



Diversity and Inclusion in Canada's Marketing Sector

CMA Research Findings 2021

Table of Contents

Introduction and Context	3
Key Conclusions	3
A diversified C-suite is likely to lead to less discrimination and stronger feelings of inclusion amongst employees.....	3
There is a significant difference in how men vs. women, and minorities vs. non-minorities, notice and experience discrimination.	4
Diversity and inclusion are good for business and should be viewed as a strategy, not a program	4
Key Findings	4
Marketers universally believe that diversity and inclusion benefit everyone and that a diverse workforce is a business growth opportunity	4
Most organizations are making efforts to diversify and have been for some time.....	5
Many – especially minorities – have noticed others being less engaged due to discrimination	5
Detailed Survey Results	6
How committed are organizations to achieving diversity?	6
How inclusive are marketing organizations?	7
What are the benefits of diversity and inclusion?.....	9
Why do organizations struggle to attain full diversity and inclusion?	9
What steps can organizations take to improve diversity?	10
Who or what is driving organizational change?.....	11
How can organizations encourage participation from those who are reluctant to speak?.....	11
Are marketers willing to share demographic information to measure and improve diversity? ..	14
Are women and minorities in senior roles?	14
Do older marketers experience ageism?	15
Methodology	16
Demographics of Survey Participants	16
Characteristics of Companies Whose Employees Participated in the Survey	18
About the Canadian Marketing Association	19
About Research+Knowledge=Insight	19

Introduction and Context

The Canadian Marketing Association (CMA), Ad Standards Canada and nabs conducted a survey on diversity and inclusion in the marketing sector over a six-week period ending in late January 2021.

The survey was undertaken to act on a commitment made by the CMA in the spring of 2020 to take steps to combat racism and other types of discrimination in the marketing profession.

In particular, the purpose of the survey was:

- To understand the current landscape of diversity and inclusion in the Canadian marketing sector, including why people from BIPOC and other marginalized groups are not better represented in the marketing profession, and
- To identify gaps and barriers within the marketing community so that we could raise awareness and identify meaningful solutions to reduce barriers and create safe, inclusive spaces for all.

A significant percentage of the survey participants are C-suite executives (23%) or senior executive management (29%). Therefore, the findings represent the views of decision-makers who have the authority to trigger change. By putting the survey results in their hands, we hope to accelerate that process.

The CMA is grateful for the expertise and insight of our Working Group on Marketing Talent for their assistance in developing the survey questions and interpreting the results.

We would like to acknowledge the support of our distribution partners – Ad Standards Canada and nabs – whose role in deploying the survey helped us reach a wider audience.

Lastly, thanks goes to RKI – the highly regarded research firm that designed and administered the survey to ensure its integrity and independence.

Key Conclusions

An analysis of the survey findings, outlined in subsequent sections of this report, has led the CMA to the following conclusions:

A diversified C-suite is likely to lead to less discrimination and stronger feelings of inclusion among employees

Companies should, where possible, actively seek to diversify their leadership ranks in order to inspire employee confidence, safety and well-being, which includes appointing a diversity lead as a senior-level position. Companies should note that a perceived lack of skilled diverse talent reflects systemic inequalities in recruitment, hiring and retention practices and is not an accurate indicator of the availability or qualifications of marketers representing diverse backgrounds.

There is a significant difference in how men vs. women, and minorities vs. non-minorities, notice and experience discrimination.

In many areas there is a significant disparity between non-minorities and minorities, and between men and women, when it comes to both seeing and experiencing discrimination. Workplaces should close this gap by facilitating ally training in bystander awareness and recognizing unconscious bias as well as setting rules for meetings that ensure diverse perspectives and voices are encouraged, heard and valued.

Diversity and inclusion are good for business and should be viewed as a strategy, not a program

Clients and customers want to support and work with companies that represent the diversity of Canada. A variety of perspectives and experiences lead to stronger results, better collaboration and more innovation and creativity. Organizations need to treat diversity and inclusion not as a program, but as a foundational pillar with accountability frameworks and measurement.

Key Findings

The research uncovered a multitude of insights that are detailed in a later section. The main themes are captured here:

Marketers universally believe that diversity and inclusion benefit everyone and that a diverse workforce is a business growth opportunity

Nearly all respondents (97%) indicate that diversity and inclusion benefit everyone and that they show that the workplace is aligned with people and with the community. In addition, 94% agree that a diverse workforce is a business growth opportunity. The top cited benefits of a fully inclusive workforce are, in order: Higher employee morale and loyalty, more innovation and creativity, better understanding of clients and customers, and improved collaboration.

When it comes to workplaces making employees feel included, 75% of respondents overall state that their organization is either excellent or very good. However, when segmented by demographic, this measure rises to 92% for non-minority men compared to 63% for minority women. Inclusion is also rated higher by respondents at companies with well-diversified senior leadership, with 91% stating that their organizations are excellent or very good at making employees feel included.

Disparities also exist with regard to how respondents view leadership's commitment to diversity and inclusion. For example, a full 100% of non-minority men believe their organizations will take appropriate action in response to discrimination incidents, compared to 75% of minority women, and 93% of non-minority men believe that members of upper management personally believe in diversity, compared to 80% of minority women. And, while 82% of minority women feel that perspectives like theirs are included in decision making, the figure rises to 95% when asked of non-minority men.

Most organizations are making efforts to diversify and have been for some time

Diversity remains elusive at the senior leadership level, with just 23% of respondents describing this group as well-diversified. The survey shows that 85% of respondents feel that their companies are making at least some effort to diversify their leadership, with 88% of these saying that their organizations have been making these attempts for several years. Lack of skilled diverse talent (32%) was cited as the top barrier to diversity, followed by organizations being unsure of where to start (22%).

Nearly all (96%) note that their organizations are taking at least one step to improve diversity, with the following being the top actions:

- Hiring new talent from diverse communities (47%)
- Creating diversity and inclusivity committees, taskforces, networks and/or affinity groups (43%)
- Developing formal diversity and inclusion training and management programs (40%)

For those few organizations who are not making efforts to diversify, the overwhelming majority (88%) feel that these efforts are not needed either because the company hires based on ability (regardless of skin colour, ethnicity, gender, sexual preference, etc.) or because the organization is simply not racist, sexist or discriminatory.

