

An abstract painting with a textured surface. The background is a vibrant red. On the left side, there are vertical strokes of blue and green. In the foreground, there are horizontal strokes of blue and yellow, suggesting a landscape or architectural elements. The overall style is expressive and modern.

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
TO ADDRESS ANTI-BLACK  
RACISM IN RESEARCH  
AND RESEARCH TRAINING**  
FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS



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# ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report is the result of the work of [the Advisory Committee to Address Anti-Black Racism in Research and Research Training](#). The Advisory Committee was created in April 2021 to counsel the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) on ways to break down existing barriers, ensure equitable access of funding, and amplify the voices and visibility of Black scholars in SSHRC research and research training programs, including tri-agency programs managed by SSHRC.

*“The Committee’s work is part of a long tradition of Black people asserting our rightful place in Canadian society.”*

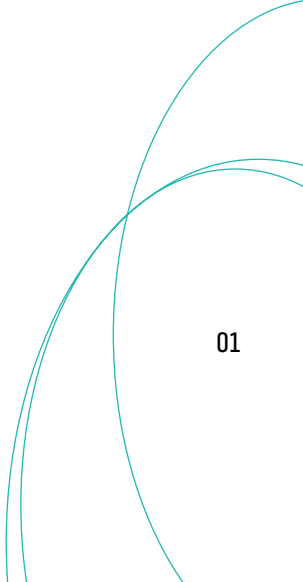
Dr. Wendell Nii Laryea Adjetey, Co-chair

*“The Committee aims to overcome the absences and negations in education and collaboratively develop a holistic narrative that centres Blackness.”*

Karine Sanchez-Coen, PhD candidate, Co-chair

*“Working on this committee with SSHRC and esteemed African, Caribbean and Black colleagues from across the country has been cathartic. The opportunity to discuss, dissect and seek solutions to the pernicious problem of anti-Black racism in the Canadian research ecosystem holds the promise of a brighter future, which we can collectively point to as the necessary lever for transformational change.”*

Sulaimon Giwa, PhD, Committee member





# STATEMENTS FROM THE CO-CHAIRS OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Co-chairing this committee has been a rigorous and rewarding duty. The depth of scholarly research, regional perspectives and overall commitment of committee members, not to mention the professionalism and attentiveness of our SSHRC partners, made the process insightful and constructive. Although deep structural change takes time, we must be relentless in our pursuit of equity for Black scholars and researchers, and SSHRC must be forthright in holding universities accountable in protecting the interests of Black faculty, graduate students and staff. Ensuring equitable research and work environments will make it harder for United States institutions to recruit talented Black researchers, which deepens Canadian brain drain and undermines Black people's contributions to Canadian society.

One of the objectives in participating in this committee is to implement long-term change that is reflective of the voices from Black communities. With this mindset, we established recommendations that will improve the visibility of Black scholars and researchers in academia. This is an ongoing process that requires firm long-term goals that endorse the integration of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI)-related considerations in research design and practices, and increase equitable and inclusive participation in the research system, including on research teams and in data collection processes. Fundamentally, conducting any analyses that involve the barriers or needs of Black communities must include Black researchers or individuals with lived experiences of anti-Black racism in decision making and governance.



# THE JOURNEY

## CONTEXT

According to the United Nations, around 200 million people identify as African descendants in the Americas. Many millions more live in other parts of the world, outside the African continent. Despite efforts made in recent decades, people of African and Caribbean descent are still discriminated against in many countries and are among the most marginalized groups in the population.<sup>1</sup>

To combat racism and racial discrimination, the United Nations established the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent in 2008<sup>2</sup> to study the problems of racial discrimination faced by people of African descent living in the diaspora and to make proposals for the eradication of racial discrimination against Africans and people of African descent throughout the world.

Following the recommendations of this working group, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed in 2015 that the International Decade for People of African Descent should be observed from 2015 to 2024.<sup>3</sup> This resolution provides a strong framework for Member States and the United Nations to enable civil society and relevant actors to join forces with people of African descent and combat anti-Black racism.

In 2018, the Government of Canada officially recognized the International Decade for People of African Descent and committed to a better future for Black Canadians and to learning more about the issues that affect Black Canadians, including improving research and data collection and better understanding the challenges faced.<sup>4</sup>

People of African and Caribbean descent have resided in Canada since the 17th century. Black communities have been established for several centuries in Nova Scotia and elsewhere in Canada, and more recent immigrant groups continue to shape the history of Canada. These plural and diverse generations have resisted slavery, residential and educational segregation, and anti-Black racism in all its forms since the 17th century.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The International Decade for People of African Descent, 2015-2024: <https://www.un.org/en/observances/decade-people-african-descent/background>

<sup>2</sup> Mandate of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/wg-african-descent/mandate>

<sup>3</sup> The Proclamation of the International Decade for People of African Descent: <https://www.un.org/en/observances/decade-people-african-descent>

<sup>4</sup> "Prime Minister announces that the Government of Canada will officially recognize the International Decade for People of African Descent," 2018: <https://pm.gc.ca/en/news/news-releases/2018/01/30/prime-minister-announces-government-canada-will-officially-recognize>

<sup>5</sup> Jean-Pierre, J. & Collins, T. (2022). "Penser une démarche épistémologique afroémancipatrice en recherche qualitative par, pour et avec les communautés noires." *Recherches qualitatives*, 41(1), 13-34. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1088793ar>



## THE CREATION OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Over the years, SSHRC has developed different policies to address systemic barriers that limit access to funding by marginalized groups. SSHRC has adopted several practices and policies to promote equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) within the organization, within postsecondary and other research-performing institutions, and within research practice and research design. Recently, the federal research funding agencies have published an EDI Action plan. However, for Black communities, there are no specific measures in place that take into consideration the intersecting ethnicities and cultures, which are needed to distinguish the specificities of anti-Black racism. Events in 2020, including the murder of George Floyd and the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on racialized communities, have drawn global attention to the reality of systemic anti-Black racism. Additional work is required to identify and mitigate distinct barriers to address the full participation of Black students and researchers in Canada's research ecosystem.

