

Leadership Counts

An Identity Survey
of National Leaders



The United Church of Canada | united-church.ca
End-of-Term Report: November 2025

The United Church of Canada strives to be a church that enables the full participation of all members and embraces the diverse gifts of its attendees and leaders, including racial identities, gender identities, sexual orientations, disabilities, ages, languages, and cultures.



Recap: Accountability for Our Commitments

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA strives to be a church that enables the full participation of all members and embraces the diverse gifts of its attendees and leaders, including racial identities, gender identities, sexual orientations, disabilities, ages, languages, and cultures.

Launched in November 2021, following extensive consultation with various identity groups, the Leadership Counts project invites ministry personnel and members of national committees to confidentially and voluntarily share information about the ways in which they identify.

To parallel the intentional commitments that have been made by the United Church, the Leadership Counts survey is based around seven identity areas:

- Indigenous person identity
- Racialized person identity
- Francophone identity or participating in French ministries
- People whose primary language is neither English nor French
- Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+ identities
- Young adults, aged 30 and younger
- People with disabilities/disabled people

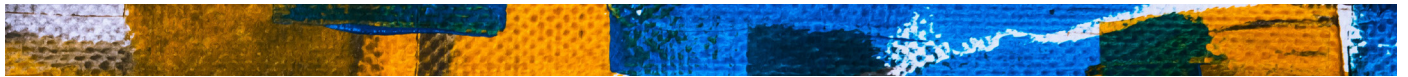
The survey offers respondents the opportunity to share more information on how they see themselves—how they name their cultures, their languages, their racial identities, their genders, their orientations, and their disabilities.

The Leadership Counts project is a collaborative effort of General Council staff in Member Engagement, the Office of Vocation, and Anti-Racism and Equity.

Diane Bosman, Adam Hanley, and Adele Halliday

Recap: The Data

	Statistics Canada: Canadian Census 2021		Leadership Counts Ministry Personnel		Committee Appointments
Equity Category	Canadian Population*	United Church Population*†	As of June 2023	As of January 2025	GC44 Term (2022–2025)
Indigenous	5%	3%	2%	2%	13%
Racialized	27%	2%	10%	11%	27%
Francophone or active in French ministries	20%	-	5%	5%	9%
Primary language other than English/French	21%	-	9%	9%	14%
2S and LGBTQIA+	4%	-	16%	15%	18%
Young adult (age 30 and under)	25%	11%	2%	2%	5%
People with disabilities	22%	-	15%	15%	14%
One or more equity identities	-	-	41%	41%	52%
Gender					
Women	50.9%	56%	47%	46%	52%
Men	48.9%	44%	38%	39%	34%
Gender-queer/ Non-binary/Not listed	0.2%	-	2%	2%	3%
No data	-	-	12%	12%	11%
*Closest analogous category †Not all data currently available					
Population details					
	36,328,480	1,214,185	of 1,498 respondents	of 1,652 respondents	of 699 appointments
			(3,924 ministry personnel)	(3,852 ministry personnel)	(556 responses)



Context

In 2025, as this report is being written, conversation about the terms diversity, equity, and inclusion is present in mainstream media. Often referred to with the shorter acronym “DEI,” in some conversation and contexts, words related to equity, diversity, and inclusion have developed negative connotations. Some governments, leaders, and organizations have scaled back their DEI initiatives, and others have cancelled them entirely.

The current discrediting of DEI initiatives is a marked difference from the context of the initial launch of Leadership Counts a few years ago. Equity is now too often falsely portrayed as solely giving people roles on the basis of their racial identity or other minoritized status. This is not the case—and is often based in a misunderstanding of what equity actually means and what it is about.

Equality refers to the practice of treating everyone exactly the same, no matter what identities they hold. Equity, however, is different. Equity takes into account that, due to the systemic discrimination that exists in society, not everyone starts in the same place. Equity realizes that in order to ensure fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all peoples, we need to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some people and groups—particularly people from marginalized communities. Equity does not mean treating everyone the same without regard for individual differences (and societal inequalities). Equity moves closer to justice, and it is part of the work of the whole church.

In this context, The United Church of Canada reaffirms its commitments to ongoing work on equity—as well as to diversity, anti-oppression, and opposing discrimination of any kind.