Many – especially minorities – have noticed others being less engaged due to discrimination

Nearly two thirds (63%) of respondents indicate that they have noticed others being less engaged due to institutional, interpersonal, structural and/or internalized systems of discrimination. However, this figure falls to 49% for non-minorities compared to 77% for members of minority groups. Similarly, while just 11% of non-minority men have seen staff from diverse backgrounds being talked down to in meetings, 50% of minority men have witnessed this behaviour. In addition, a significant number of respondents have heard racial, ethnic and gender-based jokes being made at work (43% total, and 54% of minorities).

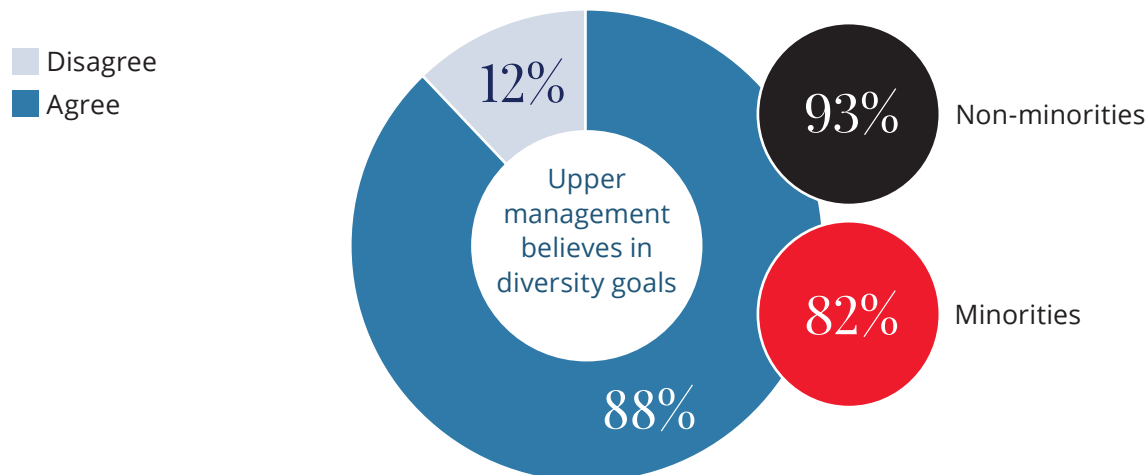
While 91% of total respondents feel welcome at work and that they belong, this figure drops to 80% when asked of minority women. When asked about their personal experiences with discrimination, 41% of respondents overall reported feeling less engaged due to the reasons above. Again, this figure falls to 33% for non-minorities (and just 17% for non-minority men), compared to 53% for minorities. However, just 28% of respondents from companies with well-diversified leadership report feeling less engaged due to discrimination, compared to a full 50% at organizations that are not diversified at the senior leadership level.

While 90% of respondents report seeing women in leadership roles in their organizations and 54% say that their companies have a senior-level role dedicated to diversity, there are barriers to growth for many ethnic, cultural and racial minorities. More than half (52%) note that members of BIPOC communities do not rise to the most senior positions, and 60% feel that Canadian experience is preferred in their workplace.

Detailed Survey Results

How committed are organizations to achieving diversity?

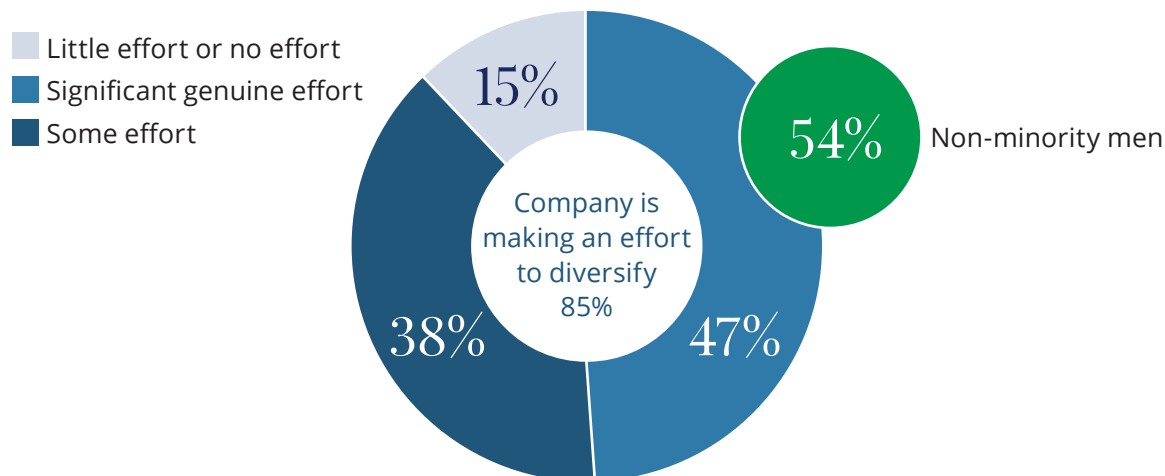
The vast majority of marketers (88%) believe that upper management personally believes in diversity. This view is most strongly held by non-minorities (93%).



A total of 85% of marketers believe their companies are making a significant genuine effort (47%) or some effort (38%) to diversify.

Companies with a more developed diverse senior leadership are more likely (67%) to be seen as making a significant genuine effort. In contrast, only 17% of companies where leadership is not diverse are seen to be making significant genuine effort.

Non-minority men are more likely (54%) than minority women (38%) to see their companies making a significant genuine effort to diversify.



Only 3% of those surveyed indicated that their organization was not making any attempts to diversify.

