35/50 INITIATIVE

THEATRE ALBERTA

DATA COLLECTION REPORT 2020-2025

(Version Release March 9, 2026)

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THE 35//50 INITIATIVE AND THEATRE ALBERTA DATA COLLECTION REPORT FOR 2020 THROUGH 2025

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THE 35//50 INITIATIVE – AN INTRODUCTION

The 35//50 Initiative began in 2020 as a coalition of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour) artists with shared experiences and values of curiosity, risk, truth, and equity. The initiative sought to study Alberta's theatre ecology, with a goal to see it more equitably reflect its civic landscape, based on municipal census data. Together, the initiative delivered a letter first in Calgary and then in Edmonton in the summer of 2020, calling for companies to commit to meaningful, measurable change in the theatre sector. The central commitment was that by the 2024–2025 season, a minimum of 35% of paid professional positions would be held by BIPOC individuals and 50% by women and gender variant individuals.

Each company was asked to track the number of their administrative and artistic team members who identify as BIPOC, as well as those who identify as women or gender-variant. In the spirit of transparency, the demographic information collected would be made public and available at the end of each artistic season. This commitment would help present an ongoing narrative of their organizational efforts.

By the fall of 2020, 64 theatre companies had publicly committed to the initiative, and 160 more individual theatre artists signed the letter to support their work.

THEATRE ALBERTA PARTNERSHIP AND PROJECTS (2021 to 2023)

In 2021, the initiative partnered with Theatre Alberta. This partnership allowed for the creation of two part-time coordinator positions to help administer the wishes of the initiative, filled by Jesse Del Fierro and Andrés Moreno. Together, they worked to guide the community process, support companies in their commitments, and began planning broader capacity-building programs.

Inspired by a conversation between rocket scientist CJ Giovingo and social justice activist Autumn Brown from the podcast How to Survive the End of the World, The Engagement Lab emerged as the first key project for this new partnership. Running from 2021-2023, the project was an immersive and experimental "lab" to ask theatre-makers in Alberta how to create a more equitable arts ecology and transform the relationship between historically marginalized artists and Alberta's predominantly white theatre institutions, later referred to as Institutions Operating Under Colonial Structures. Click here to find out more about the Engagement Lab, or listen to the podcast.

COMMUNITY RESEARCH SESSIONS (Fall 2024)

Following the completion of the Engagement Lab, Jesse Del Fierro and Andrés Moreno began focusing on finalizing the initiative and fulfilling the promise to synthesize collected data in order to demonstrate the sector's collective shift over the 5-year experiment. Theatre Alberta was able to secure research support from Calgary Arts Development to hire facilitators and statisticians to guide the development and analysis of this data. We also sought additional funds for larger community projects and tools, but were unsuccessful in our initial attempts.

With these funds, the initiative hired Breann Denby, who had previously worked on Chromatic Theatre's data reports, and Lily Hou. Together, the team developed a plan for the collection and analysis of the data collected by companies and prioritized community engagement before beginning any work by hosting facilitated sessions with companies and artists. These sessions were facilitated by Rebecca Comer and asked direct questions about participants' experiences with data collection and self-identification. This presented an opportunity to focus on their perceptions of changes in access to opportunities since the launch of the initiative, and their hopes for what a province-wide data narrative and report might accomplish. The sessions were held in different groupings to allow for all sides of the experiment to speak openly and to ask questions with their peers, hopefully reducing power imbalances. The groupings were individual artists and leaders from organizations who had signed on to the initiative.

Artist sessions reflected that while some new opportunities had emerged since 2020, progress often felt inconsistent, tokenizing, or unsustainable. Self-identification practices had become more common, largely tied to grants, but trust remained low. Many noted that initial gains had diminished, with barriers such as demographic survey burnout, pay inequity, and inaccessible work environments persisting. Participants called for tangible sector-wide changes rather than optics-driven diversity efforts.

Meanwhile, organization sessions highlighted significant challenges in tracking demographic data, ranging from survey fatigue and low response rates to difficulties in establishing baselines. Smaller companies tended to maintain closer relationships with artists and therefore had higher engagement in surveys, or had knowledge of artists used to fill gaps in data collection. Some companies reported genuine shifts in programming and hiring practices, but most described the workload of data collection as unsustainable without shared tools or sector support. Many companies expressed hope that the initiative's final report and analysis would shine a light to these issues and hopefully help by creating a standardized framework for the continuation of this data collection.

The facilitation team noted recurring struggles with data collection on both the company and artist sides, including mistrust, gaps, and fatigue. They also noted that some companies had staff turnover and the commitment to the initiative was lost in transition, leading to their data collection falling off as a priority. The most consistent recommendation was to establish a standardized, province-wide data collection method that could ease administrative burdens, encourage transparency, and rebuild trust among artists.

DATA COLLECTION

After the community research sessions, the initiative began work on a data collection tool to support the sector in tracking hiring practices and tackle the needs identified by the community. This effort was largely spearheaded by Jesse Del Fierro, with consultation from Theatre Alberta and statistician Lily Hou. Unfortunately, at the beginning of Theatre Alberta's 2025/2026 fiscal year, it became clear that the organization could not financially sustain its current staffing levels, and Jesse Del Fierro transitioned out of their role.

As the data collection began, questions of how to interpret and display the data came up. Originally, three categories were created: creative/artistic, production/technical, and administrative. However, it was quickly decided that with this approach, we were losing an important part of the story — who is being contracted for individual projects, and who is being employed longer term.

It was decided that the data would be divided into two categories, with one category for everyone working on a specific show or project, recognizing that in our industry most people are contracted on a project basis rather than employed. Then we looked at primarily permanent employees as a separate group, including administrative, technical, and artistic full-time and part-time positions. However, it should be noted that not all creative/production positions are contracts, and not all administrative positions are employed.

The following report from Lily Hou presents and analyzes data from 17 companies who completed the data collection tool and shared their information with Theatre Alberta in the fall of 2025.

35//50 Data Report

Created by Lily Hou

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Context

The original 35//50 letter outlined an initiative for Alberta theatre companies to commit to equitable employment of 35% Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) and 50% women and gender variant individuals by 2025. The original letter was signed by 64 theatre companies across Alberta. The data presented here contains five years of data from 17 companies from the original 64 signatories. Despite the low number of data sources, there are still thousands of positions and data points over the past five years. We hope that the community sessions along with the quantitative data presented here can spark conversations about commitment, responsibility, and accountability for the future.

These questions helped guide the project direction and data collection methods:

1. Have collective hiring trends shifted over the past five years?
2. Have companies successfully reached the 35//50 goal? What is "success"?
3. Are BIPOC and gender variant individuals being supported in their roles? Are they in leadership roles?
4. How can companies continue their commitment, responsibility, and accountability to the community and to themselves?

Data collection and analysis

As outlined in the original 35//50 letter, individual theatre companies were tasked with collecting their hiring data from 2020 to 2025. Most companies opted for voluntary disclosures through surveys, so the data here represents only a subset of the entire picture. Some companies used onboarding forms at the time of hiring that included disclosing gender and/or racial identity. Few instances of data collected include personal communication with the individual and previous knowledge of the individual's background. Despite the varying approaches to collecting data, the majority of the companies included in this analysis collected the same data. The data collected in this analysis are:

1. Year: Years are defined by their end year in the season. For example, 2020-2021 is labelled as 2021.
2. Position name or type.
3. If available, position contract type (permanent full-time, permanent part-time, contract, board member).
4. Total number of hiring instances for a position ("Total positions"). An individual may be hired for multiple positions, or the same individual may be hired for the same position over many productions/years. These all count as individual hiring instances for a position.
5. Total number of hired individuals who identify as BIPOC. This includes individuals who identify as BIPOC women/gender variant.

6. Total number of hired individuals who identify as women/gender variant (hereafter "women/GV"). This includes individuals who identify as BIPOC women/gender variant.
7. If available, total number of hired individuals who identify as both BIPOC and women/gender variant (hereafter "BIPOC women/GV").
8. If available, wage/salary allocated to the position(s).

All position names and their categories are provided in the Appendix section.

Definitions

BIPOC – This term stands for 'Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour,' it is meant to unite all People of Colour in the work for liberation while intentionally acknowledging that not all People of Colour face the same levels of injustice. The term aims to emphasize the historic oppression of Black and Indigenous people, as does the term IBPOC, which purposefully puts the first peoples of this land first.

Equitable – Providing opportunities and representation that fairly reflect the demographics of the community, so that the professional theatre industry mirrors the civic landscape of each city, based on recent municipal census data.

