

# **THE STATE OF DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND EQUITY IN THE CANADIAN MAGAZINE INDUSTRY: SURVEY REPORT (SUMMARY)**

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**Submitted by**

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The Alberta Magazine Publishers Association (AMPA) sustains a healthy magazine industry by serving the people who publish, create, print and distribute a uniquely Albertan view of the world. We're a classroom, a forum, a newsletter, an advocate and a united voice for magazine publishers in this province. We support Alberta magazines through promotion, advancement and practical programs that foster professional development and industry growth. [albertamagazines.com](http://albertamagazines.com)

AMPA is situated on Treaty 7 territory, home of the Kainai, Piikani, Siksika, Tsuut'ina, Stoney Nakoda Nations and the Métis Nation, Region 3.



Founded in 1993, the Magazine Association of BC is a member-driven, not-for-profit organization which believes in the interconnected cultural and economic value of a vital British Columbia magazine publishing industry. MagsBC works to foster an environment where new magazines are nurtured, established magazines are supported and magazine staff are able to develop their skills.

We acknowledge that the Magazine Association of BC carries out its work on the unceded territory of the Coast Salish Peoples, including the territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səlilwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tseil-Waututh) First Nations. [magsbc.com](http://magsbc.com)

## The project

The Alberta Magazine Publishers Association (AMPA) and the Magazine Association of BC (MagsBC) would like to support its membership and the magazine industry to be more diverse, inclusive and equitable. To that end, AMPA and MagsBC partnered to administer a Canada-wide survey on equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in the magazine industry. The goal of the survey was to gather information on:

- (i) how diverse and inclusive magazine organizations and the magazine industry are
- (ii) the challenges that magazine organizations face in becoming more diverse, inclusive and equitable
- (iii) the strategies that organizations have implemented to become more diverse, inclusive and equitable and to ensure that content represents diverse voices and perspectives.

## What we did

We conducted an online cross-Canada survey in English and French with magazine publishing companies and individuals working in the industry, including owners, publishers, staff, contractors and freelancers. 378 people responded to the survey, 153 on behalf of a magazine organization and 225 as individuals. The survey was widely circulated via emails to members of magazine associations, magazine association newsletters and website and social media posts. However, the challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic created for the magazine industry may have affected the response rate.

A series of quantitative and qualitative (open-ended) questions asked respondents about diversity, inclusion and equity in their own organization(s) and in the magazine industry overall. To assess whether people's responses differed according to their individual characteristics or the type of organization they represented, we also asked a series of individual and organizational demographic questions. This report summarizes the findings of that survey.

## What we found

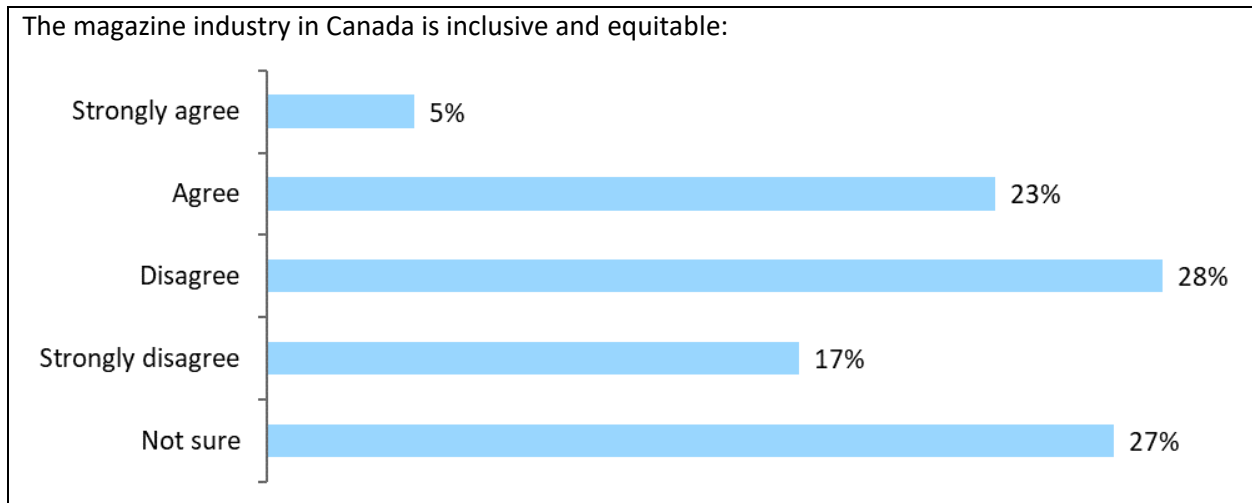
For the most part, respondents felt that the magazine industry faces some serious challenges to reaching the important goal of being diverse, equitable and inclusive, although people shared a range of opinions on the importance of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI), the current state of EDI and what magazine organizations should do to promote it.

