

Leadership Counts

An Identity Survey
of National Leaders




The United Church of Canada | united-church.ca
Mid-Term Report: October 2023

**The United
Church of
Canada** has
a long history
of embracing
diversity,
equity, and
anti-
oppression



THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA has made several commitments related to equity and self-determination. The United Church strives to be a church that enables the full participation of all members and embraces the gifts of the diverse identities of its members and leaders, including racial identities, gender identities, sexual orientations, disabilities, and more.

Putting words into action, the United Church launched Leadership Counts, a voluntary identity survey for ministry personnel and members of national committees, in November 2021.



As a young gay and Indigenous minister, I have experienced challenges within the church on my journey to ministry. With better data through Leadership Counts, we can create the strategies as a church to answer Jesus' call to inclusion and justice.

Mitchell Anderson, Ordained Minister and
General Council Executive Member

Why Leadership Counts

"Leadership Counts will help us to get a better sense of the leadership of the church we are and the church we are becoming," General Secretary Michael Blair

Leadership Counts is designed to inform the United Church's strategic plan and anti-oppression work, reveal barriers to full participation, and contribute to strategies to meet our commitments more effectively.

Having a better understanding of church leadership allows us to learn more about who is offering leadership; offer more effective support to ministry personnel, staff, and national committee members; and work towards improving broad-based equity and diversity challenges. This knowledge also allows us to develop strategies towards full participation to determine what we need to do better to meet our commitments, track changes in the identities of church leaders over time, and be more accountable for who we want to become, knowing who we are now.

Theological Rationale

Through scripture, God affirms that we are all "fearfully and wonderfully made" and that God knew us even before we were born (Psalm 139:13-18). God, as a loving Creator, has shaped and formed us, including all of our different identities.

People are complex. We identify ourselves in a variety of ways: by our gender identities, our sexual orientations, our abilities, our racial identities, our languages, and more. The United Church of Canada affirms diverse identities.

The United Church celebrates and honours all of who we are and all the identities we hold because each of us is a

beloved child of God. God loves all of us. We are continually reminded of this love and care in scripture: "See what love the [Creator] has given us, that we should be called children of God, and that is what we are" (1 John 3:1).

Leadership Counts Project

In November 2021, the United Church launched Leadership Counts, a voluntary identity survey for ministry personnel and members of national committees. The survey focused on seven specific identities that are a part of the church's commitments to equity and dismantling barriers to full participation. This survey was a collaborative effort between General Council staff in Member Engagement, the Office of Vocation, and Anti-Racism and Equity.

The identities surveyed were as follows:

- Indigenous identity
- Racialized identity
- Francophone identity or participating in French ministries
- People whose primary language is neither English nor French
- Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+
- Young adults
- People with disabilities

The survey offered respondents the opportunity to share more information on how they see themselves—how they name their cultures, their languages, their racial identities, their genders, their orientations, and their disabilities.

Real numbers and benchmarks help us not only evaluate our current situation but also allow us to create meaningful goals to broaden the variety of folk and perspectives in leadership in our church. Speaking as one who has the privilege of keeping my “diversities” to myself when I show up at a gathering, it feels important for me describe myself to the church in at least as much detail as my siblings who do not have the option of keeping their identities hidden.

*Norm Seli, Ordained Minister and
Chair of the Board of Vocation*

As of June 2023, more than 1,750 people had participated in the survey, exceeding any previous attempts to learn about the identities of United Church leaders. Respondents included the following:

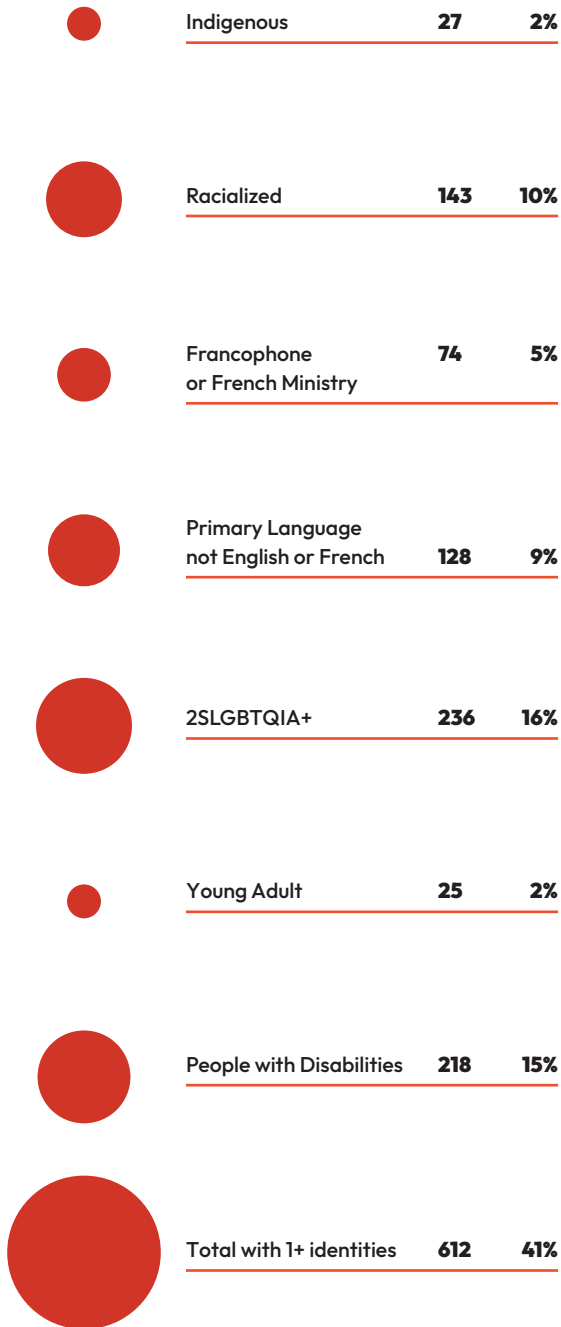
- 75 percent of national committee members (lay and ministry personnel)
- 51 percent of active ministry personnel and candidates (overall 38.2 percent of all ministry personnel, including active ministers, retired ministers, admission ministers, and those on medical leave).

