

RACE TO LEAD REVISITED:

**Obstacles and Opportunities in Addressing
the Nonprofit Racial Leadership Gap**



An initiative of
Building Movement Project



About the Building Movement Project

The Building Movement Project (BMP) supports and pushes the nonprofit sector by developing research, creating tools and training materials, and facilitating networks for social change. Since 2016, BMP's *Race to Lead* initiative has brought critical analysis and extensive data to the growing discussion about the racial leadership gap in the nonprofit sector. Through sector-wide surveys, focus groups, and organizational assessments, BMP explores how nonprofits can transform internal structures and systems to become more equitable workplaces and tackle the most significant social issues of our times.

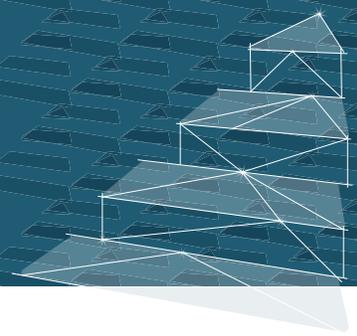
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BMP's research team—Ofronama Biu, Senior Research Associate, and Tessa Constantine, Research Analyst—spent extensive hours assessing survey responses, coding focus group transcripts, analyzing data, and providing critical feedback and edits that made this report possible. The communications team—Catherine Foley, Project Assistant, and Noelia Mann, former Communications and Operations Coordinator—ensured that the survey was seen widely and that focus groups went smoothly. BMP's Senior Advisor Deepa Iyer, as well as BMP's national team of advisors—Laila Bell, Marissa Graciosa, Dahnesha Medora, David McKinney, Aurea Montes-Rodriguez, and Simran Noor—provided key insight and analysis that shaped this report's findings and recommendations. Julia DiLaura edited this report.



Building Movement Project



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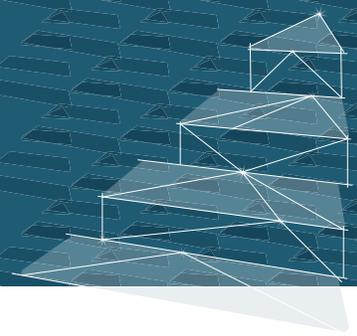
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Introduction

Inequality in the United States is a familiar issue to those who work in the nation's nonprofit sector. Many nonprofit organizations are dedicated to supporting and empowering communities that have limited resources and influence due to systemic and structural inequalities. As part of this commitment, a growing number of nonprofit organizations are reflecting on how societal inequities are replicated in their own organizations. This report, *Race to Lead Revisited: Obstacles and Opportunities in Addressing the Nonprofit Racial Leadership Gap*, presents ongoing research and analysis by the Building Movement Project (BMP) into why the nonprofit sector has so few leaders of color.

As this report is finalized in the spring of 2020, a worldwide pandemic, renewed grief and outrage over the continued killings of Black people by police and vigilantes, and a deepening recession have even more sharply exposed fault lines of who holds power and privilege and who is treated as expendable.¹ The nonprofit sector itself is scrambling as organizations, especially smaller community-based groups, fear for their financial futures at the very moment when their work is more vital than ever. These challenges offer the opportunity for organizations and their funders to respond by addressing not only the immediate crisis but also systemic inequities both within nonprofit organizations and society at large.² The data and analysis presented here offer insight on how to support organizations that embrace racial equity internally as they work toward a society in which all people have equal voice, opportunity, and power.

The Building Movement Project released initial survey findings on race and leadership in the nonprofit sector in the 2017 report *Race to Lead: Confronting the Nonprofit Racial Leadership Gap*. That report challenged long-held assumptions about why so few people of color lead nonprofit organizations, including persistent assertions that people of color need more leadership training and are less likely than white peers to aspire to top leadership roles. The data collected from a 2016 national survey of nonprofit employees showed that people of color in the sector were similarly qualified as white respondents and had more interest than white peers in becoming a nonprofit leader.³ The lack of diversity in nonprofit sector leadership was not a reflection of the qualifications or ambition of people of color, but the result of racialized barriers that inhibited their leadership ambitions, from lack of support by white boards of directors to the biases of executive recruiters. To increase the diversity of nonprofit leaders, the report recommended that the sector shift its focus away from the individual qualifications or goals of emerging leaders of color and toward addressing the systemic bias in the sector that prevents their advancement.⁴

Race to Lead Revisited: Obstacles and Opportunities in Addressing the Nonprofit Racial Leadership Gap presents findings from a 2019 survey of more than 5,000 paid nonprofit staff on their experiences of race and leadership in nonprofit settings, including many of the same questions asked in the original survey. New data and analysis

explores how respondents experience diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts in the workplace, personal and organizational financial circumstances, and views on how to both increase the diversity of nonprofit leaders and better support people of color already leading in the sector.

The report shows that despite the recent proliferation of articles, analyses, training opportunities, and organizational reflections about diversity, equity, and inclusion, the entrenched disparity of white privilege continues to dominate the nonprofit sector.⁵ This gap is illustrated through the different experiences and opportunities reported by people of color and white respondents through the survey's data and write-in responses, as well as focus groups and interviews BMP conducted in the months following the survey. Extensive DEI efforts across the sector appear to have increased awareness of race and racism, as shown by shifts in the survey responses between 2016 and 2019, but have not yet translated into significant change or more equity in how people of color experience their organizations or the nonprofit sector.

The data demonstrates that nonprofit organizations are defined by a pervasive and systemic *white advantage*, a term used in this report to describe the concrete ways that structure and power in nonprofit organizations reinforce the benefits of whiteness. This is particularly evident when comparing organizations run by white people and organizations led by people of color. The data shows notable differences in the experiences of both people of color and white respondents based on the racial composition of their organization's leadership.

Race to Lead Revisited focuses on three key findings that illustrate what is required of individual organizations and the sector at large to move toward greater equity and inclusion:

1 THE FINDINGS OF THE ORIGINAL RACE TO LEAD REPORT ARE STILL RELEVANT THREE YEARS LATER

Race to Lead Revisited confirms findings in the original 2017 report that people of color have similar leadership qualifications as white respondents. As in the first *Race to Lead* report, more people of color aspire to become nonprofit leaders than their white counterparts, and the 2019 results show the gap in ambition between the two groups is widening. In contrast to three years prior, people of color were substantially more likely to state that race is a barrier to their advancement, while white respondents were more likely to agree that their race provides a career advantage. People of all races were more likely to agree with statements describing obstacles people of color face in obtaining leadership positions. Both these findings point to greater awareness of the problem but little change in actual conditions. There were incremental improvements among all respondents about the career support available to them, and respondents overall reported fewer instances of encountering specific career obstacles. However, white respondents reported more types of support and fewer challenges than people of color, and the gap between the two groups on these experiences either remained constant or grew compared to the original *Race to Lead* report. For example, more people reported that they had mentors at work during their career, but the

responses showed significant variance, with women of color and gender non-conforming people of color⁶ the least likely to report they had an internal workplace mentor, and white men and white women the most likely.⁷

2 THERE IS A WHITE ADVANTAGE IN THE NONPROFIT SECTOR

This report categorizes the nonprofit workplaces of survey respondents into three organizational types: White-run organizations in which the board and staff leadership is more than 75% white; POC-led organizations in which more than 50% of the board and staff leadership are people of color; and All Other organizations with leadership configurations in between the other two categories. Notably, the All Other category also skews significantly toward leadership demographics that are predominantly white. Among these three organization types, almost half of survey respondents worked in White-run organizations, followed closely by All Other organizational configurations, and a much smaller share of survey respondents worked in POC-led organizations. People of color in White-run organizations reported the least positive experiences compared to people of color working in the two other organizational categories. The white advantage is also evident in the financial status of both organizations and individuals in the nonprofit sector. White-run organizations are more likely to have larger organizational budgets than those led by people of color. Also, white people in the sector are more likely than peers of color to have another source of household income, more likely to receive additional pay from their nonprofit employer like bonuses or cost of living increases, and less likely to support other family members outside their household.

3 DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION (DEI) EFFORTS ARE WIDESPREAD THROUGHOUT THE SECTOR AND PEOPLE ARE UNCERTAIN ABOUT THEIR EFFECTIVENESS

New survey questions show that close to three quarters of respondents work for organizations with DEI initiatives, and training was the most frequently reported activity. Despite the prevalence of these efforts, people of color reported few shifts toward equity in the workplace. Among respondents working for White-run organizations and All Other organizations with the exception of groups led by people of color, respondent experiences with DEI efforts were less positive for people of color than white people; that racial gap shrunk among respondents working for POC-led groups. Extensive DEI efforts among nonprofits seem to have resulted in increased awareness of race and equity issues among both respondents of color and white people compared to the first survey, but there are substantial differences in how people of color and white people understand the role of race in the nonprofit world. Overall, the increased awareness of race and equity has yet to produce measurable change in the racialized experiences of people working in the sector.

Hundreds of write-in responses and focus group observations indicate an exhaustion experienced by people of color in the nonprofit sector.⁸ People of color shared reflections about the constant demands of both job responsibilities and navigating issues related to race, and particularly the intersection of race and gender. Whether their frustrations related to being among the only people of color in a predominantly white organization, or considering whether to challenge racially fraught incidents given the potential for retaliation, or simply being overlooked and unheard, these reflections exemplify the disparity of nonprofit sector experiences among people of color compared to white peers.

The sector's growing engagement with DEI efforts often takes the shape of education and training, usually directed toward white staff and members of boards of directors. Focus group participants of color expressed discouragement that their organizations engaged in training but then took prolonged periods of time before making changes to actually improve the experiences of people of color – if their organizations took action at all.

Based on survey and focus group findings, *Race to Lead Revisited* offers recommendations for how the nonprofit sector and individual organizations can think differently and change behavior to make more significant progress toward racial equity. Although the challenges generated by the COVID-19 pandemic will likely affect the sector for months and years to come, this should not serve as a justification for nonprofits to set aside issues of race equity in the workplace. Instead, the disruption and tension of this moment can help accelerate change, as is visible in the unprecedented protest over the killing of Black people. The nonprofit sector can similarly embrace the opportunity to begin renewed work to deal with the long-term inequities and social ruptures made even more visible by the global health and economic crisis.

The data in *Race to Lead Revisited* indicates that people of color continue to experience racialized barriers and in fact reported their race was a barrier to advancement at even higher rates than in the 2016 survey. Increased discussion of race in the nonprofit sector may have offered respondents of color more of an opening to disclose issues of racial bias and, like white peers, to more readily identify privileges of whiteness in the workplace. To effectively make changes that mitigate the impact of systemic racial inequalities, nonprofits must extend DEI activities to include more assertive action that concretely addresses the white advantage that permeates the sector. Organizations must acknowledge and change the dynamics people of color identify that create or uphold obstacles to equity in the workplace. An investment in DEI efforts is not an item to complete on a checklist, but an ongoing process of confronting the links between race and power, understanding that change is disruptive, and pushing beyond current organizational dynamics to reduce the inequity and racism experienced by people of color in the nonprofit sector.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“

It is challenging constantly being the only Latina in all-white and mostly male circles. It is a constant challenge of knowing when to be strategic to stand up for my community and when I need to hold back or else be left out of decision-making circles and labeled as the 'angry Latina.'”

—Latina Woman

Background

In the three years since the Building Movement Project conducted the first *Race to Lead* survey, significant changes occurred in the nonprofit sector and across the United States.⁹ There has been a surge of interest in race and race equity, with discussions of diversity, equity, and inclusion a common feature of nonprofit conferences and trainings. Some foundations have shifted grantmaking to focus on racial inequality and inequity, and others have started more explicitly addressing the centrality of race in the issues they fund. Changes in the national political environment have been considerably less positive. The 2016 presidential election several months after the first *Race to Lead* survey ushered in new national leadership that openly embraced racist rhetoric and policies.

The original *Race to Lead* survey explored why there were so few leaders of color in the nonprofit sector. Leadership programs for people of color have focused on training participants to be better prepared for top leadership positions, emblematic of the assumption that people of color do not have the experience or skills of their white peers. But the survey results demonstrated that people of color were equally qualified as white respondents, and that the sector's investment in the personal leadership skills of individual people of color failed to address the structures that were restricting their advancement opportunities. Three years later, BMP conducted a follow-up survey, and this report is the first national analysis of the resulting data.

Race to Lead Revisited explores what has changed regarding race and leadership in the nonprofit sector in the past three years, especially given the dramatically different national landscape and the enormous nonprofit sector investment in diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. Subsequent publications will explore subsectors of responses from key demographic groups, as well as several regionally focused reports from areas where the Building Movement Project partnered with local organizations and generated sufficient response rates for a meaningful place-based analysis.

Methodology

Race to Lead Revisited builds on questions from the original 2016 survey, asking each respondent about their personal background, career plans, level of career support, and perceptions on race and leadership in the nonprofit sector. It also collected data on the organizations that employ survey respondents. New sections in the 2019 survey explored respondent experiences with diversity, equity, and inclusion activities in their organization, their current workplace experience, and their current and past financial situation.

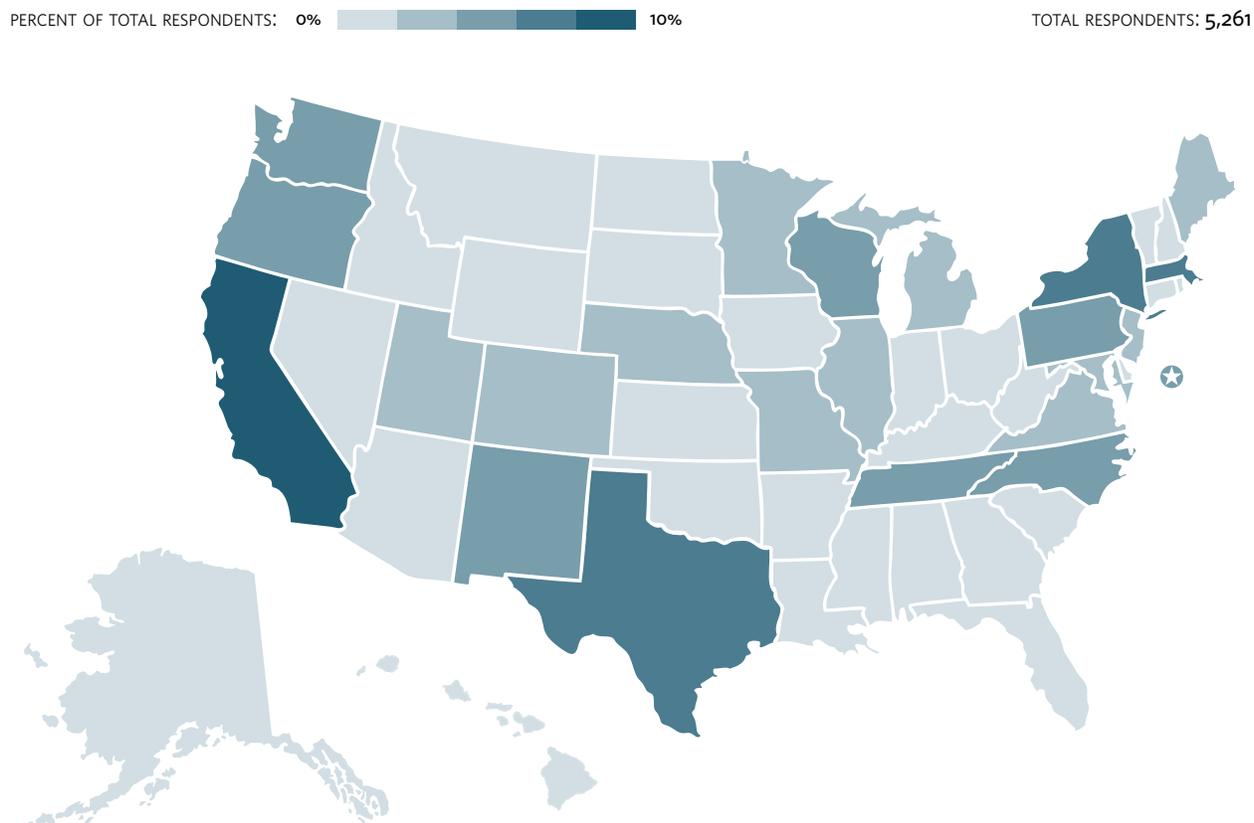
The 2019 *Race to Lead* survey was distributed and conducted online. Respondents may include people who answered the prior survey three years earlier, alongside new respondents. The survey link was promoted in the summer of 2019 through the Building Movement Project's online newsletter list of almost 10,000 people, outreach by partner organizations, and social media outlets including Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter.

The survey was open for eight weeks. The result is a convenience sample¹⁰ of those who work for pay in the nonprofit sector in the United States.¹¹ Out of more than 8,000 people who started the survey, 5,261 respondents were included in the final dataset. The Building Movement Project supplemented the survey data through focus groups with nonprofit employees in Albuquerque, Austin, Boston, Detroit, Memphis, and Milwaukee during the fall and winter months of 2019-2020.