### *Inclusion and equity in the magazine industry*

45% of respondents said that they felt the magazine industry is not inclusive and equitable. 28% said that it was inclusive and equitable and 27% were not sure. Generally, people from equity-seeking groups (ESGs) were less likely to feel that the industry was inclusive and equitable.

Organization size also affected perceptions; the smaller an organization was, the more likely a respondent was to think that the industry was inclusive and equitable.

**Figure 1: Inclusion and equity in the magazine industry**



Many respondents noted that “equity, inclusion and diversity are areas that have long been overlooked in the magazine industry” and that there is no excuse to continue practices that are inequitable and exclusionary. However, some respondents cautioned that doing work on EDI is complex. Given that discrimination and oppression are the result of long-standing historical and current forces, EDI-related change requires committed action over time. Actions taken must be more than cosmetic; they must address the deep structural components of an organization.

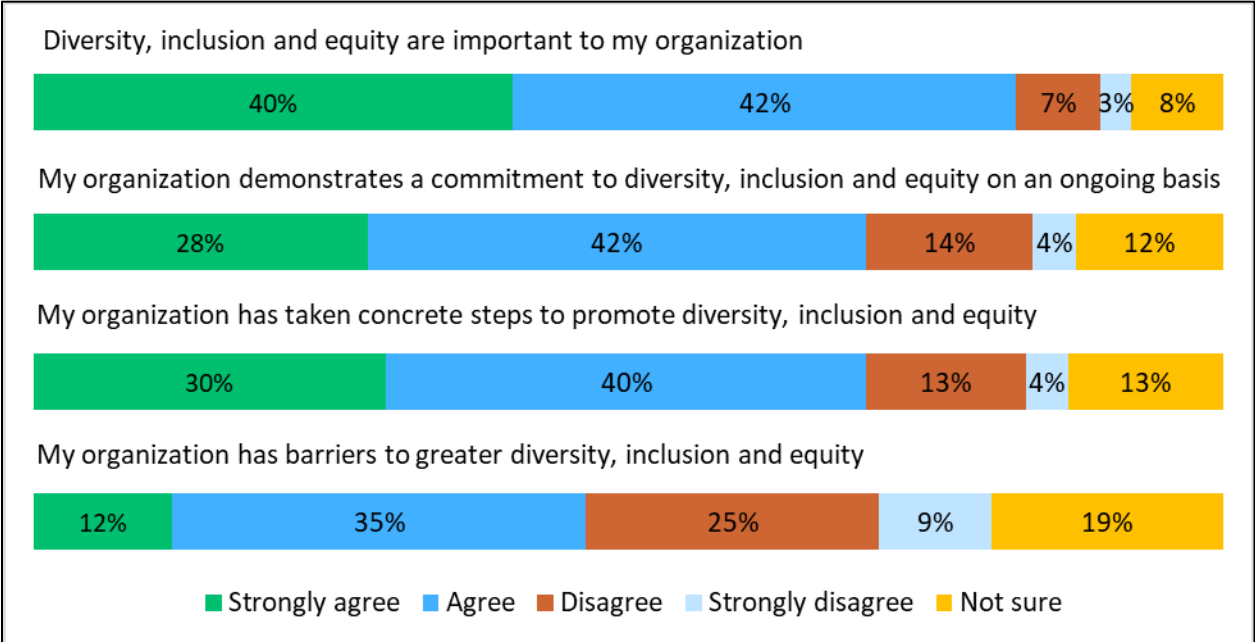
### ***Organizational commitment and action***

Although 82% of respondents agreed that diversity and inclusion were important to the organizations they worked for, only 70% felt that their organizations demonstrated a commitment to EDI and another 70% said that their organizations had taken concrete steps to promote EDI. 47% of respondents said that their organizations faced barriers to EDI.

