

RE-IMAGINING SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS:
DECOLONIZING CANADIAN DANCE

RE-CRÉER LES ORGANISMES DE SERVICE:
DÉCOLONISATION DE LA DANSE AU CANADA



Canadian Dance Assembly
L'Assemblée canadienne de la danse



Nigel Grenier/ Photo by Derek Dix

Presentation of Research Findings

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Old Mill Toronto, September 7, 2017

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The problem

How relevant is the Canadian dance service ecosystem and its dance service organizations to the needs of the Canadian professional dance sector, particularly historically underserved parts of the sector such as Indigenous dance, racialized dance, disability dance/integrated dance, and regionally underrepresented dance?

Key findings

- **No clear consensus** on whether DSOs are open, inclusive, and reflective of Canada's identity
- Current ecosystem was designed to support **Western dance forms in major cities** and **does not always work** for other parts of the sector
- DSOs are nearly **universally valued** across the sector
- **Strong support** for this project, with some **pockets of resistance**
- **Good faith** in the intentions of this project but **skepticism** that real change will occur

Key findings

- DSOs recognize the problem and are **willing to change**
- **Incremental progress** but still **room for improvement**
- DSOs are at **different stages of the journey**
- Good intentions are hampered by **limited capacity and resources**
- Tension between **serving the sector** and **leading the sector**

Methodology

Assessment of DSOs by
service users (**survey**)

Yields subjective
quantitative data:
WHAT do people think
WHO thinks what

Self-assessment of DSOs
(**interviews**)

Yields subjective
qualitative data:
WHAT do people think
WHY do they think it

Objective mapping of the dance sector and dance
sector ecosystem (**data and literature review**)

Who responded to the survey

- **451 responses: 342 individuals, 109 organizations**
- Geography
 - 55% Ontario (over)
 - 12% British Columbia (under)
 - 9% Alberta
 - 8% Québec (under)
- Primary dance form
 - 54% contemporary/modern (including jazz and tap)
 - 11% ballet
 - 35% other

Who responded to the survey

- Individuals
 - 38% dancer
 - 18% choreographer
 - 16% teacher
 - 28% other
- Organizations
 - 38% company
 - 20% dance service organization
 - 13% presenter
 - 12% education provider
 - 10% other

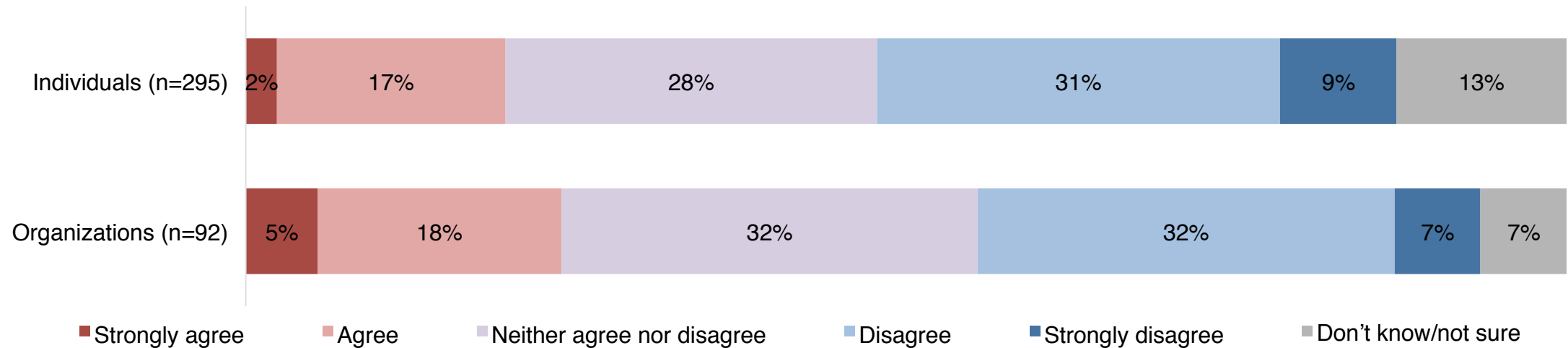
Who responded to the survey

- Individual DSO memberships
 - 32% CDA
 - 29% CADA-ON
 - 25% DTRC
 - 34% do not belong to any DSO
- Organizational DSO memberships
 - 48% CDA
 - 33% Dance Ontario
 - 18% CanDance
 - 15% do not belong to any DSO

Re-imagining Service Organizations: Decolonizing Canadian Dance

Open, inclusive, and reflective?