The mandate of the Advisory Committee was to focus on programmatic issues related to systemic racism against people of African and Caribbean descent in the Canadian social sciences and humanities research and research training ecosystem, with a particular focus on research funding. The objective was to outline recommendations that would lead to the implementation of a long-term action plan. The Advisory Committee examined ways in which SSHRC could play an effective role in helping to decolonize academe and itself, and in making resources accessible to Black researchers and students across Canadian universities. Specifically, the Advisory Committee scrutinized contexts where Black voices, experiences and perspectives are represented in scholarly fields, as well as equity and inclusion for Black researchers, graduate students and postdoctoral fellow



## COMPOSITION

The composition of the committee, with 11 members, attempted to reflect as much as possible the diversity within Canadian Black research communities, historically, geographically, culturally and linguistically, including:

- one graduate student;
- a balanced representation of career stages, genders, francophones and anglophones, regions, social sciences and humanities fields, and those from small and large institutions;
- a mix of representatives from long-established Black communities in Canada and those representing different immigrant backgrounds (particularly Caribbean and African); and
- international expertise.

Two co-chairs were appointed by the committee members: Wendell Nii Laryea Adjetey and Karine Coen-Sanchez.

- Wendell Nii Laryea Adjetey (co-chair), Assistant Professor and William Dawson Chair, Department of History and Classical Studies, McGill University
- Karine Coen-Sanchez (co-chair), Doctoral Candidate, School of Sociological and Anthropological Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ottawa
- Adeniyi P. Asiyambi, Assistant Professor, Human Geography, The University of British Columbia Okanagan Campus
- Michael F. Charles, Associate Vice-President, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Centennial College
- Denise Ferreira da Silva, Professor and Director, The Social Justice Institute, and Senior Faculty Fellow, St John's College, The University of British Columbia; and Adjunct Professor, Department of Fine Art, Monash University
- Mamoudou Gazibo, Professor, Department of Political Science, Université de Montréal
- Sulaimon Giwa, Associate Professor and Associate Dean of Undergraduate Programs, School of Social Work and Department of Sociology, Police Studies, Memorial University of Newfoundland; and Endowed Chair in Criminology and Criminal Justice, Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, St. Thomas University
- Barbara-Ann Hamilton-Hinch, Associate Professor, Recreation and Leisure Studies, School of Health and Human Performance, and Assistant Vice-Provost, Equity and Inclusion, Dalhousie University

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- Rhonda McEwen, Canada Research Chair in Tactile Interfaces, Communication and Cognition; Vice-Principal, Academic, and President and Vice-Chancellor of Victoria University in the University of Toronto; and Professor, Emerging Media
  - Barbara McNeil, Associate Professor, Language and Literacy, Faculty of Education, University of Regina
  - Félix Zogning Nguimeya, Associate Professor, Department of Accounting Sciences, Université de Sherbrooke

## ACTIVITIES

Five meetings of the Advisory Committee were held between April 2021 and June 2022.

- Launch (April 2021):
  - Introduction of committee members and sharing of initial perspectives.
  - Adoption of the Terms of Reference for the committee (see annex 1). The committee deemed it essential to change the name of the committee to reflect the fact that its mission is to combat anti-Black racism and not simply to discuss anti-Black racism.
  - Initial discussion of the committee members' priorities.
- Panorama (August 2021)
  - Presentation of SSHRC programs (Talent, Insight and Partnerships).
  - Data analysis: presentation by SSHRC of comparative and intersectional data on the participation of Black students, postdoctoral fellows, and researchers in SSHRC programs.
  - Discussion of the priorities and initial observations related to the data.
- Talent and career progression (December 2021).
- Merit review (April 2022).
- Karine Coen-Sanchez administered, developed and moderated a panel discussion titled "Voices of Black Researchers," during the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences (May 2022).
- Recommendations (June 2022): Summary of recommendations gathered through meetings, engagement and internal analysis, and report framework discussion.





The following section summarizes some observations from the data and the committee discussions.

## OBSERVATIONS

SSHRC has been collecting self-identification data for several years, in limited categories. In 2018, [a harmonized approach](#) with the other federal funding agencies was implemented with the collection of information for the four groups identified in the Employment Equity Act: women, racialized minorities, Indigenous Peoples and persons with disabilities. The questionnaire was revised and expanded in 2019 to include more categories, including subcategories for racialized minorities, providing further information and the possibility to inform the present analysis and report. It is important to understand the limitations that such short time of data collection and small sample sizes pose on the conclusions we can draw from the data.

## BLACK RESEARCH CAREERS

### *Black population census*

There is evidence of attrition of Black scholars as they move up the research career ladder and this concern has been raised by members of the Advisory Committee, and members of the Canadian Black research STEMM community,<sup>6</sup> and has been reported in other countries.<sup>7</sup> Statistics Canada has reported that the proportion of men and women with a university degree (in any discipline) is lower in the Black population than in the rest of the Canadian population.<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, regional and community differences are insufficiently considered in available data and existing analysis of the participation of Black scholars.

<sup>6</sup> For instance, according to data for the STEMM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine) presented to the tri-agencies by the Canadian Black Scientists Network.

<sup>7</sup> For instance see this study from the United Kingdom: <https://leadingroutes.org/the-broken-pipeline>

