

Equity Matters: A Snapshot of Canadian
Non-Profit Perspectives During the COVID-19 Era

Part Three: Black Respondents' Views

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Release 3: Black Respondents' Views

Background

During the month of April 2020, AgentsC designed and published a survey with the goal of understanding how people working in the Canadian non-profit sector, particularly within fundraising operations, have been impacted by the COVID-19 crisis.

The anonymous bilingual survey was taken by 131 non-profit employees and volunteers of diverse backgrounds across all levels of the Canadian non-profit industry. With the goal that these data will reflect the reality of our current times and support solutions for the sustainability of the non-profit sector, AgentsC is pleased to present the findings outlined in this third and final release of the series. As with the previous two releases on general findings and risk and business continuity during COVID-19, this latest instalment is available on AgentsC's website.¹ A separate Research Methodology Report explains the means by which the data was gathered.²

In this snapshot, we focus on the perspectives of Black employees and volunteers within Canadian non-profit organizations as data on their experiences are scarce. However, anecdotal stories told by Black non-profit employees and volunteers through the Our Right to Heal project point to a sector where many have experienced anti-Black racism within the context of broader systemic racial bias.³

The COVID-19 crisis has helped intensify the acknowledgement of anti-Black racism in institutions, such as the police force and well-known corporations. However, little is acknowledged about the racial inequities within the non-profit sector, especially in Canada. As an organization established on the principle of equity philanthropy, AgentsC felt it necessary to contribute to this important conversation by showing how Black non-profit employees and volunteers are affected by the COVID-19 crisis and explore what their views may indicate about equity in the Canadian non-profit landscape.

In April when AgentsC conducted this survey, we could not have foretold that the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis on May 25, 2020 would have sparked a global outcry against anti-Black racism. However, we did know from the outset that a survey of any kind in the Canadian non-profit sector must seek to capture the viewpoints of the country's increasing racially diverse population. It is important to note that this report reflects the viewpoints of Black respondents during COVID-19 and precede recent protests. If we were to conduct the research again, we

would possibly receive different answers and perhaps ask different questions pertaining to racial attitudes.

That being said, we are pleased to present data that points to unique Black voices within the Canadian non-profit sector, especially as so little is currently known about how Black professionals experience and support the growth of Canadian non-profits in general.

Introduction

This report is structured in three parts:

1. Demographic highlights of Black survey respondents;
2. Perspectives in fundraising among Black respondents;
3. Recommendations for the Canadian non-profit sector.

Black respondents made up 23% of our survey population, forming the second highest racial group after White respondents who comprised 56% (Graph 1). Females formed the vast majority (80%) of all Black respondents (Graph 2), who were also younger than their White counterparts (Graph 3). There was a fairly even representation within the defined sector and causes, ranging from education, hospitals, health foundations, children's services, and international development (Graph 4), with 87% of organizations predominantly headquartered in Southern Ontario (Graph 5).

Beyond the demographic differences among Black respondents, our data sheds light about the experience of Black non-profit employees and volunteers. We note, for example, there is greater proportion of Black non-profit employees in more junior roles—52% of them occupying roles below Director level, compared to 31% of White respondents (Graph 6).

For Black respondents, the greatest concerns during COVID-19 are for their own personal health and wellbeing, meeting their fundraising goals, and supporting program delivery within their organization (Graph 7). In the context of their personal concerns and attitudes towards continuing their role in the sector, 71% of Black respondents are determined to remain within the non-profit sector, with only 10% reporting a change of mind about their non-profit future (Graph 8). This indicates resilience and loyalty to the non-profit sector—Black respondents in the non-profit sector are determined to stay.

There are well-defined differences between organizations that Black and White peers work at when it comes to revenue generation. Black respondents tend to work in non-profit organizations with annual revenue of less than \$5 million (Graph 9). Moreover, Black employees report that they are less informed about the financial situation within their organizations, compared to their White peers. This is evident in Graph 9 that shows 10% of Black respondents are unaware of their organization's revenue amount, compared to 1% of their white peers who

answered in the same way. Additionally, when it comes to seeking government support during COVID-19, as many as 57% of Black respondents express that they will not or do not know if their organizations will apply for government support, compared to 57 % of White respondents who express that their organizations will apply for such support (Graph 11).

Generally speaking, Black respondents appear to be less pessimistic about their organizations reaching financial goals—10% of Black respondents believe their organizations will definitely not reach their goals compared to 25% among White peers (Graph 10). This may be because White peers tend to work in organizations with larger revenues.

Given the relative youth of Black employees within non-profit organizations, it is perhaps unsurprising that while Black respondents make up 23% of the survey sample, they represent 50% of respondents that have instated digital fundraising activities as a part of their COVID-19 response (Graph 12). This inference may account for why Black respondents report an almost threefold increase in online fundraising activity within their organization from 23% prior to COVID-19 to 67% during the pandemic (Graph 13).

In the following sections we provide more detailed insights into our findings. We conclude with a call for greater equity, visibility, and opportunity for Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) to be recognised as important leaders, employees and volunteers within the Canadian non-profit sector. Both the growing Black Lives Matter movement and the unethical, preferential treatment, including from the government, that favour predominantly white-led organizations⁴ point to a much-needed conversation about what equity means and how it may truly be achieved for all non-profit stakeholders, employees and volunteers, especially those currently marginalized on the basis of their race. We conclude this report with a set of recommendations that AgentsC believes are timely and worthy as a starting point as the sector seeks solutions.

