

# ANTI-BLACK RACISM POLICY FRAMEWORK

A guide for Canadian Cultural Organizations  
to Create Anti-Black Racism Policies



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Funders</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Message from BSO's CEO</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>10 Things Every Cultural Organization Must Do</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>I. Context and Purpose</b>	<b>8</b>
Introduction to the Anti-Black Racism Policy Framework	<b>8</b>
Consultation Process	<b>9</b>
Defining Anti-Black Racism	<b>10</b>
Current Reality: Challenges and Structural/Systemic Barriers	<b>13</b>
<b>II. Considerations for Drafting Anti-Black Racism Policies for Cultural Organizations in Canada</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>III. Next Steps for Your Organization or Department</b>	<b>25</b>
How to Design Your Own Anti-Black Racism Policy	<b>25</b>
<b>IV. Appendices</b>	<b>28</b>
Appendix A: Research Team and Advisory Group	<b>28</b>
Appendix B: Community Partners	<b>29</b>
Appendix C: Key Terminology	<b>29</b>
Appendix D: Outreach Data and Representation in Focus Groups	<b>31</b>
Appendix E: Methodology	<b>37</b>

# SUPPORTED BY



Canada Council  
for the Arts

Conseil des arts  
du Canada



ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL  
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO

an Ontario government agency  
un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario



# PARTNERS



Cultural Pluralism in the Arts  
Movement Ontario  
(CPAMO)

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**Disclaimer:** This study is sponsored by the partners listed above. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Funders, and its agencies are in no way bound by the recommendations contained in this document.

**Telefilm Canada:** Any opinions, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of Telefilm Canada or the Government of Canada. The author(s) are not mandataries or representatives of Telefilm Canada or the Government of Canada and Telefilm Canada and the Government of Canada are in no way bound by the recommendations contained in this document.

**Ontario Creates:** Any opinions, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of Ontario Creates or the Government of Ontario. The Government of Ontario and its agencies are in no way bound by the recommendations contained in this document.

**Land Acknowledgement:** We would like to honour the land that we are on, which has been the site of human activity since time immemorial. The Black Screen Office headquarters is located on the traditional territories of the **Wendat, Anishinaabe**, the **Chippewa**, the **Haudenosaunee Confederacy** and most recently, the **Mississaugas of the Credit River First Nations**.

The land known as Canada is home to many Indigenous Nations from across Turtle Island, including the Inuit and the Metis. Treaties and other agreements are agreements to peaceably share and care for the land and its resources. Other Indigenous Nations, Europeans, and newcomers were invited into this covenant in the spirit of respect, peace, and friendship.

We are mindful of broken covenants, and we strive to make this right, with the land and with each other. We are all Treaty people. Many of us have come to this land as settlers, immigrants, or newcomers, some by choice, others by force, including through the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. We honour and pay tribute to the ancestors of African origin and descent.

Black presence on these lands runs deep. Long before Confederation **Mathieu da Costa** traded here as a navigator and interpreter. **Rose Fortune** kept order on the docks of **Annapolis Royal**, and **Mary Ann Shadd Cary** broke barriers as a publisher and civil rights advocate. These are just a few of the many Black individuals who have shaped Canada, often without recognition.

We carry these truths as we commit to confronting and dismantling anti-Black racism in all its forms.

# A Message from Joan Jenkinson, Co-Founder and CEO, Black Screen Office

This framework comes from countless conversations, honest, sometimes difficult, always necessary. We listened to Black creators, leaders, and cultural workers from across Canada who shared their experiences, frustrations, hopes, and ideas for change.

What we heard is clear: statements are no longer enough. Black talent deserves more than moments; it deserves sustained opportunity, real investment, and a seat at every decision-making table.

I know firsthand how hard it can be to navigate industries where the doors don't open easily, and when they do, the support on the other side can be thin. That's why this framework isn't about theory or checkboxes. It's about practical steps organizations can take to dismantle the systemic barriers that have gone unchallenged for too long.

This is not just a screen industry issue, it's a cultural sector issue, a societal issue. Change requires intention, transparency, and accountability. No one is expected to get it perfect, but we are all expected to get moving. I invite you to read this with curiosity and commitment. Think about what your organization can do, and then do it. And if you're not sure where to start, we are here to help.



**Joan Jenkinson**

*Let's not miss this moment to do better — and keep doing better.*

# TURNING WORDS INTO ACTION

## 10 Things Every Cultural Organization Must Do

Change will not happen on good intentions alone. The following key actions, based on the research that supports the Anti-Black Racism Policy Framework, are what it takes to move from statements to real, lasting impact. We encourage you to read all of the Policy Framework, but at the core, these are the steps cultural organizations must commit to if they are serious about dismantling anti-Black racism:



### **01** Define Anti-Black Racism

Work with your Black staff, contractors, members and creatives to create a definition that reflects your sector and your work. Don't just copy what's already out there.

### **02** Go Beyond Black History Month

Spotlight Black talent and stories year-round as part of your core programming.

### **03** Understand Complexity

Black communities are not a monolith. Build programs that recognize intersectionality and diversity of experience.

### **04** Hire, Promote, Repeat

Set clear goals to recruit, hire, and advance Black talent. Publicly report on your progress and challenges.



## **05** Build Safe, Inclusive Workspaces

Train everyone, from the boardroom to the front lines, to recognize and confront Anti-Black racism and ensure there are straightforward, confidential ways to address issues when they arise.

## **06** Invest in Black Creators, Not Just Projects

Fund the people behind the work. Help Black entrepreneurs build sustainable businesses and leadership pipelines.

## **07** Strengthen Networks and Mentorship

Create spaces for connection, guidance, and collaboration, especially for those working far from the country's cultural centres.

## **08** Diversify Decision-Making

Put Black voices at the table where decisions are made: on boards, juries, and senior leadership teams.

## **09** Work Together for Structural Change

Coordinate with others in your sector to break down systemic barriers and share strategies.

## **10** Be Transparent, Especially When You Fall Short

Share your goals, your wins, and your missteps. Course-correct publicly and often.


# CONTEXT AND PURPOSE

## Introduction to the Anti-Black Racism Policy Framework

The Black Screen Office (BSO) has developed an Anti-Black Racism Policy Framework for the Canadian screen and cultural industries, based on consultations with Black Canadians working in these industries across Canada. This framework aims to address systemic anti-Black racism and foster more inclusive and equitable institutions for Black Canadians. The project builds on BSO's previous work and research, aiming to create lasting, systemic change rather than making incremental adjustments. The goal is to guide organizations in combating anti-Black racism by identifying challenges and offering actionable solutions. As further described below, the framework will be used to mobilize stakeholders to implement anti-Black racism policies and practices that have been adapted to their respective business and cultural sectors.

The Anti-Black Racism Policy Framework is a practical, adaptable tool designed to help cultural organizations take meaningful, measurable action against systemic anti-Black racism. It outlines core goals and strategies and is anchored by the **“25 Considerations for Drafting Anti-Black Racism Policies for Cultural Organizations in Canada,”** a detailed roadmap of policy areas that organizations can tailor to fit their own sector, scale, and structure. Rather than offering a one-size-fits-all model, the Framework guides each organization to assess where they are on their journey, identify the systemic barriers they face, and develop policies that respond to the lived realities of Black communities in their field. Organizations are encouraged to translate the Framework's ideas into action, committing to specific goals, embedding accountability, and sustaining long-term change. BSO and its partners will work with stakeholders across the sector to promote adoption and support implementation efforts.






This Policy Framework is the result of a multi-year initiative designed to lead the cultural sector beyond statements and into sustainable change. The first year consisted of a landscape scan to identify work that has been done in Canada, the U.S., the U.K., and France on anti-Black racism in the screen industries and other sectors. That research revealed that very little has been done outside of Canada on the specific topic of anti-Black racism in cultural industries, and within Canada, policies and frameworks have mostly existed in sectors like education, health, and municipal government. These efforts helped shape the development of this Framework. Other elements of the first year included developing a [Consultation Handbook](#) for community partners and conducting three pilot focus groups.

In the second year, the Consultation Handbook was refined based on feedback from the pilots, and a series of focus groups were held across the country in partnership with trusted community organizations (see more in the Consultation Process section). During this time, the scope of the Policy Framework was expanded beyond the screen industries to include the broader cultural sector, reflecting the priorities of funders that support multiple disciplines. BSO partnered with the **ADVANCE Music Foundation** and the **Cultural Plurality in the Arts Movement Ontario (CPAMO)** to gain additional insights into other cultural sectors. Select stakeholders will be invited to pilot the implementation of the Framework, shaping how it can be adapted and applied in different contexts.

