



2019-2023

RACE AND ETHNICITY IN COMMUNICATION BENCHMARK REPORT

A FIVE-YEAR REVIEW

REPORT NO. 4 | PUBLISHED IN MAY 2025

AN OPEN LETTER TO COMMUNICATORS

DEAR INDUSTRY COLLEAGUES,

Now in our sixth year, the Diversity Action Alliance (DAA) continues to serve as a central resource, force multiplier, and accountability lever for leaders in Public Relations and Communications. Collaboration across our industry remains essential, particularly as we approach five years since the murder of George Floyd, the surge in anti-Asian hate, and the wave of corporate commitments to racial equity that followed. After a record low in 2022, DAA data submissions reached an all-time high in 2023. We were encouraged to see a stabilized commitment to data transparency in 2024, which suggests that workforce diversity remains a shared priority across our field.

Since 2019, racial diversity has increased by six percentage points to 28% among participating organizations, compared to 42% in the overall U.S. population. Though not fully representative of the industry, the report reflects data from some of the most influential entities in our profession, including Fortune 500 companies and top U.S. agencies. Yet the facts remain: **100% of the U.S. population growth stems from racially and ethnically diverse groups, and Gen Z is the most diverse generation in history.**² Even under optimistic projections, meaningful representation across our ranks remains a generation away if we continue at the same pace. The U.S. is already changing. We can't afford to lag behind.

¹ <https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/racial-and-ethnic-diversity-in-the-united-states-2010-and-2020-census.html>

² <https://usafacts.org/data/topics/people-society/population-and-demographics/our-changing-population/>

AN OPEN LETTER TO COMMUNICATORS CONT.

So, what needs to change?

In our inaugural *Voice of Impact* study (not yet published), we surveyed 200 communicators. The results were sobering. Many non-white respondents described feeling over-mentored but under-sponsored. Nearly 30% cited bias and microaggressions as persistent barriers. One participant noted, "It's no coincidence that every firm faces the same challenge." The problem is systemic. From recruitment to promotion, cultural norms to advancement opportunities, the institutional barriers in our field disproportionately hinder professionals of color and ultimately impact our businesses' success, innovation, and profitability.

We face a choice. We can lead consequential change together or risk falling behind other business functions that embed diversity, inclusion, and fair access to opportunities more deeply into their strategies. If we don't act, we risk being viewed not as strategic partners focused on long-term viability but as cost centers, and leaders whose courage is lost.

At DAA, we remain committed to equipping our signatories—and the broader industry—with the insights, tools, and partnerships needed to build a more equitable and resilient future.

We invite you to join us.

Sincerely,

Carmella Glover

President, Diversity Action Alliance

ABOUT THE REPORT

The [Diversity Action Alliance](#) (DAA) is rooted in ACTion (Adopt best practices—Champion the cause—Track Progress). The purpose of the third component, "Track Progress" is to benchmark and track diversity numbers to improve recruitment and retention within organizations. Those who sign the DAA commitment agree to "share key representation metrics with the DAA for benchmarking and for anonymized reporting of the aggregate progress within the communication profession."

This analysis is based on data provided by 99 qualified organizations that are signatories of the DAA. This is not a representative sample of the public relations profession. This analysis focuses only on racial and ethnic diversity per the mission of the DAA. The categories of analysis are based on the guidelines of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

As this is the fifth year of the report, a five-year comparison has been made to 2019 data. The first section of this report is focused on racial/ethnic representation in organizations, segmented by position level and organization type. The second section of this report analyzes the racial/ethnic breakdown of those who were promoted between January 1, 2023 and December 31, 2023, segmented by position level and type of organization. The next section report outlines the promotion rates based on organization type and position level. Finally, the last section of this report includes demographics of the organizations that provided their data.

METHODOLOGY

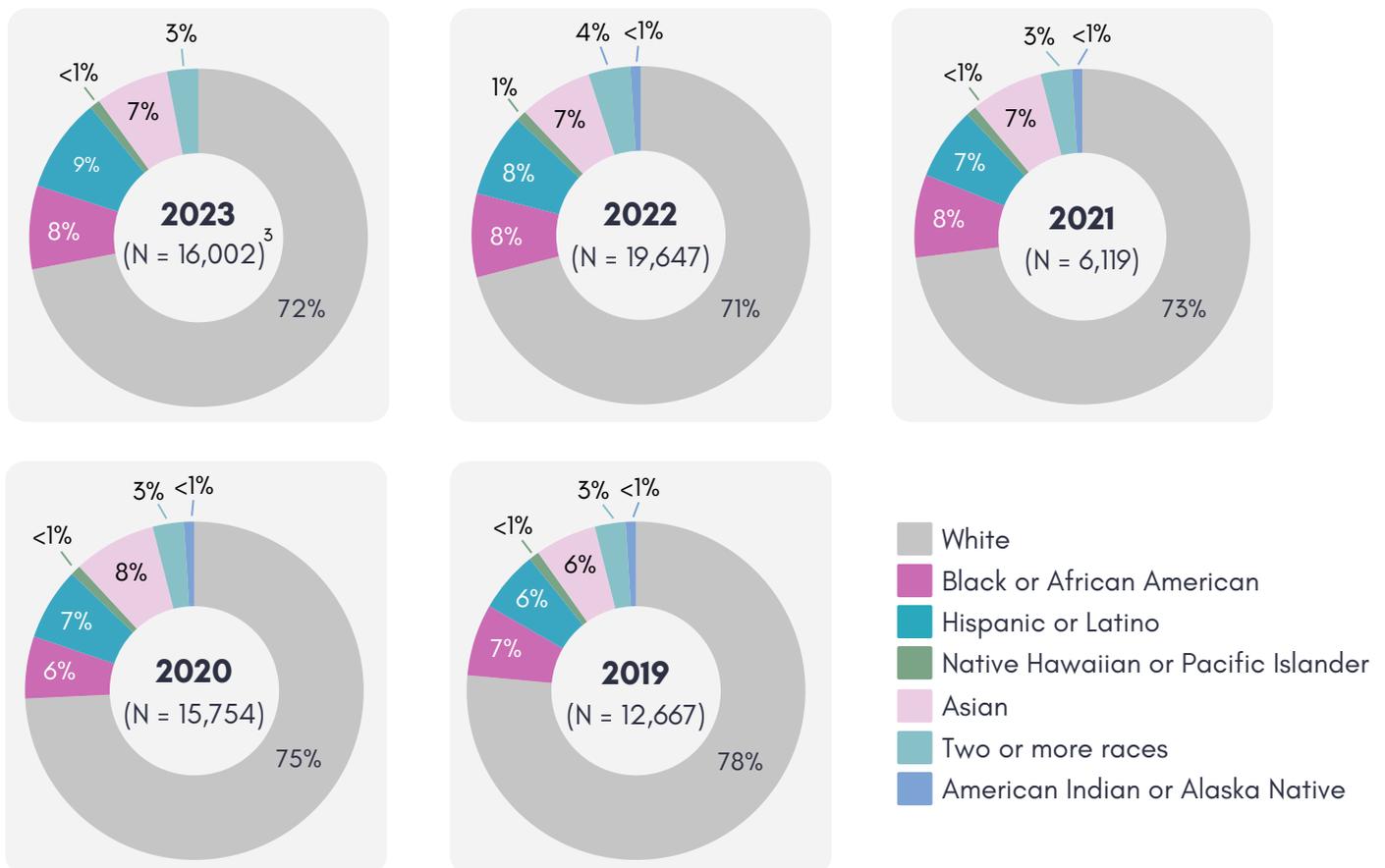
The [Institute for Public Relations](#) manages the data collection process on behalf of the DAA. Signatories of the Diversity Action Alliance commitment provided their data confidentially in a secure data management platform for the breakdown of racial/ethnic diversity of their employees as well as the number who were promoted or advanced in the specific year. Data are aggregated so no individual companies can be identified. The data the DAA collects align with the EEOC except the DAA does not collect gender, and signatories identify the race/ethnicity of their top communicator/leader/agency CEO in a separate category. Please note this is not representative of the industry, or even the signatories, so the data should be used as a guide.

Academic departments within colleges and universities, PRSSA chapters and independent practitioners have been removed from the overall analysis.

PART I: REPRESENTATION

OVERALL RACIAL/ETHNIC DIVERSITY

In 2023, 72% of all employees of the organizations that provided their data were white with 28% being racially diverse, indicating a 1 percentage point decrease in diversity compared to 2022 across all organizations and position levels based on 16,002 employees. The number of employees in this data set decreased by 20% compared to last year. However, compared to 2019 (the first year of the report), racial/ethnic diversity has increased by 6 percentage points, with increases for most groups. Due to rounding, percentages may not equal 100%. Below is the overall industry breakdown:



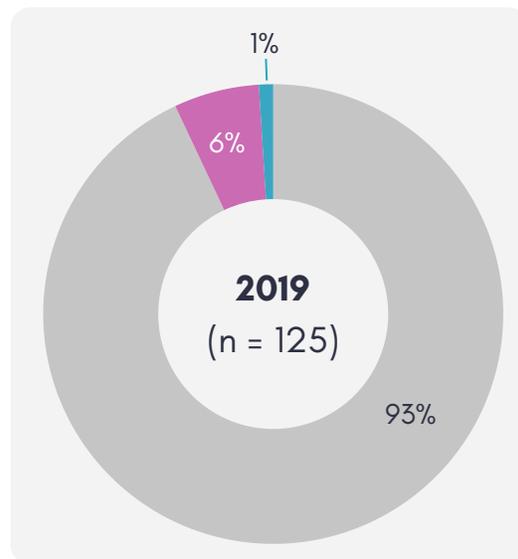
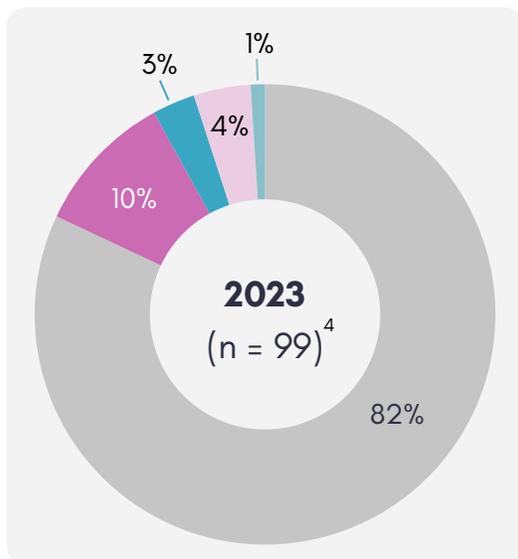
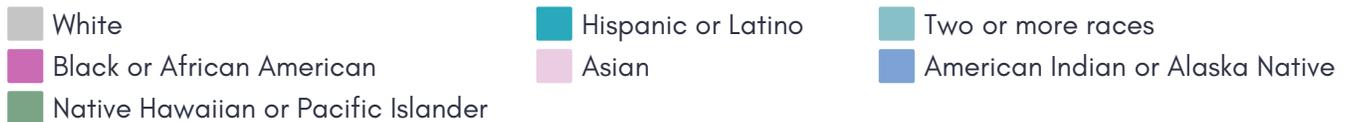
³ N = population size

RACIAL/ETHNIC DIVERSITY BY POSITION LEVEL

Consistent with previous reports, organizations are less racially/ethnically diverse at the executive and top levels of leadership and become increasingly diverse moving into the mid-level, entry-level and admin ranks.

Across all position levels, organizations were more racially/ethnically diverse than they were in 2019, especially at the top level and entry level. In 2023, 82% of the top communication or agency leaders were white compared to 93% five years ago. Compared to five years ago, top leaders and entry-level employees saw the biggest jumps in racial/ethnic diversity with a minimum 10 percentage point increase. Outside of those two position levels, other position levels experienced improved racial/ethnic diversity, ranging from 4 percentage points for administrative support to 6 percentage points for mid-level employees.

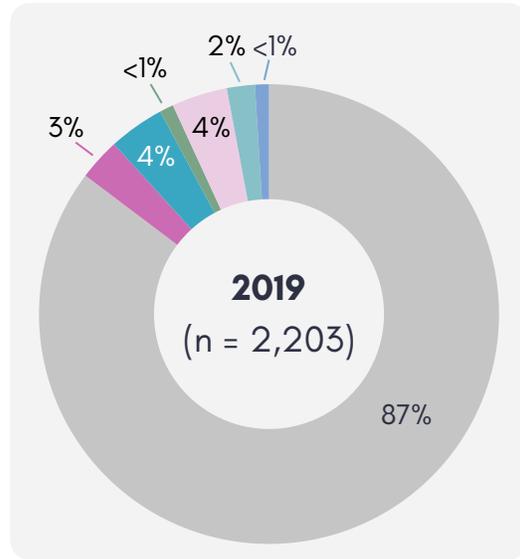
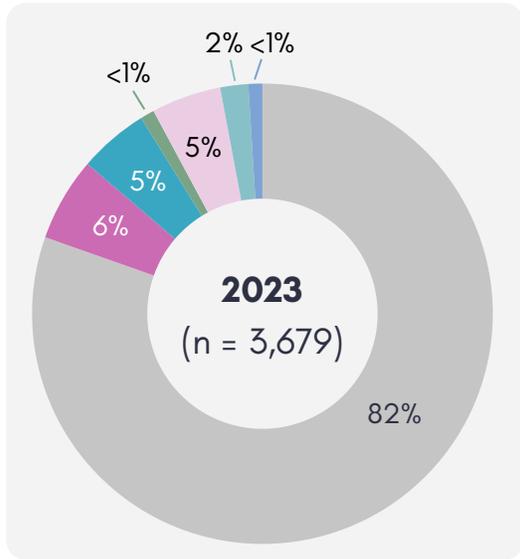
TOP LEADERS (CCOs, agency CEOs, executive directors, etc.)



⁴ n = sample size

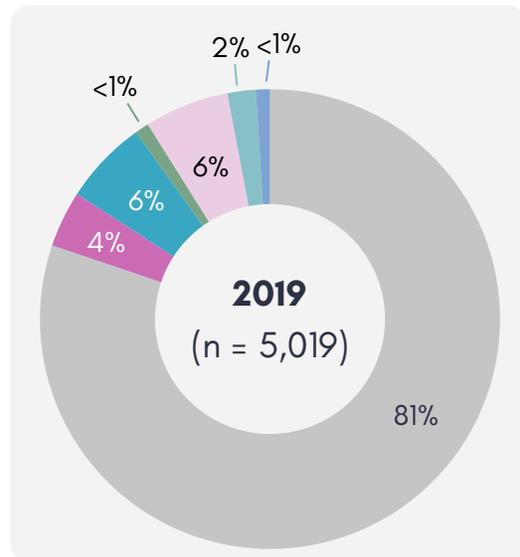
EXECUTIVES

- White
- Hispanic or Latino
- Two or more races
- Black or African American
- Asian
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

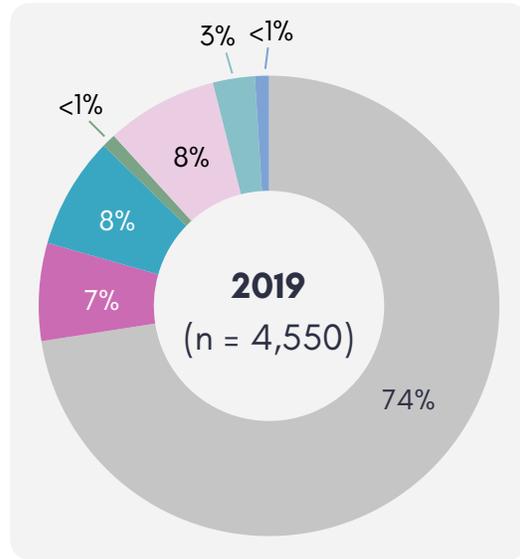
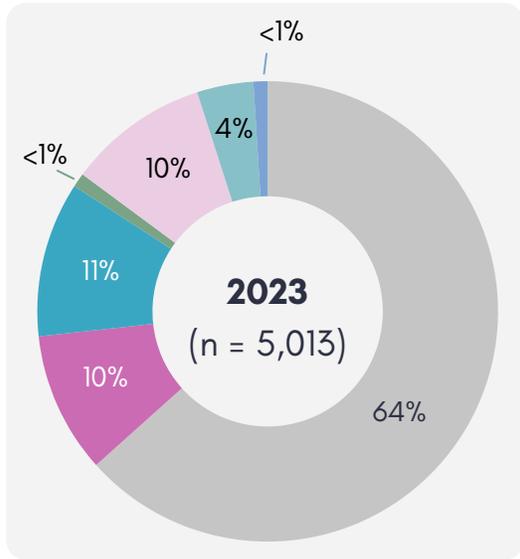
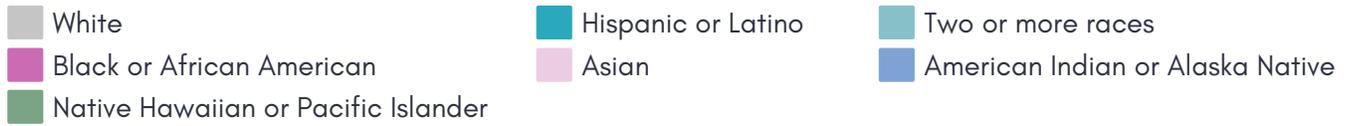


MID-LEVEL EMPLOYEES

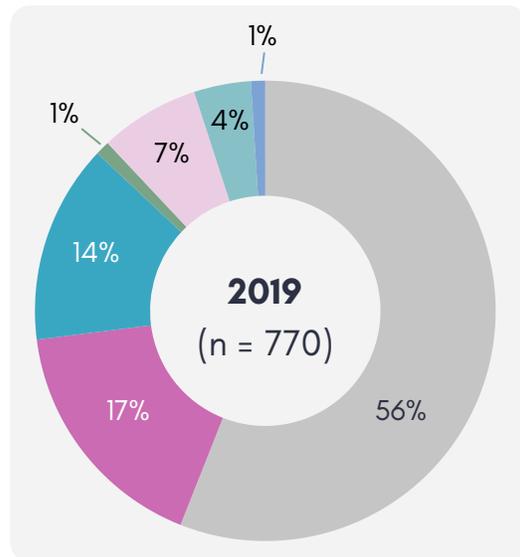
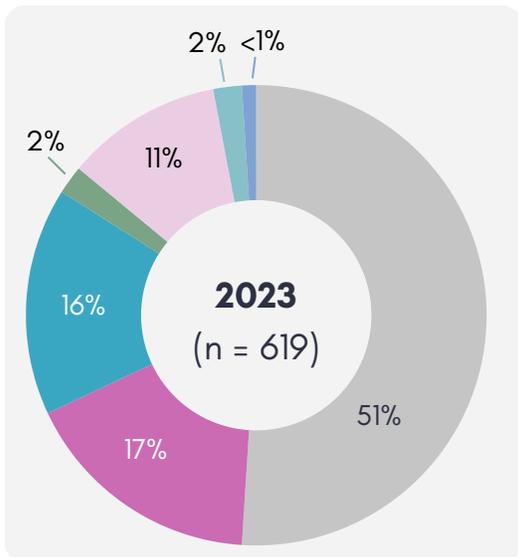
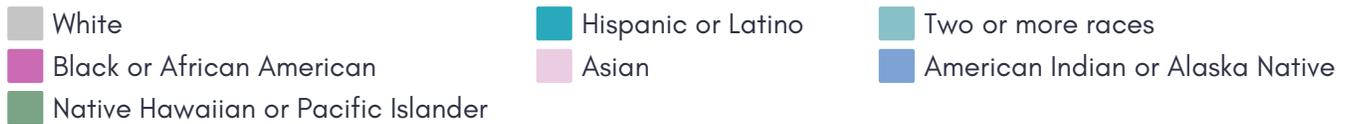
- White
- Hispanic or Latino
- Two or more races
- Black or African American
- Asian
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander



ENTRY-LEVEL EMPLOYEES



ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONALS

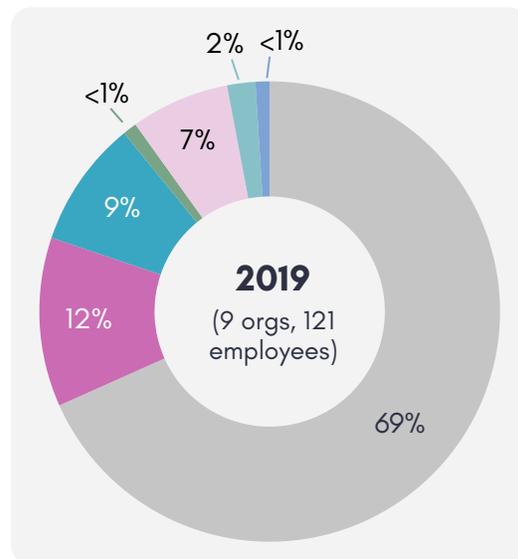
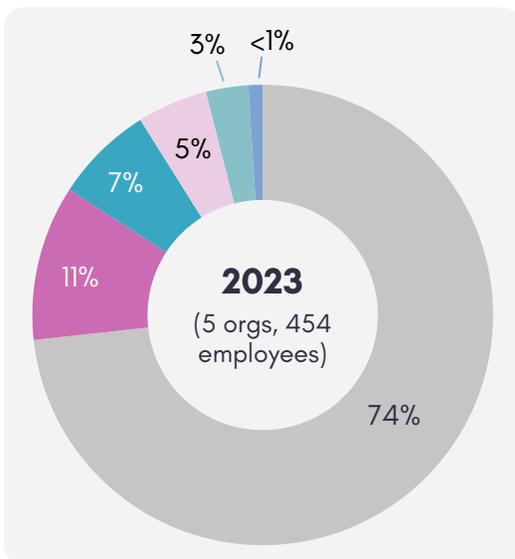
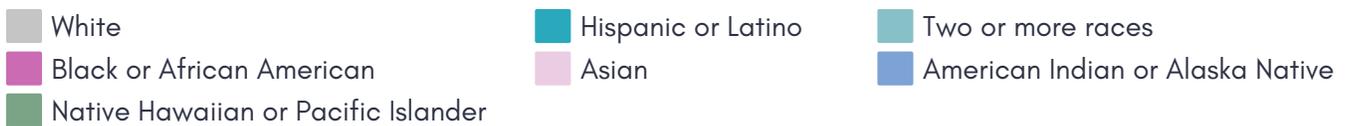




RACIAL/ETHNIC DIVERSITY BY ORGANIZATION TYPE

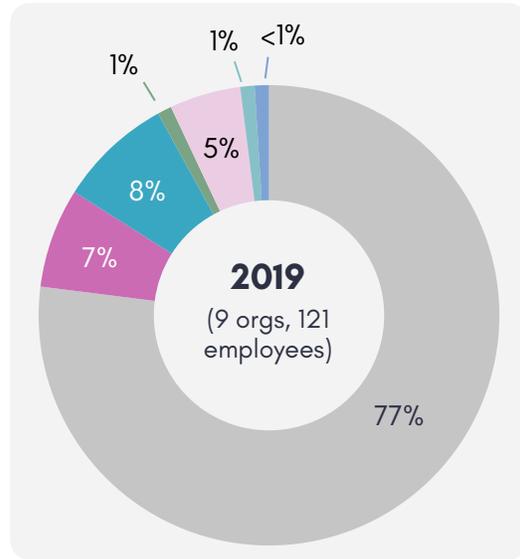
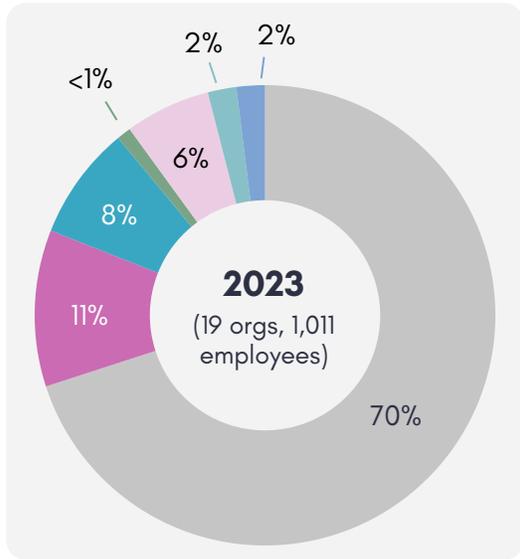
The following is the breakdown of racial/ethnic diversity by organization type. Due to rounding, percentages may not equal 100%.

ASSOCIATIONS AND NONPROFITS



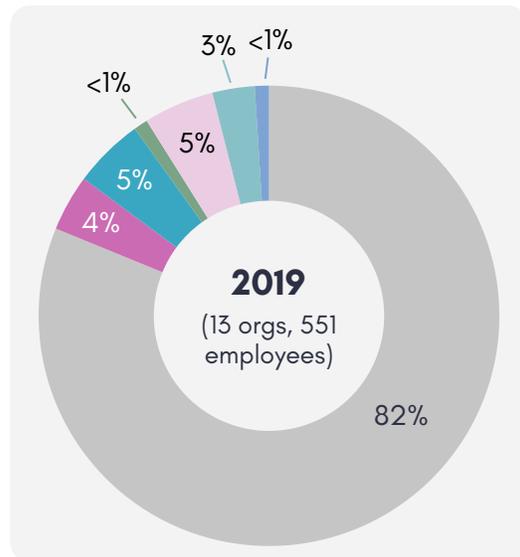
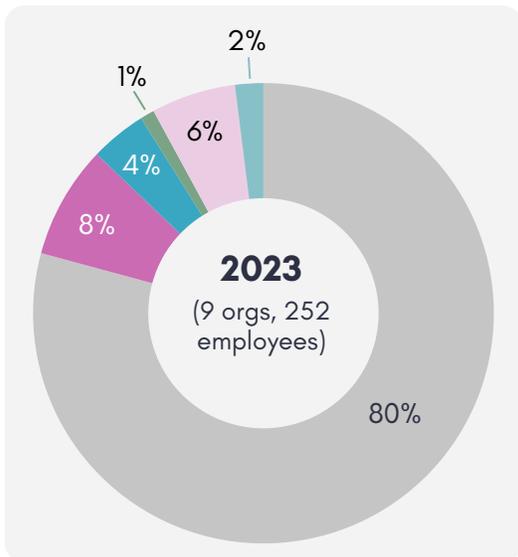
CORPORATIONS

- White
- Black or African American
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Hispanic or Latino
- Asian
- Two or more races
- American Indian or Alaska Native

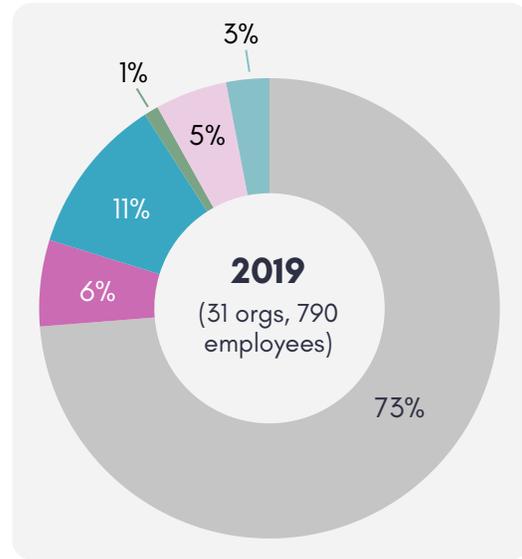
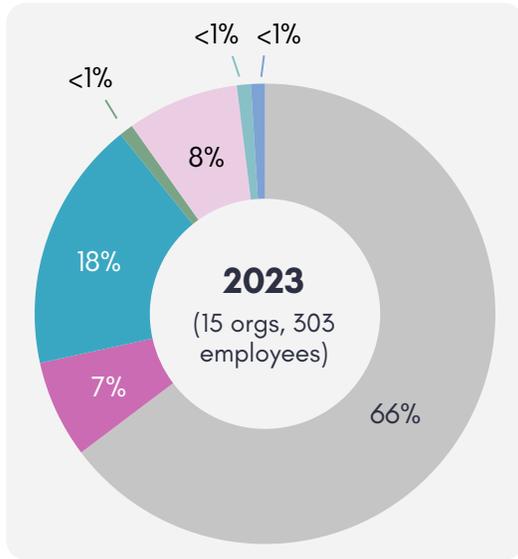
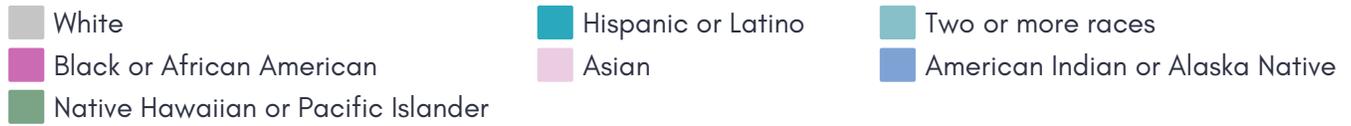


PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

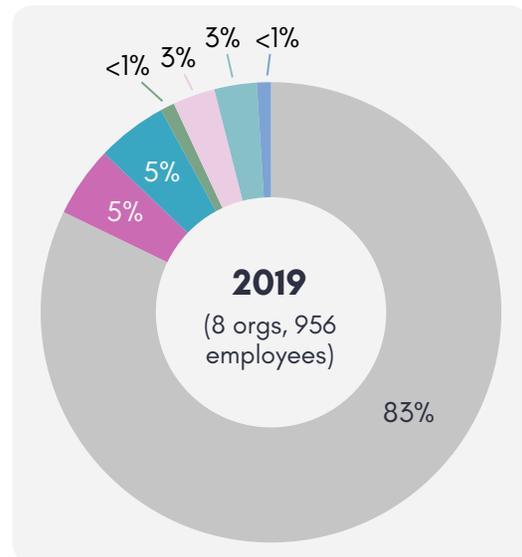
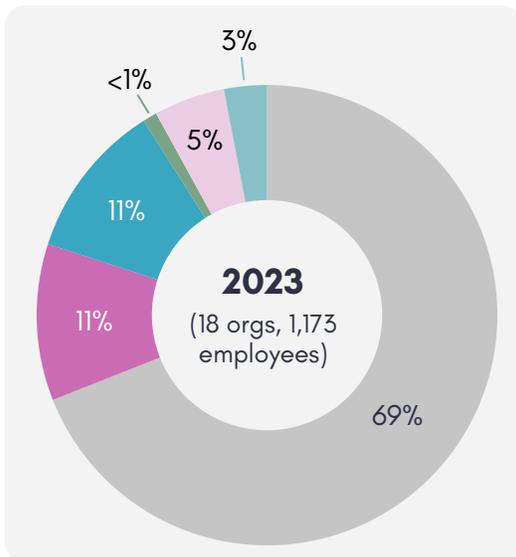
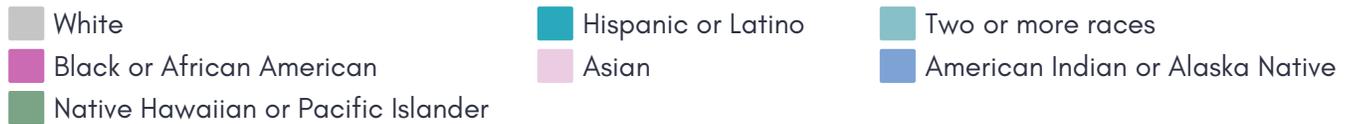
- White
- Black or African American
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Hispanic or Latino
- Asian
- Two or more races
- American Indian or Alaska Native



BOUTIQUE AGENCY⁵



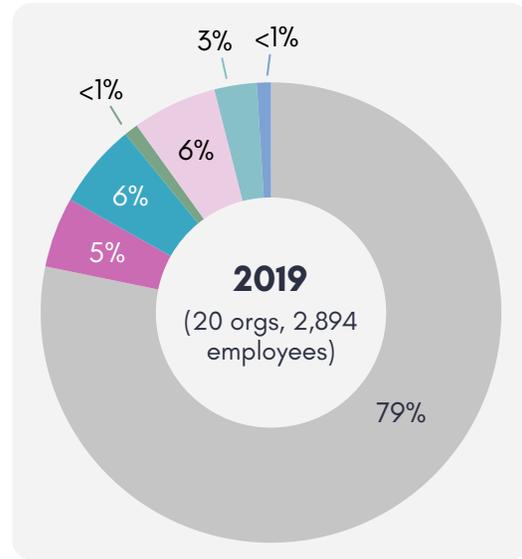
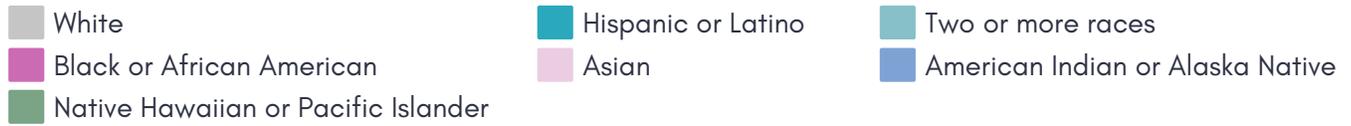
SMALL AGENCY⁶



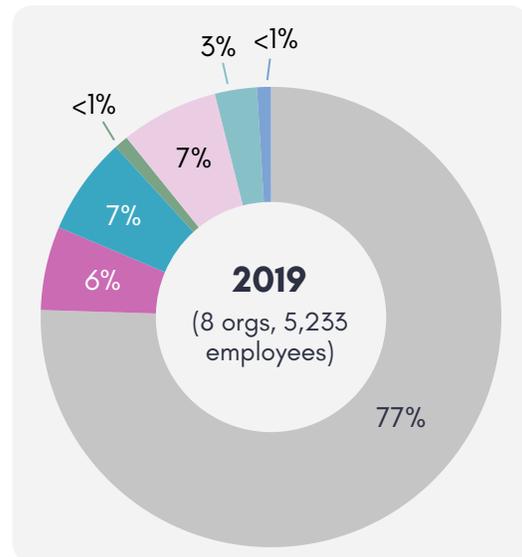
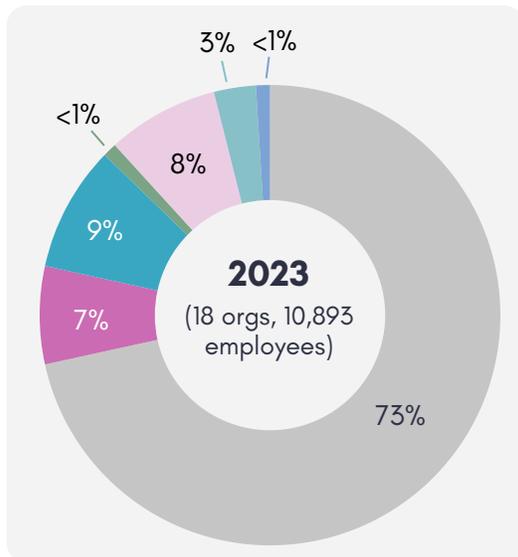
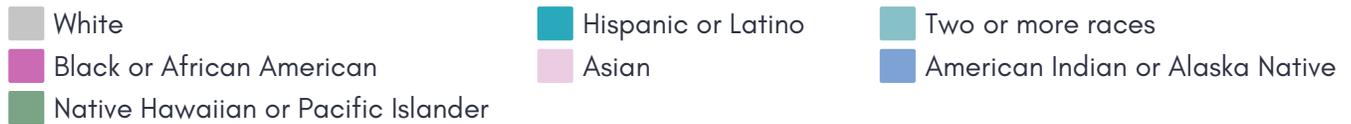
⁵ Less than \$9 million in annual revenue

⁶ \$9 million to \$19 million in annual revenue

MIDSIZE AGENCY⁷



LARGE AGENCY⁸



⁷ \$20 million to \$50 million in annual revenue

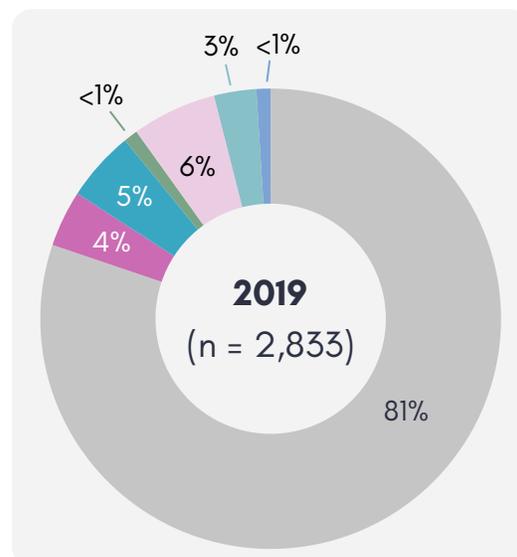
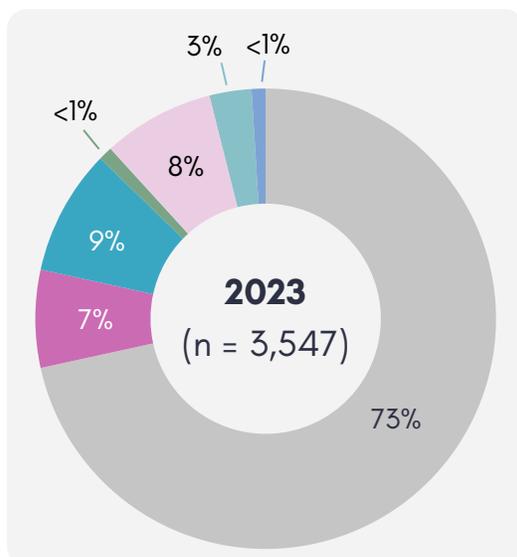
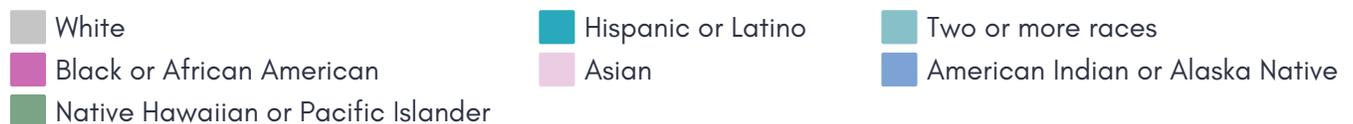
⁸ More than \$50 million in annual revenue

PART II: PROMOTION AND ADVANCEMENT

The following section of the report explores the racial/ethnic diversity of employees who were promoted between January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2023. Please note that some of the sample sizes of promotion numbers were small. The overall sample size for each component is provided.