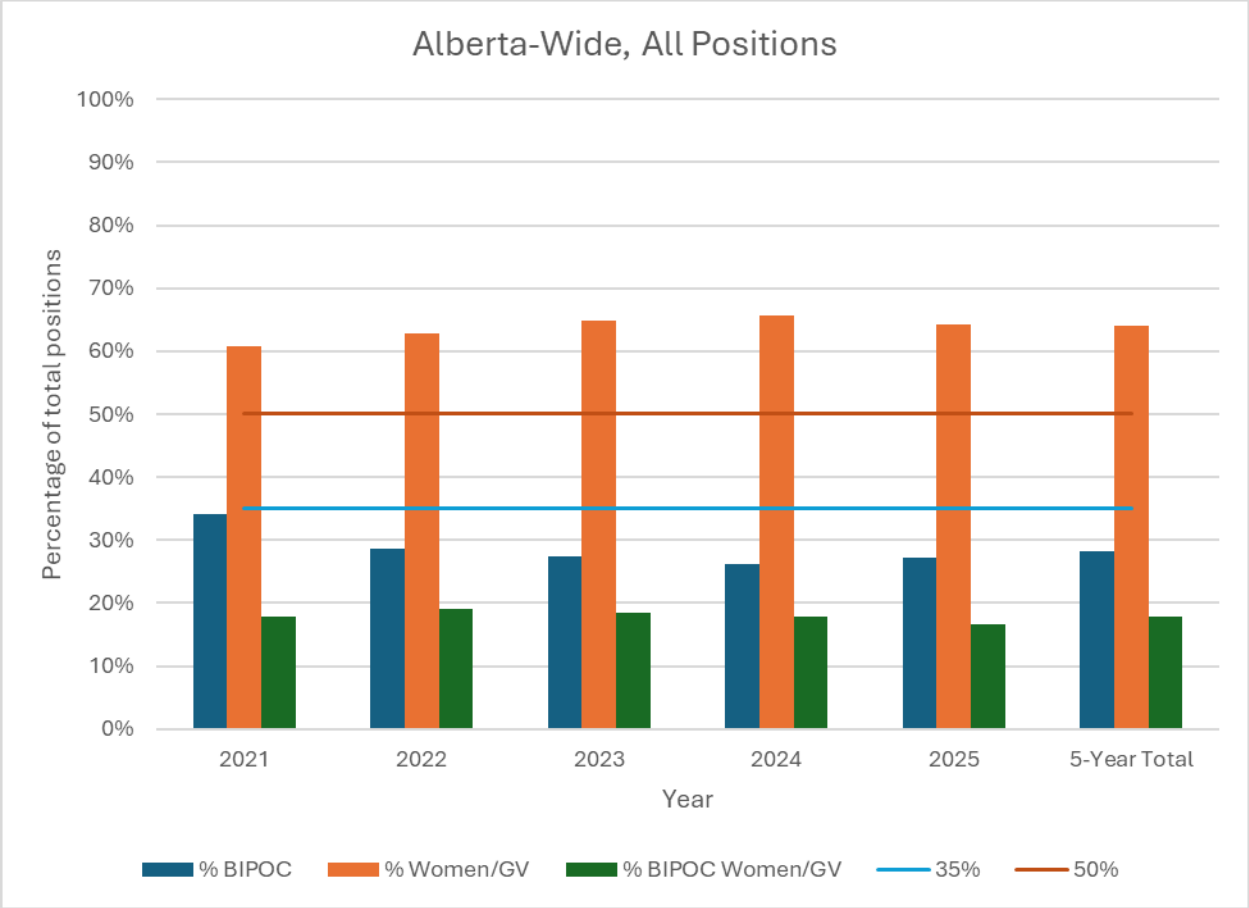
Women/gender variant – We recognize that gender identities are complex and unique to each person. This term is used for individuals who identify as women, including trans and intersex women, and non-binary, to welcome those whose gender identity and/or gender expression fall beyond the social construct of a gender binary, including, but not limited to: non-binary, two-spirit, genderqueer, GNC (gender non-conforming), and agender people.

Position category – See table in appendix for all position names and their assigned category. Position names with identifying projects or names were shortened to a general position.

Range – Difference between the highest and lowest values.

Hiring data – Alberta-wide

The Alberta-wide dataset includes all companies and all positions. Over the past five years, the percentage of BIPOC hired has not met the target of 35%, but the percentage of women/GV hired has exceeded the target of 50% each year. The percentage of BIPOC hired ranges from 34% in 2021 to 26% in 2024 (8% range). A decreasing trend is observed from 2021 to 2024, but there is a slight increase in 2025. For women/GV hired, the percentage ranges from 61% to 66% (5% range), with a slight increase over the past 5 years. BIPOC women/GV hired hovers around 17% with little change over the years (2% range).

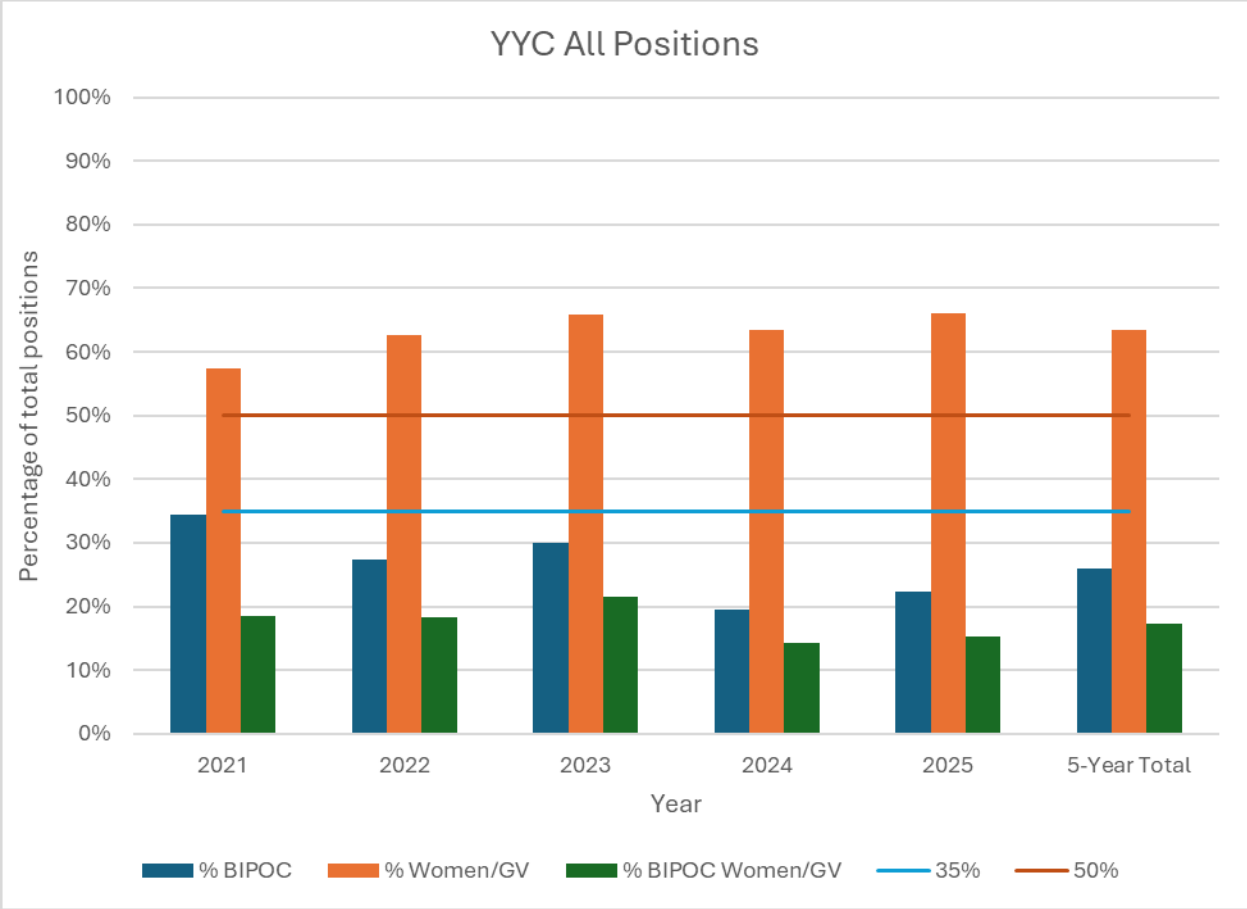


Year	% BIPOC	Total Positions	% Women/ GV	Total Positions	% BIPOC Women/ GV	Total Positions
2021	34%	647	61%	679	18%	464
2022	29%	767	63%	767	19%	705
2023	27%	846	65%	846	18%	790
2024	26%	1183	66%	1183	18%	920
2025	27%	925	64%	925	17%	898
5-Year Total	**28%**	**4368**	**64%**	**4400**	**18%**	**3777**

Ranges: %BIPOC = 8%, %Women/GV = 5%, %BIPOC Women/GV = 2%.

Trends by location (Calgary) –

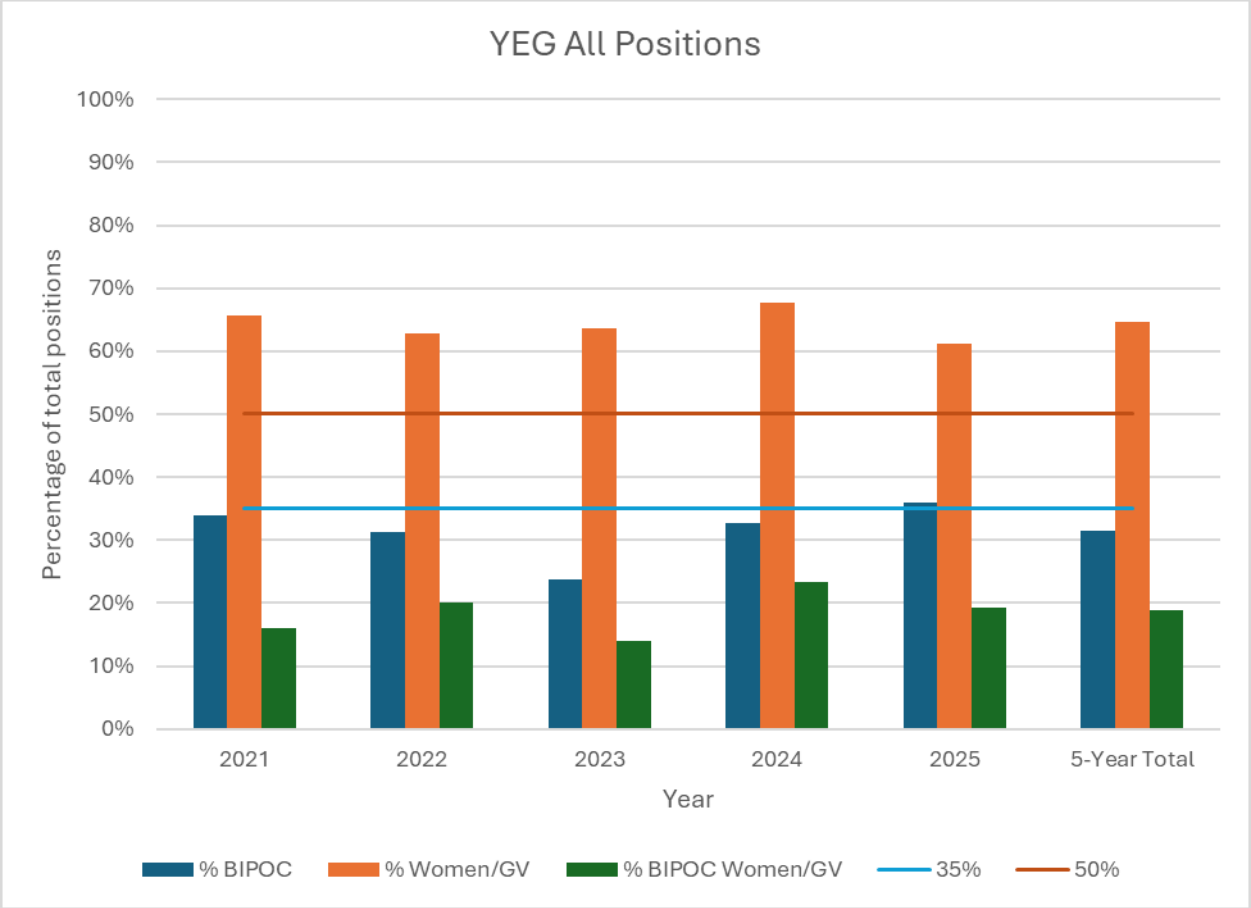
Companies were further divided by location to determine if trends were different between our major cities. In both Calgary and Edmonton, the percentage of women/GV hired exceeds 50%, with Edmonton having slightly higher percentages than Calgary. In Calgary, the percentage of BIPOC hired is close to 35% in 2021, but does not meet 35% in subsequent years. There is a decrease over the years, with the lowest percentage in 2024. Percentage of women/GV hired increases from 2021 to 2025, while the percentage of BIPOC women/GV hired fluctuates year by year.