The church’s commitments to equity help us glimpse the kin-dom of God, where all are welcome at the table (Luke 14:12–14) and are honoured and created in God’s image.

Through scripture, God affirms that we are all “fearfully and wonderfully made,” and that God knew us even before we were born (Psalm 139:1–18). God, as a loving Creator, has shaped and formed us, including all of our different identities.

In the early church, in the time of Pentecost (Acts 2), people of all ages, genders, and identities are heard and celebrated for who they are and their dreams for the church. God’s wisdom, prophecy, visions, and dreams are poured out on a diversity of people.

Today, The United Church of Canada also affirms diverse identities. People in the church may identify in many different ways: by our gender identities, our sexual orientations, our abilities, our racial identities, our cultures, our languages, and in many more ways.

God honours and loves all of us, and 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, NRSVue).

Conversations

In the 2023 midterm report of Leadership Counts we noted that

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.

Since fall 2023, the Leadership Counts staff team has held conversations with a number of groups, including the following:



We look forward to connecting with groups that we have not yet consulted with over the past 18 months—including the Indigenous Church, the Korean Network, and French ministries—to deepen our understandings.

During these conversations, the data from the [mid-term report](#) was shared ([united-church.ca](#); search “Leadership Counts”). Sometimes data specific to the focus of the network or group was also shared. Conversations focused on these core questions:

1. Where does this data confirm your experiences?
2. Where does the data surprise you?
3. What else are you wondering about from the data?
4. What might this data mean for your network?

Some of the insights gathered from these conversations follow (and several are highlighted throughout this report).

For many of these conversations, we offered an intersectional analysis of the data. People self-identify in more than one way, and highlighting the intersections shows the multiple identities that people within each group can hold.

Identities: Exploring Deeper

What does a deeper exploration of each of these seven identities reveal? The tables and comments that follow highlight intersections from the identity data and insights from conversations.

Indigenous Identity

One area of interest is that a significant number of respondents who identify as Indigenous also consider themselves racialized. Most of these respondents did not identify with any racialized identities other than Indigenous. Although the term “racialized” is often seen as distinct from “Indigenous,” these responses highlight the diverse ways people understand and relate to the term “racialized.”

Other Identities Named by Indigenous Leaders

	Racialized	Francophone	Primary Language Other than Eng/Fre	2S and LGBTQIA+	Young Adult	Disability
Ministry Personnel	36%	6%	9%	30%	3%	30%
Committee Appointments	66%	1%	31%	26%	15%	35%

Ministry Personnel

Staff of the Indigenous Ministries and Justice Unit have encouraged more Indigenous ministry personnel to participate in the Leadership Counts project. Since the mid-term report, we have noticed a 22 percent increase in the participation rate of Indigenous ministry personnel.

Committees

People who identify as Indigenous serve in all areas of the national church. The majority, but not all, of the appointments noted here are within the structures of the autonomous Indigenous Church. The percentage of young adults in the Indigenous leadership group is 15 percent, which is significantly higher than the 4 percent representation of young adults across all committee appointments.

The Indigenous Church has structured some of its committees to intentionally welcome young adults.



Racialized

Ethnocultural networks wondered about other data and experiences related to racialized ministry personnel and committee members. Cross-referencing Leadership Counts data with other church information provides a broader picture of racialized leadership.

Other Identities Named by Racialized Leaders

	Indigenous	Francophone	Primary Language Other than Eng/Fre	2S and LGBTQIA+	Young Adult	Disability
Ministry Personnel	7%	8%	52%	9%	4%	7%
Committee Appointments	33%	12%	43%	20%	8%	12%