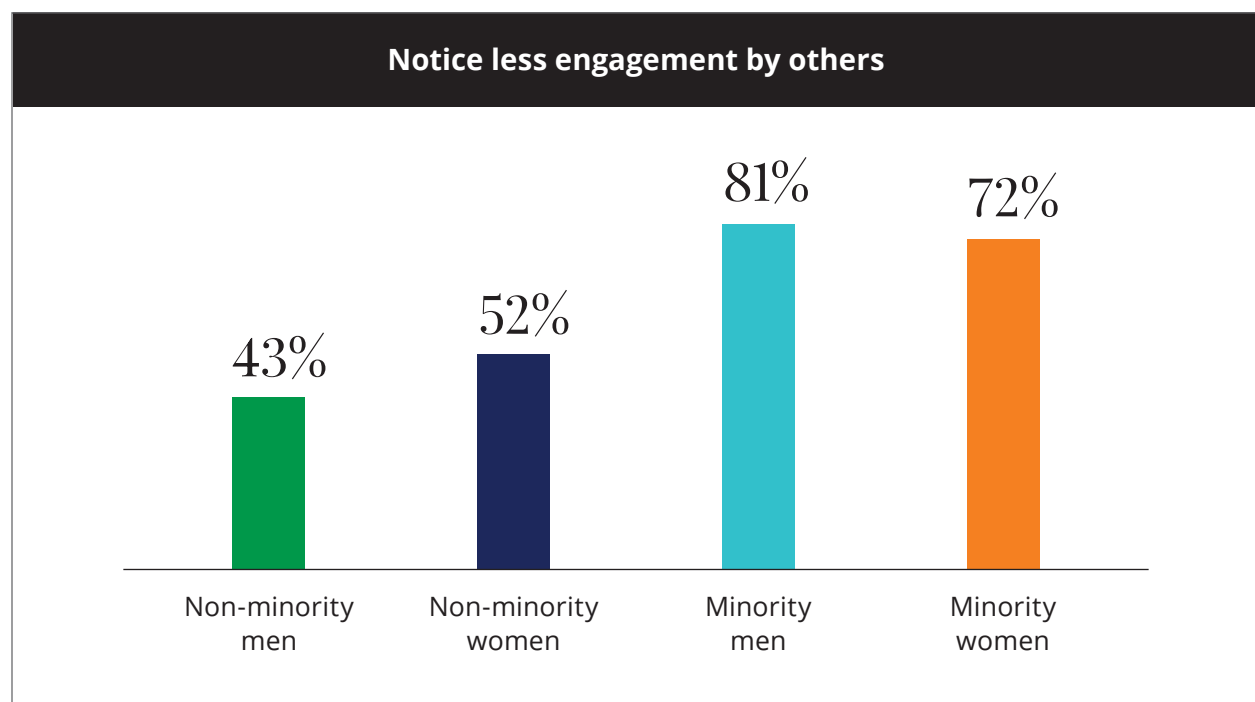
How inclusive are marketing organizations?

Sixty-three per cent of marketers have noticed others being less engaged due to either institutional, interpersonal, structural and/or internalized systems of discrimination. Those being less engaged could come from a variety of backgrounds or communities, including women, people with different cultural or ethnic backgrounds, those with a physical or mental health challenge/neurodiverse, new Canadians, members of the LGBTQ2S+ community, and those who are under 30 or over 55.

Those most likely to notice this lower engagement are most likely:

- People who have personally experienced discrimination (89%), compared to 44% who have not
- Minorities (77%), as compared to non-minorities (49%)
- Millennials (78%) as compared to GenXers (58%) and Boomers (36%)

Non-minority men are least likely (43%) to notice others being less engaged, compared to minority men (81%).



Engagement is
twice as high
at companies
with diverse
leadership

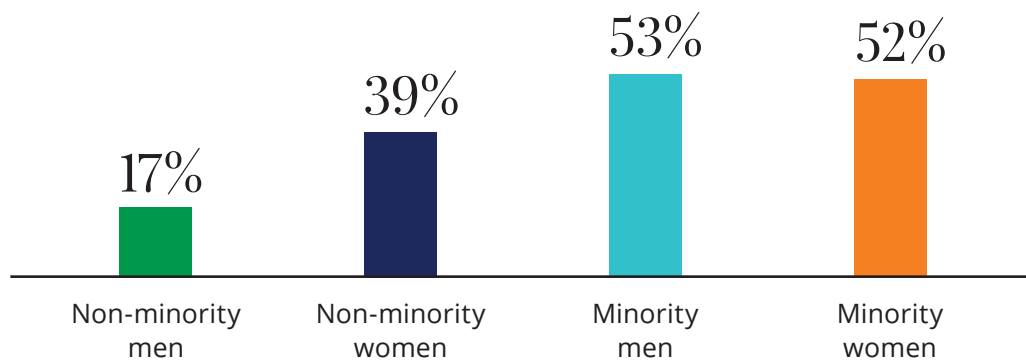
When asked how often they are personally less engaged at work due to either institutional, interpersonal, structural and/or internalized systems of discrimination, 41% of marketers reported being less engaged.

Being less engaged at work for these reasons was more likely to occur in the case of minorities (53%) compared to non-minorities (33%), with non-minority men being the least likely (17%) to have experienced this, compared to minority men (53%).

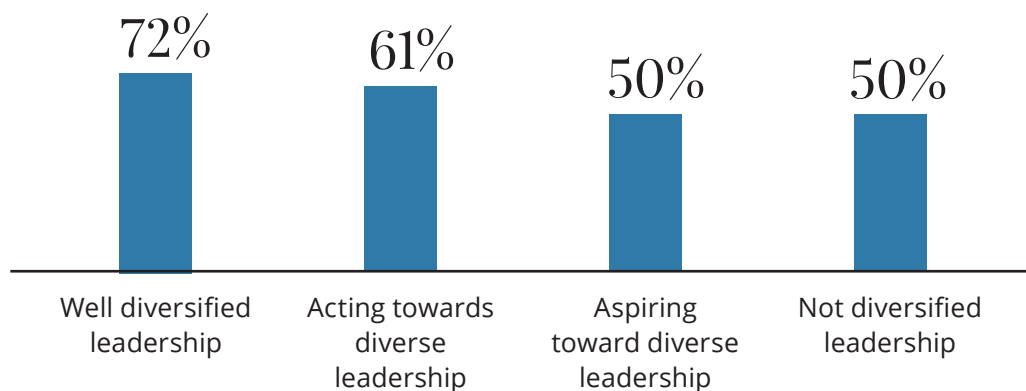
Generationally, the percentage of individuals being less engaged is higher for Millennials (53%), compared to GenXers (38%) and Boomers (23%).

Individuals at companies with highly diversified leadership are the most likely (72%) to be engaged at work.

Personally less engaged at least sometimes due to systems of discrimination



More employee engagement in companies with diverse leadership



What are the benefits of diversity and inclusion?

