



The Black Executives Network/Le réseau des exécutifs noirs

THIRD ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025



2024-2025

**The Black Executives Network
Le Réseau des exécutifs noirs (BEN/REN)**

Third Annual Report

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MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAMPIONS

As the Black Executives Network / Le Réseau des exécutifs noirs (BEN/REN) presents its third annual report, we take this opportunity, in our role as the Deputy Minister Co-champions, to express our gratitude for the commitment and collective efforts that fuelled BEN/REN's progress over the past year.

In 2024-25, BEN/REN demonstrated exemplary leadership in advancing the objectives of the Clerk's Call to Action. BEN/REN supported Black executives through various initiatives including talent management, collaboration with employee networks, federal departments and agencies, and ongoing engagement with senior leadership to address anti-Black racism and remove barriers. This year has been marked by key milestones, most notably the release of Dr. Zellars' Study on Black Executives in the federal public service, the first study of its kind examining the challenges faced by Black executives and providing actionable recommendations for improvement. This study was followed by a Preliminary Response Plan, jointly developed by BEN/REN and the Treasury Board Secretariat, further reinforcing our commitment and bolstering our ongoing efforts to create a culture of belonging, inclusion and excellence in the federal public service.

In addition, BEN/REN and the Federal Black Employee Caucus (FBEC) in partnership with the Canada School of Public Service (CSPS), with support from Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) and Transport Canada, co-hosted their first three-day policy conference entitled Rising 2025: Black Excellence and Canadian Policy. This event brought together over 3,000 participants, including federal public servants, representatives from other levels of government, and individuals from the private sector, both in person and virtually. More than 40 speakers and subject matter experts explored key themes and examined how government policies and internal initiatives are advancing racial equity for Black communities in Canada.

BEN/REN also hosted its third Annual Black History Month Networking Event in partnership with APEX, along with other events and initiatives highlighted in this annual report. We sincerely appreciate our champion allies and deputy minister colleagues for their continued support, which has been instrumental in advancing these initiatives, as well as in facilitating meaningful discussions that led to tangible results.

This past fiscal year also brought key leadership changes within our Network, underscoring our dedication to growth, purposeful progress, and the sustained success of BEN/REN.

It is our distinct pleasure to welcome Christine McDowell as the new Co-Champion of BEN/REN, who, alongside Shalene, will continue to build on our successes. We also welcome our new deputy minister allies who will support the strategic direction and continued advancement of the Network. We look forward to the fresh perspectives and energy they will bring, and we are confident that together we will further strengthen BEN/REN's mission in ensuring a more inclusive and efficient public sector that delivers service excellence to all Canadians.

Sincerely,

Caroline & Shalene



CAROLINE XAVIER (she/her)
Chief, Communications Security
Establishment Canada

SHALENE CURTIS-MICALLEF (she/her)
Deputy Minister of Justice and
Deputy Attorney General of Canada

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

I am pleased to present the BEN/REN annual report 2024-25, and I am energized by our achievements as our initiatives and collaborations are making a tangible impact in the federal public service. I am proud to recognize the remarkable growth of our BEN/REN membership from 78 members when BEN/REN was established in July 2020 to 265 members by March 31, 2025. BEN/REN members represent various core and non-core departments, crown corporations and special operating agencies across the country. This growth is a testament to the steadfast dedication of our Steering Committee, Secretariat, and members whose dedication, involvement, and contributions serve as a driving force to advance our shared vision.

On behalf of BEN/REN, I extend our heartfelt appreciation to our deputy minister champions and allies for their ongoing support, guidance, and commitment to advancing anti-Black racism in the federal public service. We offer special and sincere thanks to Chief Caroline Xavier for her exceptional leadership and unwavering dedication as both the first Black Deputy Minister in the federal public service and the inaugural Champion of BEN/REN since the network's establishment in 2020. Over the past several months, she has skillfully served in a dual role as Champion of BEN/REN and as Deputy Minister Champion for Racialized Employees. Her leadership has been instrumental in shaping, promoting, and advancing the Network's mission from its earliest days and her continued efforts have laid a strong foundation for lasting change and greater equity across the federal public service.

We are also pleased to welcome Deputy Minister Christine McDowell, who has recently stepped into the role of BEN/REN Co-Champion alongside Deputy Minister Shalene Curtis-Micallef, who will be continuing in this role.

Every BEN/REN achievement stands as a reminder of the strides we have made and serves as a motivation to persevere in our efforts to strengthen measures against anti-Black racism and eliminate barriers to foster a more inclusive federal public service. These efforts align with the Clerk's Call to Action and the Values and Ethics Code for the Public Service, but more importantly, these efforts are grounded in Canadian legislation including the *Employment Equity Act*, the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Dr. Zellars also reports on the lived experience of Black Executives and highlights the labour relations issues our membership is facing as it challenges provisions of the *Canada Labour Code*. These laws are the cornerstone of Canadian society to guarantee fundamental rights, ensuring equal opportunities and respect for every individual, regardless of race or ethnicity, and creating opportunities where everyone can thrive and contribute in a safe workplace to Canada's success. Therefore, to strengthen the responsiveness and effectiveness of the federal public service, BEN/REN and the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer (OCHRO) co-developed a Preliminary Action Plan in response to the Dr. Zellars Report to help drive meaningful progress and concrete action. The objective is to ensure our institutions uphold laws that guarantee fundamental rights and reflect the diversity of the Canadian population we serve.

According to Statistics Canada, Canada's Black population is projected to more than double by 2041, making it one of the fastest-growing racialized groups in the country. This shift underscores the necessity for the federal public service to adapt to the evolving demographic landscape, ensuring representation, and fostering an inclusive environment where all employees feel valued and truly belong. As the Black community continues to expand, our commitment to removing systemic barriers and harnessing talents is vital to maintaining excellence in the public service.

As BEN/REN celebrates its 5th anniversary in 2025, we are building on our momentum with a refreshed network, new deputy minister champions and allies, and steering committee members to guide our progress. With a forward-focused vision, we are also aligning resources to meet future needs, ensuring continued excellence and long-term sustainability. BEN/REN's reputation and brand is a gold standard for other networks. We are proud of the work we have done and grateful to the support received. Our results are clear, but what stands out more is the acuteness of the discrimination, the level of harassment and the unprecedented level of career stagnation and underrepresentation our members continue to face and live with. And yet, in the face of these persistent barriers, our members continue to show up – committed to delivering programs and services that matter to Canadians.

BEN/REN exists not only to provide our members with a strong network, but also to help the Government of Canada in addressing the challenges members face, while upholding human rights, meeting the expectations outlined in the *Canada Labour Code*, and fulfilling obligations under the *Employment Equity Act*. This goes beyond being 'woke'; it is about adhering to the legal framework that governs federal employees.

Driven by our shared commitment to addressing anti-Black racism, and guided by the values of integrity, accountability, and collaboration, with the strong support of senior leadership, I am confident that BEN/REN will continue to drive meaningful change across the federal public service. By advancing equity and inclusion, we are not only improving conditions for Black public servants, but strengthening the foundation for a more effective, responsive and high-performing federal public service that delivers better outcomes for all public servants and, ultimately, for all Canadians.

Warm regards,



HANTZ PROSPER (he/him)
Chair and Co-Founder



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Black Executives Network Secretariat is pleased to present the Black Executives Network/Réseau des exécutifs noirs (BEN/REN) Third Annual Report, covering the period from April 1, 2024, to March 31, 2025.

This report outlines key milestones, achievements and progress in addressing anti-Black racism and advancing the objectives of the Clerk of the Privy Council's Call to Action on Anti-Racism, Equity, and Inclusion in the Federal Public Service, fostering a more inclusive federal public service that values and supports Black executives and employees.