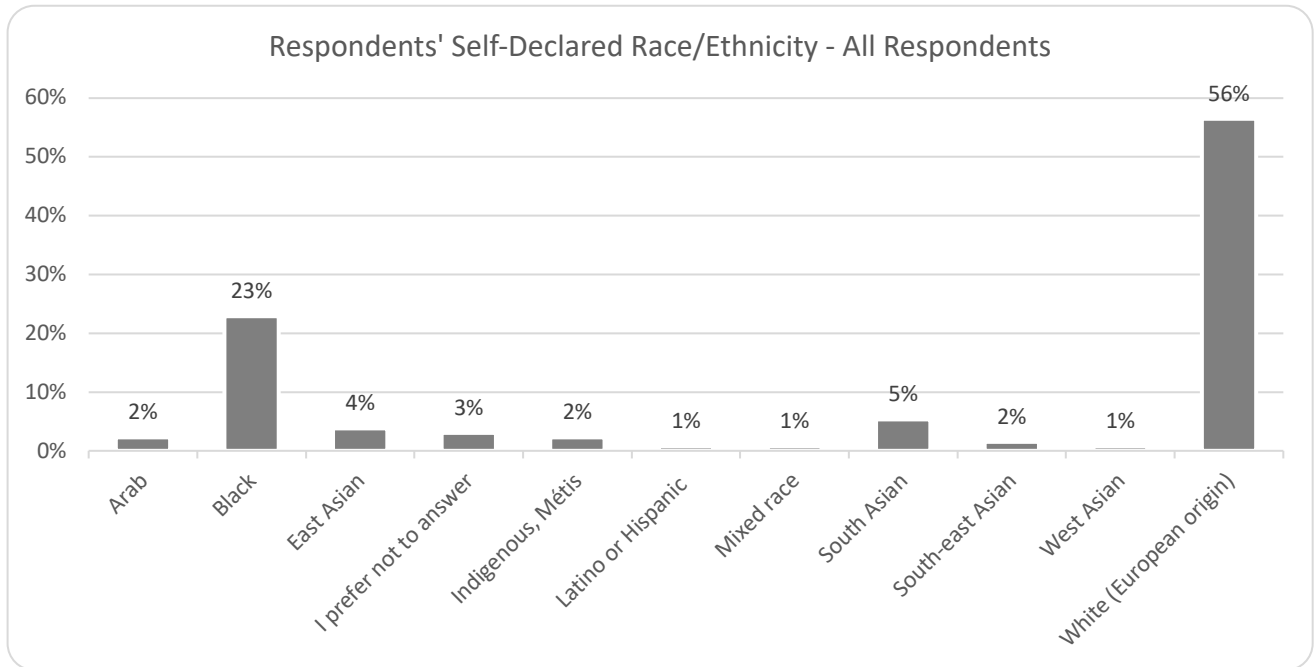


Findings

Section One: Demographic Profile and Professional Highlights of Black Survey Respondents

In this section, we focus on providing a demographic overview of the survey's Black respondents by analyzing demographic variables ranging from gender, age and position occupied. We explore differences in perceptions among Black and White respondents in terms of the financial welfare of their organizations in the following section. This helps to shed light on disparities in fundraising and revenue generation reported by Black and White respondents.

Graph 1: Respondents' Self-Declared Race/Ethnicity - All Respondents

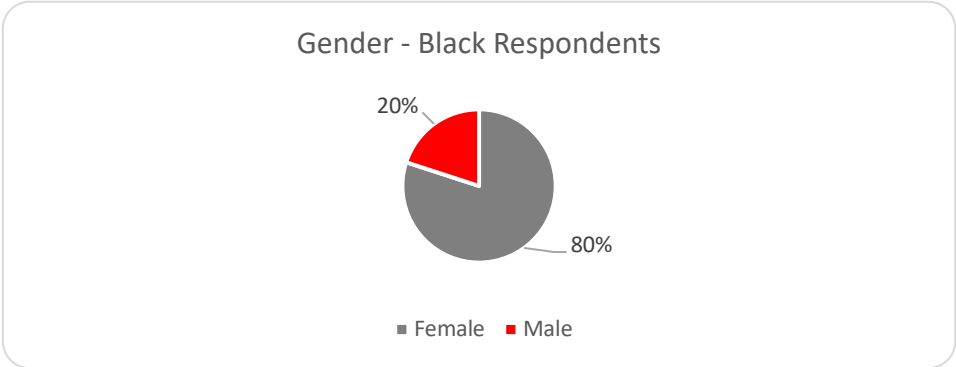


Graph 1 shows the racial and ethnic diversity of the surveyed population. And while AgentsC prioritized engaging such a diverse group, we only analyze responses from Black and White respondents in this release. We do this because the participation rates among groups that do not identify as either Black or White are not individually large enough to provide a robust basis of comparison.

Moreover, we do not wish to diminish the cultural and racial diversity of this remarkable group by consistently identifying them as the “non-” or the “Other” group – except for in graph 12, where a collective categorization is unavoidable. However, AgentsC remains committed to ensuring that the appropriate level of participation by all racial groups is met in future iterations so that the analysis may capture unique and important perspectives that reflect our society.