## Consultation Process

Consultations were conducted in partnership with trusted organizations to ensure that solutions are rooted in the experiences of those affected by anti-Black racism and to build on the trust that organizations have established with their communities. See Appendix 'B' for a list of all community partners. In addition, BSO conducted a few focus groups directly to address demographic gaps in participation.

Many of the community partners were not experienced with focus group consultation. The Consultation Handbook was created as a user-friendly guide to conducting focus group research and providing the BSO with the necessary data. Templates were developed for their use. Community Partners participated in onboarding sessions where they were walked through the process, privacy protocols, data integrity and data delivery to the research team. The research team was available throughout the consultation process to assist with questions and problems. Participants were compensated with the assistance of BSO.



The process of working primarily through Community Partners was very successful in generating participation from across the country and throughout various creative sectors. Please see Appendix 'D' for demographic charts of who participated in the consultations, identities of the research team in Appendix 'A' and a more detailed methodology of the consultation process in Appendix 'E'.

Please note that the ideas within the Policy Framework were generated through the focus group consultations. They have been illustrated with quotes from participants to communicate their perspectives. The specific demographics of those speaking in the quotes are not identified (e.g., profession, province, gender) because, unfortunately, the Black talent pool in Canada is so small that there is a risk that individuals could be identified. Focus group participants were able to speak openly because they were assured of anonymity in the final report.

## Defining Anti-Black Racism

The definition of anti-Black racism in a Canadian context was first developed in 2003 by **Dr. Akua Benjamin**, now a professor emeritus at Toronto Metropolitan University, as part of her doctoral dissertation.



Anti-Black racism is prejudice, attitudes, beliefs, stereotyping, and discrimination that is directed at people of African descent and rooted in their unique history and experience of enslavement and its legacy. Anti-Black racism is deeply entrenched in Canadian institutions, policies, and practices, to the extent that it is either functionally normalized or rendered invisible to the larger white society. Anti-Black racism is manifest in the current social, economic, and political marginalization of African Canadians, which includes unequal opportunities, lower socio-economic status, higher unemployment, significant poverty rates, and overrepresentation in the criminal justice system.

This definition has been adopted by provincial and federal levels of government, educational institutions and not-for-profit organizations. However, one of the first questions asked in the focus groups was whether it needed to be either updated or adapted specifically to the cultural industries. There was a lot of thoughtful commentary. The following themes were recurring:

- The definition should be expanded to better encompass the history of people of African descent and include specifically colonialism and other forms of inequity. It was felt that a better reflection of the historical context of anti-Black racism would hopefully lead to more thoughtful dismantling of historical exclusion and disadvantages.
- It should reflect the diversity within the Black community and, in particular, the intersectionality of members of the community (e.g. country of origin, immigration status, language, religion, ability, sexual orientation and gender identity).
- Reference to cultural appropriation (e.g., music and dance), lack of representation and stereotypical portrayals as examples of anti-Black racism would be useful in a definition specific to the cultural industries.
- The impacts should include the impact on physical and mental health.
- The definition should include action items.
- The definition should address personal responsibility to make change.

The last two items, while requested as part of the definition, will be addressed by this Anti-Black Racism Policy Framework.

The decision was made that developing a modernized definition that better reflected the cultural industries would be a large project that was outside the scope and budget of this Framework, as it would require a substantial degree of consultation on that definition. BSO therefore proposes that a future activity could be the development of a cultural industries definition of anti-Black racism.



In the meantime, **the Black Screen Office proposes the following definition for discussion purposes:**

Anti-Black racism is prejudice, discrimination, and stereotyping directed at people of African descent, rooted in their history of enslavement, colonialism, and systemic inequities. It is deeply embedded in Canadian institutions, policies, and practices, often normalized or invisible to those who benefit from white supremacy. Its impact varies based on factors like immigration status, language, religion, ability, gender identity, and sexual orientation. In the cultural industries, it appears as erasure and appropriation, with Black cultural influence often uncredited.

It also drives the social, economic, and political marginalization of Black Canadians, seen in unequal opportunities, lack of representation, lower socio-economic status, higher unemployment, poverty, health disparities, and overrepresentation in the criminal justice system.

Canada's institutions have been slow to address the systemic barriers created by anti-Black racism. The **City of Toronto** started a multi-year process to develop strategies in 2016. In 2017, the **Ontario Anti-Racism Directorate** launched a multi-year [Anti-Black Racism Strategy](#). After the murder of George Floyd in May 2020, many institutions, including a number of cultural institutions, quickly developed anti-Black racism statements, which were well-meaning but often lacked specifics or measurable outcomes. However, a few sectors, such as education and health, developed detailed and well-researched strategies and together with the **City of Toronto's Confronting Anti-Black Racism Action Plan**, they served as inspiration for this Policy Framework.



City of Toronto

# Current Reality: Challenges and Structural/Systemic Barriers


As the BSO and other organizations have conducted earlier research to identify the challenges of Black creators, the primary focus of the consultations was on solutions and strategies for dismantling barriers. For further insights into the Black experience in the cultural industries in Canada, please see [Being Seen](#), [Being Heard](#), [Industry Analysis and the Value of Black Music in Canada](#), and [Anti-Black Racism in the Arts](#). The research was also informed by reports from Statistics Canada on the Black population of Canada, including [Diversity of the Black Population in Canada \(2021\)](#). According to the most recent census data compiled in the foregoing Diversity of the Black Population in Canada (2021), that diversity has increased substantially with the community's growth. The three main population groups are Canadian-born, African-born and Caribbean-born, and they "have different sociodemographic characteristics, linguistic profiles, ethnic origins and places of residence." Key statistics showcase that:


- In 2016, the African-born Black populations surpassed the Caribbean-born Black populations to become the second-largest group based on place of birth. Together, the Canadian-born and African-born Black populations represented almost three-quarters (73.6%) of the total Black populations in Canada in 2021.
- In 2021, the Black populations in Canada were born in over 180 different countries. Jamaica and Haiti were the top countries of birth for the Caribbean-born Black populations, while Nigeria, Ethiopia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo were the most common for the African-born Black populations.
- Nearly all Black people in Canada (97.8%) resided in urban areas in 2021. Black communities in Canada were more geographically dispersed in 2021, with the proportion of the Black populations residing in Ontario and Quebec decreasing from 85.0% to 77.0% since 1996. In contrast, the percentage of the Black populations residing in Canada's Prairie provinces more than doubled, from 7.0% in 1996 to 16.0% in 2021.


These statistics suggest that not only is the Black population growing and expected to continue growing, but it is also diverse in composition and distribution.


Yet this demographic growth is matched by entrenched systemic barriers in leadership, funding access and workplace equity. Across major Canadian sectors, Black people hold just 2% of board seats despite comprising 4.3% of the total population ([TMU Diversity Institute](#)). In the music industry, nearly 98% of Black artists and professionals have never applied for grants, and among the few who have, 89% received no funding ([biv.com](#)). Black and other racialized artists earn a median income of only 72% of that earned by non-racialized artists ([ourcommons.ca](#)), highlighting persistent pay gaps. More than half of Black music professionals report race-based discrimination, and about 42% say they are often the only person of their race in their workplace ([Industry Analysis and the Value of Black Music in Canada](#)).


In the screen sector, fewer than 3% of Black professionals surveyed in a recent industry study held top decision-making roles such as showrunner or executive producer ([Being Heard](#)), underscoring the absence of Black voices in key gatekeeping positions. Nearly 88% have experienced harassment or “cultural violence” on the job, with some leaving major opportunities as a result. An overwhelming 90.6% have encountered the refrain that “it’s hard to find Black talent,” a claim that creators say allows organizations to avoid real investment in or promotion of Black professionals. These conditions, from workplace discrimination to biased perceptions of talent, create a “concrete ceiling” that continues to block access and advancement for Black artists across the sector.