This year, BEN/REN's membership grew by 29.6%, a clear reflection of our growing influence and continued commitment to fostering an empowered and vibrant community where no talent is left behind. Together, we are seizing new opportunities and paving the way for long-term success.

Building on the findings of Dr. Rachel Zellars' study research on the Black executive community in the federal public service, released in November 2024, BEN/REN continues to engage senior leaders and build meaningful partnerships with departments, employee networks, and organizations to advance shared goals and lead strategic initiatives. These collaborations are key to supporting executive career development and mobility, while strengthening the pipeline of Black talent across the federal public service.

Among these initiatives is a collaboration with the Canada School of Public Service (CSPS) to launch a new stream of the Executive Leadership Development Program, which welcomed 50 participants in its inaugural cohort. Designed to address systemic underrepresentation, the program bridges leadership development with lived experiences, supporting the career progression of Black executives.

Another significant milestone was BEN/REN's inaugural three-day conference, co-hosted with the Federal Black Employee Caucus (FBEC) and CSPS. This event brought together government officials, community leaders, and subject matter experts to explore critical policy issues, priorities, and themes affecting Black communities across Canada. At its core, the event aimed to inform and strengthen program and service delivery, helping to ensure that public policies are more inclusive, responsive, and effective in meeting the diverse needs of Canadians.

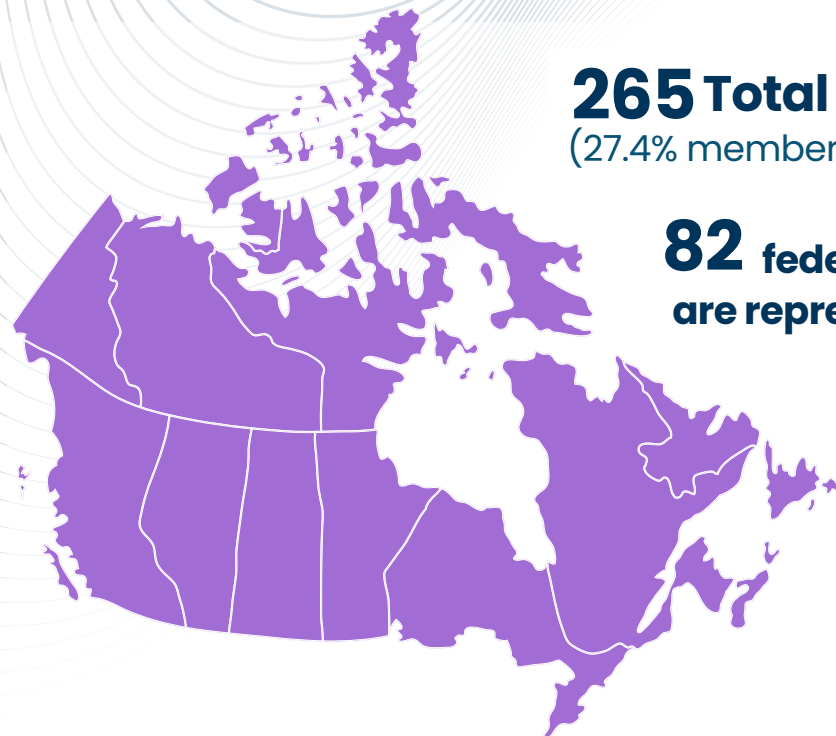
Furthermore, BEN/REN played a key role in advocating for equity-focused legislative reform by partnering with the Public Service Pride Network to urge the government to accelerate recommended amendments to the *Employment Equity Act*, ensuring Black and 2SLGBTQI+ federal workers receive formal recognition as designated groups.

Looking ahead, BEN/REN remains optimistic, knowing our efforts help shape public service management policies, bridge representation gaps, and address the challenges faced by current and future Black executives. We are committed to protecting hard-earned progress, advancing this critical work, and sustaining lasting change.

We sincerely appreciate our BEN/REN community, champions, allies, and partners for their ongoing support and dedication as we drive positive change and strengthen our impact in the federal public service and for Canadians.



OUR IMPACT AT A GLANCE

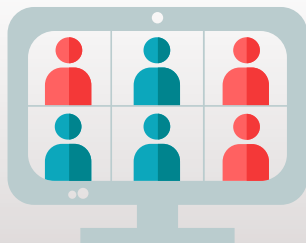


265 Total BEN/REN Members
(27.4% membership growth from 2023)

82 federal departments and agencies
are represented

Members are located across
6 major geographical regions
of Canada

Membership Meetings



100 attendees on average per meeting

LinkedIn ● 2023 ● 2024

3,583 Total Followers
2,583 New Followers
gained in 2024

+ 236.14% from 2023

1065

3583

FIRST 3-DAY CONFERENCE



3000+ in person and virtual attendees
from the federal public service, other levels of government,
and the private sector

40+ Guest speakers

1000+ attendees per
leadership sessions

280 mentees

33 mentors

10+ partnerships established

8 interdepartmental Events

AN OVERVIEW OF BEN/REN: THE CRITICAL ROLE OF OUR ORGANIZATION

Our Vision & Missions

The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, along with other federal legislation, provides a strong foundation for human rights, equity, and inclusion, ensuring protections against discrimination for all Canadians. Building on this, Canada’s adoption of the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent (UNDPAD) and its extension until December 31, 2034, combined with federal public service initiatives such as the Clerk’s Call to Action further reinforce the government’s commitment to advance anti-racism efforts and support meaningful progress.

However, despite these legislations and government commitments, Black federal employees continue to face significant barriers within the federal workforce.

Vision

The Black Executives Network / Le Réseau des exécutifs noirs (BEN/REN) was established in July 2020 to support executives in the federal public service while collaborating as a proactive partner with the Government of Canada to address systemic discrimination and anti-Black racism. The vision of BEN/REN is to help build a public service that is inclusive, representative at all levels, and committed to recognizing and leveraging talent to better serve all Canadians.

BEN/REN provides a credible voice on the identification and response to issues ensuring that Black perspectives are taken into account in government processes and decision-making.

Mission

- 1 Build and sustain a strong, inclusive and influential network of Black executives who are committed to public service excellence, sound stewardship and positive outcomes for all Canadians.
- 2 Promote talent management by supporting, mentoring and sponsoring Black executives and aspiring executives.
- 3 Exemplify the changes we want to affect in the federal public service.
- 4 Support the mental health and well-being of Black executives in the federal public service.

AN OVERVIEW OF BEN/REN: THE CRITICAL ROLE OF OUR ORGANIZATION

Our Priorities

These priorities are designed to advance and support BEN/REN’s mission.

Research and Data

BEN/REN collaborates with Statistics Canada to assess the potential of integrating the Disproportionality Index (DI) with Labour Market Availability (LMA). The development of the DI marks a significant step toward revealing disparities in the representation of Black employees across occupational groups. Moving forward, our efforts will focus on promoting awareness and adoption of the DI across the federal public service as a valuable, evidence-based tool to support equity and drive more informed, inclusive decision-making.

The BEN/REN Secretariat also introduced key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure progress and impact, with a focus on member engagement, career advancement initiatives, and mental health support. These KPIs include clear metrics to track outcomes related to the implementation of the Clerk’s Call to Action, the Dr. Zellars report, and the Preliminary Action Plan in response to the Dr. Zellars report, which was co-developed by BEN/REN and the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer (OCHRO). These KPIs also help assess departmental efforts across government to ensure meaningful action toward safer, more inclusive workplaces

Partnership & Stakeholder Engagement

Engagement with partners and stakeholders continue to play a critical role in fostering meaningful dialogue, securing senior leadership support, and driving tangible actions to address systemic anti-Black racism within the federal public service. These collaborative efforts have helped build trust, align priorities, and create pathways for sustainable change by ensuring that the voices and lived experiences of Black executives are at the center of equity-focused strategies and initiatives.

