

Decent Work for Women Working in Ontario's Nonprofit Sector Summary of Research Findings and Solutions

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

Key Findings

The sector is women-majority but not women-led. 80 percent of the sector's labour force consists of women workers. However, based on women's employment share they 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 exist 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 that 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 and parental benefit top-ups particularly lower women's compensation over the course of their life.

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. Nonprofit work is considered carework and thus women's work, particularly that of racialized and immigrant women, causing its devaluation while power dynamics between organizations and their boards, donors, or funders can be gendered. At the micro level, the sector has precarious employment, difficulty recruiting and retaining staff, lower wages, and limited access to benefits and professional development.

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 have been developing and implementing the following ten solutions at the organizational, network, and systemic levels over the last year-and-a-half by using an iterative approach.

Solution	Ultimate Goal	Outputs
Impact Level: System		
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.	Pay Transparency Submission (April 2019) Pay Equity Brief (October 2019)
Support advocacy for Employment Insurance (EI) modernization that promotes gender equity.	Women's equitable access to EI benefits are part of the federal election agenda (2019) and federal party platforms.	Policy Brief: Modernizing Maternity and Parental EI Benefits (July 2019) Supporting universal childcare

Solution	Ultimate Goal	Outputs
Impact Level: Network		
Top-up-fund (<i>emerging solution</i>)	The nonprofit sector across Ontario pools risk and resources to provide maternity and parental benefit top-ups to workers.	Pooled Top-Up Fund concept note (May 2019)
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.	ONN has infused its project learnings into work led by other organizations by partnering on research proposals digging deeper into particular aspects of women's employment experiences, informing program development for leadership and gender-based intersectional trainings, and by participating in the national Gender Equality Network of Canada.
Funder Strategy	Both governmental and nongovernmental funders of Ontario nonprofits facilitate decent work with a GBA+ lens in their funding practices.	ONN's broader funder strategy is being informed with a gender-based intersectional lens.
Board Strategy	Across the Ontario nonprofit sector, board members support a culture of decent work with a GBA+ lens in the organizations they govern.	ONN's broader board strategy is being informed with a gender-based intersectional lens.

Solution	Ultimate Goal	Outputs
Impact Level: 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.	Bridging the gap: How compensation practices can reduce the gender wage gap in Ontario nonprofits (September 2019)
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.	ONN is supervising two graduate student teams in the Masters of Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership program at Carleton University. Both teams are conducting environmental scans. One team is exploring women's leadership development programs in nonprofits while the other resources in the sector on mitigating hiring biases against marginalized women.
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.	Maternity and parental leave top-ups: How we can better support new parents in Ontario nonprofits (January 2020)

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