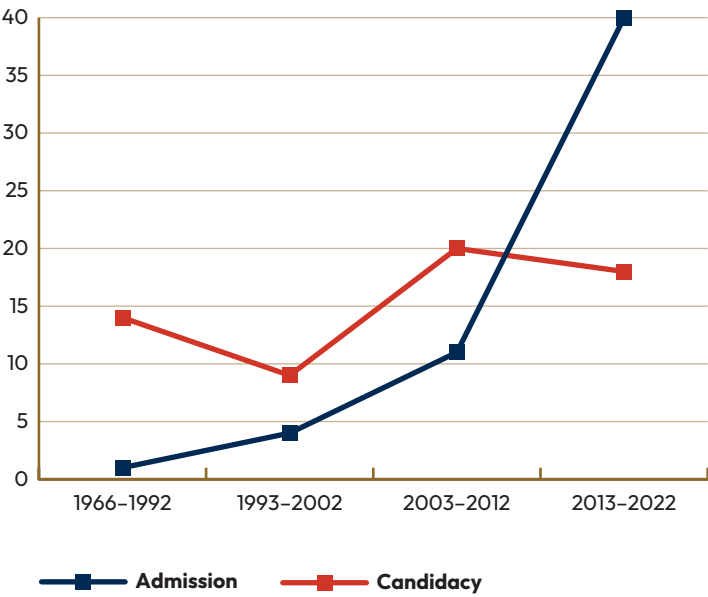
Ministry Personnel

There are several ethnocultural networks in the United Church: the Black Clergy Network, the Chinese Association, the Filipino Network, the Korean Network, and groups that hold multiple ethnocultural identities, such as the Western Intercultural Network. The Leadership Counts staff team met with the leads of each of these ethnocultural networks, as well as with many of the networks separately.

Out of the conversations with these networks, further questions were raised. For example, some people wondered about the historical differences in how racialized ministry personnel entered the order of ministry of the United Church. The graph on Entry of Racialized Ministers shows the differences in how many ministry personnel have entered the order of ministry either through the Candidacy Pathway (or a previous process for candidates) or the admission process. This data is based on the date of entry into the order of ministry for ministry personnel respondents who identified as racialized. Note that this data is only for living ministry personnel. The last decade has seen a notable increase in the number of racialized ministers entering the order of ministry through admission, especially compared with the numbers entering through the Candidacy Pathway.

Some people wondered about the historical differences in how racialized ministry personnel entered the order of ministry of the United Church.

ENTRY OF RACIALIZED MINISTERS



Ethnocultural leaders wondered where racialized ministry personnel serve? Urban, town, or rural contexts?

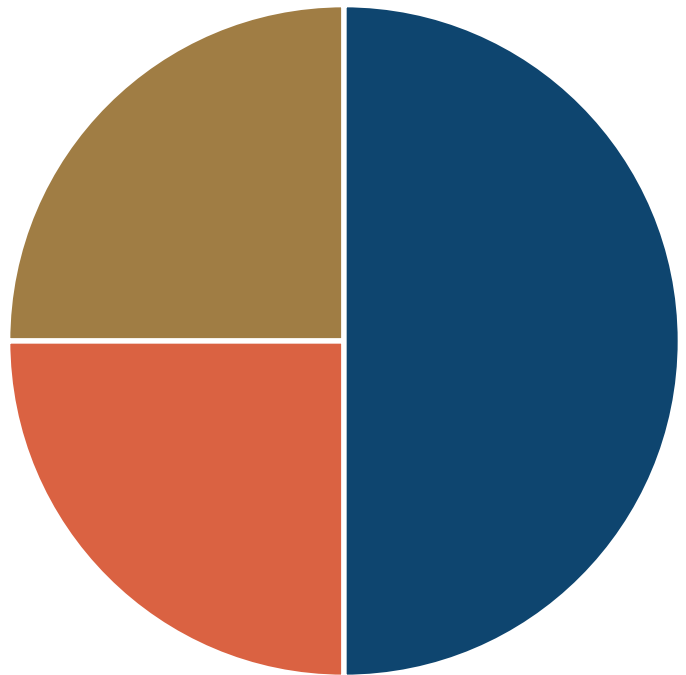
The Leadership Counts staff team was also asked where racialized ministry personnel are serving—in urban, town, or rural contexts? According to the *United Church Year Book*,

- Urban community of faith: in or near a community with a population over 30,000
- Rural community of faith: in or near a community with a population under 2,000
- Town-based community of faith: in or near a community with a population between 2,000 and 30,000

Fifty percent of racialized ministry personnel respondents who are serving in communities of faith serve in an urban context. Twenty-five percent serve in a rural context, and 25 percent serve in a town context. This data contradicts a common narrative in the church that the majority of racialized ministry personnel are serving in rural contexts. (This narrative may have originated in previous experiences of racialized admission ministers, whose first appointments were often in rural areas. Ministers who are currently in the admission process serve in city, town, and rural contexts in nearly equal proportions.)