Talent Management

BEN/REN developed new coaching, mentoring, and leadership programs to empower Black executives and aspiring leaders with the resources and guidance needed to support their career development and progression. BEN/REN is also helping to build a pipeline that prepares and equips aspiring executives, while also helping to close the representation gap at the executive level.

Mental Health

BEN/REN recognizes mental health as a vital component of workplace well-being and continues to advocate for culturally competent support systems. The Network remains actively engaged with Health Canada on the Black-Centric Enhancements to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), ensuring the unique needs of Black employees are acknowledged and addressed. Notable progress has been made, including expanded anti-racism and cultural competency training, improved data collection to better serve Black clients, and a growing number of Black mental health professionals. These are important steps toward building safer, more inclusive spaces for healing and support.

AN OVERVIEW OF BEN/REN: THE CRITICAL ROLE OF OUR ORGANIZATION

This year brought changes to our senior leadership team, Steering Committee, and Secretariat, marking a period of renewal that reflects our ongoing evolution. These transitions reaffirm our commitment to charting a clear path forward, positioning the Network for continued success in the years ahead.

We extend our sincere appreciation to those who have contributed to our success thus far and we welcome those who have recently joined us.

Our Structure: The Steering Committee

BEN/REN is primarily led by a Steering Committee of executive members who oversee and provide direction for the Network, actively engage with senior management and contribute to shaping, addressing, and implementing management policy responses.

Given the demands of the Chair's role, the Steering Committee will move towards a Co-Chair model. One Co-Chair will be the Executive Director of the Black Executives Network Secretariat, and the other will be a member of the Steering Committee.



Hantz Prosper (he/him),
Chair
Director General,
Corporations Canada,
Innovation, Science and
Economic Development
Canada



Dominic Simon (he/him)
Co-Chair
Executive Director,
Black Executives Network
(joined in February 2025)



Albert Tshimanga,
(he/him)
Senior Director,
Public Services and
Procurement Canada



Dienabou Sow
(she/her)
Director,
Natural Sciences and
Engineering Research
Council of Canada
(joined in March 2025)



Judith Bosire
(she/her)
Director, CanNor
(joined in March 2025)



Kevin Petit-Frère
(he/him)
Director General,
Privy Council Office



Mitos San Diego
(she/her)
Senior Director, Public
Services and Procurement
Canada
(joined in March 2025)



Paula Folkes-Dallaire
(she/her),
Associate Assistant Deputy
Minister, Public Services and
Procurement Canada
(until October 2024)



Samuel Bonti-Ankomah
(he/him),
Director,
Public Health Agency of
Canada
(joined in March 2025)



Tahanee McKnight,
(she/her)
Director General,
Royal Canadian Mounted
Police



Trudy Samuel
(she/her),
Director General,
The Canadian Institutes
of Health Research
(until October 2024)

AN OVERVIEW OF BEN/REN: THE CRITICAL ROLE OF OUR ORGANIZATION

Our Structure: The Secretariat

The Secretariat is responsible for delivering programs and providing the support services required for the daily operation of an effective and efficient network. This includes conducting data research and policy analysis, managing information, logistics and communications, organizing events, serving as the primary contact for the BEN/REN membership, providing strategic advice and recommendations for decision-making, and engaging with other employee networks to collaborate on initiatives.



Seyi Okuribido-Malcom
(she/her),
Executive Director
(until January 2025)



Dominic Simon
(he/him),
Executive Director
(joined in February 2025)



Sandra DiGnagbo,
(she/her)
Deputy Director



Delia Rama
(she/her)
Executive Assistant



Tineka Simmons,
Lead, Talent Management



Kimberly Beals
(she/her)
Project Manager



Sonia Bizimana
(she/her)
Project Coordinator



Jhannell Edwards
(she/her),
Communication Officer



Might Gouta
(he/him)
Junior Policy Analyst



Adeola Onafuwa
(he/him),
Policy Analyst



Charles Osaretin
(he/him),
Senior Data Analyst



Chuks Onwuachi
(he/him),
Senior Policy Analyst



Victoria Simba,
Senior Policy Analyst
(until February 2025)



Sandrine Chebekoue,
(she/her)
Policy Analyst

AN OVERVIEW OF BEN/REN: THE CRITICAL ROLE OF OUR ORGANIZATION

Our Structure: The Champions & Allies

BEN/REN is championed by senior leaders at the Deputy Minister (DM) level, who serve as DM Champions and Allies. These leaders play a vital role as advocates and ambassadors for the Network.

Their role entails providing strategic guidance, promoting interdepartmental collaboration, encouraging senior leadership engagement in addressing systemic racism across the federal public service, and reinforcing the importance of accountability at all levels of government.

BEN/REN Champions

Caroline Xavier (she/her), Chief of Communications Security Establishment Canada (until March 2025)

Shalene Curtis-Micallef (she/her), Deputy Minister of Justice and Deputy Attorney General of Canada

Christine McDowell (she/her), Associate Deputy Minister of Veterans Affairs Canada (joined in March 2025)



We extend our heartfelt appreciation to DM Bill Matthews, Secretary of the Treasury Board, for his steadfast support as the first BEN/REN Champion Ally in 2020

DM Allies

Alex Benay, Assoc. Deputy Minister, Public Services and Procurement Canada (joined in December 2025)

Bill Matthews (he/him), Treasury Board Secretary, Treasury Board Secretariat (until February 2025)

Cliff Groen (he/him), Deputy Minister, Employment and Social Development (joined in March 2025)

Isabelle Mondou (she/her), Deputy Minister, Canadian Heritage

Jean-François Tremblay (he/him), Deputy Minister, Environment and Climate Change (joined in March 2025)

Phillip Jennings (he/him), Deputy Minister, Innovation, Science and Economic Development (joined in March 2025)

Simon Kennedy (he/him), Deputy Minister, Deputy Minister, Innovation, Science and Economic Development (retired in September 2024)

AN OVERVIEW OF BEN/REN: THE CRITICAL ROLE OF OUR ORGANIZATION

In 2023, under the leadership of former Deputy Minister Simon Kennedy, Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED) officially welcomed the BEN/REN Secretariat as its new home—marking a significant milestone in our journey. By housing BEN/REN, ISED has strengthened our reach across the federal public service, enabling stronger collaboration, enhanced visibility, and strategic alignment to empower our members, drive meaningful change, and advance greater equity across the public service.

Our Membership

BEN/REN's membership is open to Black federal public service executives (at the EX 01 level and above or are acting for one year or more in an EX position or equivalent) in the core public administration, crown corporations, and agencies. BEN/REN offers its members a supportive community that fosters connections and belonging among Black executives. Members have full access to learning and networking events, membership meetings, and career development

opportunities such as coaching and mentorship. Members also have the opportunity to contribute to BEN/REN's objectives as we strive to build sustained excellence in the leadership of a public service that is agile, high performing, inclusive of diverse perspectives and experiences, and committed to ensuring no talent is left behind.



Membership Summary

Since the establishment of BEN/REN in 2020, the Black executive cadre in the federal public service has grown significantly. The number of self-identified Black executives across Canada increased from 78 members to 265 members by March 2025 representing a growth of approx. 240% over this period. This substantial increase can be attributed, in part, to BEN/REN's promotion efforts and initiatives aimed at creating the conditions for Black executive representation and inclusion in the public service.

While we are proud to acknowledge the remarkable progress made and growth in the number of Black executives, it is important to note that there is still work to be done to achieve equitable representation. BEN/REN continues to engage with senior leadership to implement strategies to further close these gaps and develop a strong pipeline of Black executives in the public service.

