

## Community Development Halton Analysis: MAS Non-Profit Survey

This Community Development Halton (CDH) publication uses the results of a June 2021 survey called, 'Canadian NFPs/Charities, Study Report', which was undertaken and published by Management Advice Service (MAS) in September 2021. <sup>1</sup>

*MAS provides not-for-profit organizations with free professional advisory and consulting assistance. Since 1993 MAS' corps of volunteer executive and senior management level volunteers have worked with boards, founders and executives on their strategic planning, human resources, finance, fundraising, marketing communications and IT challenges. If your organization would like a free consultation on management and operations, you can email: [info@masadvise.org](mailto:info@masadvise.org); visit [www.masadvise.org](http://www.masadvise.org); or call: 416 963 5792.*

### A MAS Survey on Non-Profits and COVID-19

Over the coming months, and across 2022, CDH will study the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 on Halton's residents and share our insights and findings with members and local communities. As health restrictions loosen across the province, social contacts increase, and people in Halton continue to recover and look forward, CDH nonetheless believes it is important to reflect on the last 18 months and analyze the impacts of COVID-19.

One particularly relevant area of study for us here at CDH is examining the impact of COVID-19 on member organizations and the wider non-profit community. Analyzing non-profits experiences, difficulties and challenges will provide us with insights and information to better inform our community and plan for future resiliency.

It is intended that this publication will act as a solidarity piece for non-profits by revealing that there were collective challenges and difficulties experienced across the non-profit sector during COVID-19. In doing so, it may be a source of optimism for organizations to know that they weren't alone, while often, across the previous 18 months, it may have felt like that. Of course, disparities exist within the non-profit sector, just like any other sector: those larger, better resourced organizations with dedicated IT staff would have likely found the transition to work-from-home orders easier to respond to compared with smaller organizations without such resources.

As part of CDH's ongoing interest in the impacts of COVID-19 on the non-profit sector, a Community Lens was published in July 2021 using data from an Ontario Nonprofit Network (ONN) survey. <sup>2</sup> Among the survey findings were: "65% of Halton non-profits have lost

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<sup>1</sup> MAS, 'Canadian NFPs/Charities, Study Report', September 2021:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1meuDML-8TNiIVdHkrF7DaxOZnbf0\\_0Ap/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1meuDML-8TNiIVdHkrF7DaxOZnbf0_0Ap/view)

<sup>2</sup> CDH, 'Community Lens #174 – Impact of COVID on Halton Non-profits', June 2021:

<https://cdhalton.ca/2021/07/28/community-lens-174-impact-of-covid-on-halton-nonprofits/>

volunteers since the beginning of the pandemic; 75% of Halton non-profits did not receive any provincial supports which were put into place specifically for organizations within the sector; and about 32% of Halton non-profits reported they were not financially sustainable beyond 12 months.”

Adding to this topic, CDH is releasing this analysis of a survey that was carried out by MAS. In it, two key survey findings will be analysed, and we will consider what it means for Halton’s non-profit community. MAS released the findings of an online survey it sent out to its members between “June 9 to 28, 2021. A total of 223 decision-makers in Canadian NFPs/Charities responded to this ten-minute survey which was designed to provide information about the NFPs/Charities sector. Three-quarters (N=160) of these organizations had used MAS services. The balance (N=63) either had not or the respondent was not aware if their organization had done so.”

The majority of MAS’s current clients and respondents to the survey are in the GTA. The organization, by working virtually in Alberta and Quebec, has expanded its range of impact in locations outside Ontario. MAS also undertook virtual work in British Columbia and now has a consultant based in the province.

## **COVID-19: Racial Equity and Diverse Representation**

Canada is beginning to bear witness to the mounting evidence and data that revealed that COVID-19 disproportionately impacted racialized groups, low-income and precarious workers, and those with the least agency in society.<sup>3</sup>

It is likely that many non-profits were thinking about society’s structural inequalities pre-COVID, even those that didn’t have an explicit mandate to do so. COVID-19 has not only accelerated such discussions in the non-profit sector, but sharpened focus around providing practical solutions to improve representation of minorities and service access equity.