Year	% BIPOC	Total Positions	% Women/ GV	Total Positions	% BIPOC Women/ GV	Total Positions
2021	35%	394	57%	394	19%	351
2022	27%	479	63%	479	18%	446
2023	30%	488	66%	488	22%	466
2024	20%	580	63%	580	14%	550
2025	22%	597	66%	597	15%	597
5-Year Total	**26%**	**2538**	**63%**	**2538**	**17%**	**2410**

Ranges: %BIPOC = 15%, %Women/GV = 9%, %BIPOC Women/GV = 7%.

Trends by location (Edmonton) – In Edmonton, the percentage of women/GV hired over the past 5 years ranges from 61% to 67% (7% range), and is less variable than in Calgary. Percentage of BIPOC hired almost reaches 35% in 2021, followed by a slight decrease then an increase. In 2025, the percentage of BIPOC hired exceeds the 35% goal. Similar to Calgary, there is a wide range in percentage of BIPOC hired over the past 5 years (12%). Percentage of BIPOC women/GV hired fluctuates year over year with a range of 9%.



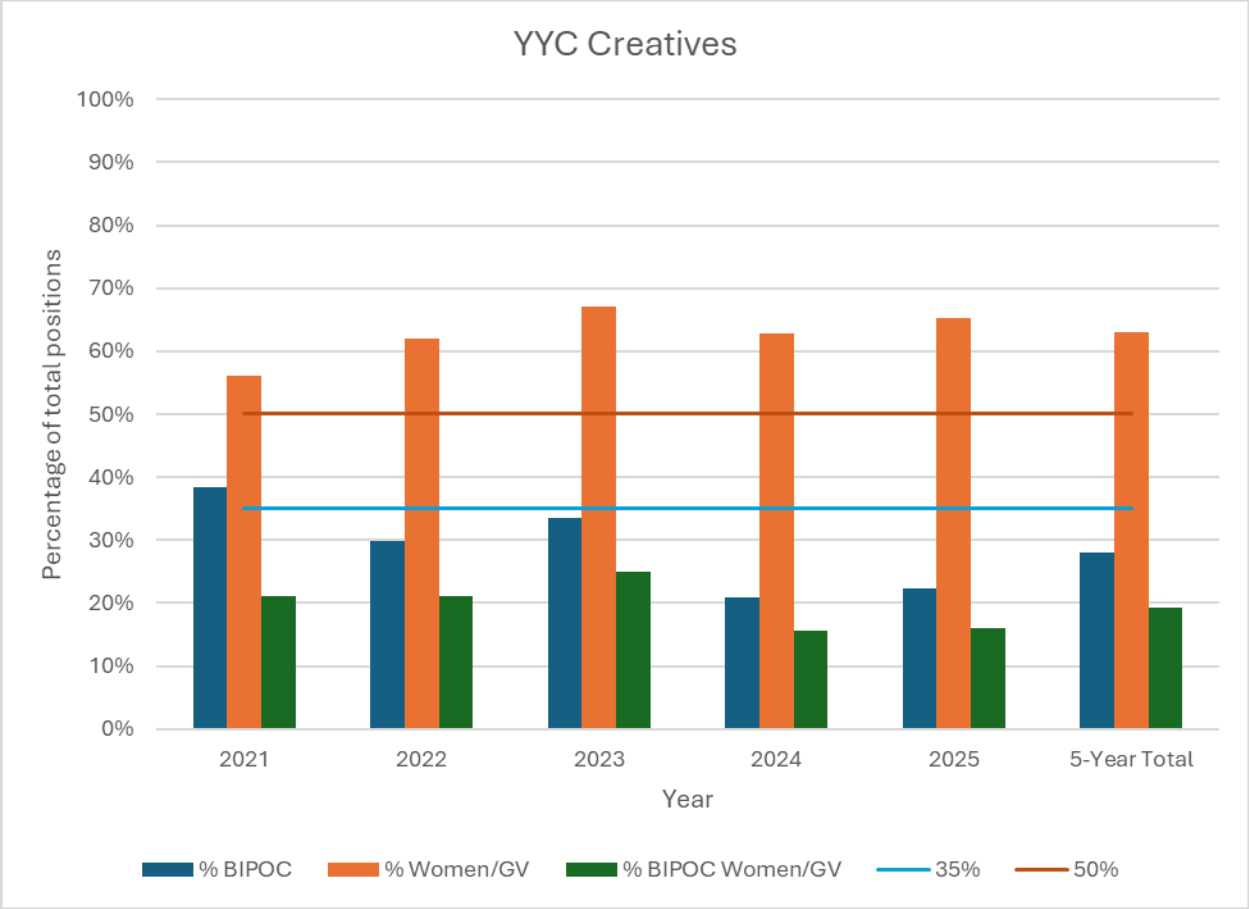
Year	% BIPOC	Total Positions	% Women/ GV	Total Positions	% BIPOC Women/ GV	Total Positions
2021	34%	253	66%	285	16%	113
2022	31%	288	63%	288	20%	259
2023	24%	358	64%	358	14%	324
2024	33%	603	68%	603	23%	370
2025	36%	328	61%	328	19%	301
5-Year Total	**32%**	**1830**	**65%**	**1862**	**19%**	**1367**

Ranges: %BIPOC = 12%, %Women/GV = 7%, %BIPOC Women/GV = 9%.

Trends by position category per location (Calgary)

To further understand the composition of representation, each location's positions were subdivided into creatives/production ("creatives") and administrative ("admin"). Is the overall percentage of representation from all positions being skewed by certain categories, or are they relatively equal?

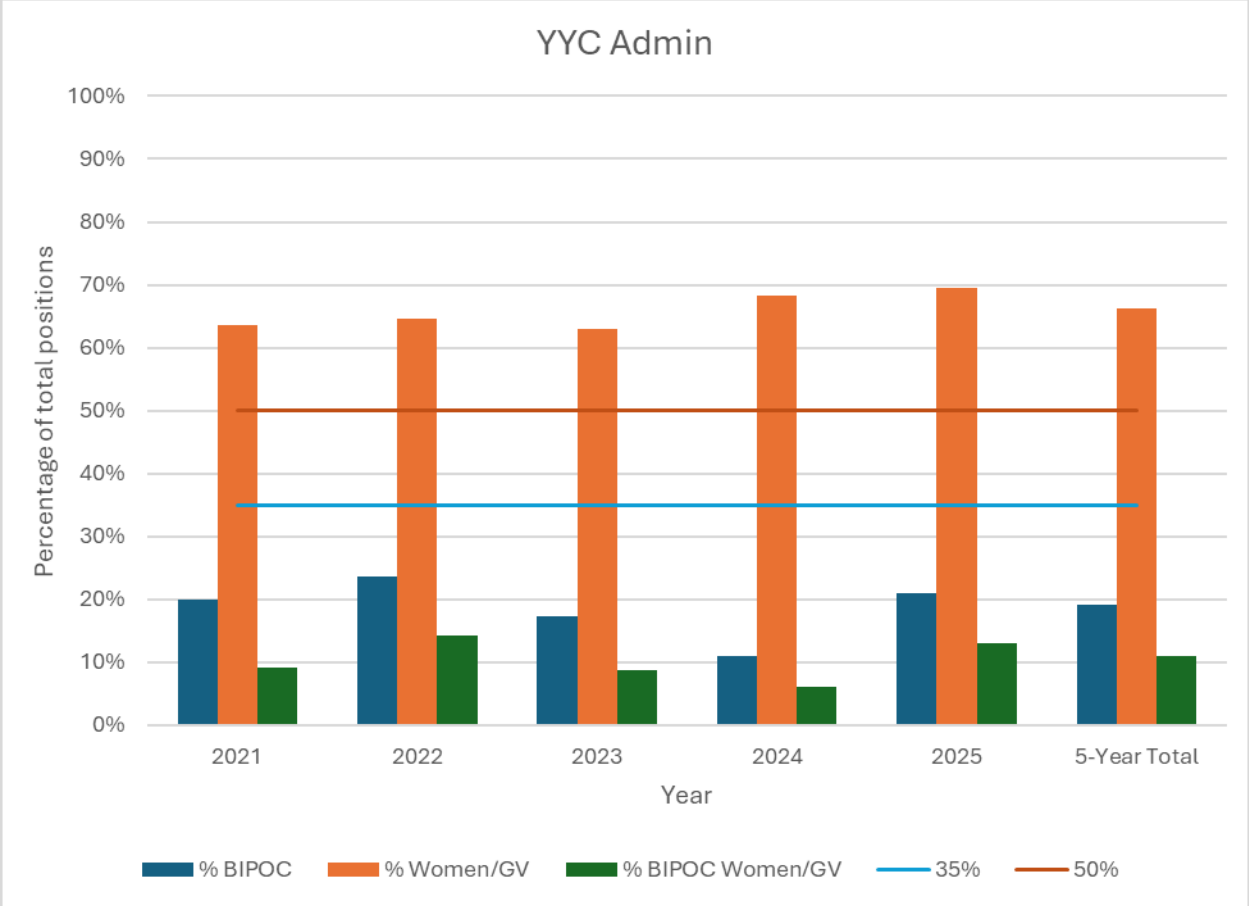
In Calgary, creatives hired comprise most of the positions (5-year total = 1923 or 80%) compared to admin (5-year total = 494 or 20%). Creatives and admin hired meet and exceed 50% women/GV hired each year, with admin having a higher percentage of women/GV hired than creatives. Percentage of BIPOC creatives hired in 2021 exceeds 35%, however this decreases over subsequent years. There is a slight uptick in 2023 but the following year has the lowest percentage at 21%.