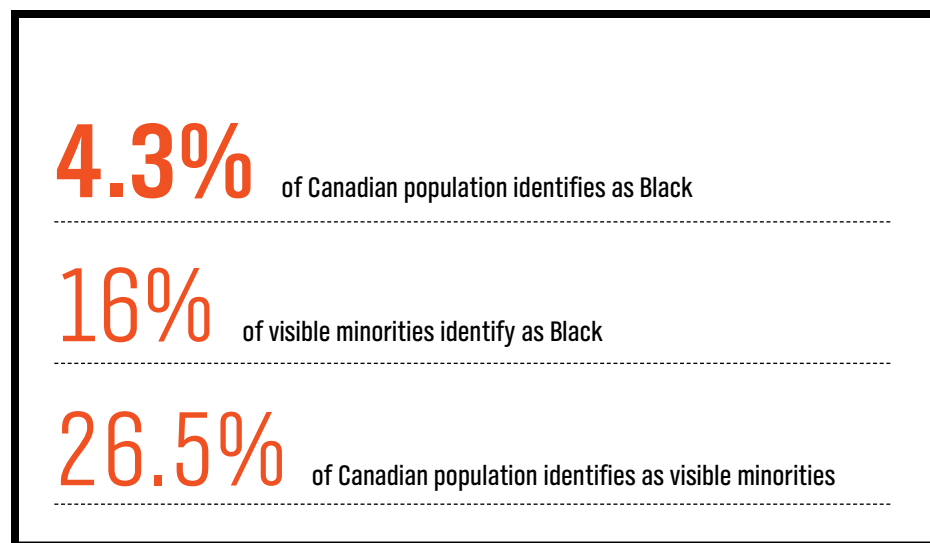
<sup>8</sup> See: [https://www.statcan.gc.ca/en/dai/smr08/2022/smr08\\_259](https://www.statcan.gc.ca/en/dai/smr08/2022/smr08_259) and <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2020001/article/00002-eng.htm> (Table A2)



Gaps in national data availability makes it difficult to assess the equitable access to funding by the Black population. Provincial data gaps and institutional data practices—specifically, the refusal among many universities to gather and report self-identification data—are both symptomatic of systematic barriers and key to overcoming them.

From 2016 to 2021, the Canadian census reported that the percentage of the Canadian population who identified as Black rose from 3.5% to 4.3%. In 2021, 5.5% of the population in Ontario and 5.1% in Quebec were Black. These numbers could be even higher given the challenges related to self-identification: Black people can choose to identify under another self-identification category than Black or choose not to self-identify considering the discrimination against Black peoples. These and other factors, such as age and regional differences, should be considered in a deeper analysis of the recently released 2021 Census data. The principal aim, regardless of the specific number considered representative, is to remove all barriers for Black participants.

**FIGURE 1 – Census data (2021) Black population**





## *Participation of Black scholars in SSHRC programs*

SSHRC data is available only for scholars and students who apply to its programs, and not for those who do not. No information is available on the different Black communities and their participation.



The proportion of Black scholars who apply to SSHRC programs varies from **2.5%** (New Frontiers in Research Fund, tri-agency program, 2019) to **3.9%** (Insight, SSHRC, 2021).

This level of participation in SSHRC programs is underrepresentative. The rates are even lower in the science, health and technology sectors. The limited representation of Black individuals in academia limits their capacity to fully access and participate in the educational system.<sup>9</sup> This limits the visibility of their research, their contributions, and perspectives in academia, subsequently contributing to their isolation in institutions and lack of support through mentorship programs. As much as this underrepresentation is the product of anti-Black racism, in cyclical fashion it may also be the manner in which anti-Black racism is perpetuated in the research ecosystem more broadly.

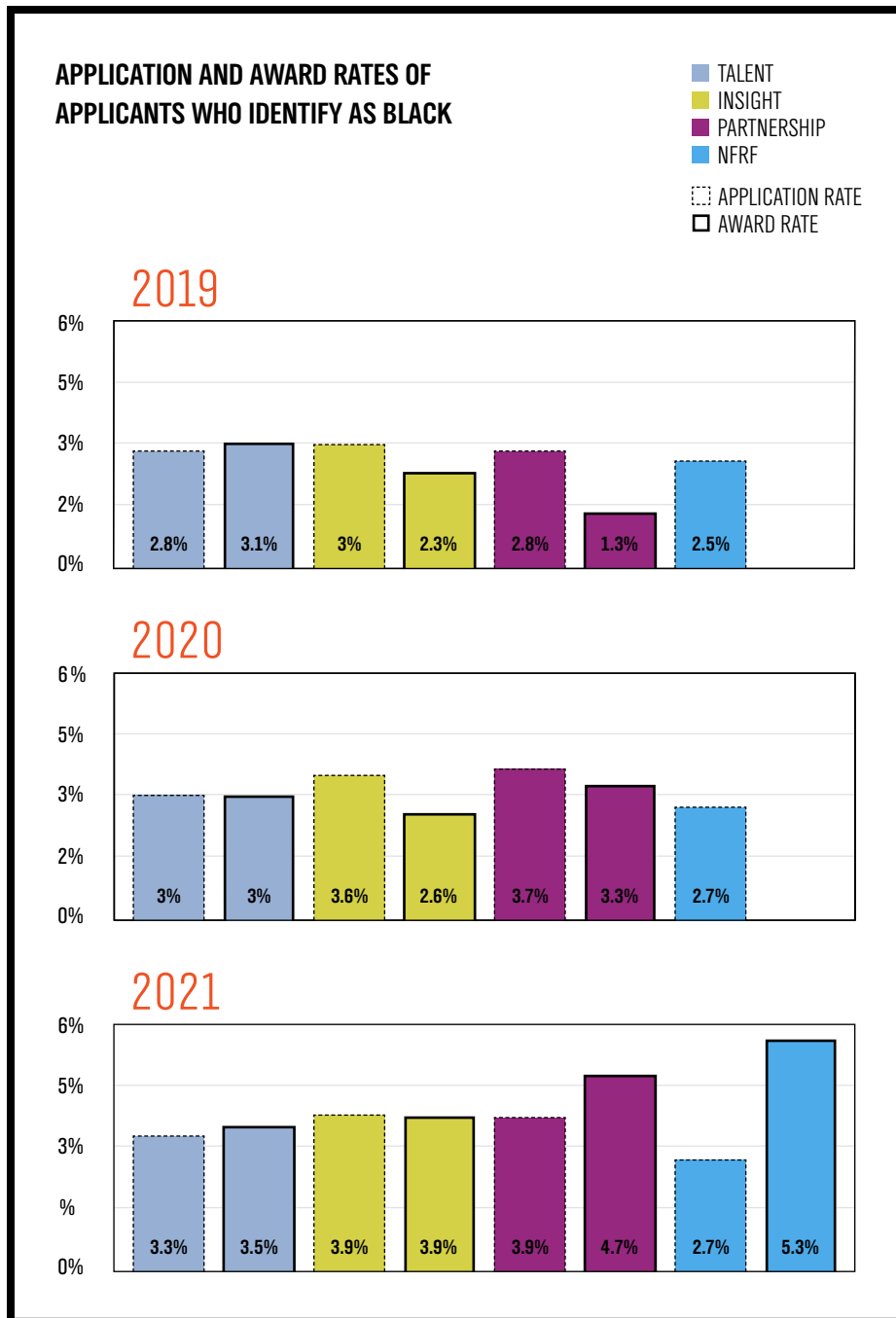
As demonstrated in Figure 2, award rates are lower than application rates for visible minorities in SSHRC programs. The trend is more difficult to assess for Black applicants because of the small number (n), but a similar trend appears. Award rates in SSHRC programs for applicants who identify as Black range from 1.4% (Partnerships, 2019) to 3.9% (Insight, 2021). It should be noted that for Black applicants' awards/winners the actual numbers (n) are not accessible. This prevented the committee members from fully deconstructing barriers that may have contributed to the low rate of applicants.