Demographics

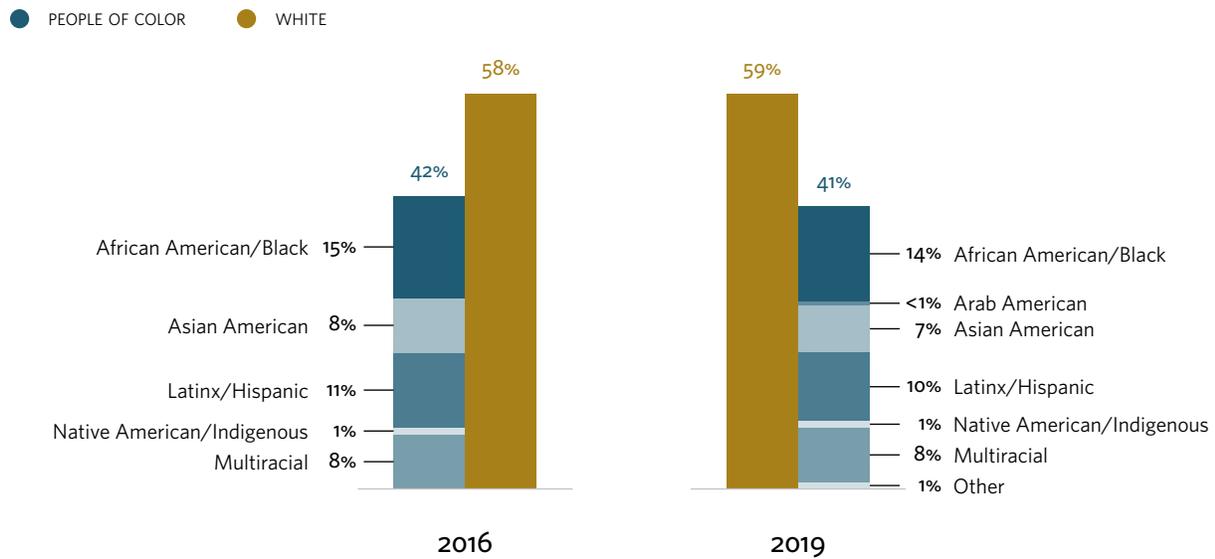
The composition of the 5,261 survey respondents was remarkably similar to the more than 4,000 participants in the original *Race to Lead* data three years prior. Respondents came from all 50 states and the District of Columbia (*Figure 1*). The demographics of the 2019 *Race to Lead Revisited* sample resembled the 2016 sample in race/ethnicity, immigrant experience, sexuality, and gender.

FIGURE 1 | PERCENTAGE OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY STATE AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



The race/ethnicity breakdown of respondents (*Figure 2*) is within one percentage point of the 2016 sample. In 2019, 41% of respondents identified as people of color, including 14% African American/Black; 10% Latinx/Hispanic; 7% Asian American; 1% Native American/Indigenous; less than 1% Arab American;¹² and 8% multiracial.¹³

FIGURE 2 | RACE/ETHNICITY



Immigration history (*Figure 3*) was also within one percentage point of the original survey, with 10% of respondents reporting they were immigrants and 17% children of immigrants. *Figure 4* shows the percentage of respondents identifying as LBGQT+ (lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/queer) was 21%, identical to the 2016 sample.¹⁴ In the 2019 dataset, 81% of respondents identified as women compared to 78% in 2016, with three percentage points fewer men (16%) and the same percentage (3%) identifying as gender non-conforming (see *Figure 5* on the following page).

FIGURE 3 | IMMIGRATION EXPERIENCE

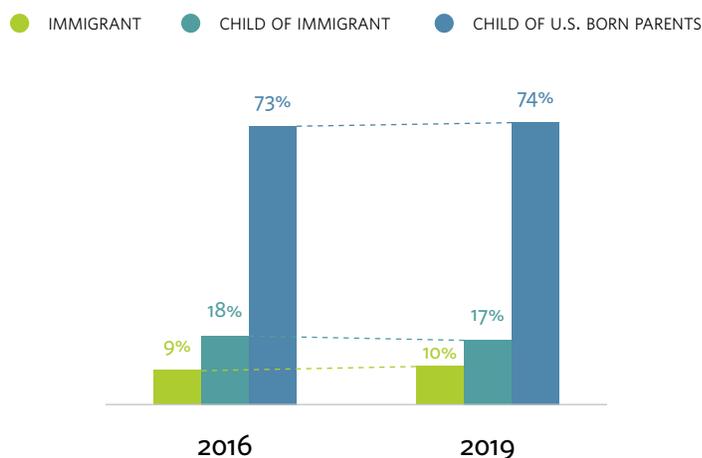


FIGURE 4 | SEXUAL ORIENTATION

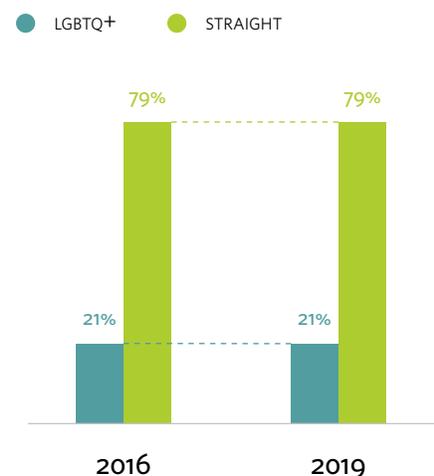
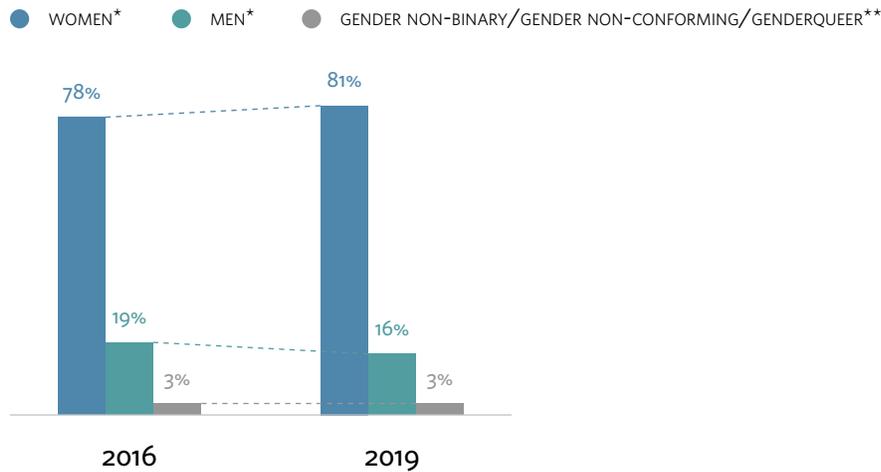


FIGURE 5 | GENDER IDENTITY

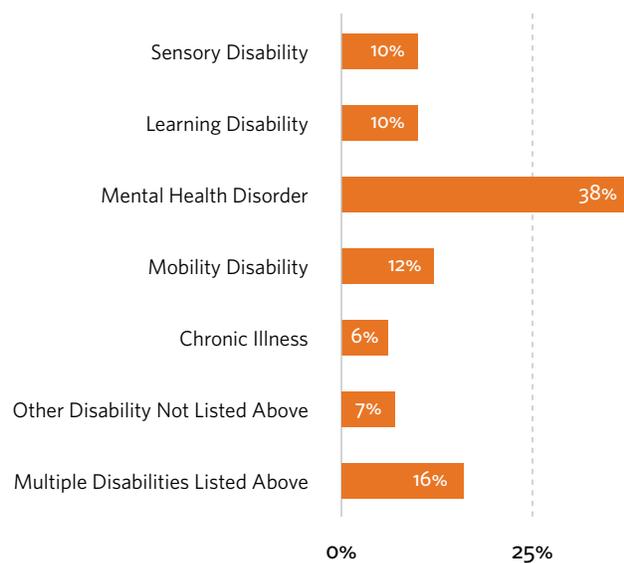


* In 2019, both cisgender and transgender respondents are included in the “women” and “men” categories.

** In 2016, transgender respondents were included in a “trans, gender non-conforming, non-binary, et. al.” category.

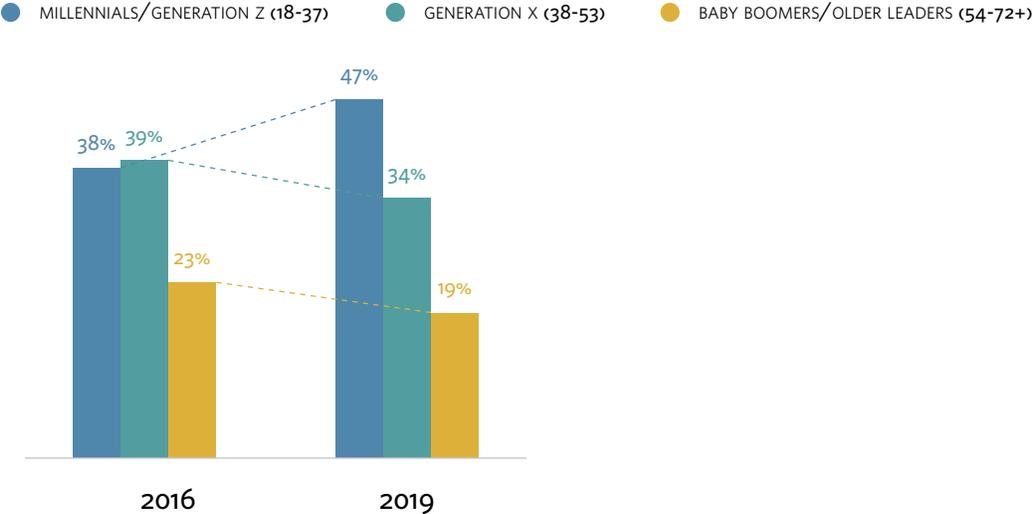
In a new survey question, 10% of respondents—both people of color and white people—reported having a disability. *Figure 6* shows that the type of disability most often reported was “mental health” at 38%. Motor disability made up 12% of total disabilities, followed by sensory disability and learning disability, both at 10%. Sixteen percent of respondents with a disability selected more than one disability category.

FIGURE 6 | RESPONDENTS WITH DISABILITIES BY TYPE



The greatest difference between the 2016 and 2019 samples was age, as seen in *Figure 7*. Millennials made up almost half (47%) of respondents compared to 38% three years earlier.¹⁵ There were five percentage points fewer respondents in Generation X and four percentage points fewer respondents in the Baby Boom generation. This may reflect shifts in overall workplace age demographics between the two surveys; a 2018 analysis from the Pew Research Center notes that Millennials have become the largest share of the U.S. workforce.¹⁶

FIGURE 7 | AGE/GENERATION

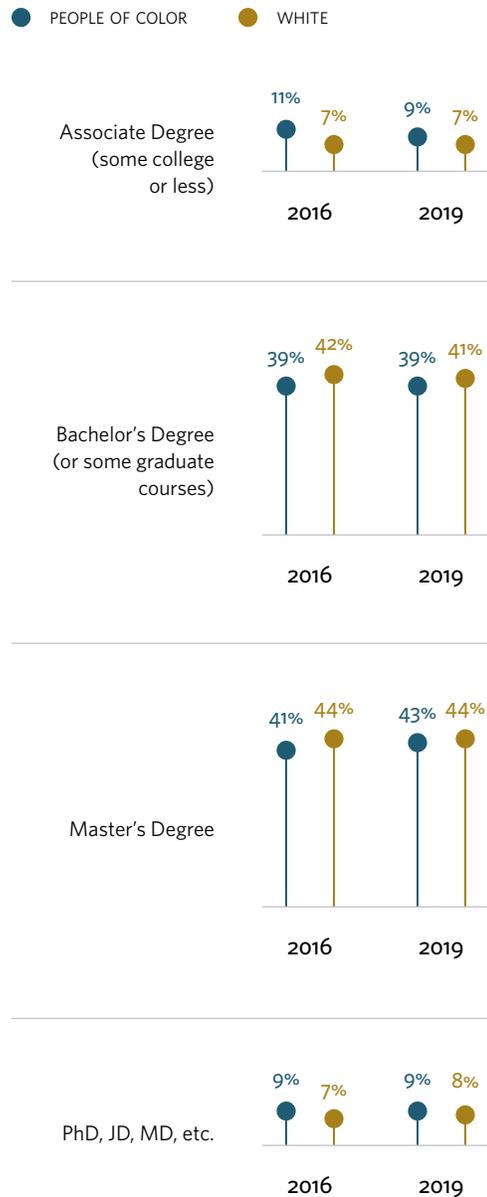


KEY FINDING 1: The Same Story

The first *Race to Lead* report found that people of color and white respondents were equally qualified, and people of color were more likely to aspire to top leadership positions in nonprofit organizations. The findings challenged a common narrative that people of color were not as prepared or interested regarding nonprofit leadership positions. The 2016 survey also found that more than a third of people of color reported that their race/ethnicity negatively impacted their career advancement and all respondents—especially people of color—believed that people of color interested in nonprofit leadership positions faced racialized barriers to advancement.

Findings in the 2019 data echoed these results, with some important changes. A higher percentage of people of color answered that race/ethnicity was negatively impacting their career advancement and a higher percentage of white respondents reported that their race/ethnicity was a positive factor in their career. There were small increases in the percentage of respondents who reported that they experienced various types of career support in their organization and decreases in the percentage of respondents who reported that they faced specific challenges. However, the gaps in the responses between people of color and white people remained constant or increased, with people of color less likely to report workplace support and more likely to report workplace challenges. Overall, 2019 respondents were more likely than those in 2016 to agree that people of color face barriers in seeking top leadership jobs, which seems to reflect an increased awareness of issues related to race and racism in the nonprofit sector.

FIGURE 8 | EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

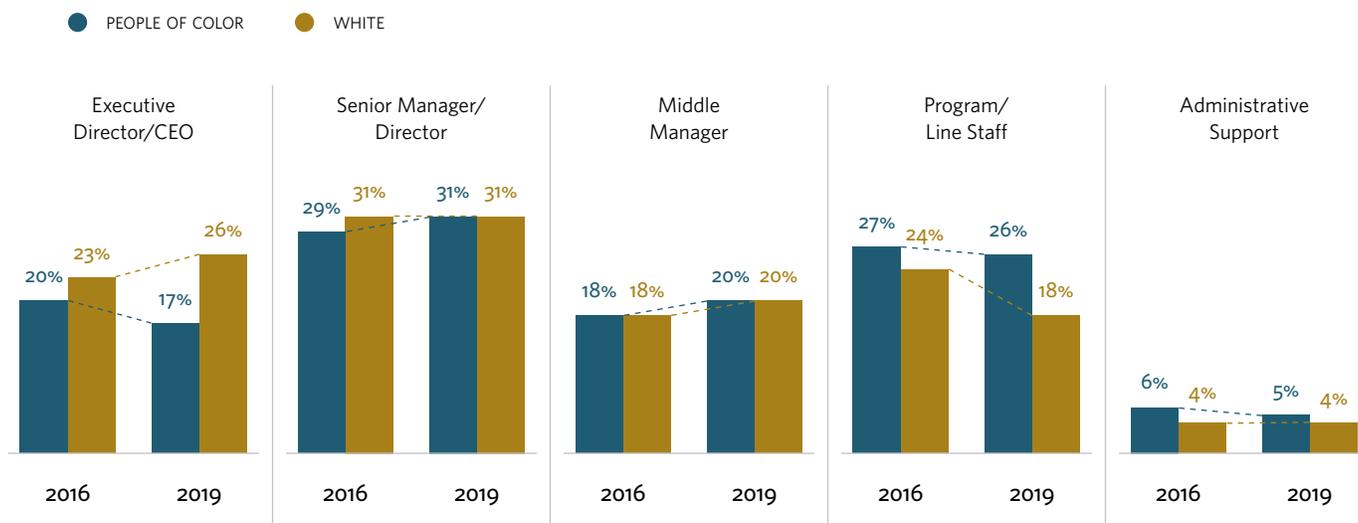


Still Eager and Educated

Similar to the first survey, people of color and white respondents in the 2019 sample had comparable education levels and roles in their organizations. People of color were again more likely than white respondents to express interest in becoming a nonprofit leader, with an even larger gap in 2019 than in the first survey.

As in the first *Race to Lead* report, there are similar levels of education among people of color and white respondents in 2019 (see *Figure 8* on the previous page). People of color were similarly distributed across types of job roles in 2016 and 2019, but in 2019 a smaller percentage of people of color reported being in top leadership roles of executive director or chief executive officer (ED/CEO). Simultaneously, a larger percentage of white respondents in 2019 were in ED/CEO roles, and a smaller percentage in roles at the level of program or line staff compared to 2016 (*Figure 9*). These shifts resulted in increased gaps in role/position between white respondents and people of color in *Race to Lead Revisited*.

FIGURE 9 | CURRENT ROLE/POSITION



Respondent interest in leading a nonprofit organization¹⁷ is shown in *Figure 10* on the following page. In the *Race to Lead Revisited* sample, 52% of respondents of color who were not already executive directors indicated that they were *definitely* or *probably* interested in becoming a nonprofit executive director or chief executive officer, compared to 36% of white respondents. This difference in aspirations—sixteen percentage points—is higher than the gap of ten percentage points in the 2016 survey. In a follow-up question on what preparations were necessary for these leadership roles, the most common choice among six options in both 2016 and 2019 was technical and management skills, and there was more agreement on this point between people of color (34%) and white respondents (35%) in 2019 than in the first survey (39% people of color and 33% white people).