Comparison of Identities of United Church Leadership to Canadian Population and United Church Population

Equity Category	Statistics Canada: Canadian Census 2021		Leadership Counts (as of June 2023)	
	Canadian Population*	United Church Population* †	Ministry Personnel	Committee Appointments
Indigenous	5%	3%	2%	11%
Racialized	27%	2%	10%	28%
Francophone or active in French ministries	20%	-	5%	8%
Primary language other than English or French	21%	-	9%	15%
2SLGBTQIA+	4%	-	16%	17%
Young adult (age 30 and under)	25%	11%	2%	3%
People with disabilities	22%	-	15%	13%
One or more equity identities	-	-	41%	49%
Gender				
Women	51%	56%	47%	52%
Men	49%	44%	38%	35%
Gender-queer/Non-binary/Not listed	0%	-	2%	3%
No data	-	-	12%	11%
*Closest analogous category †Not all data currently available				
Population details				
	36,328,480	1,214,185	of 1,498 respondents	485 appointments
			(3,924 ministry personnel)	(361 responses)

1,498

Ministry Personnel



(June 30, 2023)

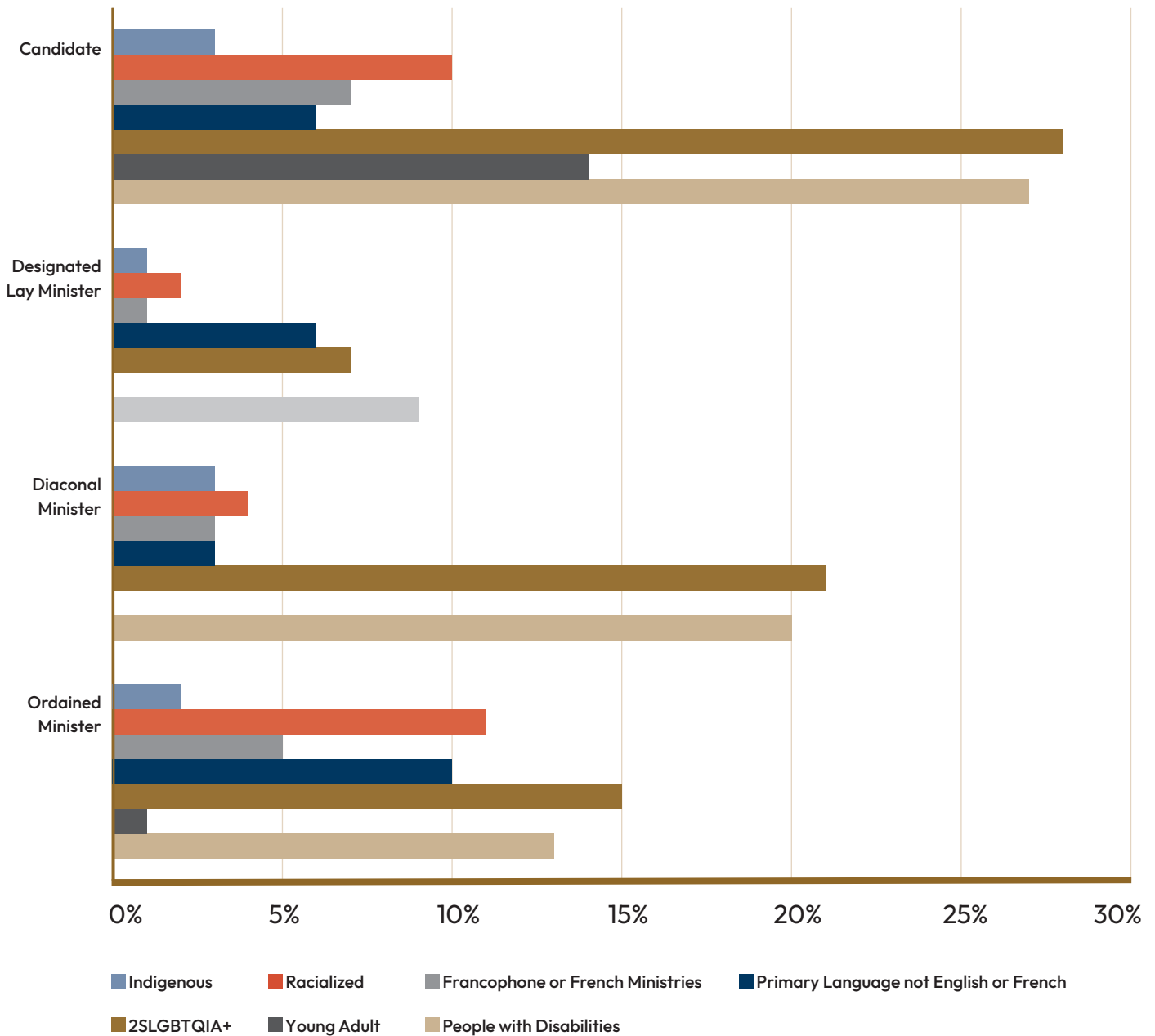
Who We Are: Ministry Personnel