Respondents noted that their organizations were at widely different places in their commitment to and action on EDI. We identified four levels of organizational commitment in the responses. One group of respondents said that their organizations were deeply committed to EDI and that this mandate guided all their actions and decisions. Others noted that their organizations were committed to working on addressing EDI and that industry-wide, “there seems to be an earnest push towards equity across the board,” but that progress is slow and more change is needed. A third group noted that even though EDI is a stated priority in their organization, commitment has not been followed by visible action or the allocation of resources to implement concrete strategies. A fourth group of respondents noted that a complete lack of organizational commitment to EDI was preventing change. Some of these people described an

organizational climate in which some individuals, most often from ESGs, are committed to EDI and try to make changes but face significant resistance from leadership or colleagues.

**Figure 2: EDI in organizations**

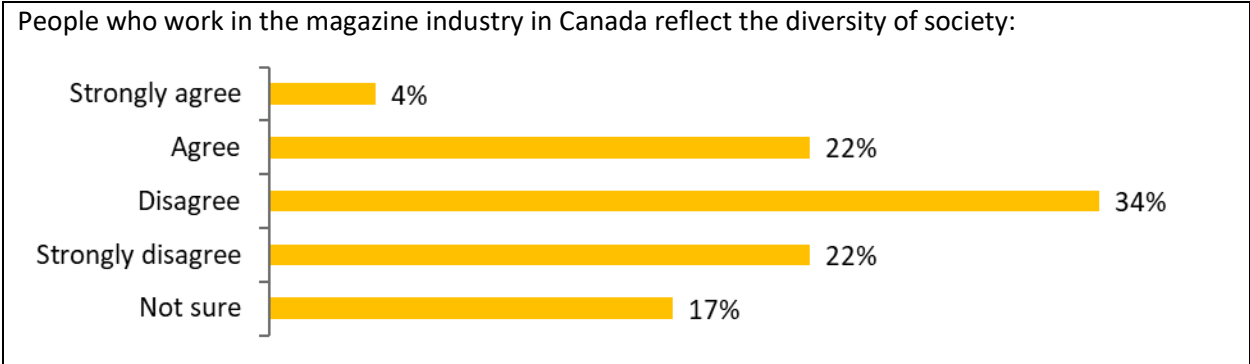


**Representation and recruitment in the magazine workforce**

Respondents saw having a diverse, equitable and inclusive workforce as key to promoting EDI in their organization and across the industry. As one noted, “The thing that has been the most significant for us is to have editorial board and staff members who come from diverse backgrounds and have a desire to have the magazine better reflect the society in which it publishes. Direct and immediate change came from this.”

However, when asked whether people who work in the magazine industry currently reflect the diversity of society, 56% of respondents disagreed, 26% agreed, and 17% were not sure. Respondents from ESGs and those with less decision making authority (e.g. staff, freelancers) were more likely to think the workforce is not representative.

**Figure 3: Representation in the magazine industry**



On the other hand, some respondents told us that the industry and their own organizations were very representative of the diversity of society, either because everyone is welcomed regardless of their background or because specific efforts are made to promote EDI.

Barriers to a representative workforce

Respondents described a range of barriers to a representative workforce in the magazine industry. 64% of respondents said that staff, contractors and freelancers from ESGs could get a position in their organization just as easily as people from non-ESGs. However, a number also discussed the barriers ESGs face to entering the industry, including bias and discrimination in hiring along the lines of gender, race, and age. Respondents recounted situations where “only White males got promotions and women weren't often hired due to ‘potential pregnancies’” and experiences of “being rejected for full-time employment based upon my age.”

Respondents described an entrenched culture in magazine organizations in which White men occupy leadership positions and most often hire and promote other White men. This homogeneity is exacerbated when editors or managers look for writers or staff from among their personal networks, which limits the pool of potential talent.

Even when people from ESGs manage to get into the industry, it is difficult to get promoted into leadership, and staff from ESGs are not intentionally supported to move into these positions. One person commented: “Editorial magazines are mainly White because upper level management are White and BIPOC [Black, Indigenous and people of colour] employees can get to middle management but never higher than that.” However, many respondents asserted that in order for the industry as a whole to become more equitable, diverse and inclusive, it is essential that people from ESGs be promoted into leadership so they are in a position to make important organizational change. As one said, “New generation of diverse leadership needed. ESG members need to be in charge. Let them lead.”