There is near universal agreement for each of the following:

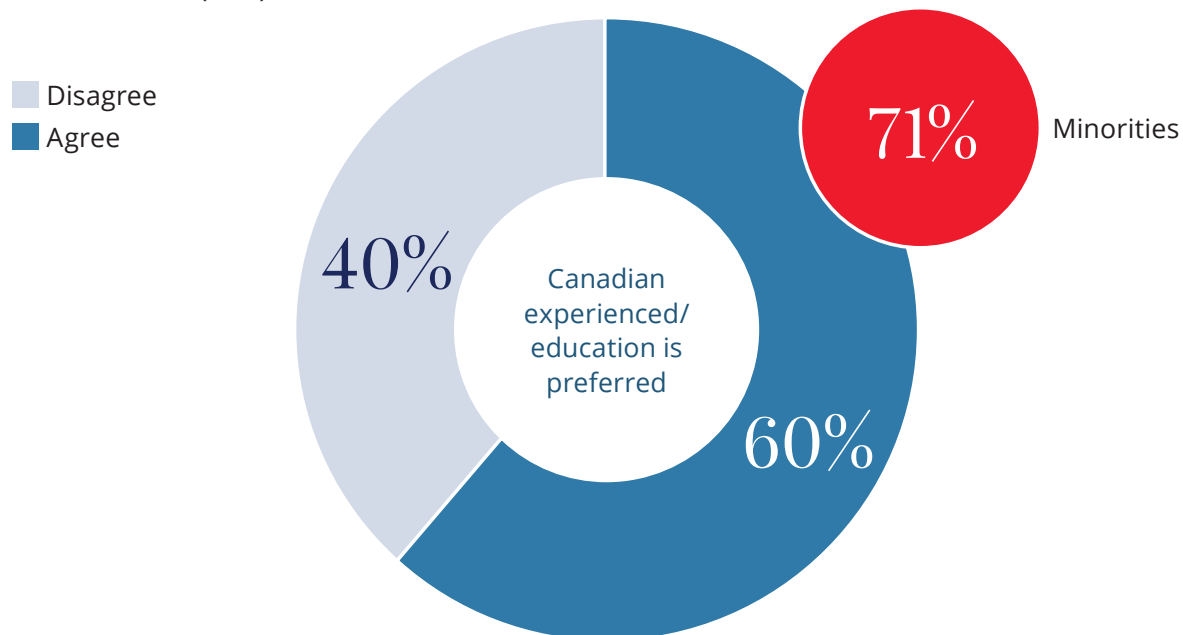
- Inclusivity benefits everyone, not just people from diverse backgrounds.
- Inclusivity and diversity in the workplace show that we are aligned with people and community.
- I see a diverse workforce as a business growth opportunity.

Fit with the organization is more important to those with well diversified senior leadership (75%) compared to 57% where leadership is not diverse, where the employees are more likely to describe fit as an excuse that managers use to hire someone like them.

Why do organizations struggle to attain full diversity and inclusion?

A full 85% of marketers believe that organizations face obstacles to diversification. While no particular obstacle is highly prevalent, the two mentioned most often are a perception (32%) that there is lack of skilled diverse talent, and being unsure where to start (22%).

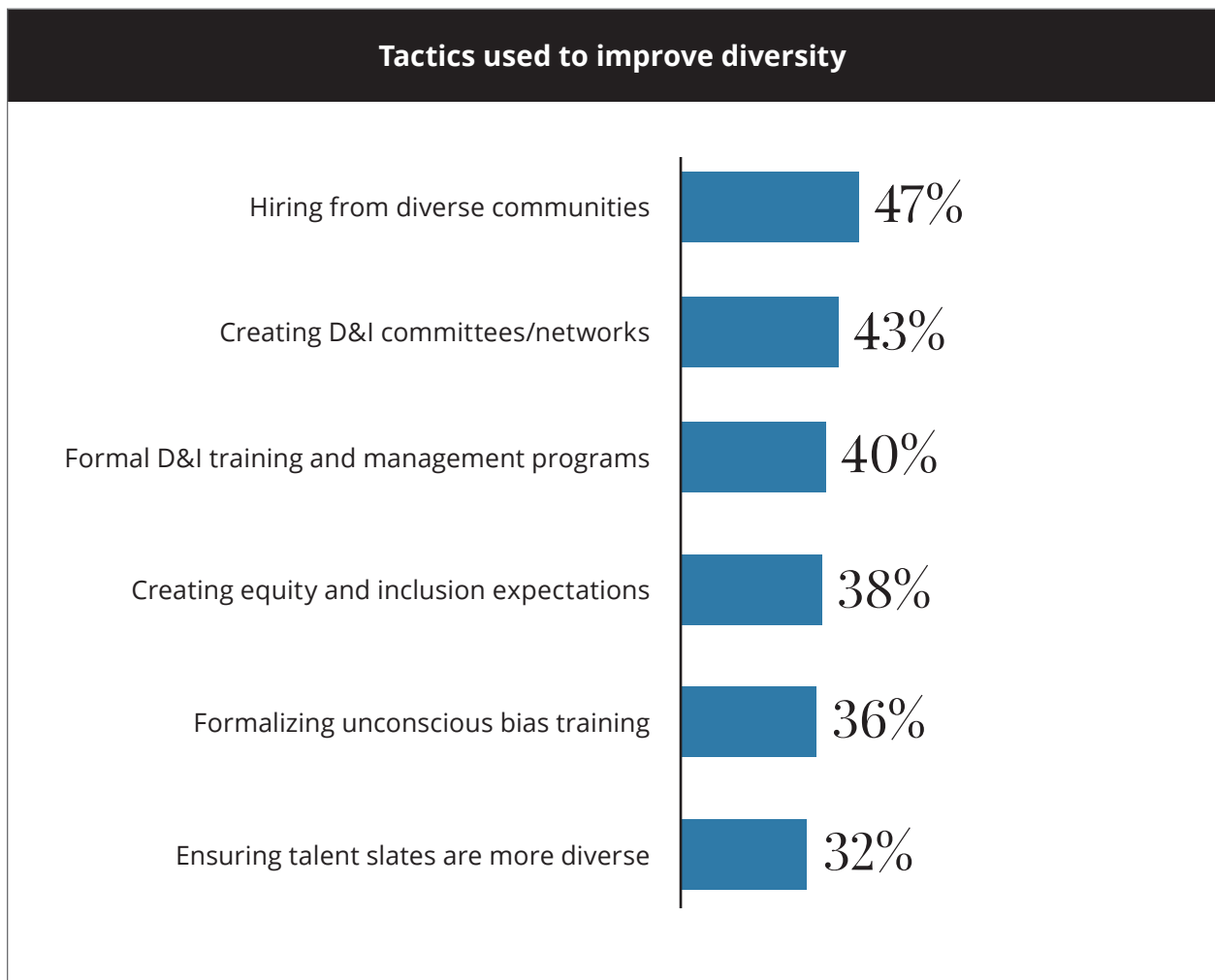
A small majority of marketers (60%) agree their organizations prefer Canadian experience/ education. This perception is held most strongly among minorities (71%), as compared to non-minorities (52%).