FIGURE 10 | LEVEL OF INTEREST IN TAKING A TOP LEADERSHIP ROLE (AMONG NON-EDS/CEOS)

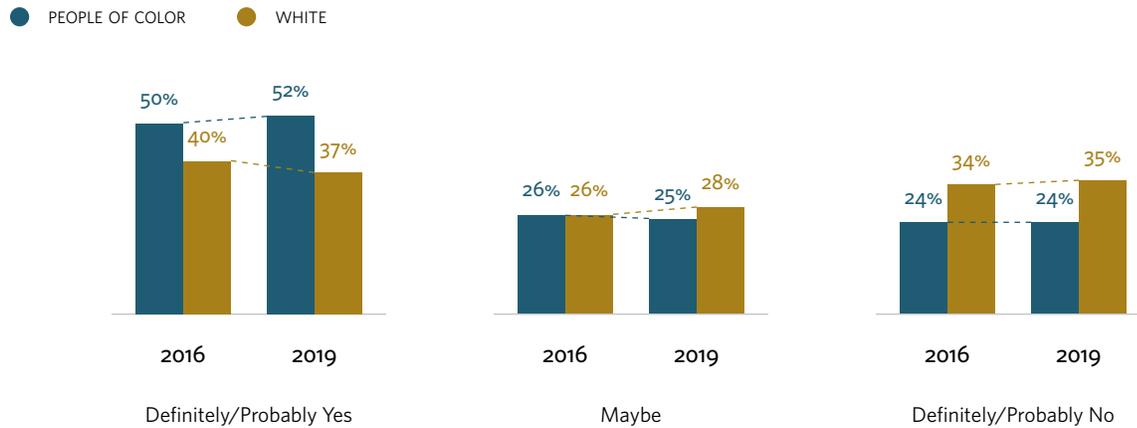
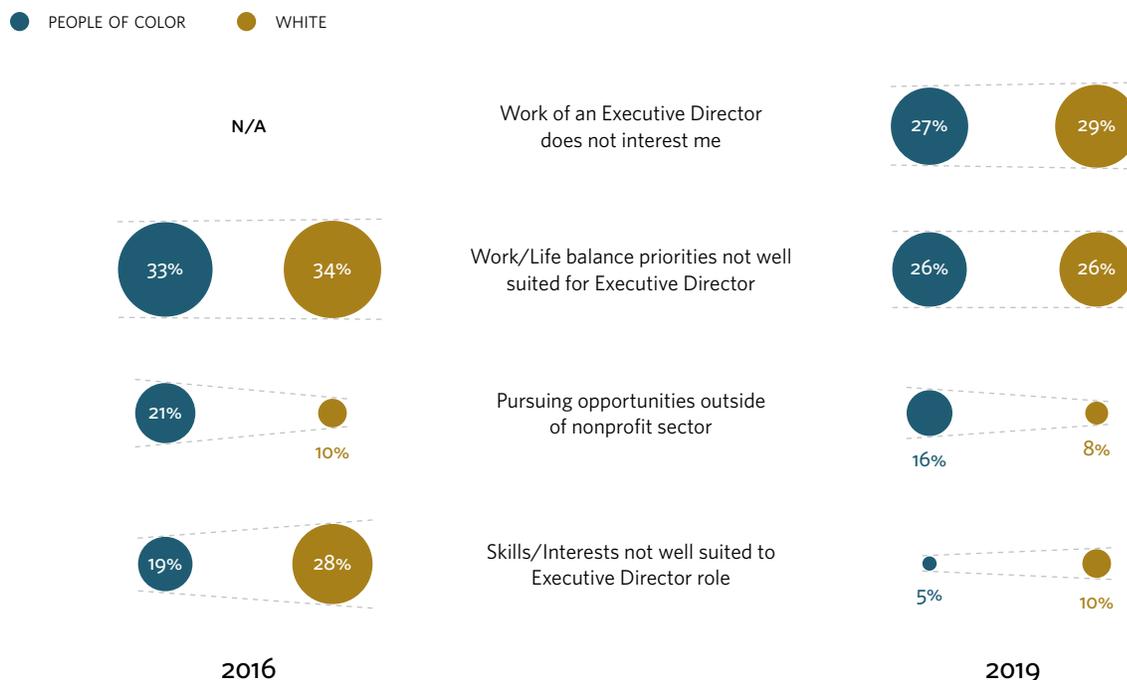


Figure 11 shows how respondents who were *definitely not* or *probably not* interested in a top leadership role described the reason for their response. The most commonly selected reason was lack of interest in the executive director role (27% people of color and 29% white people), a new response option in 2019. Almost as many respondents answered that their work/life balance priorities conflicted with the top leadership job (26% for both people of color and white respondents). Similar to the first survey, the percentage of people of color indicating that they ultimately saw themselves pursuing opportunities outside of the nonprofit sector was double that of white respondents (16% and 8% respectively).

FIGURE 11 | WHY RESPONDENTS DO NOT ASPIRE TO TOP LEADERSHIP ROLES (AMONG NON-EDS/CEOS)



Continued Gaps in Support and Challenges

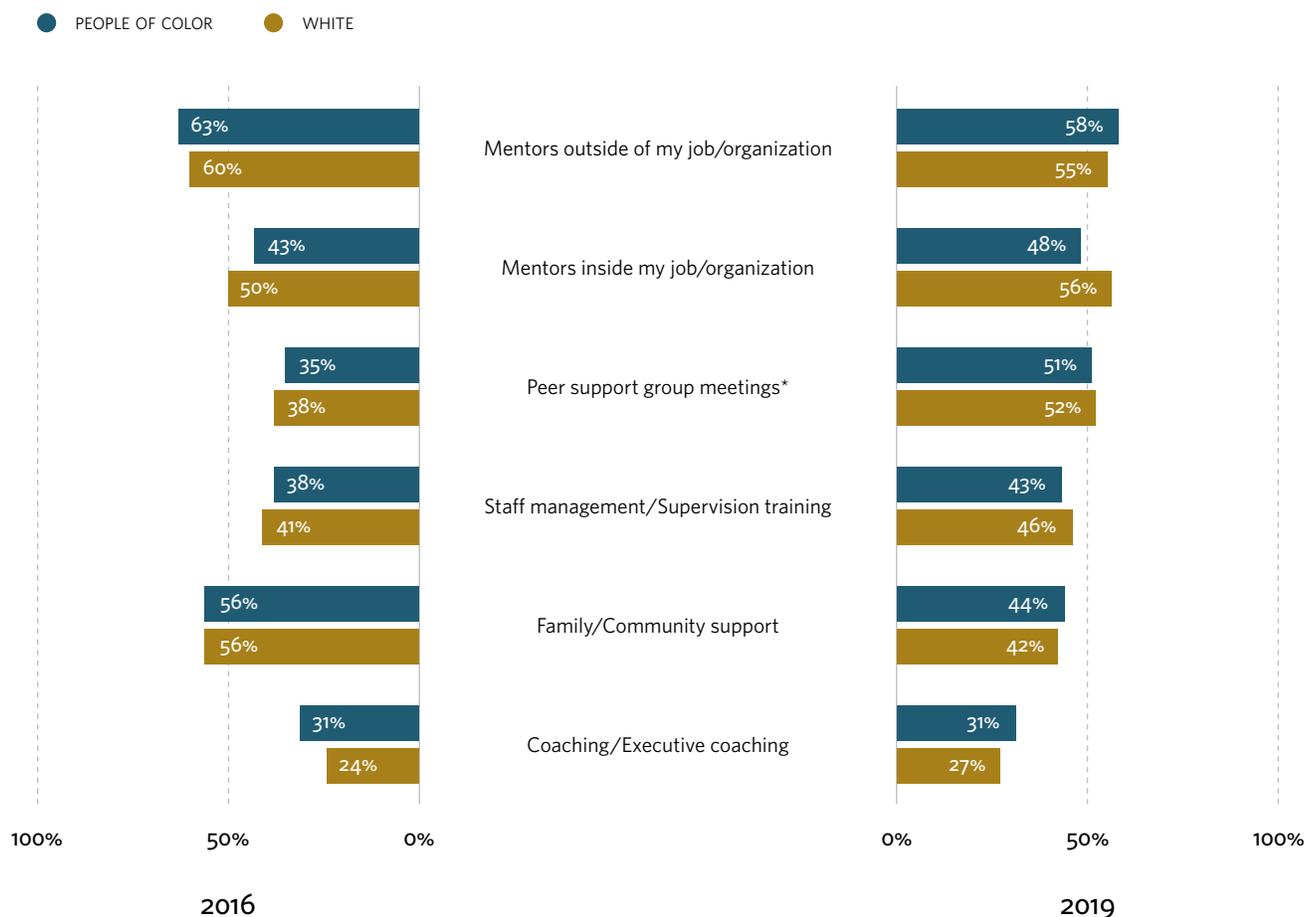
The data revealed persistent—and in some cases growing—gaps between people of color and white respondents on the support they receive and challenges they face in their organizations. Comparing the first *Race to Lead* survey with *Race to Lead Revisited*, the 2019 data shows increases in certain types of support that both people of color and white respondents reported they had received in their nonprofit career, but white people are still more likely to have various kinds of career support than people of color. A similar pattern exists regarding career challenges: a smaller percentage of 2019 respondents reported experiencing challenges overall, but people of color continued to report more obstacles than white respondents.

One important workplace challenge stands out as a persistent problem. Three years after the initial survey, a markedly larger percentage of people of color reported that they lack role models at their job, especially women and people who identified as gender non-conforming.

CAREER SUPPORT

Figure 12 (on the following page) compares how respondents answered whether they had access to six types of career support in the 2016 and 2019 surveys. In 2019, both people of color and white respondents report more experiences of receiving support in three of the six areas: workplace mentors, staff management or supervision training, and peer support or affinity groups. Mentors at work and management training were reported at roughly five percentage points higher in 2019 than in the original survey. The larger percentage of respondents reporting they received peer support in 2019—sixteen percentage points more for people of color and fourteen percentage points more for white respondents—may in part reflect a change to the wording of the survey question to include peer affinity groups and online discussions as examples of this kind of support.

FIGURE 12 | TRAINING AND SUPPORT RECEIVED



* In 2016, this option read: "Peer support group meetings." In 2019, this option read: "Peer support/affinity group meetings or online discussions."

Having a mentor on the job was also reported more frequently in the 2019 sample. The survey recorded more people of color (48% 2019 vs. 43% 2016) and white respondents (56% 2019 vs. 50% 2016) reporting they received mentoring at their job during their career; in both surveys, white people were more likely to report this support. An intersectional analysis of mentorship experiences based on race and gender offers a more nuanced picture.¹⁸ The groups least likely to have internal workplace mentors were women of color and gender non-conforming people of color (47% and 39% respectively), while white men and white women, men of color, and white respondents who identified as gender non-conforming reported internal mentorship at higher rates (58%, 56%, 54%, and 51% respectively).

In some categories of career support, the survey recorded negligible changes between 2016 and 2019, and only slight variances between white respondents and people of color. There was an increase of three percentage

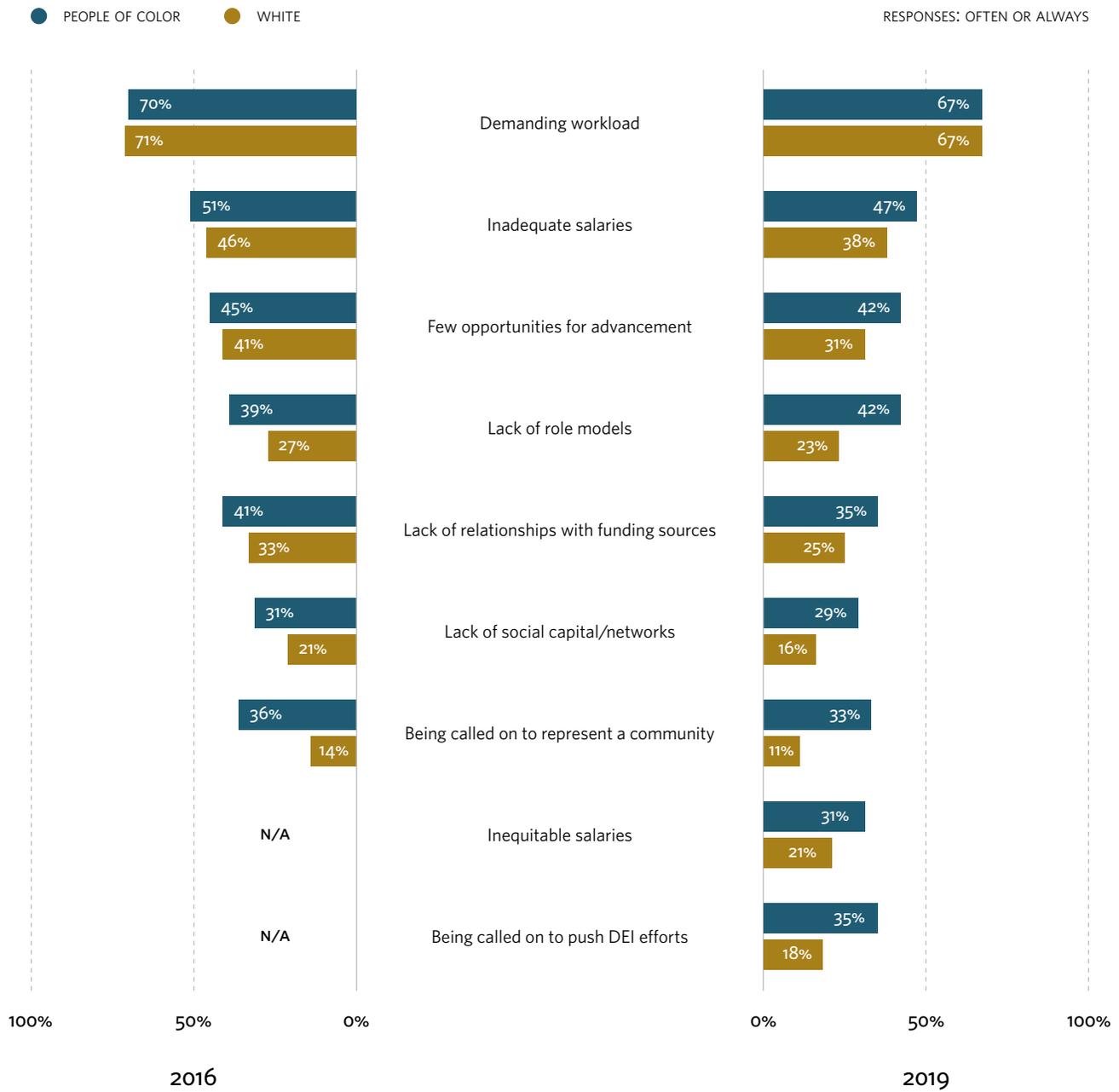
points in coaching or executive coaching reported by white respondents (27% 2019 vs. 24% 2016), while the percentage for people of color remained the same (31%). The percentages of respondents receiving support from family and community were significantly lower (44% for people of color and 42% for white respondents in 2019 compared to 56% for both groups in 2016). There was also a decrease of five percentage points among both people of color (58% 2019 vs. 63% 2016) and white respondents (55% 2019 vs. 60% 2016) who reported they had a mentor outside their organization.

CHALLENGES

Both the 2016 and 2019 surveys asked respondents how frequently they experienced a selection of seven common career challenges. Comparing the two samples, the percentage of respondents reporting that they *often* or *always* faced a particular challenge showed incremental decreases in all areas except for the challenge of a lack of role models.

As shown in *Figure 13* on the following page, a lower percentage of respondents reported they *often* or *always* face challenges including a lack of social capital and networks, lack of relationships with funding sources, limited opportunities for advancement, and inadequate salaries. *Figure 13* also includes two challenges added for the 2019 survey: inequitable salaries compared to peers doing the same work, and the stress of advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts within organizations. In 2019 the same percentage of people of color and white people reported being challenged by a demanding workload (67%), a rate slightly lower than in 2016. For each of the other challenges, a slightly higher percentage of people of color than white people reported that experience in the 2019 survey. The largest increase in the gap between experiences of white people and people of color was the challenge of having few opportunities for advancement, which grew from a gap of four percentage points in 2016 to a gap of eleven percentage points in 2019.

FIGURE 13 | CHALLENGES AND FRUSTRATIONS FACED ON THE JOB



Lack of role models was the only challenge that increased for people of color, with 42% of respondents in 2019 (compared to 39% in 2016) reporting they *often* or *always* experienced this career challenge; white respondents reporting the same decreased from 27% in 2016 to 23% in 2019. The result is a wider gap between people of color and white respondents, up from twelve percentage points in 2016 to nineteen percentage points in 2019. Gender non-conforming people of color were most likely to report *often* or *always* lacking a role model at their job (50%), followed by women of color (44%) and gender non-conforming white people (43%). By contrast, roughly one third (34%) of men of color reported they *often* or *always* face this challenge, followed by white women (23%) and white men (19%).

Persistent Systemic Barriers

Although the 2019 data shows more support and fewer challenges for both people of color and white respondents, other responses indicate increased inequality in the sector. In the first *Race to Lead* report, more than a third of respondents of color reported that their race/ethnicity had been a barrier to their career advancement. The new sample shows a striking increase both in people of color who report their race/ethnicity has negatively affected their career advancement and in white respondents who acknowledge that their race helped their career. A larger percentage of all respondents, and especially people of color, agreed with statements identifying barriers that face people of color interested in top nonprofit leadership positions. All these responses suggest an increased overall awareness of the systemic racial barriers throughout the nonprofit sector.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“

As a working-class Hispanic in a majority upper- and middle-class white work environment ... I probably need coaching and mentoring, but I feel that being Hispanic has prevented me from finding mentors or others who want to take me under their wing.”

—Mexican American Woman

“

[The] hardest part of being an outsider is not knowing what you are missing out on, whether mentoring or opportunities you're never asked about.”

