

Conclusions and Implications

Overview

Visible minorities are under-represented in the senior-most leadership positions in the GTA. Just 13% of the 3257 leaders we examined in our study are visible minorities compared to 49.5% among the population in the municipalities under study.

Sector-specific Findings

Table 20 summarizes the results which have been highlighted in each chapter of this report.

Elected: Visible minorities are best represented at the provincial level in which 8 of 35 (23%) MPPs in the targeted municipalities are visible minorities compared to 21% of School Board Trustees, 14% of Federal MPs, and 10% of Municipal Councillors.

Public Service: In provincial ministries and municipal government departments, visible minorities represented only 4% of senior employees in municipal governments but 8% of police executives and 10% of provincial deputy ministers and assistant deputy ministers.

Corporate sector: Visible minorities accounted for only 5% of executives and 3% of board members.

Voluntary sector: Within the largest charities and foundation, visible minorities represented 14% of executives and 18% of board members.

Education: There are no school boards with visible minority directors (although this will change with a recent appointment, which will come into effect in June 2009) but 19% of principals and vice-principals in the Toronto District School Board are visible minorities. Visible minorities are 20% of College executives and 11% of university executives, in comparison to 27% of College boards and 24% of university boards in the GTA.

Agencies, Boards, and Commissions: About 31% of the City of Toronto's municipal agency appointments are visible minorities. This is the highest percentage found in any sub-group we examined. According to reports from the City of Toronto, this is a 40% increase in three years. Their success in the area has been a result of tracking, analysis and targeted strategies.

Comparing Across Sectors

The nature of each sector makes cross-sectoral comparisons difficult. Because of the different approaches used to collecting data and the differences in the scale of organizations, we should be cautious about drawing conclusions. However, some observations can be made when comparing the various sectors (see table 20).

Table 20: Visible Minority Representation by Sector

Sector	Total Analyzed	% Visible Minority
Elected Officials	224	16%
Public Sector Executives	123	8%
Corporate Sector Boards and Executives	993	4%
Voluntary Sector Boards and Executives	344	13%
Education Sector Boards and Executives	1191	20%
Government Agencies, Boards, and Commissions	382	19%
Total	3257	13%

First, it is evident that some areas we examined have much higher levels of representation than others. The education sector is the clear leader. The corporate sector has the fewest visible minority leaders.

More research is needed on the qualifications, career paths and selection processes among and within sectors to better understand the differences. It is clear from the biographies of individuals featured in this report that there is some movement between sectors. For example, successful and aspiring politicians sometimes become CEOs in the voluntary sector. Successful business people often move to the boards of agencies, educational institutions and non-profit organizations. There is also movement from the corporate sector to the public sector in staff positions.

It is not clear, however, that there is as much movement into the corporate sector from the other sectors and this could be a reason that corporate sector boards are the least diverse group in our study. Previous research supports this tentative conclusion. Dhir (2009), for example, suggests that systemic barriers exist to corporate sector boards because of what he terms “the pool problem.”

While the non-profit and for-profit sectors are distinct, many of the skills required of board members are similar, and this may offer an important source of lateral recruitment for corporate boards. In addition, drawing from research on federally regulated organizations—notably financial institutions and telecommunications companies which must report on the demographics of their workforce—there are reasons to be optimistic. Based on these reports, there is evidence of progress in the “feeder” roles, or the next level of managers who eventually will serve as executives.

Second, in all sectors except the corporate sector, boards are more diverse than senior executives. This is likely due to the significant differences in selection and recruitment processes.

Action: Individuals, Organizations, and the Community

There is little doubt that significant progress has been made in recent years for visible minorities moving into leadership roles across the spectrum and our report is full of examples of well-qualified and successful leaders in the GTA. At the same time, it is clear that the representation of visible minorities in leadership roles is not proportionate to the general population in the GTA or even the organizations they lead.

As one of the most richly diverse communities in the world, the Greater Toronto Area has enormous potential to leverage its diversity for success in the global economy. To ensure that the region's potential is met by individuals, organizations and the community, we have presented a number of recommendations. The list is drawn from previous literature on the topic, and is by no means exhaustive. These have been chosen because they relate most closely to our findings and our observations on our data.

Count: What Gets Measured Gets Done

Even in the corporate sector, there is evidence that counting can lead to results. Federally regulated organizations have advanced more quickly than others in part because they have been analyzing and reporting on participation rates at all levels for many years.

On the other hand, it is still very difficult to get demographic data on the leadership of many organizations, even in the public sector. To get data which is specific to the GTA is even more challenging. More work needs to be done to ensure organizations collect and share data to allow for easy analysis and comparison.

Organizations also do little analysis of their workforce to gather information about the pipeline. Some organizations do not undertake employee satisfaction surveys because they are concerned about the results that they will get. However, building a fact base around visible minority career advancement experiences is important and offers a feedback channel for visible minority managers, professionals, and executives.

Set Targets

The City of Toronto is a leader in diversity because it set targets and measured results. Targets are not quotas but goals and without explicit goals diversity is not likely to be a priority. Many boards make representation a key criterion, along with other key competencies and ensure a proportion of seats are allocated to under-represented groups. Many private and public sector corporations have explicit targets for diversity and some even tie it to managers' performance measures.

