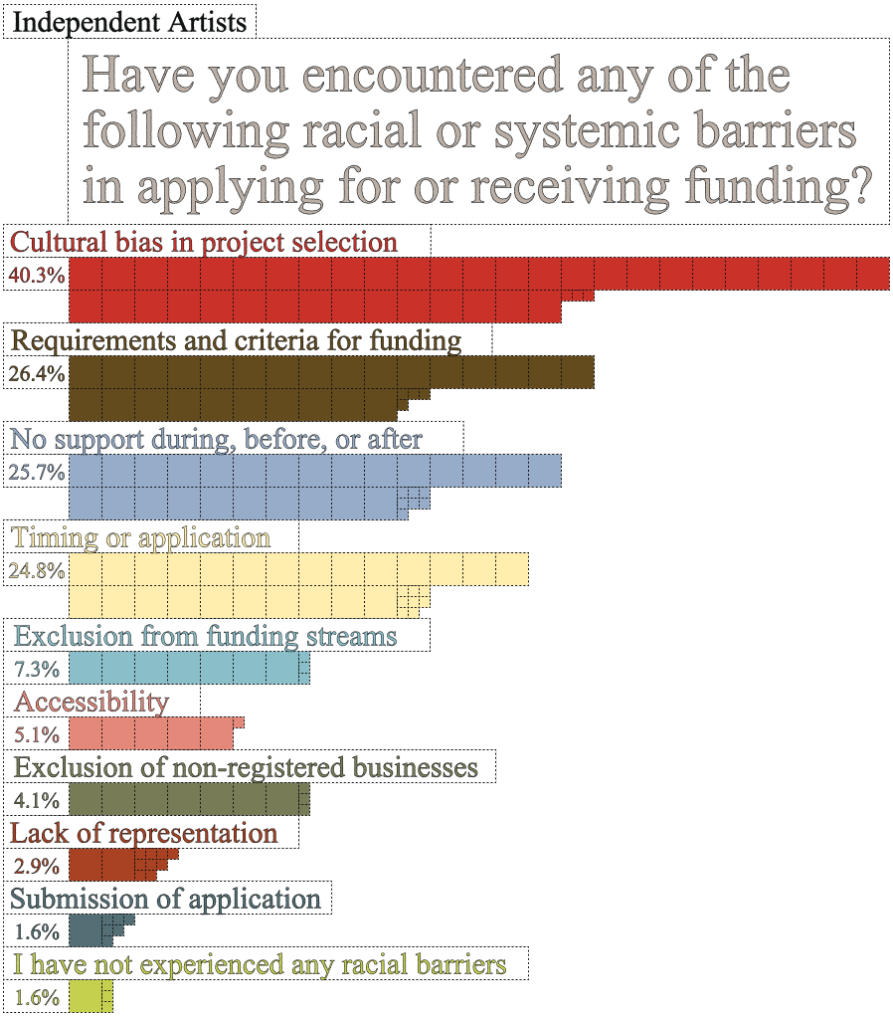
Among respondents who applied for funding, reported success was relatively high.

Figure 41: Perceptions on Equity and Accessibility in Funding



Perceptions of the equity and accessibility of the funding application process were mixed but generally leaned toward moderate affirmation.

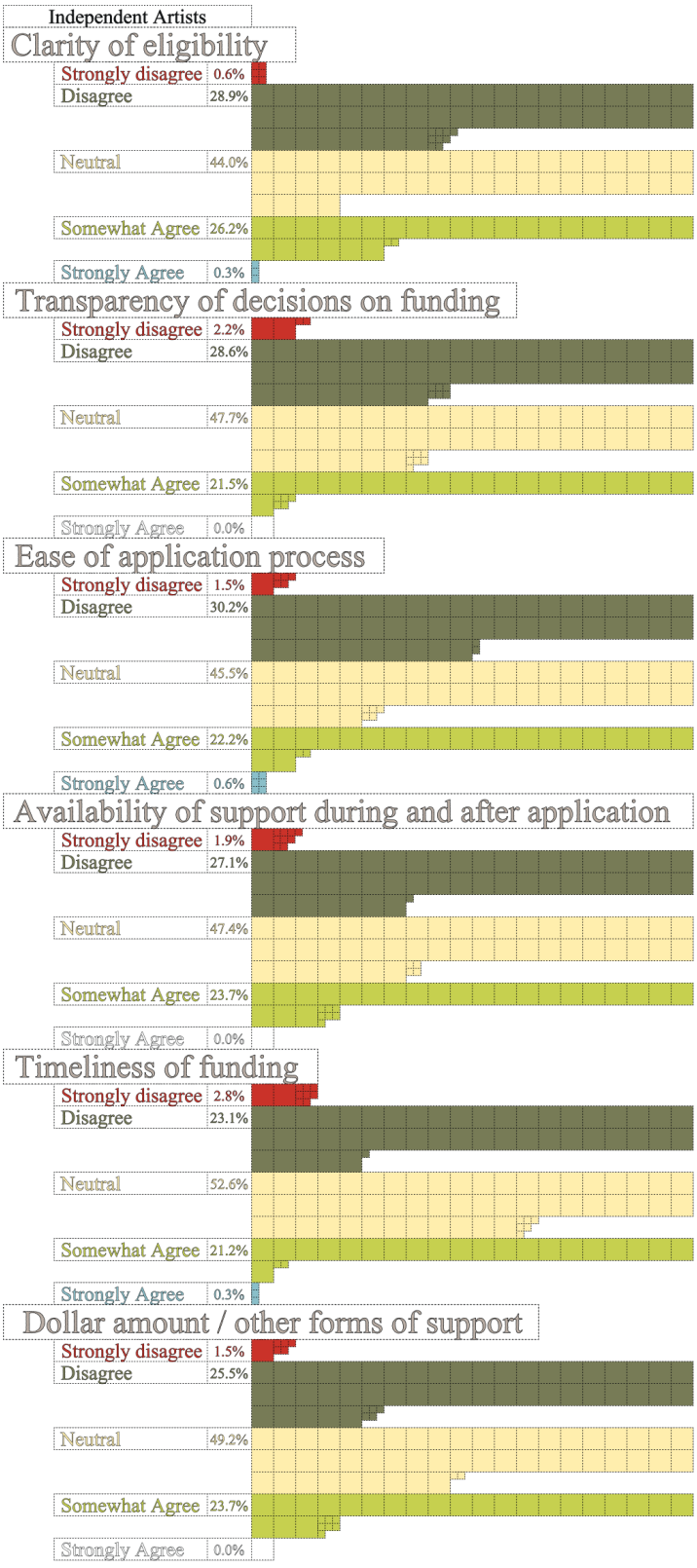
Figure 42: Experiences of Barriers in Funding Processe Figure 42: Experiences of Barriers in Funding Processes



Despite high levels of application and funding receipt, respondents reported encountering multiple racial or systemic barriers.

Overall, Independent Artists reported high levels of engagement with funding and opportunity structures within the Arts, Culture, and Heritage sector, alongside widespread perceptions that racial and cultural identity shapes access, framing, and evaluation of artistic work. While most respondents reported applying for and receiving funding, a substantial proportion also identified systemic and cultural barriers embedded within funding criteria, selection processes, and institutional support structures.

Figure 43: Perceptions on Funding Application Processes for Independent Artists



Independent artists reported mixed perceptions of funding application processes across multiple dimensions, with responses frequently concentrated in the neutral and disagreement categories. Key findings include:

- Fewer than one-third of respondents perceived eligibility criteria as clear.
- There is considerable uncertainty and skepticism regarding decision-making transparency.
- Neutral responses consistently represented the largest proportion, indicating widespread uncertainty or variability in experiences.

Figure 44: Perceptions on Feedback from Funding Applications

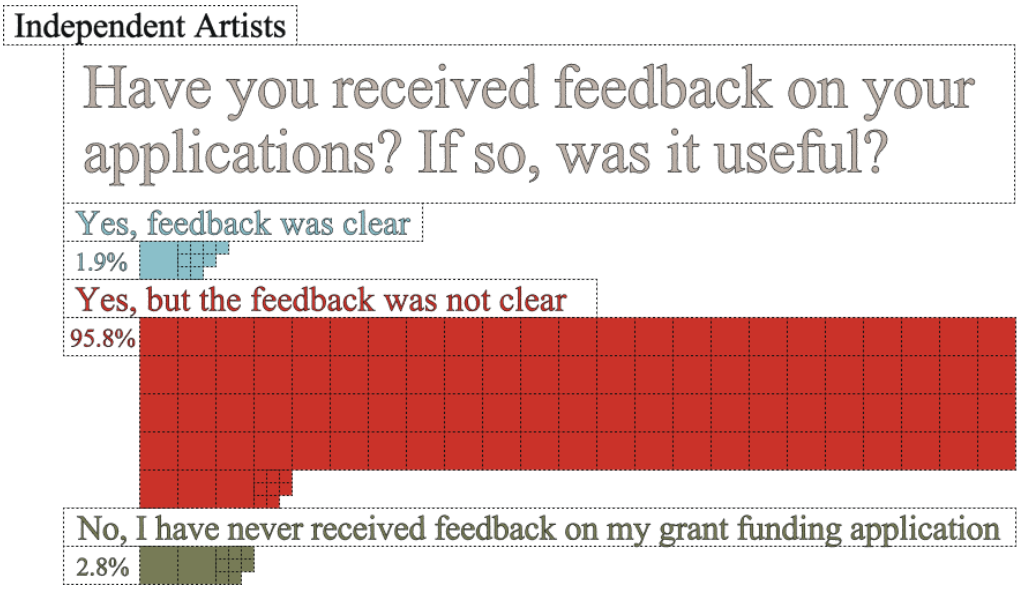
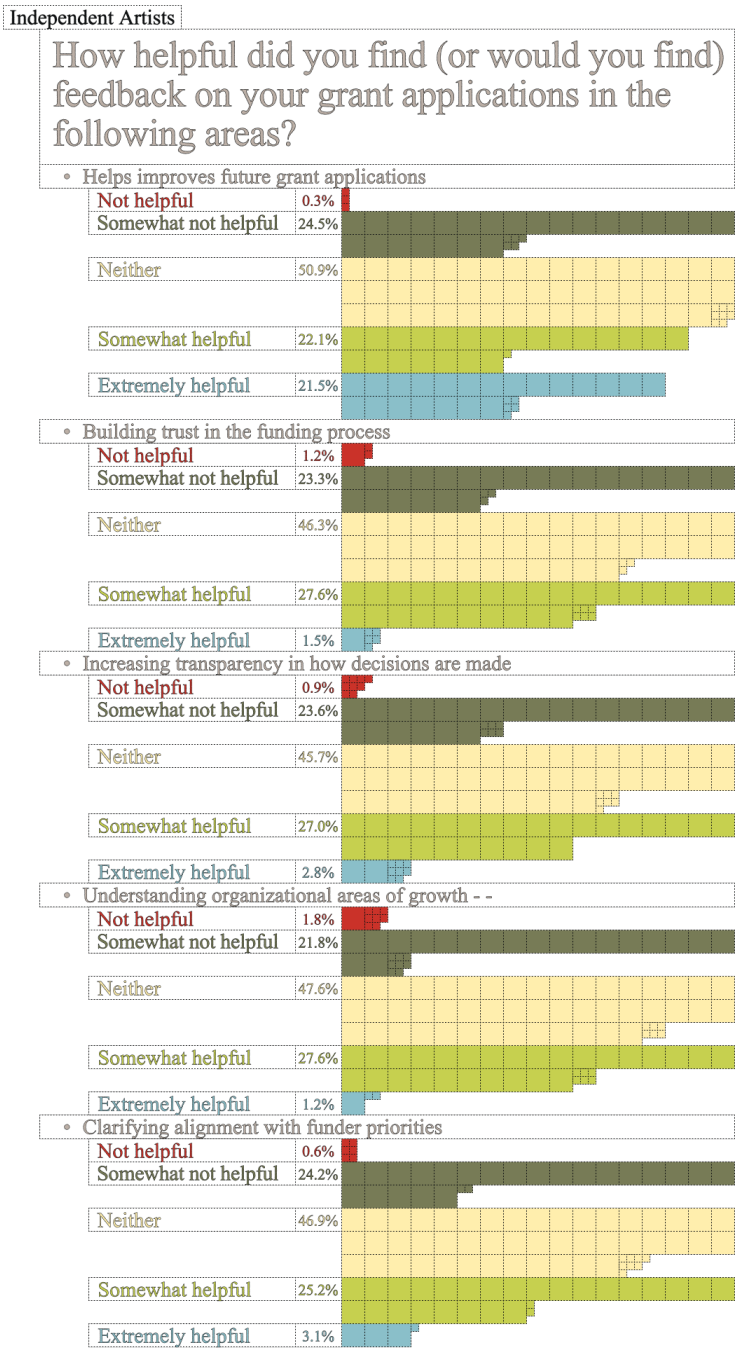