—South Asian Man

“

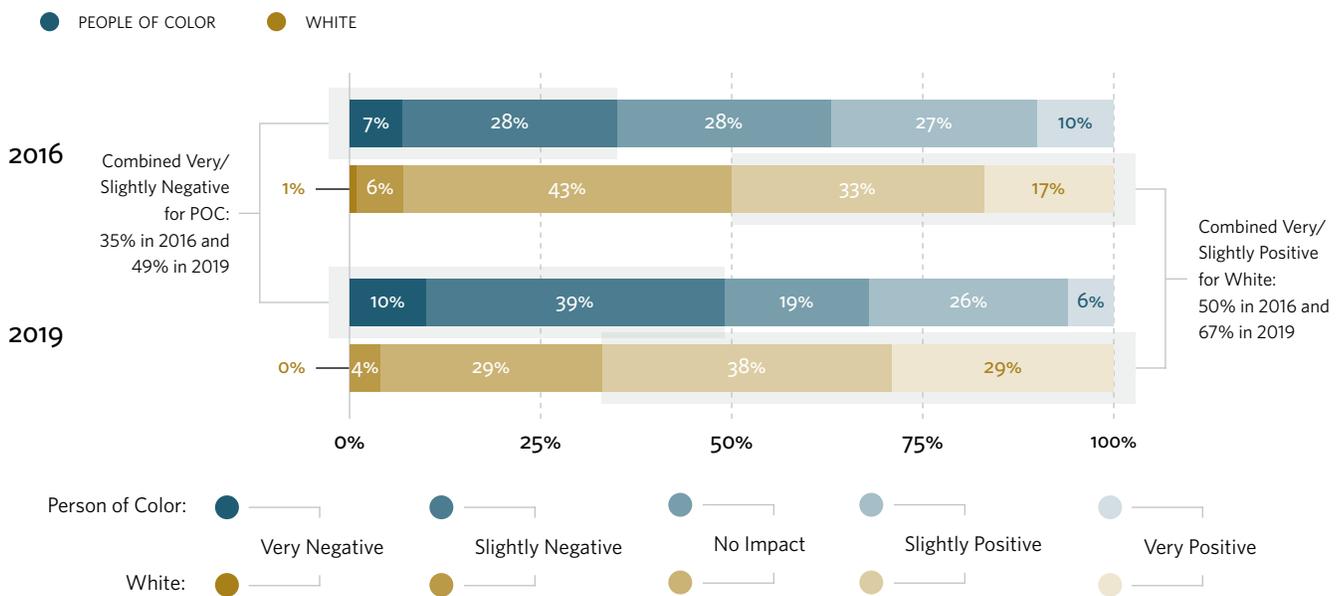
I had a boss who intentionally sought to advance people of color within the leadership ranks ... Our team was diverse and often the only diversity at leadership tables, engaging with funders, evaluators and senior stakeholder. [It is] important to note that my boss was white.”

—African American Woman

CAREER ADVANCEMENT

One of the most dramatic differences between the 2016 and 2019 data was regarding the role of race in career advancement. Almost half (49%) of people of color surveyed in 2019 reported that their race/ethnicity had a *very negative* or *slightly negative* impact on their career, compared to 35% in 2016. Among white survey respondents in 2019, 67% reported their race/ethnicity had a *very positive* or *slightly positive* impact on their career advancement, compared to 50% in 2016. As seen in *Figure 14*, among people of color the biggest change between 2016 and 2019 data was the response that race had a *slightly negative* impact on career advancement, with an increase of ten percentage points; there was an increase of four percentage points in the response that race had a *very negative* impact. For white respondents, there was an increase of twelve percentage points of those reporting their race/ethnicity had a *very positive* impact on their career advancement, and an increase of five percentage points in those reporting a *slightly positive* impact.

FIGURE 14 | IMPACT OF RACE ON CAREER ADVANCEMENT



PERCEPTIONS OF BARRIERS TO LEADERSHIP

The 2019 survey responses demonstrated a more robust reaction to statements about reasons for the nonprofit racial leadership gap. Respondents of all races were more likely to agree to a range of statements about the impact of racial bias on people of color in the nonprofit sector in 2019 compared to 2016 – often affirming these statements by overwhelming margins. The statement *“People of color must demonstrate they have more skills and training than white peers to be considered for nonprofit executive jobs”* was a new prompt on the 2019 survey, clarifying a 2016 statement that had been open to various interpretations: *“People of color need more skill-building and training opportunities to be considered more often for nonprofit executive jobs.”* Almost 90% of respondents of color agreed with the newly clarified statement, while only 65% of white people agreed.

Figure 15 (on the following page) shows the gap between people of color and white respondents in response to statements including *“It is harder for people of color to advance because of their smaller networks”* and *“Organizations often rule out candidates of color based on the perceived ‘fit’ of the organization.”* Except for the statement *“Executive recruiters don’t do enough to find a diverse pool of qualified candidates for top-level nonprofit positions”* respondents across race were more likely to agree with the provided statements in 2019 than in 2016. Importantly, however, larger increases in the level of agreement among people of color resulted in bigger gaps between the perceptions of white respondents and people of color than in 2016.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“

I am usually the only or one of a handful of BIPOCs [Black, indigenous, and people of color] in the room. It’s such an isolating, frustrating, and infuriating dynamic ... The lack of leadership of color at every organization I’ve worked at has impacted not only the running of the organization, but my own professional and even personal development.”

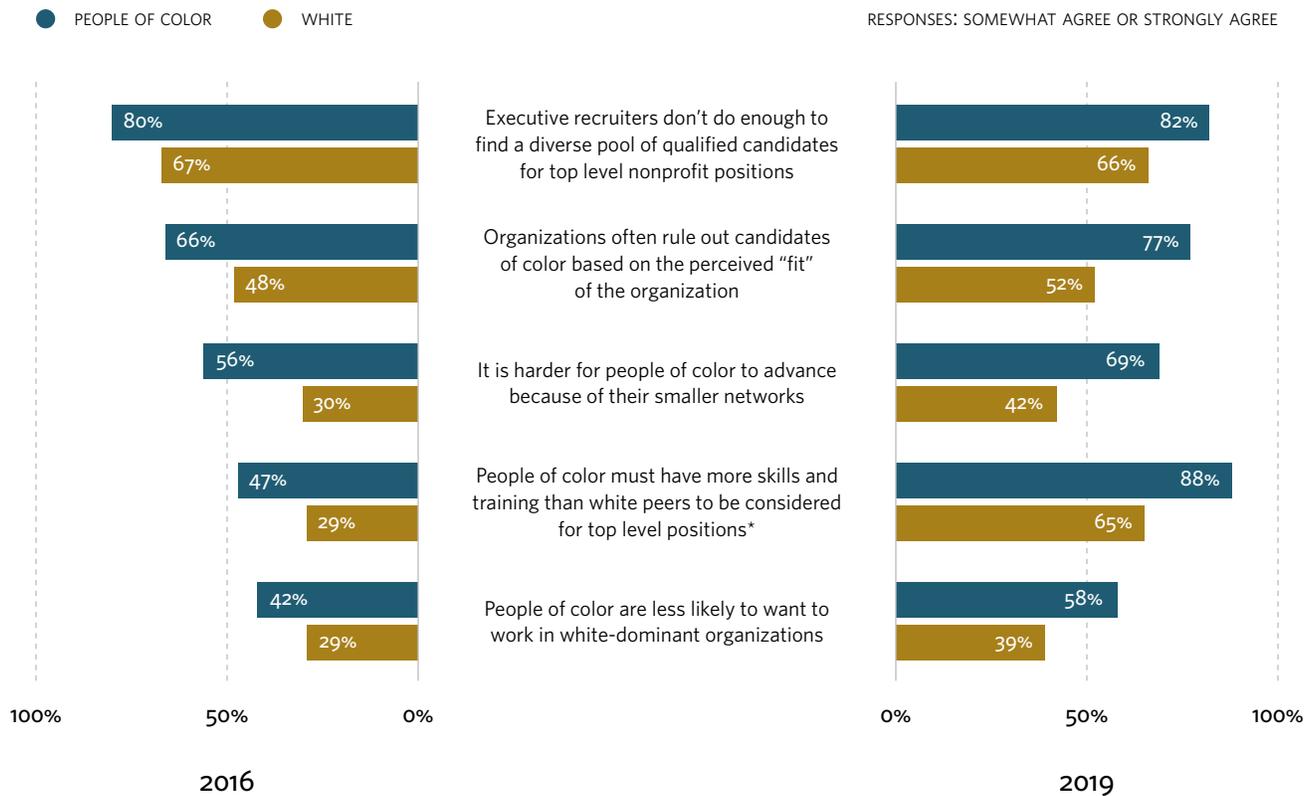
—Black Woman

“

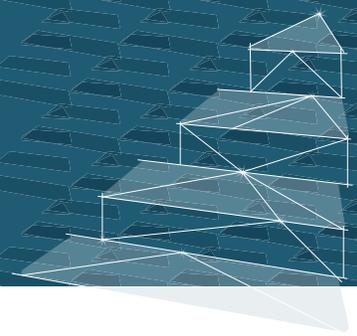
I was hired by a white woman and became part of a long line of white women who have led [the organization] as directors. It doesn’t feel great to point that out, but I think our former director could relate to me and identified me as a leader partly due to race and culture.”

—White Woman

FIGURE 15 | PERCEPTIONS OF THE LEADERSHIP GAP



* In 2016, the statement read: "People of color need more skill-building and training opportunities to be considered more often for nonprofit executive jobs." In 2019, the statement read: "People of color must demonstrate that they have more skills and training than white peers to be considered for nonprofit executive jobs."



KEY FINDING 2: The White Advantage

Overwhelming scholarship, data, and lived experiences illustrate the systemic privilege afforded to white people based on race in the United States.¹⁹ In both the 2016 and 2019 surveys, responses from people of color and white people demonstrate persistent disparities based on race throughout the nonprofit sector. This report uses the term *white advantage* to describe how structure and power operate specifically in the context of nonprofit organizations, steadily reproducing concrete and experiential benefits for white people despite a stated agreement in the sector on the problems of racial inequity and the need to change those conditions.

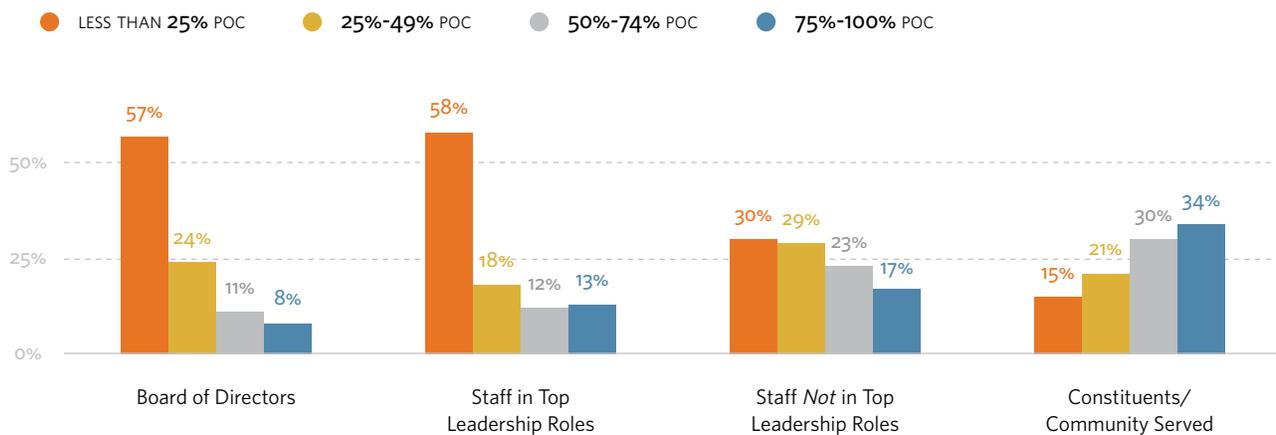
Three areas of survey data offer insight into the disparities between people of color and white respondents and illustrate how the white advantage operates as intrinsic to the sector. First, the racial makeup of nonprofit sector organizations as indicated by their board of directors, staff leadership, staff at large, and community served; second, the way respondents experience their workplace based on the racial demographics of its leadership; and finally, income disparities based on race in both nonprofit organizational budgets and the personal finances of survey respondents.

The Whiteness of Organizations

A new question on the 2019 *Race to Lead* survey asked respondents to report the racial composition of their nonprofit organization by indicating the percentage of people of color among the board of directors, staff in top leadership roles, staff outside of leadership, and the community served by the organization using a scale with four categories: less than 25%, 25-49%, 50-74%, and 75-100% people of color.

More than half (57%) of survey takers overall reported working for organizations in which less than twenty-five percent of board members are people of color (see *Figure 16* on the following page). Similarly, 58% of respondents reported that their organization's top leadership was less than twenty-five percent people of color. Among the two categories that constitute the less diverse half of the four-category scale, 81% of survey takers reported that their organization's board is more than half white, and 75% of respondents reported the same about their nonprofit's leadership team.²⁰ In contrast, a combined 40% of survey takers reported that more than half of their organization's staff who are not in top leadership roles are people of color, and 64% of respondents indicated that more than half of the community served by their nonprofit are people of color.

FIGURE 16 | RACIAL COMPOSITION OF ORGANIZATIONS BY ROLE



CATEGORIZING ORGANIZATIONAL TYPES

To assess the experiences of survey respondents in organizations with different degrees of leadership by people of color, the survey categorized nonprofits based on the racial composition of leadership. The categories—White-run, POC-led, and All Other organizations—are defined by the percentage of people of color that survey respondents reported in their organization’s board of directors and staff leadership.

The White-run category consists of organizations in which both the board and staff leaders are less than 25% people of color, meaning that white people constitute at least 75% of those in the top levels of leadership.²¹ The POC-led category includes organizations that have 50% or more people of color on the board of directors and in staff leadership. The third category includes All Other organizations that do not meet the threshold for either the White-run or POC-led designations.

The two grids in *Figure 17* illustrate the dominance of white leadership in nonprofit organizations. The grid on the left shows the percentage of survey respondents who reported working for each of the sixteen possible racial configurations of board and leadership. As shown, the four squares in the upper-left corner represent organizations in which fewer than 50% of both staff in top leadership roles and the board of directors are people of color. The single orange square represents those organizations with the lowest possible representation of people of color in leadership. Despite being only one unit of sixteen possible combinations of board and staff leadership, 45% of all survey respondents worked for organizations in this category. To facilitate analysis of the experiences of the almost half of survey respondents who work for organizations with the lowest possible racial diversity of leadership and board, this report assigns the title White-run to those groups with less than 25% people of color among both senior staff and board.

At the opposite, lower-right corner of the grid in *Figure 17* are four blue squares that represent organizations in which more than 50% of both the staff leadership and board of directors are people of color. Although these

nonprofits—designated as POC-led for the purposes of this analysis—constitute one quarter of the potential board and staff combinations, only 14% of respondents indicated they work for nonprofits where people of color held a majority of staff and board leadership roles. The All Other category includes the remaining eleven possible combinations of racial diversity in board and staff leadership, represented in the grid with gray squares; the remaining 41% of survey respondents reported working for these organizations. Importantly, the majority of respondents in this final category indicated that less than 50% of their organization’s board and senior staff are people of color.

The grid on the right in *Figure 17* shows the proportional representation of respondents working for organizations in the three categories. Although the 45% of respondents working for White-run organizations are represented by the single orange square in the grid on the left, that same 45% covers more than seven squares when displayed proportionally on the right. Conversely, 14% of respondents working for POC-led nonprofits cover four squares representing four possible combinations of board and staff leadership diversity in the grid on the left, but those respondents are represented by only two squares in the proportional grid on the right.