Identity Responses from Ministry Personnel

Leadership Counts has confirmed that there is much diversity in the United Church's ministry personnel, often greater than in the broader United Church population. More than 40 percent of ministers name one or more identities to which the church has made full-participation commitments. We also observed that respondents shared richer detail than simply responding yes or no to survey questions. There were comments and insights that relate to the ways we name our races/ethnicities, languages, gender identities, sexual orientations, and disabilities. Survey results have highlighted many insightful and interesting stories about our ministry personnel.

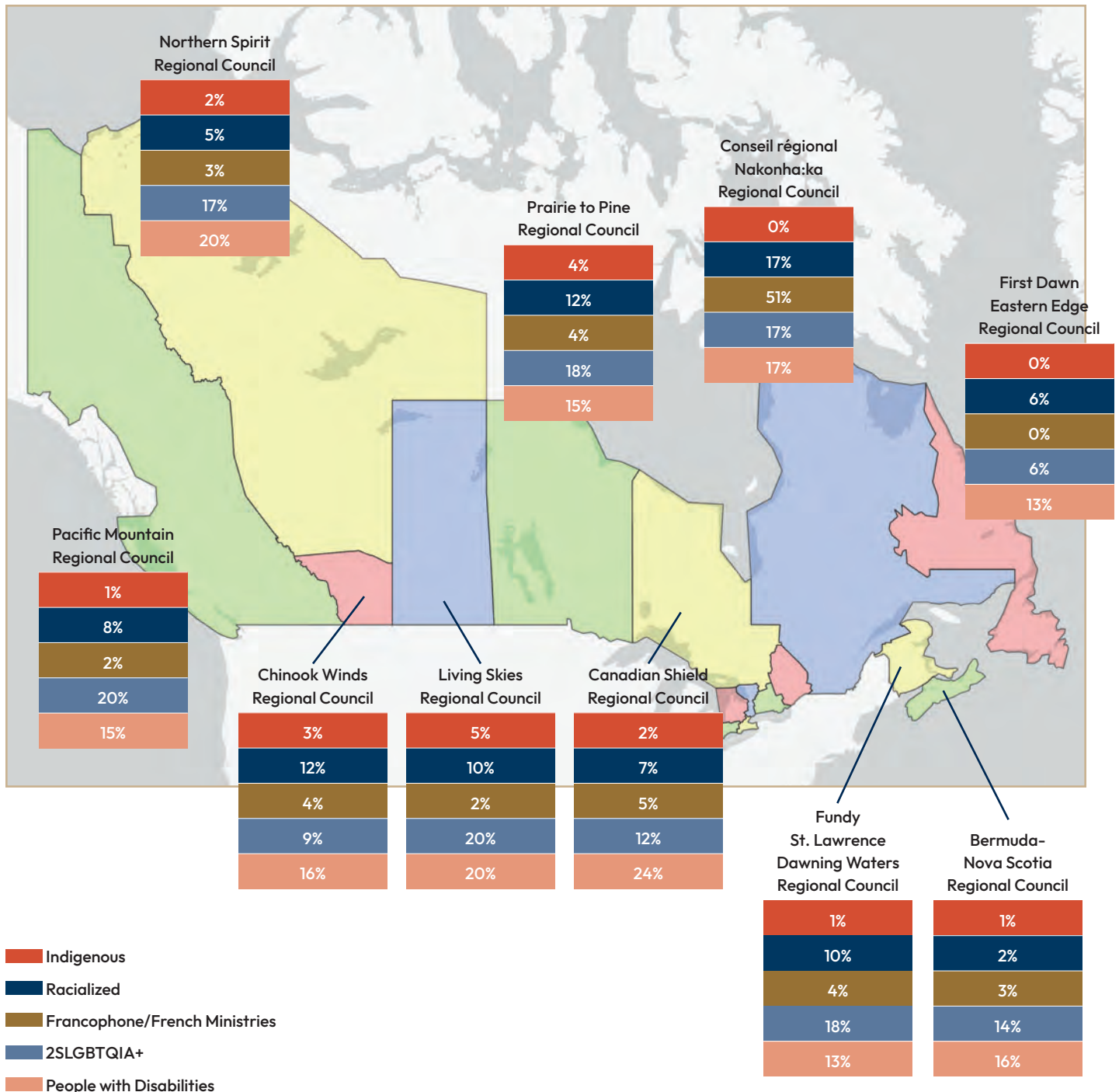
Minister Type

When comparing survey responses by minister type (candidate, designated lay minister, diaconal minister, or ordained minister), candidates show a high level of diversity. Across the majority of equity identities, candidates report the highest percentage compared to other minister types.