Figure 45: Perceptions on Feedback Mechanisms for Independent Artists

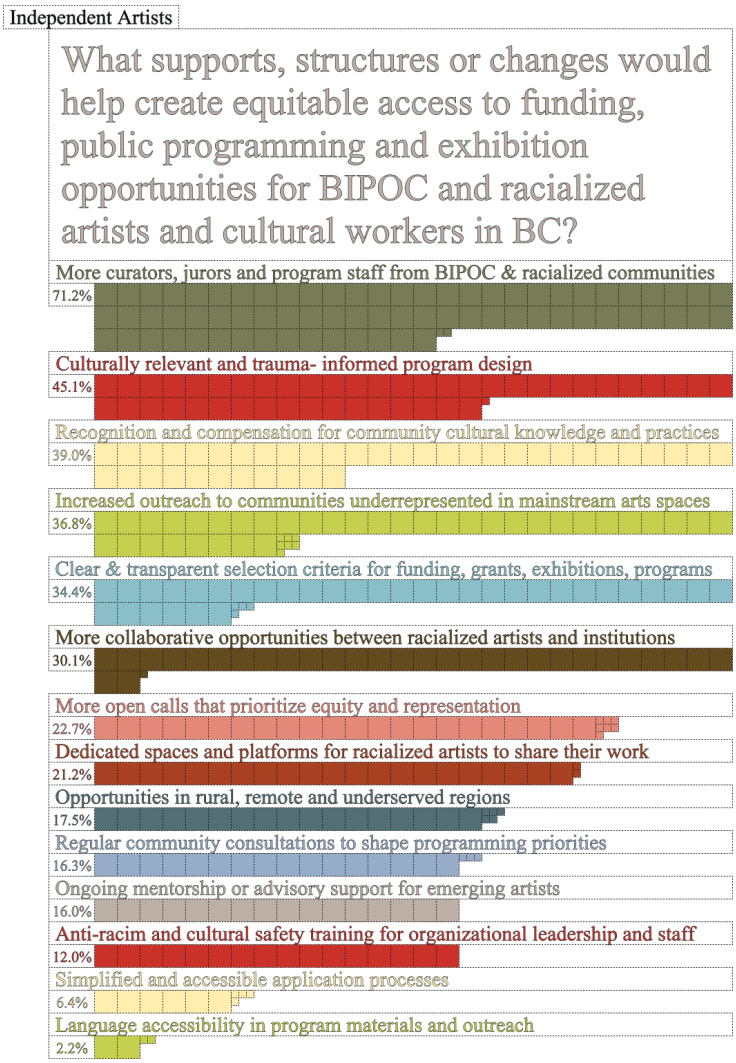


Experiences with feedback on funding applications were overwhelmingly negative in terms of clarity. When asked about the helpfulness of feedback across several areas, responses again clustered around neutrality. Key findings include:

- Perceptions were neutral for building trust in the funding process.
- Responses regarding understanding organizational areas of growth and clarifying alignment with funder priorities also reflected moderate neutrality.
- Independent Artists reported high levels of uncertainty and dissatisfaction with funding application processes and feedback mechanisms within the Arts, Culture, and Heritage sector.

Across measures of clarity, transparency, accessibility, and timeliness, neutral and negative perceptions outweighed positive ones. Feedback on funding applications was reported as largely unclear and only moderately helpful, with limited evidence that current feedback practices meaningfully support learning, trust-building, or improved future applications.

Figure 46: Qualitative Feedback on Structures and Supports



Independent artists articulated a clear need for more meaningful, transparent, and accountable feedback mechanisms within funding and application processes. Across responses, feedback was framed not as a courtesy, but as a critical component of equity, learning, and professional sustainability.

A recurring theme was the need for accessibility-informed evaluation practices, particularly for artists who face systemic barriers such as disability. Respondents emphasized that claims of accessibility must be substantiated through ongoing testing of application tools and criteria with artists who directly experience barriers. Several noted that implicit bias, ableism, and limited disability awareness remain embedded within eligibility criteria and assessment frameworks, undermining stated commitments to accessibility.

Artists also expressed a strong desire for greater transparency in funding decision-making. This included requests for clarity about what criteria are prioritized, how many applications are received in each funding pool, how much funding is available, and the proportion of applicants who are successful. Respondents suggested that access to this information would help contextualize outcomes and reduce uncertainty, speculation, and mistrust in the process.

Concerns about equity framing and unintended exclusion also emerged. One respondent noted apprehension that some equity approaches may inadvertently marginalize certain groups, arguing that exclusion in any direction undermines the goal of inclusive dialogue. While perspectives varied, this feedback points to the need for clearer communication about how equity priorities are operationalized and balanced within evaluation processes.

Several respondents highlighted non-linear career trajectories, particularly for women and caregivers. Artists called for recognition of re-emerging or interrupted practices, noting that caregiving responsibilities and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have disproportionately affected women's ability to sustain continuous artistic production. The absence of dedicated pathways or platforms for re-emerging artists was identified as a significant gap.

A consistent and prominent concern related to the lack of feedback despite substantial unpaid labour invested in applications. Respondents expressed frustration that funders with paid staff and juries often cite capacity constraints as a reason for not providing feedback, despite artists investing significant time and expertise without compensation. This dynamic was described as inequitable and demoralizing.

Constructive suggestions were also offered. These included the development of mentorship programs, application clinics, or cohort-based feedback sessions for artists who apply multiple times without success, allowing them to learn from prior submissions and improve future applications.

Finally, artists expressed a desire for contextually informed evaluation, particularly for regionally specific or culturally grounded work. Respondents wanted clarity about whether jurors possessed relevant regional or cultural knowledge, and if not, how gaps in expertise were addressed during the assessment process.

Overall, the feedback underscores that Independent Artists are seeking feedback that is accessible, transparent, context-aware, and proportional to the labour invested. Rather than generalized comments, respondents emphasized the value of feedback that explains how decisions were made, by whom, and against what criteria, within systems that genuinely account for diverse identities, geographies, and career pathways.

Recommendations on Advancing Equity from Independent Artists

Independent Artists identified a range of supports, structures, and systemic changes that they believe would improve equitable access to funding, public programming, and representation within the Arts, Culture, and Heritage sector. The most frequently endorsed recommendations emphasized decision-making power, cultural relevance, and transparency.

The strongest area of consensus related to representation in decision-making roles. A substantial majority of respondents (71.2%) called for more curators, jurors, and program staff from Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities, highlighting the importance of lived experience and cultural knowledge in shaping funding and programming outcomes.

Transparency and accountability were also identified as critical needs. Over one-third of respondents (34.4%) emphasized the importance of clear and transparent selection criteria for funding, grants, exhibitions, and programs. Similarly, 30.1% recommended the development of more collaborative opportunities between racialized artists and institutions, suggesting a need for relationship-based approaches rather than one-directional evaluation models.

Cultural relevance and care were repeatedly foregrounded. Nearly half of respondents (45.1%) identified the need for culturally relevant and trauma-informed program design, while 39.0% called for recognition and compensation for community cultural knowledge and practices. These findings underscore concerns that existing systems often undervalue relational, community-based, and culturally specific forms of artistic labour.

Outreach and access were also highlighted. 36.8% of respondents recommended increased outreach to communities underrepresented in mainstream arts spaces, while 22.7% called for more open calls that explicitly prioritize equity and representation. Additionally, 21.2% supported the creation of dedicated spaces and platforms for racialized artists to share their work, indicating ongoing gaps in visibility and access to presentation opportunities.

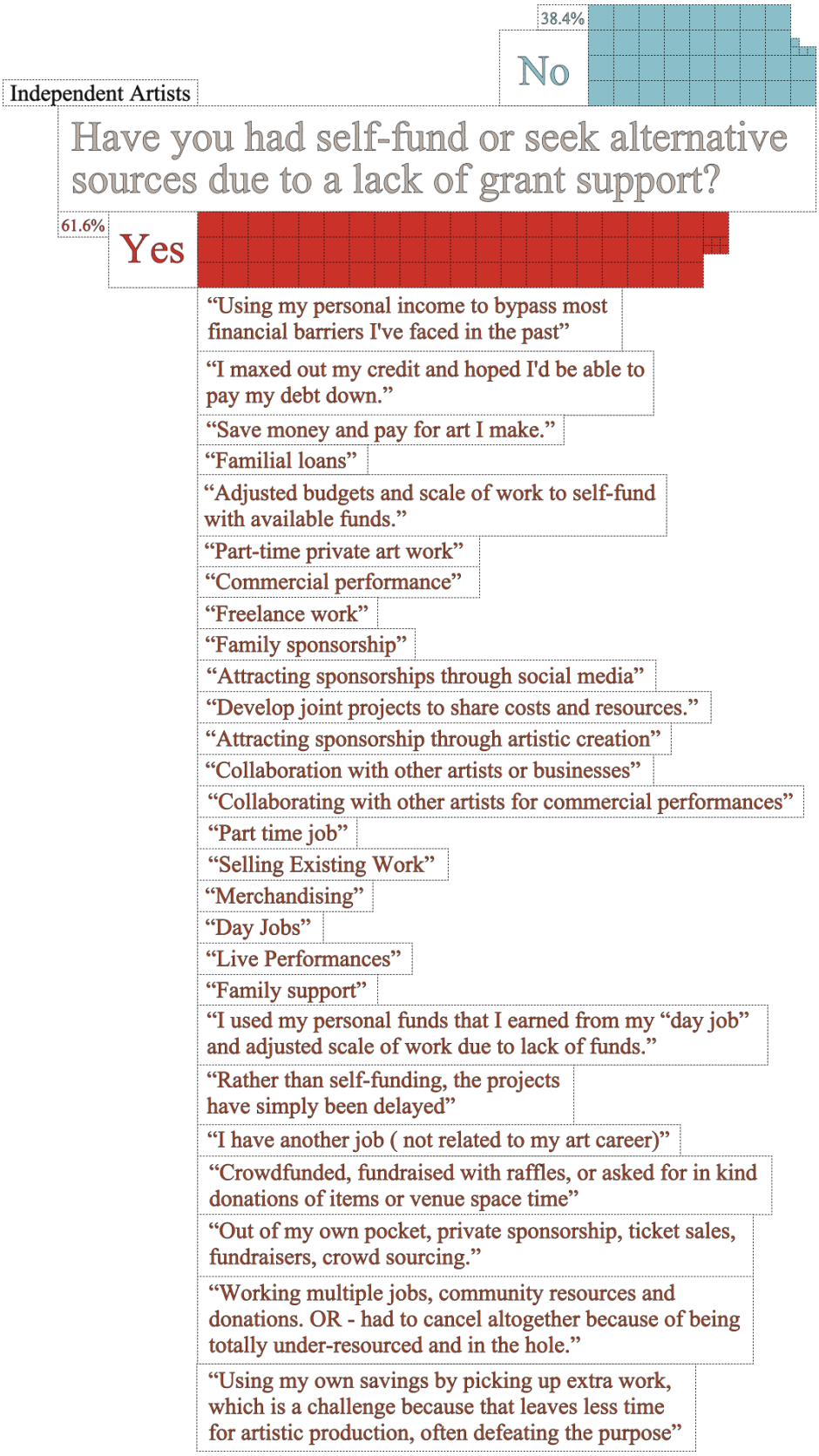
Support structures for artists at different career stages were noted as another area for improvement. 16.0% of respondents identified the need for ongoing mentorship or advisory support for emerging artists, while 16.3% recommended regular community consultations to shape programming priorities. Together, these responses point to the value of sustained engagement rather than one-time interventions.

Geographic and accessibility considerations were also present, though cited by smaller proportions of respondents. 17.5% recommended increased opportunities in rural, remote, and underserved regions, while 6.4% called for simplified and more accessible application processes. Fewer respondents identified anti-racism and cultural safety training for organizational leadership and staff (12.0%) and language accessibility in program materials and outreach (2.2%), though these were still recognized as relevant supports.

Overall, the recommendations reflect a strong emphasis on structural change over individual accommodation, with Independent Artists prioritizing shifts in who makes decisions, how programs are designed, and whose knowledge is valued within the sector.

Self-Funding and Alternative Financing Among Independent Artists

Figure 47: Experiences of Self-Funding



A majority of Independent Artists reported relying on self-funding or alternative sources of financing due to insufficient grant support. Specifically, 61.6% (n = 199) indicated that they had self-funded or sought alternative funding sources, while 38.4% (n = 124) reported that they had not. This finding indicates that self-financing is a common and significant strategy for sustaining artistic practice in the absence of consistent grant funding.

Qualitative responses revealed several recurring forms of alternative financing, often used concurrently rather than in isolation. The most frequently cited approach involved the use of personal income and savings, including income from unrelated "day jobs," part-time employment, or multiple jobs. Artists described diverting wages earned outside their artistic practice to cover production costs, often noting that this reduced the time and energy available for artistic work.

A second prominent strategy involved debt and financial risk, including the use of credit cards and personal loans. Several respondents reported maxing out credit or assuming debt with the expectation of future repayment, highlighting the precarity associated with sustaining artistic production without institutional support.

Family-based support emerged as another key source of financing. Artists reported relying on family loans, family sponsorship, and informal financial assistance from relatives. While this support enabled projects to proceed, respondents noted that access to such resources is uneven and not available to all artists.