 *“Growing up in Winnipeg 20-something years ago, you didn't see a lot of Black people at this point in time. Now, though, we are everywhere.”*


 *“There is so little intersectional representation for Black people in media. We want to see everybody: Black Queer people, Black immigrants, Black people who speak languages that are not English, Black folks with disabilities. I want to see more stories about communities. I want to see more stories with families that are loving and supportive. I want to see more that is reflecting the very real and very nuanced reality of being Black, and there’s a million different realities.”- Being Seen, Black Communities Report*

 *“Participants emphasized that the lack of pre-existing sector connections requires Black creatives to spend more time, money, and other resources pursuing various means of creating and accessing opportunities, with limited certainty or pay-off.” - Being Heard*

 *“Overall, it is apparent that racism at a societal level has limited the representation of Black musicians and Black music industry professionals in Canada as a result of the exploitation of Black music without credit, the negative stereotyping of Black music and its surrounding culture, the failure of policy to uplift Black musicians, and the disproportionate harm that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on Black people in the music industry.” - Industry Analysis and the Value of Black Music in Canada*


 *"It's important to hear from those who are new and those in the field for some time and to address the multiplicities of the Black arts perspectives from its aesthetics to organizational realities and the larger systemic challenges to Black arts"- Anti-Black Racism in the Arts*

Intersectionality was a frequent topic of focus group conversation during the discussion of the definition of anti-Black racism and beyond. As a reminder, intersectionality is a term coined by American Black feminist scholar **Kimberlé Crenshaw** to reflect how multiple forms of identity can overlap and create greater obstacles within institutions meant to serve them and protect their rights. It asks us to understand how a Black woman might have different challenges from a Black man, or a disabled straight Black man might have different challenges from a Queer non-disabled Black man. Strategies to break down structural anti-Black racism, therefore, need to consider how these systems and strategies can impact individuals differently, depending on their identities. Please see the demographic charts in Appendix D, which present some elements of intersectionality in the focus group participants.

 *"Many diversity initiatives fail to properly include Black people with disabilities by treating race and disability as separate issues. For example, diversity programs in the arts may promote Black representation but overlook accessibility needs like adaptive technologies or physical accommodations. ...Solutions include developing intersectional policies that provide both racial and disability accommodations, creating mentorship programs for Black creatives with disabilities, and ensuring accessibility in cultural events."*

There were discussions of elements of combating anti-Black racism which went beyond the scope of this Policy Framework to address issues such as access to education and healthcare. The final overarching theme was the need to see anti-Black racism as a structural issue and not the result of individual racist behaviour. While individual racist behaviour unfortunately still happens, what we are concerned with here is anti-Black racism as the result of a system of power dynamics that are upheld, sometimes unwittingly, by the status quo. While there can and should be individual action to break down the power systems, the focus of this Framework is on lasting change more than individual calling out of inappropriate behaviours.

The Policy Framework below showcases the needs of the Black communities working in the Canadian screen and cultural industries. However, some recommendations lead to a more equitable and inclusive society in general and can be used and adapted by organizations working towards an anti-oppression work environment as they confront multiple forms of racism, homophobia and ableism. Participants in the research often expressed that advancement and inclusion for Black creatives could not be done in isolation but must be part of systemic change for equity-deserving communities.

 *"Let's work together towards a more just and equitable society."*

# II. CONSIDERATIONS FOR DRAFTING ANTI-BLACK RACISM POLICIES FOR CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS IN CANADA

## A Note Before You Begin

The **25 Considerations** outlined below are drawn directly from the experiences, insights, and recommendations shared in our national consultation process. They reflect what Black creatives, workers, and leaders across Canada told us they need to see from cultural organizations, both large and small, to begin dismantling anti-Black racism in meaningful, measurable ways.

Not every consideration will apply to every organization, and not all actions can or should be taken at once. We recognize that organizations vary widely in size, resources, and structure. A national cultural institution will have different capacities than a small, volunteer-led nonprofit. The goal is not to do everything, but to start where you are, commit to progress, and make choices that reflect your realities while staying accountable to the communities you serve.

This is not a checklist. It's a guide to help you think through your policies, practices, and values, and to begin building an organizational culture rooted in equity and responsibility.



## 1. Definition

**Consult with your Black staff, creatives, and network to define what your organization means by Anti-Black Racism.**

Consult with your Black staff, creatives and network to define what your organization means by anti-Black racism. Go beyond the standard definition used by the government and develop a definition that reflects the work that your organization does. Organizations in the same sector may wish to work together to develop a common definition (e.g., screen industries, music, etc.) or use the BSO updated definition for inspiration. The process of developing a definition can help to understand the issues and the impact of anti-Black racism.




## 2. Continuity

**Promote the work of Black talent throughout the year.**

To avoid token or performative actions, consider ways to promote the work of Black talent throughout the year. Do not limit promotion to Black History Month, but incorporate it into mainstream programming.

“So then when organizations decided to fulfill their quota of acknowledging anti-Black racism specifically in dance, they thought: 'well, once I worked with a Black artist, then I was addressing anti-Black racism,' and not looking at that themselves, at specifically white organizations and the level of anti-Black racism that's perpetuated within the systems of their organizations. Therefore who they choose to engage with may not necessarily address the anti-Black racism that permeates that organization.”



*"I find the granting structure with anti-Black racism being a PC (politically correct) term now that everyone must deal with that. It's like at the forefront, whether you're a ballet dancer, an acrobat, a visual artist, Blackness needs to be at the front and that in itself is a disservice and somehow also just contributing to the anti-Blackness because you're not allowed to just be a person who has a great idea... And until we really address this kind of gaze to have blackness or cultural diversity being a thing and how we make decision-making, then there's never going to be equity because, you're asking me to put my race or my ethnicity first as opposed to just embodying who I feel I am as a person, which embodies race and culture and all that together just as any other person."*



*"We all know 'hire Black artist month', right? Also known as Black History Month."*

### **3. Nuance**

**Gain a deeper understanding of the diversity within Black communities.**

Be aware of the complexity of the Black community and the intersectionality of individuals within it. Consider tailoring programs for specific communities, such as Black Disabled creators or Black newcomers. Establish an advisory committee that reflects the diversity of the Black community to propose solutions that consider the multiple layers of discrimination that may be experienced.

### **4. Fairness**

**Investigate and address bias in hiring and promotion practices.**

To avoid creating or sustaining hurdles that potential Black hires have to overcome that are greater than those experienced by non-Black hires, investigate potential biases in hiring decisions. This includes examining how informal practices, like relying on personal networks or word-of-mouth, can reinforce exclusion, especially in organizations without formal HR structures or standardized hiring processes. Consider identifying clear, equitable guidelines for eligibility for new hires. For example, a director might be considered for a format they haven't yet worked in if they have a certain number of minutes in other formats. Continue with transparent criteria for promotion within the organization, such as years worked, milestones met, and diversity of experience, to ensure Black hires are not stuck in the role they were initially brought in to fill.

### **5. Targets**

**Set and publicize measurable goals for Black recruitment.**

To ensure that demonstrable progress is made, have clear measurable goals for recruitment of Black talent within the organization, with partners and within projects funded. Post these goals publicly and provide reporting on how they were met, why they maybe were not met and strategies for improvement.

## 6. Outreach

### Change recruitment practices to access a broader range of Black talent.

That could include engaging Black casting directors or talent agencies, or seeking out different job boards.

“We need a marketing agency. We need somebody who basically is representing our interests and putting us out there. I mean, you've gathered the people together, you have the database, but I don't know, cold calling doesn't seem to work. You can't just keep knocking on doors. It's almost like you need a marketing agency.”

## 7. Advancement

### Track and promote the career advancement of Black executives within your organization.

Ensure that Black executives are not stuck in entry-level or mid-career positions but are given the opportunities to succeed. Compare the career advancement of Black executives to that of executives with other identities to identify hidden biases or barriers. Consider quotas or goals to measure advancement and ensure that hires are not performative. Identify training that will help the Black executives be successful.



“You hire these few people because they're Black, but there's no capacity building. Let's say the person doesn't necessarily have the training that they need to do this position, then train them.”

## 8. Authority

### **Ensure Black executives have real authority and support.**

To ensure the engagement of Black executives is not performative, consider how to ensure that Black executives have the authority necessary to do their work. Train Board members, senior executives, co-workers and subordinates on countering anti-Black racism, anti-oppression, emotional intelligence, cultural competency and unconscious bias. Train staff on understanding the distinctions between racism and anti-Black racism and develop specific strategies to counter anti-Black racism that are complementary to any strategies to combat racism, to create an inclusive environment.

*"If a production company was in all of their productions pretty much only just casting white people and no one of any culture, that could be considered racist in general. Whereas if they're constantly making Black actors look bad, that would be anti-Black racism."*

## 9. Protection

### **Create safe, confidential processes for reporting discrimination.**

Ensure that there are processes in place to deal with both systemic barriers and individual discriminatory actions. Provide clear and confidential opportunities to discuss potential discrimination and, if necessary, file a complaint. Where there are existing resources better suited to address the complaint, ensure that everyone is aware of them (e.g., union complaints process, human rights legislation). Ensure that, where necessary, there are investigations, consequences and protection of the reporting party.