OVERALL RACIAL/ETHNIC DIVERSITY OF PROMOTED EMPLOYEES IN 2023

Regarding promotions across all organizations and job levels (n = 3,547), 27 percent of employees who were promoted were racially or ethnically diverse, an increase of 1 percentage point compared to last year. Compared to five years ago, more employees who were promoted overall were racially/ethnically diverse. Due to rounding, percentages may not equal 100%. Below is the overall industry breakdown:

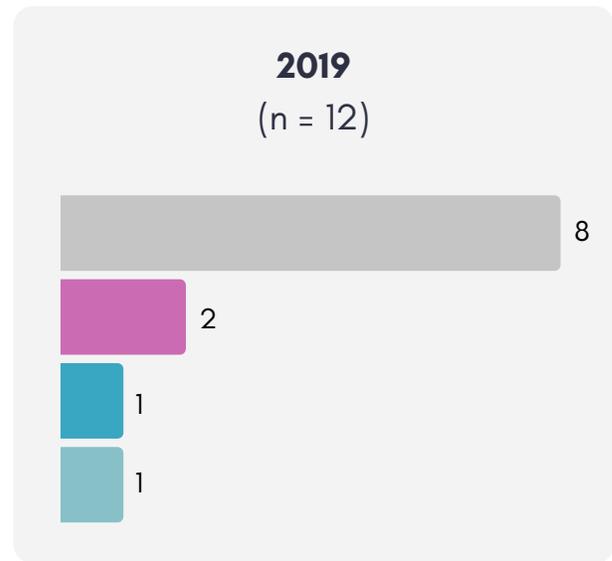
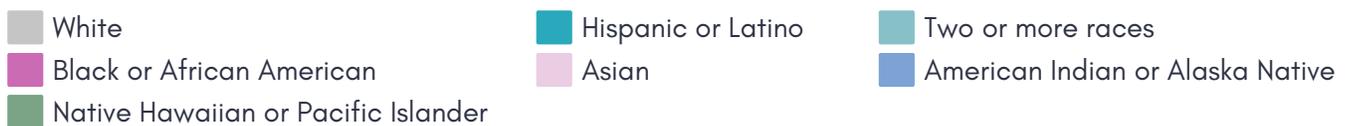


RACIAL/ETHNIC DIVERSITY OF PROMOTED EMPLOYEES BY POSITION TYPE

Similarly to the overall composition of employees, promotions of employees are less racially/ethnically diverse at the executive and top levels of leadership and become increasingly diverse moving into the mid-level, entry-level and admin ranks. Compared to five years ago, all position types saw increases in racial/ethnic diversity.

Please note that in some cases, frequencies, or the number of times something occurs, is reported rather than percentages due to the small sample sizes. Also, the number of promoted employees is much smaller than the overall number of employees so percent changes should be considered cautiously. Due to rounding, percentages may not equal 100%. Below is the breakdown:

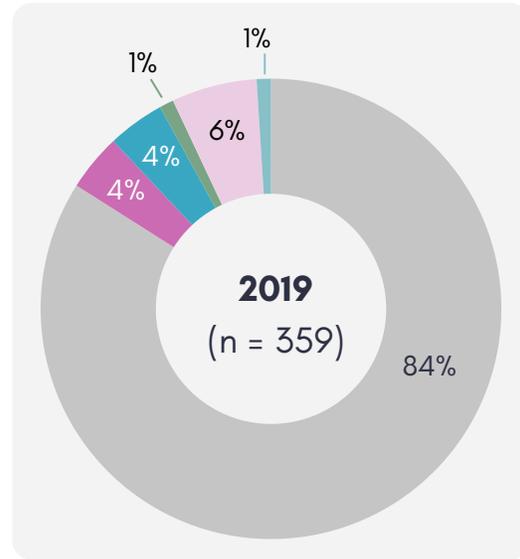
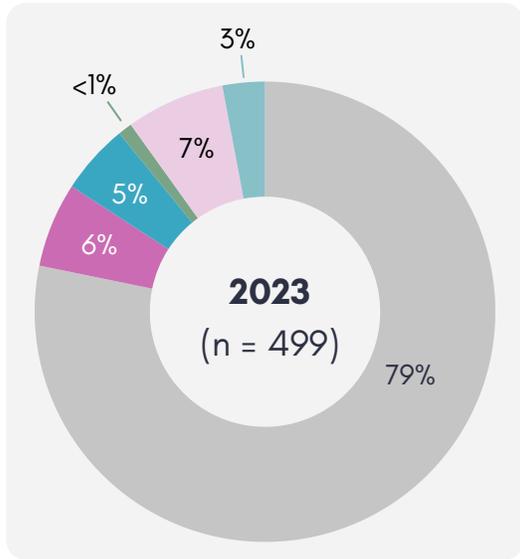
TOP LEADERS (CCOs, agency CEOs, executive directors, etc.)



⁹ Please note the low sample size in this category. Therefore, frequencies (or the number in each category) were used.

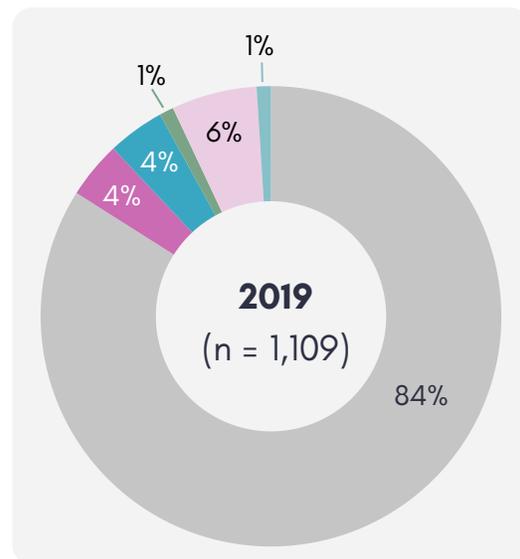
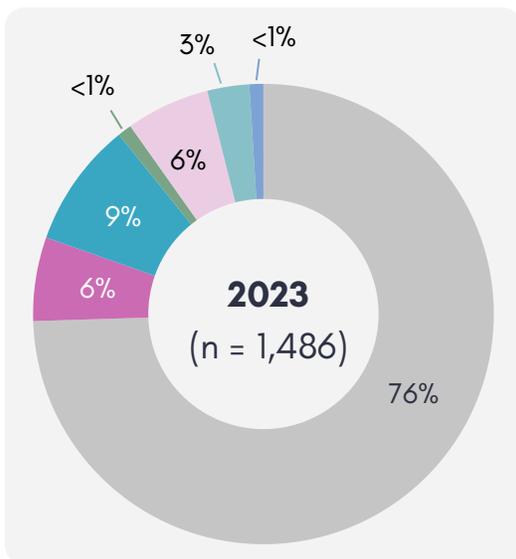
EXECUTIVES

- White
- Hispanic or Latino
- Two or more races
- Black or African American
- Asian
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

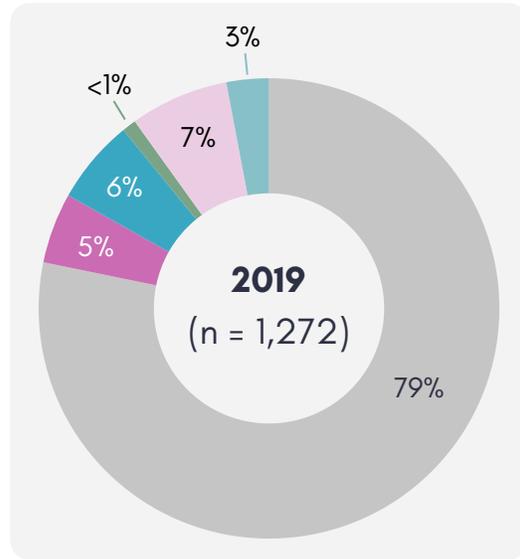
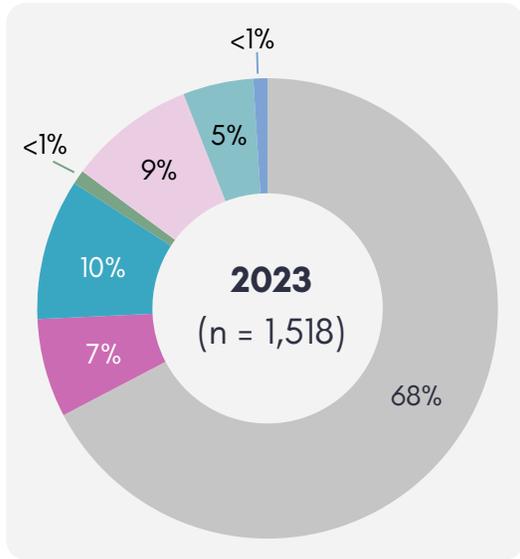
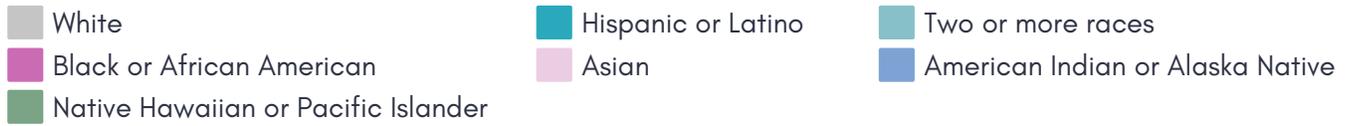


MID-LEVEL EMPLOYEES

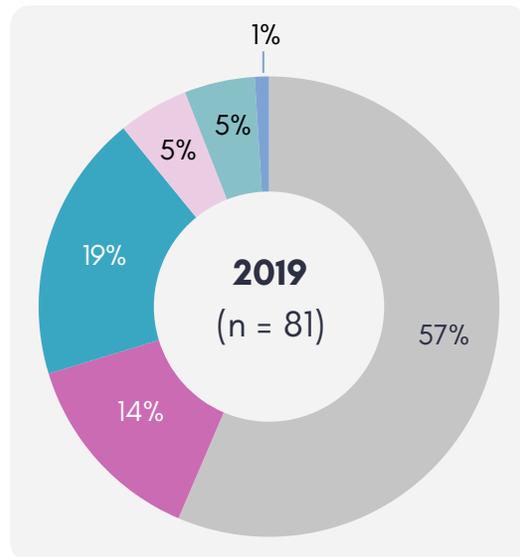
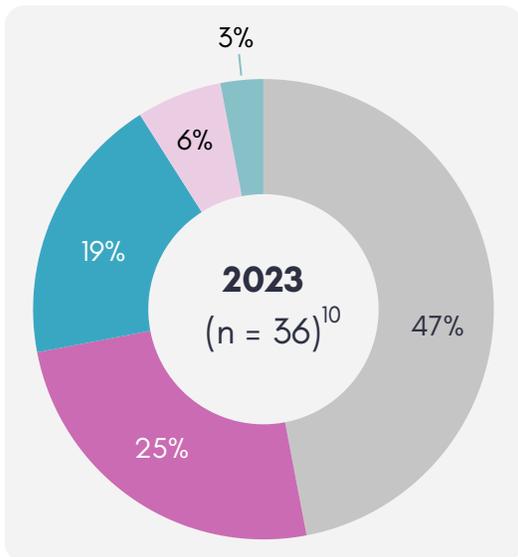
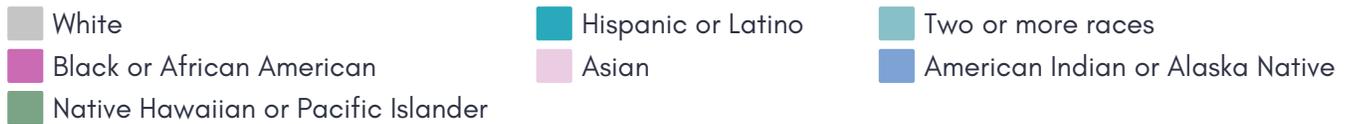
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ENTRY-LEVEL EMPLOYEES



ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONALS



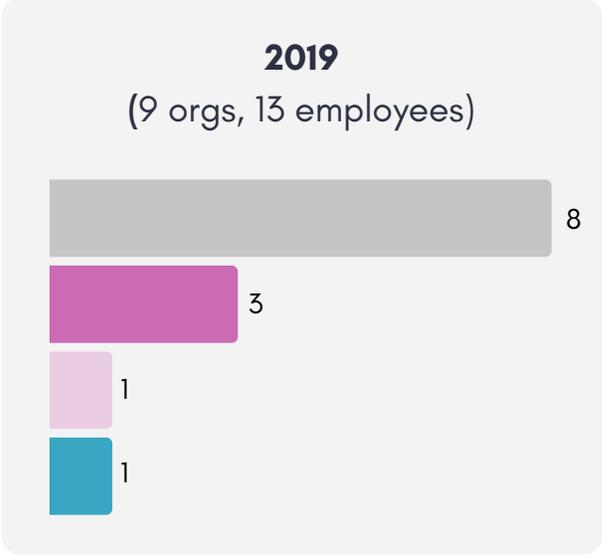
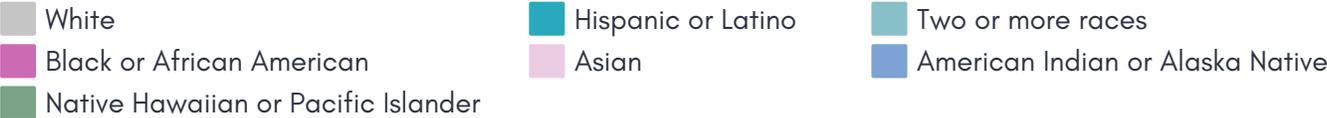
¹⁰ Please note the low sample size for the 2023 administrative professionals data.



RACIAL/ETHNIC DIVERSITY OF PROMOTED EMPLOYEES BY ORGANIZATION TYPE

The following is the breakdown of the racial/ethnic diversity of employees who were promoted in 2023 by organization type. Due to rounding, percentages may not equal 100%. Below is the breakdown:

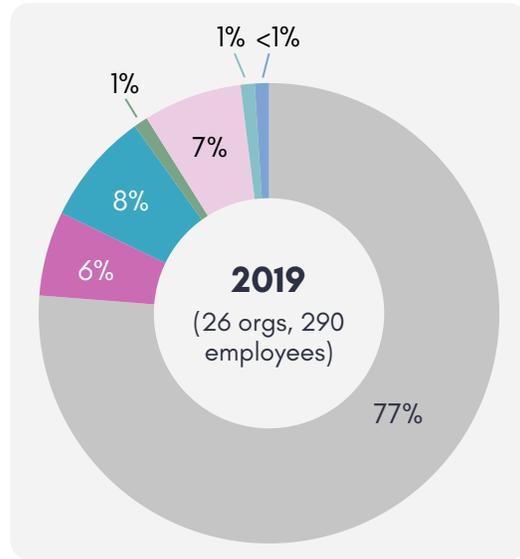
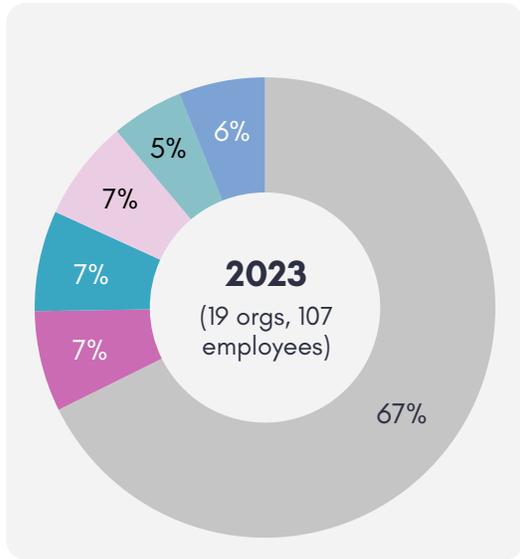
ASSOCIATIONS AND NONPROFITS



¹¹ Please note the low sample size in this category. Therefore, frequencies (or the number in each category) were used.

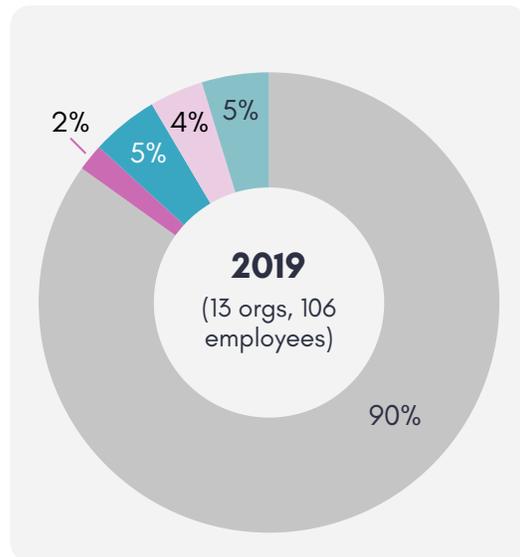
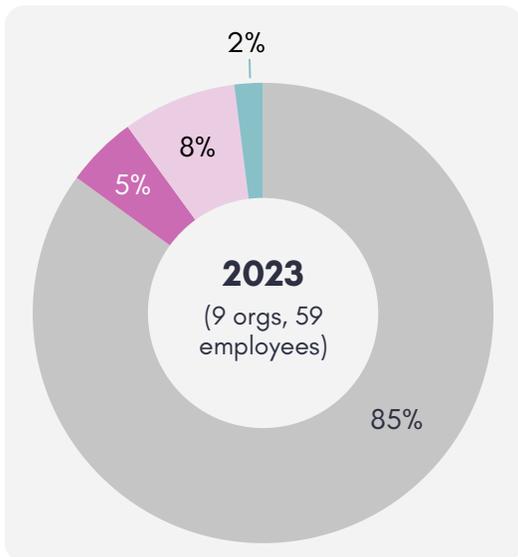
CORPORATIONS

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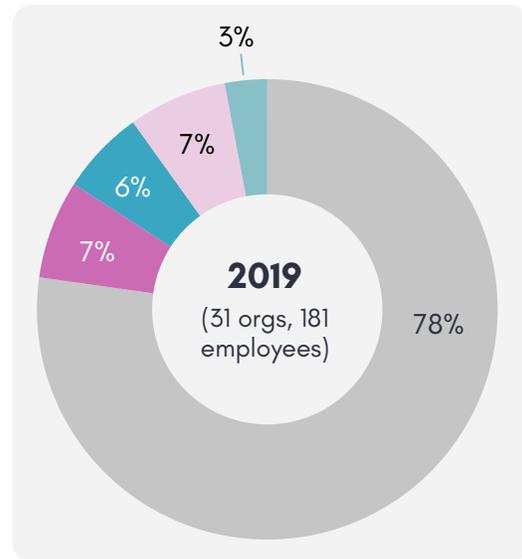
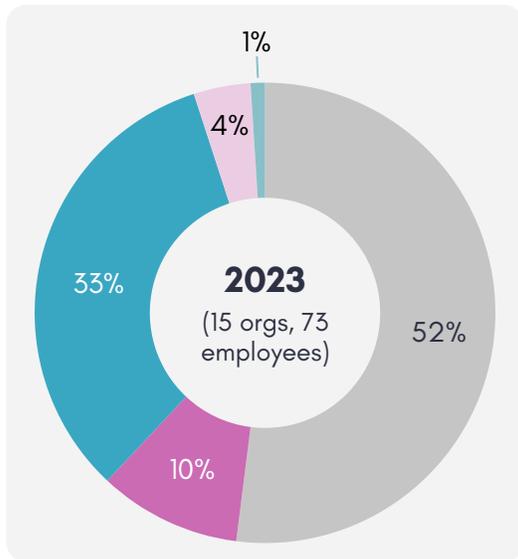
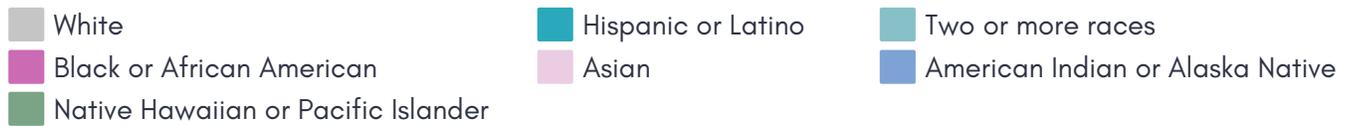


PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

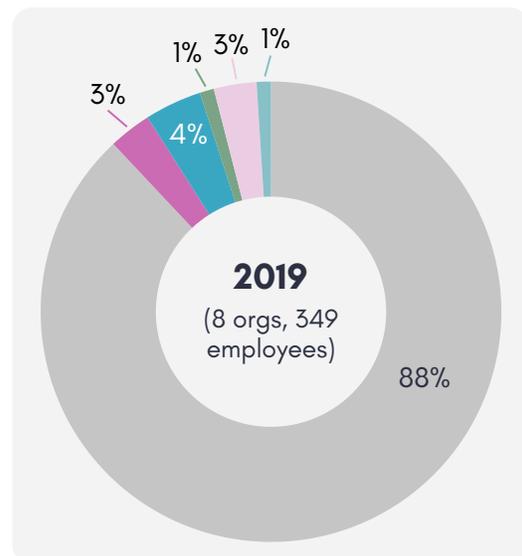
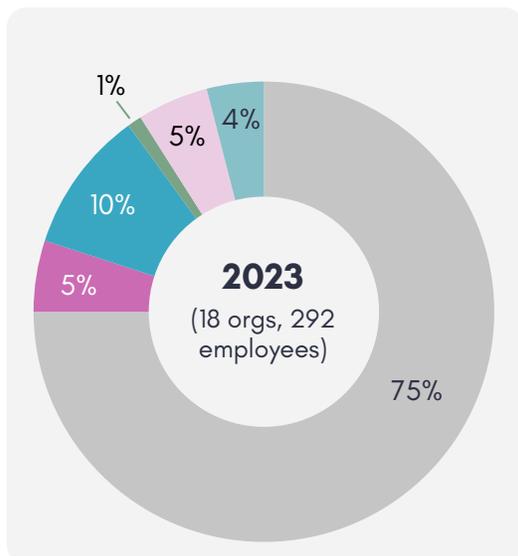
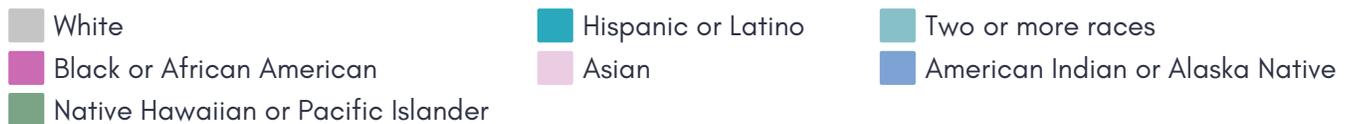
- White
- Hispanic or Latino
- Two or more races
- Black or African American
- Asian
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander



BOUTIQUE AGENCY¹²



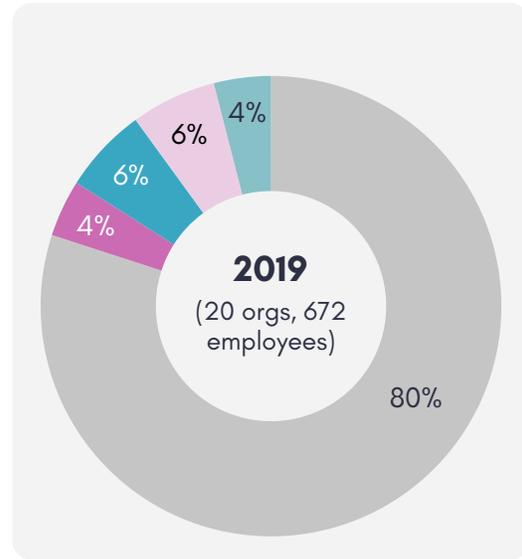
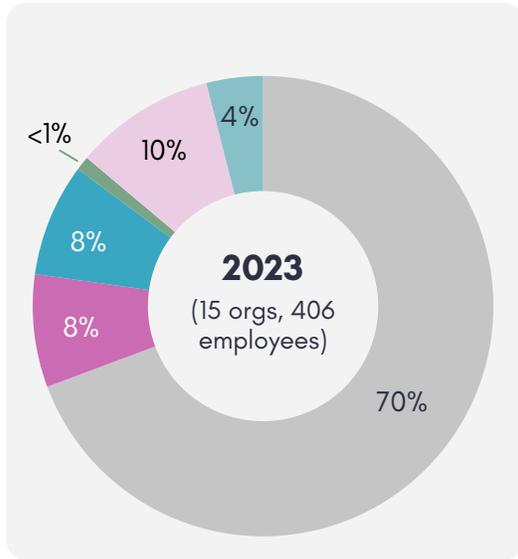
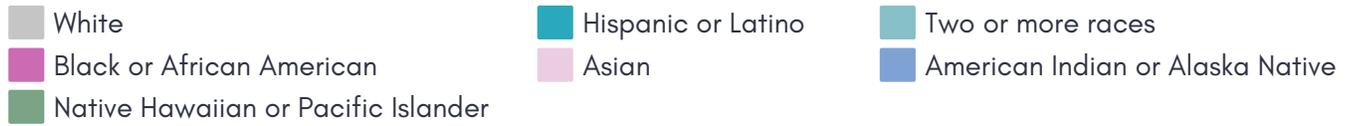
SMALL AGENCY¹³



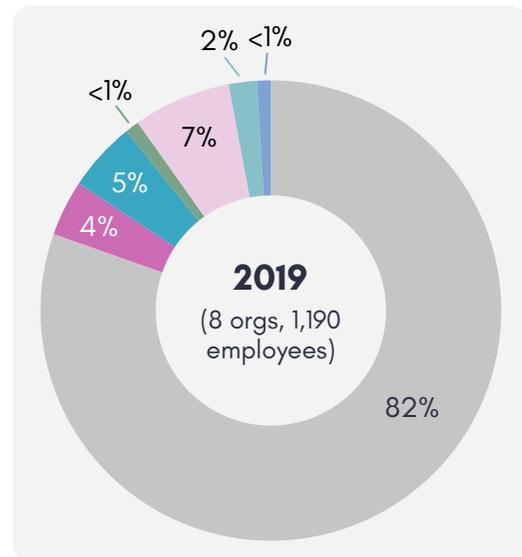
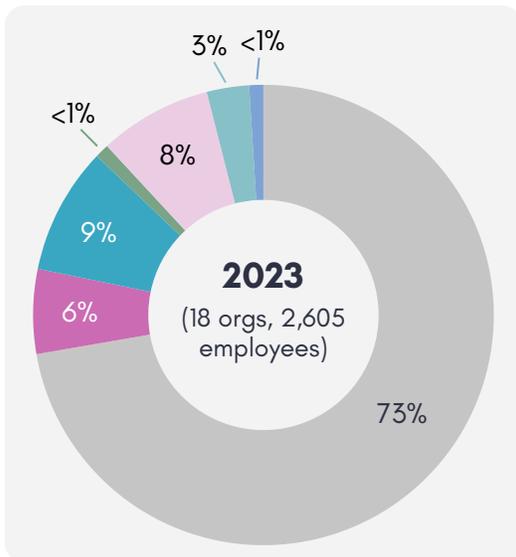
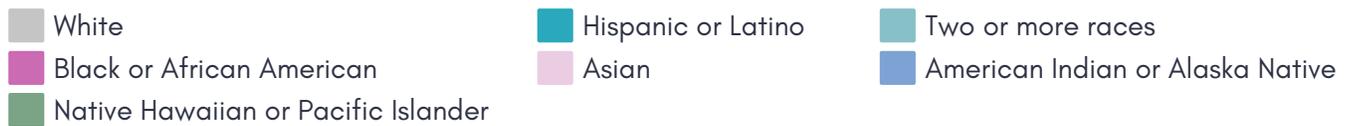
¹² Less than \$9 million in annual revenue

¹³ \$9 million to \$19 million in annual revenue

MIDSIZE AGENCY¹⁴



LARGE AGENCY¹⁵



¹⁴ \$20 million to \$50 million in annual revenue

¹⁵ More than \$50 million in annual revenue



OVERALL PROMOTION RATE

The below table outlines the promotions rate segmented by organization type (see Table 1) and position level (see Table 2).

The overall promotion rate for organization type and position level was calculated. The overall promotion rate across all types of organizations was 23%, meaning 23% of all employees were promoted in 2023.

In the “Promotion Rate Table by Organization Type,” (see Table 1) each row represents a specific type of organization and each column represents the promotion rate for each racial/ethnic group. This number is calculated by dividing the number of promoted employees by the number of total employees and converting that result to a percentage. Overall in 2023, 23% of all employees were promoted with variations among the racial/ethnic group and the types of organizations. For example, the percentage of employees promoted ranged from 7% at associations/nonprofits to 25% at small agencies.

For each racial/ethnic group, comparisons can be made to the promotion rate at their organizations with the percentage of employees who were promoted according to their race/ethnicity. For example, 21% of Hispanic employees in small agencies were promoted with the average promotion rate of 25% in small agencies. However, only 11% of Black employees were promoted.

**TABLE 1:
PROMOTION RATE TABLE BY ORGANIZATION TYPE**

	Overall Promotion Rate	Hispanic/Latino	White	Black	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	Asian	American Indian or Alaska Native	Two or More Races
Association/Nonprofit	7%	0%	2%	0%	0%	43%	0%	50%
Corporation	11%	10%	10%	7%	0%	12%	25%	22%
Professional Services	23%	0%	25%	16%	0%	36%	0%	25%
Boutique Agency	24%	44%	19%	33%	0%	12%	0%	100%
Small Agency	25%	21%	27%	11%	100%	25%	0%	36%
Midsize Agency	21%	22%	21%	19%	20%	27%	0%	19%
Large Agency	24%	25%	24%	22%	11%	24%	10%	25%
TOTAL	23%	24%	23%	19%	15%	24%	19%	25%

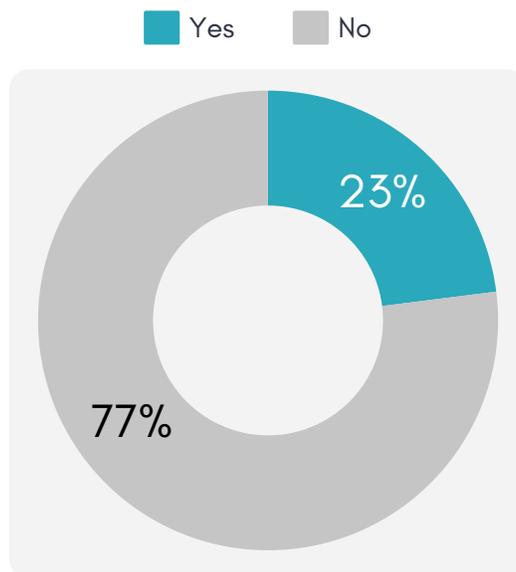
**TABLE 2:
PROMOTION RATE TABLE BY JOB LEVEL**

	Overall Promotion Rate	Hispanic/Latino	White	Black	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	Asian	American Indian or Alaska Native	Two or More Races
Top	8%	0%	6%	11%	0%	50%	0%	0%
Executive	14%	12%	13%	15%	50%	18%	0%	20%
Mid-level	23%	27%	24%	20%	7%	23%	21%	20%
Entry level	31%	28%	33%	22%	21%	31%	25%	33%
Admin	6%	7%	5%	9%	0%	3%	0%	7%
TOTAL	23%	24%	23%	19%	15%	24%	19%	25%

PART III: DEMOGRAPHICS ¹⁶

The number of organizations who reported having a Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) or executive who primary leads diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives dropped from 32% in 2022 to 23% in 2023. However, the most frequent DEI structure in organizations was having multiple executives or individuals in their organizations were primary responsibilities for DEI initiatives, which rose to 28% from 20% in 2022.

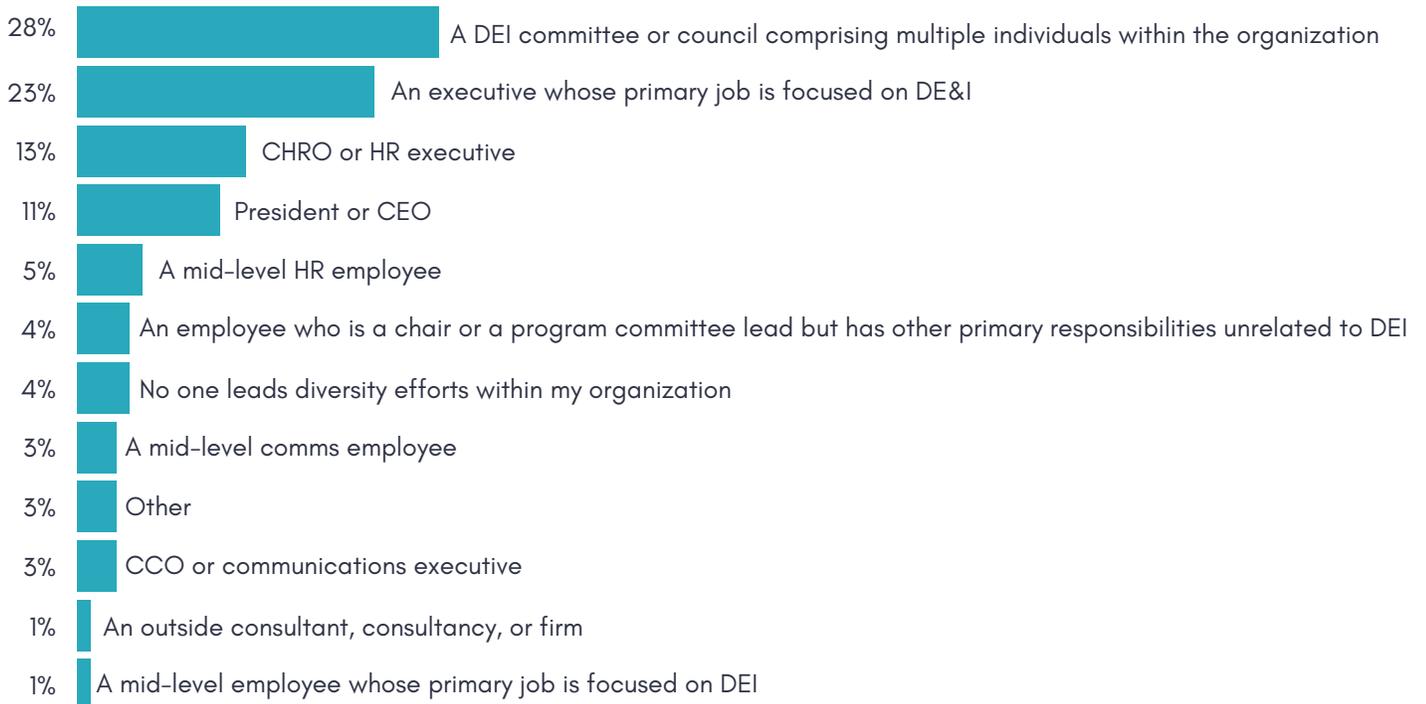
DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION HAVE A CHIEF DIVERSITY OFFICER?*



*In 2022, 32% of respondent organizations had a CDO

¹⁶ Due to rounding, percentages may not equal 100% throughout.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR LEADING DE&I

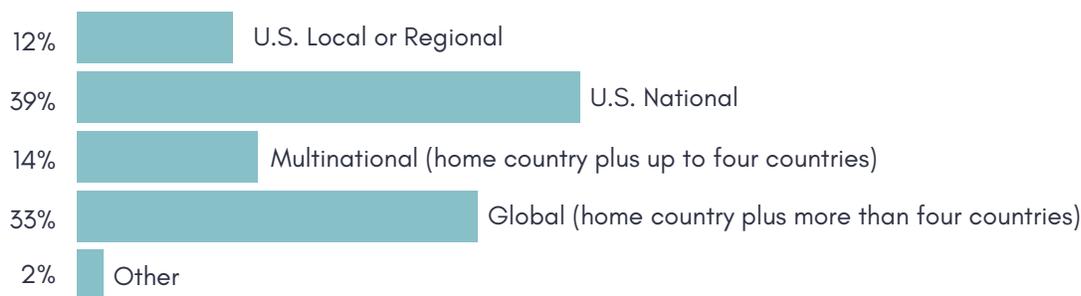


TYPE OF ORGANIZATION (in frequencies)

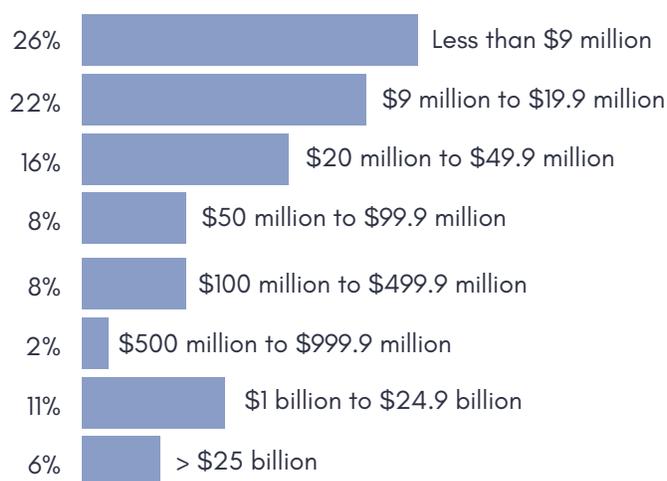
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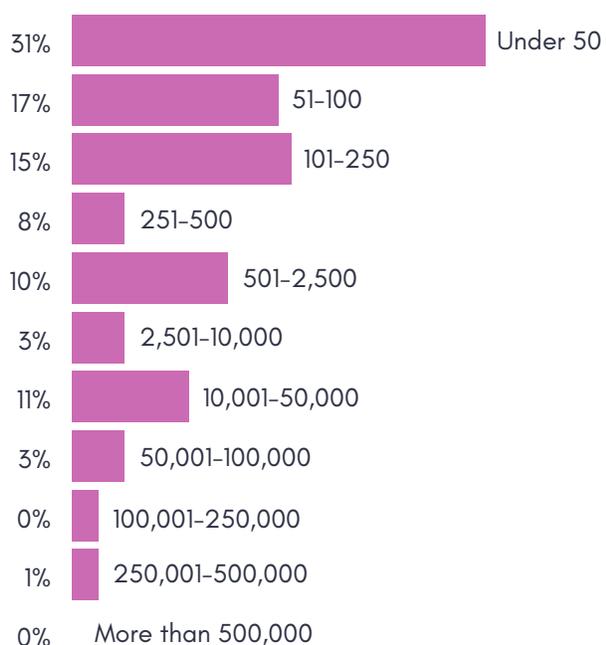
ORGANIZATION'S GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE



ANNUAL REVENUE



NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES IN THE OVERALL ORGANIZATION



ABOUT DIVERSITY ACTION ALLIANCE (DAA)

The **Diversity Action Alliance (DAA)** exists to bring communication and public relations industry leaders and organizations together to drive and support transformative change toward shared workforce representation and inclusion goals, focused primarily on those most impacted by racial exclusion. Through data-driven insights, agenda-setting thought leadership, education, and other critically needed resources, the DAA's mission is to be the industry's accountability lever and force multiplier, driving more diverse, fair, and inclusive workplaces that lead to lasting change, fortifying its leaders and organizations for the workplace of the future. For more information about the Diversity Action Alliance, visit www.diversityactionalliance.org.

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS (IPR)

The **Institute for Public Relations** is an independent, nonprofit research foundation dedicated to fostering greater use of research and research-based knowledge in corporate communication and the public relations practice. IPR is dedicated to *the science beneath the art of public relations*.® IPR provides timely insights and applied intelligence that professionals can put to immediate use. All research, including a weekly research letter, is available for free at www.instituteforpr.org.

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