Many respondents described generating income through commercial or market-based artistic activities, including commercial performances, live shows, ticket sales, merchandising, and selling existing artwork. Others relied on freelance and contract work, sometimes within the cultural sector and sometimes outside it, to subsidize unpaid or underfunded artistic projects.

Sponsorship and fundraising strategies were also reported, though less frequently. These included private sponsorships, crowdfunding campaigns, raffles, community fundraising efforts, in-kind donations, and securing free or discounted venue space. Several respondents emphasized the additional labour required to organize these efforts, often without guaranteed outcomes.

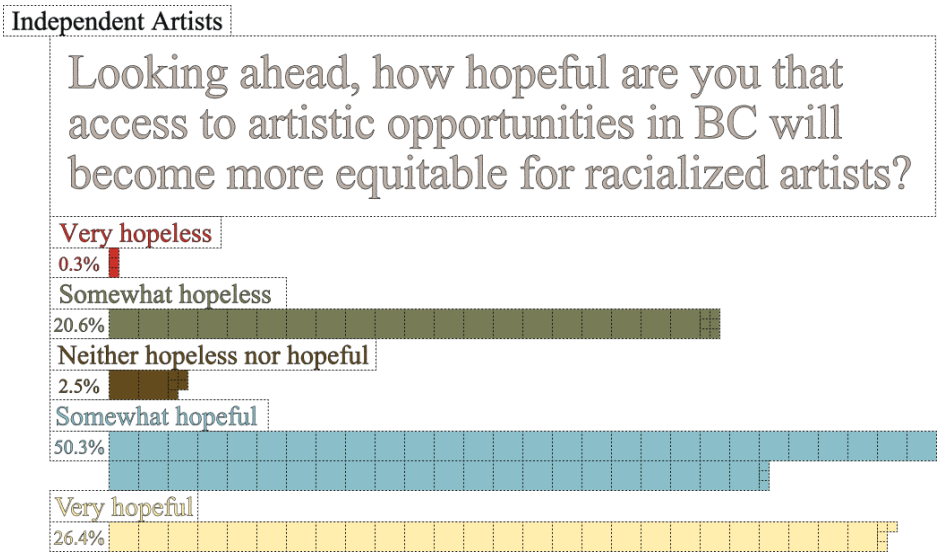
Collaboration was identified as another adaptive strategy. Artists described sharing costs and resources through joint projects, collaborations with other artists, or partnerships with businesses, particularly for commercial or performance-based work.

Finally, some respondents indicated that rather than self-funding, projects were delayed, reduced in scope, or cancelled entirely due to lack of resources. Others reported adjusting project budgets or scaling down artistic ambitions to align with available funds.

Self-funding is a widespread and structurally significant response to gaps in grant support among Independent Artists. The reliance on personal income, debt, family resources, commercial work, and fundraising underscores the financial precarity of independent artistic practice and highlights the hidden costs borne by artists when public funding is insufficient, inaccessible, or inconsistent.

Hopefulness Regarding Equity, Representation, and Diversity

Figure 48: Perceptions of Hope in the Sector



Independent Artists expressed cautious optimism about the future of equitable access to artistic opportunities for racialized artists in British Columbia. A majority reported feeling hopeful to some degree, with 50.3% indicating they were somewhat hopeful and 26.4% reporting they were very hopeful. Together, this represents 76.7% of respondents expressing optimism about progress toward equity.

At the same time, a notable proportion of respondents expressed pessimism. 20.6% reported feeling somewhat hopeless, and 0.3% reported feeling very hopeless. A smaller proportion (2.5%) indicated they felt neither hopeless nor hopeful. These findings suggest that while optimism is prevalent, it coexists with significant concern and skepticism, reflecting uneven experiences and mixed confidence in the pace and depth of sector change.

Recommendations and Reflections on Funding and Sector Practices

Independent Artists articulated a wide-ranging set of recommendations that collectively emphasize structural reform, transparency, accessibility, and cultural accountability within the Arts, Culture, and Heritage sector.

A dominant theme concerned who holds decision-making power. Artists repeatedly called for greater diversity among jurors, curators, mentors, and organizational leadership, particularly increased representation of Black, Indigenous, and other racialized individuals with lived experience, regional knowledge, and cultural competency. Respondents emphasized that current funding structures continue to reflect colonial and Western-centric standards of artistic value, often privileging established institutions, "high art" forms, and applicants with prior grant success.

Transparency in funding distribution emerged as another central concern. Artists expressed frustration with unclear priorities, opaque evaluation criteria, and a lack of information about applicant pools, success rates, and decision rationales. Many noted that funding tends to circulate among those who have already received grants, reinforcing cycles of exclusion for artists without institutional validation or formal training.

Accessibility and equity were consistently framed as inadequately operationalized. Respondents highlighted barriers related to disability, caregiving, poverty, and cost of living, particularly in Metro Vancouver. Artists described application timelines as too short, eligibility criteria as overly complex, and unpaid labour associated with grant writing as disproportionately burdensome for those without financial security, mentorship, or networks. Several respondents called for alternative application formats, including video, oral, or language-supported submissions, as well as evaluation criteria that move beyond narrow definitions of "artistic excellence" to include cultural grounding, community connection, intergenerational knowledge sharing, and risk-taking.

Artists also emphasized the need for mentorship, skills-building, and career-stage–appropriate support, particularly for re-emerging artists, cultural producers, curators, and those in non-traditional or interdisciplinary roles. Several respondents noted that funding structures often fail to recognize or adequately support behind-the-scenes cultural labour, such as curatorial, producing, and experience-design roles that sustain artistic ecosystems.

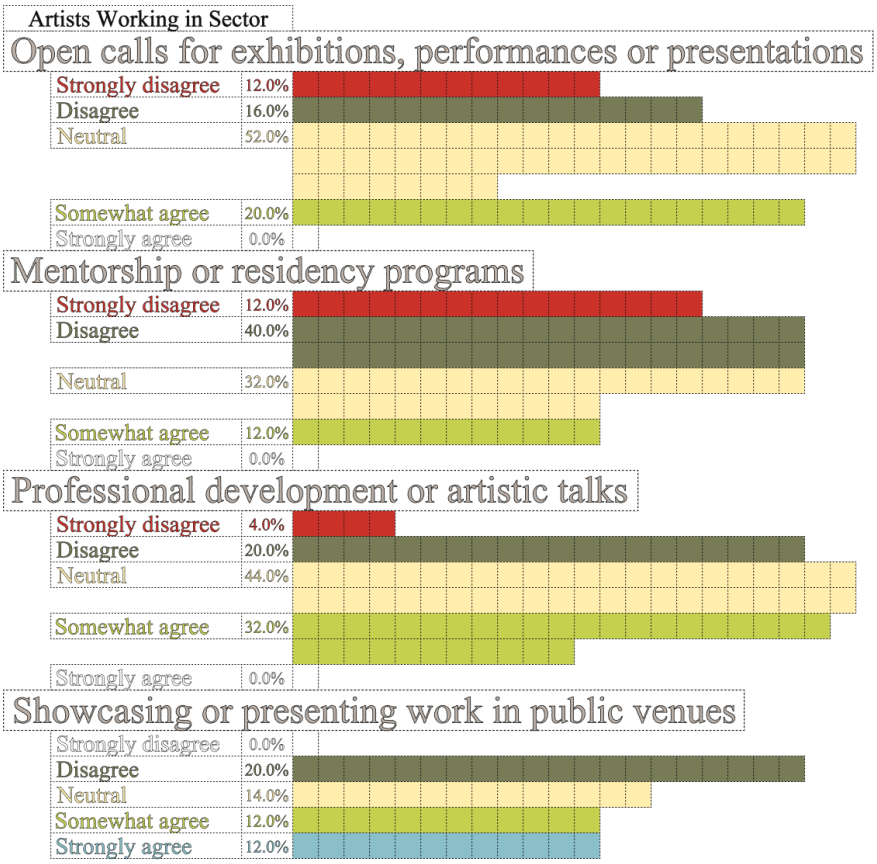
Geographic inequity was another recurring theme. Respondents called for greater investment in artists and cultural spaces outside Vancouver, improved outreach to rural and remote communities, and increased access to affordable creative spaces and studios without commercial rent pressures.

Finally, many artists reflected on the emotional and relational toll of navigating the sector. Experiences of tokenization, pressure to disclose personal trauma or "otherness," lack of meaningful feedback, and historical harm caused by institutions were cited as sources of mistrust and discouragement. While some respondents acknowledged positive changes in recent years, particularly increased attention to BIPOC artists, these gains were described as fragile and constrained by shrinking funding pools and persistent structural inequities.

Independent Artists' responses reveal a sector in transition. While most respondents expressed hope that equity and representation will improve, this optimism is tempered by lived experiences of exclusion, precarity, and institutional mistrust. Artists' recommendations consistently point toward the need for deep structural change, including redistributing power, redefining artistic value, improving transparency and accessibility, and investing in long-term stability for artists and communities rather than short-term, competitive project funding.

Artists Working in the Sector- Frequency of Engagement with Artistic Opportunities

Figure 49: Measuring Engagement



Artists working within the Arts, Culture, and Heritage sector reported generally moderate levels of engagement with sector opportunities, with responses most often concentrated in the neutral category across all engagement types.

For open calls for exhibitions, performances, or presentations, a majority of respondents (52%, n = 13) selected Neutral, indicating neither low nor high engagement. Smaller proportions reported disagreement (16% Disagree, n = 4; 12% Strongly Disagree, n = 3), while 20% (n = 5) somewhat agreed that they engaged frequently. No respondents strongly agreed.

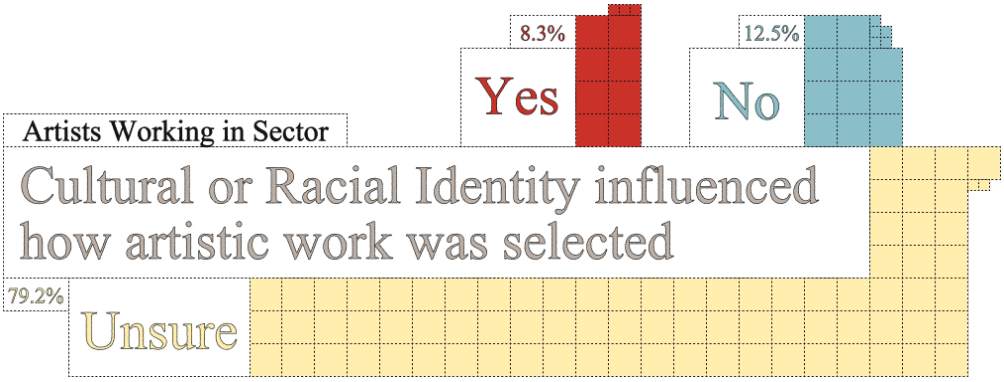
Engagement with mentorship or residency programs showed lower perceived participation. 40% (n = 10) disagreed and 16% (n = 4) strongly disagreed, compared to 32% (n = 8) who selected Neutral and 12% (n = 3) who somewhat agreed. No respondents strongly agreed, suggesting limited or uneven access to these opportunities among artists working in the sector.

For professional development or artistic talks, responses again clustered around neutrality, with 44% (n = 11) selecting Neutral. 32% (n = 8) somewhat agreed that they engaged with these opportunities, while 20% (n = 5) disagreed and 4% (n = 1) strongly disagreed.

Engagement with showcasing or presenting work in public venues was also predominantly neutral. A majority of respondents (56%, n = 14) selected Neutral, while 20% (n = 5) disagreed. Notably, 12% (n = 3) somewhat agreed and 12% (n = 3) strongly agreed, indicating that a smaller but visible subset of artists experienced more frequent engagement in public presentation opportunities.

Across all categories, neutral responses consistently represented the largest proportion, suggesting variability in access or inconsistent opportunities for artists working within the sector.

Figure 50: Perceived Influence of Cultural or Racial Identity



When asked whether their cultural or racial identity influenced how artistic work was selected, framed, or allocated in public programming, most artists working within the sector reported uncertainty. A substantial majority, 79.2% (n = 19), indicated they were Unsure.

A smaller proportion, 12.5% (n = 3), reported that their identity did not influence selection or allocation decisions, while 8.3% (n = 2) reported that their cultural or racial identity did influence how their work or programming opportunities were allocated.

These findings suggest that, among artists working within the sector, perceptions of identity-based influence on opportunity allocation are less explicit or less clearly experienced than among independent artists, with uncertainty being the dominant response.

Overall, artists working within the sector reported moderate and uneven engagement with artistic opportunities, with most respondents neither strongly affirming nor denying frequent participation. Perceptions of whether cultural or racial identity influenced the allocation of artistic opportunities were characterized primarily by uncertainty, indicating that such dynamics may be less visible, less directly experienced, or more difficult to assess from within institutional or organizational roles.