Year	% BIPOC	Total Positions	% Women/GV	Total Positions	% BIPOC Women/GV	Total Positions
2021	39%	317	56%	317	21%	274
2022	30%	318	62%	318	21%	285
2023	33%	371	67%	371	25%	349
2024	21%	472	63%	472	16%	442
2025	22%	445	65%	445	16%	445
5-Year Total	**28%**	**1923**	**63%**	**1923**	**19%**	**1795**

Ranges: %BIPOC = 18%, %Women/GV = 11%, %BIPOC Women/GV = 9%.

The percentage of BIPOC admin hired is much lower compared to percentage of BIPOC creatives hired. The percentage of BIPOC admin hired was the highest in 2022, followed by a substantial decrease over the next few years (24% down to 11%, a 13% difference). The percentage of women/GV hired is quite high at over 63%, reaching almost 70% in 2025.

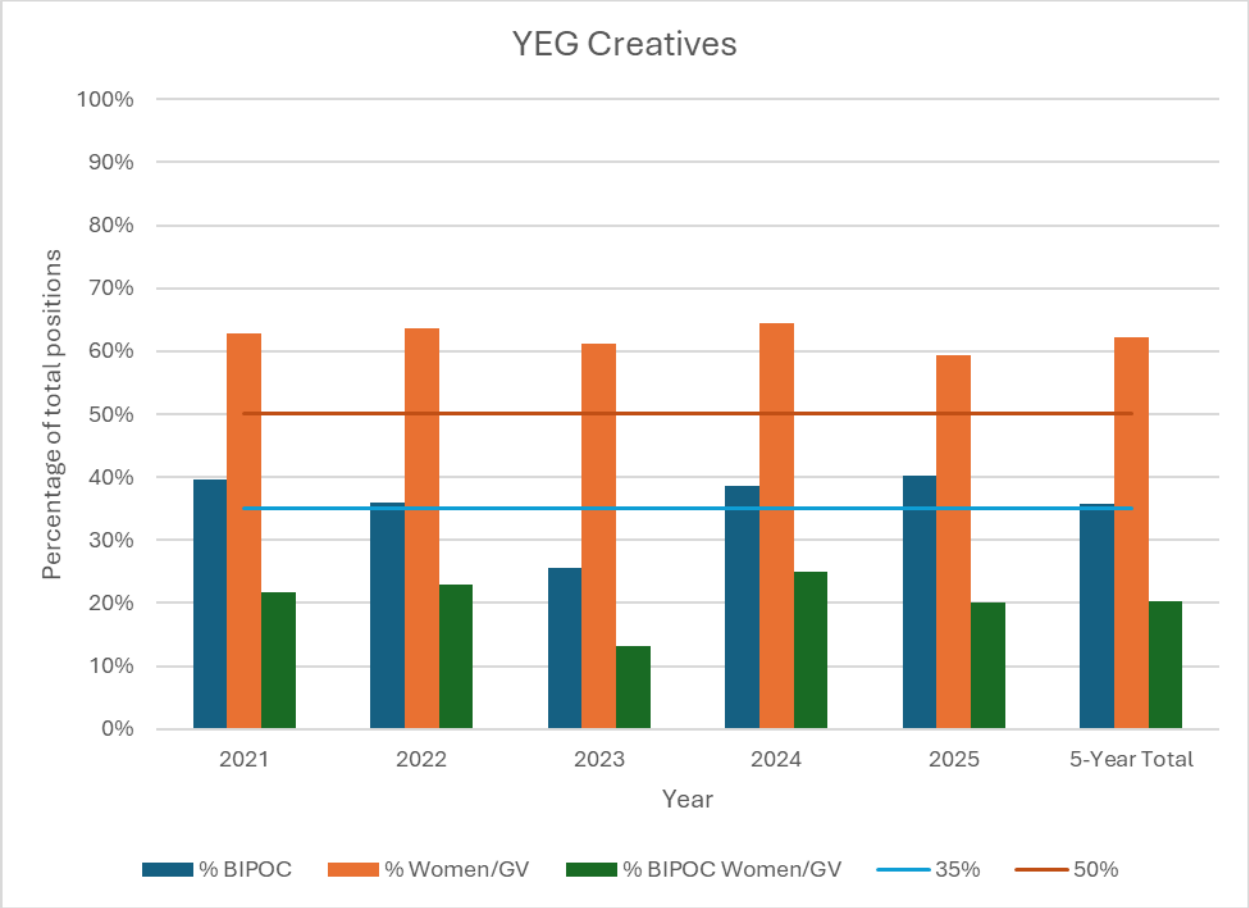


Year	% BIPOC	Total Positions	% Women/GV	Total Positions	% BIPOC Women/GV	Total Positions
2021	20%	55	64%	55	9%	55
2022	24%	127	65%	127	14%	127
2023	17%	92	63%	92	9%	92
2024	11%	82	68%	82	6%	82
2025	21%	138	70%	138	13%	138
5-Year Total	**19%**	**494**	**66%**	**494**	**11%**	**494**

Ranges: %BIPOC = 13%, %Women/GV = 7%, %BIPOC Women/GV = 8%.

Trends by position category per location (Edmonton)

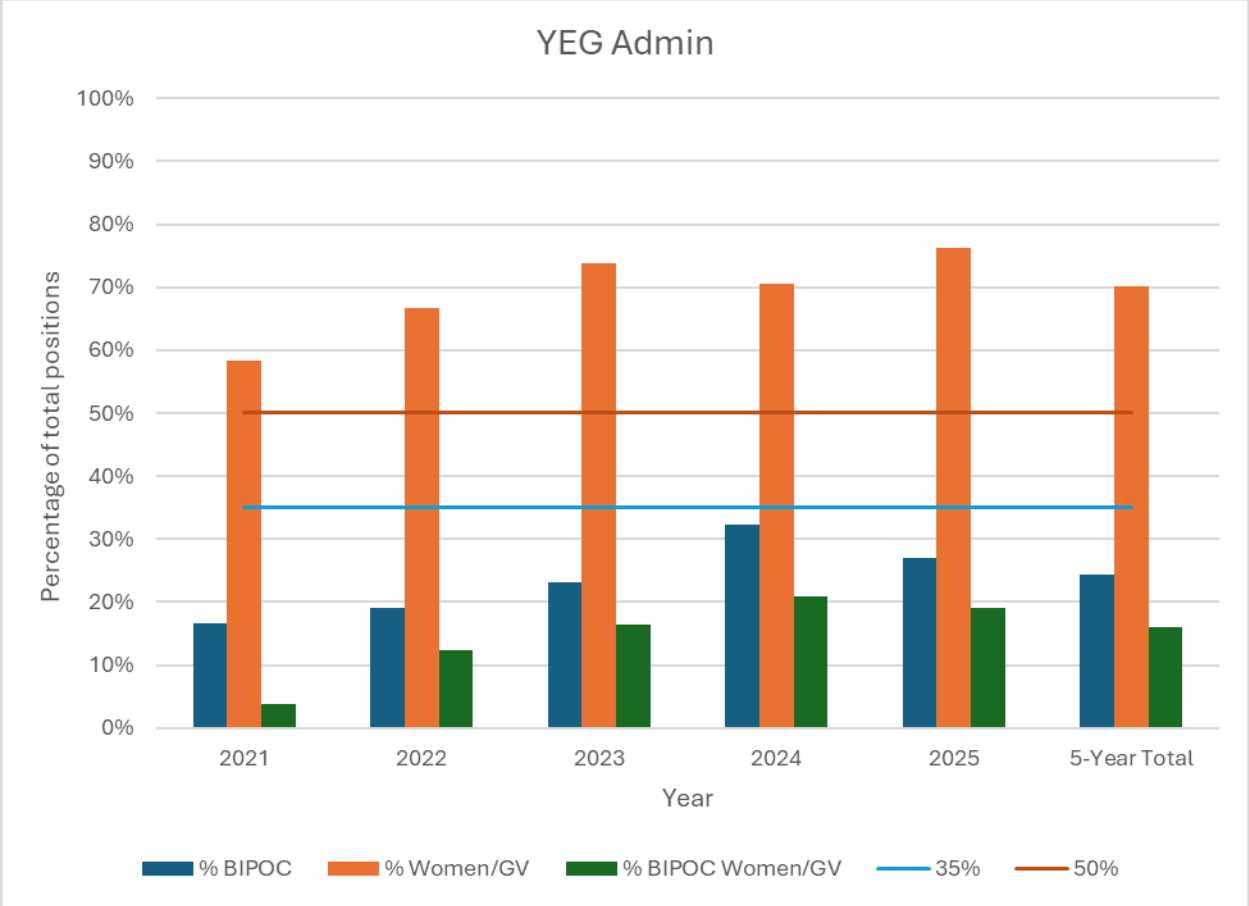
In Edmonton, creatives hired comprise most of the positions (5-year total = 1106 or 79%) compared to admin (5-year total = 295 or 21%). Both creatives and admin exceed 50% women/GV hired over the past 5 years. Percentage of women/GV creatives hired is lower than admin, hovering around 60%. The percentage of BIPOC creatives hired meets and exceeds the 35% goal every year except for 2023, which was at 26%. There is little change for percentage of women/GV creatives hired over the last 5 years (range = 6%), but there is a greater difference over the last 5 years for BIPOC hired (range = 14%).



Year	% BIPOC	Total Positions	% Women/GV	Total Positions	% BIPOC Women/GV	Total Positions
2021	40%	169	63%	169	22%	74
2022	36%	203	64%	203	23%	183
2023	26%	242	61%	242	13%	214
2024	39%	251	65%	251	25%	229
2025	40%	241	59%	241	20%	224
5-Year Total	**36%**	**1106**	**62%**	**1106**	**20%**	**924**

Ranges: %BIPOC = 14%, %Women/GV = 6%, %BIPOC Women/GV = 12%.

BIPOC admin hired does not meet 35%, but it increases greatly from 2021 (17%) to 2024 (32%). Percentage of admin hired reach 70% women/GV hired each year, which is the highest between locations and positions. The range of BIPOC, women/GV, and BIPOC women/GV hired is large over the last 5 years, with a range of around 16-18%. However, it should be noted that the number of total positions for admin is 295, which shifts how much each individual impacts the percentage/proportion.



Year	% BIPOC	Total Positions	% Women/GV	Total Positions	% BIPOC Women/GV	Total Positions
2021	17%	36	58%	36	4%	26
2022	19%	63	67%	63	12%	57
2023	23%	65	74%	65	16%	61
2024	32%	68	71%	68	21%	62
2025	27%	63	76%	63	19%	58
5-Year Total	**24%**	**295**	**70%**	**295**	**16%**	**264**

Ranges: %BIPOC = 15%, %Women/GV = 18%, %BIPOC Women/GV = 17%.

Representation and financial data

Representation in hiring data does not capture the entire experience of BIPOC and women/GV individuals working in the theatre space. Specifically, hiring practices may feel tokenistic in the attempt to meet a diversity goal, rather than supporting diversity as a core mission. Support can come in the form of hiring more BIPOC and women/GV individuals, however it is important to determine if these individuals actually feel supported in these spaces. Forms of support vary and can include monetary, community, and accessibility support; the quantitative data here focuses on financial support. The earlier conducted community sessions can provide context to community and accessibility support, and together determine if there is a difference in representation over the past 5 years, and the steps for continuing this work.

Approximately half of the total hiring data had accompanying financial / wage data. Companies entered their financial data along with corresponding position data in the provided spreadsheet. The aggregate financial data here includes the funds for all paid positions, then split by permanent/contract positions, and creative/admin positions, overlayed by percentage of BIPOC, women/GV, and BIPOC women/GV hired. To preserve anonymity, the year-by-year number of positions was not included in this report; the 5-year total number of all positions is 1461. The year-by-year total expenses on compensation are:

Year	Total Compensation Expense
2021	$862,966
2022	$2,144,821
2023	$2,410,466
2024	$2,500,204
2025	$2,421,074
5-Year Total	**$10,339,531**

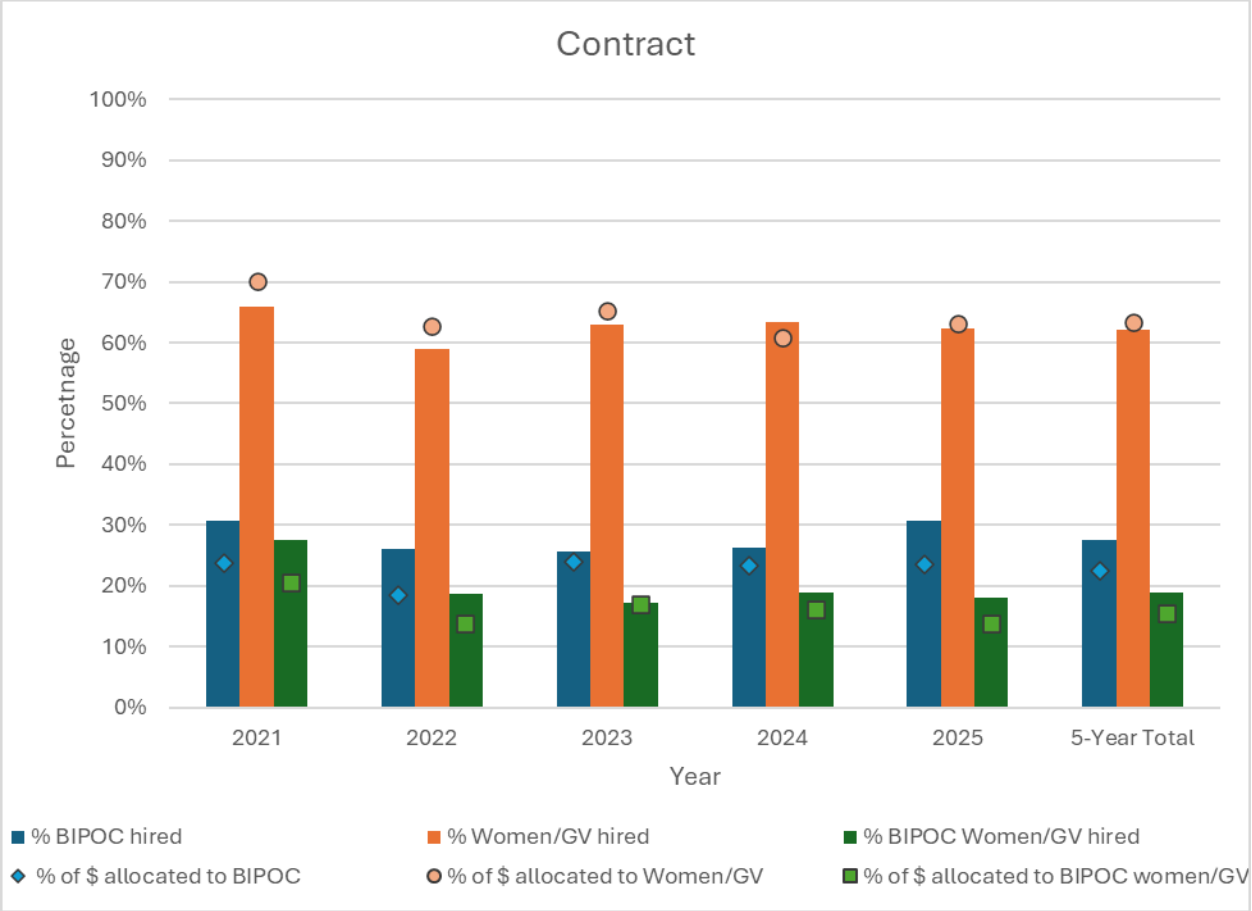
As this data is a subset of the total hiring data, the hiring percentages were not directly compared to the 35//50 goal, but the observed trends are similar. The percentage of women/GV hired exceeds 50%, but the percentage of BIPOC hired does not meet 35%, especially in admin/permanent positions.

Percentage of wages for BIPOC and/or women/GV compared to percentage hired provides some information on how BIPOC and/or women/GV are compensated (i.e. are many BIPOC individuals hired, but for temporary positions with smaller budget allocation?). If there is adequate monetary support for BIPOC and women/GV hired, the percentage of individuals hired compared to percentage of wages allocated should be relatively equal. This also provides information on whether BIPOC and/or women/GV are in permanent positions, which are connected to higher pay, stability, and power.

When grouped by all positions, the percentage of BIPOC hired is higher than the percentage of total wages allocated to BIPOC across all 5 years. In 2021, the percentage of BIPOC hired was 28% and the wages allocated were 17%. The difference between BIPOC hired and wage allocation decreases from 2021 to 2024, but the difference is greatest in 2025 (29% hired vs. 17% allocated). The difference between percentage of women/GV hired compared to percentage allocated has decreased over the past 5 years. The greatest difference was in 2021 (62% hired vs. 51% allocated), and the lowest was in 2024 (64% hired vs. 61% allocated). BIPOC women/GV show a similar trend, with the greatest difference in 2021 (24% hired vs. 9% allocated) and a decreasing difference over time.

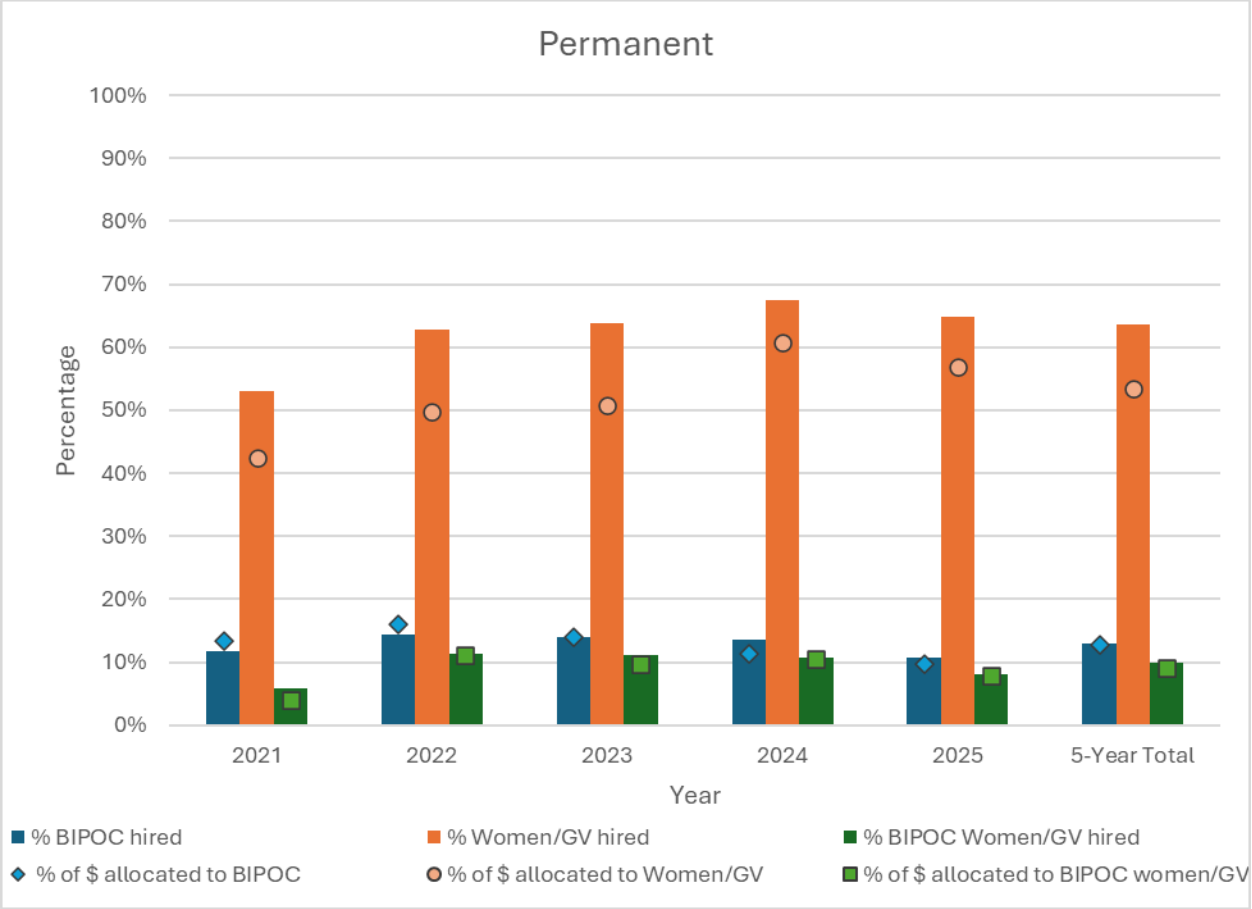
When split by contract/permanent positions, the number of contract positions is far greater than the number of permanent positions. On average, contract positions make up almost 90% of the total number of positions each year. However, the percentage of total wages for all contract positions is about 40%, while the percentage of total wages for permanent positions is about 60%.

Contract positions show a greater percentage of wages allocated to women/GV compared to the percentage of women/GV hired each year except for 2024. The largest difference was in 2021 (66% hired vs. 70% allocated), then decreased slightly over subsequent years. The percentage of BIPOC hired is higher than the percentage allocated for all 5 years, but approaches similar percentages in 2023 and 2024. The percentage of BIPOC women/GV hired is also higher than the percentage allocated, except in 2023 when it is matched.



Permanent positions show a contrasting trend compared to contract positions, however it should be noted that permanent positions have a much smaller sample size compared to contract positions and interpretations here are preliminary. Percentage of wages paid to BIPOC is slightly higher than or equal to the percentage of BIPOC hired over the past 5 years, with a slight decrease in 2024. A similar trend is found for BIPOC women/GV. The percentage allocated to women/GV is lower than the percentage of

women/GV hired over the past 5 years, with the largest differences from 2021 to 2023 (10% in 2021, 13% in 2022 and 2023) followed by smaller differences in 2024 and 2025. More data would provide a greater understanding of the hiring landscape of permanent positions.



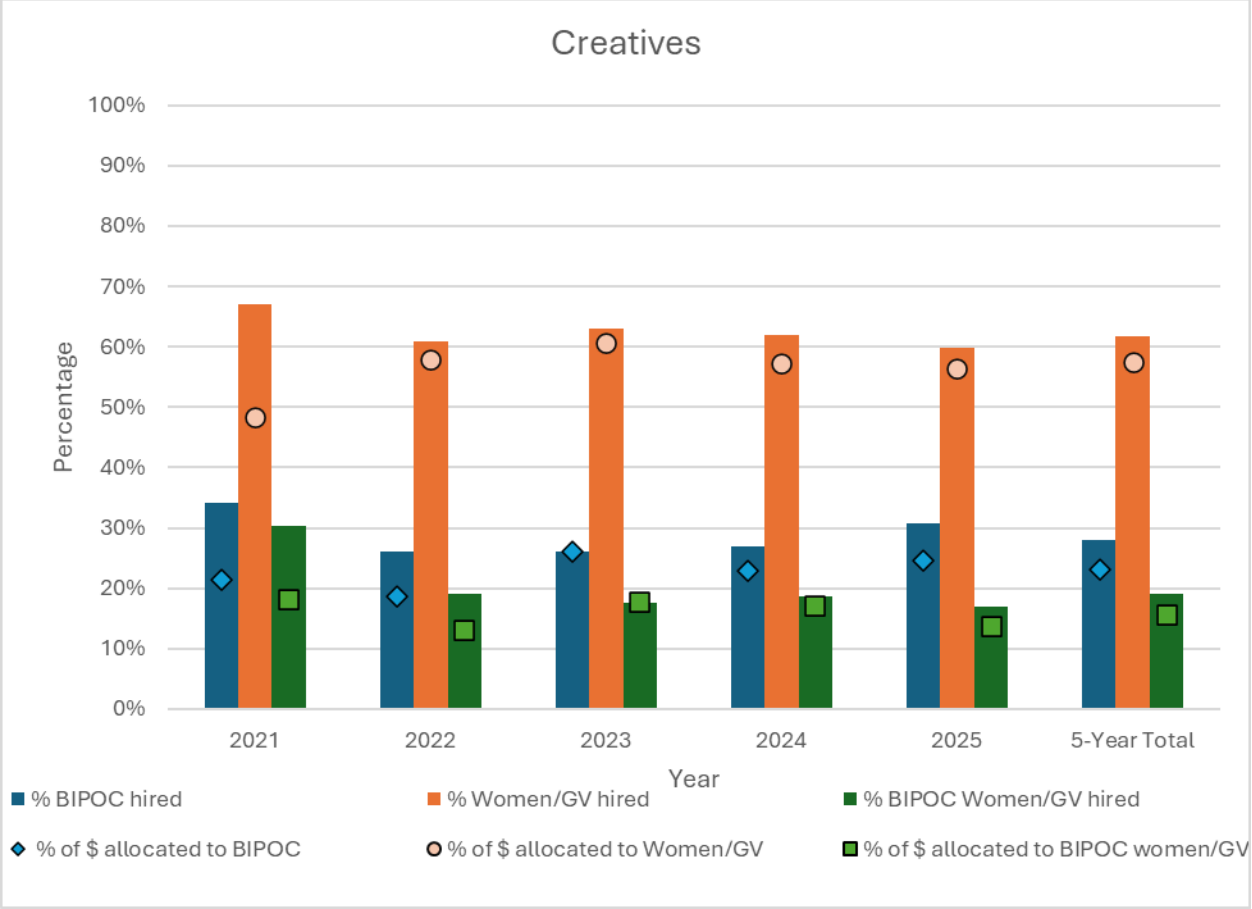
After categorizing positions into creatives and admin, approximately 70% of the total number of individuals hired are creatives and 30% are admin, however the majority of the wages are paid to admin positions each year (about 70%). Within the admin position category, about 50% of the position types are categorized as permanent and 50% as contract, while for creatives it is about 94% contract versus 6% permanent. About 38% of the total number of admin individuals hired are in permanent positions, and 62% in contract positions. For creatives, about 98% of hires are in contract positions and only 2% are in permanent positions.

Within the admin position category, 50% of all admin positions hired (262 positions total) from the last 5 years are categorized as permanent (126 positions) and 50% as contract (126 positions). When looking at unique instances of admin positions by removing duplicate job titles over the years, there are a total of 59 unique positions. Of the 59 unique positions, 38 are contract and 21 are permanent. When looking at the number of individuals hired within admin positions, the total number is 387 individuals hired over 5

years. Percentage of individuals hired in contract admin positions is 62% (241 individuals), while percentage of individuals hired in permanent admin positions is 38% (146 individuals).

Within the creatives position category, 6% of all creative positions hired (238 positions total) from the last 5 years are categorized as permanent (15 positions) and 94% as contract (223 positions). When looking at unique instances of creative positions by removing duplicate job titles over the years, there are a total of 42 unique positions. Of the 42 unique positions, 40 are contract and 2 are permanent. The total number of individuals hired within creative positions over the last 5 years is 1074. Percentage of individuals hired for contract creative positions is about 98% (1058 individuals) while individuals hired for permanent creative positions is about 2% (16 individuals).

Percentage of BIPOC creatives hired is lower than the percentage of wages in 2021 and 2022, but the difference decreases over subsequent years, and the percentages match in 2023 (26%). A similar trend is observed in BIPOC women/GV creatives. The percentage of wages paid to women/GV is less than the percentage of women/GV hired each year. It is quite low in 2021 (about 48% allocated versus 67% hired), but the difference decreases over the next few years to almost match.



Percentage of wages paid to BIPOC admin is slightly higher than percentage of BIPOC admin hired in 2021. However, in subsequent years the total wage percentage remains the same while more BIPOC are hired, resulting in the largest difference between wages and individuals hired in 2025 (13% difference). A similar trend is observed in BIPOC women/GV hired. Percentage of wages paid to women/GV is slightly lower than percentage hired each year, with 2022 almost matching in percentages (55%), but the wages generally match the increase in number of hires.

Conclusion and future steps

Working with people and intersectional identities is complicated and numbers alone cannot capture the entire picture. While the data here presents quantitative data from thousands of hired positions over the past 5 years, each datapoint does not include the person's experiences, knowledge, or history. The initiative defined a 5-year time frame to meet the 35//50 goal, however this work is a continuous process, and at its core is an initiative stemming from curiosity, risk, failure, and commitment. The data here presents a chance to examine the focus for the next 5 years and the gaps that need to be filled within the theatre community.

The past 5 years of hiring practices shows some successes towards achieving the 35//50 commitment. For all positions, the percentage of women/GV hired each year exceeds 50%, but the percentage of BIPOC hires does not reach 35%, and has decreased over subsequent years. Percentage of BIPOC hires fluctuates year by year and notable differences are observed when subdivided by position types and location. In Calgary, the percentage of BIPOC creatives meets 35% for 1 year, and in Edmonton the percentage has exceeded 35% in most years. Admin positions have lower percentages of BIPOC hires in both locations and do not meet the 35% goal; Calgary has a decreasing trend over the past 5 years while Edmonton has a slight increase.

The percentage of women/GV hired has consistently reached 60% or more even at the start of the initiative; the emphasis now should be towards hiring more BIPOC representation, especially in admin and permanent positions. BIPOC creatives hired may be close to 35%, but these positions are majority contracts/temporary positions and it may feel performative if the permanent positions that create the shows are not comprised of BIPOC hires. While hiring women/GV individuals is important for representation, hiring more non-BIPOC women/GV cannot be a substitute for true representation. Further, the data presented here does not track the individual hired and only tracks hiring instances. For example, the same BIPOC individual may be hired multiple times and would be counted multiple times, inflating the actual number of BIPOC individuals hired. While one BIPOC individual is supported, they may feel tokenized and this does not reflect support for the community as a whole.

The wage and salary data overlaying individuals hired shows a lower percentage allocated to BIPOC compared to percentage of BIPOC hired each year. The percentage of wages allocated to women/GV is also lower than the percentage hired, however the difference is smaller. As expected, the majority of total wages are paid to permanent positions (60%), while the bulk of individuals hired are in contract positions (90%).

When split by creatives/admin positions, BIPOC and BIPOC women/GV creatives start with a large difference between wages and individuals hired in 2021, but the difference decreases over subsequent years. In admin positions, the percentage of wages

is lower than individuals hired, except for BIPOC admin in 2021. The data was also split into contract/permanent positions; however the sample size for permanent positions is too small for confident conclusions.

A common effect of decreases in budgets is a decrease of contracts. However, the limited expense data here shows no total wage/salary decrease over the past 5 years. While companies' expenses for wages and salaries has remained relatively the same, the percentage of BIPOC hired has decreased from 2021, with a minor increase in 2025. Further, the percentage of wages paid to BIPOC has remained relatively the same over the past 5 years (15-18%).

The higher baseline of BIPOC individuals hired in 2020/21 was likely due to a confluence of factors including the momentum of Black Lives Matter, the release of the 35//50 Initiative call to action, and COVID-19 wage support programs, but the wages for these individuals do not catch up until 2023. The percentage of wages paid to BIPOC individuals has since decreased in 2025. Wages paid to women/GV have increased to match the increases in percentage of individuals hired. However, there is a distinct lack of BIPOC admin hired, and the percentage of wages paid to them remains the same despite the increase of BIPOC admin hired. Women/GV admin hired have also increased since 2021, and as have their wages, but these are still 8% lower than the percentage hired.

It is important to note that the percentage of BIPOC hires is the greatest in contract/ creatives positions, but these positions receive less total wages compared to permanent/ admin positions. This is most evident when the positions are split by creatives/admin. Admin positions comprise 70% of total compensation expenses with only 10-20% BIPOC in these positions. The financial data is only a subset of the total dataset which can provide only preliminary interpretations, however the trends show that there is much more work to be done to support BIPOC admin.

There are distinct limitations to this dataset. The focus of the project is a wide sweep of Alberta's theatre landscape, so individual companies that may be exceeding the 35//50 goal are lost in the aggregate data. Companies centered around BIPOC voices tend to be smaller, but their community impact is far greater and cannot be measured with only hiring data. Companies whose mandates are focused on BIPOC work, and therefore allocate the majority of their expenses and positions to BIPOC individuals, are at the forefront of shifting the narrative. Smaller companies have also noted making hiring offers to BIPOC individuals but cannot match the offers from larger companies.

The data collection methods will need to be further refined for the next project, either through a centralized system or utilizing existing data (i.e. CADA's work with SMU Data Arts). The data collection method used here was through each company's own approach in addition to provided guidelines. A collective data collection method built upon this iteration of data collection, with new input from theatre companies and artists, can be

created to ensure accountability and responsibility for the next 5 years. The variety of companies also creates unique challenges to data collection. For example, festival-style companies have slightly different approaches to hiring and may not be able to track all data due to the nature of contractors and sub-contractors.

Some companies noted difficulties with gathering data, either due to survey fatigue, concerns about anonymity, and reluctance to disclose information. Work towards a collective data collection approach, building trust, and building community will help create a stronger, more creative, and more diverse theatre industry. This initiative was originally created to keep the community accountable to each other and to themselves. The work towards an equitable and diverse theatre ecology requires ongoing commitment that cannot be a reaction to societal shifts, but a proactive approach to community representation.

Appendix 1 – Positions

Job Title/Position	Position Category
Accessibility Coordinator	Admin
Accountant	Admin
Actor	Creative
Admin & Marketing Coordinator	Admin
Admin Assistant	Admin
Admin Coordinator	Admin
Admin Support	Admin
Admin Assistant	Admin
Animator	Creative
Archivist	Admin
Artist	Creative
Artist in School	Creative
Artistic Associate	Admin
Artistic Director	Admin
Artistic Leadership	Admin
Artistic Producer	Admin
Artistic Staff	Admin
Arts Administrator	Admin
ASL Interpreters	Creative
Assistant Artistic Director	Admin
Assistant Director	Creative
Assistant Lighting Designer	Creative
Assistant Managing Director	Admin
Assistant Projections Designer	Creative
Assistant Stage Manager	Creative
Associate Artist	Admin
Associate Artistic Director	Admin
Associate Lighting Designer	Creative
Associate Producer	Admin
Associate Production Manager	Admin
Associate Projections Designer	Creative
Bartenders	Admin
Board Chair	Board
Board Co-Chair	Board
Board Member	Board
Board of Directors	Board
Board Secretary	Board
Board Treasurer	Board

Bookings Coordinator	Admin
Bookkeeper	Admin
Box Office	Admin
Box Office Casual	Admin
Box Office Manager	Admin
Box Office Staff	Admin
Builder	Creative
Business Development Officer	Admin
Business Manager	Admin
Camera Operator	Creative
Cast	Creative
Choreographer	Creative
Club Artist	Creative
Co-Artistic Director	Admin
Community Engagement Artist	Creative
Community Gathering Artist (Musicians, Visual Artists)	Creative
Community Gathering Coordinator	Admin
Company Manager	Admin
Composer	Creative
Consultant	Admin
Contractors	Creative
Coordinators	Admin
Copyist	Admin
Costume & Props Assistant	Creative
Costume & Props Associate	Creative
Costume Coordinator	Creative
Costume Designer	Creative
Covid Infection Mitigation & FOH Staff	Admin
COVID Safety Coordinator	Admin
Creative Team	Creative
Creatives	Creative
Crew - Assistants	Creative
Crew - Casual	Creative
Crew - Heads	Creative
Cultural Outreach Coordinator	Admin
Dance Dramaturge	Creative

Design Team	Creative
Designer	Creative
Development Manager	Admin
Development Staff	Admin
Dialect Coach	Creative
Director	Creative
Director of Artistic Operations	Admin
Director of Business Operations	Admin
Director of Development	Admin
Director of Finance	Admin
Director of Marketing	Admin
Director of Photography	Creative
Director of Production	Admin
Director/Dramaturg	Creative
Drama Artist	Creative
Drama Education Associate	Admin
Dramaturg	Creative
Elders	Admin
Executive Director	Admin
Facilitator	Creative
Fellowship Artist	Creative
Festival Coordinator	Admin
Fight Director	Creative
Film Crew	Creative
Finance/Admin Staff	Admin
FOH Audio Engineer	Admin
FOH Manager	Admin
FOH Staff	Admin
Front of House	Admin
General Manager	Admin
General Manager/Admin Assistant	Admin
Graphic Designer	Admin
Graphics and Background Designer	Admin
Graphics Designer	Admin
Guide Designer	Admin

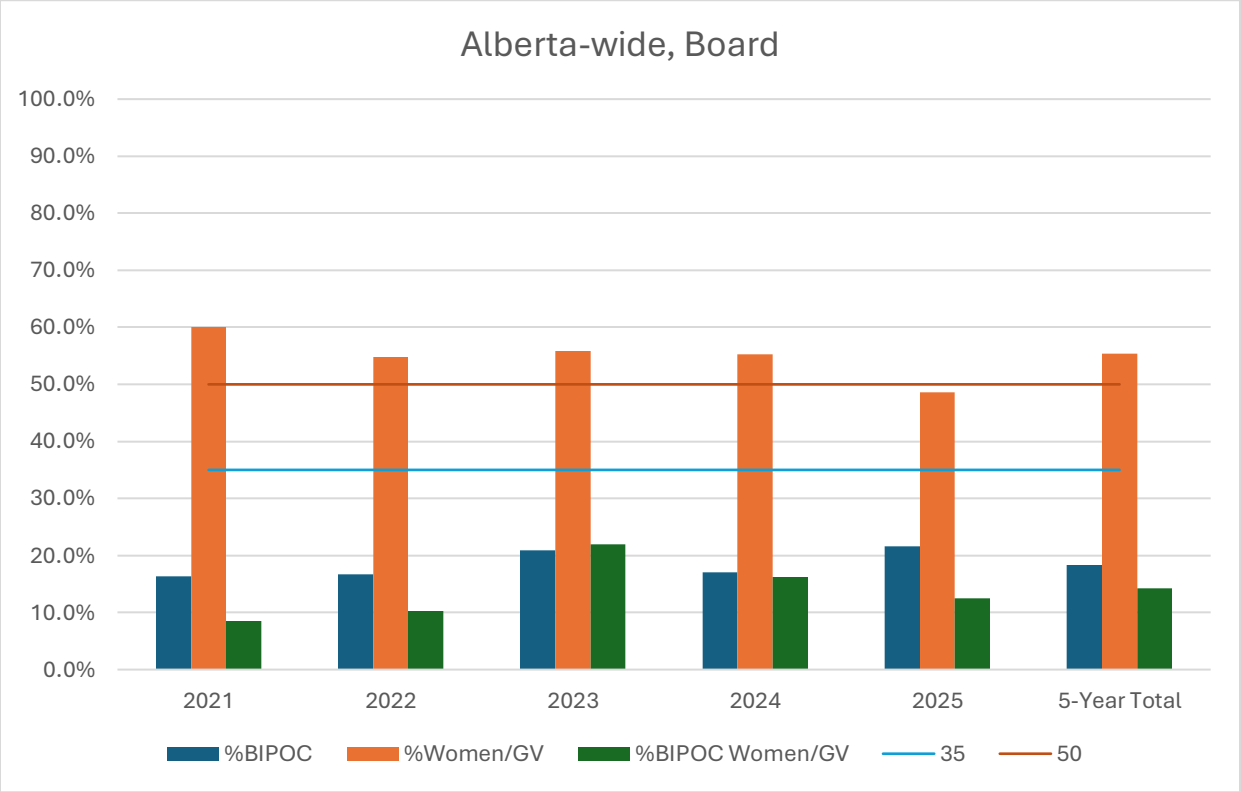
Interim Director of Development	Admin
Interim Executive Director	Admin
Interim Managing Director	Admin
Intern	Admin
Interview Participants	Creative
Isolation Training Classes Artist	Creative
Lighting Associate	Creative
Lighting Designer	Creative
Maintenance Crew	Admin
Management	Admin
Managing Director	Admin
Marketing & Design Coordinator	Admin
Marketing Coordinator	Admin
Marketing Manager	Admin
Marketing Staff	Admin
Mastering Engineer	Creative
Music Director	Creative
Music Producer	Creative
Musical Composer	Creative
Musical Director	Creative
Musicians	Creative
Online Classes Artist	Creative
Online Instructor	Creative
Online School Residency Artist	Creative
Original Choreographer	Creative
Other Admin	Admin
Other Crew	Creative
Other Fundraising	Admin
Other Marketing	Admin
Outreach Coordinator	Admin
Patron Services Manager	Admin
Performer	Creative
Photographer	Admin
Play Development Artist	Admin
Playwright	Creative
Producer	Admin

Production Artist	Creative
Production Assistant	Creative
Production Designer	Creative
Production Intern	Creative
Production Management Mentor	Admin
Production Manager	Admin
Production Staff	Creative
Production/Set Staff	Creative
Program Coordinator	Admin
Project Coordinator & Host	Creative
Project Voice Mentor	Creative
Project Writing Mentor	Creative
Project Writing Mentor & Workshop	Creative
Projection Associate	Creative
Prop Maker	Creative
Publicist	Admin
Puppet Designer	Creative
Residency Coordinator	Admin
Resident Playwright	Creative
School Outreach	Admin
Selection Panelist	Admin
Senior Management	Admin
Set & Lighting Designer	Creative
Set Designer	Creative
Sound Design Assistant	Creative
Sound Designer	Creative
Sound Engineer	Creative
Sound Operator	Creative
Specialty Director	Creative
Stage Manager	Creative
Streaming Technician	Creative
Studio Engineer	Creative
Summer Camp Coordinator	Admin
Summer Camp Instructor	Creative
Teaching Team	Creative
Technical Director	Admin
Technical Producer	Creative

Technician	Creative
Ticket Office Attendants	Admin
Tour & Education Coordinator	Admin
Touring Manager	Admin
Travel Coordinator	Admin
Video Editor	Creative
Videographer	Creative
Volunteer & Consultation	Admin
Volunteer Coordinator	Admin
Wardrobe Design Assistant/A2	Creative
Web Developer	Admin
Website Designer	Admin
Working Agreement Facilitator	Creative
Workshop Instructor	Creative
Youth Artist	Creative

Appendix 2 – Board Members

Board members are not paid positions, and the original 35//50 letter focused on representation for paid positions. The sample size for board members is much smaller and trends are not as evident. Board member data was pooled together for both locations. Percentage of women/GV in board positions is over 50% each year, and the percentage of BIPOC in board positions hovers around 15-20%, however this is a cautious interpretation due to the small sample size (i.e., one individual accounts for a greater percentage as the sample size decreases).



Year	% BIPOC	Total Positions	% Women/GV	Total Positions	% BIPOC Women/GV	Total Positions
2021	16%	55	60%	55	9%	35
2022	17%	42	55%	42	10%	39
2023	21%	43	56%	43	22%	41
2024	17%	47	55%	47	16%	43
2025	22%	37	49%	37	13%	32
5-Year Total	18%	224	55%	224	14%	190

The 35//50 INITIATIVE FINAL CONCLUSION

We began this journey with the hope that a unified community galvanized by curiosity and a drive to do better would give us a better understanding of what was needed to not only meet but surpass our initial goal of 35% of paid professional positions held by BIPOC artists, and 50% by women and gender variant artists.

However, at the end of this experiment, we are left without clear answers to those questions that led our data collection. The questions again are:

1. Has the collective hiring trend shifted over the past 5 years?
2. Have companies successfully reached the 35//50 goal? What is “success”?
3. Are BIPOC and gender variant individuals being supported in their roles? Are they in leadership roles?
4. How can companies continue their commitment, responsibility, and accountability to the community and to themselves?

To answer many of these questions requires iteration and collective commitment. This version of the experiment focused on allowing committed companies to discover how they wanted to track data on their own, which created the biggest problem in data collection. With only 27% of the companies that originally signed up sending in data for their companies, the data collected can only give us a glimpse into the representation of marginalized voices in the theatre sector in Alberta .

The most repeated barriers highlighted by companies to collecting data also revealed deeper structural and systemic issues that complicate both the process of gathering data and the broader goals of the initiative. The barriers include:

Lack of Standardized Data Collection

Because no standardized method of data collection was established at the start of the initiative, companies have been tracking information in inconsistent ways. This has created discrepancies across organizations, making it difficult to synthesize data in a way that is accurate, equitable, and comparable across the sector.

Artist Data Concerns

Artists themselves have expressed skepticism around data collection, noting concerns about how their personal information will be used and whether it will ultimately serve equity goals. This mistrust means that the feedback gathered may not be representative of the artists engaged, leading to gaps and distortions in the data.

Limited Scope of Data

Companies have noted that while they can report numbers based on responses to surveys, the data lacks nuance like the length of time artists were engaged or the standards under which they were employed. Many companies also reported a low response rate, which creates holes in the data.

Administrative Capacity

Company size and administrative capacity have also proven to be barriers. Smaller companies with limited staff often struggle to dedicate resources to track, organize, and submit the requested data. The administrative burden of this work can feel disproportionate when compared to the company's overall capacity.

Gaps in Historical Tracking

Some companies have admitted that they have not been tracking demographic data over the past five years. As a result, compiling the necessary information now represents a significant workload—one that many organizations feel they cannot afford in terms of time, finances, or staffing.

Waning Commitment

Finally, there has been a general decline in engagement from both companies and artists after five years of the initiative. The impacts of COVID 19 on our producing schedules and models were overwhelming, and cannot be underestimated. However, they are also not a singular excuse for failing to prioritize the curiosity and drive for better representation that was the impetus for this work in 2020, when the Black Lives Matter movement was the zeitgeist. As a result, many companies did not finish or submit their data.

Meanwhile, artists who were involved in drafting and supporting the original letters have also returned to full-time work as theatres reopened, which has naturally decreased their capacity to stay engaged in the initiative.

FINAL THOUGHTS

As this phase of the initiative wraps up, we hope this push that originated in 2020 continues to encourage data tracking as a way to identify trends and provide insights to companies about what they can do to improve in their efforts and to better represent the audiences they serve. Doing this work often falls on the shoulders of the same marginalized communities that are asking for better representation, and often they are underfunded and under-supported.

For this initiative, we were fortunate to find a partner in Theatre Alberta, who supported us with resources and collaboration to help the initiative meet its goals, run programs and collaborate with the community to ensure we are fulfilling the wishes of artists across Alberta.

We also wouldn't be able to do any of this work without the commitment of companies that signed on in 2020 and took the commitment as an opportunity to learn, reflect, and evolve. To the companies that saw their commitment through, we are ever thankful to you and look forward to continuing to see where this work can take your respective companies.

Finally, initiatives like this can't happen without voices that stand up and ask for better. However vulnerable that made all of artists who wrote the original letters, this initiative was a palpable step forwards, and we hope that now that we are closing the chapter on this initiative, it can be an example and a reminder to artists everywhere to ask for better, collaborate with their community and hold transparency and accountability as values that are inherent in our industry.