Even if the proportion of Black scholars who applied to and are funded by SSHRC programs is close to the reported population level (3.5% in 2016, 4.3% in 2021), this level of participation in SSHRC programs is extremely low.

<sup>9</sup> <https://troymedia.com/education/repeating-the-cycle-of-racism-through-education/>  
<https://www.universityaffairs.ca/opinion/in-my-opinion/i-cant-breathe-feeling-suffocated-by-the-polite-racism-in-canadas-graduate-schools/>



**FIGURE 2 – Application and award rates of Black applicants by SSHRC program**

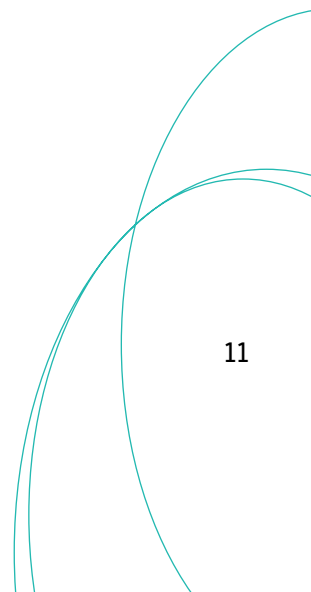




Another indicator of the underrepresentation of Black scholars in the research ecosystem is the data on Canada Research Chairs. Overall, only 1.96% of chairholders (n=39) in all sectors identify as Black. Most of these Chairs are in the social sciences and humanities, which is the only one of the three agencies where Black scholars are not underrepresented (see Figure 5).

### *Participation of Black scholars by disciplines*

Black scholars are not uniformly distributed across social sciences and humanities disciplines. Application data indicate that more Black scholars are present in social work, sociology and education, whereas fewer Black scholars apply from philosophy, fine arts and psychology. Overall, there seems to be a stronger participation in social sciences than humanities (Figure 3 – Application rates by disciplines). When considering the award rates, the same trend toward social sciences is observed. The variation between the application rate and award rates could be used, with additional monitoring, to assess systemic barriers in certain disciplines.



**FIGURE 3 – Application rates by disciplines**

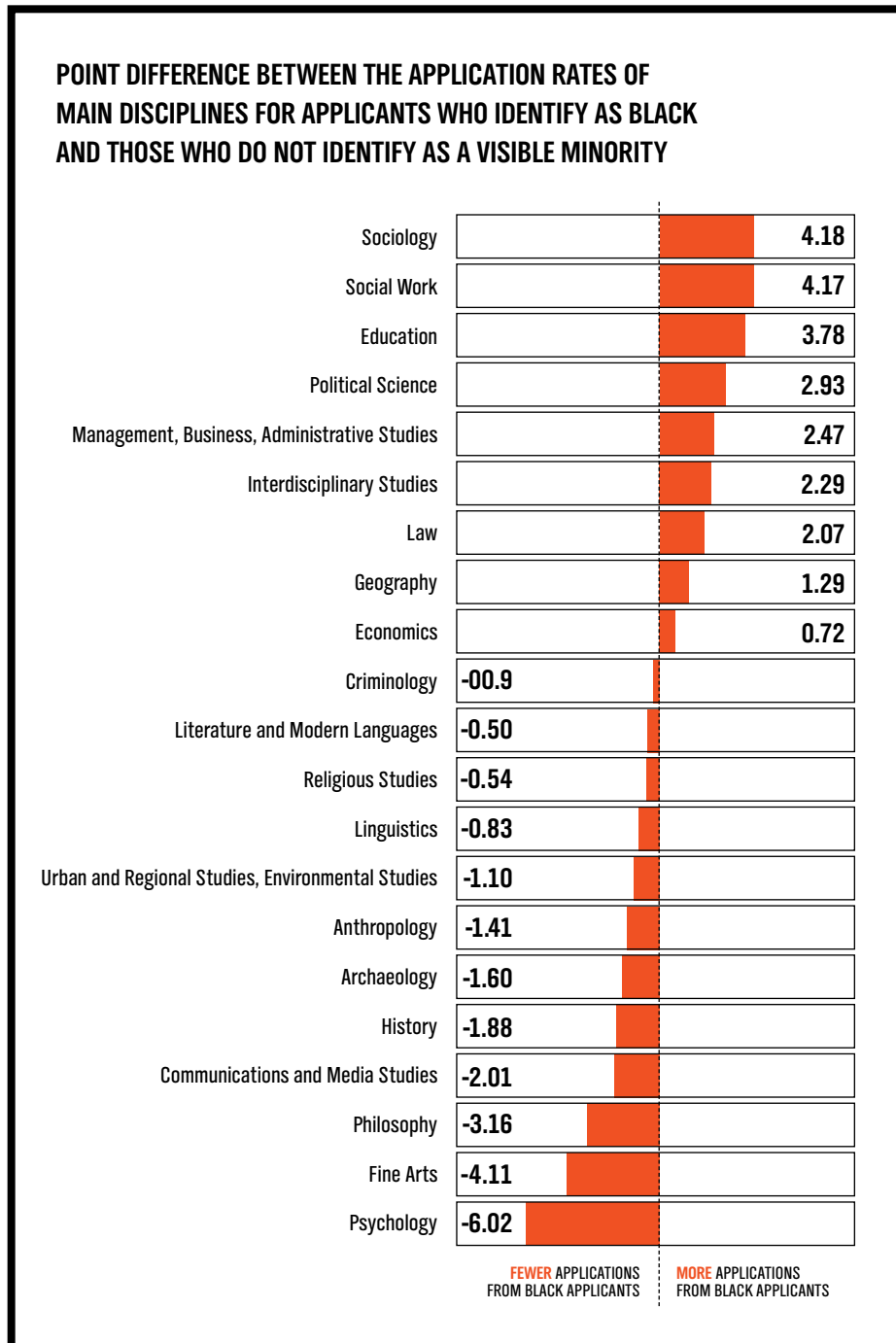
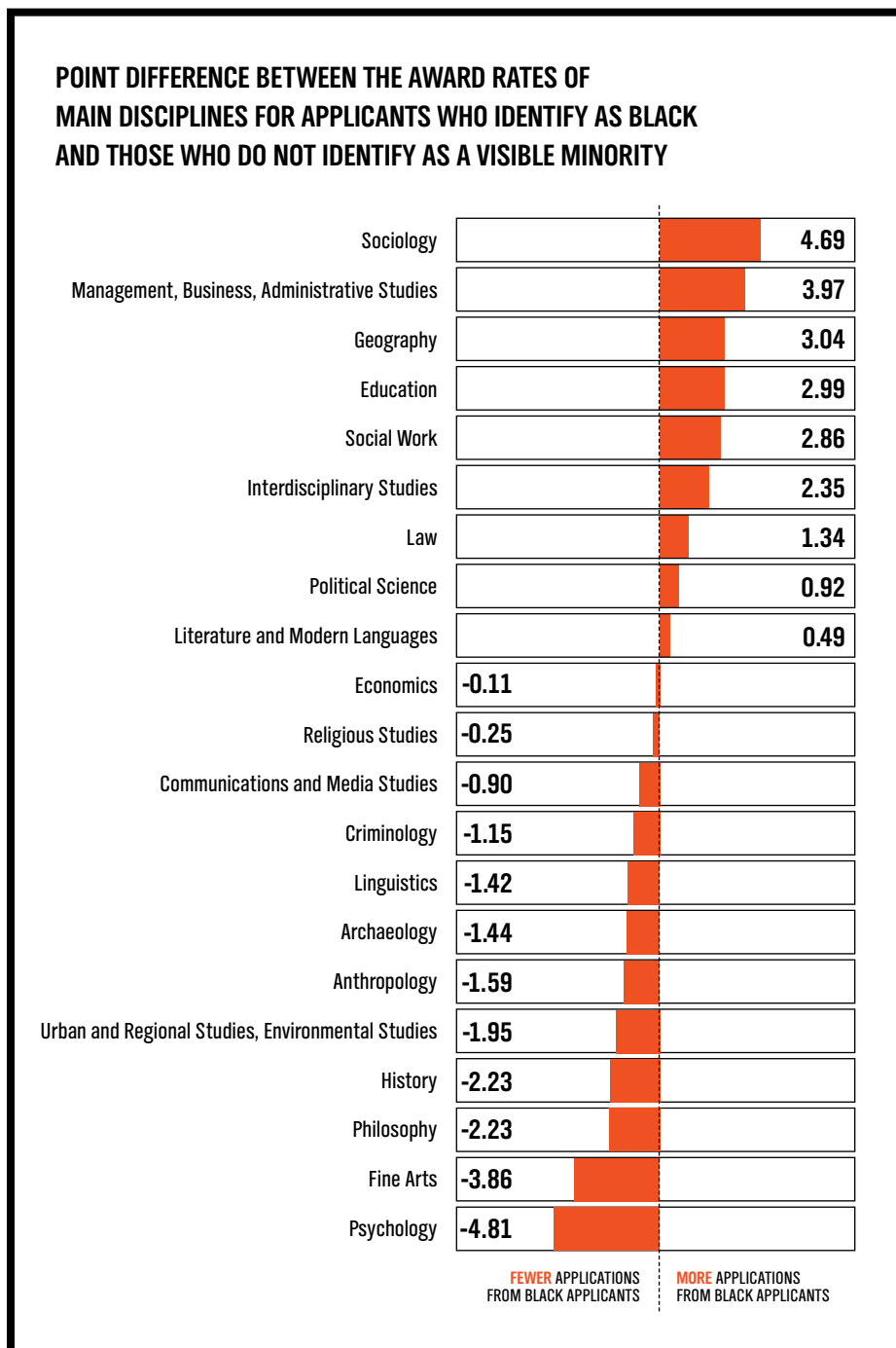


FIGURE 4 – Award rates by disciplines





## *Systemic barriers to access*

### **Program design and delivery**

SSHRC, as a granting agency, is limited in its ability to support Black students' access to the research ecosystem, because financial support begins only at the graduate level and granting agencies have no direct control over institutional policies governing students (e.g., admissions and mentoring), academic hiring, and promotion. Nevertheless, the granting councils can impose requirements on individuals and institutions for eligibility to funding, as well as in their memoranda of understanding with postsecondary institutions as partners in award administration. The committee offered various alternatives, such as:

- Offer new scholarships and fellowships reserved for Black students and postdocs
- Require institutions to put in place a framework similar to the Canada Research Chairs EDI Action Plan, so that internal processes to select meritorious students are transparent and open (i.e., for the tri-agency scholarships programs such as Canada Graduate Scholarships—Master's, Canada Graduate Scholarships—Doctoral, Vanier and Banting)
- Launch an Award for Black Excellence
- Add a target for Black Canada Research Chairs within the “visible minorities” targets