What steps can organizations take to improve diversity?

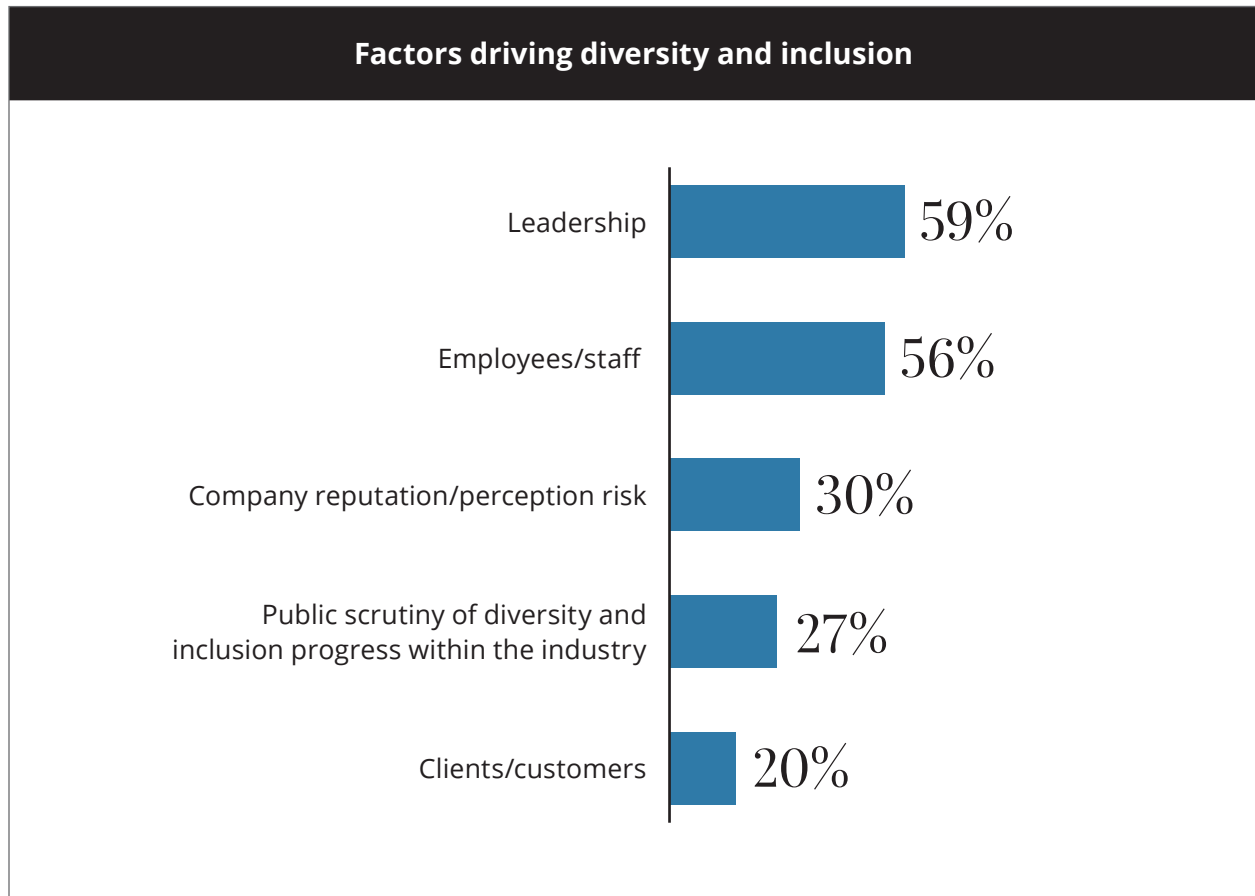
Almost all marketers indicate that their organizations have made efforts to improve diversity. The most common tactics they have used are:

- Hiring talent from diverse communities
- Creating diversity and inclusivity committees, networks and affinity groups
- Formal diversity and inclusivity training and management programs



Who or what is driving organizational change?

Diversity and inclusion are primarily driven by leadership, followed by employees/staff. Leadership is more likely to be driving the conversation in organizations with the most developed diverse senior leadership (69%-75%) as compared to 30% in companies where leadership is not diverse. The drive for change is higher in large companies (71%) compared to smaller companies (57%).



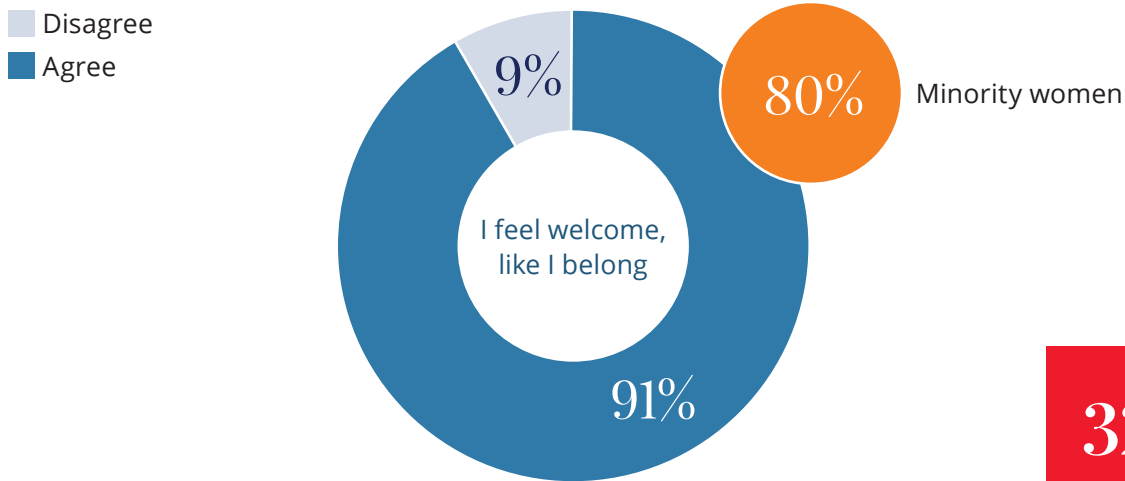
How can organizations encourage participation from those who are reluctant to speak?