AN OVERVIEW OF BEN/REN: THE CRITICAL ROLE OF OUR ORGANIZATION

The total number of BEN/REN members more than doubled, increasing from 78 to 265 between 2020 and 2024.

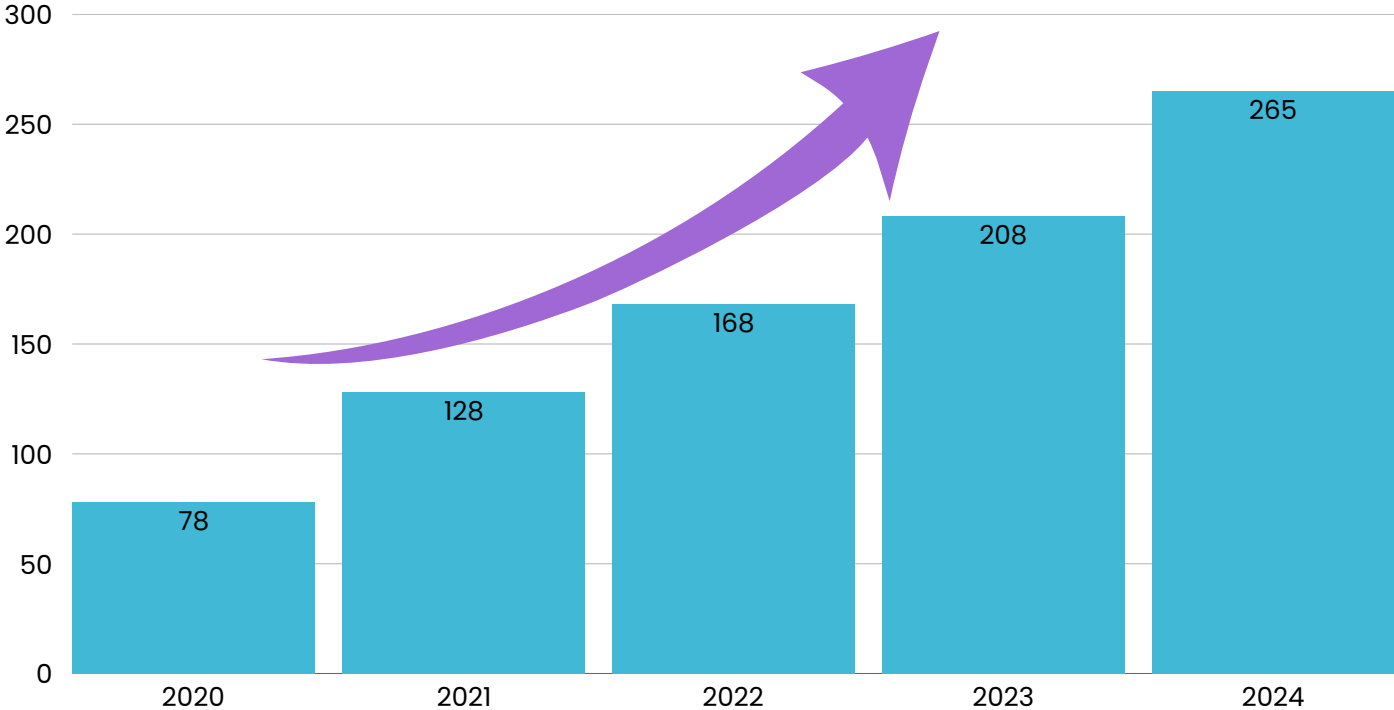
To Note:

BEN/REN’s membership includes Black executives representing various core and non-core departments, crown corporations and special operating agencies across the country. As a result, these numbers may differ from the total of self-identified Black executives reported by the Treasury Board Secretariat.

Self-Identification

We encourage Black executives to self-identify in surveys and employment processes to provide BEN/REN and the Government of Canada with an accurate understanding of Black representation and experiences within the public service. This supports efforts to promote equity by identifying and addressing disparities and barriers Black federal employees face. Moreover, self-identification guides the development of policies, programs, and inclusive practices that foster equitable opportunities and support for BEN/REN members and all public servants.

Figure 1. Growth of the BEN/REN’s Membership since 2020



AN OVERVIEW OF BEN/REN: THE CRITICAL ROLE OF OUR ORGANIZATION

Bridging the Gap: Black Executives Representation in the Federal Public Service TBS Source

Based on the Black population’s share of Canada’s population (4.3%) and a total executive workforce of 7,760, the federal public service should have approximately 334 Black executives to reflect equitable representation. Currently, Treasury Board Secretariat reports that the Black executive representation in the Core Public Service stands at only 233 (3.0%). The data reveals a shortfall of 101 Black executives. This represents a 30.2% gap in achieving population parity at the executive level.

Figure 2. Representation of Black Executives by Group and Levels

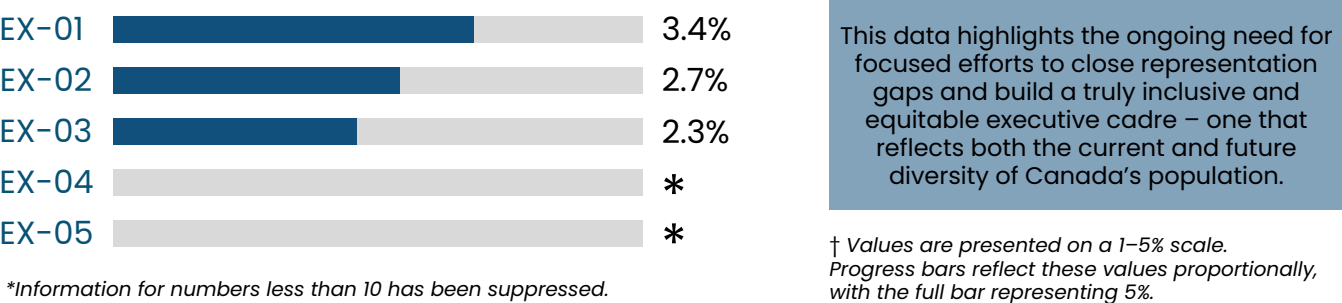
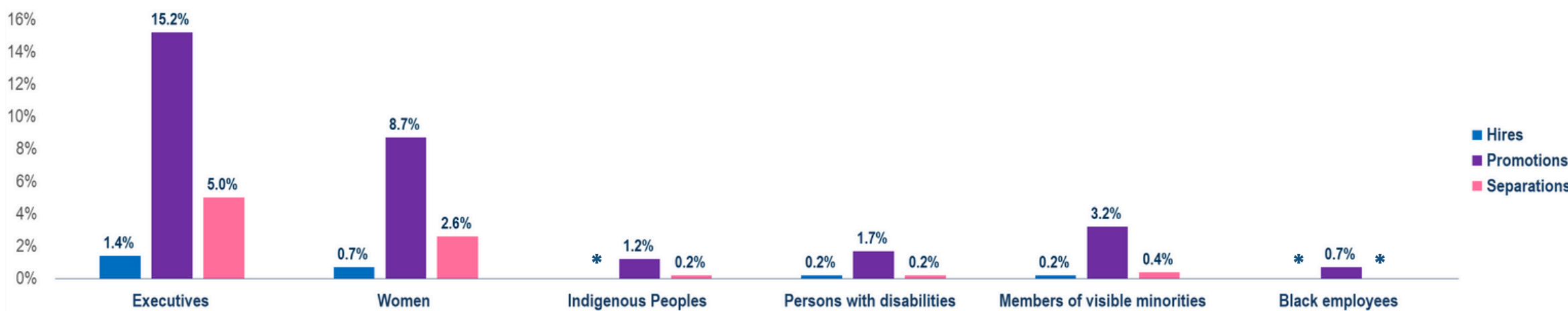


Figure 3. Promotions of Executives by Designated Groups in the Core Public Service (TBS EE Report 2023–24 Table 11)



* Information for small numbers has been suppressed. Additionally, to avoid residual disclosure, other data may also be suppressed.