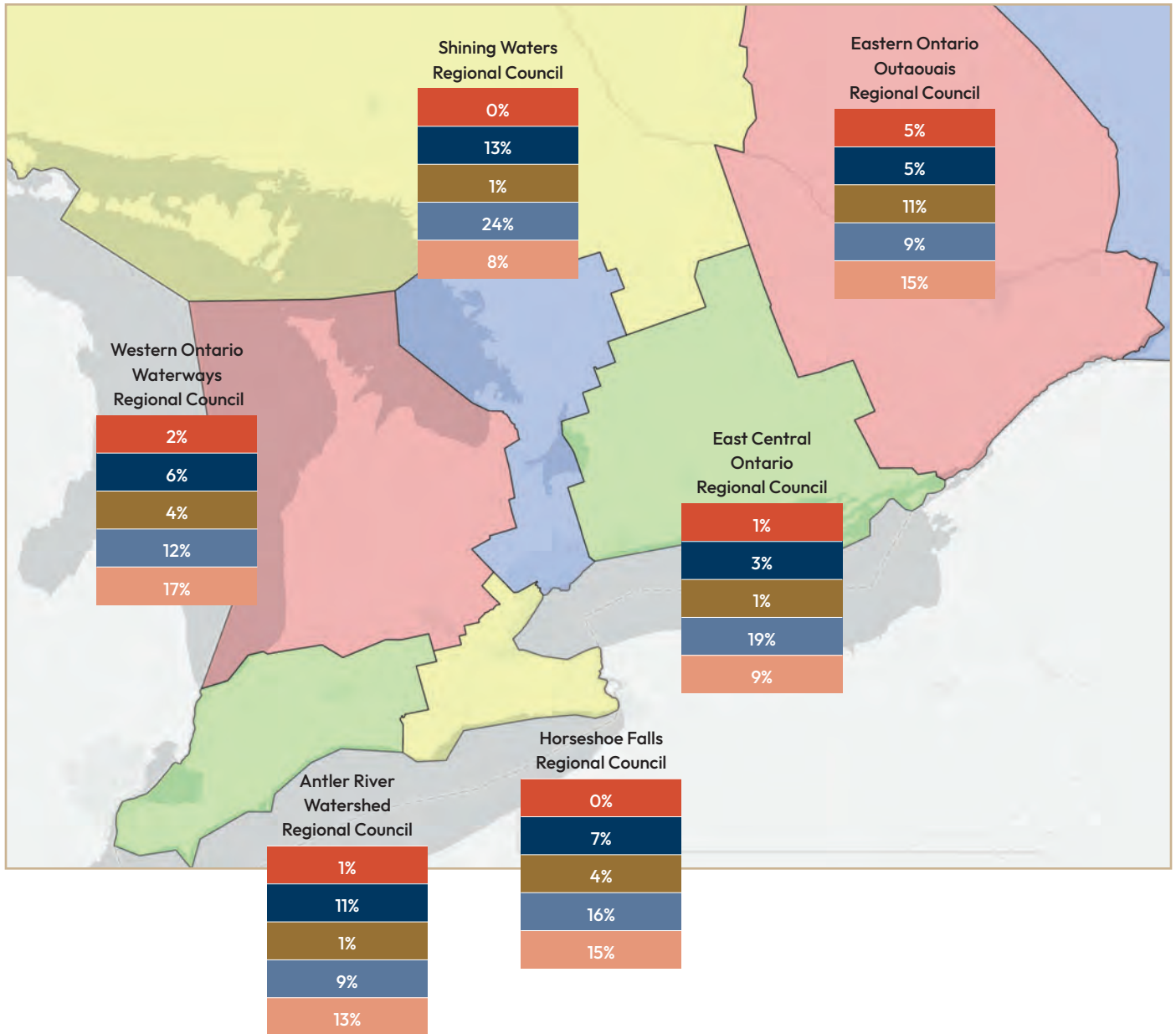


Regional Council

We've also observed geographic differences. The percentage of ministry personnel identifying with each of the seven equity identities varies across the regional councils. Note: These numbers represent the responses received and might not fully reflect the presence of identities in each regional council.



- Indigenous
- Racialized
- Francophone/French Ministries
- 2SLGBTQIA+
- People with Disabilities



Indigenous Identity

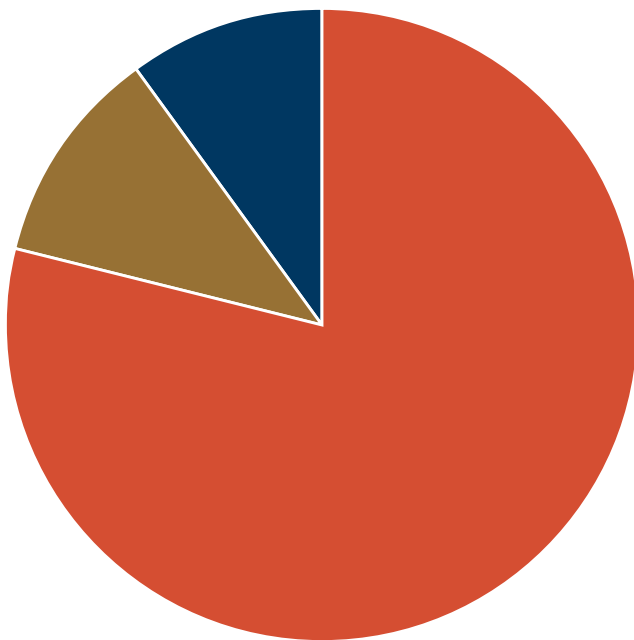
Among ministry personnel identifying as Indigenous, the vast majority identify as First Nations, followed by many who identify as Métis.