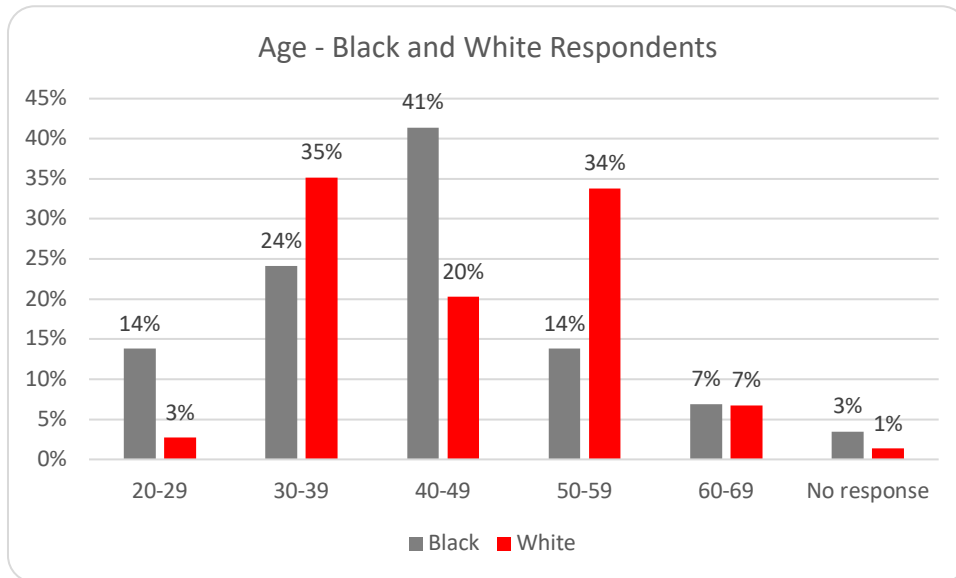
Graph 2: Gender - Black Respondents



Graph 2 shows the very high representation of Black female professionals in the gender breakdown. This is both an advantage and a drawback for a demographic analysis. It is a drawback because of the low percentage of Black males and the absence of those identifying as queer or neither gender. However, this predominant Black female representation provides us with the opportunity to build a more thorough profile of Black female professionals working in the non-profit industry.



Graph 3: Age - Black and White Respondents

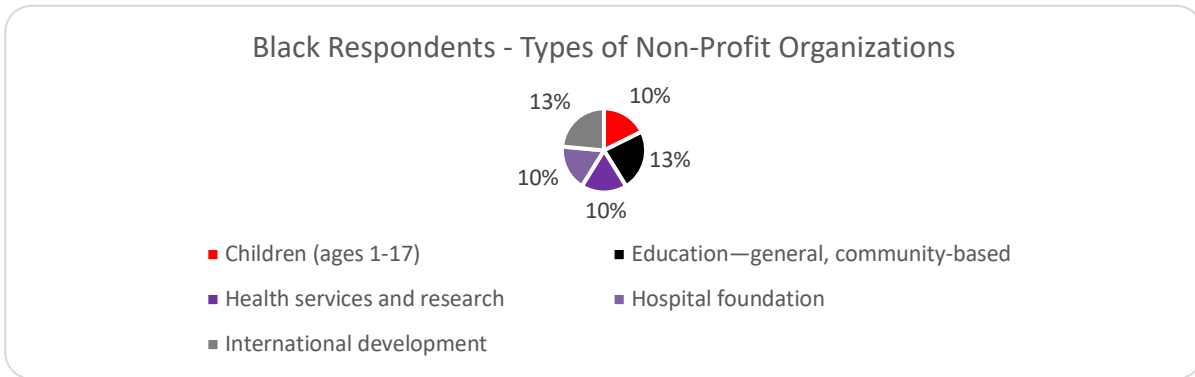


Graph 3 shows that 79% of Black respondents are under the age of 50; however, there are some striking differences in age distribution among Black and White peers.

- The percentage of respondents under 40 is essentially equal—38% for Black respondents and 38% for White respondents.
- Black respondents are very underrepresented in the age group over 50. Only 21% of Black respondents were over the age of 50, while the figure is double at 42% for White respondents.
- As such, while significant percentages of both racial groups tend to be between the ages of 30 and 50, Black respondents are much more likely to be under 50 and White respondents are more likely to be over 50.
- This likely has an influence on the seniority of positions occupied by members of these racial groups.

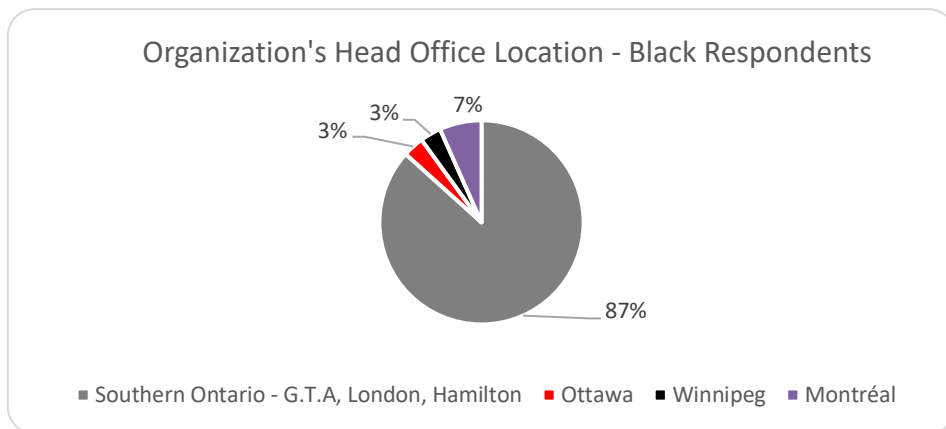


Graph 4: Types of Non-Profit Organizations - Black Respondents



Graph 4 shows the top five types of non-profit organizations where Black respondents work: children; health services and research; international development; education; and hospital foundation. These top five sectors alone account for 56% of all of the Black respondents. Yet, while these five are most reported sectors, we observe that there is fairly even distribution across the top five sectors that Black respondents are engaged in—two of these, education-general, community-based and international development both score 13%, while the others are close behind at 10%. Black respondents tend to be less represented in the arts, religion, culture and sports, as well as grant-making organizations.