WHY THE FOCUS ON BLACK PUBLIC SERVANTS MATTERS

Focusing on Black federal public servants is first and foremost a legal responsibility, grounded in the *Employment Equity Act* and related legislation. At the same time, it is a matter of equity and fairness, accountability, and building a more effective public service that benefits all Canadians.

The *Employment Equity Act* establishes a legislative framework to ensure fair workplaces opportunities by identifying and eliminating systemic barriers for designated groups, including visible minorities, that encompasses Black employees as a subgroup. Yet, despite measured progress for visible minorities, Black employees continue to face unique and persistent systemic barriers within the federal workforce, pointing to the need for more focused and sustained actions.

Data between 2017 and 2023 from the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) reported a persistent salary gap where Black employees in the Core Public Administration earned consistently less than their counterparts. Black employees are notably **overrepresented** in the \$50K to \$75K salary range, at 45.4%, compared to 36.2% for visible minorities overall. These disparities exist despite Black employees' qualifications and contributions to the federal public service. Data also confirms that Black employees report higher rates of discrimination complaints and diminished trust in staffing and promotion processes.

Further analysis by Dr. Martin Nicholas, through the development of the Disproportionality Index, revealed that Black employees are significantly overrepresented in lower salary bands and underrepresented at the highest salary levels across all occupational groups. This important analysis is featured in the "Why the Focus on Black Public Servants" placemat, a key communications tool developed by the BEN/REN Secretariat and now used in senior leadership briefings to highlight these disproportionate challenges.

These challenges exist alongside a shifting demographic reality. Statistics Canada projects that the Black population which represents 4.3% of Canada's population will more than double by 2041. This projection highlights the growing influence of Black communities in shaping Canada's demographic and cultural fabric by 2041.

The Black Executives Network plays a crucial role in supporting the federal public service to implement initiatives, programs, as well as providing management policy responses to eliminate systemic barriers. These efforts are instrumental for fostering a truly inclusive and equitable workplace that reflects the diversity of the population it serves.

Addressing systemic barriers for Black public servants is not about 'special treatment'. It is about ensuring fair access to opportunities, equitable representation at all levels of the federal public service, harnessing underrepresented talent, and incorporating diverse lived experiences into policy development.

In doing so, the federal public service not only strengthens representation at every level—it also builds public trust, drives better policy outcomes, and upholds Canada's commitment to anti-racism, inclusion, and service excellence.

The result: a more inclusive and equitable future that benefits all Canadians!



WHY THE FOCUS ON **BLACK PUBLIC SERVANTS MATTERS**

As of March 2024, of the 61,015 people who self-identified as a member of a visible minority group, 13,270 self-identified as Black, which is an increase of 1,499 employees since last year.

Figure 4. Core Public Administration Population
(TBS EE Report 2023-24)

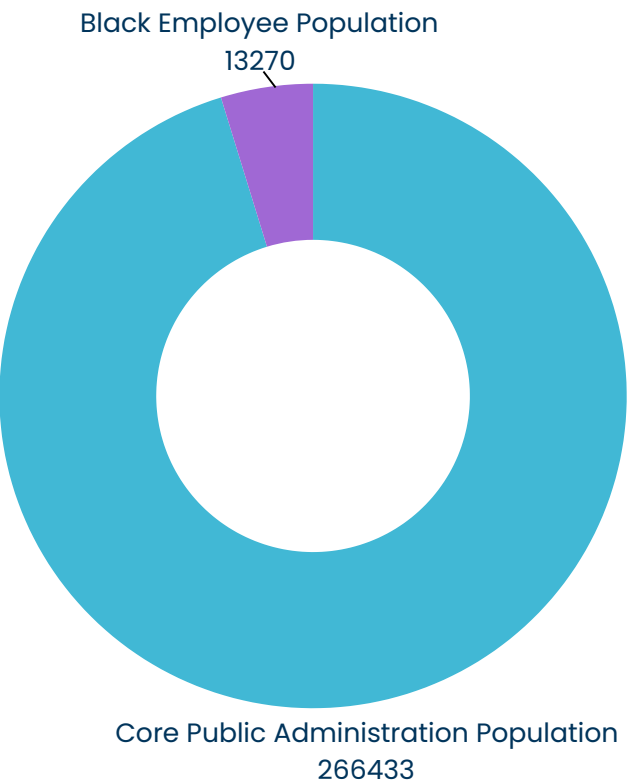
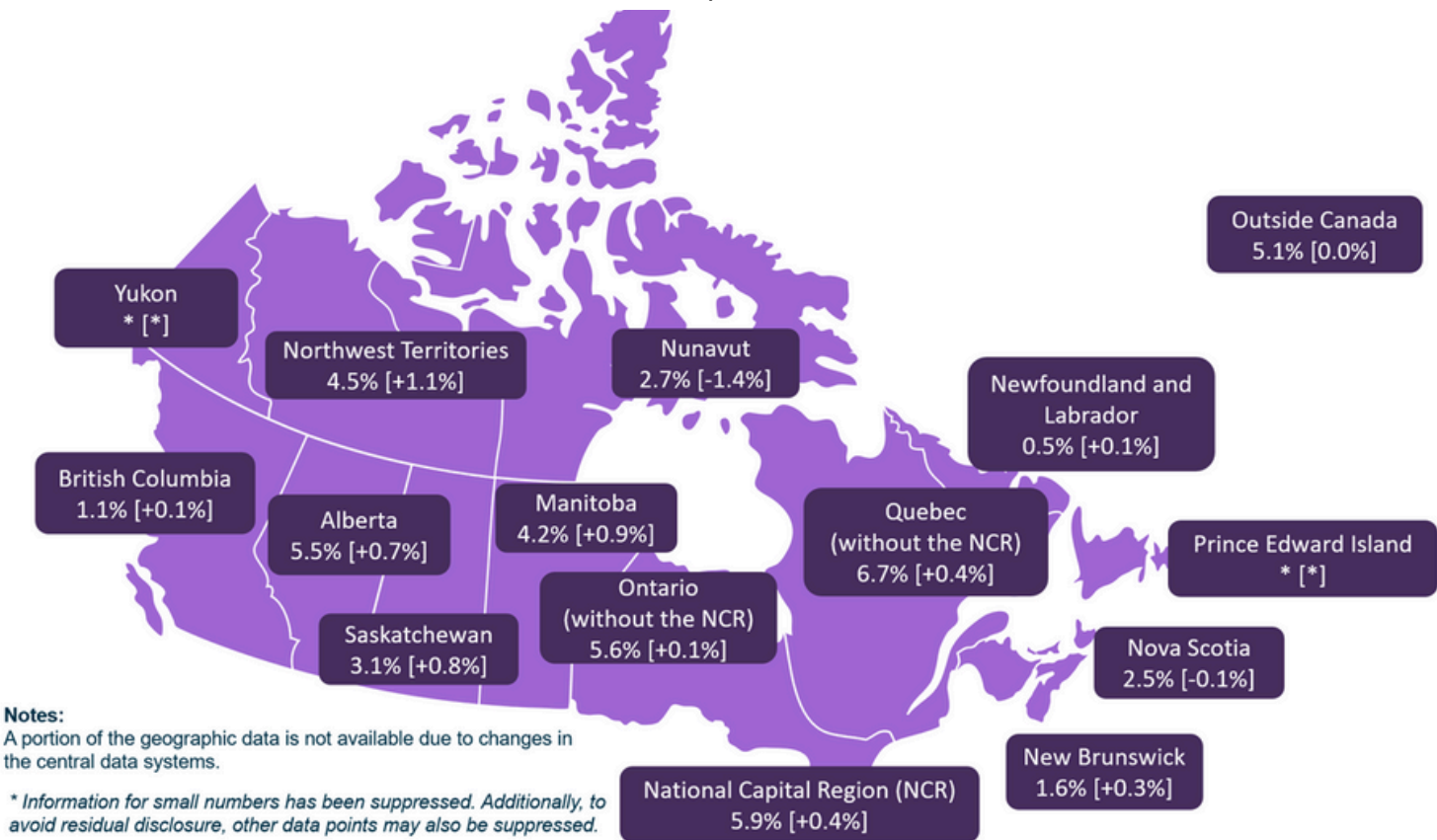
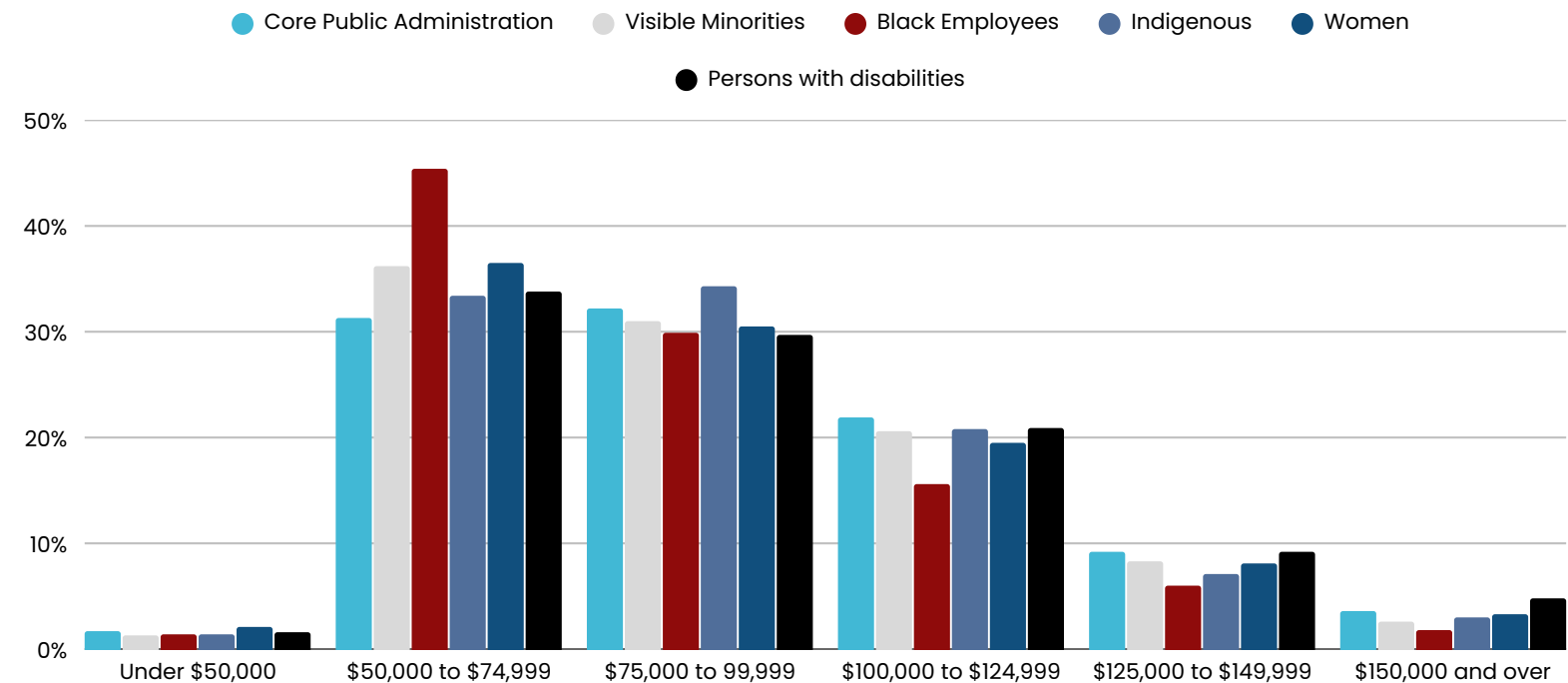