Of those respondents who do not identify as Indigenous, 5 percent reported participating in the Indigenous Church. People defined “participating” in a wide range of ways.

Racial/Ethnocultural Identity

The most frequently named racial and/or ethnocultural identity among ministry personnel is White (e.g., European descent). The next three most prevalent identities are: 4 percent of respondents identify as Black (e.g., African, Afro-Caribbean, African-Canadian descent), 2 percent identify as mixed race (e.g., White and other racial identities), and 2 percent identify as Korean.

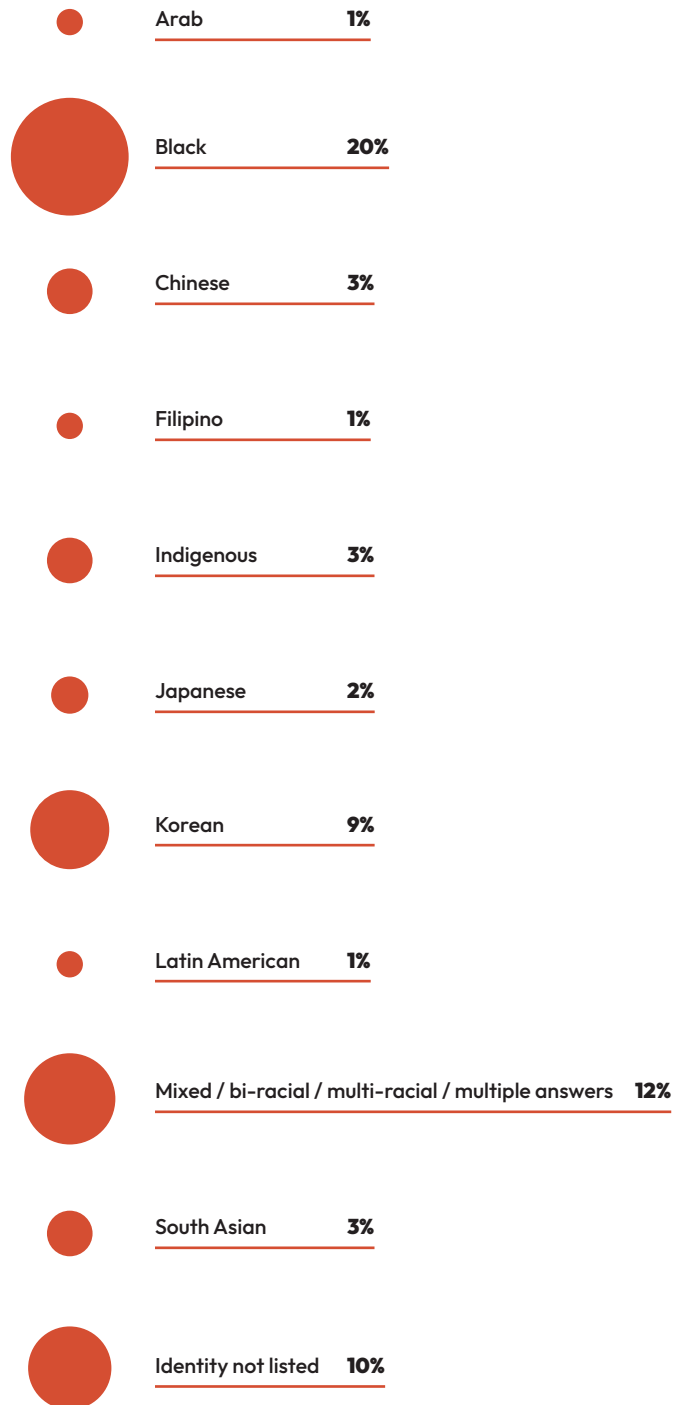
Taking a closer look at the responses within each identity area, the following insights emerged:



RACIAL AND / OR ETHNOCULTURAL IDENTITIES OF MINISTRY PERSONNEL

- White **79%**
- Racialized **11%**
- Other (identity not listed or blank) **10%**

RACIAL IDENTITIES OF NON-WHITE RESPONDENTS



Among active ordained and diaconal ministers who identify as (non-Indigenous) Racialized, **61 percent** entered via admission from other denominations, and **39 percent** were ordained or commissioned in the United Church.

47 percent of active ordained and diaconal ministers who entered the United Church via admission from other denominations identify as (non-Indigenous) Racialized.

5 percent of active ministers who were ordained or commissioned in the United Church identify as (non-Indigenous) Racialized, and **3 percent** identify as Indigenous.

10 percent of respondents currently in the candidacy process identify as Indigenous or Racialized.

Francophone Identity and French Ministries

While only about **2 percent** of ministry respondents identify as Francophone, an additional **3 percent** who did not identify as Francophone reported participating in French ministries. Additionally, another **14 percent** reported being able, or mostly able, to participate in the life of the church in French.

Language

Survey data showed that more than 40 languages are spoken by ministry personnel, with Korean, Dutch, Spanish, and Shona being the most cited.

Languages Spoken





Leadership Counts lays important groundwork for encouraging and implementing our church’s commitments to anti-racism, equity, and diversity among leadership. We can only know how we’re doing when we can look at the whole picture and how it is changing from our efforts and intentionality.

I want to help take the guesswork out of national nominations processes. We know that even having a diversity of people and voices at the table changes conversations for the better.