FIGURE 17 | BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND STAFF LEADERSHIP RACIAL COMPOSITION

● WHITE-RUN: BOARD/LEADERS > 75% WHITE ● ALL OTHER COMPOSITIONS OF BOARD/LEADERS ● POC-LED: BOARD/LEADERS > 50% POC

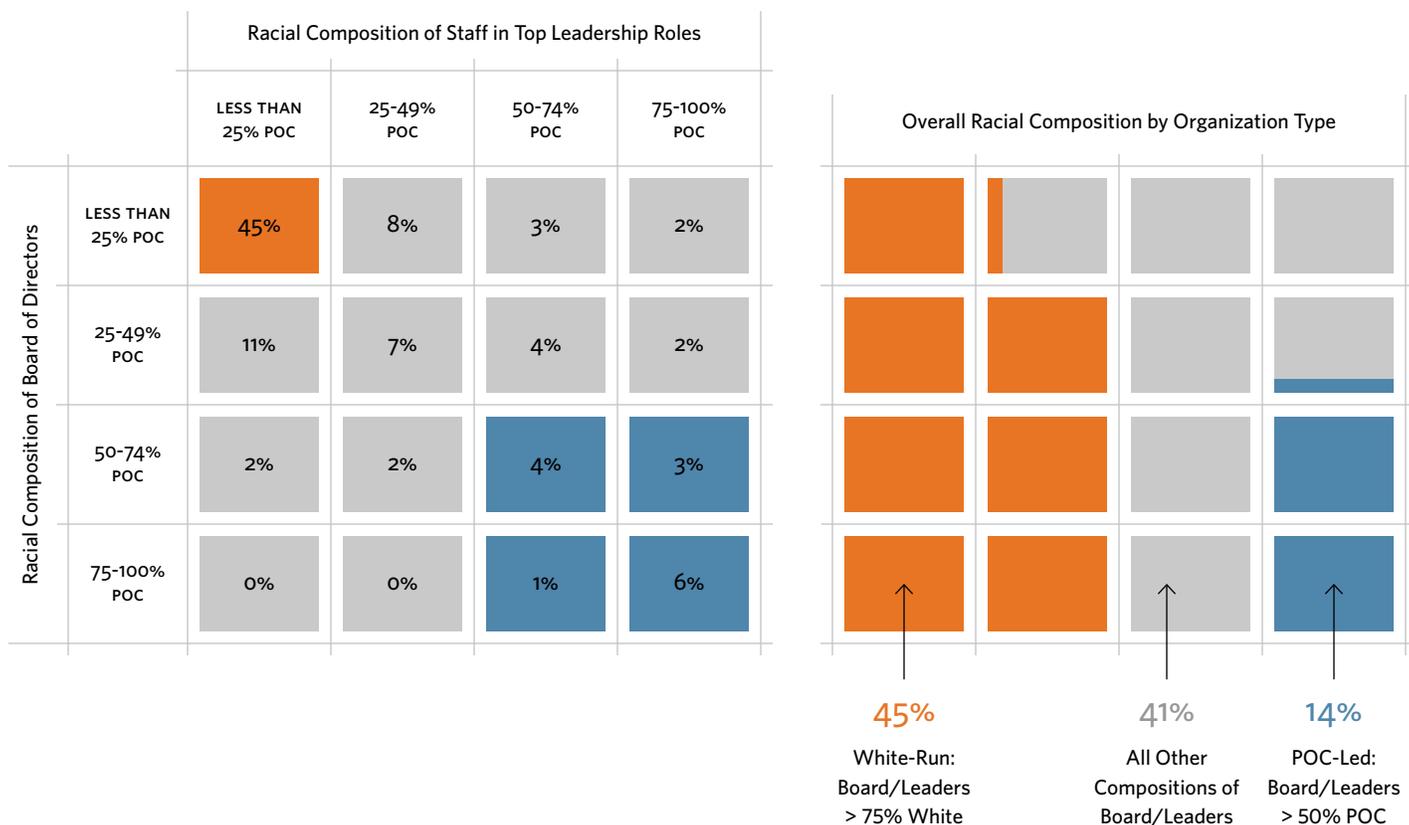
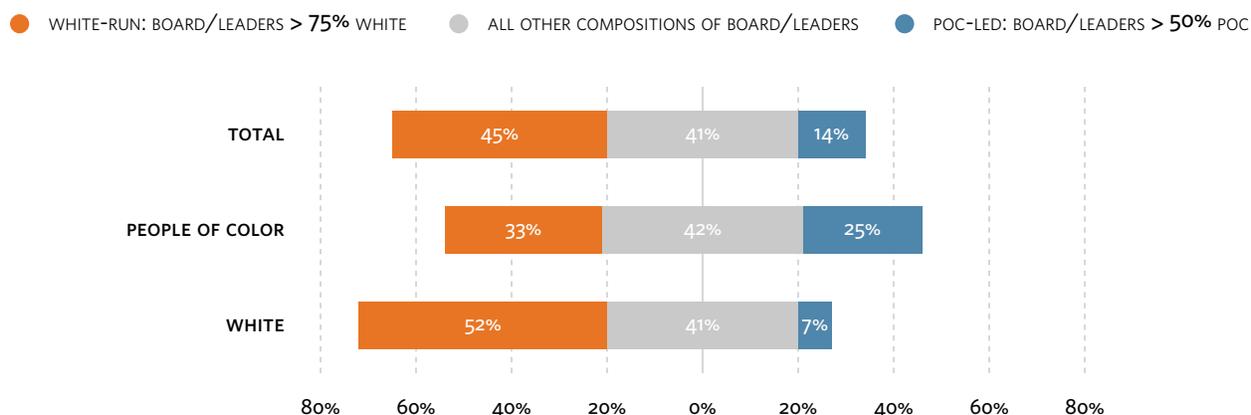


Figure 18 shows that more than half (52%) of white respondents and one third (33%) of people of color work for White-run organizations, while 25% of people of color and 7% of white respondents work for POC-led organizations. In other words, a majority of white respondents work for White-run organizations while only a quarter of people of color work for POC-led groups. Similar percentages of people of color (42%) and white respondents (41%) work for groups in the category that includes All Other organizations. These distributions generate distinctly different experiences in nonprofit organizations for people of color and white respondents, as described below.

FIGURE 18 | RESPONDENTS BY RACIAL COMPOSITION OF ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP



Experiences in Organizations

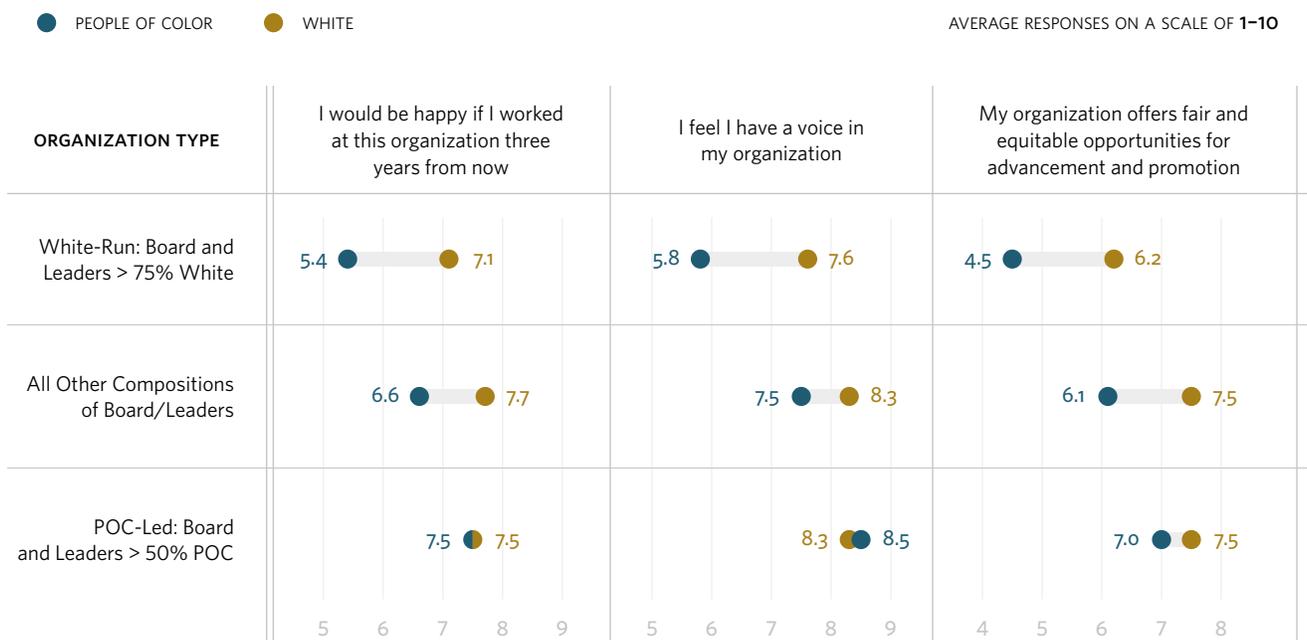
Data from a new set of questions on the 2019 survey shows distinct differences between how people of color and white respondents experience their nonprofit workplace. These differences are even more pronounced when the responses are analyzed by three organizational types above, showing stark contrasts between those who work for White-run groups compared to those in POC-led or All Other organizations.

ORGANIZATION TYPE AND IMPACT ON EXPERIENCES

The survey asked respondents to rate their level of agreement—on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 10 (*strongly agree*)—with three positive statements about their happiness, voice, and opportunity within their organization. As seen in Figure 19, white respondents generally report better outcomes on the three measures than people of color. In response to the statement “I would be happy if I worked at this organization three years from now,” respondents of color in White-run organizations had an average level of agreement of 5.4, contrasted with 7.1 for white respondents. Both people of color and white respondents working in POC-led organizations had a 7.5 average level of agreement to this statement. In other words, people of color and white respondents

in White-run groups have very different levels of agreement regarding whether they would be happy to work for their organization in three years, while all respondents in POC-led organizations are more positive about this prospect, with no difference between people of color and white respondents.

FIGURE 19 | WORKPLACE EXPERIENCES BY RACIAL COMPOSITION OF ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP



The same pattern holds true for agreement with the statement “*I feel I have a voice in my organization.*” The average response of people of color was 5.8 in White-run groups compared to 8.5 in POC-led groups; white respondents averaged 7.6 in White-run groups and 8.3 in POC-led organizations. The pattern continues again for the statement “*My organization offers fair and equitable opportunities for advancement and promotion.*” The level of agreement for people of color in White-run groups averaged 4.5; the average jumped to 7.0 in POC-led organizations. White respondents had an even higher average response (7.5) than people of color in POC-led groups; white respondent agreement level in White-run organizations (6.2) was substantially higher than people of color in the same organizational category.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“

I don’t believe I’m taken as seriously in the workplace because I am a young woman of color. I often question things, which doesn’t always go over well in majority-white organizations. I’ve been used as a ‘token’ brown person.”

—Pakistani Woman

The findings illustrate the presence of the white advantage in the nonprofit sector in three ways. In White-run organizations, people of color have less positive experiences than white respondents, who consistently average higher levels of agreement to positive statements about their experience at their organization. White respondents rank their experience of the work environment higher than people of color and at similar levels in both White-run and POC-led organizations, and this applies to white respondents across all levels of organizational roles and positions. While all respondents reported more positive experiences in POC-led groups, respondents of color are most positive when they work in a POC-led organization and least positive, by a considerable margin, in White-run groups.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“

I always present my accomplishments and achievements ... but sometimes that is not enough. If your leadership is all white, how can they ever relate or understand how much effort you make for people to look past your race?”

—Latinx Woman

“

[I worked for] white-led organizations refusing to grapple with institutional racism – blaming non-whites for bringing up issues. I tried my best to push internally. Ultimately I had to leave for my own sanity.”

—Iranian Woman

“

I have experienced being one of the only people of color who was part of the leadership team. I witnessed microaggressions toward staff of color and tokenism. ... I attempted to seek out those who I thought would be more open to conversations about these topics ... [and] relied on other people of color to check in with about my experiences.”

—Filipino American Woman

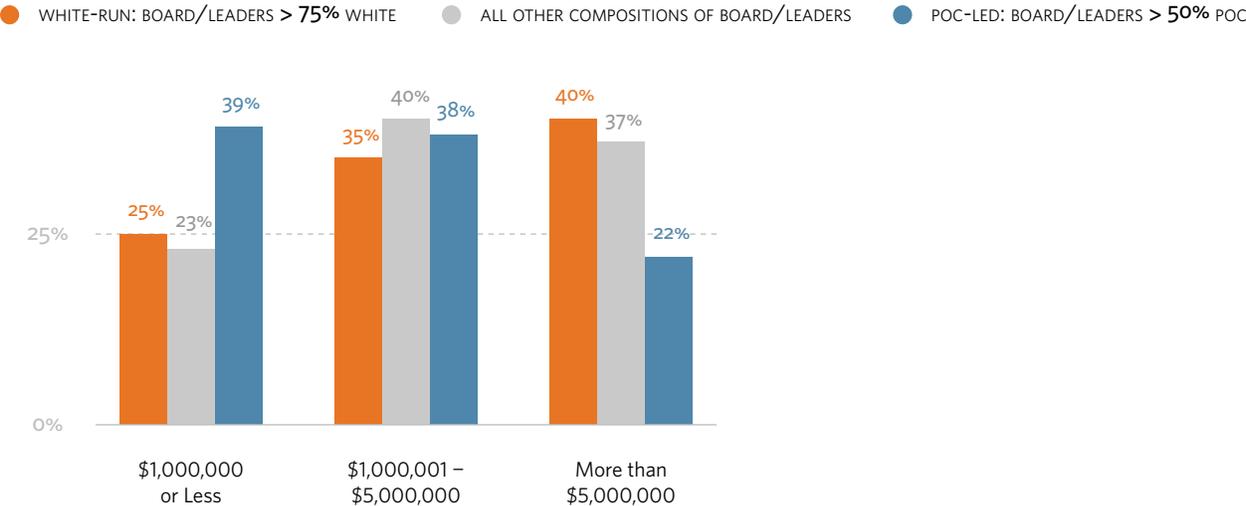
EXPERIENCE BY RACE AND GENDER

For the three statements listed on page 25, the differences in experience based on the race of respondents and organizational type are even more striking through an intersectional lens that considers both the impact of race and gender on how respondents experience their organization. Overall, white men reported the highest level of agreement with all three statements, and women and gender non-conforming people of color the lowest level of agreement. For level of agreement with the statement “I would be happy if I worked at this organization three years from now,” gender non-conforming people of color averaged 6.1, gender non-conforming white people 6.2, and women of color 6.3, in contrast with 7.7 for white men and 7.4 for both white women and men of color. Similar trends appear in response to “I feel I have a voice in my organization”²² and “My organization offers fair and equitable opportunities for advancement and promotion.”²³

Money Matters

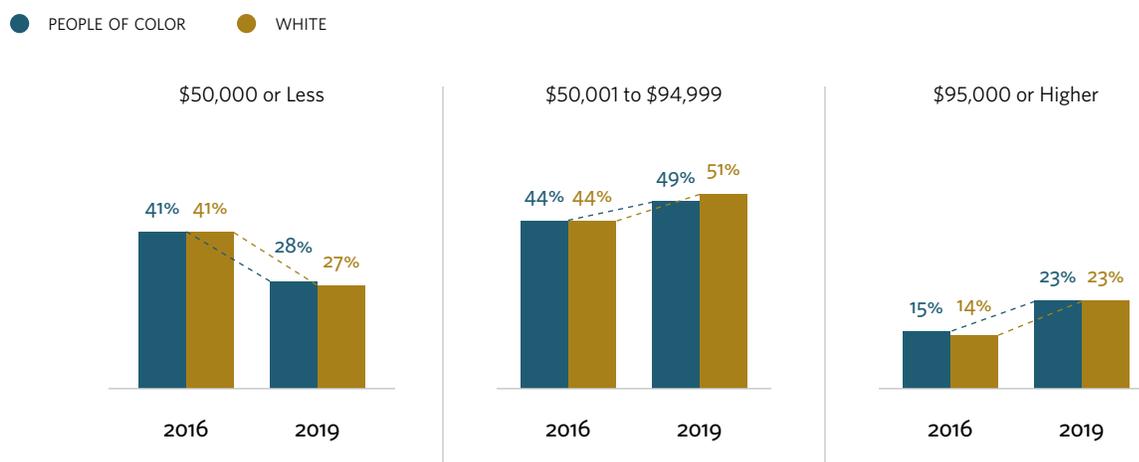
The impact of the white advantage throughout the nonprofit sector is also evident in survey responses on financial issues. The overall financial advantage of white people in the United States is well documented.²⁴ Increasing evidence also illustrates the financial advantage of nonprofit organizations with white leaders.²⁵ BMP’s analysis of survey responses on organizational budget size through the lens of organization racial composition of leadership and board further illuminates this advantage. Based on the organizational budgets reported by survey respondents, 40% of White-run groups and 37% of All Other groups (neither White-run nor POC-led) had annual budgets of more than \$5 million, compared to only 22% of POC-led organizations (see Figure 20). Conversely, POC-led groups are the most likely (39%) to have budgets of less than \$1 million compared to White-run organizations (25%) and All Other groups (23%).

FIGURE 20 | ORGANIZATION BUDGET BY RACIAL COMPOSITION OF ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP



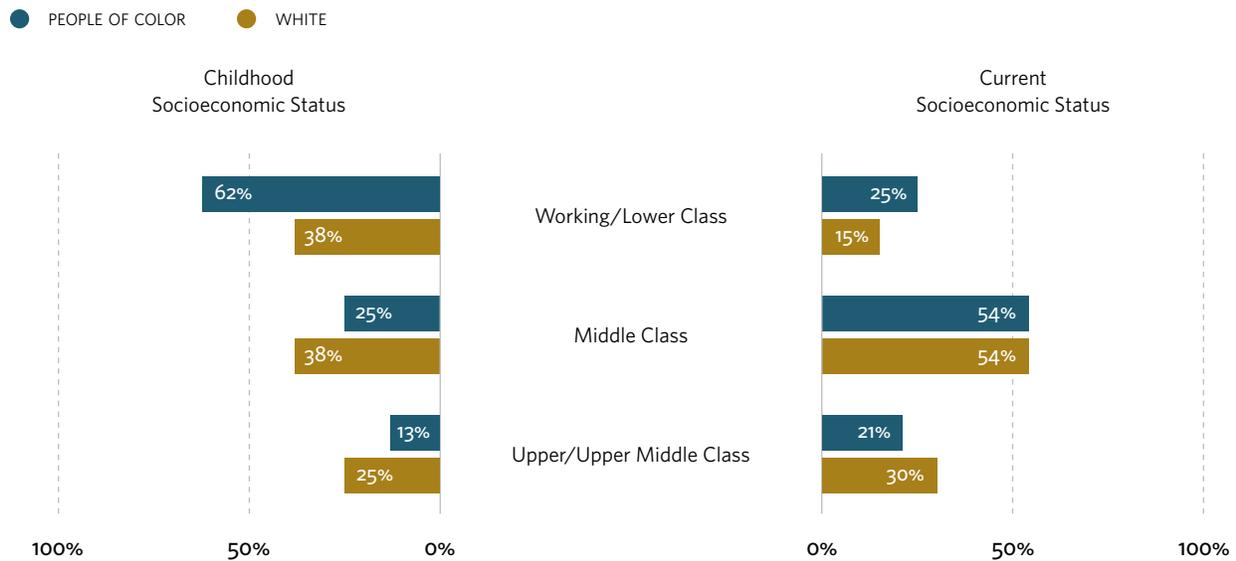
While organizations with white leadership accrue greater financial support, white survey respondents also reported financial advantages at the individual level. Although salary data provided by respondents did not reveal obvious racial disparities in compensation (*Figure 21*), as seen in *Figure 13* on page 16, people of color were more likely than white respondents to indicate that they *often* or *always* faced frustration over both inadequate and inequitable salaries (47% and 31%) compared to white respondents (38% for inadequate salary and 21% for inequitable salary).²⁶ New survey questions related to financial well-being—on class background, financial support, and salary increases through promotions or other forms of income—shed additional light on the financial advantages that benefit white people in the nonprofit sector.