Lead: Make Diversity a Strategic Priority

Senior executive commitment to diversity is perhaps the single most important factor shown to influence organizational practices that develop leaders. Many organizations "pay lip service" to diversity but do not put in place the processes needed to turn the words into action. As such, top-down commitment is essential. Regardless of their demographics, explicit and authentic commitment to diversity by leaders can have a direct and positive impact on visible minorities' perceptions of fairness and the quality of the workplace, which in turn helps to develop visible minority leaders.

Develop "the Pipeline"

For executives and for board members, "developing the pipeline" or the pool of labour for leadership positions is critical to increasing diversity. Focused recruitment processes are needed to reach out to targeted communities. Often diverse candidates can be drawn from other sectors. For example, leaders in government, the voluntary sector and educational institutions often have the same skills as corporate leaders, yet work under the radar. We noted that many elected officials have experience in other sectors. Private sector boards could be doing more to draw on other sectors.

The process has to begin early to ensure a "pool" of qualified applicants. For those individuals who are "almost ready," providing targeted skills development and training in general leadership

skills and in specific skills (negotiations, for example) as well as leadership or board training programs are critically important.

Many people already have the skills and experience necessary to make the jump into leadership, but they lack the personal and professional networks which often lead to leadership roles. Initiatives that expand networks and offer mentoring can help to overcome this barrier to leadership.

Strategies to attract well-qualified candidates across sectors include:

- Publicizing vacancies and opportunities through a variety of channels including ethno-cultural media and organizations;
- Partnering with ethno-cultural organizations to promote lateral moves of well-qualified visible minority candidates—there are many well-established ethno-cultural nonprofits that provide an obvious source of talent; and
- Using recruitment agencies and services which can outreach to ethno-cultural communities.

Develop and Sustain Excellent Human Resources Practices

Typically, organizations with the best diversity records also have well-developed, professional and transparent processes for recruitment, development and advancement of employees and well-developed recruitment and orientation strategies at the board level.

Transparent career development policies and practices are needed to reduce the perception that “who you know matters more than what you know.” Some examples include:

- Developing bias-free selection processes that do not disadvantage qualified individuals whose cultural backgrounds may affect their communications styles;
- Establishing appropriate processes for assessing international experience and credentials;
- Establishing coaching, shadowing and mentoring programs as part of succession planning which include well-qualified visible minority candidates;
- Ensuring employees and board members have appropriate diversity training to help build a “culture of inclusion;” and
- Ensuring the “business case” for diversity is well-understood throughout the organization through effective training and development as well as organizational communications.

Communicate to Influence: Mainstream Diversity

Organizations should promote transparency about the diversity of their staff and reinforce “the business case” for diversity at every opportunity. They should consider how their “brand” is communicated to their customers, citizens and clients. Mainstreaming diversity refers to the process of thinking about diversity in all activities throughout an organization and in its relations with external stakeholders, such as suppliers, customers, political and educational institutions, and the media.

Organizations do not exist in a vacuum and they can play a major role in influencing the broader social context which can shape the experience of visible minorities. They can also influence public policies which affect visible minorities. As well they can influence media representation which has the potential to perpetuate harmful stereotypes or to promote positive role models (Mahtani, 2001), shaping the attitudes and aspirations of citizens. Not only do we need to ensure that there are diverse leaders but we need to ensure that they are fairly presented in the media. Organizations which mainstream diversity do not just support visible minorities internally but

consider diversity in their interactions with other organizations and institutions in their “sphere of influence.” These organizations help shape the broader societal context.

Examples of how organizations can extend their influence include:

- Procurement policies which consider diversity in supplier organizations;
- Marketing and communications which ensure diverse representation;
- Philanthropy and outreach which include ethno-cultural organizations and events;
- Media relations which profile visible minority leaders and feature visible minority experts; and
- Advocacy which addresses policies which particularly affect visible minority employees such as immigration and education policies.

Not only does mainstreaming diversity tell prospective leaders about the opportunities which exist within an organization, it encourages other organizations to take diversity seriously. It can also contribute to broader societal change which will help the GTA create communities which value and leverage diversity. Over the long term, integrated strategies are needed to increase the pool of people ready and aspiring to take leadership roles. Increasing high school and post-secondary graduation rates, improving the supports for immigrants and their families and promoting role models are among the long term strategies needed.

Looking Ahead

This study represents the first time that the important issue of diversity in leadership has been examined in a systematic way across sectors with a focus on the GTA. This work will be updated and expanded in 2010 and 2011 to include more industries which affect the lives of residents, such as the legal profession, the justice system, and/or the media. While we can expect that change in the leadership of our region’s most important institutions will take time, our hope is that our research will encourage organizations to reach their full potential through the inclusion of visible minorities in their most senior decision-making positions.

Already, our first report has found that organizations which make diversity a priority are able to effect change. Their activities begin with a simple act—counting. By taking stock of who leads them, these organizations are explicitly recognizing that today’s complicated and globalized world requires leadership with a variety of perspectives. They know that in order to stay relevant to the diverse population that they serve, they must reach out to new talent, in their management and on their boards.

We also hope that organizations which are not included in this study, or which have not addressed diversity in leadership, are inspired to begin their own counting. By counting and sharing their results publically, they will assure the residents of the GTA that they have made this issue a priority and will reap the social and economic benefits that diversity in leadership can bring.