Marcie Gibson, Diaconal Minister, Chair of the Response Committee of the Office of Vocation

Gender and Orientation

Ministry personnel used many descriptions and combinations of descriptions to name their genders and orientations—12 variations to describe gender and 37 to describe orientation.

Identities such as Asexual/Nonsexual, Bisexual, Polysexual, and Pansexual were selected both by people who identified as 2SLGBTQIA+ and those who did not.

Young Adults

Of Young Adult ministry personnel respondents, 60 percent hold at least one other equity identity.

People with Disabilities

People offered a variety of ways in which they identified as disabled. Both those who did and those who did not identify this way noted varying degrees of relating to this identity.

Who We Are: National Committee Members

Identity Responses from Commissioners and National Committee Members

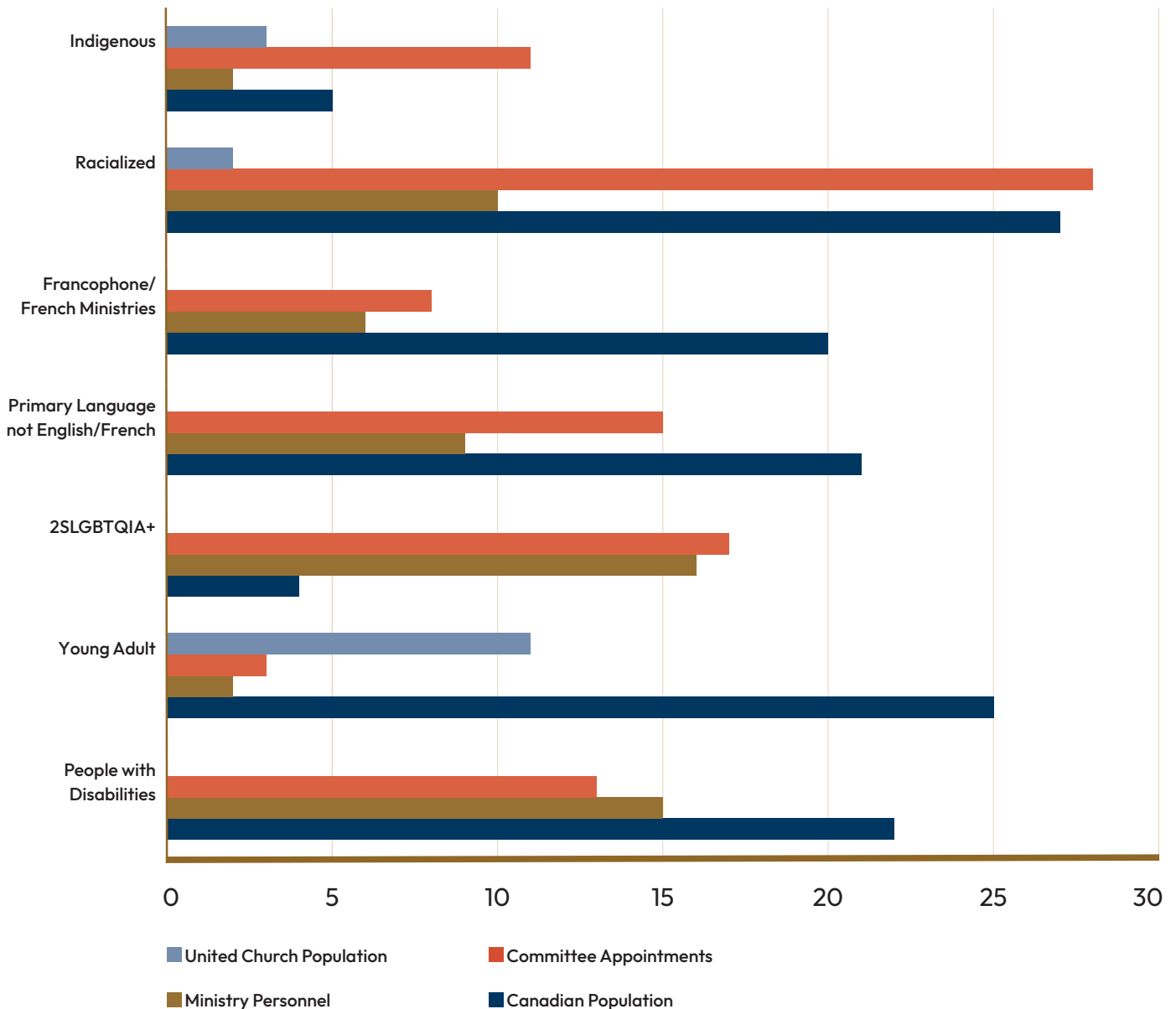
(June 30, 2023)	Indigenous	Racialized	Franco- phone or French Ministry	Primary Language not English or French	2SLGBTQIA+	Young Adult	People with Disabilities	Total with 1+ Identities
256 Commissioners	5%	13%	7%	8%	15%	5%	13%	39% (100 Commissioners)
485 Committee Appointments	11%	28%	8%	15%	17%	3%	13%	49% (222 appointments)

Between meetings of the General Council, the United Church is guided by the work and decisions of a variety of committees, boards, and councils. It is important that the full diversity of the United Church membership is a part of these decision-making and advisory groups. Through Leadership Counts, we now have information about the identities of those serving in 75 percent of the current (June 2023) committee appointments (365 of 485 appointments). This information provides the church

with insights about who is serving and whether we are effectively drawing from the diversity of the church's membership.