FIGURE 21 | RESPONDENT COMPENSATION



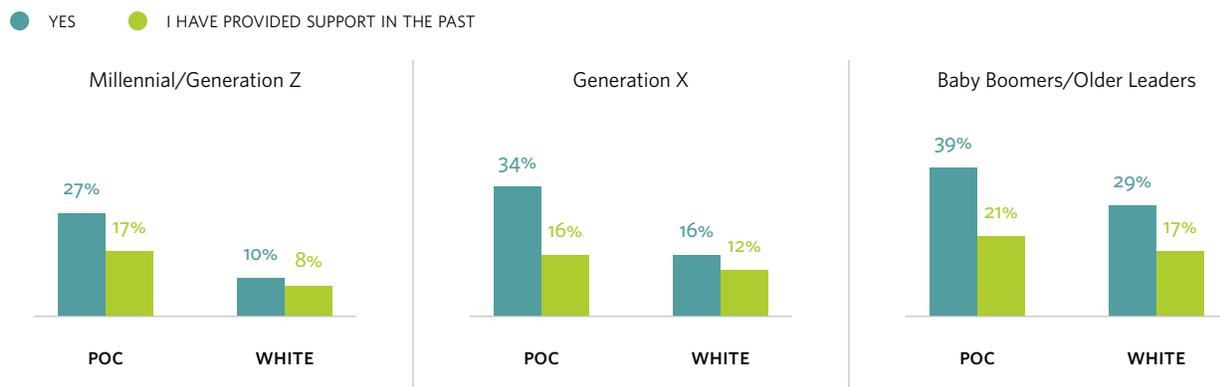
Survey takers were asked to identify their socio-economic class both during childhood and at present. As seen in *Figure 22* on the next page, 62% of people of color and 38% of white respondents reported growing up in a working or lower class household, a difference of twenty-four percentage points. Those percentages were much smaller in regard to current income status, with 29% of people of color and 15% of white people identifying as working or lower class. Mobility was evident for many respondents, with 59% of people of color and 43% of white respondents indicating upward class movement between their childhood and present. A small but notable group of respondents (13% POC and 19% white) reported downward class mobility.

FIGURE 22 | SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS



The upward and downward mobility of respondents does not solely reflect their nonprofit salary. Two new questions on overall economic status were added to the 2019 survey. The first asked if respondents relied on another source of income to cover household expenses. Fifty-four percent of respondents reported they did rely on another income, including 51% of people of color and 56% of white respondents. A larger gap between people of color and white respondents was present regarding the second new question: whether respondents provide regular support to other family members outside their household. Among people of color, 31% reported providing regular support to family outside their household, compared to 16% of white respondents. The percentage of people who provide regular financial assistance to other family members increases based on generational age (*Figure 23*) among both people of color and white respondents. The burden, however, is not equally distributed; more than a quarter (27%) of Millennials of color reported currently supporting other family members, compared to 10% of white Millennials.

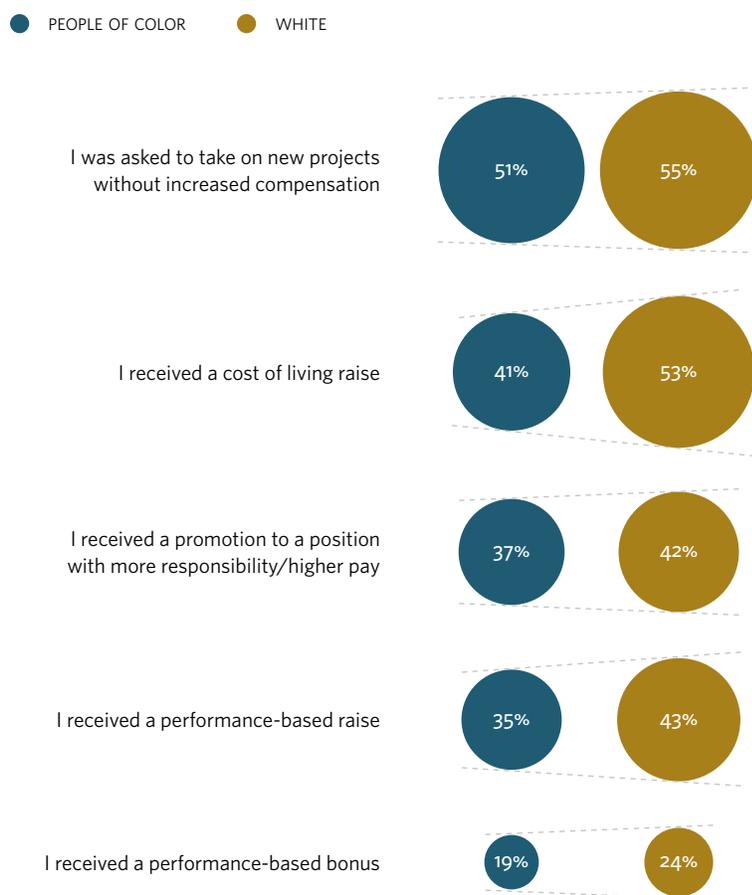
FIGURE 23 | DO YOU PROVIDE REGULAR FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO YOUR FAMILY?



The final data point on financial well-being asked if respondents had received promotions, cost of living adjustments to salary, or other financial incentives or support from their organization. As seen in *Figure 24*, white respondents were more likely than people of color to have received pay increases in all categories, including promotions (37% POC vs. 42% white), bonuses (19% POC vs. 24% white), and cost of living adjustments (41% POC vs. 53% white). White respondents were also more likely to report being asked to take on additional responsibility without increased compensation (51% POC vs. 55% white).

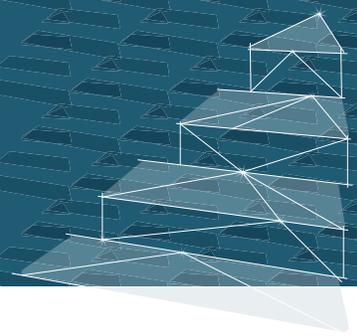
Combined, these findings indicate that white people working in the nonprofit sector have a financial advantage even when they are paid similar salaries to their peers of color. Compared to people of color, white respondents are more likely to have another source of income, less likely to support other family members outside their household, and more likely to report a variety of additional financial compensation received from their organization.

FIGURE 24 | PROMOTIONS, RAISES, AND OTHER INCOME FROM EMPLOYER



Addressing the White Advantage

The white advantage that permeates the nonprofit sector is clear throughout these findings. Survey data shows that the majority of people in the nonprofit sector work for organizations that are mostly white in their board and leadership, and this finding is supported by numerous other studies of the sector.²⁷ White people may thrive in these environments, but the data shows that people of color do not. In fact, the survey results suggest that white-dominant groups could learn from POC-led organizations, in which both people of color and white respondents reported more satisfaction with their work environment. To start, nonprofits need to significantly increase people of color in board and staff leadership positions and give serious consideration to the organizational changes that will make that transition successful. As that takes place, the current leadership of white-dominant organizations will need to institute new practices, policies, and procedures to advance the well-being of people of color within the organizations. That includes acknowledging and identifying ways that nonprofit organizations reproduce financial inequities that advantage white people. Despite increasing emphasis on racial equity throughout the sector, the impact of these efforts does not appear to have changed the work environment for people of color.



KEY FINDING 3: DEI Initiatives and Obstacles

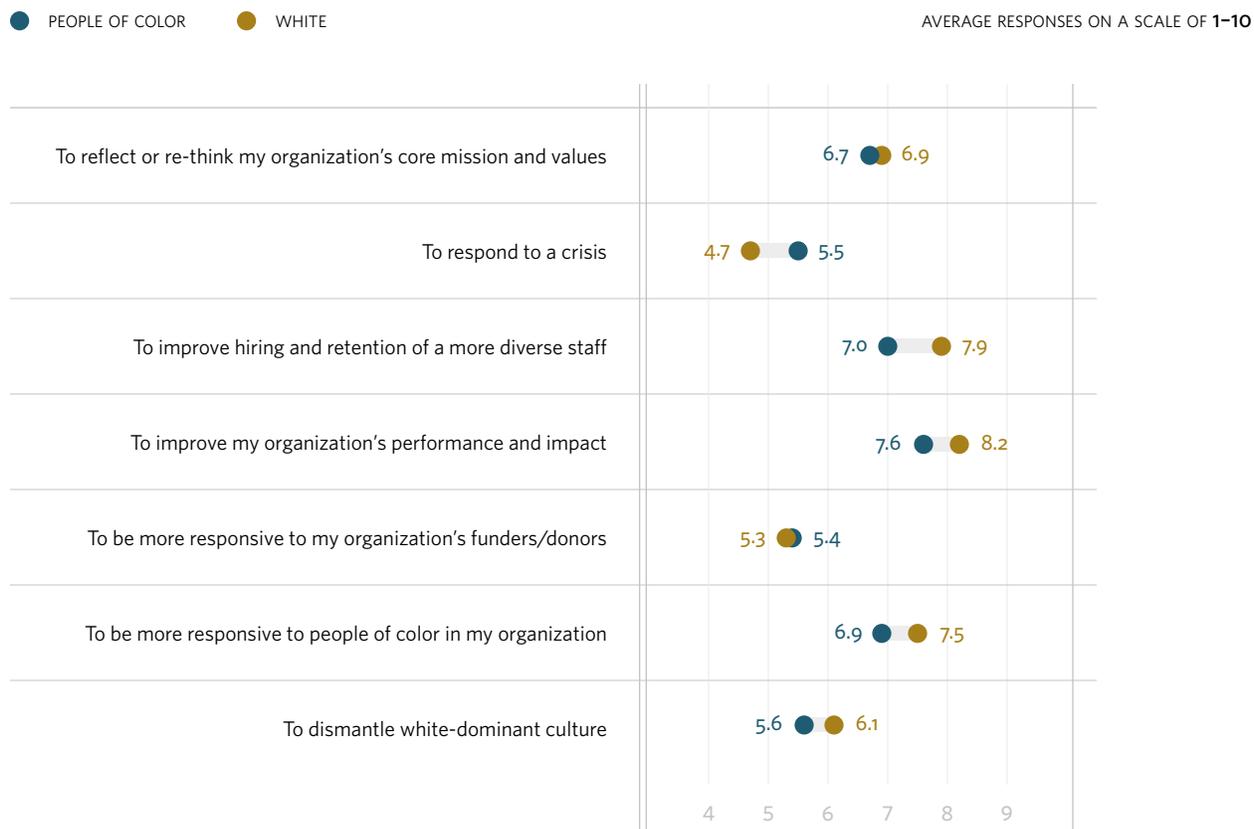
The 2019 *Race to Lead* survey asked respondents new questions about diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives in their organizations. The findings confirm that DEI efforts are increasingly prevalent throughout the sector. Organizations are employing a variety of DEI activities, with training on diversity issues among the most common. But respondents reported varied perceptions of their organization's commitment to DEI. Although the survey was not intended to measure the impact of nonprofit DEI initiatives, the data shows respondents in White-run organizations, especially people of color, provided lower ratings on how they perceived their organization's commitment to DEI compared to respondents in POC-led or All Other organizations. A series of questions on how to increase and support the leadership of people of color in the nonprofit sector illustrates differences between how people of color and white respondents view these efforts and their likelihood of success.

Motivations and Strategies

An overwhelming 74% of respondents in the 2019 survey reported that their organization is engaged in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives or activities. The survey asked those respondents to consider a list of potential reasons for DEI initiatives and rank on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 10 (*strongly agree*) the extent that those motivations applied to their organization. Respondents agreed most strongly that the motivation for their organization's DEI efforts was to improve the organization's performance and impact (average level of agreement 8.0 out of 10). The next strongest perceived motivations were to improve hiring or retention of a more diverse staff (average response 7.5) and to be more responsive to people of color in the organization (average response 7.3). The least strongly perceived motivation was that organizations were responding to a crisis (average response 5.0). Respondents had a similarly low perception (average response 5.4) that their organization was undertaking DEI work to be more responsive to its funders and donors.

Figure 25 on page 33 illustrates differences between how people of color and white respondents assessed their organization's motivations for engaging in DEI initiatives on the scale from 1 to 10. Across most measures, people of color indicated less agreement than white respondents about what factors contributed to these efforts. Notably, people of color were more likely than white people to attribute DEI initiatives to their organization responding to a crisis (5.5 compared to 4.7 for white respondents), suggesting that people of color more readily identify organizational crises that are not apparent to white respondents.

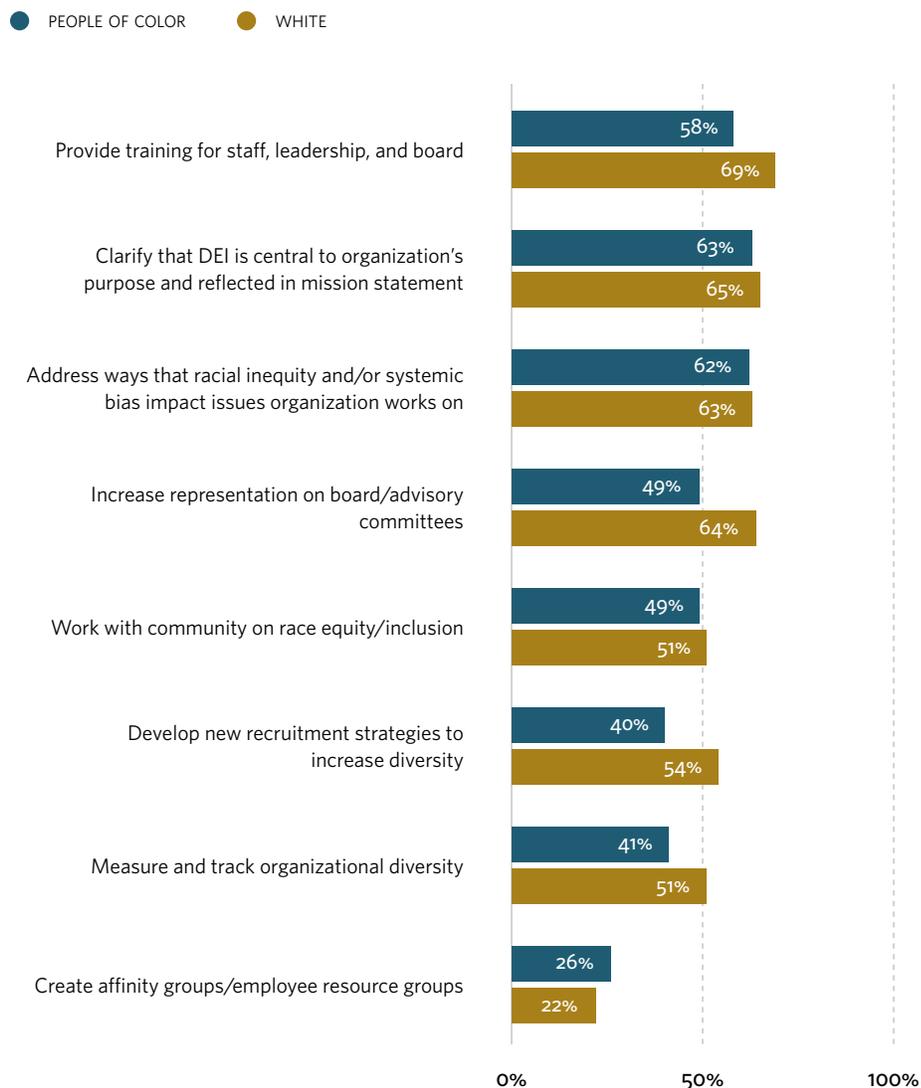
FIGURE 25 | PERCEPTIONS OF ORGANIZATION'S REASONS FOR ENGAGING IN DEI INITIATIVES



Survey respondents whose workplace had active DEI initiatives indicated their organization's activities by selecting from a list of potential strategies. Across all respondents, training was the most frequently reported activity at 65%, closely followed by efforts to clarify that diversity, equity, and inclusion are central to the organization's mission (64%) and to address ways systemic bias impacts issues addressed by the organization (63%).

As shown in *Figure 26*, people of color were less likely to report their organization engaged in training (58%) than white respondents (69%). Other notable gaps between people of color and white respondents were evident in responses about whether DEI activities intended to diversify the board of directors (49% POC vs. 64% white), recruit for staff diversity (40% POC vs. 54% white), and measure or track organizational diversity (41% POC and 51% white). These gaps may reflect that people of color and white respondents work in organizations with different DEI strategies, or could indicate that people of color and white people have significantly different interpretations of the intention of DEI efforts.