RACIALIZED MINISTRY PERSONNEL SERVING COMMUNITIES OF FAITH

■ Urban **50%**
■ Rural **25%**
■ Town **25%**



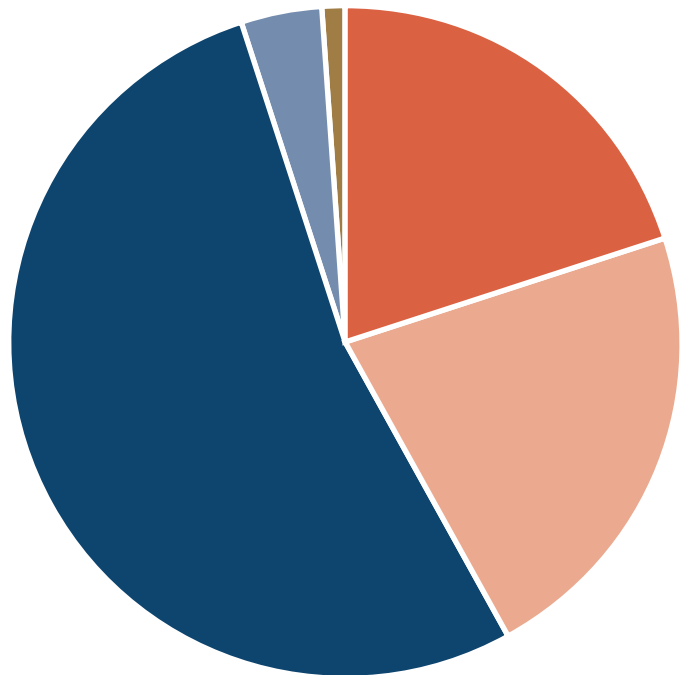
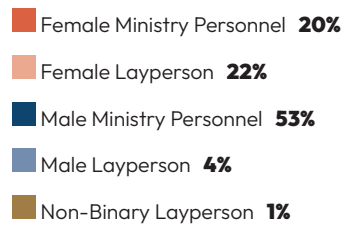
Many network members also observe a low number of racialized lay men in their communities of faith.

Committees

Of the (non-Indigenous) racialized committee members, more than 50 percent are male ministry personnel. In contrast, very few racialized male lay people serve on committees. This raises questions about the presence and participation of racialized lay men in our communities of faith.

Since the majority of racialized committee appointments are ministry personnel, and the majority of racialized ministry personnel join the United Church through the admission process, the admission process makes a significant impact on the diversity of committee leadership.

GENDER AND MINISTRY: RACIALIZED COMMITTEE MEMBERS





Francophone or Active in French Ministries

Among respondents who identify as francophone or are active in French ministry, a notably higher proportion also identify as racialized: 24 percent of ministry personnel and 34 percent of committee members, compared to 11 percent and 27 percent, respectively, in the overall respondent group.

Other Identities Named by Francophone or Active in French Ministries Leaders

	Indigenous	Racialized	Primary Language Other than Eng/Fre	2S and LGBTQIA+	Young Adult	Disability
Ministry Personnel	3%	24%	20%	19%	4%	16%
Committee Appointments	2%	34%	29%	25%	11%	18%

Ministry Personnel

Fifty-five percent of ministry personnel respondents in Conseil régional Nakonha:ka Regional Council identify as francophone or active in French ministries. Eight percent of ministry personnel respondents from Eastern Ontario Outaouais Regional Council identify in this way. For all the other regional councils, less than 5 percent of ministry personnel respondents identify as francophone or active in French ministries.

Committees

Committee members who identify as francophone or active in French ministries serve across all parts of the United Church’s committee structure. The appointments counted within Leadership Counts include those people elected to la Table des ministères en français. Within the francophone and French ministries appointments there is rich diversity. Many of these members also have a primary language other than French or English.

Non-francophone
committee members able to or mostly able to participate in meetings in French: **18%**

Francophone
committee members able to or mostly able to participate in meetings in English: **82%**



Primary Language Other than English or French

Within this identity we see the highest percentage of people who identify as racialized for both ministry personnel and committee appointments. Many also identify as francophone or are active within French ministries.