Challenges to recruitment of ESGs

The vast majority of respondents agreed that it was important for magazine organizations to hire staff and contractors from ESGs (90%) and to work with freelancers from ESGs (89%).

However, 44% told us that their organizations face challenges when recruiting people from ESGs. A lack of funds and low turnover in most organizations means that there are few available positions for new hires from ESGs. Small magazines also have few leadership positions into which to promote people from ESGs.

Many respondents described how the low-paying and precarious nature of work in the industry means that only people with privilege – often White and middle-class – can afford to work in jobs where they are underpaid or put in unpaid time. This restricts who has access to the training opportunities necessary to enter the industry: only those with privilege can afford to take unpaid or low-paying opportunities early in their career.

**Figure 4: Recruiting from equity seeking groups**



Other respondents noted that it was hard to hire from ESGs because organizations don't know how to connect with candidates. Many magazines lack relationships with equity-seeking communities and organizations that want to reach out sometimes don't have the resources to do it: "As an editor of a small arts publication with limited resources and staff, it takes time to scout, contact, and start a dialogue with a new writer from an equity-seeking group."

Respondents also said that the industry needs a larger talent pool of contributors from ESGs to draw from. This is harder for niche publications or magazines in homogenous rural communities, which are even less likely to find qualified staff from ESGs who can write about the content area.

Where formal hiring processes do exist, they rarely prioritize EDI. However, sometimes there are no policies. Smaller magazines especially "often have no real HR department or policies in place, allowing publishers and upper management to overlook diversity and inclusion."

Some progress on recruitment

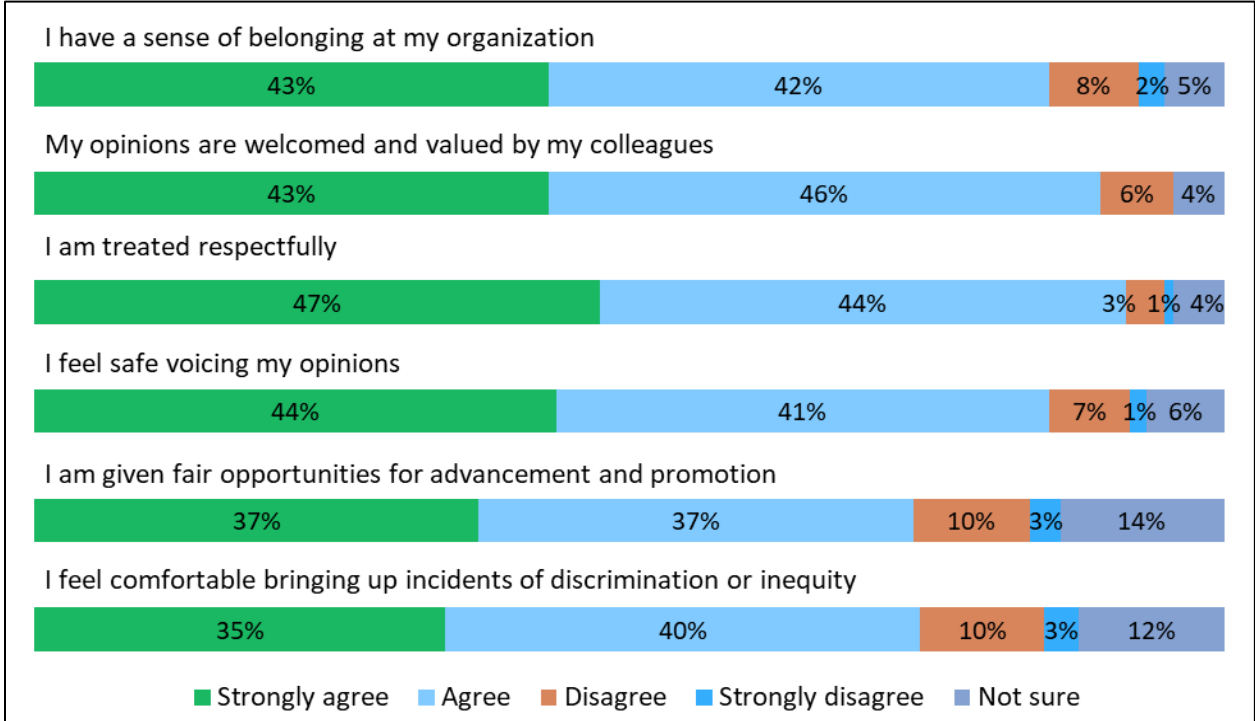
Despite these barriers, a number of respondents shared what their organizations are doing to build EDI in their workforce. 65% of respondents said their organizations make an intentional effort to work with people from ESGs, although larger organizations were more likely to do this than smaller ones. Some have set and report regularly on targets for diversity among staff, contributors, volunteers and board members. Other organizations have taken time to assess