The current dance service ecosystem is open, inclusive, and reflective of Canada's identity.

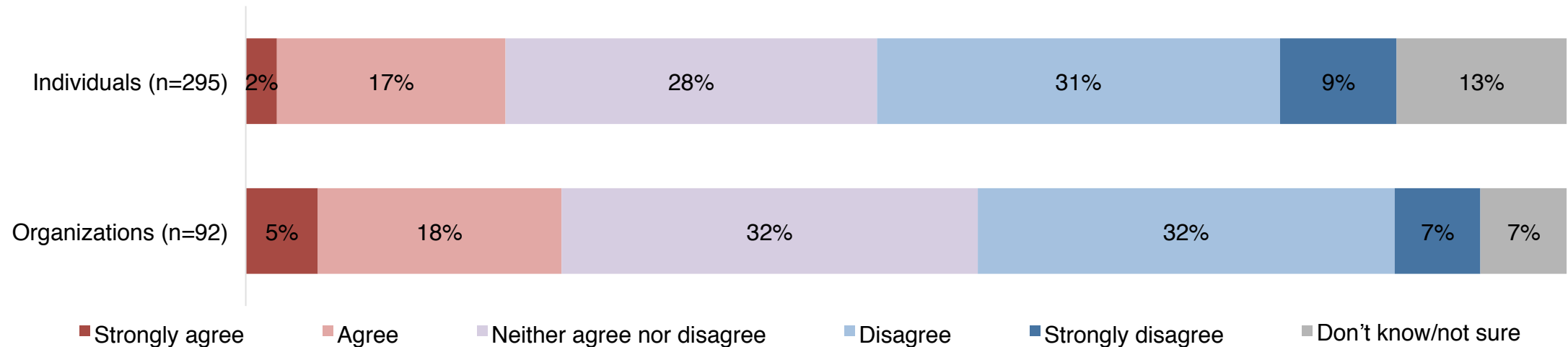


- **No clear consensus**, with responses evenly divided
- BC less likely to agree and more likely to disagree
- Orgs in contemporary/modern dance more likely to agree, orgs outside of contemporary/modern and ballet more likely to disagree

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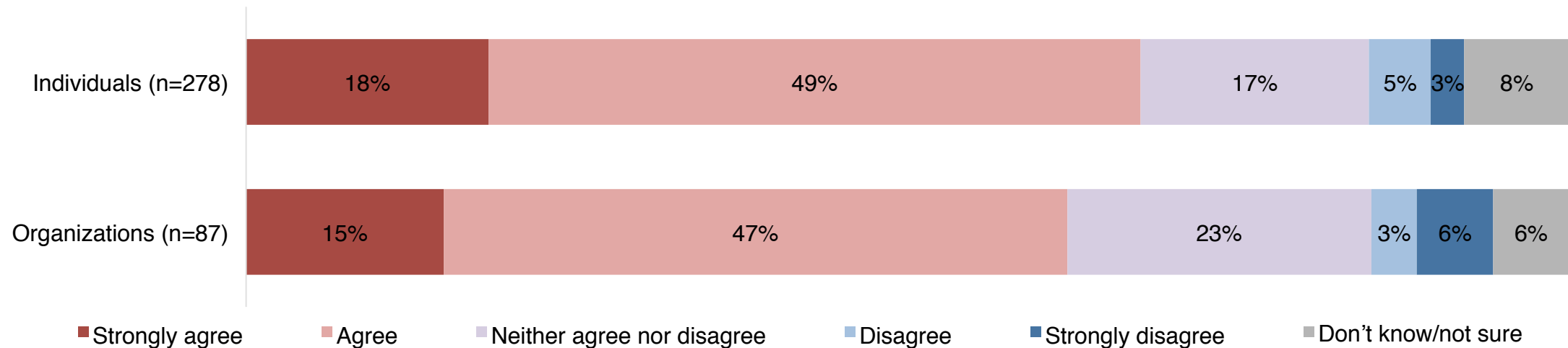


