

CONCLUSIONS

Change is subtle but positive

This year, as in the last two years, DiverseCity Counts analysed visible minority representation among leaders in the GTA. It looked at rates of representation in leadership positions in elected office, the public sector, the corporate sector, the voluntary sector, the education sector, and agencies, boards and commissions. The study revealed that of a total of 3,330 leadership positions, 483 (14.5%) are held by members of visible minority groups. These findings demonstrate a small but discernible improvement in the diversity of GTA leaders over the last three years.

There is variation among sectors

- The largest increase in leadership representation occurred among elected officials, with an 18.4% increase in the percentage of diverse leadership in 2011 from 2009.
- In the public sector, 8.8% of public sector leadership positions are held by visible minorities, a slight increase from 8.1% in 2009.
- The corporate sector remains the least diverse sector, with only 4.2% visible minorities in leadership positions.
- Government agencies, boards and commissions display the best overall diversity with 22% of leadership positions held by visible minorities.
- Government agencies, boards and commissions also show a significant increase in visible minority leadership, with a total increase of 18.3%.

There is variation within sectors

Overall sector rates often mask large variances across organizations within the same sector. For instance:

- 80% of university and 83.3% of college boards of governors have over 20% visible minority leaders;
- 66.7% of regional school boards had 20% or more visible minorities in leadership positions.

On the other hand, organizations in some sub-sectors are laggards. In the corporate sector, visible minorities lack any representation on 78.7% of corporate boards and 74.2% of executive teams. Likewise, in the voluntary sector, 64.3% of charities and 100% of foundations have executive teams with no visible minority representation. Such discrepancies demonstrate the opportunity for experience to be shared across sectors and among organizations.

The legal sector: A need to focus on leadership

In 2011, DiverseCity Counts looked at the representation of visible minorities among leaders within the legal sector. To assess the diversity of leaders in the legal sector in the GTA, the proportion of visible minorities among judges, governing bodies and law schools, and lawyers in the largest law firms were analysed. These sub-sectors were also analysed for variations in visible minority leadership representation.

Ultimately, the data show that visible minorities account for only for 6.8% of legal sector leaders (163 of 2,410) compared to 14.4% of all lawyers practicing in the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (Statistics

Canada, 2006) and 49.5% of the broader GTA population. Law school leaders and governing bodies have the greatest proportion of representation of all the legal sub-sectors studied, at 10.5%.

Ultimately, the generally low rates of visible minority representation among legal sector leaders suggest that the legal profession and its institutions need to continue to promote the advancement of visible minorities in leadership roles. This study identified a range of initiatives underway and some shining successes as well as opportunities for further progress.

Recommendations for all sectors

It is clear that progress is occurring but change is slow. Public and corporate sector organizations must continue to strive for the full representation of visible minorities in positions of leadership. This is necessary for social equity, but also because the GTA, one of the most richly diverse regions in the world, has the potential to leverage its diversity for greater innovation and financial performance in the global economy. To maximize the region's potential, governments, organizations and community groups should:

Understand the business case for diversity

Diverse leadership enhances efficiency, innovation, access to markets and financial performance.

Lead: Make diversity a strategic priority

Effective organizations recognize that diversity is a strategic priority, and their leadership reinforces this value. Senior executive commitment to diversity may be the most important factor in influencing organizational commitment and effective practices. Top-down commitment is crucial.

Communicate to influence

Proactive communication about an organization's commitment to diversity enhances its reputation and creates awareness for all stakeholders within and outside the organization among employees, suppliers, clients, educational institutions, the media and the public. The business case should be communicated at every opportunity.

Mainstream diversity

Proactive organizations recognize that diversity encompasses more than just a representative workforce. By making diversity mainstream – that is, a goal in all aspects of an organization's activities, from recruitment to procurement – an organization will benefit from a more inclusive work culture, a good reputation, and access to new markets.

Develop and sustain human resource practices

Successful organizations create the infrastructure to recruit, hire, support, develop and retain top diverse talent. Good human resource practices include liaising with diverse communities, committing to bias-free hiring, providing orientation to new recruits, mandating internal diversity training, creating mentoring and sponsorship programs, developing networking programs for employees, and being transparent about all human resource processes.

Develop the pipeline

Building a qualified pool of talent for leadership requires building a pipeline. Effective strategies include engaging current workers in mentoring and other initiatives. Youth outreach, by offering scholarships or internships, for example, engage the interest of promising leaders and maximizes their potential.

Count: What gets measured gets done

Data suggests that tracking diversity is linked to improved rates of diversity in leadership. Reporting on diversity creates a solid fact base that organizations can use to reflect on their performance, consider their policies, and assess what can be done to improve diverse representation in the upper echelons of their organizations. Firms that have been required to abide by federal equity legislation have seen improved rates of diversity in their leadership ranks.

Looking ahead

The findings of this study suggest that change is occurring slowly and that diversity in the GTA is a work in progress.

Diversity presents an opportunity for all sectors. Organizations across corporate and public sectors must commit to the equitable representation of visible minorities in positions of leadership. The GTA, one of the most richly diverse regions in the world, has the potential to leverage its diversity for improved social cohesion, innovation and financial strength in the global economy.