The top three ways to ensure participation from all are:

- Prevent anyone from dominating or derailing the discussion
- Ensure each meeting includes people representing diverse or dissenting points of view
- Follow up after the meeting, thank participants for attending and ask for their feedback

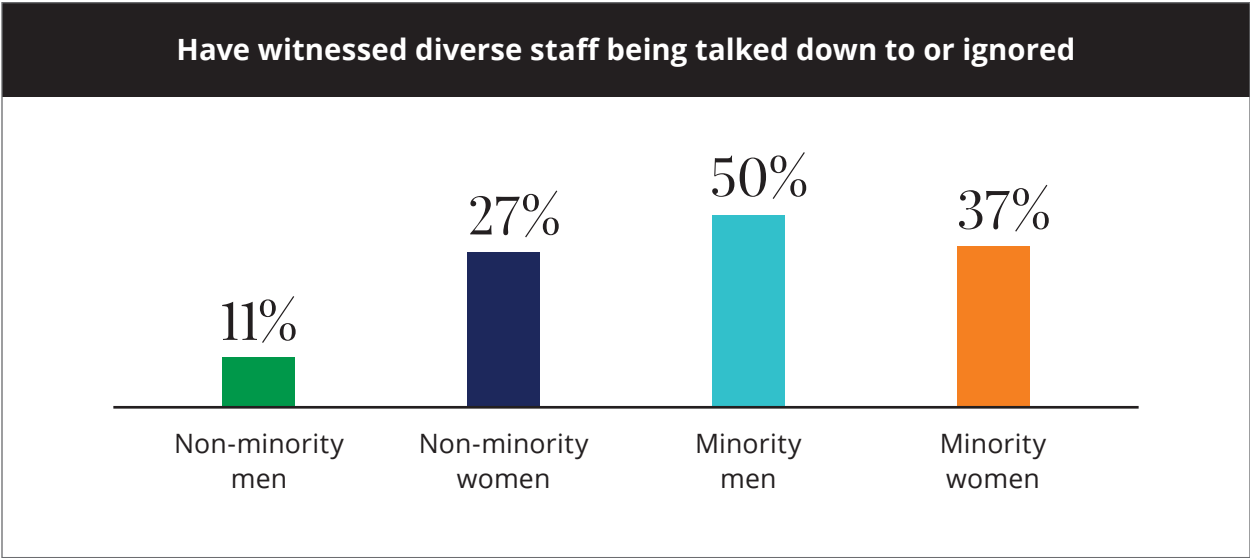
The response “Greet each meeting participant warmly, by name, so everyone feels welcome” is the #1 answer for non-minority men, while overall it is the lowest rated (59% vs 40% overall and 34% for minority women.)

The vast majority of marketers (91%) feel welcome at work. This is especially true of non-minority men (97%) in contrast to 80% of minority women.



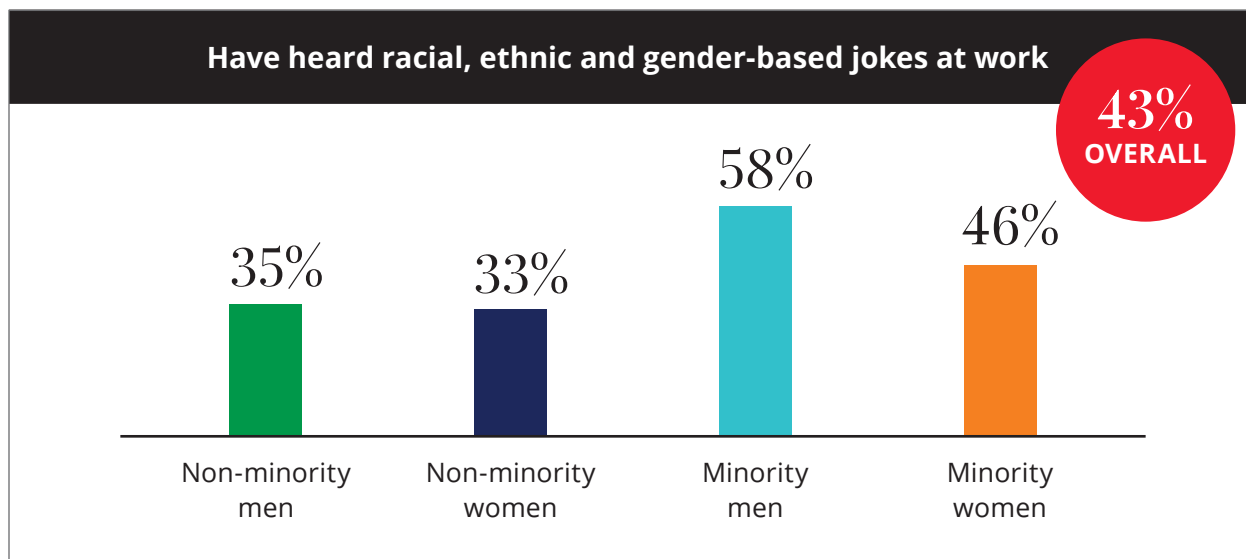
About a third of marketers (32%) have seen staff from diverse backgrounds being talked down to and ignored in meetings. Only 11% of non-minority men say they have witnessed discriminatory behaviour, in sharp contrast to 50% of minority men.

32% of marketers have observed discriminatory behaviour



43% of marketers have heard racial, ethnic and gender-based jokes at work

Overall, many marketers (43%) have heard racial, ethnic and gender-based jokes at work. This is especially true of minorities (54%) in comparison to non-minorities (33%).

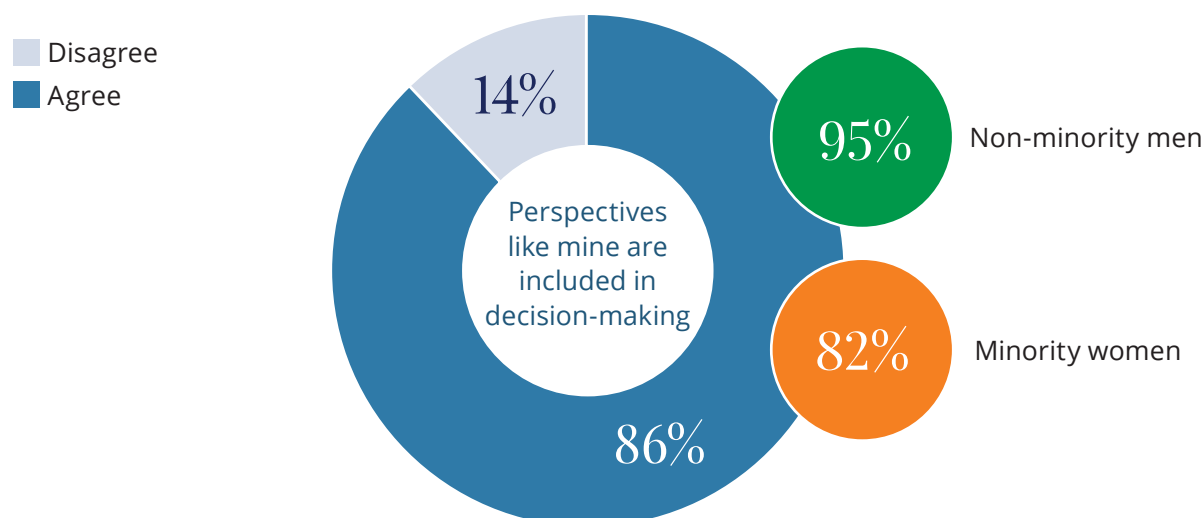


The majority of marketers (59%) agree that people don't push for change because they don't want to be seen as disruptive. This is especially true of minorities (66%) compared to non-minorities (53%).