FIGURE 26 | ORGANIZATION'S CURRENT DEI STRATEGIES

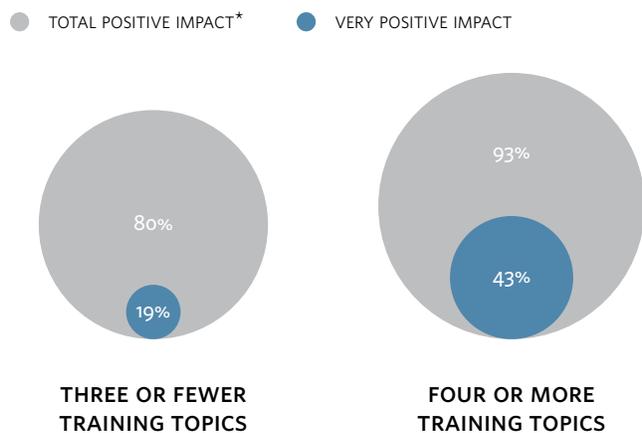


Respondents who reported their organization had conducted DEI training were asked to identify the training topics provided by their organization. Most of the reported topics focused on learning about systemic or structural issues such as *understanding terms* (68%), *implicit bias* (63%), *understanding structural racism* (58%), and *white privilege* (52%). Far fewer respondents were part of trainings on topics such as *recruiting diverse staff* (31%) or *racial trauma/healing* (18%).

Overall, respondents were positive about training they received, with 86% of respondents overall ranking the experience either *slightly positive* or *very positive*. Survey respondents who reported receiving training on four or more DEI topics were more likely to report a positive experience with training (93%) than those who indicated three or fewer training topics (80%), as shown in *Figure 27* on the following page. Forty-three percent

of respondents who reported their organization had trained on four or more topics gave the impact of training the highest rating of *very positive*, compared to 19% of respondents who reported three or fewer training topics, a gap of twenty-four percentage points.

FIGURE 27 | POSITIVE IMPACT OF TRAININGS



* Total positive impact includes respondents who indicated that training had a *very positive* or *slightly positive* impact on the organization.

Respondents offered different assessments of the impact of training. White respondents were twelve percentage points more likely to report a *very positive* or *slightly positive* training impact than people of color (79% POC vs. 91% white), and people of color were ten percentage points more likely to say the training had *no impact* (17% POC vs. 7% white). These differences may reflect a skepticism about DEI training that was expressed by some people of color in focus groups conducted by the Building Movement Project. In several focus groups, people of color expressed frustration about the content of trainings, which frequently present information that is new for many white people but not for people of color, resulting in a DEI experience that focuses on white staff and board members rather than how to improve the workplace experience for people of color. In addition, people of color expressed concern that training was too often the full extent of an organization’s DEI investment: a means to check DEI efforts off an organizational to-do list, rather than an entry point for a longer process to actually address internal inequities.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“Diversity, equity, and inclusion work in all-white spaces feels exhausting and traumatic.”

—Asian and Latinx Multiracial Woman

“[Colleagues] insisted I’ve called them racists when I, in fact, said ‘All white people hold implicit bias, and it’s incumbent on each of us to do our own unpacking with regard to racial equity,’ which has led to me being labeled as a ‘troublemaker.’”

—White Man

Write-in survey responses from people of color described how much effort they invested in advocating for their organization to address internal inequities. Many respondents of color described an expectation from majority-white organizations that people of color should lead DEI efforts and educate white leadership and staff about race and racial equity. As *Figure 13* (page 16) illustrates, more than a third of people of color (35%) said they *often or always* experienced “*stress of being called upon to push diversity, equity, and inclusion*” in their organization, compared to 18% of white respondents. Despite these challenges and frustrations, several survey respondents shared positive reflections about DEI efforts leading to changes within their nonprofit organizations. More experimentation and learning is needed to determine what interventions and change strategies yield the most positive results for organizations as they engage in efforts to become more equitable workplaces.

Commitment and Policies

The 2019 survey asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement with three statements related to their organization’s engagement with diversity, equity, and inclusion: “*My organization has policies and procedures in place to ensure a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace;*” “*My organization’s leadership consistently demonstrates a commitment to being an equitable, inclusive, and diverse workplace;*” and “*My organization takes a public stand on the root causes of issues facing the community we serve.*”

On a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 10 (*strongly agree*), people of color ranked their organizations lower on average than white respondents on having policies and procedures to ensure an equitable workplace (6.2 average for POC respondents vs. 7.0 average for white respondents), leadership commitment to DEI (6.4 POC vs. 7.0 white), and the organization’s public stand on root causes of issues facing the community served (6.7 POC vs. 6.9 white). *Figure 28* offers more insight into how the racial composition of organizational leadership and board affects how respondents rated their organization.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“

I have been fortunate that my organization was provided funding for equity training. The trainers helped the group identify ... many of the structural and systemic inequities in our organization’s structure and culture. To have been part of this transformation, it takes love, patience, diplomacy, anger, and dogged persistence.”

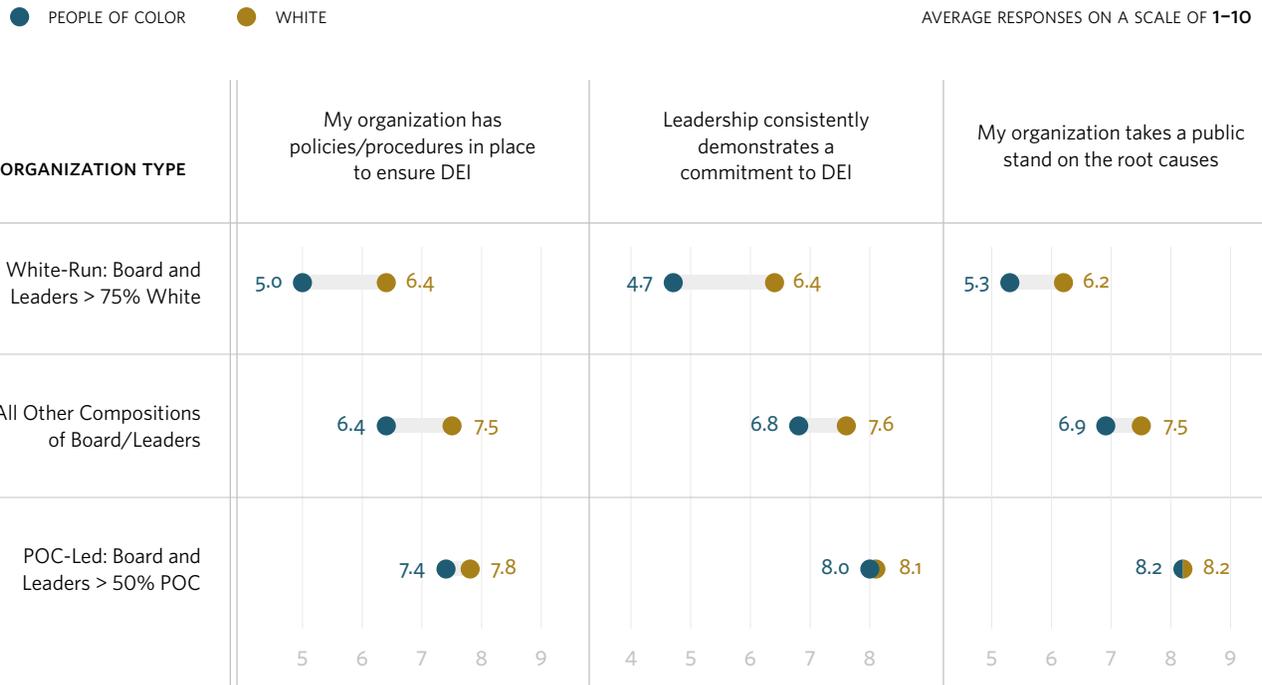
—Asian Woman

“

[Our organization] finally has taken the steps of creating a diversity and inclusion committee this year and I am able to express myself in a safe space through my participation ... I am also going to have an impact by shaping programs on racial equity.”

—Black, Native American, and White Multiracial Woman

FIGURE 28 | DEI POLICIES AND COMMITMENT

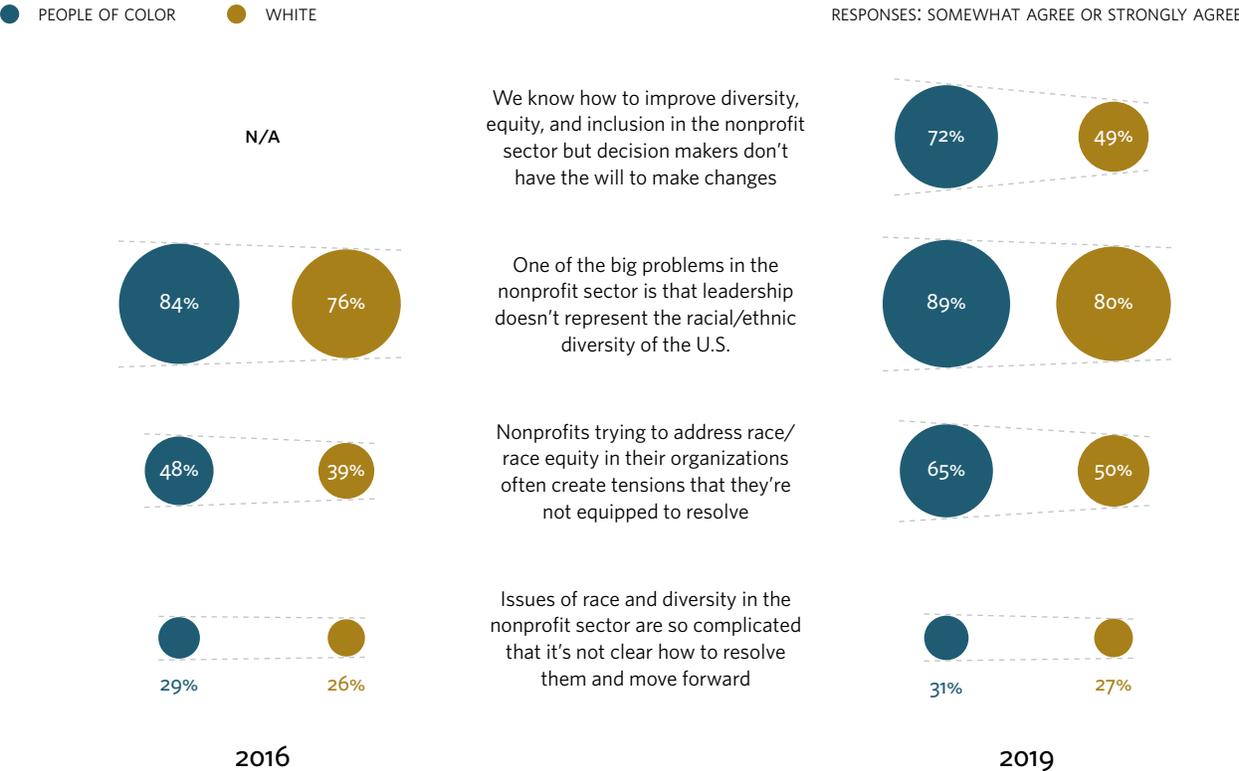


Respondents in White-run organizations expressed less agreement with all three statements than those in POC-led groups and those with other leadership combinations. Among respondents working for White-run organizations, people of color reported a lower average level of agreement than white respondents. For example, for respondents in White-run groups, the average agreement that their organization has policies and procedures to ensure an equitable workplace was 5.0 for people of color compared to 6.4 for white respondents. People of color in White-run organizations had an average agreement level of 4.7 regarding a consistent leadership commitment to DEI efforts compared to 6.4 for white respondents. For respondents working in POC-led groups, the level of agreement with all three statements was substantially higher, from the lowest average level of agreement of 7.4 among people of color rating that the organization has policies and procedures to ensure an equitable workplace to the highest 8.2 average for both people of color and white respondents that the organization takes a stand on root causes of issues affecting the community served. The largest difference in average responses to the three questions between people of color and white respondents working for POC-led organizations was 0.4 points; among respondents working for White-run groups, the largest difference was 1.7, more than four times greater.

Building the Will and the Way

Although organizations throughout the sector are engaging in DEI activities, such as training and defining the role of equity in organizational mission, these efforts have not translated to changes in the systemic white advantage that defines the nonprofit sector. Survey data indicates skepticism about the sector’s willingness to embrace change and discouragement about why there has been so little progress in diversifying the racial composition of nonprofit leadership. The survey explored respondent opinions on how to address race in the nonprofit sector and increase the number of leaders of color. Respondents ranked their level of agreement to four statements on nonprofits and race on a five-point scale from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Two statements that were also in the 2016 survey generated similar levels of agreement overall in 2019 (Figure 29). A relatively small portion of the survey respondents (31% of people of color and 27% of white respondents) indicated agreement with the statement that issues of race are “so complicated that it’s not clear how to resolve them and move forward.” In contrast, the statement with the highest levels of agreement (89% POC and 80% white) affirmed that lack of leadership diversity is “one of the big problems in the nonprofit sector.”

FIGURE 29 | RACE AND LEADERSHIP IN THE NONPROFIT SECTOR



The statement *“Nonprofits trying to address race and race equity create tensions they are not equipped to resolve”* had the largest change in responses between 2016 and 2019. Just under half (48%) of people of color agreed with the statement in 2016, compared to roughly two-thirds (65%) in 2019, a shift of seventeen percentage points. Among white respondents there was a change of eleven percentage points from 39% in 2016 to 50% in 2019. The resulting gaps in agreement between respondents of color and white people were nine percentage points in 2016 and fifteen percentage points in 2019. A new statement in the 2019 survey—*“We know how to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion in the nonprofit sector but decisions-makers don’t have the will to make changes”*—generated a gap of twenty-three percentage points between agreement by people of color (72%) and white respondents (49%).

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“

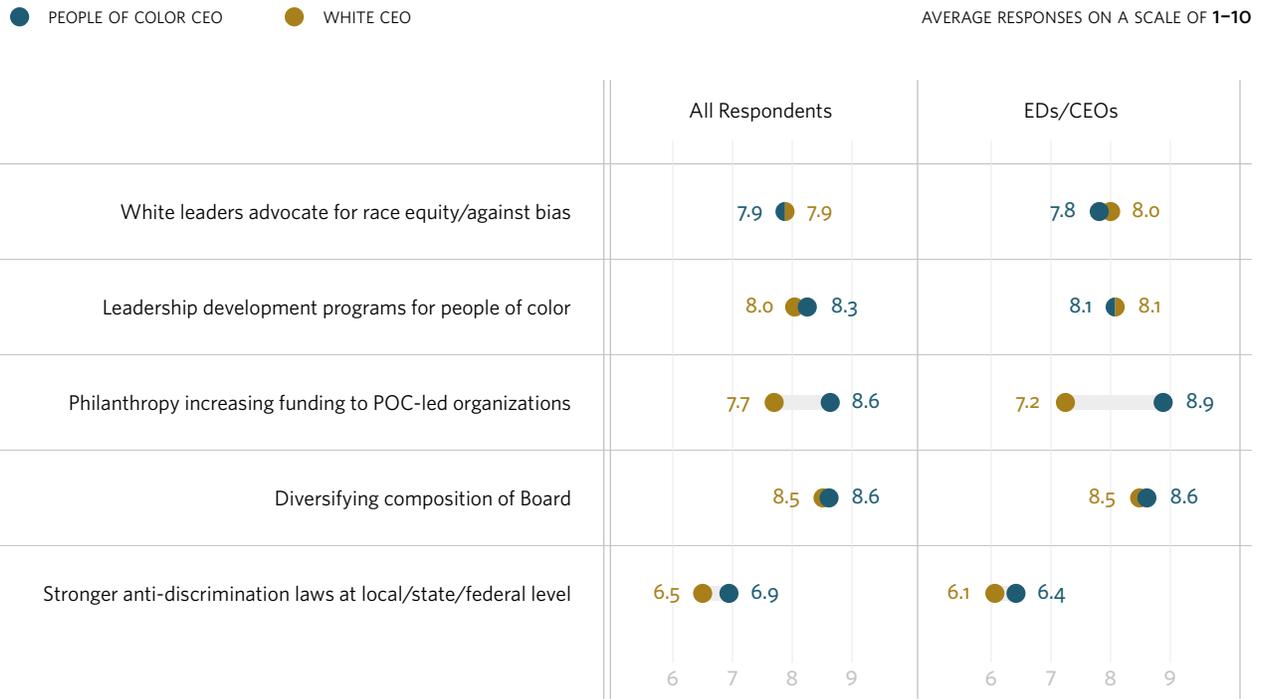
We know the way forward, we can readily identify the barriers – but too often we focus on changing people’s minds about racial inequity, which I sense is beyond anyone’s control. I think we must shift the focus to changing people’s behaviors ... Our country’s history shows [shifting mindsets] is slow and too unpredictable.”