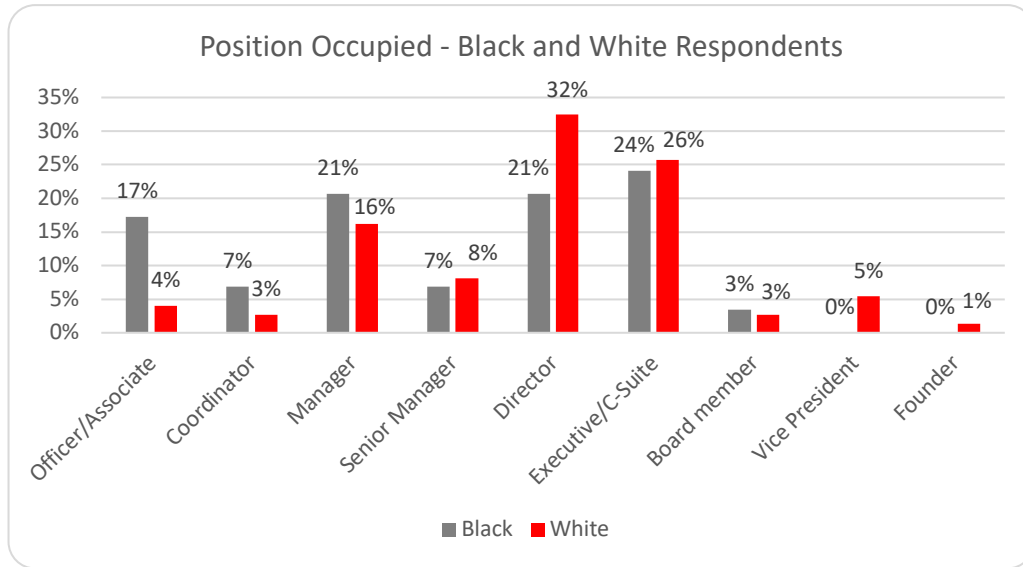
Graph 5: Geography - Black Respondents - Organization's Head Office Location



Graph 5 shows that the vast majority of Black respondents work in the Southern Ontario region—Greater Toronto area, London, and Hamilton. As the Black community across Canada and Quebec is highly diverse, speaking different languages and arriving from different host countries with distinct cultures, this overrepresentation of the Southern Ontario region is also an aspect that future AgentsC research will seek to address and improve upon.



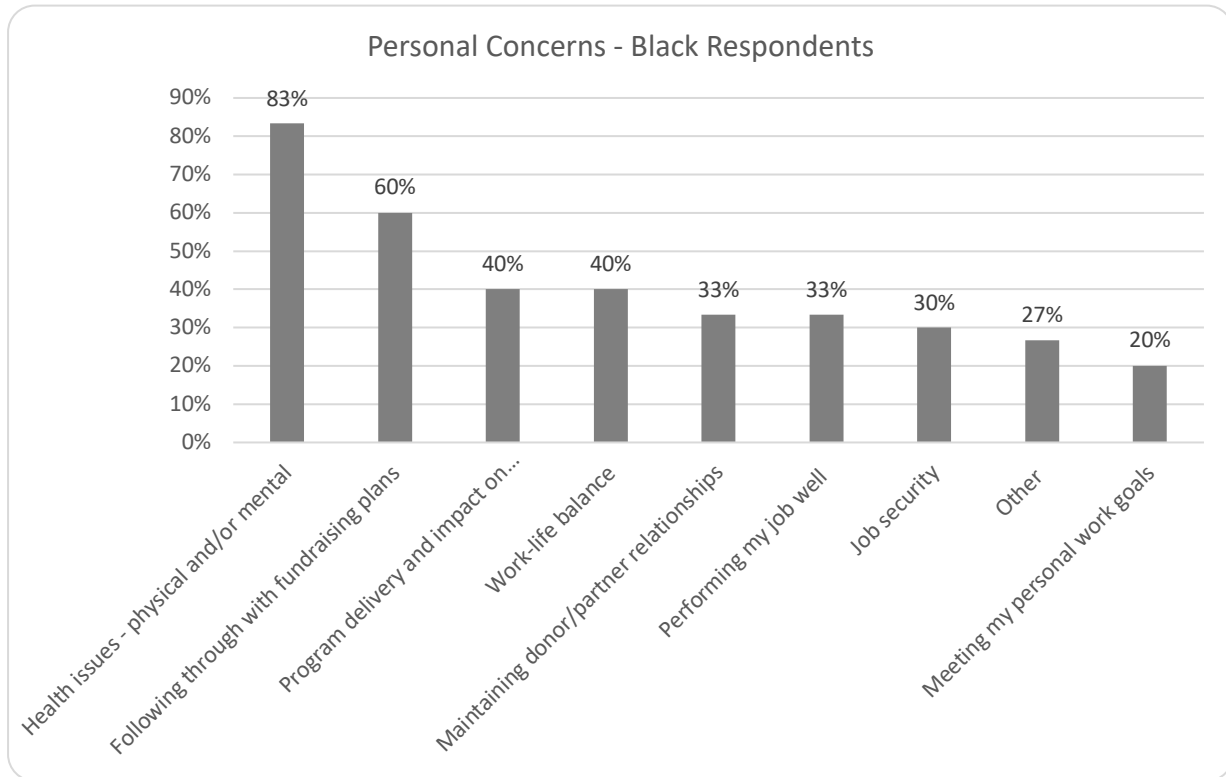
Graph 6: Position Occupied - Black and White Respondents



Graph 6 shows the distribution of positions occupied by Black and White respondents.

- Overall, we observe that respondents from both racial groups occupy managerial, directorial, or executive roles within their organization. However, the distribution of these roles within each racial group is not always equal. For instance, while the percentages of Black and White respondents occupying either manager or senior manager roles is almost equal (28% for Blacks, 24% for Whites), the percentages occupying leadership roles is not.
 - 45% of Black respondents occupy either director or executive roles, while the percentage rises to 58% for Whites and 64% if we include founder and vice-president roles.
- Moreover, Black respondents have much higher proportions of those working in officer and coordinator roles than White respondents—24% compared to 7%.
- Thus far, we have shown that Black respondents are more likely to be younger and more likely to occupy entry- to mid-level roles than their White peers. These observations may likely be linked with the lower average age for Black respondents in the survey.
- Notwithstanding, the significantly lower representation of Black people in leadership roles within a sector that serves the general population and underserved communities is a point for reflection and remedial action.