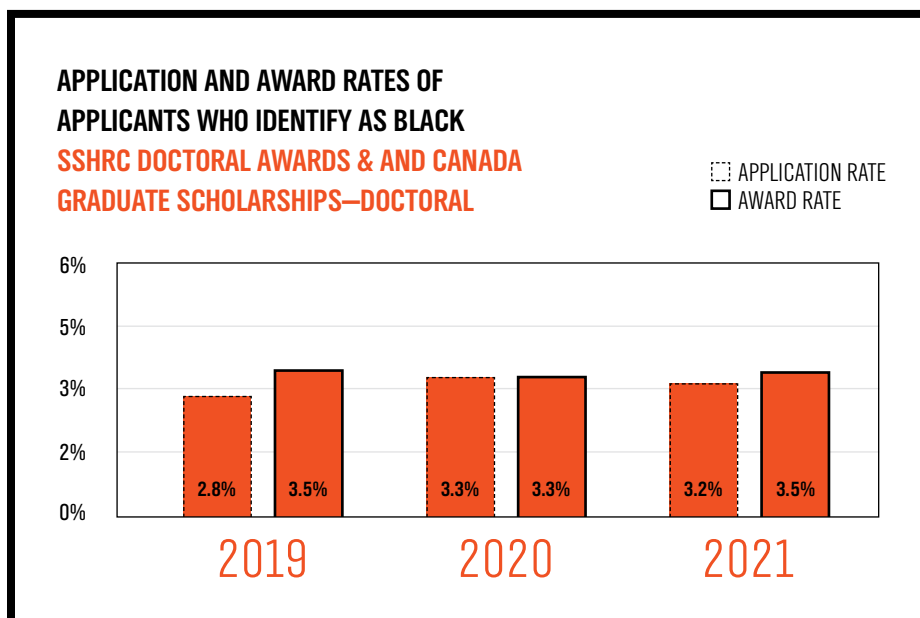
As well, there are programs where the assessment of merit is a shared responsibility between SSHRC and postsecondary institutions, such as the Canada Graduate Scholarships and the Canada Research Chairs programs. In the case of the Canada Graduate Scholarships–Master’s, the entire selection process has been delegated to the institutions. In the case of the doctoral awards, the applicants face a preselection at their institution to be able to enter the national competition managed by SSHRC. In the case of the Canada Research Chairs Program, the selection is also the responsibility of the institutions, whereas SSHRC is responsible for determining whether the candidates meet the program’s criteria for excellence. Historically, visible minority participation in the Canada Research Chairs Program has been lower than expected due to systemic barriers to access. Specific requirements had to be put in place in 2017 to ensure open and transparent processes in the selection of the applicants, as well as the implementation of targets for designated groups. This experience could indicate that similar barriers exist in scholarship programs, and targets for Black scholars should be explored.

**FIGURE 5 – Black Canada Research Chair holders**

	CIHR	NSERC	SSHRC	Total
Agency Total n	740	771	481	1992
Black (n=39)	0.95%	1.30%	4.57%	1.96%

No data is available on the participation of Black students to the Canada Graduate Scholarships—Master’s, as the institutions did not collect the self-identification data. Nevertheless, a small difference appears between application and award rate for all visible minorities, indicating some systemic barriers to success. The available data at the doctoral level indicates an application and award rate of around 3%, which is still quite low given the latest census data.

**FIGURE 6 – Doctoral awards – application and award rates of Black applicants**





SSHRC does not currently offer direct support at the undergraduate level (unlike the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council [NSERC]), and undergraduate students can only be supported indirectly through research grants used by researchers to support students at all levels through salaries and stipends.

The access to graduate studies and research support depends, therefore, on those principal investigators benefitting from SSHRC support. The underrepresentation of Black scholars in academia means there are insufficient Black mentors, constituting a systemic barrier for Black students. It should be noted that the federal budget (2022) announced dedicated scholarships for Black students at the undergraduate, master's, doctoral and postdoctoral levels, to be implemented in 2022-23, across all agencies, recognizing the need for an investment to address systemic barriers and anti-Black racism. This announcement recognizes the need to address barriers to funding for Black students.

SSHRC is partnering with institutions in the delivery of many funding opportunities, particularly those focusing on supporting the careers of researchers, such as scholarships and the Canada Research Chairs Program. Complementary requirements to target-setting, put in place in the Canada Research Chairs Program—such as the mandatory EDI institutional action plans and the requirements to implement fair and open, transparent processes for the selection of nominees—have demonstrated the agency's ability to positively influence the research ecosystem. These efforts could be extended to other programs, to build awareness of the specific barriers faced by Black scholars and the development of institutional policies to address them and better support Black scholars.

### **Administrative burden**

Because of global events and renewed calls to action on EDI, universities have begun to focus attention on the proportionally low numbers of Black faculty in Canadian postsecondary institutions. A 2018 report by the Canadian Association of University Teachers, entitled, "Underrepresented & Underpaid: Diversity & Equity Among Canada's Post-Secondary Education Teachers,"<sup>10</sup> found that Black university teachers constitute 2.0% of the total population; the number of Black senior administrators in Canadian universities is even lower.

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<sup>10</sup>[https://www.caut.ca/sites/default/files/caut\\_equity\\_report\\_2018-04final.pdf](https://www.caut.ca/sites/default/files/caut_equity_report_2018-04final.pdf)



An output of a national dialogue and action event bringing together Canadian higher education leaders—the Scarborough Charter on Anti-Black Racism and Black Inclusion in Canadian Higher Education: Principles, Actions, and Accountabilities<sup>11</sup>—specifically calls for an increase in the number of Black university senior administrators.

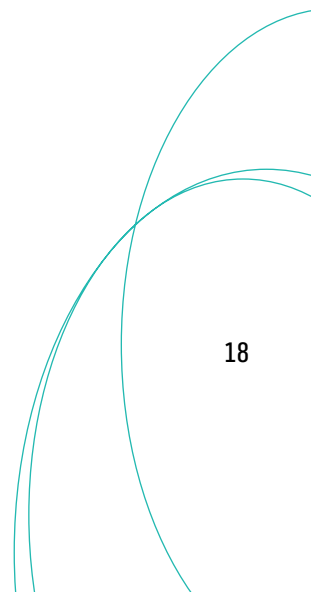
The committee discussed the importance of this charter and the effect that these recommendations will have on eligible SSHRC applicants and awardees. Specifically, the committee noted that some of the excellent Black scholars deserving of SSHRC awards are the same scholars who are called—and will continue to be called—to senior administrative positions, particularly in EDI roles. Due to the small numbers of Black faculty in Canadian universities, this is inevitable. Therefore, any SSHRC clauses or constraints on award holders that preclude them from continuing to be eligible for SSHRC awards need to be reexamined so that these criteria do not become unintended consequences of denying these scholars upward mobility within university hierarchies.