## 10. Authorship

### **Ensure Black stories are primarily told by Black creators.**

To ensure authenticity in representation and storytelling, primarily Black stories should be told by Black creators. Establish policies governing the minimum participation of Black creators for projects that focus on Black experiences, stories or communities. Consider establishing policies for the engagement of Black creatives where a Black story or character is not the focus of the creative.

## 11. Transparency

### **Be transparent about funding and commissioning decisions.**

Transparency in decision-making for funding or commissioning a project will help creatives learn and understand the basis of the decision. This is particularly important if, in the past, there has been a pattern of not supporting Black creatives, but it is also relevant to understand the objective assessment of an application. Provide rationale with learning opportunities for applicants when turning down a project for funding. Consider how resources could be allocated to provide assistance to overcome systemic barriers to funding (e.g., developing a business plan, putting a team together, promotion, finding partners, finding grant writers).



## 12. Incubation

### **Support Black creative entrepreneurship.**

Business networks can be hard to find and engage with for Black creative entrepreneurs. Support Black creative entrepreneurs to gain knowledge and skill necessary to develop their creative material, raise financing, find distribution or audiences, prepare funding applications and manage their businesses. Support Black small businesses in the creative sector with business mentorship and networking. Consider building hubs that can incubate Black creative small businesses formally or informally. Provide opportunities for Black creative leaders from more established regions (e.g., Toronto and Montreal) to visit smaller regions to provide advice, mentorship, networking and inspiration.

*"If we had more interaction with other people, that would be a way to kind of create something as part of it, instead of having so many different organizations and different committees. If we could figure out a way to bring everything together, to have, like a centralized opportunity, like an office or some kind of place, a networking area where everybody is all in the same spot."*

## 13. Representation

### **Increase Black evaluators, analysts, and jurors.**

Mainstream decision-makers, evaluators, analysts, and jurors often lack awareness and understanding of Black culture, communities, and stories. To ensure that Black experiences and culture(s) are appropriately evaluated, increase the number of Black evaluators, analysts, or jurors who assess creative material for funding. Consider ways to educate non-Black decision-makers on the complexities of Black communities and cultures.

## 14. Investment

### **Invest in Black creators directly, not just projects.**

Address intergenerational financial disparities by funding Black creators and entrepreneurs, and not just the projects that they create. Funding could be for hard-to-finance operational costs such as incorporation, travel, training, engaging consultants, financial advisors or early-stage creative development.

## 15. Access

### **Improve access to funding opportunities and platforms.**

Black creators, particularly if outside Montreal and Toronto, may not be aware of available funding and platforms for reaching audiences. Support opportunities for Black creators to meet with and better understand the requirements of funders, platforms and distributors. Set metrics for engagement to ensure that all team members are conducting meaningful outreach.

## 16. Consultation

### **Engage Black communities formally when leadership representation is lacking.**


Where an organization does not have Black executives or does not sufficiently reflect intersectionality or the diversity of Black communities, consider formalizing other forms of engagement. Advisory councils can assist with decision-making, training, consulting, and communications strategies.

## 17. Community

### **Create spaces for Black employees and members to build community.**

Black creators often feel isolated. They may not have had the opportunity to build a network through post-secondary education. Create common spaces for Black employees, contractors and members to foster dialogue and reflection. Creating opportunities for discussion groups, workshops, mentoring and networking can build community and offer alternative pathways to learning and career advancement.

Consider fostering opportunities for Black talent to collaborate with other underrepresented communities to build partnerships and work towards common equity and inclusion goals. Find opportunities to openly discuss the impact of anti-Black racism to foster understanding and amplify Black voices. Consider establishing mentorship relationships that last longer than a project or a particular job but can be ongoing throughout the mentee's career.

 *"The Toronto market for Black folks in the industry is pretty booming. Do we bring somebody here who's a part of that, or does somebody from here go out there to learn from them, to see how they've created their network?"*

## 18. Visibility

### **Build and maintain a database of Black talent.**

Employers can find it challenging to find Black talent. Consider building a database of Black talent and promoting it. This could be combined with other underrepresented groups and organizations for cost efficiency. For example, the Canadian screen industry has [AccessReelworld](#) for Black, Indigenous and People of Colour screen talent and [CultureBrew.Art](#) is a national database of Indigenous and Racialized, literary, media, performing and visual arts professionals. Encourage Black talent to participate and be counted. Ensure that safety and privacy protocols are established and communicated.

## 19. Wellness

### **Provide mental health resources to support Black professionals.**

Countering anti-Black racism can be exhausting for Black talent and executives. It can add time and energy to their existing jobs. Provide workshops, mental health resources and support sessions to help Black professionals process and better counter anti-Black racism. Consider whether these resources can be provided in-house through the leadership of Black executives, engaging Black specialized resources or directing Black employees, contractors and members to outside resources.

*“The amount of young dancers that I've had to mentor and talk to and reignite their mental health who've gone into that institution, and eventually, by the time they got to a level of professionalism, all the mental abuse that they had suffered as being Black dancers or being told that they would never be good enough. But they [the institution] don't know that because the people decided not to go to them to be healed. They came to spiritual healers outside of the institution.”*

## 20. Ownership

### **Support Black-owned creative platforms.**

Support the development of parallel Black platforms (e.g., broadcaster, YouTube channel, theatre company) by Black creative entrepreneurs to bypass traditional barriers and foster success on the community's terms and within the community's values.

*“I feel that Black people need to have systems and production companies and stuff that they own themselves because we're constantly fighting for a seat at someone's table that doesn't necessarily want us there, instead of focusing on building our own table.”*

## 21. Inspiration

### **Promote visible Black leadership to inspire the next generation.**

The adage is 'you can't be it if you can't see it.' Provide opportunities to promote experienced Black creatives, executives, educators, leaders and business owners to inspire emerging Black talent to follow careers in the cultural industries. Engage with young Black people so that they see the opportunities in the cultural industries.

*"It'd be really great to focus on Black youth and really show them that there can be a career to be had in the arts, and it'd be great if the next generation knew that was a possibility."*

## 22. Expertise

### **Ensure access to qualified Black hair and makeup professionals.**

If your organization is part of the performing arts (e.g., screen industry, music, theatre, dance, etc.), ensure that qualified and trained hair stylists and makeup artists familiar with the needs of Black performers are available and that the necessary supplies are available. Identify steps to increase the talent pool of qualified hair stylists and makeup artists.

## 23. Accountability

### **Set measurable goals, report progress, and adjust.**

Establish policies in accordance with the Anti-Black Racism Policy Framework, including measurable goals, and report regularly on progress made toward achieving those goals. Identify failures, adjust policies and strategies, and provide updates in reports. Publicize progress, including failures, to demonstrate continued commitment and adjustments where necessary. Not all of the above recommendations will apply to each organization. Work with the Black Screen Office to develop a customized implementation plan.

## 24. Collaboration

### **Build sector-wide goals and mutual learning opportunities.**

Identify where organizations within a sector (e.g., all national broadcasters or all small theatre companies in Ontario) can work together to learn from each other and establish common goals.

## 25. Leadership

### **Engage Black executives and board members in meaningful ways.**

Black representation within leadership communicates inclusion more effectively than any policies. Reflect on opportunities to engage Black executives and Black members of the Board of Directors. Listen to their insights but do not expect them to speak for the entire Black community.



# III. NEXT STEPS FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION OR DEPARTMENT

## How to Design Your Own Anti-Black Racism Policy

Many who participated in the research expressed concern that this Framework might not create real change. They had participated in many previous roundtable discussions and focus groups that resulted in reports that were read and shelved. With that in mind, we provide steps to guide you to enact real change. Creating real change can feel overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be. Here's a simple, step-by-step guide for organizations ready to move from talk to action:

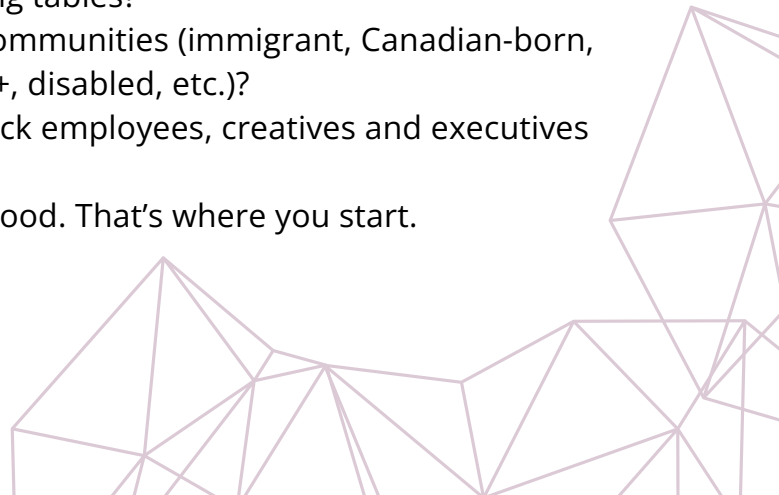
### **Step 1: Gather Your Leadership Team**

- Block time for an honest conversation with senior leaders and decision-makers.
- Acknowledge that anti-Black racism exists in every sector, including yours.
- Agree that this work is not a “nice to have,” but core to your organization’s mission and future.

### **Step 2: Take Stock — Conduct a Self-Assessment**

Ask these questions, and write down the answers honestly:

- How many Black employees, creatives, and executives do we have or regularly work with?
- How often do we fund or commission Black-led projects?
- Do Black staff or partners feel safe raising concerns?
- Is there a process for them to raise concerns and be confident that they will be addressed?
- Are Black voices present at decision-making tables?
- Do we understand the diversity of Black communities (immigrant, Canadian-born, English- and French-speaking, 2SLGBTQIA+, disabled, etc.)?
- Do this work before engaging with any Black employees, creatives and executives to demonstrate commitment to change.
- If the answers make you uncomfortable, good. That's where you start.



### Step 3: Build Your Working Group

- Don't do this in a bubble.
- Invite Black staff, creatives, and trusted community members to join a working group or advisory council.
- Be clear: they are not there to “speak for all Black people,” but to share lived expertise and help shape your framework.
- Pay them for their time and input.

### Step 4: Create Your Definition of Anti-Black Racism

- Start with the definition in this Framework.
- Discuss as a group: What does anti-Black racism look like in our organization?
- What behaviours, decisions, or practices have caused harm?
- What needs to be named so we can change it?
- Draft your definition and circulate it internally for feedback before finalizing it.

### Step 5: Set Specific, Measurable Goals

Metrics for success will depend on the organization and its existing progress toward countering anti-Black racism. Each organization should establish its own metrics and how they are presented to the Black communities that it engages with. Here is a [Metrics Development Template for Advancing Anti-Black Racism Commitments](#)

### Step 6: Assign Responsibility

- Designate a senior executive as the point person responsible for progress, not just an HR person.
- Include this work in board oversight and regular senior leadership discussions.
- Tie progress to performance reviews and leadership evaluations.



### Step 7: Build a Transparent Reporting Process

- Decide how you will track progress:
  - Quarterly updates?
  - An annual public report?
  - Internal dashboards for leadership?
- Be honest about what’s working and what’s not, and what you’re doing to improve.

### Step 8: Make Adjustments as You Go

- Revisit your goals and strategies every year.
- Use feedback from Black staff and communities to adjust your approach.
- Stay open, flexible, and accountable.

### Step 9: Reach Out for Support

- BSO is available to assist.
- If you need advice on where to begin, how to organize your process, or want us to review your framework, get in touch.
- You don’t have to do this alone — but you do have to do it.



# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Research Team and Advisory Group



**BSO CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**



**LEAD RESEARCHER**



**ASSOCIATE LEAD RESEARCHER**



**ASSISTANT RESEARCHER**



**RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION ASSISTANT**

### **Advisory Group**

(in alphabetical order):

Alicia Hall  
Trevor Hampden  
Adonis Huggins  
Keziah Myers  
Johann Nertomb  
Kevin Ormsby  
Tara Taylor



## Appendix B: Community Partners

### **Community Partners** (in alphabetical order):

ACTRA National

ArtsBuild Ontario

BC Community Alliance

Black History Manitoba

BlackLantic Media

Coalition M·É·D·I·A·

Dalton Higgins

Dance Collection Danse

FKB Media Solutions

La Table Ronde du Mois de l'histoire des Noir·e·s / The Round Table on Black History Month

Light House Arts Centre

## Appendix C: Key Terminology

Language is a powerful tool in the fight against Anti-Black racism. However, many of the terms used to describe experiences of Black communities, systemic oppression, and identity are continually evolving. The research team recognizes that there are differences of opinion on the most appropriate terminology, and that words can hold different meanings based on the context. We acknowledge that not all terms will resonate with everyone and that language continues to shift as our collective understanding deepens. This appendix is meant to support shared understanding while remaining open to future revision and dialogue.

### **Anti-Black Racism**

Anti-Black racism is prejudice, discrimination, and stereotyping directed at people of African descent, rooted in their history of enslavement, colonialism, and systemic inequities. It is deeply embedded in Canadian institutions, policies, and practices, often normalized or invisible to those who benefit from white supremacy. Its impact varies based on factors like immigration status, language, religion, ability, gender identity, and sexual orientation. In the cultural industries, it appears as erasure and appropriation, with Black cultural influence often uncredited. It also drives the social, economic, and political marginalization of Black Canadians, seen in unequal opportunities, lack of representation, lower socio-economic status, higher unemployment, poverty, health disparities, and overrepresentation in the criminal justice system.

## Black Creatives/Creators

This project is broad in its definition of Black, which includes bi-racial and multi-racial individuals of Black communities. Participants were welcome to self-identify. Creatives/creators included all Black people working in the targeted cultural industries, including those who were self-employed, struggling to get into the industry, creating their own content or students in a relevant discipline (e.g. film studies, interactive digital media, communications, theatre studies).

## Cultural Industries

Cultural Industries encompass those sectors that produce and distribute goods, services, and activities of a cultural, artistic, or heritage-related nature. They function as both economic entities and vehicles for cultural expression, identity formation, and social meaning. They rely on creativity, skill, and talent to generate products and experiences that often hold intellectual property rights. In the scope of this project, the research team focused specifically on the screen industries, performing arts, music, and creative writing.

## Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a term first coined by **Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw**, but is based on previous scholarship to refer to an integrated analysis of oppression that includes factors such as gender, race, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance and class.

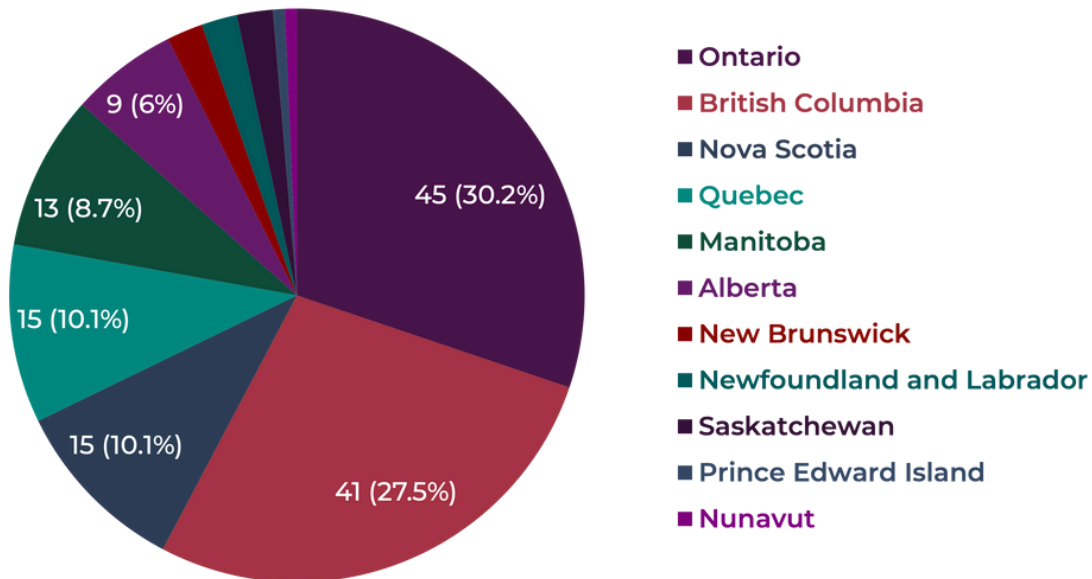
## Policy Framework

A policy framework is a structured set of guidelines, principles, tools and procedures established to guide decision-making and the development of specific policies within an organization or a particular sector. It provides a consistent and coherent approach to addressing issues and achieving objectives.