“how certain aspects of our hiring processes can preclude hiring and promotion of people from equity seeking groups” and made changes to those processes.

**Workplace inclusion**

When asked about their experiences of inclusion in their own organizations, respondents – both those from ESGs and non-ESGs – generally said that they feel valued and respected in the workplace. However, older and White people were more likely than younger or BIPOC people to feel that they are given equitable opportunities for advancement or that they can bring up incidents of inequity without fear of negative consequences.

**Figure 5: Workplace experiences**

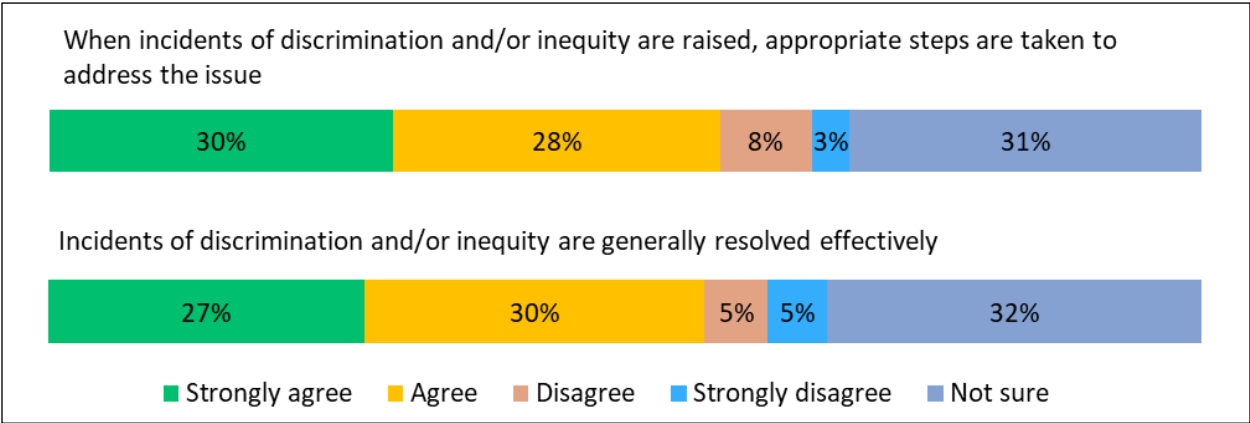


Around a quarter of respondents reported that they had experienced barriers to inclusion (28%) or discrimination (24%) in a past or current publishing-related workplace. Genderqueer and non-binary people and women were more likely than men, and Black respondents were more likely than other racial/ethnic groups, to report discrimination and barriers to inclusion.

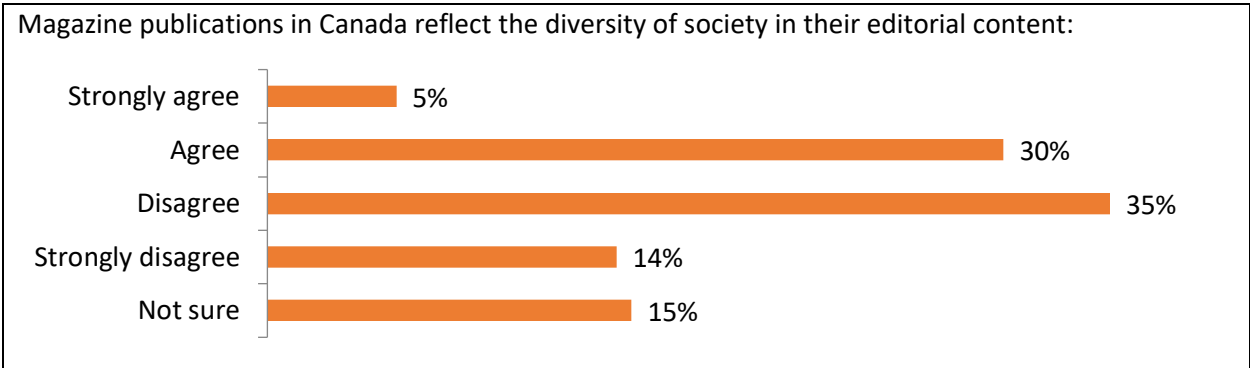
When incidents of discrimination happen in their organizations, 58% of respondents agreed that appropriate steps are taken to address the issue and 57% said that they are generally resolved effectively. However, approximately 30% of respondents were not sure if this was the case, pointing to a need for more transparent processes for dealing with exclusion and discrimination.