Qualitative Perspectives on Cultural Identity and Programming Allocation

Open-ended responses from artists working within the sector provided additional context to the quantitative finding that most respondents were unsure whether cultural or racial identity influenced how artistic work or programming opportunities were allocated. While only a small proportion explicitly reported identity-based influence in the closed-ended question, qualitative accounts reveal more nuanced and complex experiences.

Several respondents described how their cultural background significantly shapes how their work is received, framed, and interpreted by institutions and curators. Artists noted that identity can function simultaneously as a source of recognition and constraint. In some cases, cultural identity was described as opening space for dialogue around decolonization, community care, and belonging. However, respondents also reported that this recognition often came with an overemphasis on "diversity" rather than engagement with the conceptual, aesthetic, or methodological depth of the work itself.

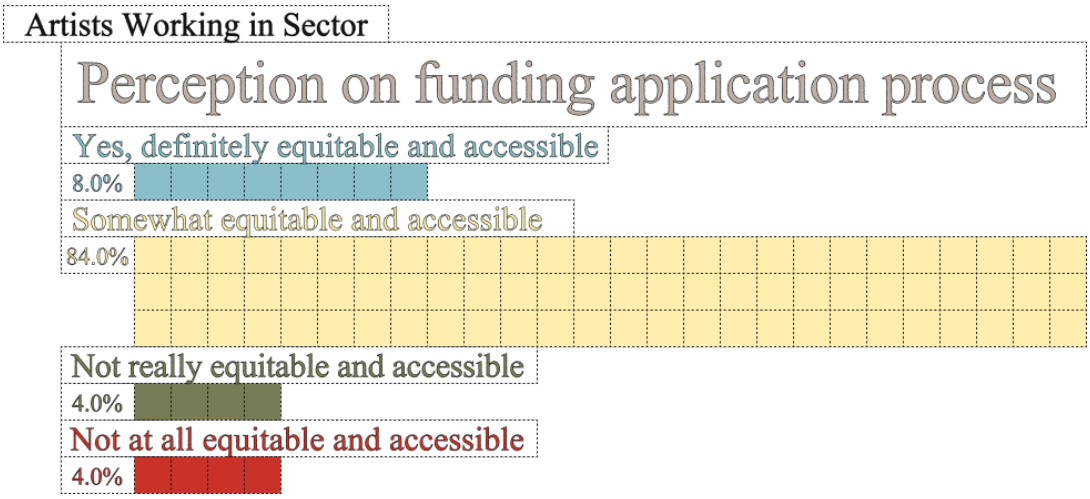
A recurring theme was the flattening or generalization of cultural specificity. Artists reported that organizations and boards frequently frame their work using broad racialized categories, even when those categories do not accurately reflect culturally specific histories, practices, or intentions embedded in the work. This tendency was described as limiting, as it can obscure nuanced cultural narratives and reinforce institutional simplifications of identity.

Respondents also described experiences of identity performance and tokenization, including feeling pressured to foreground aspects of their background, such as immigrant status or racial identity, to align with institutional expectations. This pressure was characterized as emotionally taxing and professionally constraining, particularly when artists felt their identity was being emphasized primarily to satisfy representational goals rather than to meaningfully engage with their artistic practice.

Together, these qualitative findings suggest that while identity-based influence may not always be overtly recognized or acknowledged in formal processes, artists working within the sector experience subtle but persistent dynamics related to tokenism, cultural misframing, and selective valuation of identity. These experiences help explain the high proportion of respondents who selected "unsure" in the quantitative data, indicating that the influence of cultural background on opportunity allocation is often indirect, situational, and embedded within broader institutional practices rather than explicit decision-making criteria.

Perceptions on Funding and Grant Application Processes Among Artists Working Within the Sector

Figure 51: Perceptions on Funding Processes

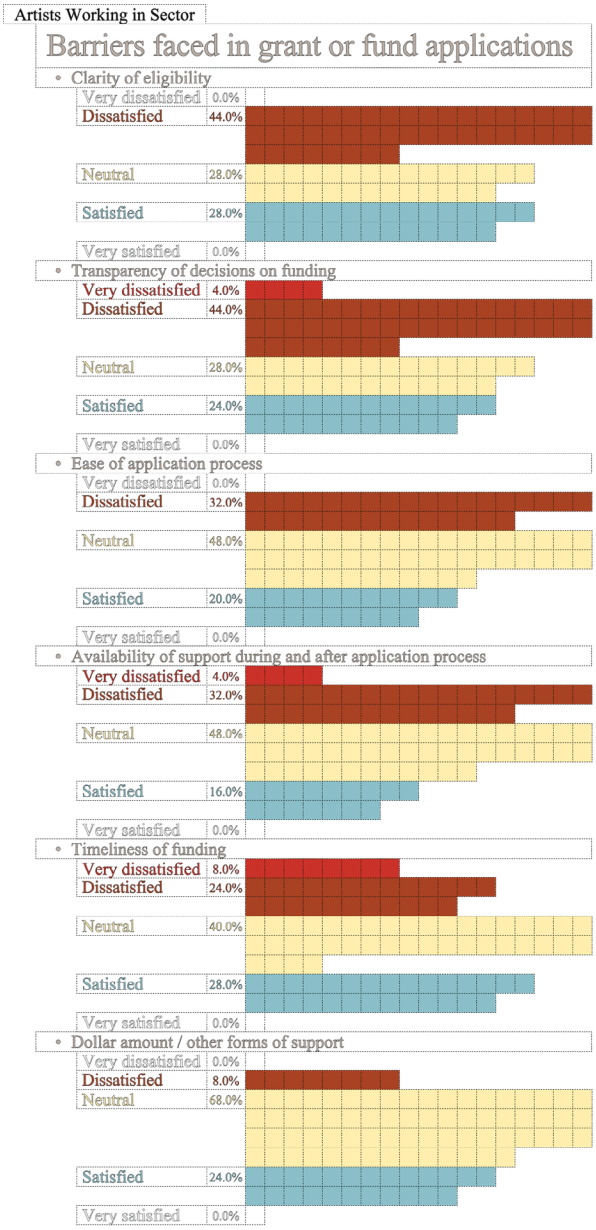


Artists working within the Arts, Culture, and Heritage sector reported mixed but generally moderate assessments of funding and grant application processes, with neutrality and partial satisfaction emerging as dominant response patterns across most indicators.

With respect to overall perceptions of the funding application process, a substantial majority indicated a qualified sense of equity and accessibility. Specifically, 84.0% of respondents reported that the process was somewhat equitable and accessible to racialized and minority artists, while 8.0% stated yes, definitely. In contrast, 4.0% reported not really and *4.0% indicated no, not at all, suggesting that while overt dissatisfaction was limited, strong confidence in the system was also relatively rare.

Assessment of specific process-related barriers revealed several areas of concern. Regarding clarity of eligibility criteria, 44.0% reported being dissatisfied and 28.0% were neutral, compared to 28.0% who expressed satisfaction. Similarly, perceptions of the transparency of funding decisions reflected notable ambivalence, with 44.0% dissatisfied, 28.0% neutral, and 24.0% satisfied. These findings indicate that lack of clarity and transparency remain significant structural challenges for artists navigating funding systems.

Figure 52: Barriers to Funding Processes

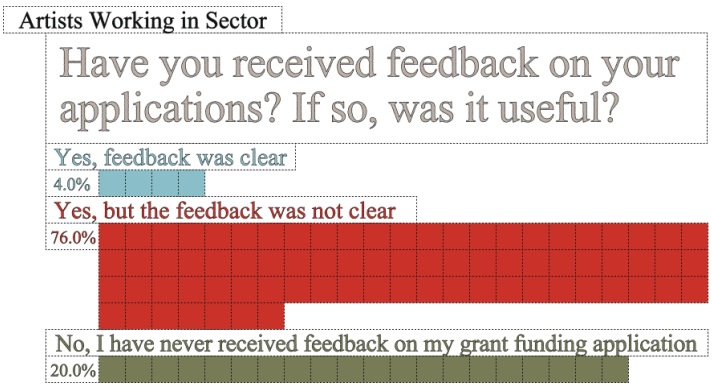


In relation to the ease of the application process, nearly half of respondents (48.0%) expressed neutral views, while 32.0% reported dissatisfaction and 20.0% expressed satisfaction. A comparable pattern emerged for the availability of support during and after the application process, where 48.0% were neutral, 32.0% dissatisfied, and 16.0% satisfied. These distributions suggest limited consistency in support experiences and point to gaps in applicant-facing assistance.

Perceptions of the timeliness of funding decisions were similarly mixed. While 40.0% reported neutral perceptions, 32.0% expressed dissatisfaction, and 28.0% indicated satisfaction. Evaluations of the amount of funding or availability of alternative forms of support were somewhat more favourable, with 68.0% reporting neutral views and 24.0% satisfied, though 8.0% remained dissatisfied.

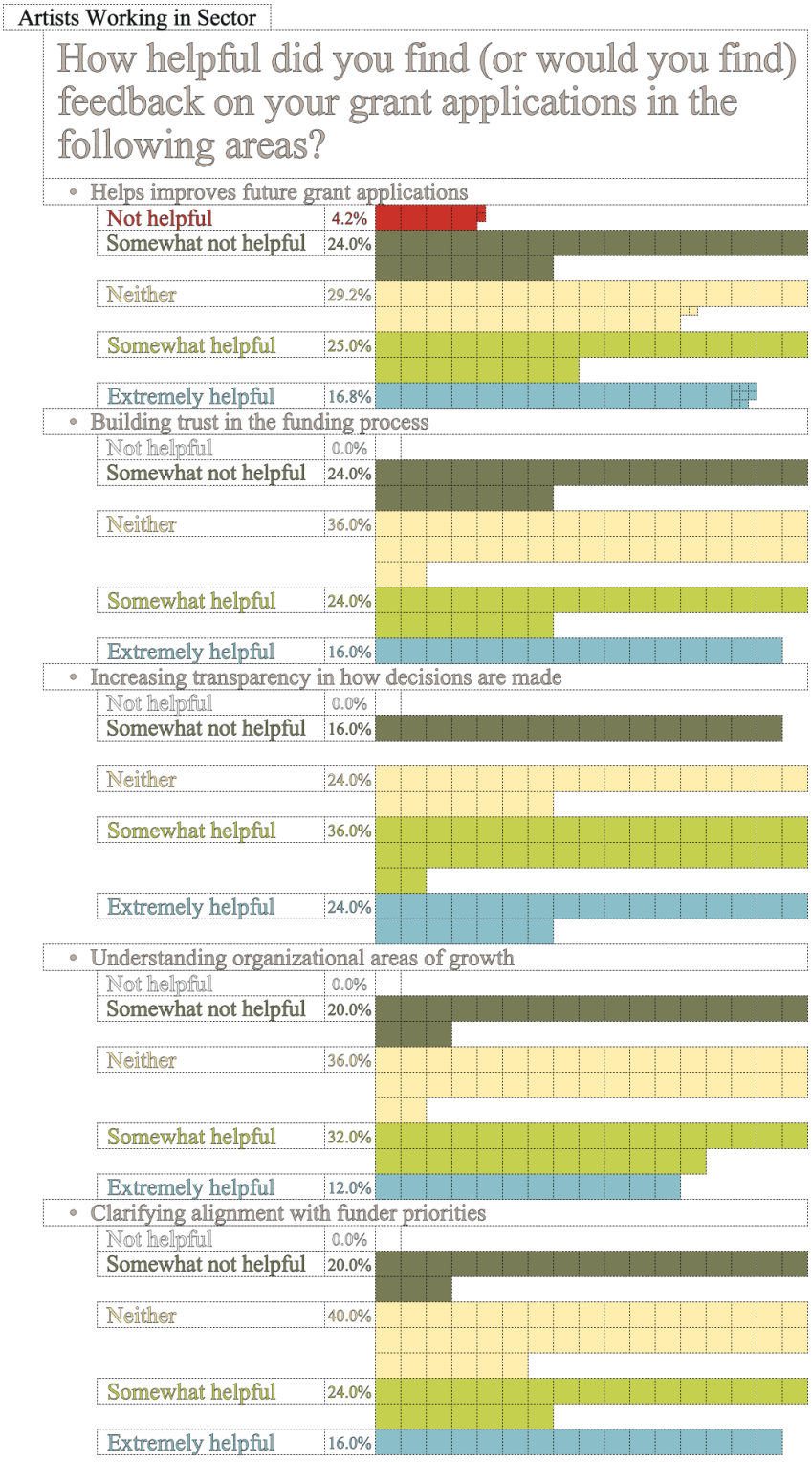
Experiences related to feedback on grant applications further underscore areas of concern. A large majority (76.0%) indicated that they had received feedback but found it unclear, while 20.0% reported never having received feedback at all. Only 4.0% stated that feedback was clear. These findings point to a significant gap between the provision of feedback and its perceived usefulness or clarity.

Figure 53: Experiences Receiving Feedback



Among those who evaluated the helpfulness of feedback, responses were again characterized by neutrality. For example, in relation to feedback helping to improve future grant applications, 29.2% selected neutral, 25.0% somewhat helpful, and 16.8% extremely helpful, while 29.2% found it not or only somewhat helpful. Similar distributions were observed for feedback related to building trust in the funding process, increasing transparency, understanding organizational growth areas, and clarifying alignment with funder priorities, with neutral responses consistently ranging between 36.0% and 40.0%.