- **Designed for Western dance forms**, doesn't work for other styles
- **Incremental progress** but still **room for improvement**
- DSOs need to educate themselves and improve their diversity
- **Good intentions** are hampered by **limited capacity**

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Favouring some while neglecting others?

The current dance service ecosystem favours certain parts of the dance sector and neglects others.

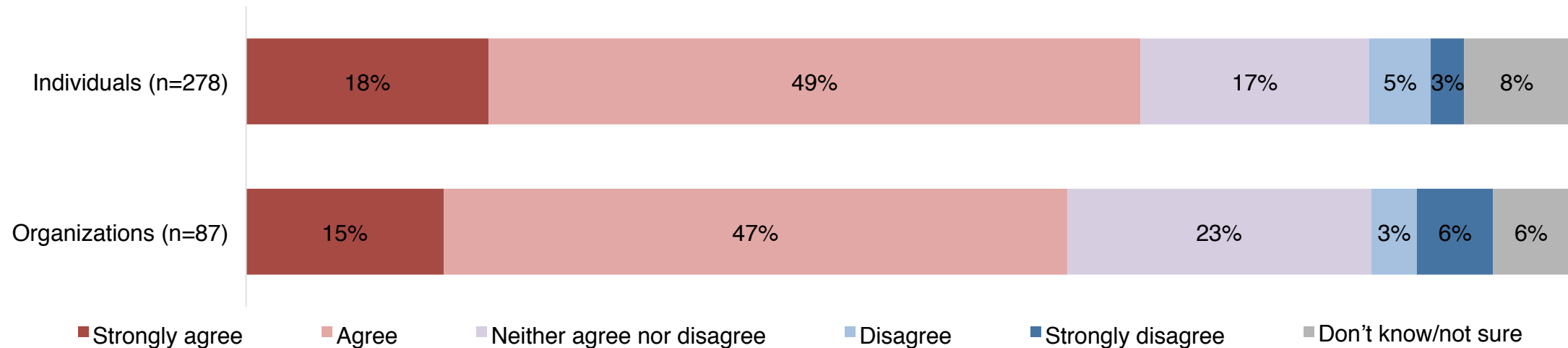


- **Majority agree**, and only a small proportion disagree
- Similar degree of agreement and disagreement across dance forms
- BC more likely to agree (linked to its disagreement that the current ecosystem is open, inclusive, and reflective of Canada's identity)

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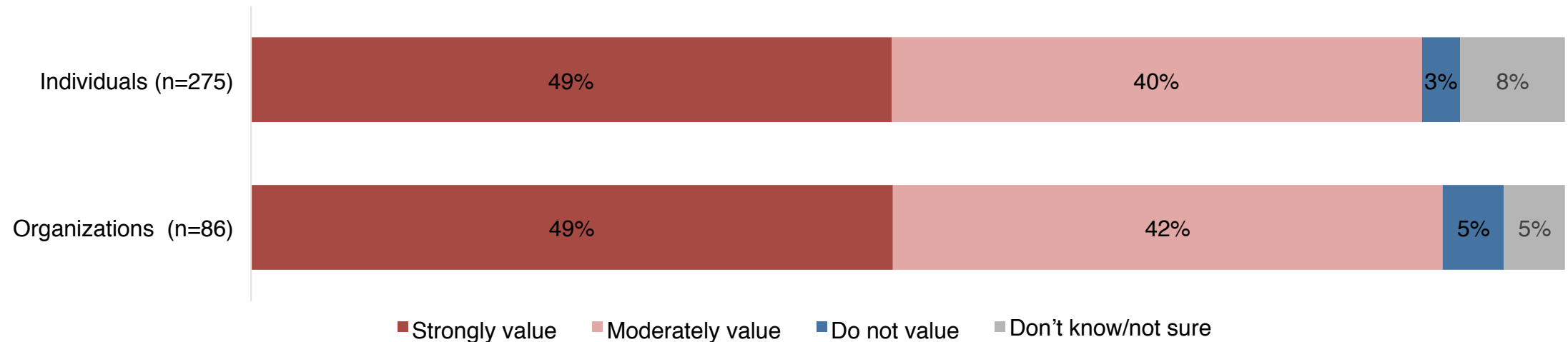