**Figure 6: Resolution of incidents of discrimination**



**Figure 7: Diversity of magazine publications**



A number of respondents told us that they had never witnessed discrimination in their organization: “What I will say is in my decades of experience in the industry I have yet to personally see anyone fired, mistreated, refused a job, paid less, paid more or any of that based upon their demographic. In my world, you are paid X-cents per word or X-dollars per hour, regardless who you are. But that is only MY experience, of course.”

**Magazine content diversity**

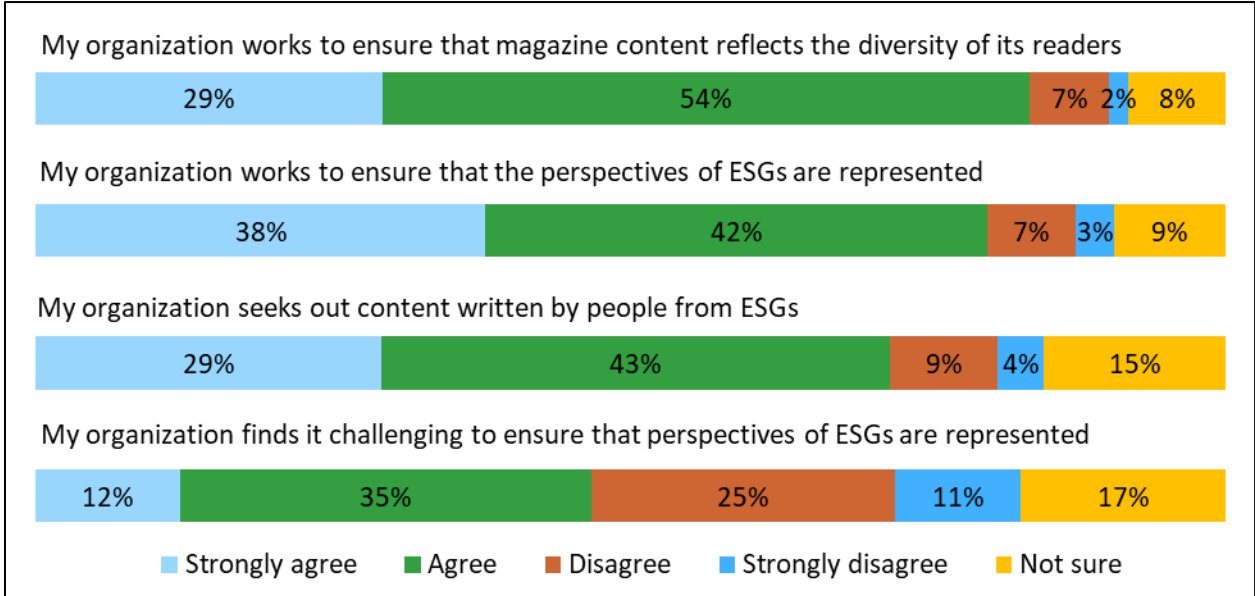
91% of respondents agreed that it is important to ensure that magazine content reflects the interest of diverse readers and 88% agreed that magazines should be relevant to readers from ESGs. However, only 35% of respondents believed that the editorial content of Canadian publications currently reflects the diversity of society, while 49% did not.

83% of people said that their organization currently works to ensure that magazine content reflects the diversity of its readers. Many respondents told us that working with contributors from ESGs was their main strategy for diversifying content; 72% said that they intentionally seek out content written by people from ESGs. For some organizations, trying to publish more content by people from ESGs merely involves making it clear that they welcome all writers and are committed to inclusion. For others it involves using concrete strategies to increase the diversity of writers and regularly measuring their progress. For example, “Our first 3 issues

averaged about 50% contributors from equity-seeking groups, and our most recent issue surpassed that standard, with more than 60% of contributors coming from racialized groups, with additional representation from other equity-seeking intersections.”