Figure 54: Perceptions on Feedback



Overall, these findings suggest that artists working within the sector perceive funding and grant application processes as neither wholly inaccessible nor fully equitable. Instead, responses point to persistent ambiguity, limited transparency, and insufficiently clear feedback mechanisms, highlighting areas where systemic improvements could enhance trust, accessibility, and effectiveness within the funding landscape.

Desired Feedback from Grant-making organizations Among Artists Working In the Sector

The feedback from respondents highlights a strong desire for greater transparency, clarity, and developmental value in feedback provided by grant-making organizations.

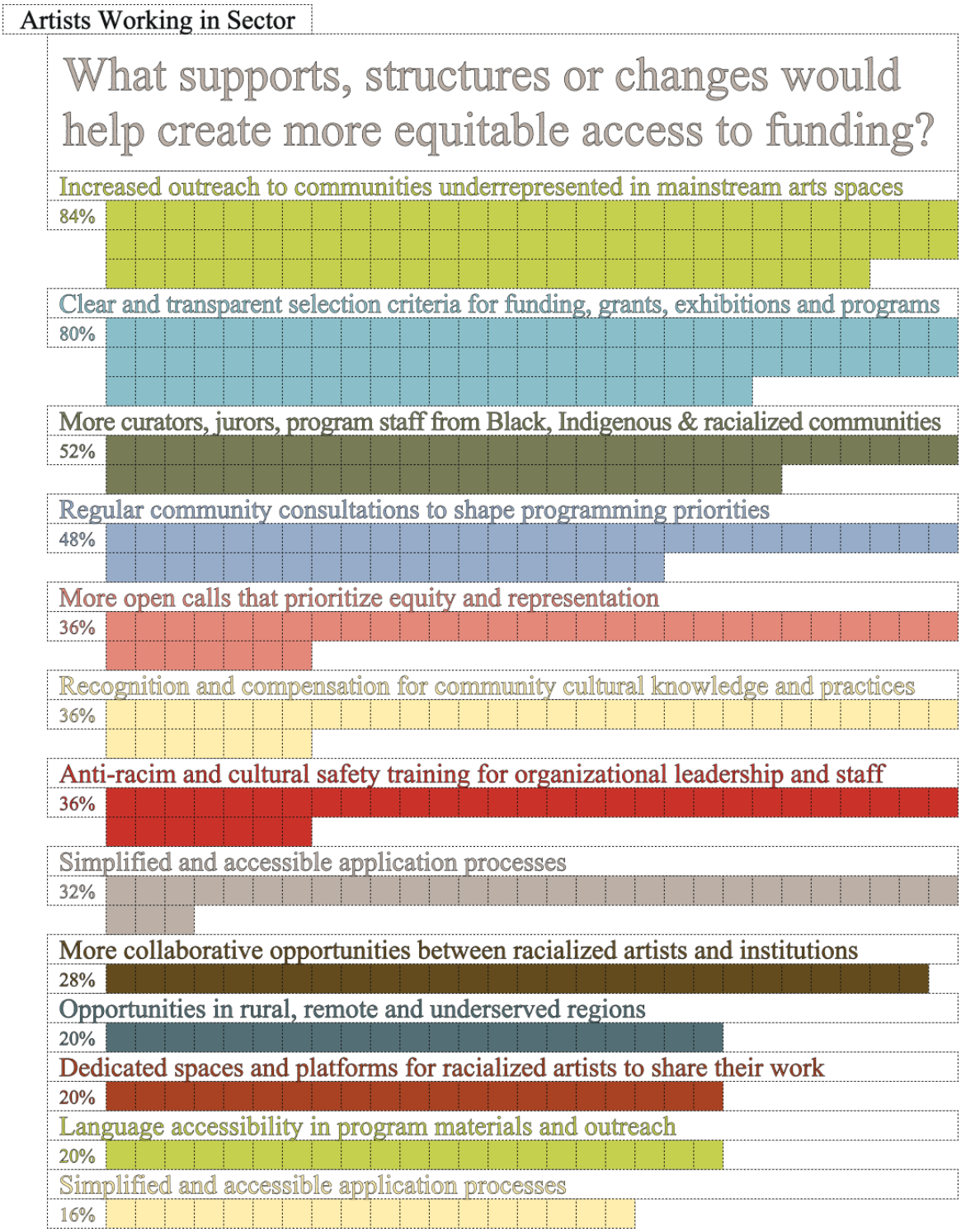
Artists emphasized the importance of receiving detailed and constructive feedback that clearly explains how their proposals aligned or failed to align with funders' stated priorities. Respondents expressed a need for specific commentary on strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement, as well as illustrative examples of successful applications, to better understand evaluation standards and improve future submissions. Such feedback was viewed as particularly critical for racialized and immigrant artists, who often apply without access to institutional mentorship or insider knowledge and therefore rely heavily on formal feedback mechanisms to navigate funding systems.

Additionally, respondents underscored the value of greater transparency around juror composition and decision-making processes. Knowing who serves on juries and what perspectives inform evaluations was seen as essential for building trust and ensuring equitable assessment. Participants also noted ambiguity around opportunities to request further feedback, describing current practices as inconsistent and difficult to navigate. Clearer communication about whether, how, and when additional feedback can be accessed was identified as a key improvement that would reduce uncertainty and perceived gatekeeping within grant-making processes.

Overall, this feedback points to a need for more transparent, accessible, and educational feedback practices that support artist development while strengthening confidence in the fairness and accountability of funding institutions.

Recommended Supports, Structures, and Changes to Improve Equitable Access to Funding Among Artists Working within in the Sector

Figure 55: Recommendations to Funding Structures

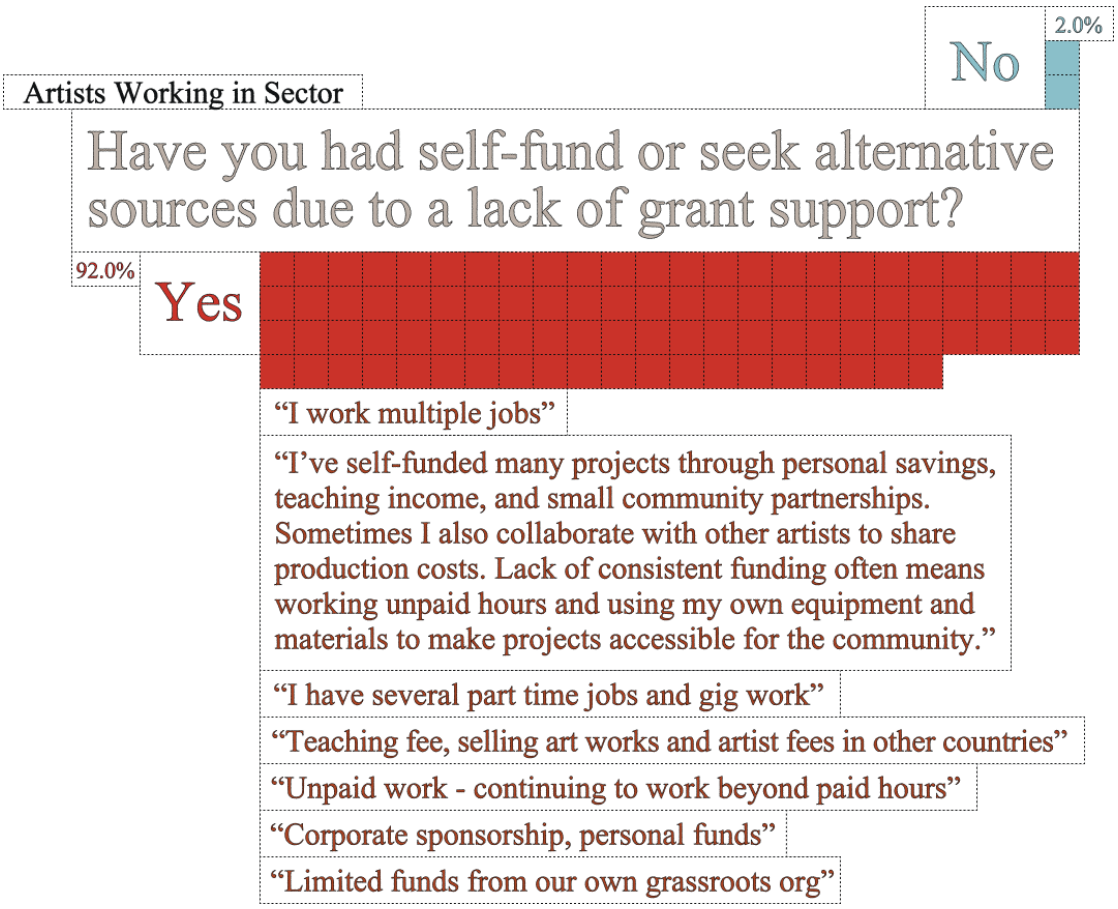


Artists working within the Arts, Culture and Heritage sector identified a range of structural changes that would support more equitable access to funding. The most frequently selected support was increased outreach to communities underrepresented in mainstream arts spaces, identified by 84.0% of respondents. This was closely followed by calls for clear and transparent selection criteria for funding, grants, and programs (80.0%), indicating strong concern about opacity and uncertainty in decision-making processes.

More than half of respondents (52.0%) emphasized the need for more curators, jurors, and program staff from Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities, highlighting representation within decision-making structures as a critical equity mechanism. Nearly half (48.0%) supported regular community consultations to shape programming priorities, while 36.0% each selected recognition and compensation for community cultural knowledge, anti-racism and cultural safety training for organizational leadership, and more open calls prioritizing equity and representation. Additional supports, though selected by smaller proportions, point to persistent access barriers. Simplified and accessible application processes were identified by 32.0% of respondents, while ongoing mentorship or advisory support for emerging artists and collaborative opportunities between racialized artists and institutions were each selected by 28.0%. One-fifth of respondents (20.0%) highlighted the need for dedicated platforms for racialized artists, expanded opportunities in rural, remote, and underserved regions, and language accessibility in program materials, underscoring geographic and linguistic inequities within the sector.

Overall, responses indicate that artists working in the sector prioritize transparency, representation, and proactive outreach as foundational conditions for equity, alongside structural reforms that recognize diverse forms of cultural labour and knowledge.

Figure 56: Alternative Funding



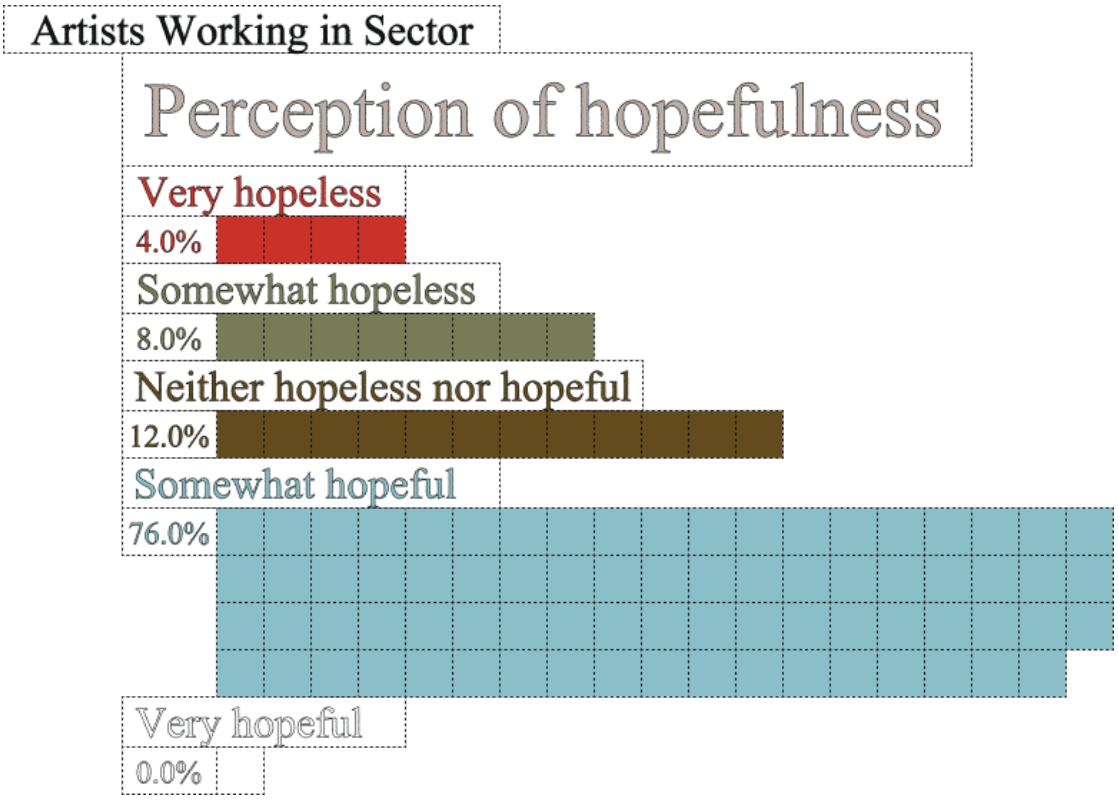
A substantial majority of artists working within the sector reported having to self-fund or seek alternative sources of financing due to a lack of grant support. In total, 92.0% of respondents indicated that they had relied on self-funding or non-grant sources, compared to only 8.0% who reported not having to do so. This stark contrast demonstrates the extent to which grant funding alone is insufficient to sustain artistic and cultural work, even among those embedded within the sector.