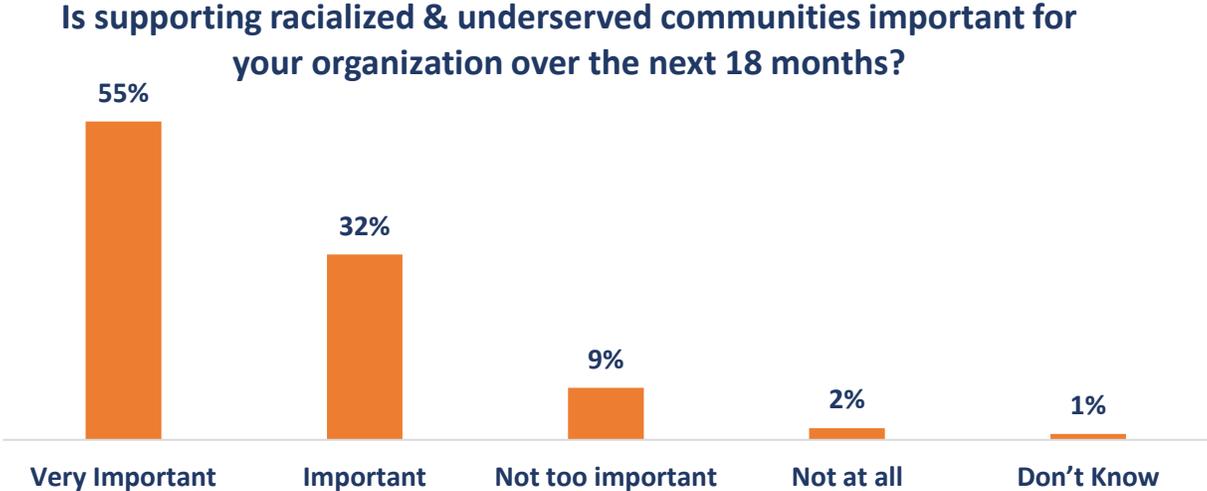
Here at CDH, for example, across the month of September (2021), three Equity and Diversity Workshops were delivered to our member organizations and members of the public.<sup>4</sup> It is our intention to continue to hold more workshops on these topics in 2022. CDH would have held workshops such as these, irrespective of the mounting evidence of the disproportionate impact of COVID, as it’s a core mission of the organization to increase awareness of underserved and underrepresented communities. However, COVID’s impacts certainly brought a renewed urgency to our diversity and equity objectives.

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<sup>3</sup> Statistics Canada, ‘COVID-19 in Canada: A Six-month Update on Social and Economic Impacts’, October 2020: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-631-x/11-631-x2020003-eng.htm#c>

<sup>4</sup> CDH, ‘Power and Privilege in Volunteer Engagement Workshop Series’, September 2021 <https://cdhalton.ca/civicrm/?civiwp=CiviCRM&q=civicrm%2Fevent%2Finfo&reset=1&id=165>

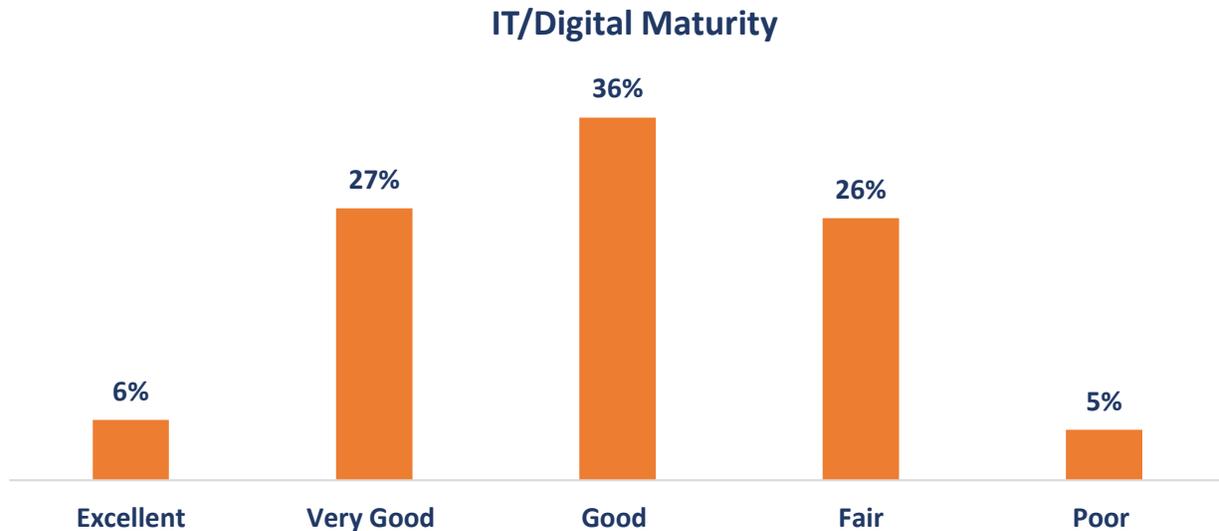
Based on the MAS survey results, other non-profits also believe that prioritizing diversity and equity initiatives over the next 18 months, as the country recovers from COVID, is “important for their organization”. In fact, 55% of survey respondents believe that “supporting racialized or underserved communities” will be “very important” over the next 18 months. When we include the “32%” of survey respondents that believe this will be an “important” issue, it accounts for “87%” of survey respondents that believe “supporting racialized or underserved communities” will be either “very important or important” over the next 18 months.