Figure 5. Representation of Black employees by province and territory of work
(TBS EE Report 2023-24).



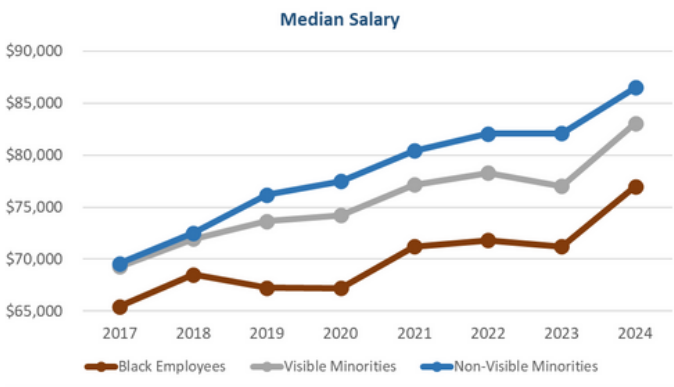
WHY THE FOCUS ON **BLACK PUBLIC SERVANTS MATTERS**

Figure 6. Salary-level Representation for Black Employees: Stagnation and Barriers to Advancement



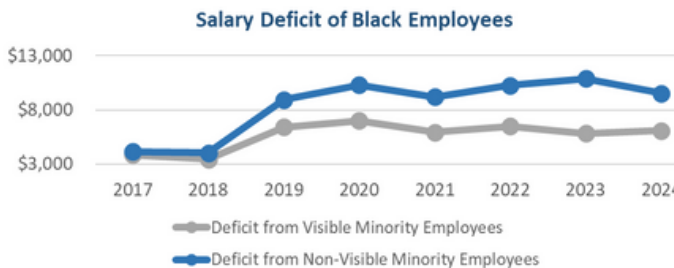
Black employees are more overrepresented in the \$50,000 to \$74,999 salary range compared to their counterparts in the federal public service, where their earnings often plateau. This trend underscores the need for targeted initiatives to address career stagnation and further support professional advancement.

Figure 7. Median Salary and Salary Deficit of Black Employees



Despite being a subgroup of the visible minority group, Black employees in the Core Public Administration earned consistently less—about **\$3.4k–\$7k**—than the median salary of other visible minority employees between 2017 and 2024.

Black employees' median salaries consistently stayed lower, hovering around **\$65k–77k** throughout the period, resulting in a median salary deficit that grew from **\$4.2k–10.9k** for Non-Visible Minority Employee



OUR RESULTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS:

IMPACTFUL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE

CALLING FOR AMENDMENTS TO THE EMPLOYMENT EQUITY ACT

In December 2023, the Task Force on the Employment Equity Act Review EEA task force recommended updating the Act to expand the list of designated groups to formally include Black and 2SLGBTQI+ workers.

United in purpose, BEN/REN and the Public Service Pride Network (PSPN) called on the federal government to accelerate the Task Force's recommended amendments. Advancing these efforts reinforces the principles of the *Employment Equity Act* to ensure workplaces remove barriers and create equitable opportunities for underrepresented groups to thrive.

STUDY ON THE BLACK EXECUTIVES WITHIN THE FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE AND PRELIMINARY RESPONSE PLAN

In September 2023, BEN/REN commissioned Dr. Rachel Zellars to conduct the very first research study of its kind in the federal public service examining the unique experiences Black executives face.