Qualitative responses illustrate the range and precarity of alternative financing strategies. Artists most commonly reported working multiple jobs or holding several part-time positions, often outside their artistic practice, to subsidize creative work. Personal savings, teaching income, and unpaid labour beyond compensated hours were frequently cited, alongside selling artworks, artist fees earned in other jurisdictions, and small community or grassroots partnerships. Some respondents described reliance on corporate sponsorships, limited internal organizational funds, or shared costs through collaboration with other artists.

Across responses, self-funding was consistently described as requiring significant personal sacrifice, including unpaid time, use of personal equipment and materials, and reduced capacity for sustainable artistic production. These findings suggest that even artists working within arts and cultural organizations experience structural funding gaps that shift financial risk onto individuals, reinforcing inequities tied to income stability, caregiving responsibilities, and access to external resources.

Perceptions on Hopefulness, Equity, and Representation Among Artists Working within the Sector

Figure 57: Measuring Hopefulness



Overall, artists working within the sector expressed moderate but cautious optimism about the future of equity and representation in the Arts, Culture and Heritage Sector. A strong majority (76%) reported feeling somewhat hopeful that access to artistic opportunities in BC would become more equitable for racialized artists. However, no respondents indicated feeling very hopeful, and approximately one quarter of respondents reported neutral or negative outlooks, including 12% who felt neither hopeful nor hopeless and 12% who felt somewhat or very hopeless. These findings suggest that while progress is recognized, confidence in sustained systemic change remains limited.

Qualitative responses contextualized this cautious hope. Artists described a sector that has made visible commitments to equity but continues to operate through structures that privilege institutional familiarity, administrative capacity, and dominant (often Western or colonial) frameworks of artistic value. Many respondents noted that improvements in representation are fragile and uneven, particularly in the context of reduced funding pools, rising costs, and intensified competition.

Recommendations for Improving Equity in Funding and Representation

Artists working in the sector articulated a clear set of priorities for improving equity, representation, and access:

1. **Clearer, More Transparent Funding Systems:** Respondents repeatedly emphasized the need for clearer eligibility criteria, simplified application requirements, and greater transparency around decision-making. Many noted that overly narrow or technical criteria disadvantage artists without institutional access, traditional portfolios, or grant-writing support. Transparency around how projects are assessed and how equity considerations are weighed was seen as essential to trust and fairness.

2. **Equitable Distribution of Funding:** There was strong support for redirecting funding toward independent, grassroots, and community-based artists and organizations, rather than concentrating resources within large, established institutions. Artists called for smaller, flexible grants that support experimentation, collaboration, and year-round sustainability, particularly for racialized and immigrant artists.

3. **Mentorship, Network-Building, and Support for Non-Linear Pathways:** Many respondents highlighted the need for mentorship, especially from BIPOC curators and cultural workers as a critical pathway into funding and programming opportunities. Artists stressed that emerging does not always mean young and called for support for artists entering the sector later in life, as well as those without access to established networks. Community-based learning and peer networks were widely described as primary sources of professional development.

4. **Intersectional Approaches to Equity:** Artists emphasized that equity initiatives must better account for the intersection of race with class, disability, caregiving responsibilities, geography, and immigration status. Respondents noted that current funding models often fail to accommodate these realities through rigid timelines, insufficient compensation, or unrealistic expectations of unpaid labour.

5. **Recognition of Diverse Roles and Practices:** Several respondents highlighted the marginalization of niche or hybrid artistic roles such as curators, producers, experience designers, and interdisciplinary practitioners, whose work is essential to cultural ecosystems but often poorly understood by funders. Calls were made to broaden definitions of artistic practice beyond “high art” categories and to better recognize culturally grounded, community-embedded, and heritage-based work.

6. **Accountability and Decision-Making Power:** While respondents acknowledged the advocacy work of BIPOC staff within institutions, many noted that meaningful change is often constrained by hierarchical decision-making structures. There was concern that equity efforts rely too heavily on individual advocates rather than being embedded at senior leadership and governance levels.

Artists working within the sector see incremental progress toward equity, but remain skeptical of its durability without structural reform. Hopefulness is tempered by lived experience navigating opaque systems, limited resources, and persistent inequities. Respondents clearly articulated that meaningful change will require not only representational diversity, but also transparent funding practices, redistribution of resources, sustained mentorship, and structural accountability across the Arts, Culture and Heritage Sector

Chapter 7

Qualitative Phase

The qualitative phase of this study draws on data collected between November 4, 2025 and November 26, 2025. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with artists and cultural workers working across the arts, culture, and heritage sector in British Columbia. This phase was designed to complement the quantitative analysis by centring lived experience and providing insight into how equity, access, and power are understood and navigated within the sector.

An initial aim of the qualitative phase was to also interview board members of arts, culture, and heritage organizations. In practice, this proved challenging. Boards are widely recognized as difficult sites for external research access and are often described in the literature as institutional "black boxes," particularly when research topics involve governance, accountability, or anti-racism. Board members typically operate under significant time constraints and may be reluctant to participate in research where there is no pre-existing relationship of trust, especially on issues that invite critical reflection on institutional power. As a result, the qualitative sample is composed primarily of artists and cultural workers rather than senior leadership or board members.

While this limits the range of perspectives captured, it also reflects a deliberate analytic choice to centre voices that are often least visible in formal decision-making spaces yet most directly impacted by sectoral inequities.

7.1. Sampling

This study employed purposive sampling to identify participants with relevant lived and professional experience in the arts, culture, and heritage sector. Initial participants were identified through professional and community networks and were selected based on demonstrated engagement with equity, anti-racism, or access-related issues within the sector.

Snowball sampling was then used to identify additional interviewees. Participants were invited to share information about the study with peers who they felt might offer valuable perspectives, allowing the sample to expand organically through trusted relationships. In addition, individuals who completed the study survey were given the option to indicate interest in participating in a follow-up interview. Several participants were recruited through this mechanism, broadening the range of professional roles and experiences represented.

Given the focus of the study, recruitment prioritized Black, Indigenous, and racialized individuals. Where expressions of interest were received, participants were screened to confirm self-identification prior to scheduling interviews. This approach was intended to ensure alignment between the study objectives and the perspectives included, while respecting participant agency and self-definition.

7.2. Profile of the Sample Population

The final qualitative sample comprised 22 participants with diverse roles and levels of experience within the sector. Participants included independent artists, cultural workers, administrators, curators, programmers, producers, and arts managers. Experience ranged from emerging practitioners to individuals with more than two decades of involvement in the field.

Participants worked across multiple disciplines, including visual arts, performance, film, music, museums, heritage institutions, community arts, and grassroots cultural initiatives. Several participants held hybrid roles, combining artistic practice with administrative, curatorial, or advocacy work. This diversity of roles provided a multi-layered view of the sector, capturing how inequities are experienced across different positions within cultural labour.

A detailed summary of participant roles and experience is provided Appendix A.

7.3. Data Collection And Limitations

Data collection consisted of virtual interviews conducted via Zoom. Interviews followed a semi-structured format and ranged from approximately 45 to 60 minutes in length. All interviews were conducted between November 4, 2025 and November 26, 2025.

The interview guide covered a range of topics, including professional pathways, experiences of representation and exclusion, organizational culture, access to programming and funding, emotional labour, and participants' perspectives on future needs and solutions for advancing equity in the sector. Prior to each interview, participants received an information sheet and consent form outlining the purpose of the study, confidentiality measures, and their right to withdraw at any time.

The sample size provided rich and detailed accounts of equity and inequity within the sector. One of the central aims of this study was not to generalize across the entire arts, culture, and heritage sector, but to understand the structural and relational factors that shape inequitable outcomes. This objective was well served by the depth of the qualitative data.

A key limitation of the qualitative phase is the relative absence of perspectives from senior leadership and board members. Because power within the sector is often concentrated at these levels, the lack of direct insight from these actors limits the ability to fully examine decision-making rationales and institutional self-understandings. Nevertheless, participants' accounts offer valuable analysis of how power is experienced, resisted, and navigated from positions outside formal authority.

7.4. Data Analysis

Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and reviewed in full prior to coding. Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's six-phase approach to thematic analysis, which provides a structured yet flexible framework for identifying patterns of meaning across qualitative data.

The analytic process began with familiarization through repeated reading of transcripts and the generation of initial analytic notes. Transcripts were then systematically coded to capture concepts related to identity, access, power, organizational practice, and emotional labour. Codes were iteratively refined and grouped into broader themes through ongoing comparison across transcripts.

Themes were reviewed to ensure coherence and alignment with the coded data and were then clearly defined and named. Throughout the process, attention was paid to preserving participant voice and context, with analytic interpretation grounded in verbatim excerpts rather than abstraction.

Thematic analysis was selected for its capacity to accommodate multiple, situated realities and to surface both shared patterns and points of divergence across participant experiences. This approach aligns with the study's commitment to centring lived experience while remaining attentive to structural conditions shaping those experiences. A summary of the thematic analysis process is presented in table below.

Table 17: Thematic Analysis Process

Phase	Description of Process
Familiarization with data	Transcription, reading and re-reading to note initial ideas.
Generating initial codes	Systematically coding interesting concepts.
Search for themes	Collating codes into overarching themes.
Review themes	Ensuring themes align with coded excerpts.
Define and name themes	Analysis and refining specifics of each theme.
Produce final report	Final analysis and provision of illustrative examples.

(Adapted from Braun and Clarke, 2006)

7.4.1. Identified Themes

Themes were identified through a combination of deductive coding informed by the interview guide and inductive coding grounded in participants' narratives.

Table 18: Identified Themes

Theme	Definition
Personal Identity, Cultural Background & Professional Pathways	How participants' racial, cultural, and social identities shape their career trajectories, artistic practices, values, and relationships to the sector.
Representation, Visibility & Belonging	Participants' perceptions of representation within staff, leadership, and programming, and how visibility or absence shapes feelings of belonging, safety, and legitimacy.
Organizational Culture & Internal EDI Practice	Experiences of internal organizational culture, including formal and informal equity, diversity, and inclusion practices, and the gap between stated commitments and lived realities.
Access to Programming, Participation & Barriers	Pathways into programs, residencies, exhibitions, and opportunities, alongside barriers related to race, class, unpaid labour, and institutional design.
Funding Systems, Eligibility & Structural Barriers	How funding criteria, application processes, and assessment frameworks shape access for racialized artists and organizations, including experiences of exclusion and misalignment with lived practice.
Equity Initiatives, Networks & Community Collaboration	Engagement with IBPOC-led networks, peer support, mentorship, and community-based collaboration as alternatives to or interventions within dominant institutional structures.
Power, Gatekeeping & Sector Structures	How power is exercised, maintained, or contested through leadership, governance, hiring, and decision-making processes across the sector.
Emotional Labour, Safety & Well-being	The emotional and psychological impacts of working in the sector as a racialized person, including burnout, hypervisibility, tokenism, and concerns about safety and sustainability.
Future Needs, Solutions & Recommendations	Participant-identified priorities and solutions for advancing equity, including changes to leadership pipelines, funding models, accountability, and sectoral norms.
Access to Capacity-Building Opportunities	How participants experience access to professional development, training, mentorship, and skills-building opportunities, and how access is shaped by race, precarity, and institutional resources.
Structural Racism Within the Sector	How systemic and institutional forms of racism shape leadership, funding, legitimacy, and decision-making beyond individual intent or isolated incidents.
Indigenous Relations	How participants understand and engage with Indigenous peoples, sovereignty, and responsibilities within the sector, including tensions between reconciliation discourse and material practice

To centre the voices of participants and ground the analysis in lived experience, the qualitative findings are presented thematically using verbatim excerpts from interviews. For each theme identified through the coding process, selected quotations are presented to illustrate how participants articulated their experiences, perceptions, and analyses of equity, access, and power within the arts, culture, and heritage sector. Quotes are reproduced as spoken, without paraphrasing, to preserve meaning, tone, and context.

Themes are presented sequentially, beginning with Personal Identity, Cultural Background, and Professional Pathways, and progressing through the remaining themes as listed in the table above.

7.5. Summary of Qualitative Data Findings

This section presents an integrated thematic synthesis of semi-structured interviews conducted with Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) independent artists. While participants represented diverse disciplines, identities, and career stages, their accounts revealed strong convergence across key themes related to identity, access, equity, and power within the Arts, Culture, and Heritage sector in British Columbia.

Personal Identity, Cultural Background, and Professional Pathways

Across all interviews, participants described personal identity and cultural background as foundational to both artistic practice and professional trajectories. Artistic work was frequently framed as an extension of lived experience, cultural lineage, migration histories, or Indigenous knowledge systems rather than as a purely individual or market-oriented endeavour. Many participants emphasized that their entry into the sector did not follow conventional or institutionally sanctioned pathways. Instead, professional development often occurred through community engagement, self-directed learning, or informal mentorship, reflecting limited access to formal training and institutional support. Participants also noted that non-linear pathways were often misunderstood or undervalued by institutions, contributing to challenges in establishing legitimacy and accessing opportunities.

> Everything I've learned has been through community, not only the Filipino community, but through Black, Indigenous, and Chinese creative communities working in solidarity with us.
>
> — Anonymous Participant

Others highlighted how migration, race, and intergenerational histories shaped their entry into the arts: "My identity as a mixed Afro-Indigenous Brazilian artist often influences how my work is received and framed."

At the same time, participants spoke of delayed access to the sector due to limited exposure, lack of representation, or late discovery of cultural identity. Some described only learning about their Indigenous or Métis heritage in adulthood, while others entered the arts after pursuing unrelated work because they "didn't really see a path" for themselves earlier on. These accounts highlight how structural invisibility and inequitable access to early arts education shape who enters the sector and when.

Representation, Visibility, and Belonging

I often feel like I'm supposed to list my trauma to improve my chances at getting funding. It feels deeply invasive.

— Anonymous Participant

Participants consistently distinguished between visibility and belonging. While many acknowledged increased visibility of racialized artists in recent years, this visibility was often described as conditional, episodic, or symbolic rather than structural. Several artists reported being invited into spaces primarily to satisfy representational or reporting requirements, without meaningful influence over programming, governance, or long-term strategy.

Feelings of belonging were frequently linked to peer-led or community-based environments rather than formal institutions. Participants described institutional spaces as sites where inclusion was fragile and contingent on compliance with dominant cultural norms.

A strong and recurring theme was the uneven distribution of visibility and recognition across the sector. Participants emphasized that representation was not simply symbolic but materially connected to belonging, confidence, and career sustainability. Several noted that being one of few racialized or Black artists in predominantly white spaces created a persistent sense of isolation. One participant described local arts environments as "very white," while another observed that Black artists were present but rarely visible in leadership, decision-making, or high-profile programming.

Participants drew comparisons between British Columbia and other regions, particularly larger urban centres, where they perceived more visible cultural diversity. The absence of role models and peers was described as discouraging for emerging artists, especially youth, who "don't see themselves reflected" in the sector. These findings suggest that limited representation reinforces cycles of exclusion, affecting both participation and retention.

Participants overwhelmingly described low representation of BIPOC artists across training programs, institutions, and professional spaces, particularly in dance and contemporary performance. Verbatim reflections emphasized the isolating experience of being one of few racialized students in predominantly white programs, reinforcing a sense of not belonging. Artists deduced that this lack of representation signals who the sector is implicitly designed for and who is considered an exception.

While many participants acknowledged a temporary increase in visibility following the Black Lives Matter movement, they also observed that these gains were uneven and fragile. Quotes revealed that while opportunities increased briefly, they often felt conditional and time-limited. Artists interpreted this pattern as evidence that inclusion efforts were reactive rather than transformative. As momentum faded post-pandemic, many participants felt visibility recede, reinforcing skepticism about the sector's long-term commitment to racial equity and belonging.

One participant reflected: "Some curators embrace my voice, but others focus mainly on the 'diversity' aspect rather than the artistic or conceptual depth of my projects."

Organizational Culture and Internal EDI Practices

A lot of equity work feels like representation-for-reporting, not representation-for-diversity-of-thought.

— Anonymous Participant

Experiences with organizational culture varied, but many participants expressed skepticism toward institutional commitments to equity, diversity, and inclusion. While some organizations were described as well-intentioned, EDI efforts were often perceived as superficial, performative, or inconsistently applied. Participants noted that diversity language was increasingly common, yet not always accompanied by meaningful changes in hiring, governance, or resource allocation.

Several participants described workplace environments where racialized staff were expected to educate others or raise concerns, often without support or authority. The expectation to remain polite or non-confrontational, described by one participant as a form of "Canadian politeness," made it difficult to challenge harmful practices.

Artists reported feeling simultaneously invited and constrained, particularly when their identities became the primary lens through which their work was interpreted. Quotes highlighted experiences of being valued for representational purposes, while artistic range and experimentation were implicitly discouraged. This dynamic contributed to feelings of tokenization and creative limitation, suggesting that organizational cultures may reproduce inequity even while professing inclusion.

Several participants noted that EDI labour was disproportionately carried by racialized staff and artists without corresponding authority: "It's often middle management BIPOC arts workers restricted decision-making power who advocate for cultural sensitivity."

Access to Programming, Participation, and Barriers

The eligibility criteria are too complicated. The deadlines are too short. Some of us don't have mentors, or an arts degree, or networks to exploit.

— Anonymous Participant

Barriers to accessing programs and opportunities were widely reported. Participants described challenges related to cost, geographic location, time, and eligibility requirements. Those who were self-employed or balancing multiple roles found it difficult to participate in unpaid or underpaid opportunities that were often framed as career-building.

For some, access barriers were compounded by cultural exclusion. Participants noted that programs were frequently designed without consideration of different artistic traditions, community contexts, or lived realities. As a result, many felt they were being asked to adapt to systems that were not built for them, rather than being meaningfully included.

Access to training, auditions, and professional development emerged as a central barrier across interviews. Participants' verbatim accounts emphasized that many art forms, especially dance, rely on informal prerequisites such as early studio training, competition histories, and affiliation with recognized institutions. Artists deduced that these expectations privilege those with economic means and cultural familiarity with the sector.

Several participants described avoiding auditions or advanced programs altogether due to perceived inadequacy, despite holding formal degrees. These narratives reveal how exclusion operates not only through formal criteria but through unspoken norms that signal who belongs. The cumulative effect is a narrowing of participation that disproportionately excludes BIPOC, immigrant, and working-class artists.

Access to programming and opportunities was shaped by intersecting barriers related to race, class, disability, caregiving responsibilities, and geography. Participants described application processes as opaque, time-intensive, and reliant on insider knowledge or informal networks. Short timelines and inaccessible formats further limited participation, particularly for artists balancing multiple jobs or community obligations.

Artists working in community-based, interdisciplinary, or culturally specific practices reported disproportionate exclusion from mainstream platforms, venues, and institutional programming.

Funding Systems, Eligibility, and Structural Barriers

The ‘high art’ world continues to be heavily funded over art forms created by BIPOC racialized folks.

— Anonymous Participant

Funding structures emerged as a significant source of frustration and inequity. Participants described grant systems as complex, opaque, and difficult to navigate, particularly for those without institutional affiliations or prior funding histories. Eligibility criteria were often seen as misaligned with community-based or culturally specific practices.

Several participants noted that funding tends to circulate among the same organizations and individuals, reinforcing existing power dynamics. One participant described the system as favouring those who already “know how to speak the language” of funders. These findings suggest that current funding models may inadvertently exclude the very community’s equity initiatives aim to support.

Funding systems were consistently described as opaque, exclusionary, and misaligned with the realities of artistic careers, particularly in dance. Verbatim quotes highlighted repeated grant rejections, unclear evaluation criteria, and a lack of feedback that left artists unable to improve future applications. Participants deduced that funding structures favour established networks, recognizable aesthetics, and linear career narratives.

One participant’s experience of pivoting repeatedly first within dance styles, then into arts administration, was emblematic of broader trends. Artists interpreted these outcomes not as individual failures but as systemic conditions that force talented practitioners out of creative work. The saturation of arts administration roles further reinforced perceptions that survival in the sector increasingly depends on proximity to power rather than artistic merit

Funding systems emerged as a central site of structural inequity. Participants widely perceived grant processes as overly bureaucratic, competitive, and aligned with Eurocentric and colonial standards of artistic value. Eligibility criteria privileging prior funding success, institutional affiliation, or formal credentials were seen as reinforcing cycles of exclusion.

Several participants raised concerns about the grouping of Black, Indigenous, and other racialized artists into a single equity category, arguing that this obscures distinct historical and structural realities and contributes to inequitable outcomes, particularly for Black and Indigenous artists. The absence of meaningful feedback on unsuccessful applications was frequently cited as undermining trust and professional growth.

A recurring concern was the tendency for funding to circulate among previously funded applicants: “Grant funding is more likely to go to people who have already received funding contributing to the harmful cycle that keeps BIPOC from receiving funding.”

Equity Initiatives, Networks, and Community Collaboration

Having BIPOC mentors is a mutually rewarding experience—these relationships build the basis for new programming, funding, and intergenerational opportunities.

— Anonymous Participant

Participants' quotes underscored how network dependency remains one of the most entrenched barriers in the sector. Artists described opportunities circulating through informal relationships, making "knowing the right people" essential for access to jobs, commissions, and visibility. This was especially pronounced in dance, where auditions and opportunities are rarely openly advertised.

While some participants appreciated equity-focused initiatives, they also noted that these efforts often fail to disrupt network-based gatekeeping. Verbatim accounts suggested that without intentional redistribution of power and information, equity initiatives risk reinforcing existing hierarchies. Artists expressed a desire for collaboration models rooted in transparency, reciprocity, and long-term relationship building rather than short-term inclusion.

Despite systemic barriers, participants highlighted the importance of informal networks, peer support, and community-led initiatives. Many described relying on relationships within their cultural or artistic communities to access opportunities, share resources, and sustain their practice. These networks were often characterized by mutual care and collaboration rather than competition. However, participants emphasized that these networks often function as compensatory mechanisms in the absence of equitable institutional investment. Community-led initiatives were frequently under-resourced and reliant on unpaid or precarious labour.

Participants expressed cautious optimism about equity-focused initiatives but stressed that their impact depended on sustained commitment and accountability. Short-term projects or pilot programs were seen as insufficient without long-term investment and power-sharing with communities.

Power, Gatekeeping, and Sector Structures

Those who ultimately establish the structure still operate from colonial perspectives.

— Anonymous Participant

Participants consistently framed their experiences within broader structures of power and gatekeeping. Interview participant narratives highlighted how artistic legitimacy is controlled by a small number of institutions, funders, and decision-makers whose values shape what is funded, programmed, and celebrated. Artists deduced that these structures privilege particular aesthetics, training backgrounds, and social networks.

Gatekeeping was described as cumulative and self-reinforcing, particularly for immigrant and BIPOC artists who lack early access to sector knowledge. Without intervention, these structures perpetuate homogeneity and limit innovation, contributing to attrition among underrepresented artists.

Several participants described feeling that they had to conform to dominant norms to be accepted, sometimes at the expense of their cultural integrity. Others noted that alternative or culturally rooted practices were undervalued or misunderstood. These accounts underscore how structural power shapes artistic legitimacy within the sector.

Artists reported pressure to conform to dominant norms to gain access, often at the expense of cultural integrity.

Emotional Labour, Safety, and Well-being

It's exhausting having to explain your existence over and over just to be considered.

— Anonymous Participant

The emotional toll of navigating inequitable systems was a prominent theme. Participants spoke of burnout, frustration, and the cumulative impact of microaggressions and exclusion. For racialized artists and workers, emotional labour extended beyond their roles to include managing others' discomfort, educating peers, and advocating for change.

Safety was discussed not only in physical terms but also as emotional and cultural safety. Participants emphasized the importance of spaces where they could work without fear of being stereotyped, tokenized, or dismissed. The lack of such spaces was identified as a barrier to long-term participation and well-being. Artists reported that these conditions undermine well-being and contribute to burnout, disengagement, and exit from the sector. The absence of culturally responsive mental health supports and safe reporting mechanisms further exacerbated feelings of vulnerability and isolation.

Concerns about psychological safety were particularly acute for artists working within institutions, who described fear of professional repercussions if they raised concerns about racism, inequity, or exclusion.

Artists working within institutions expressed concern about psychological safety and fear of professional repercussions when raising equity issues.

Access to Capacity-Building Opportunities

It took me ten years to learn the language and landscape of grants.

— Anonymous Participant

Participants reported uneven access to capacity-building opportunities such as grant-writing support, mentorship, leadership training, and systems literacy education. Verbatim accounts highlighted that artists who succeed often do so because they have access to informal guidance that demystifies funding, programming, and career progression.

BIPOC and immigrant artists reported that lack of access to these resources places them at a structural disadvantage, regardless of talent or training. Participants emphasized the need for sustained culturally responsive capacity building embedded across career stages.

Participants identified significant gaps in access to capacity-building opportunities such as mentorship, grant-writing support, leadership development, and administrative assistance. Existing programs were often described as short-term, competitive, or inaccessible to independent artists without institutional backing.

Artists emphasized the need for sustained relationship-based capacity-building that recognizes diverse entry points into the sector and values experiential and community-based knowledge alongside formal credentials.

Structural Racism Within the Sector

The system wasn't built for us, and it shows in who gets funded and who doesn't.

— Anonymous Participant

Across themes, participants' quotes pointed to structural racism as an underlying condition shaping experiences in the sector. Artists described patterns of exclusion that could not be explained by individual bias alone, including underrepresentation, network dependency, and unequal access to resources. Interviews revealed how racialized artists must navigate systems not designed with them in mind.

Participants reported that structural racism manifests through policies, norms, and expectations that appear neutral but disproportionately disadvantage BIPOC artists. Addressing these issues requires systemic change rather than isolated equity initiatives.

Participants emphasized that meaningful equity cannot be achieved through representational strategies alone but requires redistribution of power, resources, and decision-making authority.

Indigenous Relations

Indigenous relations can't be folded into diversity work—it requires Indigenous-led decision-making.

— Anonymous Participant

While fewer participants directly addressed Indigenous relations, participants acknowledged tensions and gaps in how Indigenous artists and communities are engaged within the sector. Artists observed that Indigenous inclusion is often symbolic rather than grounded in sustained relationship-building, accountability, and respect for sovereignty.

Participants highlighted that meaningful Indigenous relations require moving beyond project-based engagement toward long-term partnerships, Indigenous-led decision-making, and recognition of ongoing colonial impacts within arts and heritage institutions.

Indigenous participants and those working closely with Indigenous communities underscored the need to distinguish Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination from broader racial equity frameworks. Participants cautioned against pan-Indigenous or pan-BIPOC approaches and called for Indigenous-led funding streams, governance structures, and decision-making processes grounded in long-term relationships and accountability.

Non-Indigenous participants emphasized the importance of cultural humility, consent, and sustained partnership when engaging with Indigenous artists and communities.

Conclusively, participants stressed the importance of long-term accountability, land-based relationships, and Indigenous governance.

Future Needs, Solutions and Recommendations

Looking forward, participants called for systemic rather than symbolic change. They emphasized the need for funding reforms that recognize diverse practices, transparent decision-making processes, and meaningful inclusion of marginalized voices in leadership. Early access to arts education, mentorship, and visible pathways into the sector were identified as critical for future generations.

Participants also highlighted the importance of sustained relationships between institutions and communities, built on trust and accountability. Rather than short-term consultations, they called for long-term collaboration that redistributes power and resources. Taken together, these findings suggest that advancing equity in British Columbia's arts, culture, and heritage sector will require structural transformation grounded in lived experience, not solely policy commitments.

7.6. Discussion of Qualitative Thematic Analysis Findings

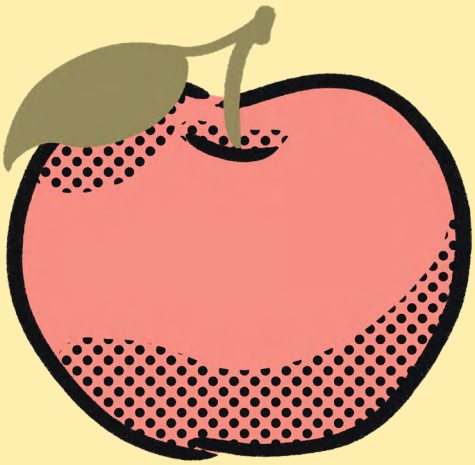
The qualitative findings reveal a sector characterized by heightened equity discourse but limited structural transformation. Across themes, participants articulated how power, gatekeeping, and colonial norms continue to shape access to funding, programming, and institutional legitimacy.

A key contribution of these findings is the distinction participants drew between visibility and belonging. While representation has increased, it has not consistently translated into decision-making power, sustained support, or cultural safety. This gap mirrors broader critiques of performative equity within cultural institutions.

Community networks emerged as critical sites of resilience and innovation, yet participants emphasized that informal solidarity cannot substitute for institutional accountability or public investment. The emotional labour described across interviews highlights the human cost of navigating systems that rely on racialized artists to advocate for change without adequate protection or compensation.

These findings underscore that equity within the Arts, Culture, and Heritage sector requires more than expanded access or symbolic inclusion. Meaningful change will depend on redistributing power, redesigning funding systems, and centering community-rooted knowledge, care, and long-term sustainability.

Chapter 8



Triangulation of Quantitative and Qualitative Results

This section synthesizes findings from the quantitative surveys and qualitative semi-structured interviews to provide a comprehensive understanding of equity, representation, access, and systemic barriers within the Arts, Culture, and Heritage sector in British Columbia. Triangulation reveals strong convergence between statistical patterns and interview narratives, while qualitative findings add depth and explanation to areas of high neutrality, ambivalence, or divergence observed in the survey data.

Identity, Representation, and Belonging

Quantitative findings indicated widespread ambivalence among Independent Artists regarding racial representation in the sector. Across multiple survey items related to racial diversity, representation in programming, and feelings of welcome, neutral responses consistently ranged between approximately 40% and 55%, with moderate agreement and persistent disagreement also present. This pattern suggests uncertainty or uneven experiences rather than clear consensus.

Qualitative interview data help explain this ambivalence. Interview participants consistently distinguished between visibility and belonging, describing experiences of being seen without being meaningfully included. Artists articulated that while representation has increased, it is often conditional or instrumentalized, which aligns with the high neutrality observed in the survey data.

Thus, survey neutrality does not indicate the absence of opinion, but rather reflects complex, context-dependent experiences of partial inclusion that are difficult to capture through closed-ended measures alone.

Organizational Culture, EDI, and Institutional Trust

Survey results showed mixed perceptions of the effectiveness of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) policies. Among Independent Artists, fewer than half agreed that EDI policies were effective, while a substantial proportion remained neutral and approximately 16% expressed disagreement. Artists working within the sector were more critical, with 40% disagreeing that EDI policies were effective.

Interview data strongly contextualize these findings. Participants described EDI initiatives as often performative, reactive, or limited to representation without structural change. Racialized artists working within organizations reported carrying disproportionate equity labour without authority or institutional support.

These qualitative insights help explain why sector-based artists were more skeptical in survey responses: proximity to institutional operations appears to expose the gap between policy and practice more clearly.

Access to Programming and Participation

Quantitative data showed that Independent Artists reported frequent engagement with artistic opportunities, yet also expressed high levels of neutrality regarding accessibility, transparency, and feelings of welcome. For example, over 50% selected neutral when asked whether calls for artists are promoted in accessible ways or whether they feel welcome in publicly funded opportunities.

Interview participants provided detailed explanations for this pattern. Artists described structural barriers such as short application timelines, inaccessible formats, reliance on informal networks, and expectations of unpaid labour.

Thus, survey neutrality reflects not satisfaction, but variability and unpredictability in access, where opportunities exist but are unevenly reachable depending on resources, networks, and life circumstances.

Funding Systems and Structural Barriers

Quantitative findings revealed that over 87% of Independent Artists had applied for funding, and over 90% had received funding at least once, yet perceptions of fairness, transparency, and accessibility remained mixed. While most respondents described funding processes as somewhat equitable, nearly all process-related questions showed large neutral or negative response categories. Feedback clarity was particularly problematic, with over 95% reporting that feedback was unclear or nonexistent.

Qualitative interviews strongly reinforced these findings. Participants described funding systems as opaque, cyclical, and biased toward applicants with prior success:

Interview participants also elaborated on the emotional and financial costs of grant-writing, aligning with survey data showing that 61.6% of Independent Artists self-funded projects and relied on personal income, debt, or unpaid labour. This triangulation demonstrates that funding access alone does not equate to funding equity or sustainability.

Power, Gatekeeping, and Decision-Making

Survey data indicated strong support for structural reforms, particularly increased representation of Black, Indigenous, and racialized individuals in decision-making roles. Among Independent Artists, over 70% recommended more racialized jurors, curators, and program staff, and similar priorities emerged among artists working within the sector.

Interview participants directly connected this need to experiences of gatekeeping and colonial power structures.

Qualitative findings deepen the quantitative results by illustrating how power concentration shapes funding outcomes, program priorities, and definitions of artistic value.

Emotional Labour, Safety, and Well-being

While the surveys did not directly measure emotional labour or psychological safety, related indicators emerged indirectly through high neutrality, dissatisfaction with feedback, and widespread self-funding. Interview data filled this gap by foregrounding emotional and mental health impacts:

This triangulation highlights a limitation of quantitative measures alone and underscores the importance of qualitative inquiry for capturing well-being impacts.

Capacity-Building and Sector Sustainability

Quantitative findings showed strong demand for mentorship, advisory support, and capacity-building, with 16–28% of respondents across surveys explicitly identifying these needs. However, these percentages understate the urgency expressed in interviews.

Participants described taking years to learn institutional language and processes without support:

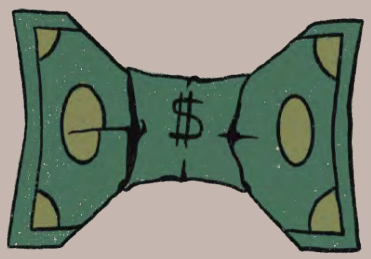
This suggests that survey-based estimates may underrepresent the depth of need, as artists normalize long-term precarity and self-reliance.

Indigenous Relations

Survey results indicated general agreement on the importance of inclusion and representation but did not disaggregate Indigenous-specific experiences in depth. Interview data provided critical nuance, emphasizing that Indigenous relations cannot be subsumed under general racial equity frameworks:

This highlights a key gap in sector practices and points to the need for distinct policy and funding approaches.

Chapter 9



Policy implications

1. Treat “neutral” survey responses as a warning sign, not a success metric

High neutrality across representation, accessibility, and transparency items combined with interview accounts of conditional inclusion suggests inconsistent practices across institutions and regions.

Policy Implication:

- Sector agencies should not interpret neutrality as endorsement. It indicates uneven implementation and low confidence.

Policy actions:

- Require public reporting on equity implementation beyond demographics (e.g., changes to criteria, jury training, feedback standards, accessibility testing).
- Add standardized sector indicators (timelines, feedback provided, applicant support utilization, accommodation use).

2. Make funding transparency a baseline requirement

Surveys show persistent uncertainty about clarity and transparency, and 95.8% of Independent Artists report unclear feedback. Interviews connect opacity to mistrust and repeated exclusion.

Policy actions:

- Publish success rates by stream, award ranges, and number of applications per pool each round.
- Require funders to provide minimum feedback standards (at least short, specific rationale aligned to criteria).
- Disclose jury composition (role, region, relevant expertise; with privacy safeguards).

3. Redesign application systems to reduce unpaid labour and accessibility burdens

Both methods show that "ability to apply" is stratified by time, class, disability, caregiving, and network access.

Policy actions:

- Extend timelines and introduce rolling/intake windows where feasible.
- Allow multiple submission formats (written, video, oral/storytelling), and provide translation and accessibility supports. Introduce tiered application complexity (micro-grants with lightweight reporting; larger grants with scaled requirements).

4. Shift from project-only models to stability mechanisms

High self-funding rates (61.6% Independent Artists; 92% sector artists) indicate current grant levels and structures do not match costs, especially in high-cost regions.

Policy actions:

- Expand multi-year funding and operating/core supports, including for community-rooted organizations.
- Create supports for space/studio access and non-project expenses that directly affect sustainability.
- Implement minimum compensation guidelines and adjust grant caps to reflect venue and production inflation.

5. Redistribute decision-making power, not only representation in programming

The strongest survey recommendation is increased BIPOC decision-makers (71.2% Independent Artists) and similar priorities among sector artists (e.g., outreach and transparent criteria). Interviews identify gatekeeping and colonial norms embedded in boards, juries, and leadership.

Policy actions:

- Require meaningful BIPOC representation in juror pools, program staff, and governance, with decision authority (not advisory-only roles).
- Introduce community accountability mechanisms, such as community review panels or governance seats for equity-deserving communities.
- Rotate juries and avoid repeatedly rehiring the same adjudicators.

6. Separate and tailor equity approaches, especially for Indigenous relations

Interviews emphasize Indigenous sovereignty cannot be collapsed into general diversity frameworks; demographic data show different representation patterns across surveys.

Policy actions:

- Establish Indigenous-led funding streams with Indigenous governance and evaluation frameworks.
- Support long-term relationship models (not one-off consultations), including resourced partnership-building.
- Distinguish race-based equity programming from Indigenous sovereignty obligations in policy design.

7. Invest in capacity-building as infrastructure, not remediation

Surveys show demand for mentorship and advisory supports; interviews indicate artists spend years learning "grant language" without supports.

Policy actions:

- Fund sustained mentorship and clinics (including cohort models for repeat applicants).
- Support paid grant-writing assistance for artists without institutional access.
- Fund BIPOC-led intermediary organizations to deliver capacity supports with cultural safety.

8. Address emotional labour and cultural safety as sector outcomes

Interviews document burnout, identity performance pressure, and trauma disclosure dynamics. Survey signals include unclear feedback and heavy self-funding burdens.

Policy actions:

- Adopt cultural safety and anti-ableism standards, including field-testing "accessible" processes with disabled artists.
- Build protections for artists raising concerns (clear complaint pathways; non-retaliation commitments).
- Value cultural labour explicitly (compensate community knowledge, relational work, and consultation time).