### COVID-19: IT/Digital Maturity

In March 2020, almost overnight, non-essential businesses and many in the non-profit sector were issued with work-from-home orders. This placed an almost universally shared and unprecedented test on non-profits and their IT divisions/personnel to transition to a new work environment in a manner that was as seamless and undisruptive to workflows as possible.

The results of the IT/Digital Maturity question, which has an almost perfect normal distribution across the five categories, reveals something that many working in this sector likely suspected: a significant proportion of non-profits would have experienced difficulties and challenges in the transition to work-from-home. Overall, among the non-profit sector in this survey, the self-reported level of IT/Digital Maturity is quite strong, with at least 69% of respondents reporting a “Good” or better understanding of IT/Digital Maturity.



The corollary to this is that it's reasonable to suggest that at least the 31% of organizations reporting in the "Fair and Poor" categories would have experienced some level of difficulties in the initial transition from office to work-from-home arrangements and across the subsequent 18 months. Furthermore, as it was such an unprecedented time, it is likely that even better resourced non-profits and those with sophisticated IT systems would have experienced challenges and difficulties at least at some point during this period. While this isn't explicit in these data, research from other sectors indicates that even larger, better-resourced companies anticipated "productivity loss due to lack of remote work capabilities," so it is likely that these trends translated to a much thinner resourced non-profit sector.<sup>5</sup>

### **Conclusion: COVID-19 has upended the non-profit community**

CDH is grateful to MAS for undertaking this survey and publishing its results. It's important that non-profits experiences of COVID-19 continue to be studied and receive public attention over the coming months and years for several reasons. Firstly, as a transparency exercise, in which non-profits, particularly smaller resourced ones, can work through their COVID-19 experiences with their staff, donor-bases, and wider public audiences. This process can also act a solidarity exercise for the sector, which can begin to see that data and survey findings show that there were many shared experiences and difficulties throughout 2020 and 2021. Finally, MAS's research, along with surveys, studies, and data published elsewhere should provide organisations with the information to better resource and inform resiliency planning over the next 18<sup>th</sup> months and beyond.

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<sup>5</sup> PWC, 'COVID-19: Making remote work productive and secure', accessed 3 November 2021: <https://www.pwc.com/us/en/library/covid-19/making-remote-work-productive-secure.html>

Shining a light on non-profit experiences will remain a priority for CDH as structural and strategic reorganisations continue to take place across our sector in the months and years ahead. During this period, CDH will continue to monitor developments that come from organisations across the province and country, as our sector continues to adapt, responds to ongoing headwinds, and hopefully looks forward to a brighter and more resilient future.

### **Connect with Community Development Halton**

If you would like to reach out with feedback or commentary to Community Development Halton on this topic or other areas of interest, you can email: [data@cdhalton.ca](mailto:data@cdhalton.ca).

### **Connect with Management Advice Service**

If your organization would like a free consultation on management and operations, you can email: [info@masadvise.org](mailto:info@masadvise.org); visit [www.masadvise.org](http://www.masadvise.org); or call: 416 963 5792.