The chart below shows where the percentage of committee members who identify with an equity identity exceeds the percentage of ministry personnel and United Church members with that identity, and where it is less.

Equity Identities on Committees, in the United Church, and in Canada



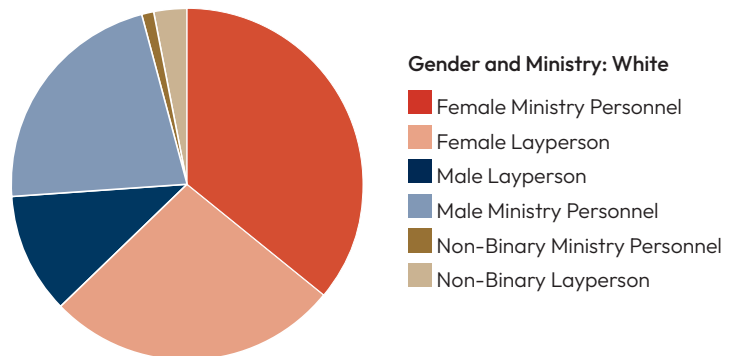
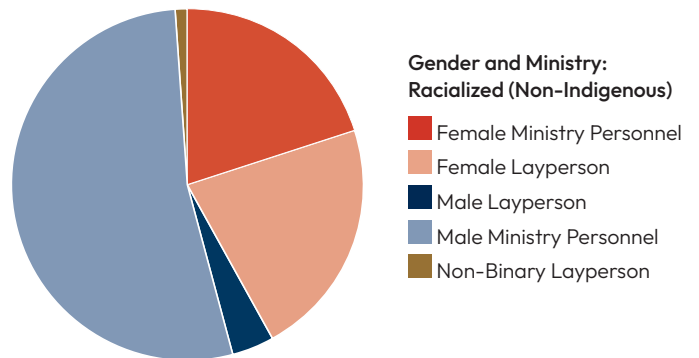
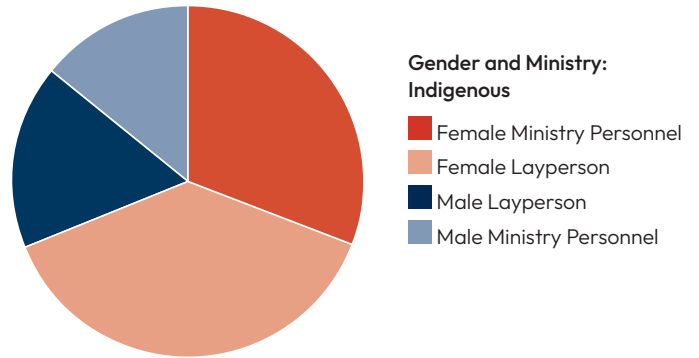
In 2017 the General Council Executive considered, but did not adopt, a proposal that “people from racialized and other marginalized communities comprise one third of the governance structures/systems of the church.”

From committee members’ self-identification, we know that almost half of committee appointments are filled by people who hold one or more of the United Church’s equity-commitment identities. Since not all committee members have participated in this voluntary survey, and those who have not participated may also hold one or more equity-commitment identities, the actual percentage of equity-identifying committee members may be over 50 percent.

Gender and Ministry Type by Indigenous, Racialized, and White

We also learn more about who is serving on committees when we consider identities intersectionally, such as by gender, ministry type, and racial identity.

- Of Indigenous committee members: 70 percent are women (36 percent lay; 34 percent ministry personnel).
- Of (non-Indigenous) Racialized committee members: the most prevalent identity is male ministry personnel (54 percent)
- Of White committee members: the most prevalent identity is female ministry personnel (36 percent)



Number of Appointments per Committee Member

As is frequently the case in churches, many people are called to serve on more than one committee at a time. Sometimes this is a function of how a committee operates, such as where additional committee appointments are required for particular committees, and sometimes it is a personal choice to serve on more than one committee.

The 485 committee appointments analyzed in this report were filled by 379 different people. This is an average of 1.28 committee appointments per person. (Those who participated in Leadership Counts average 1.36 appointments per person.)

The Changing Nature of Committees

Most committee appointments are for terms of three years or less, with the possibility of reappointment for an additional term. In addition, various short-term task groups and working groups are formed and disbanded as needed. As such, the population of national committees is constantly changing, and with it, the identities that are present in those committees. Information from Leadership Counts assists the church in being aware of who is and is not present in leadership roles in this shifting pool of volunteers.

Committee Appointments across Various Identities

APPOINTMENT RATE OF PEOPLE WHO IDENTIFY AS:

Indigenous	1.86
Racialized (non-Indigenous)	1.56
Neither Indigenous nor Racialized	1.21

IDENTIFY AS:

	YES	NO
Francophone or French Ministry	1.54	1.34
Primary Language not English or French	1.52	1.32
Two Spirit or LGBTQIA+	1.83	1.26
Young Adult	1.17	1.37
Person with a Disability	1.55	1.32



Our commitments to equity, anti-racism, and right relationship demand more than good words and good policies—we need real, tangible change. Leadership Counts helps us pursue and track actual change in the leadership make-up of our church. Justice requires all of us... to be part of change that counts.

Jordan Cantwell, Ordained Minister and past Moderator

Our Work Continues

Numbers alone cannot tell the story of who our leaders are or how effectively the church is meeting its equity commitments. Over the coming months, Leadership Counts project staff will be engaging in conversations with various leaders and communities to better understand the stories, the successes, the barriers, and the opportunities that this data reveals.