The vast majority of marketers (85%) believe their organization will take appropriate action in response to incidents of discrimination. Non-minority men universally (100%) believe that this is the case, compared to minority women (75%).



The vast majority of marketers (86%) believe perspectives like theirs are included in decision-making. This is especially true for non-minority men (95%) compared to minority women (82%).



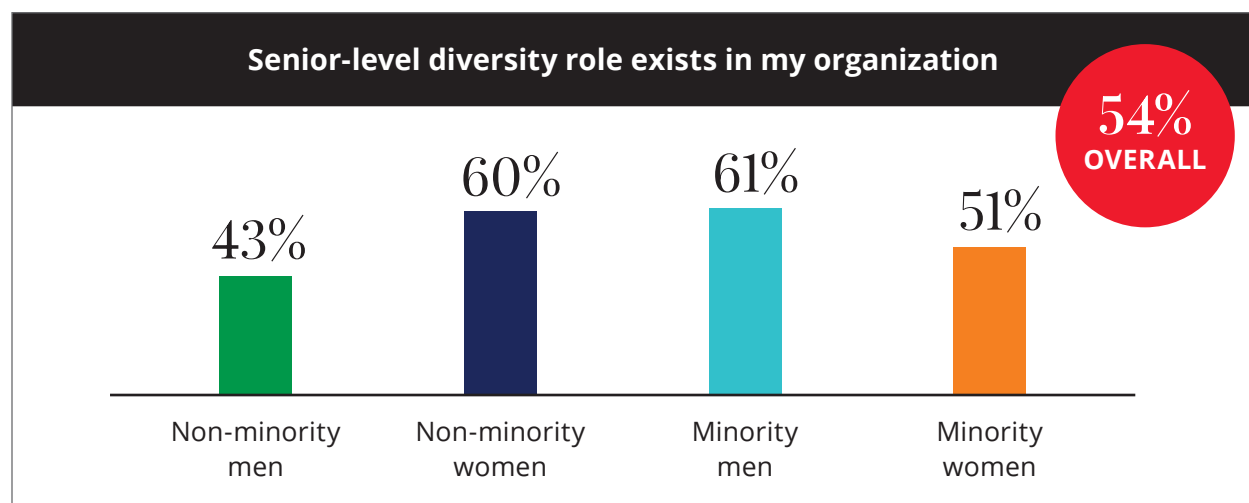
Are marketers willing to share demographic information to measure and improve diversity?

Marketers are overwhelmingly comfortable sharing demographic information (for example: ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, physical conditions, cultural background, country of origin etc.) with their organization if they were told it was being used to create a more diverse and inclusive workplace. There is little difference in this finding among the demographic profiles that we measured.

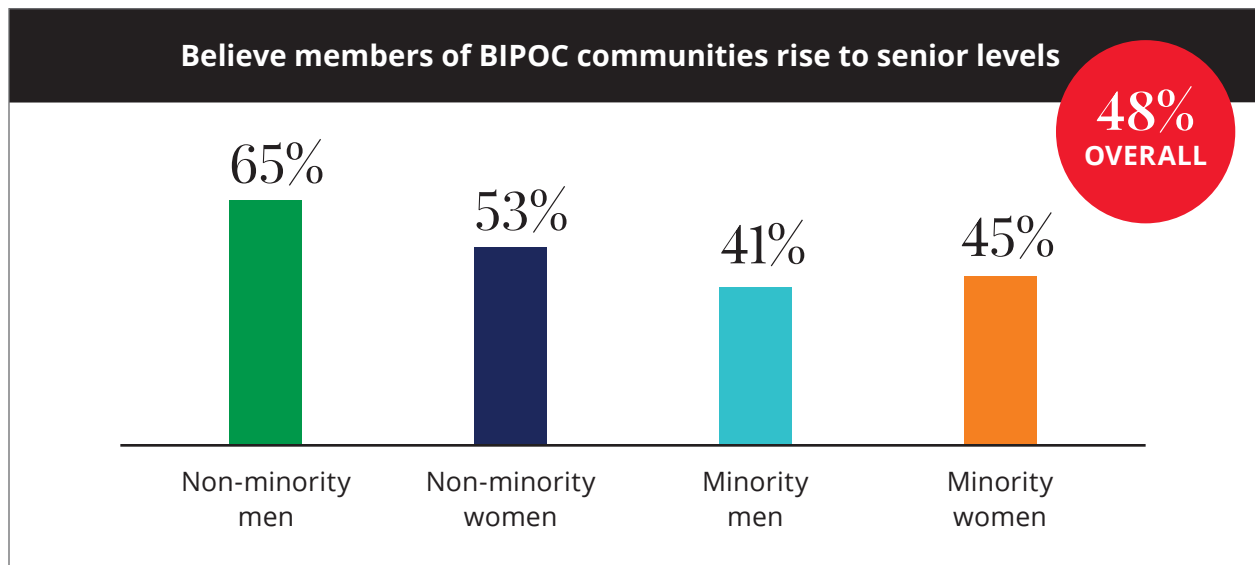
Are women and minorities in senior roles?

A total of 90% of marketers see women in leadership roles at their companies.

More than half of those surveyed report that their company has a senior role dedicated to diversity. This is less likely to be reported by non-minority men (43%) compared to minority men (61%).



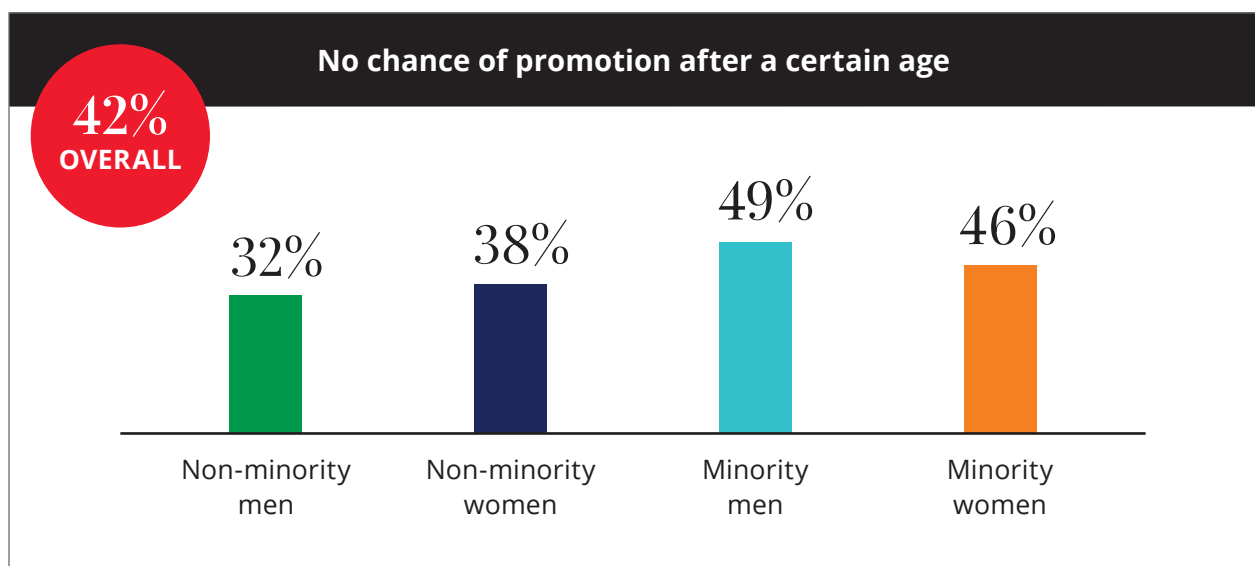
Just under half of marketers (48%) believe that people from BIPOC communities rise to the most senior positions. Non-minority men are more likely (65%) than minority men (41%) to agree with this statement.



Do older marketers experience ageism?

Forty-two per cent of marketers believe that people above a certain age have no chance of being hired or promoted.

Minorities are more likely (49%) to agree to this statement compared to non-minorities (36%). Non-minority men are least likely (32%) to agree with this statement.



Methodology

The research was conducted by RKI – an independent research company that follows the highest professional standards.

The survey was deployed by the CMA, Ad Standards and nabs and remained in field over a six-week period between December 2020 and January 2021. It was directed at marketers from agencies, brands, NFPs, service providers and independent consultancies.

A total of 425 usable responses were collected and analyzed by RKI. CMA and its distribution partners did not receive individual survey results.

The survey has a margin of error of +/-3.9%, 18 times out of 20.

Demographics of Survey Participants

A significant percentage of the survey participants are C-suite executives (23%) or senior executive management (29%). On the brand side, 58% indicate that they are a primary decision-maker and an additional 33% say they are part of the decision-making process.

The survey participants represent the full spectrum of marketing, with 38% from brands, 28% from marketing agencies, 16% from marketing services, and 8% from the not-for-profit or government sectors. Participation was strong across the country, from small, medium and large organizations, and from different demographic groups (Millennials, GenXers and Boomers). More than 50% of participants consider themselves to be a member of a minority group, and 13% were raised or educated outside of Canada.

In this report, “minorities” are survey respondents who indicated that they consider themselves a member of a minority group on the basis of factors such as: ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical health challenge, neurodiverse, cultural background or country of origin.

Full demographics are provided in the following tables.

Gender

Total responses = 307	
Male	40%
Female	57%
Non-binary	1%
Prefer not to disclose	3%

Average age

Total responses = 308	
Millennial	43%
GenX	50%
Boomer	7%
Average #Yrs	42.9

Member of a minority group

Total responses = 285	
Any	56%
Ethnicity/race	24%
Religion	12%
Sexual orientation/gender identity	12%
Physical/health challenges/neurodiverse	9%
Cultural background/country of origin	23%
Other	6%
Non-minority	44%

Location

East	14%
Ontario	71%
West	16%

Where educated

Canada	87%
Outside of Canada	13%

Position in organization

Total responses = 425	
C-suite executive	23%
Vice-president/director/senior executive	28%
Other senior management	16%
Other mid-management	11%
Mid-level marketing role	18%
Junior level marketing role	4%

■ Characteristics of Companies Whose Employees Participated in the Survey

Type of organization

Total responses = 425	
Brand	38%
Agency	28%
Marketing services	16%
NFP/government/PSI	8%
Other	7%
No relation to marketing or advertising	3%

Total number of employees

Less than 201	48%
201 - 5,000	35%
More than 5,000	17%

Total annual advertising and marketing spend (client side only)

Less than \$1M	36%
\$1 million or more	52%
Do not know	12%

Diversity of leadership

How would you describe the leadership of your organization when it comes to diversity?	Senior leadership
Total responses = 402	
Not diversified	13%
Aspiring	30%
Acting towards	34%
Well-diversified	23%

About the Canadian Marketing Association

The Canadian Marketing Association (CMA) strengthens marketers' significant impact on business in Canada. We provide opportunities for our members from coast to coast to develop professionally, to contribute to marketing thought leadership, to build strong networks across all economic sectors, and to shape positions advocated by the CMA to strengthen the regulatory climate for business success. Our Chartered Marketer (CM) designation signifies that recipients are highly qualified and up to date with best practices, as reflected in the Canadian Marketing Code of Ethics and Standards.

For more information, visit thecma.ca

About Research+Knowledge=Insight

RKI: Research+Knowledge=Insight is a full service market research firm located in Toronto. Led by an innovative team of award-winning professionals, RKI focuses on content and media research, recently developing a number of high-profile reports in the areas of workplace diversity, equity and inclusion. Their area of expertise spans the complete gamut, from standard market research's qualitative and quantitative components, to projects designed to promote thought leadership and editorial/advertorial content placement.

RKI's practice is tailored to a range of audiences, from elite C-suite executives, to small, medium, and large business leaders, and to employees and consumers across a range of industry verticals. The RKI team provides insight and inspiration to realize changes specific to particular industries in an evolving global scene.

For more information, visit www.rkinsight.com

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