47% of respondents reported that their organization has barriers that make it challenging to ensure the perspectives of ESGs are represented in content, although 36% said they faced no such barriers. Some challenges involved the culture of the magazine industry, which values certain kinds of mainstream narratives but marginalizes stories coming from ESGs. Others talked about attempting to diversify content but facing resistance from leadership or colleagues. Respondents who worked at some niche publications had particular challenges, noting that because their readers are not diverse and not interested in diversity, “there is active resistance to making room for diverse authors.”

**Figure 8: Diversity of magazine content – organizational efforts**



**Industry-wide EDI issues**

EDI issues exist against the stark backdrop of an industry struggling to stay alive. As one person asked, “How do you improve diversity, inclusion and equity in an already dying magazine and journalism industry?” Magazines that are surviving find that “it’s a challenge to prioritize diversity for many reasons. Most publishers are small, with small budgets and little time” to shift internal policies, change hiring practices and invest in new content producers.

Some respondents noted that the insularity of an industry made up of predominantly White organizations creates an exclusionary culture that is resistant to change. The industry also exists within a social and cultural context that shapes the norms within organizations so that even when organizations make progress on EDI, they sometimes come up against external barriers like public attitudes that make their work harder.

### ***EDI is not a problem in the magazine industry***

A number of respondents told us that exclusion and discrimination is not a problem in the magazine industry in Canada and that focusing on EDI was unimportant or offensive. The most common concern about applying EDI to hiring and promotion was that it would compromise quality: “I hire writers, sales people, production people based on their qualifications, not their gender, sexual preference or anything else. Qualifications matter most.” Some called the idea of hiring solely on the basis of a candidate’s membership in an ESG “reverse discrimination.”

In terms of magazine content, a few respondents worried about the tension between principles of EDI and objectivity, arguing that focusing on EDI in content production introduces bias into the story, to the detriment of journalistic integrity.

A number of respondents told us that EDI was not important or achievable in their niche publications. Niche magazines survive by being relevant to a small group of people, and if their audience is not diverse, staff and contributors don’t need to be.

### **Suggested strategies for change**

Respondents provided a number of suggestions for promoting and enhancing EDI in the magazine industry. The following is a summary of those suggestions.

#### ***Organizational Commitment and Action***

- Secure organizational commitment to EDI and create a plan of action.
- Build organizational infrastructure, such as policies, practices or an EDI committee.
- Engage staff and leadership in training and education to increase awareness about barriers to inclusion at an organization and how to promote EDI in all activities.

#### ***Representation and Recruitment***

- Improve human resources policies and processes to remove barriers and prioritize hiring and promoting people from ESGs.
- Increase the supply of qualified people from ESGs in the industry by providing information on how to enter the industry, offering opportunities to gain specialized industry skills and hosting fairly paid internships and job placements.
- Build relationships with ESGs and communicate your organization’s commitment to EDI.
- Create databases for candidates from ESGs and job boards for posting opportunities.
- Go beyond your usual networks in hiring staff and contributors and work against nepotism in the industry.
- Hire new people from ESGs, especially into permanent positions, and pay them according to fair, consistent and transparent wage structures.

- Intentionally hire and promote people from ESGs into leadership. Offer mentorship and support to current ESG staff to move into leadership positions.

### ***Workplace Inclusion***

- Create workplace policies that promote EDI and work to combat discrimination.
- Create systems of support for current staff and contributors from ESGs. Specifically, offer opportunities for professional development and mentorship.
- Invite input from staff and contributors from ESGs and act on their advice and suggestions.
- Allow for flexible work arrangements to support inclusion for people with disabilities.
- Create a clear process for reporting barriers to inclusion or incidents of discrimination.
- Encourage diversity of thought, be open to opinions that challenge 'business as usual' and address defensiveness when it arises.

### ***Magazine Content***

- Do more features and stories on people from ESGs. Set targets for content written by or about people from ESGs.
- Pay well for editorial content written by people from ESGs.

### ***Funding and Support for the Magazine Industry***

- The magazine industry needs more external support, such as grant funding, to allow EDI-related change initiatives to succeed.