Other Identities Named by Leaders with a Primary Language Other than English or French

	Indigenous	Racialized	Francophone	2S and LGBTQIA+	Young Adult	Disability
Ministry Personnel	2%	62%	11%	9%	1%	10%
Committee Appointments	29%	80%	19%	9%	3%	18%

Ministry Personnel

Nine percent of ministry personnel have a primary language other than English or French. One significant update from the data shared in the 2023 mid-term report is that, with an increase in Indigenous respondents, the primary languages named now include Mohawk and Cree.

It has been reported that ministry personnel whose primary language is not English can face discrimination in a community of faith when congregational members complain that they have trouble understanding the minister. For example, the “Pastoral Relationships Thriving with Equity” report notes that “While 95 percent of respondents to the questionnaire note English as their language of most comfort, it is not English proficiency but accent or vocal tenor that garners comment.”¹ The Leadership Counts data on primary languages illustrates the significant size of the ministry personnel population impacted by this type of experience.

Committees

Ninety-three percent of respondents who identified as having a primary language other than English or French also identified with one of the other equity identities. These members bring a wealth of racial and cultural identities to their committee appointments. The intersection of racialization and language is a strength of diversity; it is also a place where people may face discrimination given the layering of these multiple marginalized identities.

¹ The United Church of Canada, “Pastoral Relationships, Thriving with Equity Resource Project: Final Report” (August 2023), p. 70



Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+

In addition to inviting people to name whether they identify as Two Spirit or LGBTQIA+, everyone was invited to name their gender identity and sexual orientation. Given nine options to describe sexual orientation and seven to describe gender, respondents offered 95 unique combinations to describe themselves—and still added many write-in options.

Other Identities Named by Indigenous Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+ Leaders

	Indigenous	Racialized	Francophone	Primary Language Other than Eng/Fre	Young Adult	Disability
Ministry Personnel	4%	7%	6%	6%	4%	24%
Committee Appointments	19%	29%	13%	7%	7%	27%

Ministry Personnel

The mid-term report illustrated the diversity of identities according to minister type (candidate, designated lay minister, diaconal minister, ordained minister). Currently, 31 percent of candidate respondents identified as 2S and LGTBQIA+. This is significantly higher than respondents of other ministry types.

Committees

As highlighted in the mid-term report, individuals often serve on more than one national committee or role. Those who identify as Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+ hold an average of 1.83 committee appointments each—nearly two per person—compared to an average of 1.26 appointments for those who do not hold this identity.

Although committee appointments overall are split 45 percent lay people and 55 percent ministry personnel, among individuals who identify as 2S and LGBTQIA+, only 20 percent are lay people and 80 percent are ministry personnel.

Affirm United wondered if congregations are prepared for an increased LGBTQIA+ new minister cohort?

demiromantic demisexual Cisgender woman **Gay**
Lesbian Demi-male **Intersex** Asexual/Nonsexual
Celibate Heterosexual/Straight **Agender** **Pansexual**
Polyamorous **meta-sexual** **Gender Fluid**
Nizh Manidoowag I do not identify with sexuality. **Cisgender man**
An identity not listed **Nonbinary** **Trans man** **Queer**
Bisexual Still in discernment I do not identify with gender. **Genderqueer**



Youth and Young Adults

Because very few people aged 30 or under are serving on committees or as ministry personnel, it is statistically challenging to draw other conclusions about their identities. However, even in these small numbers there are some intriguing differences, including that a high percentage identify as Two Spirit or LGBTQIA+, and as disabled/person with a disability. These statistics match other, more comprehensive identity surveys of young adults in Canada.²

Other Identities Named by Youth and Young Adult Leaders

	Indigenous	Racialized	Francophone	Primary Language Other than Eng/Fre	2S and LGBTQIA+	Disability
Ministry Personnel	4%	25%	11%	7%	39%	25%
Committee Appointments	41%	44%	21%	9%	26%	38%

Ministry Personnel

Because of the educational requirements to enter the order of ministry, there is often only a short time after entry when a person is under age 30. It is not surprising that the group of candidates and ministry personnel who identified as under age 30 is smaller than some of the other equity identity groups. However, there is a greater presence of 2S and LGBTQIA+ people among the youngest ministry personnel compared to the full group of ministry personnel survey respondents. Young adult ministry personnel and candidates also identify with disabilities more than other ministry personnel respondents.

Committees

Conversations have pointed to many reasons for why fewer young adults serve on committees, including long appointment terms and scheduling conflicts that make it difficult for students and young professionals to participate. Also, committee membership is not the full story of young adult leadership in the national church. Young adults are actively engaged in a variety of leadership roles beyond traditional committees—such as summer internships, national conferences and events, young scholars programs, global and ecumenical programs, and the participation of almost 100 youth and young adults at General Council 45.

What are other ways of connecting with the wisdom of young adults? In what ways are young adults in forms of leadership that are not counted as traditional national committees?

² Allyson McCormack, "More than a third of Maritime university students report disabilities," CBC.ca (January 21, 2025).



People with Disabilities/Disabled People

People offered a variety of ways of identifying as disabled. This category also had the most write-in options, including people explaining to what extent they felt that this identity did or did not describe them at this particular point in time.

Other Identities Named by Leaders with Disabilities

	Indigenous	Racialized	Francophone	Primary Language Other than Eng/Fre	2S and LGBTQIA+	Young Adult
Ministry Personnel	4%	5%	5%	6%	25%	3%
Committee Appointments	33%	23%	12%	18%	34%	13%

Ministry Personnel

There are many gaps in what we know about the experiences of ministry personnel who have disabilities. From this data, we do not know how many request accommodations in their ministry contexts or workplaces. This data can also be compared with anonymous data acquired from the United Church’s Restorative Care Plan and Long-Term Disability Plan administrators about trends they’re noticing.

The disability identity is one of the identity categories being reviewed for equity concerns in the Total Compensation Review. The [results of this review](#) were presented at General Council 45 in August 2025.

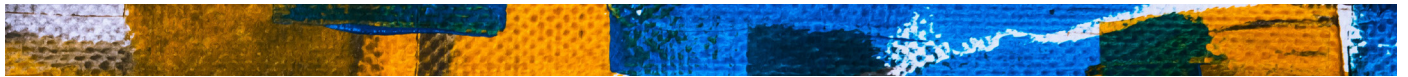
Committees

People with disabilities is one of two identity categories where committee participation is lower than the church population (the other being young adults).

Eighteen percent of women appointed to committees identify as disabled, compared to 10 percent of men. Eighteen percent of ministry personnel in committee appointments identify as disabled, compared to 9 percent of lay people.

Among identity groups, young adults have the highest proportion of committee members identifying as disabled (38 percent), followed by Indigenous members at 35 percent. In contrast, only 12 percent of racialized committee members identify as disabled.

The Disabilities Network shared that, when comparing Leadership Counts data to Canadian census data, not only are there fewer people with disabilities/disabled people in ministry and on committees, but this is also their observation of the membership of communities of faith.



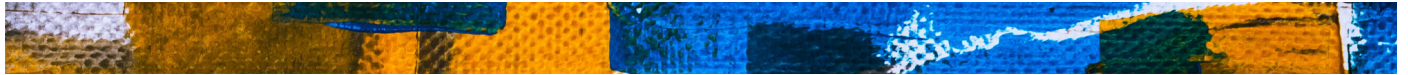
Informing Other Work

Data and stories from Leadership Counts are informing strategic activities in the church, including the following:

- A Total Compensation Review for ministry personnel
- [Toward 2035](#)
- Committee recruitment and communications
- Equity, diversity, and anti-oppression education and support for General Council and its committees
- Growth and Invigorating Leadership [strategic teams](#)

Data and stories from Leadership Counts also exist beside and help to inform companion studies:

- “Pastoral Relationships Thriving with Equity” report
- Full Participation Audit for Committees initiative
- Racial equity audit of part of the General Council Office



Appendix: Methodology

The [2023 mid-term report](#) contains the full details of how the Leadership Counts survey was developed and how the data is analyzed. The data for committee appointments in this report reflects the full scope of all 699 appointments that served at some point during the 44th triennium (August 2022–August 2025).