Next Steps

The data and insights gathered through Leadership Counts—along with data and insights gathered through other projects—provide critical context for the United Church's strategic plan. All of the church's activities can benefit from understanding who our leaders are as we follow our Call to Deep Spirituality, Bold Discipleship, and Daring Justice.

Appendix: Methodology

Survey Development

The survey for ministry personnel is an update of the Policy on the Collection, Protection, and Retention of Ministry Personnel Personal Information and the Ministry Personnel Personal Information form, which the General Council Sub-Executive approved in May 2015.

In 2020, work began to revise the collection of personal information for ministry personnel and to expand the data to include elected members of national committees. To revise the questions in the survey, many equity groups were consulted, including networks like the Anti-Racism Common Table, the Black Clergy Network, the Korean Network, the Chinese Association of United Churches, the Filipino Association, Affirm United/S'affirmer ensemble, the Trans advisory group, La Table des ministères en français, the National Indigenous Council, the Indigenous Ministries and Justice Unit, the Indigenous Office of Vocation, Two-Spirit members of the United Church, and the Disabilities Network.

The valuable feedback obtained from these groups helped to shape the questions, answer options, and language of the survey. Our full communion partners in the United Church of Christ (USA) use very different categories when they report on the racial and ethnocultural identity of their ministers. Leadership Counts chose terminology that reflects the terms used in the Canadian census, which helps us understand the responses in relation to Canadian demographics.

Developing the survey also involved consulting with General Council legal counsel on the legal issues of collecting personal identity-based information. It is consistent with human rights legislation to collect this information. For example, the [Ontario Human Rights Commission](#) and the [British Columbia Human Rights Commission](#) encourage collecting identity-based data.

Developing the survey also involved developing the infrastructure to deliver it and to store the data in the Dynamics CRM and Customer Voice system. This ensures appropriate security for confidential data and enables participants to access and edit their responses.

Delivery

In November 2021, ministry personnel and elected members of national committees were sent e-mails inviting them to participate in Leadership Counts. A reminder e-mail was sent in March 2022. Because survey responses are confidential but not anonymous, the survey invitation contained a unique link for each individual to complete the survey. This enabled the United Church to have up-to-date demographic information even as its leadership changed roles or locations. By late 2022, survey participants could access their data on ChurchHub and update it if necessary. Those who have not participated in the survey can find their unique link from the My Identity Data tile on ChurchHub. Another e-mail reminder was shared in March 2023. In 2023, quarterly e-mail invitations were shared with new candidates, new ministry personnel, and new elected members.

Response

A previous version of an identity survey was approved by the General Council Executive and the Permanent Committee on Ministry and Employment Policies and Services in 2015. At that time, similar identity data was collected via the PR 404 Ministry Personnel Personal Information Form. However, only 274 ministry personnel participated, representing 16 percent of active ministry personnel at that time. It is tremendously encouraging to see the massive increase in participation of ministry personnel in the Leadership Counts project, including their willingness to share confidential information about their identities.

While participation is high among active ministry personnel, we recognize there is potential bias within the group of survey participants. Potentially, individuals who can answer Yes to one or more of the equity identity questions could be more inclined to participate than people who can't. However, this may be mitigated by the fact that nearly 60 percent of survey respondents do not identify with any of the equity identities of this project.

A Note about Committee Statistics

Equity identities for members of national committees can be analyzed in terms of the number of serving individuals with a given identity and in terms of the number of appointments filled by individuals with a given identity. In this report, we have shared statistics related to the number of appointments rather than the number of individuals. Analyzing the diversity of the appointments gives us a better sense of the presence and prevalence of various identities across all committees.

This is a voluntary survey. Some people may choose not to participate or not to share details on one or more of their identities. The survey counts the number of people who choose to be counted with a given identity. As such, the percentage of equity identities is calculated from the total number of appointments, not the total number of responses. This means, for example, that while 23 percent of responding committee appointments self-identified as Two Spirit or LGBTQIA+ (84 of 361), we report the statistic as 17 percent of all committee appointments (85 of 485). The 124 committee appointments for which we do not have responses may or may not identify in this way. If any do, this percentage would be higher. The reality of identities present may always be higher but not lower than reported.

Analysis: Corrections and Comparison to Statistics Canada

The data has been compared to publicly available Statistics Canada data, particularly from the 2021 Census. For some of the equity identity areas, Statistics Canada has provided cross-tabulation analysis that provides data within a particular identity area for those who are also affiliated with The United Church of Canada. In some instances, the language used by Statistics Canada is slightly different from what we use. For example, Leadership Counts uses Racial/Ethnocultural identity while Statistics Canada uses Visible Minority. This cross-tabulation data is available for

- [Indigenous identity](#)
- [Racialized identity](#)
- [Young Adults](#)

We were also able to use [Statistics Canada data](#) to see whether respondents reflect the percentage of 2SLGBTQIA+ people in the Canadian population. However, this data is not from the 2021 census but from a separate study that was released in 2021.

Reporting

The data from Leadership Counts provides the church with information about its current leaders, and also changing identity trends over time. Data is retrieved and analyzed quarterly, with plans to report to the General Council at the end and mid-point of each triennium. This is the first mid-term report. Summary statistics will also be published annually in the *Year Book*.