### **Recognition and visibility**

The committee noted that SSHRC has a role to lead in the promotion of Black excellence in research. There are many ways this can be done.

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<sup>11</sup><https://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/principal/signatories-scarborough-charter>





# MERIT REVIEW

## BLACK REVIEWERS ON COMMITTEES

There are not enough Black researchers participating in merit review processes. The proportion of Black scholars sitting on committees (2.3%) was smaller than the proportion of Black applicants overall (3%). It should also be noted that, even though this number is too low, it is also evidence that Black scholars are already carrying an extra burden in the merit review process, as they only constitute 2% of faculty (as cited above). This corresponds to a total number of 40 Black reviewers. Only about 20% of all SSHRC committees included a minimum of one Black reviewer. This number correlates to the data on individuals who are racialized (excluding Black individuals). Overall, more Black men were recruited than Black women (small sample size).

Diversity in the composition of committees is a positive factor to support success of Black applicants. Data are limited but are supported by qualitative findings that a more diverse group of reviewers is more open to different perspectives and approaches.

## APPLICATION RATE FOR BLACK SCHOLARS

Many Black scholars report inadequate review of their research proposals and biases within the merit review process with inadequate representation of Black scholars on these committees. Although the differences in application and award rates of Black applicants is not significant (figure 2), the participation rate is still quite low and there is an understanding that Black scholars are reluctant to participate and apply because of different factors, such as historical rejections, lack of support in their institutions, lack of understanding of their research expertise and field by merit review committees. Average ranking of grant applications from Black scholars tends to be slightly lower (3.87 sextile) than for non-Black applicants (3.53 sextile).

A growing body of analysis points to the existence of bias in merit review. Although self-identification data is confidential and is never shared with merit review committee members, this information can be public in some cases or inferred from information provided in the



application. Training of merit review committees, increasing the diversity of committees, and increasing the requirements to consider EDI in the assessment of the research programs are critical to address these barriers.

## BLACK STUDIES

In addition to concerns about the participation and success of Black scholars in the merit review process, committee members expressed additional concerns regarding the evaluation of Black Studies research, and biases against this field of research.

The field of Black Studies focuses on the life experiences of people of African and Caribbean descent, and its analysis is rooted in the historical lived experiences of Black communities. Black Studies is growing in popularity and getting more recognition at Canadian universities (Francis, 2019), thanks to the work of several scholars<sup>12</sup> (Cooper, 2007; Bernard, 2006; Nelson, 2011) and an increasing student demand (Benchetrit, 2021).

Black Studies programs at colleges and universities focus on the Black Experience (past and present, as well as future aspirations) in all its diversity, complexities and richness. A digital journey through a number of university websites (e.g., Dalhousie, Queen's, Trent, York, Toronto, and so on) reveals that Black Studies is interdisciplinary, with programs focusing on the sociohistorical and ongoing lived experiences of African descendants in the arts, culture, education, language, economics, politics, gender and sexualities, health, science, social life and well-being, and so on. The Black Studies field and research areas reflect the diversity found in Black communities. Applications for merit review in this field should be able to rely on appropriate and diverse expertise.

We must remember that Black Studies is not about integration and assimilation into the ways of the dominant society. Black Studies is not about ivory tower politics or parochial and esoteric matters. Black Studies is fundamentally about a scholarly tradition or intellectual paradigm that is self-determinative and counterinsurgent to the ways of white supremacy, anti-Blackness, colonialism, and neo-colonialism of African peoples wherever they reside. Black Studies derives its legitimacy from critical assessment and reflections on the material needs of the masses of Black people, not white liberalism or its designated institutions.

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<sup>12</sup> For more bibliographic references on Black Canadian studies, please visit this link from the University of Toronto Libraries: <https://guides.library.utoronto.ca/c.php?g=718273&p=5128289>

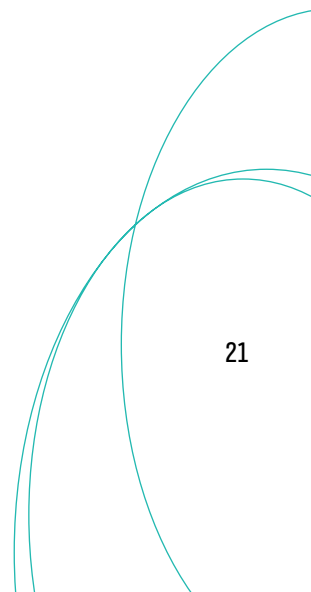


# RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations from the Advisory Committee to address anti-Black racism in research and research training follows the following framework (Figure 7):

1. Fair access to research support—removing systemic barriers in program design;
2. Equitable participation in the research system: A broader overview of research funding and the identification of systemic barriers to accessing these funds, as well as the context for research and the recognition of institutions as drivers of change;
3. EDI in research design and practice: Defining the criteria for research excellence;
4. Production of new knowledge in EDI by the humanities and social sciences;
5. SSHRC advocates for diversity and inclusion. Therefore, it is important that the staff also follow suit: a variety of skills and lived experiences is part of the process of dismantling systematic barriers.

FIGURE 7 - Framework for the proposed recommendations





## 1. FAIR ACCESS FOR BLACK SCHOLARS IN RESEARCH

Ensure Black scholars' full participation in SSHRC funding opportunities by providing dedicated support, eliminating systemic biases in merit review, and promoting Black excellence. Thus, we recommend that SSHRC:

### **Better data**

- Continue monitoring application and award rates for Black researchers, explore the collection of additional data on Black scholars, and expand the analysis of data with comparative studies to other population groups. Publish those data where applicable;
- Support research led by Black scholars on available data to identify systemic barriers in the ecosystem to inform policy making;
- Explore possible criteria that could be used to set research funding targets taking into consideration the diversity of the community;
- Fund a study of unsuccessful grant applications from Black scholars to inform additional supports that could be put in place.