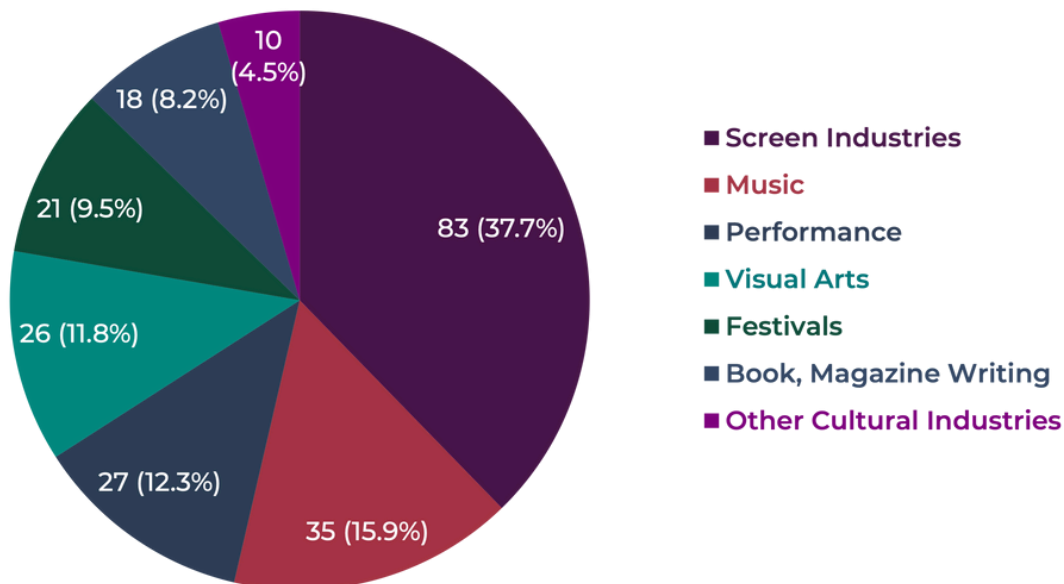
# Appendix D: Outreach Data and Representation in Focus Groups

## PARTICIPANTS BY PROVINCE, 2023-2024



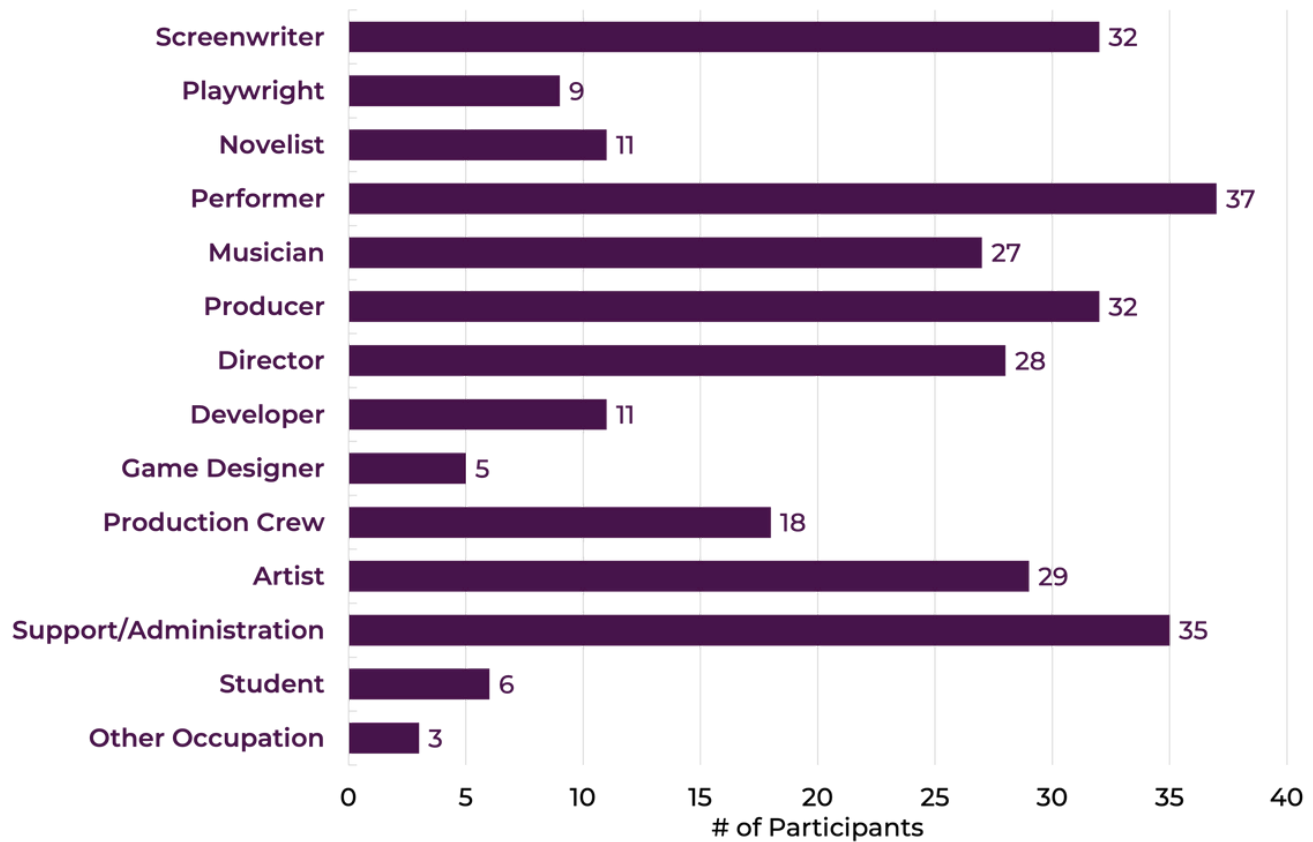
Note. Percentages based on total participants (149).

## PARTICIPANTS BY INDUSTRY, 2023-2024



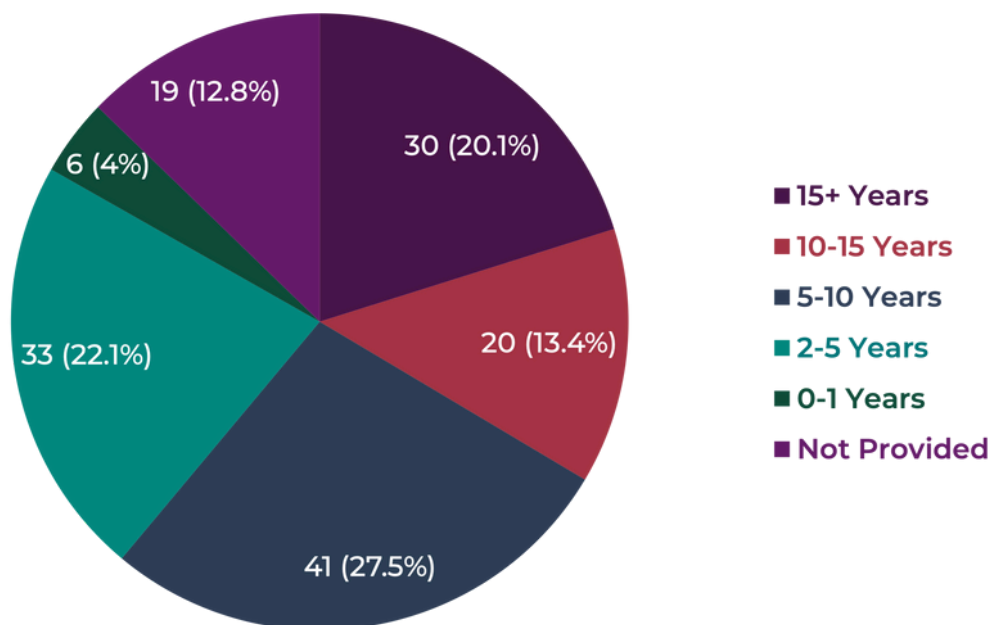
Note. The total exceeds the number of participants (149) because some individuals work across multiple industries. Percentages based on total responses (220).

## PARTICIPANTS BY OCCUPATION IN THE CULTURAL INDUSTRIES, 2023-2024



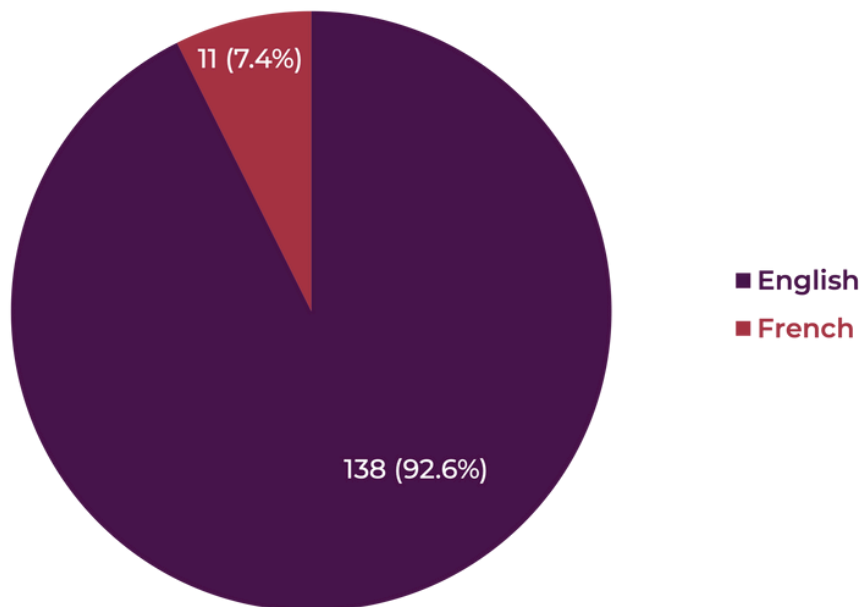
Note. The total (283) exceeds the number of participants (149) because some individuals have multiple professional affiliations.