Graph 7: Personal Concerns - Black Respondents



Graph 7 shows responses from Black respondents to the question: what are your top 3 personal concerns? As such, each respondent was allowed three choices, which were made in no particular order.

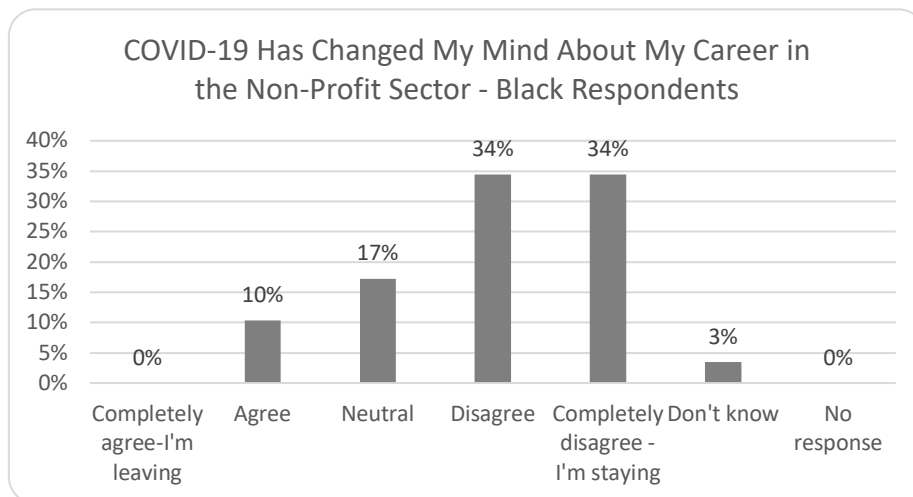
- 83% (or approximately 8 of 10) of all black respondents cited health issues—physical and/or mental—as a concern.
- The second most widely-cited concern was following through with fundraising plans, which was separated by 23 percentage points from the number 1 cited concern—health issues.
- The other concerns, also separated by a significant margin from the number cited concern (20 percentage points), are program delivery and work-life balance (40% each).

During a pandemic, concern for physical and mental health is understandably a priority issue for all people. The high rate of reported concern by Black respondents is significant for a number of reasons:



1. Anecdotally, we know that Black respondents prior to COVID-19 reported experiences of job insecurity and racism in the non-profit sector, and that the pandemic may likely exacerbate such feelings;
2. As previously mentioned, minimal research data exists in relation to the overall perceptions and experiences of Black people in the non-profit sector. As such, there is an element of invisibility experienced by the very visible role of Black people in the sector. Such invisibility is played out in the minimizing of Black people’s contribution to the sector in general, as well as barriers to equity that they have historically reported. Dealing with racism and exclusion clearly has implications for one’s mental, and inevitably, physical health;
3. A future study exploring how Black employees and volunteers navigate exclusion and health concerns and secure their own personal welfare as non-profit organization stakeholders would offer great insight into this unknown area.

Graph 8: COVID-19 has changed my mind about my career in the non-profit sector - Black respondents



Graph 8 shows responses to the question: has the COVID-19 crisis changed your mind about your career in the non-profit sector?

- The vast majority of Black respondents are committed to staying, in spite of the difficulties that the outbreak of COVID-19 has imposed.
- Only 10% of respondents agreed that COVID-19 had changed their mind about their careers in the NGO sector and 0% chose “completely agree.”
- 68% were committed to staying and 17% were neutral.



Figure 1: Words of Our Time

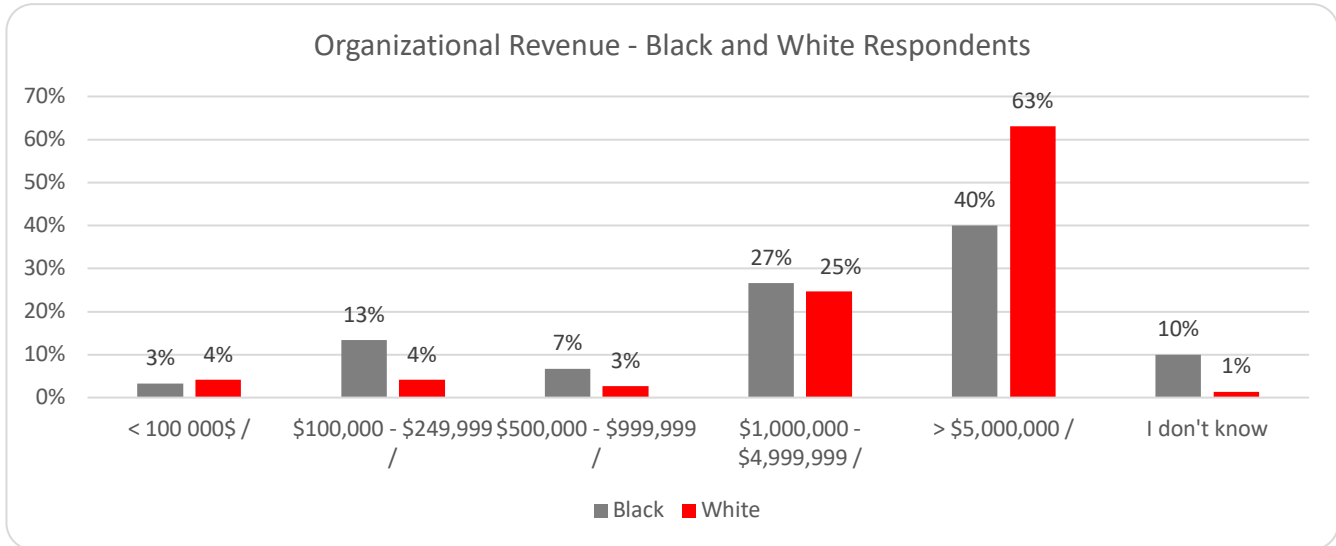
We asked survey respondents to list three words that best describe their perception of the COVID-19 pandemic in relation to work. The word cloud below shows "resilient" as the word most used by Black respondents to reflect their current mood. Words such as innovation, growth, hope, opportunity, and adaptability were tempered by many Black respondents also feeling "uncertain" during our current time.