On November 4, 2024, Dr. Zellars' final report entitled 'The Study on Black Executives in the Federal Public Service' was released. This study sheds light on systemic barriers, inequities, and gaps in career advancement opportunities. It also underscores the emotional, psychological, and physical impacts on Black executives and offers concrete recommendations which serves as a roadmap to address systemic issues, including the need for intentional leadership, accountability, data transparency, and systemic change.

We are sincerely grateful and appreciative of our BEN/REN members who bravely and courageously shared their lived experiences for this study. Their contribution and resilience are helping move the needle forward toward equity and accountability in the public service.



A STUDY ON THE
BLACK EXECUTIVE
COMMUNITY IN THE
FEDERAL PUBLIC
SERVICE

Prepared By:
Dr. Rachel Zellars, MA, JD, PHD

PRELIMINARY RESPONSE PLAN

When the study was released, the system demonstrated swift responsiveness, with the Clerk of the Privy Council taking immediate and meaningful action. Acknowledging the urgency of the study's findings, the Clerk promptly issued a Preliminary Action Plan, which was co-developed by BEN/REN and the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer (OCHRO).

He also announced the creation of dedicated capacity at OCHRO to support implementation and ensure transparency and accountability. His proactive approach signalled a commitment to addressing key recommendations and ensuring that necessary steps were taken at scale to drive systemic change across the public service.

EVENTS

Rising 2025: Black Excellence and Canadian Policy

As part of a broader commitment to prioritize policies and initiatives that address systemic anti-Black racism, equity and inclusion, BEN/REN co-hosted its first 3-day policy conference, from February 10-12, 2025, in partnership with the Federal Black Employee Caucus (FBEC), the Canada School of Public Service (CSPS), and with support from Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), and Transport Canada.

The policy conference took place in February 2025, marking a year since Canada renewed its commitment to the United Nations Decade for People of African Descent (UNDPAD) and its decision to extend the Decade until December 31, 2034.

The purpose of this conference was to provide a valuable platform for raising awareness as well as encouraging dialogue and meaningful engagement centered on Black lived experiences to help build bridges within the policy community and to provide tools to policy makers. In this spirit, the event brought together over 3,000 participants both in person and virtually, including representatives from all levels of government, the private sector, and the community.

Together with more than 40 guest speakers and subject matter experts, attendees explored the key themes of the UNDPAD, including emerging trends and best practices for informing decision-making and advancing more inclusive policy outcomes. On a larger scale, embedding diverse voices into the policy process leads to stronger, more responsive decisions and ultimately improves service delivery for all Canadians.

On the evening of the first day of the Policy Conference, a vibrant networking event brought together Black public servants, policy professionals, and community leaders to foster connection and collaboration. The evening created space for informal dialogue, relationship-building, and reflection setting a welcoming tone for the rest of the conference and reinforcing the importance of visibility, solidarity, and shared purpose in the policy landscape.

BEN/REN remains committed to continuing this dialogue to ensure it permeates all levels of government and reaches the communities we serve. These conversations and efforts strengthen accountability, foster trust, and drive lasting, systemic change. Building on this progress, our sustained approach underscores our resolve to translate dialogue into meaningful, enduring progress for all the people we serve.

** A comprehensive report on the conference will be issued under separate cover. We encourage you to watch for its upcoming release*



EVENTS

Third BEN/REN & APEX Black History Month Networking Event

In celebration of Black History Month, BEN/REN and the Association of Professional Executives of the Public Service of Canada (APEX) co-hosted their third annual in-person networking event on February 25, 2025, at the National Art Center, in Ottawa. This event provided a valuable opportunity for dialogue, engagement and building professional relationships between Black executives and the deputy minister community. More than 100 participants were in attendance.

The event also included the presentation of the Richard D. Sharpe Award for Excellence which was inaugurated by BEN/REN in 2024 to honour Richard's visionary leadership in shaping a public service grounded in equity and justice, and actively committed to addressing anti-Black racism.



Richard D. Sharpe Award

Following a nomination process, this year's Richard D. Award for Excellence was proudly presented to Kathy Lusk, Director General at Service Canada, in recognition of her exceptional leadership in spearheading and championing trailblazing initiatives including the Building Black Leaders Program and the Diverse Leadership Development Program. Deputy Minister Cliff Groen of Service Canada had the privilege of presenting this well-deserved recognition to Kathy.



EVENTS

Holiday Networking Event

On Thursday, December 12, 2024, BEN/REN hosted its highly anticipated annual Holiday Networking Event at Exit Lounge in Ottawa, a Black-owned business. This event brought together over 80 Black executives for an evening of celebration, connection, and reflection. Set in a warm and welcoming atmosphere, the event was filled with empowerment, Black joy, and collective pride as BEN/REN members embraced the holiday spirit and acknowledged the remarkable achievements made throughout the year. More than a celebration, this gathering demonstrated the power of community and the importance of building strong professional relationships and uplifting each other.



Interdepartmental Emancipation Day Event

On July 31, 2024, BEN/REN co-hosted an Interdepartmental Emancipation Day Webcast with the Public Service Procurement Canada (PSPC), Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) and Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) Black employee networks. Deputy Minister Jean-François Tremblay opened the event and Chief Caroline Xavier provided closing remarks. With 876 virtual attendees, the event honoured Black Canadians' contributions, reflected on Canada's history of slavery, encouraged discussions on systemic racism, and reaffirmed a shared commitment to equity and justice.

TALENT MANAGEMENT & CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Leadership Series

The BEN/REN Leadership Series is a new initiative featuring expert panellists and discussions on fostering professional growth, addressing systemic challenges, and empowering leaders through coaching and mentorship.

On October 4, 2024, BEN/REN hosted Empowering Leaders through Expert Coaching, a panel exploring the unique challenges Black executives face and the pivotal role of executive coaching in leadership development, career progression, and personal fulfillment. The session was moderated by Farahldine Boisclair, and the discussion featured insights from executive coaches and leadership experts, highlighting the critical need for tailored coaching to navigate racial trauma and workplace inequities.

In December 2024 and January 2025, BEN/REN in collaboration with the Canadian Innovation Centre for Mental Health at ISED, co-hosted two leadership sessions focused on reflection and leadership growth. These sessions helped participants set meaningful professional goals to build on their strengths for a successful new year. More than 1,000 Black executives and employees across the public service attended these sessions virtually.



Executive Leadership Development Program (ELDP)

The Canada School of Public Service (CSPS) launched a new stream of the Executive Leadership Development Program (ELDP), with the support of BEN/REN, to advance the [Action Plan for Black Public Servants](#) aimed at dismantling barriers faced by Black public servants.

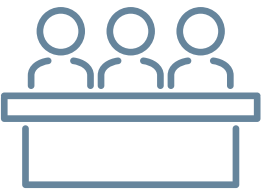
Designed to address the historic underrepresentation of Black executives, this tailored initiative provides participants at the EX 01 to EX 03 levels with essential knowledge of public service leadership, while creating space for peer connection and the integration of lived experiences. With 50 participants in its first cohort, the program supports career advancement by strengthening leadership skills and access to high-impact development opportunities and helping close representation gaps in the federal public service.

TALENT MANAGEMENT & CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Black Policy Leaders Development Program (BPLDP)

In January 2024, the Privy Council Office (PCO), in collaboration with BEN/REN, launched the Black Policy Leaders Development Program (BPLDP). This initiative provides Black employees at the EC-04 to EC-06 levels with rotational placements within PCO, offering diverse policy experience while equipping them with the competencies and leadership skills needed to harness top talent and innovative ideas.

To mark the launch of the program, PCO and BEN/REN co-hosted an orientation session in October 2024 to welcome the inaugural cohort of nine participants. The session provided valuable insights into career development and progression, setting the stage for a meaningful and enriching experience.



Interdepartmental Speed Mentoring Event

On February 26, 2025, BEN/REN and the Black Employee Network of Climate Change Canada (ECCC) co-hosted a virtual Speed Mentoring Event to celebrate Black History Month. This event fostered meaningful mentorship opportunities between Black executives and employees in the federal public service. With 33 Black executives serving as mentors and 280 Black employees participating as mentees, the initiative reinforced a culture of support for the pipeline of Black leaders in the federal public service.

Mental Health

In April 2024, BEN/REN hosted a mental health session entitled ‘Healing-Centered Leadership for the Rest of Us: Rest, Healing, and Healthy Uses of Power’. Led by coaches Dale Allen and Trevor Stevenson, the session focused on the importance of rest, the power of personal healing, and redefining leadership through empathy and resilience. The session encouraged a shift from conventional leadership models toward more human-centered approaches, reinforcing BEN/REN’s commitment to supporting Black executives in building inclusive and balanced leadership practices.



KING CHARLES III CORONATION MEDAL RECIPIENTS

The King Charles III Coronation Medal is a commemorative honour created to mark His Majesty's accession and to honour individuals who have made significant contributions to Canada.

BEN/REN is proud to count among its membership, recipients of the King Charles III Coronation Medal. Their recognition is a testament not only to their professional achievements, leadership and excellent service within and beyond the federal public service but also to their commitment to building a better Canada.



We celebrate the following recipients' accomplishments with pride:

Adan Abdi, Indigenous Services Canada

Albert Tshimanga, Public Services and Procurement Canada

Aliou Diarra, Canada Revenue Agency

Anab Ahmed, Administrative Tribunals Support Service of Canada

Denise Gomes, Shared Services Canada

Farrah Fleurimond, Transport Canada

Hantz Prosper, Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada

Jacqueline Beckles, Justice Canada

Marie Calixte-McKenzie, Communications Security Establishment Canada

Marie-Caroline Badjeck, Department of Fisheries and Oceans

Marina Leigertwood-Joseph, Public Services and Procurement Canada

Michel Burrowes, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada

Moussa Dramé, Veterans Affairs Canada

Nadine Huggins, Health Canada

Pauline Lacossade, Environment and Climate Change Canada

Ray Edwards, Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada

Roxane Lee, Service Canada

Ryan Pascal, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

Trudy Samuel, Canadian Institutes of Health Research

Veronica Fox, Royal Canadian Mounted Police

** While these are the names submitted to the BEN/REN Secretariat, we recognize and congratulate all who have received the King Charles III Coronation Medal.*

LOOKING AHEAD: ENSURED CONTINUED SUCCESS



BEN/REN continues to make impactful contributions to the federal public service, ensuring a more inclusive and efficient public service that delivers service excellence to all Canadians. Our work is guided by the voices of our BEN/REN members, whose lived experiences ensure that our actions are driving systemic change and building a more inclusive workforce. This Network exists not just to hold space, but to help shape the public service of the future, one that is equitable and inclusive. Such endeavour requires collective action, visible leadership commitment, and a shared responsibility to create a workplace where all employees are respected, supported, and empowered to succeed.

Despite the meaningful progress BEN/REN has achieved over the past five years including advancing representation, increasing leadership opportunities, and narrowing inclusion gaps, there is still much work to be done. True and lasting Black inclusion must go beyond incremental gains; it must be fully realized and woven into the very fabric of our institutions. As the government navigates fiscal constraints and workforce adjustments, we must acknowledge the disproportionate impact these shifts may have on Black employee population. Now more than ever, the federal public service must act with intention, strategy, and fairness, ensuring our efforts align with fundamental legislative principles such as those outlined in the *Employment Equity Act*. The urgency is clear; equity must not be an afterthought but a guiding force in shaping a truly inclusive future.

Therefore, it is essential that we stay committed to safeguarding the hard-earned progress we have achieved. At the same time, we must remain purpose-driven as we advance key recommendations from the Dr. Zellars report. BEN/REN will continue to collaborate closely with TBS-OCHRO and actively engage with senior leaders to refine and implement the Response Plan, drive meaningful change, and contribute to building a public service that truly reflects and serves all Canadians.

By strengthening pathways for Black executives and aspiring leaders across all regions, we are helping to build a more inclusive and equitable federal public service, because true excellence is rooted in inclusion, belonging, and representation.

FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORKS AND INITIATIVES GUIDING OUR WORK

Call to Action on Anti-Racism, Equity and Inclusion:

<http://canada.ca/en/privy-council/corporate/clerk/call-to-action-anti-racism-equity-inclusion-federal-public-service.html>

Canadian Human Rights Act: <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/h-6/>

Canada Labour Code: <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/l-2/>

Charter of Rights and Freedoms: <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/const/page-12.html>

Employment Equity Act: <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/e-5.401/>

Study on Black Executives in the Federal Public

https://wiki.gccollab.ca/images/f/f8/A_Study_of_the_Black_Executive_Community_in_the_Federal_Public_Service_compressed_2MB.pdf

The Federal Budget 2024: <https://budget.canada.ca/2024/home-accueil-en.html>

United Nations Decade for People of African Descent, 2015–2028:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/social-development-partnerships/supporting-black-communities/international-decade.html>

Values and Ethics Code: <https://www.tbs-sct.canada.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=25049>





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Employment Services and Development Canada
Innovation Science and Economic Development
Natural Resources Canada
Transport Canada

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Trudy Samuel
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Collaborators on Interdepartmental Events and Initiatives

Association of Professional Executives of the Public Service of Canada (APEX)
Canada School of Public Service
Canada Revenue Agency – Black Employee Network
Employment and Social Development Canada
Environment and Climate Change Canada – Black Employee Network
Federal Black Employee Caucus (FBEC)
Health Canada
Privy Council Office
Public Service Pride Network (PSPN)
Public Service Procurement Canada – Black Professionals Network
Statistic Canada
Treasury Board Secretariat – Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer
Transport Canada

Special Mentions

April Howe, Founder and CEO Crayon Strategies (coaching event panellist)
Dale Allen, Coach (coaching event panellist)
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Dr. Rachel Zellars
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Eleonore Eaves, Founder Eaves Coaching (coaching event panellist)
Farahdine Boisclair, Executive Director, Office of the Secretary to the Governor General (Policy Conference MC)
Irwin Bess, Executive Faculty Member at the Canada School of Public Service (coaching event panellist)
Mel Skinner, Executive Coach (coaching event panellist)
Mike Pinder Photography (APEX & BEN/REN event)
Rosie Dénot, Executive Health Canada (coaching event panellist)
Sebastien N'Singi, Legal Counsel, Department of Justice (Policy Conference MC)
Trevor Stevenson, Coach (coaching event panellist)



Endnotes

Demographic in the Public Service [Demographic Snapshot of Canada's Public Service, 2023 - Canada.ca](#)

Salary Range Distribution [Employment Equity in the Public Service of Canada for Fiscal Year 2022 to 2023 - Canada.ca](#)

Employment Equity Act Review Task Force Final Report [A Transformative Framework to Achieve and Sustain Employment Equity](#)

Black Population Projections 2041 [The Daily — Canada in 2041: A larger, more diverse population with greater differences between regions](#)

Study on Black Executives in the Federal Public Service [File:EN - BENREN Black EX Report.png - wiki](#)

Results for Black Employees - Discrimination [2022 Public Service Employee Survey results: Racial group - Canada.ca](#)



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BEN
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Le Réseau des exécutifs noirs