## PARTICIPANTS BY INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE, 2023-2024



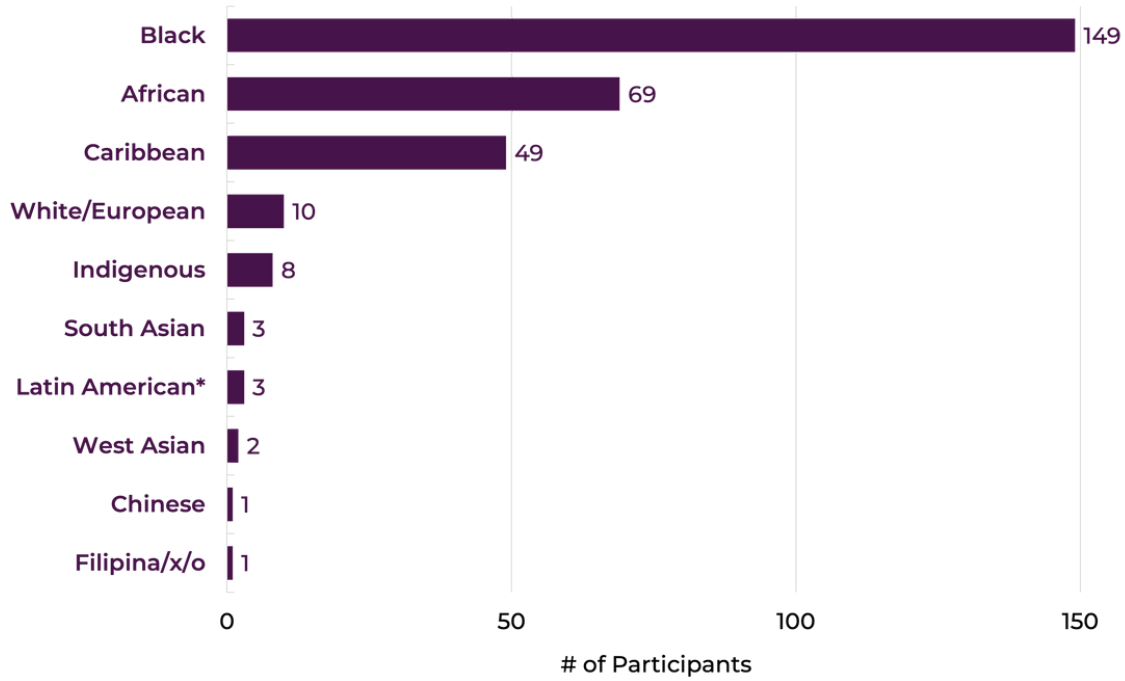
*Note. 19 participants did not provide their years of industry experience. Percentages based on total participants (149).*

## LANGUAGE OF PARTICIPANTS, 2023-2024



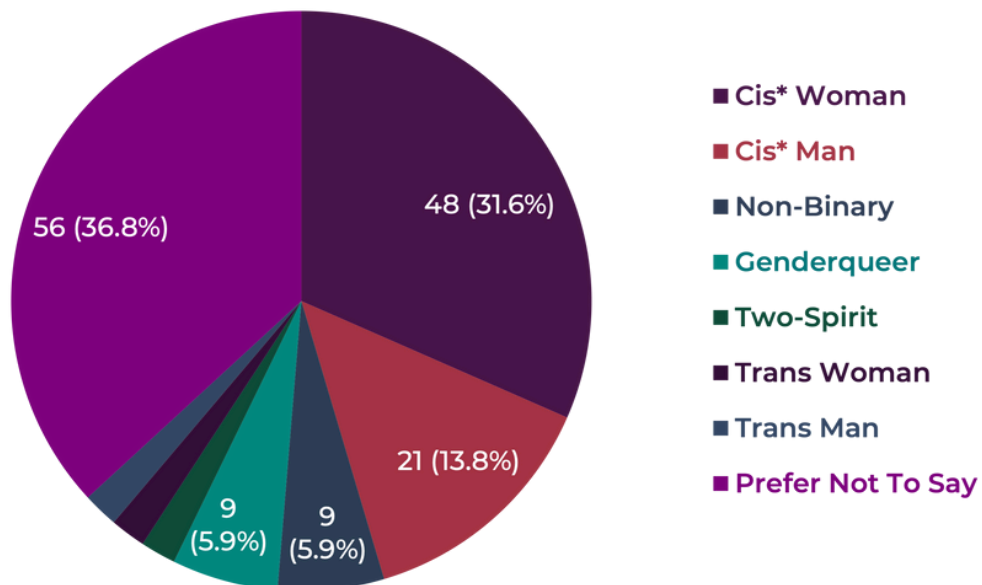
*Note. Percentages based on total participants (149).*

## ETHNIC IDENTITY OF PARTICIPANTS, 2023-2024



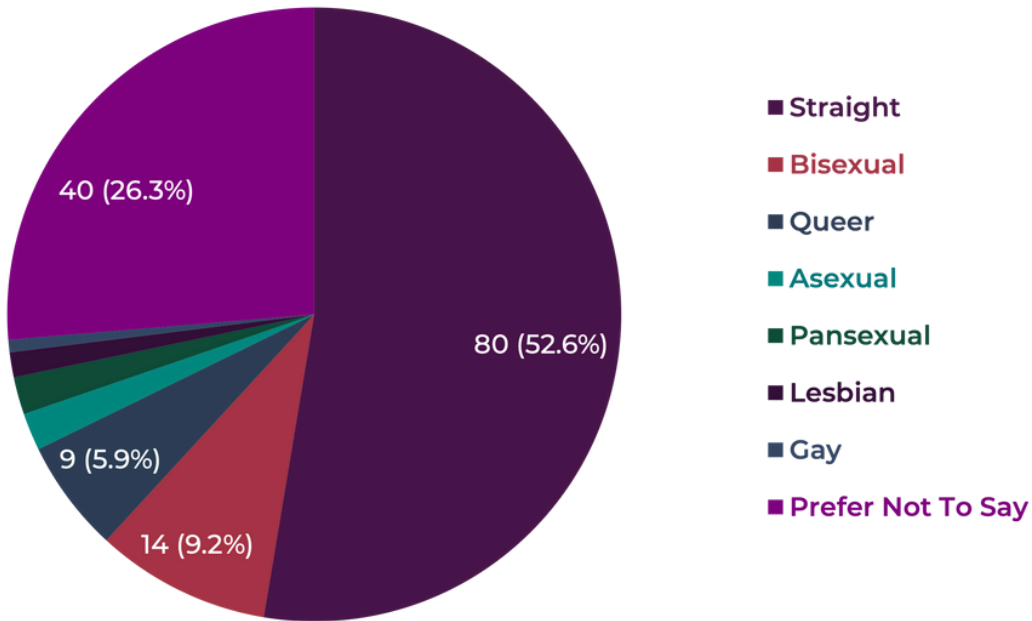
*Note. To account for intersectionality, the total number of ethnic identities exceeds the number of self-identifying participants (149). Participation required identifying as Black (or Black African or Black Caribbean); some participants held multiple ethnic identities. \*Latin American includes Latino, Latina, Latinx, or Latine identities and encompasses Mexico, Central and South America (including Brazil), and Spanish-speaking Caribbean nations.*

## GENDER IDENTITY OF PARTICIPANTS, 2023-2024



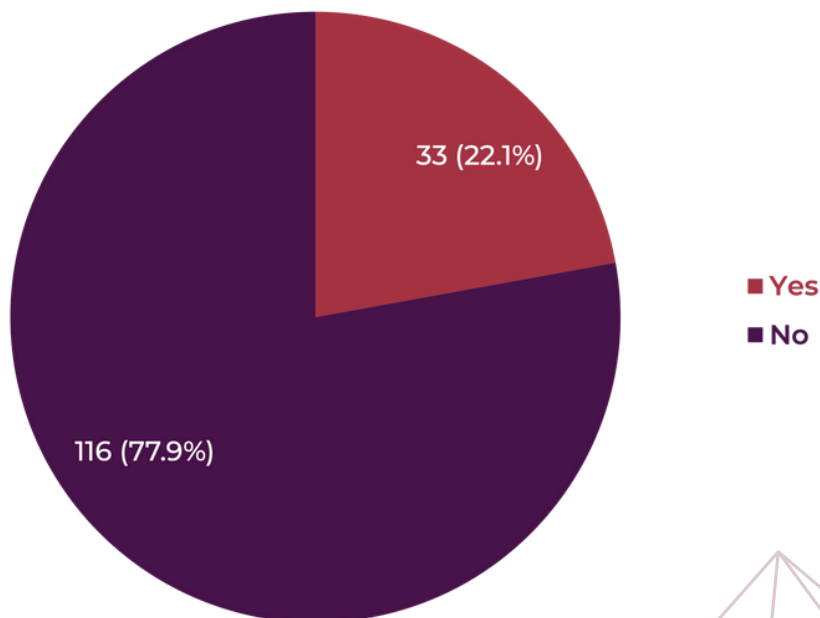
Note. To account for intersectionality, the total exceeds the number of self-identifying participants (149). Percentages based on total responses (152). \*We use Cis as short for Cisgender, a person whose gender identity matches their sex assigned at birth.

### SEXUALITY OF PARTICIPANTS, 2023-2024



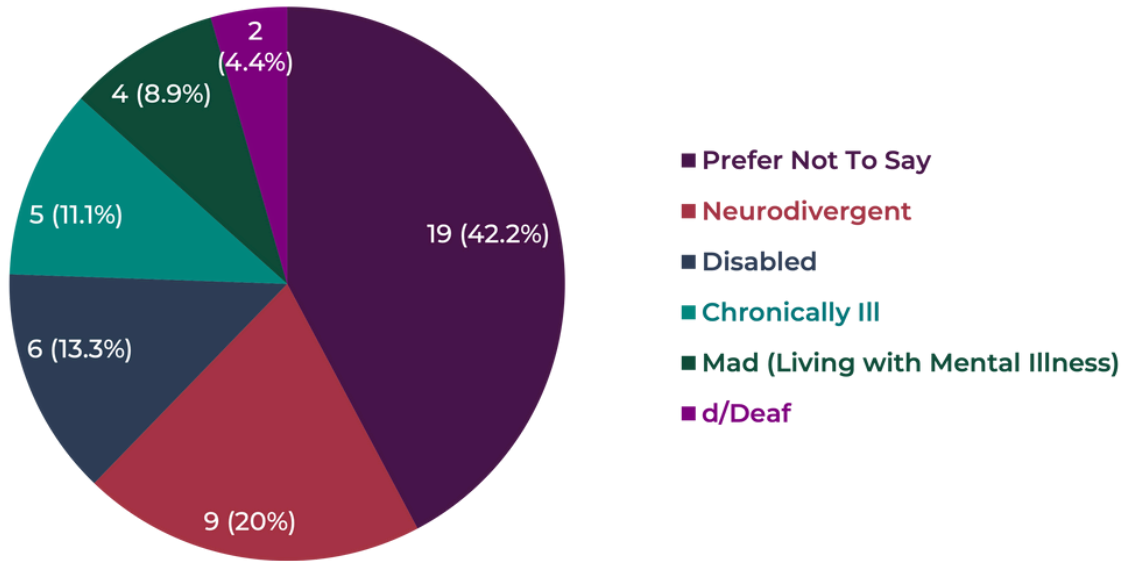
Note. To account for intersectionality, the total exceeds the number of self-identifying participants (149). Percentages based on total responses (152).

### PARTICIPANTS IDENTIFYING AS A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY, 2023-2024



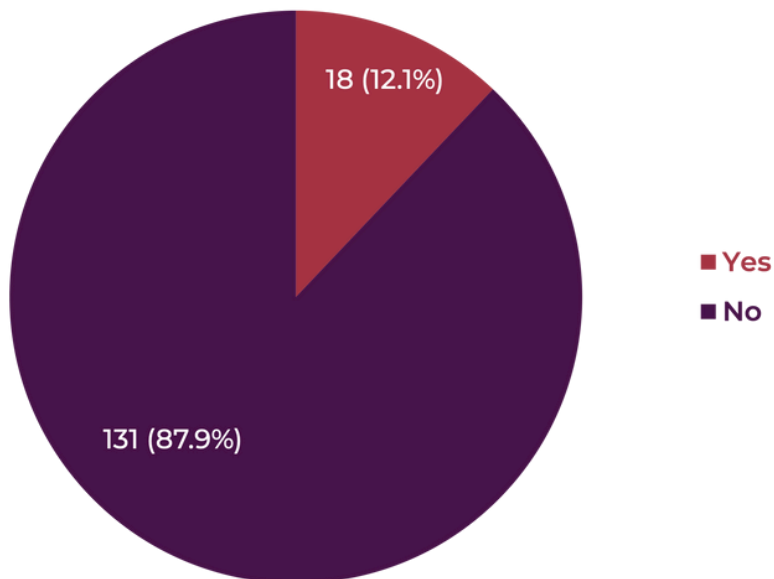
Note. Percentages based on total self-identifying participants (149).

### PARTICIPANTS IDENTIFYING AS A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY, 2023-2024



Note. Of the 149 participants, 33 identified as a person with a disability. To account for intersectionality, the total exceeds the number of self-identifying participants (33). Percentages based on total responses (45).

### PARTICIPANTS IDENTIFYING AS A NEWCOMER, 2023-2024



Note. Percentages based on total self-identifying participants (149).

## Appendix E: Methodology

The research for the Anti-Black Racism Policy Framework was conducted over two years and involved multiple phases of engagement with participants, community partners, and industry stakeholders. The decision was made to use qualitative research to elicit potential solutions from those most impacted by anti-Black racism in the Cultural Industries. A total of 149 individuals participated in the research. In the first year, 18 participants took part, while in the second year, 131 participants contributed. Across both years, 20 focus groups were conducted: three in Year 1 and 17 in Year 2. With the help of the members of an advisory group, the research team contacted over 60 cultural organizations working in a number of different industries represented in this framework. These organizations had to have Black creatives within their programs and services to be considered. After 17 of them answered the first callout, an info session was organized, and the research team finally collaborated with the 11 community partners who expressed their interest in the project.

To ensure effective outreach and engagement, the research team decided to leverage the existing trust and community-building efforts established by these community partners. Rather than organizing focus groups independently, the team invited community partners to host the focus groups themselves. This approach helped create safer and more comfortable spaces for participants to share their experiences. Each partner organization was provided with an honorarium for their involvement, and participants also received an honorarium for their time and contributions. Each community partner was invited to host up to two focus groups.

In the first year, the research team piloted three focus groups to refine the approach before scaling up in the second year. This pilot phase helped the team better understand how to expand the project beyond the screen industries to include cultural industries more broadly. To support the community partners, the team provided comprehensive training via an onboarding session. This training ensured that each partner had the tools and knowledge needed to successfully host focus groups either in person or via Zoom. The partners also received a detailed Consultation Handbook that outlined step-by-step instructions for facilitating focus groups in both formats.

Once all community partners submitted their data, the research team hired a Research Assistant to support the data analysis phase. Using NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software, the Research Assistant organized and coded the collected data to

identify key themes and patterns. The coding process involved creating a series of structured "coding trees," which are hierarchical frameworks that allow researchers to systematically categorize and analyze qualitative data. These coding trees grouped insights into thematic categories, enabling the research team to map connections between participant feedback, lived experiences, and the broader objectives of the policy framework. By building a clear structure of codes and sub-codes, the Research Assistant ensured that insights were easily accessible and that recurring themes could be traced across multiple focus groups and interviews. This method allowed for a nuanced analysis that reflected both commonalities and distinct experiences across participants.

It is important to note that this document is not a traditional research report but rather a research-based policy framework. Unlike typical reports highlighting trends or presenting qualitative data results, this framework is distinctive in that it translates the collected data into actionable, community-driven directives.

These directives are not presented as optional recommendations but as **essential steps required to address the systemic issues identified by participants**. The framework emphasizes implementation strategies that reflect Black communities' priorities and lived realities, ensuring that their voices remain central to the proposed policy changes.



Black Screen Office  
CBC Broadcast Centre  
25 John Street, 6th Floor, Toronto, ON  
M5V 3G6  
[info@bso-ben.ca](mailto:info@bso-ben.ca)  
[bso-ben.ca/research](http://bso-ben.ca/research)