Section Two: Differences in Fundraising Between Black and White Respondents

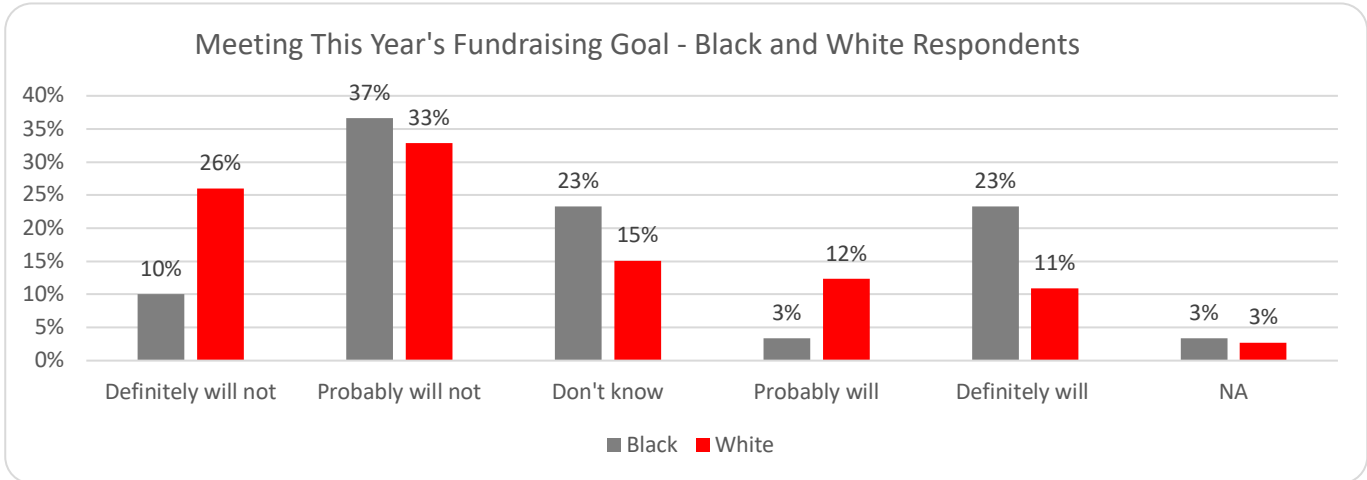
Graph 9: Organizational Revenue - Black and White Respondents



Graph 9 shows the distribution of Black and White respondents according to their organization’s yearly revenue.

- The tendency of both racial groups appears to be towards the higher end of the revenue spectrum, with the majority of both groups working for and directing organizations with yearly revenues of over \$1,000,000.
- While the majority of Black respondents do indeed work for organizations with yearly revenues of over \$1,000,000 (67%), the percentage is substantially higher amongst White respondents (88%)—nearly 9 in 10 White respondents work for organizations with yearly revenues of over \$1,000,000.
- Black respondents show much higher percentages of working for organizations whose revenues are less than \$1,000,000—23%, compared to 11% for White respondents.
- Another notable difference is that 10% of Black respondents did not know their organization’s yearly revenue compared to 1% of White respondents.

Graph 10: Meeting This Year's Fundraising Goal - Black and White Respondents

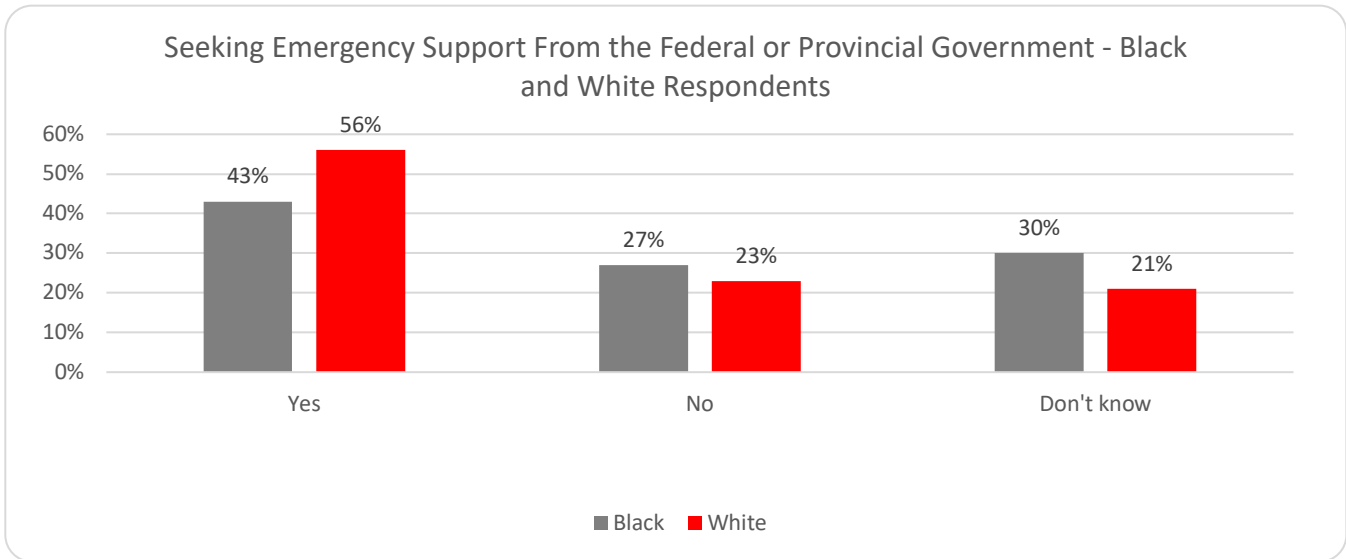


Graph 10 presents Black and White respondents' answers to the question of whether or not they expect their organization to meet its fundraising goals for the current year.

- Overall, White respondents are more pessimistic as to whether their current organization will meet its goals: 59% said either definitely will not or probably will not, whereas 47% of Black respondents had this view.
- 29% of Black respondents said that they expected their organization to meet its current goals, whereas 23% of White respondents said the same.
- Black respondents appeared to be less informed than their White peers in relation to whether their organization will meet their current fundraising goal—23% compared to 15%. This finding points to Graph 9 where Black respondents were 10 times more likely to be unaware of their organization's current revenue. When placed together, these findings indicate that there is a disparity between how well Black respondents feel informed about funding issues within their organization. Black people who occupy more junior roles, may be less informed in the conversations about organizational finance than their White colleagues who may be more included and occupy more senior roles.
- Additionally, this disparity could relate to the day-to-day roles of Black employees and volunteers being far removed from internal forums where budget and finance discussions are held. Either way, it is important for all non-profit organizations to keep all employees informed of the financial wellbeing of their organization, and also, for all employees to be in a position to know how well their organisations are performing in relation to financial goals.



Graph 11: Seeking Emergency Support From the Federal or Provincial Government - Black and White Respondents



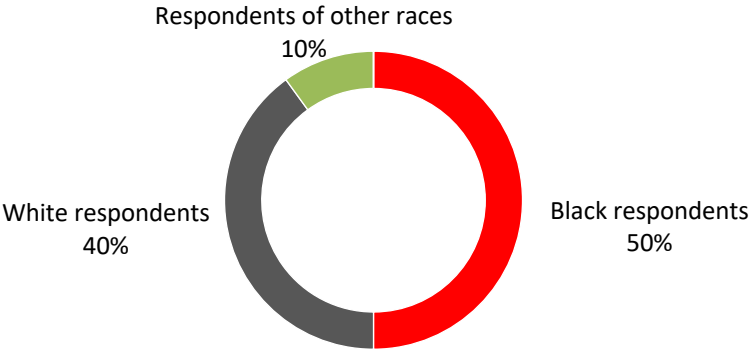
Graph 11 shows both group's responses to whether their organization plans to seek emergency financial support from the federal or provincial governments.

- Black respondents reported that their organizations were less likely to seek such aid— 43% compared to 56% of White respondents who said that their organization was seeking government support.
- Almost equal percentages of Black and White respondents indicated that their organizations were not planning on engaging government support.
- There was a higher percentage of those who responded with “I don’t know” to this question amongst Black respondents, similar to Graph 9 [Organizational Revenue]—23% for Black respondents compared to 15% for White respondents.



Graph 12: Black Respondents and Digital Fundraising

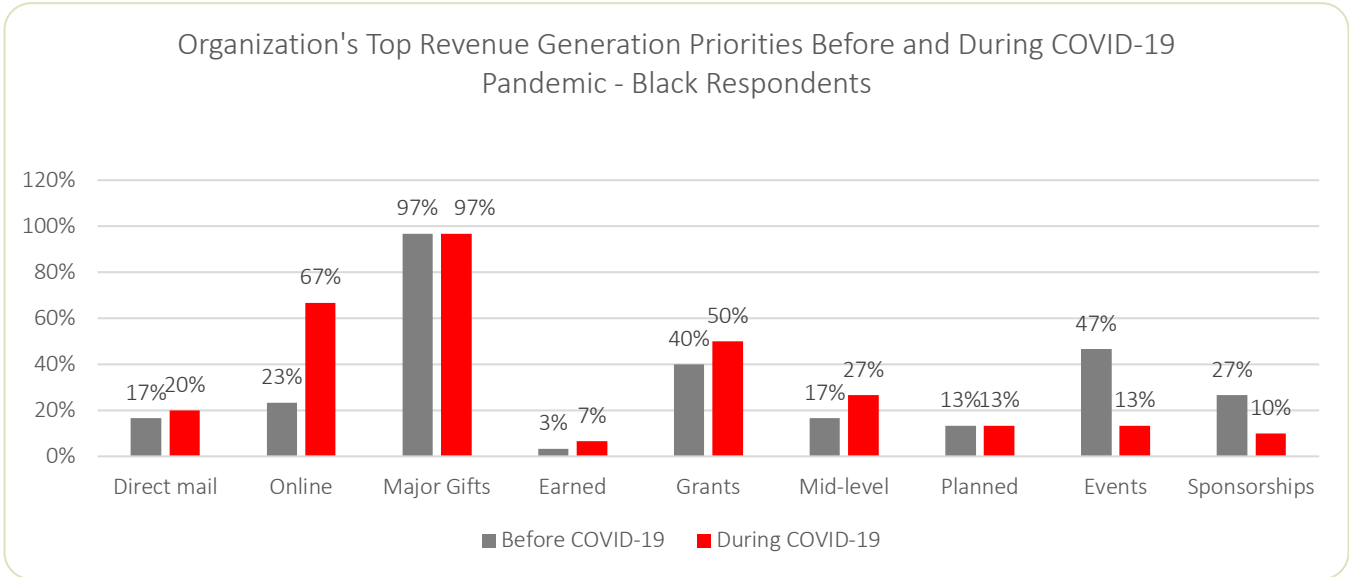
Black Respondents and Instating Digital Fundraising During COVID-19



