

Decent Work for Women Working in Ontario's Nonprofit Sector

Summary of Research Findings and Solutions

ONN conducted a comprehensive literature review, series learning circles, and a survey through a gender-based intersectional lens (GBA+) in order to better understand the barriers to economic empowerment faced by women working in Ontario's nonprofit sector. Now, we're taking action to develop and implement solutions to break down these barriers.

Key Findings

The sector is women-majority but not women-led. 80% of the sector's labour force consists of women workers, but based on their employment share women are disproportionately concentrated in non-leadership positions and are more likely to lead smaller sized and low budget organizations. Unequal job opportunities and a glass ceiling particularly exists for immigrant and racialized women and women with disabilities, resulting in a gendered and racialized hierarchy in the labour force.

Women have lower compensation than men. Three components impact women's compensation in the sector. First is a phenomenon known as the "care penalty", where wages in the sector are lower in comparison to other sectors, despite the fact the workforce is highly educated and experienced. Within the sector, women earn less than men, especially in senior leadership positions. Last, limited access to a pension plan, health benefits, and maternity leave top-ups particularly lower women's compensation over the course of their life cycle.

Women experience sexism at all levels. Busting the myth that sexism doesn't exist in a women-majority sector, women experience sexism on a day-to-day basis, in the types of roles they occupy, in distribution of work, and value of that work. Board members were cited as treating their male and female executive directors unequally.

Women overwhelmingly experience bullying and some sexual harassment. Bullying was experienced from other women in similar positions and those in power, while sexual harassment was experienced in interactions with external parties such as clients.

Gender plays a significant role in the nonprofit sector. At the macro level, nonprofit work is considered carework and thus women's work causing its devaluation while power dynamics between organizations and their boards, donors, or funders can be gendered. At the micro level, precarious employment is increasing and the sector has difficulty recruiting and retaining staff, lower wages, and limited access to benefits and PD.

Racism and ageism are other common forms of discrimination. Identities are complex and so discrimination is experienced in multiple ways. Some women experience discrimination primarily based on gender, some at the intersection of gender and another part of their identity, such as ability or age, and others primarily because of one part of their identity that is not gender, such as race.

More details on the findings can be found in our [literature review](#) and [Women's Voices](#) reports.

Moving Conversation to Action

We are developing the following ten solutions at the organizational, network, and systemic levels over the next year-and-a-half. We are using an iterative approach; the solutions will be refined as the project progresses.

Solution	Ultimate Goal
1. Organizational: Create a compensation guide for the nonprofit sector with a GBA+ lens that outlines different components of compensation, their importance, how they impact diverse women, and how to implement them.	A fair standard of compensation practices in the nonprofit sector.
2. Organizational: Document maternity and parental leave top-up practices in the nonprofit sector and share stories about how nonprofits made these policies work.	Widespread adoption of maternity top-ups in the nonprofit sector.
3. Organizational: Develop resources to mitigate hiring biases and integrate a GBA+ lens into leadership development.	Increase racialized, immigrant, and Indigenous women, women from the LGBTQ community and women with disabilities in leadership positions.
4. Network: Funder Strategy	Both governmental and nongovernmental funders of Ontario nonprofits facilitate decent work with a GBA+ lens in their funding practices.
5. Network: Board Strategy	Across the Ontario nonprofit sector, board members support a culture of decent work with a GBA+ lens in the organizations they govern.
6. Network: Support the creation of an LMI (Labour Market Information) portal for the nonprofit sector.	Ontario nonprofits have access to a wide range of information on nonprofit human resources in one place.
7. Network: Support other organizations working on solutions for women working in the nonprofit sector.	A stronger networked approach to gender equity across the nonprofit sector in Ontario.
8. Network: Convene and connect women working in nonprofits with resources, professional development opportunities, and systems of support.	Women working in Ontario nonprofits have access to opportunities to build their professional skillsets.
9. Systemic: Support advocacy for Employment Insurance (EI) modernizations that promote gender equity (i.e: equitable access to EI for women, EI benefit waiting periods for new parents, and adequate replacement levels during parental leaves) through networked policy advocacy.	Women's equitable access to EI benefits are part of the federal election agenda (2019) and federal party platforms.
10. Systemic: Advocate for women's economic empowerment policies in Ontario through networked policy advocacy.	The Government of Ontario undertakes women's economic empowerment strategies that are informed by a nonprofit lens (e.g., universal childcare program in Ontario; pay transparency in Ontario workplaces; and implementation, enforcement, and funding for a strong pay equity law in Ontario).

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