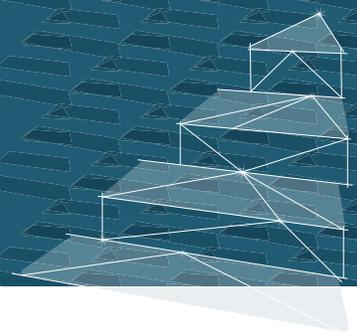
—Black Woman

The 2019 survey asked respondents to rate five strategies for increasing the diversity of top-level nonprofit leaders on a scale of potential effectiveness from 1 (*not effective at all*) to 10 (*extremely effective*). As shown in *Figure 30*, people of color and white respondents indicated similar average ratings regarding most of the potential strategies with the exception of increasing philanthropic support for organizations led by people of color. People of color indicated strong agreement (average level of agreement of 8.6) that increasing philanthropic funding to POC-led organizations would be effective for increasing the diversity of the nonprofit sector’s leadership. In contrast, white respondents indicated significantly less agreement (average of 7.7). The racial gap on this issue was wider among executive directors and CEOs. Among these respondents, EDs/CEOs of color indicated a higher level of agreement than respondents of color overall (average agreement of 8.9), while white EDs/CEOs indicated average agreement even lower than white respondents overall (average of 7.2). This racial gap in the perception that increased philanthropic funding for POC-led organizations would effectively contribute to more diverse nonprofit sector leadership is particularly notable given the previously noted data (see *Figure 20* on page 27), illustrating that respondents working for POC-led nonprofits report substantially smaller organizational budgets compared to White-run and All Other organizations.

These differences are telling indicators of the continued racial disparity of experiences with the institutional philanthropy that wields significant influence on nonprofits. The sector is dedicating increased—and long overdue—attention to systemic racial disparities and bias in philanthropic funding, including under-investment in organizations led by people of color at stark rates that some advocates call “philanthropic redlining.”²⁸

FIGURE 30 | NONPROFIT SECTOR STRATEGIES TO INCREASE LEADERSHIP DIVERSITY





Adding Up the Results

Lessons Learned

The new data from *Race to Lead Revisited* illustrates that addressing racial disparity in the nonprofit sector requires changes at individual, organizational, and sectoral levels. To make the nonprofit sector more equitable, organizations must take internal and external action that results in concrete changes for people of color. Many nonprofits are engaged in activities that constitute important first steps in this process, such as modifying mission statements to reflect a commitment to race equity and implementing training programs. While the sector has recently endeavored to educate white people about race and racism through diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, training does not in and of itself lead to race equity. The survey results suggest that even as DEI efforts are becoming widespread, too many organizations are not progressing from reflection and discussion to actually taking action.

The *Race to Lead Revisited* data illustrates that in the three years since the first report, the factors that contribute to the nonprofit racial leadership gap are still present and potent. There are, however, some changes that indicate the potential for progress:

- **A significant conversation on racial inequity has begun.** With 74% of respondents reporting that their organization has undertaken work on diversity, equity, and inclusion, there is an effort throughout the sector to better understand and reflect on race and racism.
- **Awareness of racial inequities is higher.** Respondents to the 2019 survey appear to have an increased consciousness of racial inequities compared to the 2016 sample: a larger percentage of all respondents agreed with statements about the barriers that face people of color in nonprofits and how race operates to advance or negatively impact career advancement.
- **Improved career support was reported, though it does not reflect more equity in the workplace experience.** Respondents of all races reported more career support of various types and fewer workplace challenges. The differences in responses between the 2016 and 2019 surveys are modest, but the change reflects positive movement to build on in the future. Continued progress will require addressing the persistent racial gap in these experiences, as illustrated by white people reporting more support and fewer challenges than people of color.

If the 2019 survey results show some overall forward motion for the nonprofit sector on issues of equity, one of the most striking findings is that in most areas the discrepancy of experience between people of color and white respondents has grown or remained the same compared to 2016. On questions including barriers to leadership for people of color, individual nonprofit workplace experiences, and personal support and challenges that affected

career trajectory, the responses of white people and people of color revealed distinctly different experiences. White people were more likely to rate their organization positively and were less likely to acknowledge obstacles to the leadership of people of color. The disparity of experiences between people of color and white respondents was most clearly visible considered alongside the racial demographics of the board and staff leadership of the organizations that employ survey respondents. This report categorized organizations into three broad categories: White-run, POC-led, and All Other organizations. Both people of color and white people reported the least positive experiences working for White-run groups, although white people fare far better. Both people of color and white respondents report a far better experience in POC-led groups, and their experiences are much more similar than in the two other organizational categories.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“

I’m always the youngest director and the only African American female in the room. This has been increasingly frustrating because I find that I’m challenged more, that I’m also expected to represent my entire race. I’ve had to really develop a tough exterior; most importantly, to pick my battles.”

—African American Woman

The persistent gaps between the experiences of people of color and white respondents highlight the need for nonprofit leaders, funders, and supporters to understand and acknowledge the systemic white advantage that permeates the sector. To take effective action to meaningfully address racial inequities, existing DEI efforts on race and racism must move beyond awareness and discussion to enact tangible changes in organizational policies and practices. Organizational leadership must examine the formal and informal rules that guide their workplaces that maintain white dominance. Change in the sector can only happen when nonprofit groups identify the concrete, structural factors that reproduce racial leadership disparities, and undertake new and transformative steps to fundamentally expand whose voices and experiences inform how the sector operates.

Opportunities for Change

The nonprofit sector's widespread investment in DEI activities provides an opening for change on racial equity through an intersectional understanding of the experiences of people in the sector. There is no time to lose. The global coronavirus pandemic, the growing movement for justice for Black people, and the predictions of an extended recession will constitute either an opportunity to institute a new normal across the nonprofit sector or a consolidation of existing power.

The opportunities below can help guide change efforts throughout the nonprofit sector and its individual organizations. These efforts focus on race and race equity because racism is intimately tied to many other forms of inequity such as sexism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, religious discrimination, and more. The intersections between racism and other forms of marginalization are critical to understand and address in order to successfully dismantle all such discriminatory practices.

Organizations often try to enact racial equity initiatives on their own, which can be a challenging and isolating process. One overarching recommendation is that nonprofits take on the work described below in partnership with peer organizations with similar goals. A cohort of groups working together on race and race equity can offer each other feedback, collaborate to solve problems and address difficult situations, provide support and accountability for the DEI process, and share reflections on challenges and accomplishments.

OPPORTUNITY 1

Focus on Structures and the Experience of Race and Racism

Do not discount the experiences of people of color in the workplace. Structural analysis of race and racism, especially for white-dominant groups, is a critical foundation for race equity work. When successful, these efforts place racial issues in historical context and illustrate how the systems that underpin everyday life are inherently biased. However, focusing on structural racial issues will only be meaningful if coupled with efforts to understand and validate the individual and collective experiences of people of color in nonprofit organizations and institutions. This survey demonstrates that people of color, especially in White-run groups, consistently have more negative workplace experiences. Those experiences result from not only historical structural biases but also specific organizational

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“

Inequity is less about title and responsibility and more about pay. As our organization has become more transparent on pay ... [it] allows for honest conversations on pay without compromising my relational and less-competitive, community-oriented value system.”

—Chamorro and White Multiracial Woman

practices that can be identified and improved, from hiring procedures to raises and promotions to how organizations acknowledge and incorporate employee voices.

OPPORTUNITY 2

Policies Have Meaning ... If Enforced

Groups committed to DEI efforts often take on work to examine and change organizational policies to reflect the organizational commitment to equity. This might include policies on equitable salary or improving anti-discrimination procedures. It is essential to consistently model and reinforce the organization's commitment to racial equality. For example, if a staff member makes comments that are discriminatory or derogatory, even inadvertently, an organization that is committed to its racial equity process must have a clear set of procedures in place to address the person making the comments, followed up by actionable consequences. A realignment of policies and practices is only effective if they are acted on consistently and universally.

OPPORTUNITY 3

Put Your Money ...

Organizations led by people of color simply need more funding. To interrupt the cycle of replicating the inequities the sector is committed to fight, funders need to examine their own practices to understand and change why groups led by people of color are so rarely provided the resources they need to grow and thrive. With so many nonprofit sector organizations that are majority-white in their leadership and board composition, it is easy to focus on the importance of diversifying these groups. That is a necessary activity. However, as money flows to white-dominant organizations, including funds specifically to support race equity work, groups led by people of color remain under-resourced, as noted both in 2019 survey findings and in external analyses of sector funding. This is even more critical as organizations led by people of color, which have smaller budgets on average than organizations led by white people, manage financial losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic that also disproportionately affects communities of color.

OPPORTUNITY 4

Reflecting the Community: Racial Diversity in Action

Although survey responses indicate that many organizations want to diversify staff and board of directors, respondents overwhelmingly worked for groups led by white leadership and boards. Recruiting and retaining racially diverse staff and board leaders requires setting and meeting targets for bringing on candidates, instituting effective onboarding and support for new staff and board members, and being willing to shift power – that is, to listen to the observations and recommendations of staff and board members of color, and to change the organization's policies and practices accordingly. *Race to Lead Revisited* data illustrates that both people of color

and white respondents have a more positive experience in their organization when more people of color are in leadership positions. All nonprofits should set a racial equity goal that their organization's leadership reflect the racial demographics of the population they serve.

OPPORTUNITY 5

Responsibility and Results

Diversity, equity, and inclusion requires an ongoing commitment and investment in tangible change. If an organization is committed to a DEI process, it must establish thoughtful and measurable ways to assess progress based on a widely-shared plan for what should change, who is responsible, and how results will be documented, such as setting benchmarks and surveying staff and board members about their experiences. Transparency of results and organization-wide annual reviews can help guide course corrections and the establishment of ongoing goals.

The Risk of Inaction

The nonprofit sector can and should take a lead on equity, especially during a time of rising economic anxiety, a renewed reckoning with racism and violence against Black people, and widespread suffering due to the COVID-19 pandemic that is disproportionately impacting communities of color. At present, however, the sector reflects the entrenched structures of power in the United States, as illustrated in the persistent white advantage observed throughout nonprofit organizations. The best way to accelerate equity is to take action that challenges the current systems and structures that keep inequality in place. While looking inward at leadership and policies, organizations and funders must also reckon with the too-common aversion to investing in advocacy, voter engagement, organizing, and other strategies that could more aggressively challenge the underlying systems that reproduce inequality and continue to harm the communities served by the sector. Organizational and sectorial change is difficult; it takes strength and risk. But boldness is the only way forward to effectively address racial inequity. Nonprofits must choose between supporting the status quo or embracing the action required to achieve diversity, equity, and inclusion for all.

Endnotes

- 1 For example: Cineas, Fabiola. (April 8, 2020). "COVID-19 is disproportionately taking Black lives." Vox. <https://www.vox.com/identities/2020/4/7/21211849/coronavirus-black-americans>; Rosalsky, Greg R. (May 26, 2020). "How the Crisis Is Making Racial Inequality Worse." NPR. Planet Money. <https://www.npr.org/sections/money/2020/05/26/860913793/how-the-crisis-is-making-racial-inequality-worse>; Farmer, Blake (April 2, 2020). "The Coronavirus Doesn't Discriminate, But U.S. Health Care Showing Familiar Biases." NPR. <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2020/04/02/825730141/the-coronavirus-doesnt-discriminate-but-u-s-health-care-showing-familiar-biases>
- 2 For example: Le, Vu (April 19, 2020). "Foundations, knock it off with the philanthropic Sophie's Choices and increase your payout" Nonprofit AF Blog. <https://nonprofitaf.com/2020/04/foundations-knock-it-off-with-the-philanthropic-sophies-choices-and-increase-your-payout/>
- 3 Thomas-Breitfeld, Sean and Kunreuther, Frances (June 2017). *Race to Lead: Confronting the Nonprofit Racial Leadership Gap*. Building Movement Project. <https://racetolead.org/race-to-lead/>
- 4 The data collected from the first survey is featured in a series of reports examining the national data overall, the specific experiences of LGBTQ people of color, women of color, and those in executive director and chief executive officer positions. In addition, there were two state-level reports, one on the sub-sample of respondents from California and the other examining the responses from Massachusetts. The full set of *Race to Lead* reports are available at www.buildingmovement.org and www.racetolead.org
- 5 For example: Marrow, Jasmine. (July 3, 2018). "What We're Learning about Nonprofits' DEI Journeys." Guidestar Blog. <https://trust.guidestar.org/what-were-learning-about-nonprofits-dei-journeys>
- 6 The term "gender non-conforming" is used throughout this report to refer to survey respondents who selected the category "gender non-binary/gender non-conforming/genderqueer." See endnote 13 for a more detailed explanation of the format of the question on gender.
- 7 The *Race to Lead: Women of Color in the Nonprofit Sector* report did not include gender non-conforming data.
- 8 The quotes included in this report are drawn from write-in responses by survey respondents. This report describes the race/ethnicity of quoted survey takers using the standardized terms Asian, Black, Latinx, Multiracial or White unless respondents used a different term in identifying themselves in their write-in response or opted to provide additional details on any specific national or ethnic origins in their survey response.
- 9 The 2016 survey was titled the *Nonprofits, Leadership and Race Survey*.
- 10 A convenience sample is one of the main types of sampling methods. For more information on this term, see <https://stattrek.com/statistics/dictionary.aspx?definition=convenience%20sample>
- 11 The survey was open to those who worked full- and part-time in the nonprofit sector but only full-time employees submitted responses.
- 12 Less than half of one percent of respondents identified as Arab American.
- 13 Due to rounding, some percentages that appear in the figures throughout this report may not precisely reflect the absolute numbers or add to 100%.
- 14 The format of the question on gender was changed between 2016 and 2019. The 2016 survey included the following gender categories: 1) female, 2) male, 3) transgender (female to male), 4) transgender (male to female), and 5) a "write-in" option. There were 106 individuals (3% of the total sample) who selected one of the transgender categories or wrote in another gender identity. Of this group, roughly two-thirds wrote in gender non-conforming or a similar identity. For the 2019 survey, BMP updated the gender categories as follows: 1) woman (cisgender and/or transgender), 2) man (cisgender and/or transgender), 3) gender non-binary/gender non-conforming/genderqueer, and 4) a "write-in" option. The 3% of the 2019 sample reported as "gender non-conforming" includes respondents who selected that gender option or wrote in a similar gender identity. A separate question that allowed respondents to self-identify as transgender was selected by less than 2% of the total sample. This report does not factor cisgender and transgender identity into its analysis of gender.
- 15 Survey respondents indicated their birth year and BMP sorted respondents into generational categories as follows: Generation Z (1998 or later); Millennial (1982-1997); Generation X (1966-1981); Baby Boomer (1947-1965); and Older Leaders (1946 or earlier). Generation Z, the youngest generation of current workers, accounted for only four responses in the final sample (less than 0.5% of the total). This population is combined with Millennials for the purposes of reporting data by generation. A similarly small percentage of the sample (less than 1%) indicated they were born before 1946, and these Older Leaders were combined with the Baby Boomer generation.

- 16 Fry, Richard (April 11, 2018). "Millennials are the largest generation in the U.S. labor force." <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/04/11/millennials-largest-generation-us-labor-force/> This study's definition of Millennials varies slightly in birth years (1981 to 1996) from the range BMP uses in the 2016 and 2019 surveys (1982 to 1997).
- 17 Excludes respondents who are currently or have previously been an executive director or chief executive officer.
- 18 The term *intersectionality* refers to the ways people with multiple marginalized social identities (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, disability) experience overlapping forms of oppression at the same time (e.g., racism, sexism, ableism), and how the impacts of these simultaneous biases are compounded. See Crenshaw, Kimberlé, *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics* [1989] <https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1052&context=uclf>
- 19 For example: Pinsker, Joe (February 26, 2015). "White Privilege, Quantified." <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/02/white-privilege-quantified/386102/>
- 20 Other studies of the nonprofit sector indicate a much larger percentage of white board members and executive leaders of nonprofit organizations. See BoardSource (2017), *Leading with Intent: A National Index of Nonprofit Board Practices*. <https://leadingwithintent.org/>
- 21 For a description of nonprofits as white spaces, see Suarez, Cyndi (January 27, 2020) "The Nonprofit Sector as White Space," *Nonprofit Quarterly* <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/nonprofit-sector-white-space/> and Tomkin, Anastasia Reesa (May 26, 2020), "How White People Conquered the Nonprofit Industry." *Nonprofit Quarterly* <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/how-white-people-conquered-the-nonprofit-industry/>
- 22 The average level of agreement regarding the statement "*I feel I have a voice in my organization*" was 7.0 for women of color, gender non-conforming people of color and gender non-conforming white people; 7.8 for white women; 7.9 for men of color; and 8.3 for white men.
- 23 The average level of agreement regarding the statement "*My organization offers fair and equitable opportunities for advancement and promotion*" was 5.5 for gender non-conforming people of color; 5.7 for women of color and gender non-conforming white people; 6.5 for men of color; 6.6 for white women; and 7.2 for white men.
- 24 For example: Traub, Amy, Catherine Ruetschlin, Laura Sullivan, Tatjana Meschede, Lars Dietrich, and Thomas Shapiro. (June 21, 2016). "The Racial Wealth Gap: Why Policy Matters." Institute for Assets & Social Policy, Brandeis University and Demos. <https://www.demos.org/research/racial-wealth-gap-why-policy-matters>; Kochhar, Rakesh. (October 18, 2004). "The Wealth of Hispanic Households: 1996 to 2002." Pew Research Center. *Hispanic Trends*. <https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/2004/10/18/the-wealth-of-hispanic-households/>; Signe-Mary McKernan, Caroline Ratcliffe, Eugene Steuerle, and Sisi Zhang. (April 25, 2013). "Less Than Equal: Racial Disparities in Wealth Accumulation." Urban Institute. <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/less-equal-racial-disparities-wealth-accumulation>; Muñoz, A. P., Kim, M., Chang, M. Jackson, R. O., Hamilton, D., and Darity, W. A., