

# California's Race to Lead: The Nonprofit Racial Leadership Gap in the Golden State

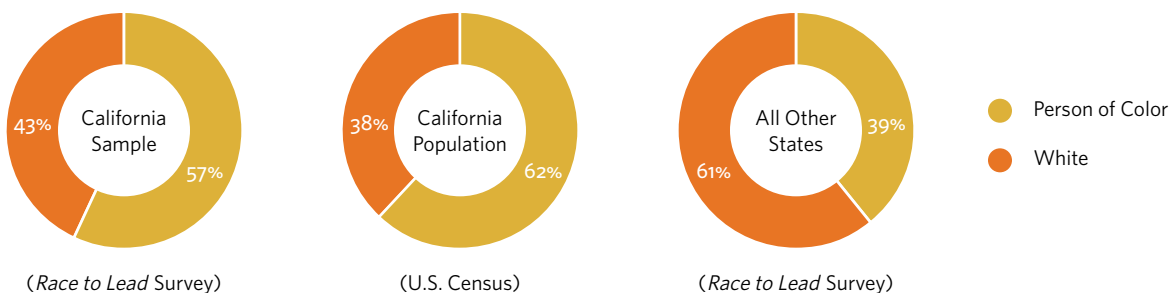


## Executive Summary

The Building Movement Project's *Race to Lead* series investigates why there are so few leaders of color in the nonprofit sector, reporting on findings from more than 4,000 survey respondents. Findings at the national level showed that—contrary to prevailing narratives—people of color have similar qualifications as white respondents and are more likely to aspire to nonprofit leadership positions. In addition, respondents across race agreed that people of color seeking leadership positions face systemic barriers to advancement, ranging from fewer networks and connections for advancing their careers to lack of support from white leadership and boards.

*California's Race to Lead: The Nonprofit Racial Leadership Gap in the Golden State*, examines the subset of respondents—nearly 20% of the total—who work in California. The report explores the differences between people of color and white respondents in California and how the Golden State's findings compare to the findings in all the other states combined.

The results in California are of particular interest to nonprofits across the country. The fact that California has had a people of color majority for almost two decades offers a glimpse of how the United States workforce will look in another generation. There is a vibrant nonprofit sector in California with more than 250,000 registered nonprofit groups. According to a 2009 study by the Urban Institute, people of color constituted 25% of nonprofit leaders in the state (excluding hospitals and higher education). This figure is higher than the findings from national studies that have repeatedly found that less than 20% of nonprofit leaders were people of color.

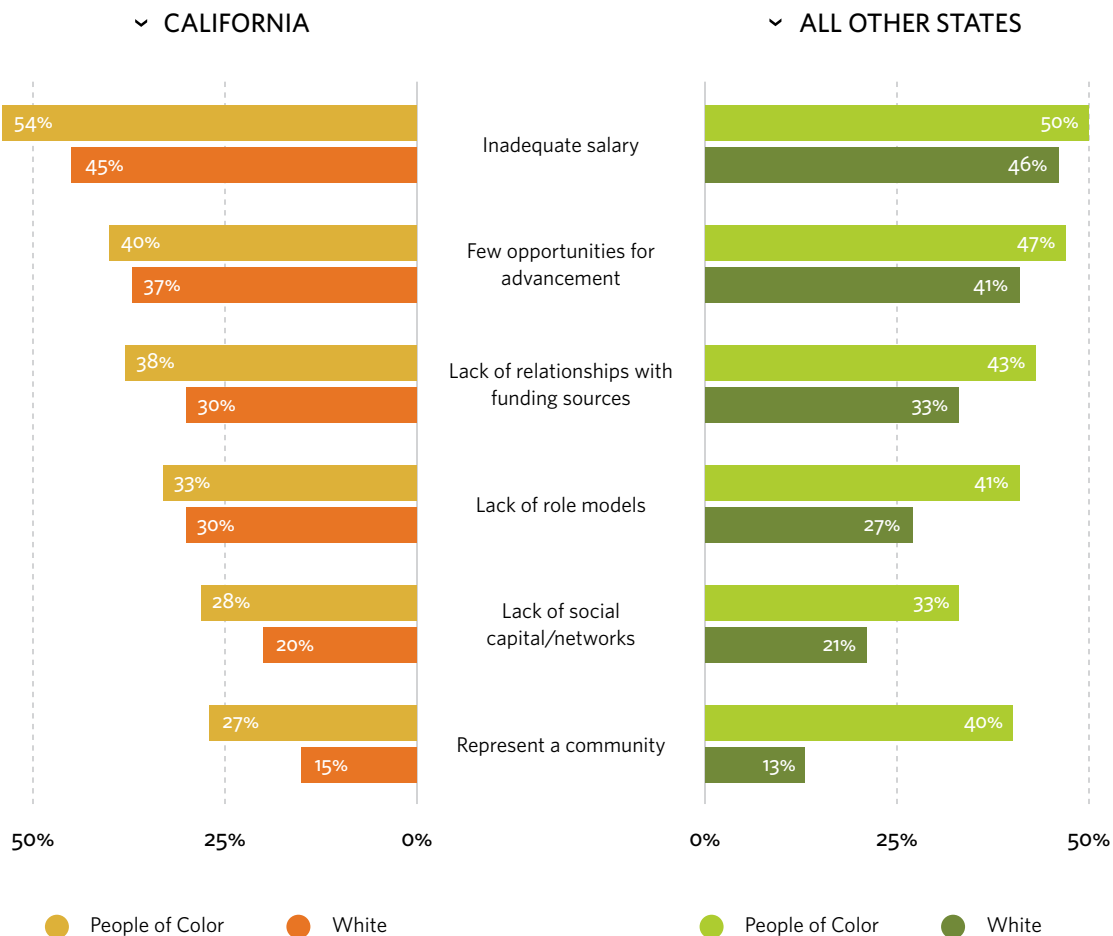


Race/Ethnicity Compared to California Population and All Other States

# Findings

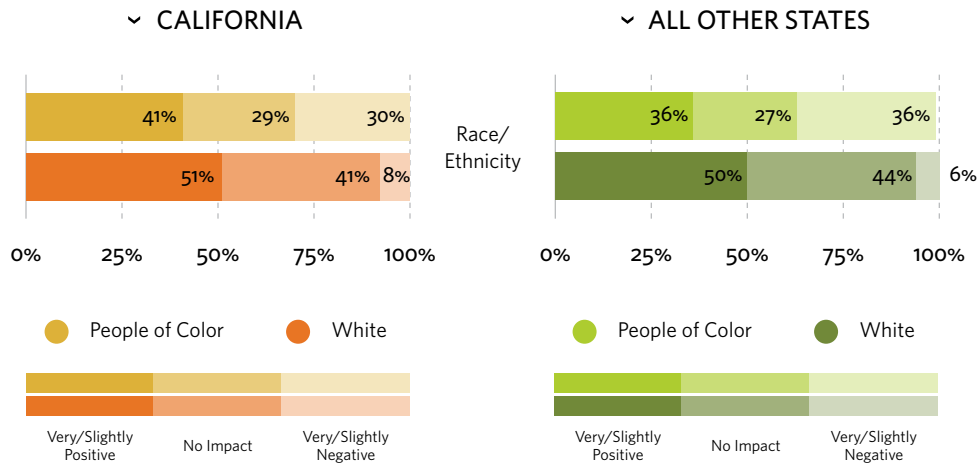
California's *Race to Lead* looks at California respondents' background, organizational information, leadership aspirations, supports and challenges, and opinions on barriers to the advancement of people of color to nonprofit leadership.

The data shows that people of color respondents in California were more positive about their work experiences than people of color in other states. For example, on almost every indicator, Californians of color reported less frustration and more supports in their work. They also had a more positive view of how their organizations were addressing issues of diversity and race. In addition, people of color respondents from California had a slightly lower level of agreement on statements they were presented on possible barriers facing aspiring leaders of color.

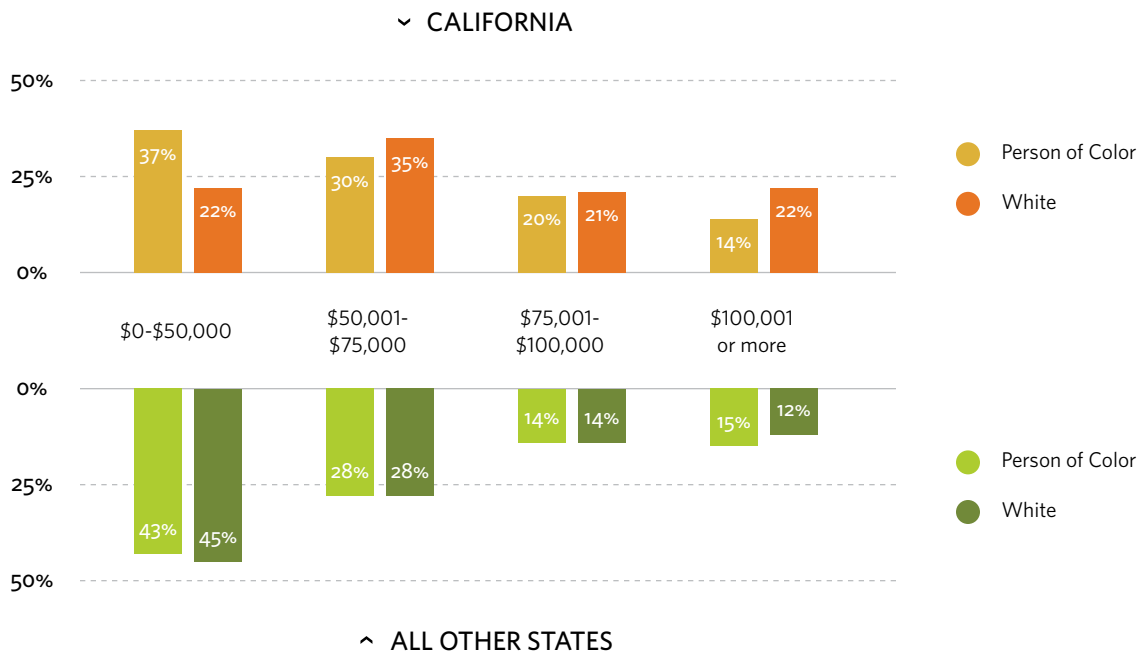


Challenges and Frustrations Faced on the Job ("Often" or "Always")

The California difference, however, did not erase many of the obstacles still facing people of color in the state's nonprofit sector. For example, almost a third (30%) of California's POC respondents reported that their race had a negative impact on their career advancement, a disturbing finding even though it was 9% less than the percentage reported by people of color in other states. Another challenge was seen in a finding on salaries. California's white respondents reported earning higher salaries than people of color in the state, and more than respondents—both whites and people of color—in other states.



Factors That Have Played a Role in Respondent's Career Advancement



Current Annual Salary

# A Push and a Pathway

Over the past decade, foundations in California have made efforts—both individually and collaboratively—to focus on building the capacity of people of color-led groups, especially those that are community-based. Several of these programs were created after a report by the Greenlining Institute detailed the lack of investment in people of color institutions and communities. This push resulted in additional resources—over \$30 million—concentrated on providing technical assistance, especially capacity building to support new POC leadership and organizations that served communities of color. In some cases, these investments paved the way for further foundation support.

## Recommendations

The analysis of California's survey data has the potential to offer guidance to the rest of the country both about ways to advance people of color leadership, and the reasons for persistent barriers.



### **Invest in People of Color-Led Organizations**

Foundations can examine the funding they give to people of color-led organizations to make sure their levels of investment match their intentions to support these groups.



### **Learn More about People of Color Leaders**

Exploring the pathways that led current EDs/CEOs of color to their leadership positions—both the obstacles they faced and supports they received—could identify lessons for a new generation advancing in the nonprofit sector.



### **Collect Information on Investments and Impact**

As the 10-year foundation initiative to invest in people of color and grassroots organizations and leaders comes to an end, reliable information about the funding organizations receive is needed to address challenges facing leaders of color.



### **Examine the Intractable Problems**

A few areas that could use increased scrutiny are: 1) which types of organizations are most likely to hire POC leaders; 2) salary differentials by race and by type of organization; and 3) how race/ethnicity has negatively impacted the career advancement of aspiring leaders.



### **Keep the Momentum Going**

Good news does not always last. To build on the positive findings in this report, there should be a concerted effort to listen to and learn from current and aspiring leaders of color about what they need.



Building Movement Project

For more information, please visit  
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