### **Awards for Black scholars**

- Support inclusion of Black students in research through undergraduate research awards;
- Set dedicated scholarships;
- Consider supplements to awards for Black scholars, considering the challenges to access graduate studies;
- Provide additional feedback to Black applicants in scholarships to help support their applications;
- Explore options for an increased number of Canada Research Chairs allocated to Black scholars.

### **Support research by Black scholars**

- Fund a study of unsuccessful grant applications from Black scholars to inform additional supports that could be put in place;
- Set a target for research funding to Black applicants in competitions.





### **Eliminate bias against Black researchers and Black Studies in merit review**

- Increase the participation of Black researchers in the merit review process:
  - Collaborate with postsecondary institutions to identify potential reviewers and develop a list of experts;
  - Implement policies that will reinforce an open call for participation to the merit review process;
  - Develop an inclusive approach to the recruitment of reviewers that invites researchers with less experience to participate in the merit review process;
  - Expand recruitment to reinforce the knowledge and relevant expertise;
- Review training and guidelines for merit review members and for chairs of committees, to include a special focus on anti-Black racism and Black Studies;
- Mandate training on anti-Black racism;
- Review the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans—TCPS 2 to include language related to discrimination against Black scholars;
- Explore the feasibility of creating a merit review committee dedicated to Black Studies in some relevant funding opportunities;
- In the revisions of the tri-agency EDI unconscious bias module, include a focus on anti-Black racism.

### **Promote Black excellence in research**

- Create new distinct research prizes for Black excellence and for Black Studies;
- Increase the visibility of Black students and scholars and their research in communications plans, products and publications.



## 2. EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH ECOSYSTEM

Examining the entire research funding ecosystem, with a focus on identifying systemic barriers to accessing these funds, is critical for addressing anti-Black racism in institutions and the broader research ecosystem. Therefore, we recommend that SSHRC:

- Communicate to institutions its expectations about an increased participation of underrepresented groups—especially Black scholars—in award funding opportunities and increased support to students through grants (stipends, research assistant);
- Collaborate with institutions or require institutions to set in place mentorship programs, such as dedicated support in research offices;
- Develop EDI requirements regarding internal selection processes in postsecondary institutions for scholarships, fellowships and chairs.
- Consider a process that would permit applicants to appeal the decisions of their institution’s research committees and apply directly to SSHRC.

## 3. EDI IN RESEARCH PRACTICE AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Guidelines exist to support the appropriate review of research, such as the consideration of EDI in research practice and design. EDI in research practice involves promoting diversity in team composition and trainee recruitment; fostering an equitable, inclusive and accessible research work environment for team members and trainees; and highlighting diversity and equity in mentoring, training and access to development opportunities. EDI in research design (EDI-RD) involves designing research so that it takes EDI into account through approaches such as intersectionality, gender-based analysis plus (GBA+), antiracist approaches, and disaggregated data collection and analysis that includes consideration of diversity and identity factors such as, but not limited to, age, culture, disability, education, ethnicity, gender expression and gender identity, immigration and newcomer status, Indigenous identity, language, neurodiversity, parental status/responsibility, place of origin, religion, race, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.

- Review SSHRC’s guidelines on EDI in research practice and research design with an anti-Black racism perspective;
- Develop guidelines for the merit review of Black Studies.



## 4. FUND NEW RESEARCH TO ADDRESS ANTI-BLACK RACISM IN SOCIETY AND TO SUPPORT BLACK STUDIES

SSHRC funds a considerable volume of research that is focused on topics related to EDI and can therefore impact broader society. This includes, for example, the 2021 targeted call on Race, Gender and Diversity Initiative. SSHRC can also use text analytics in its database of funded research to understand more about the history and evolution of topics of research. Black scholars often contribute directly to the definition of the concepts and theory of EDI research and anti-Black racism.

There is an opportunity for SSHRC to stimulate interest in understanding the lived experience of members of the Black diaspora across a broad array of funding opportunities to manifest and promote discovery of intersectional and disaggregated realities. In this way, a wider range of topics may be explored to understand implications of Blackness beyond those topics that are predominant in Black Studies. SSHRC could fund Black organizations that are working in partnership with Black academics to buttress Black Studies and anti-racism from a community perspective.

Opportunities may exist to advance the three objectives of the International Decade for People of African Descent: increasing attention on the human rights of people of African descent; research to combat anti-Black racism; and knowledge mobilization that promotes a greater respect for the diverse heritage, culture and contributions of people of African descent.

- Launch a funding opportunity on Black Studies
- Fund research on anti-Black racism



## 5. SSHRC IS A DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE

Diversity and inclusion in SSHRC'S workplace are explicit goals. The staff feels connected to the community it funds and there are many EDI experts in the organization. Nevertheless, Black employees have raised issues about inclusion and the working environment. The committee discussed the critical role that Black staff in research play in supporting faculty. Members of the committee discussed witnessing the silencing of Black staff in their institutions—even if there are Black staff, they do not feel empowered to advocate for changes that they see could be implemented without fear of reprisal, including job insecurity.

Given the consistent message from Black staff in academia that they are at risk if they promote innovation in EDI, the committee strongly recommends that SSHRC look internally, as there are likely efforts needed to ensure representation and inclusion of Black employees at all levels within SSHRC. These efforts are as important as efforts to support the Black research community. SSHRC staff play an important role in program design and the merit review process, and the organization relies on the presence of Black people, their expertise, knowledge and lived experiences. Upward mobility, including having EDI-focused senior administrative leaders, is imperative at SSHRC to change the culture and climate of award granting. We recommend that SSHRC internally:

- Offer required training on anti-Black racism;
- Ensure the recruitment and inclusion of Black employees at all levels of the organization, particularly in senior administration, including the governing council.