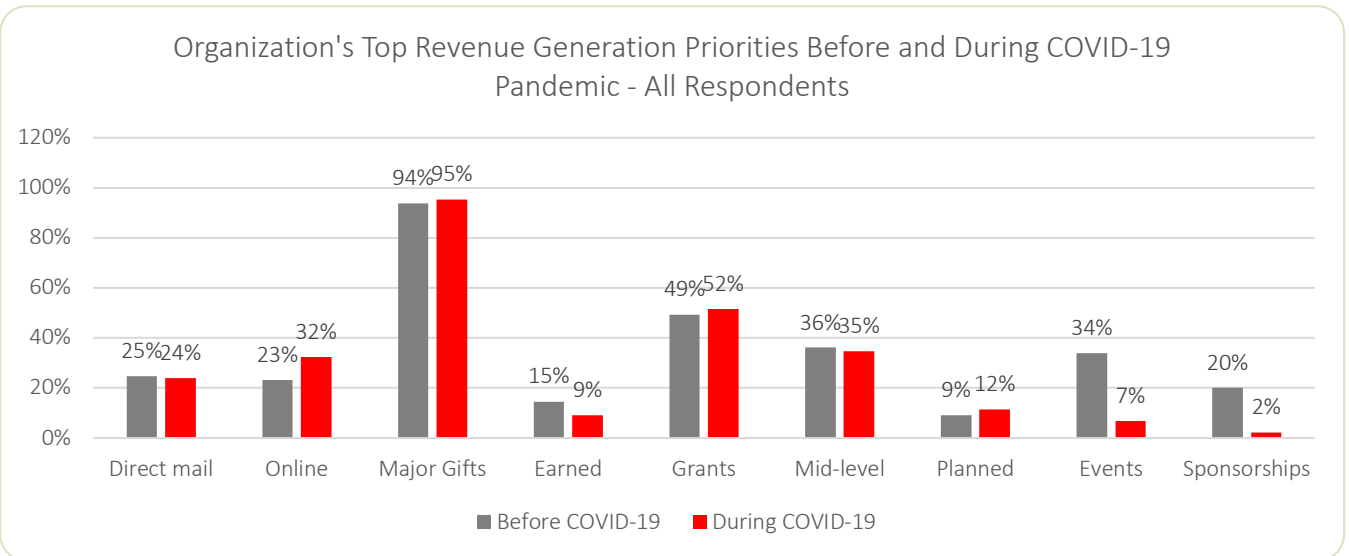
- While Black respondents made up 23% of the survey sample, they represented 50% of respondents that have instated digital fundraising activities as a part of their COVID-19 response. As such, there appears to be higher rates of digital adoption among Black non-profit fundraisers, certainly since the onset of COVID-19.
- Further research is required to better understand how Black employees and volunteers use digital platforms to fundraise and what the unique experiences they possess may add to the sector’s understanding of digital fundraising trends.



Graph 13A: Organization's Top Revenue Generation Priorities Before and During COVID-19 Pandemic - Black Respondents



Graph 13B: Organization's Top Revenue Generation Priorities Before and During COVID-19 Pandemic - All Respondents



- Graph 13A shows a common thread in the dramatic increase in online giving and decreases in events and sponsorship activity. Before COVID-19, online giving is a major source of revenue for almost one in four Black respondents, compared to during, where almost 3 in 4 Black respondents indicate that their organizations are employing online funding. This change represents a 191% increase.
- There were decreases in event and sponsorships, both of which went from occupying a fairly significant percentage of overall Black respondents, to a relatively small one: 47% prior to COVID-19 and 13% during for events and 27% prior and 10% during for sponsorships
- Direct mail, major gifts, earned revenue, and planned giving either did not change at all, or barely changed.
- We also see a dramatic increase in the prioritization of grant revenue from 40% to 50% among Black respondents – significantly higher than that reported by all races.
- Graph 13B is borrowed from AgentsC’s initial COVID-19 survey report, *We’re In This Together*, published in May 2020. The graph looks at the general responses to the question about revenue generation priorities before and during COVID-19. Compared side by side, we observe major differences in some areas of fundraising. Most glaring of which is the incredible increase, as noted before, in digital fundraising among Black respondents.
- Among Black respondents, sponsorships appear to remain steadier, with a decline from 27% to 20% contrasted with a decline of 10% to 2% among fundraisers of all races.
- There appears to be an increase in earned revenue among Black fundraisers, more than doubling as a priority from 3% to 7% before and during COVID-19 respectively. However, all other participants saw a more significant decline starting from 15% to 9% for all other participants.

Recommendations

As we conclude our third and final series of COVID-19 non-profit research, discussions about systemic anti-Black racism are stirring within the non-profit sector. Corporations large and small have seized on the opportunity to display their support for equity. It is our observation, however, that at this time, the Canadian non-profit sector remains slow to establish concrete measures of change. As such, our concluding remarks are more a call to action within the Canadian non-profit sector to accelerate a positive response that tackles the exclusion of Black people, Indigenous people, and all People of Colour.

AgentsC recommends these four critical starting points which form actionable and measurable responses to building important equity-based solutions:

1. Strengthening the competencies and representation of boards of governance;
2. Establishing best practices for culturally-appropriate communications and marketing standards;
3. Implementing fair and transparent recruitment and retention measures;
4. Achieving proportionate philanthropy and funding directed at societal priorities.

In support of this agenda and others that are important to an equity action plan, AgentsC will facilitate the Equity Summit to include a cross section of Canada's non-profit stakeholders in driving important areas of change. The first summit meeting will be held on July 30, 2020.

¹ [AgentsC Reports COVID-19 Series](#)

² [Research Methodology](#)

³ [Our Right to Heal](#)

⁴ In recent months, the non-profit sector has had reason to question the process for how government chooses its trusted partners. We note that in the awarding a \$900 million Student Grant Program to WE Charity, the absence of an equitable and transparent process for selection disadvantages the sector and intended recipients of the grant. Furthermore, recent [reports](#) about systemic anti-Black racism within WE has drawn further questions about how such trusted partners can knowingly perpetuate practices of discrimination and oppression against Black people and all people of colour while also commanding the respect and support of funders.