- DSOs favour Western dance forms and **perpetuate the hierarchy**
- Current ecosystem is concentrated in Toronto, Montréal, and Vancouver, with **limited access to services outside these cities**
- Some are frustrated by the question and see this as self-evident

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Value placed in the work of DSOs

Overall, how much do you/does your organization value the work of dance service organizations?



- **Vast majority** value the work of DSOs
- **Even those who are not members** of DSOs value their work
- “Do not value” or “don’t know/not sure” mostly because they don’t know what DSOs offer or don’t see them as relevant to their needs

What is most valued about DSOs

Advocacy and representation	32%
Sharing of news, information, and opportunities	16%
Direct services (e.g. counseling, workshops, admin support)	13%
Financial support (e.g. grants, subsidies)	13%
Providing community and connectivity, especially through facilitating collaboration and conversations	12%
General support and opportunities	11%

What is missing from the current ecosystem

Equity, inclusion, diversity, and accessibility	29%
Partnerships with other service organizations to provide more streamlined information and services	12%
More community and connectivity, especially through facilitating collaborations and conversations	11%
More advocacy, especially for marginalized dance forms	8%
More focus on and resources for dancers and small companies	8%
Greater responsiveness to the needs of the sector	8%

Responses to this project

- **Overall strong support** for the project
- Some wariness and **pockets of resistance**
- Confusion about **what is meant by “decolonization”**
- Confusion between **decolonization** and **relevance/reshaping**
- Eagerness to provide feedback and acknowledgment that **some voices are missing or underrepresented** in the conversation
- **Good faith** in its intentions but **skepticism** that real change will occur

How DSOs rate themselves

- **Many conversations** happening about equity, inclusion, diversity, and accessibility
- Awareness of **historic biases** in services
- **Desire and willingness to change**
- DSOs are at **different stages of the journey**
- Many examples of **working in partnership** and willingness to do more

How DSOs rate themselves

- Each organization sees itself as occupying a **unique niche**
- Tension between the **need to continue serving their membership base** and reaching out to underserved parts of the sector
- Concern about **dilution of focus** and **loss of core purpose**
- **Limited resources** to reach and serve a wider remit, including challenges of maintaining a regular physical presence
- **Precarious funding** hampers strategic planning
- Need for **greater clarity** about the purpose of these conversations

Mapping the dance sector

- **Rapid growth** over the past 20 years*
- **Highly concentrated** in a small number of major cities**
- **Great diversity** of dance forms**
- Minorities of various kinds are **disadvantaged both financially and in other ways professionally** within their work in the dance sector*

* Hill Strategies Research, Statistical Profile of Artists in Canada, 2004, 2009, 2014

** EKOS Research Associates, *Yes I Dance*, 2014

Mapping the dance service ecosystem

- **High number of DSOs** serving the professional dance sector
 - 4 national DSOs
 - 11 provincial/regional DSOs
 - 3 labour organizations
- Most DSOs were founded to support the needs of dancers and large dance companies working in **ballet and contemporary/modern dance**
- **Uneven** levels and types of dance services across the country
- There is a tension between DSOs' dual roles of **serving the sector** and **leading the sector**

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Acknowledgments

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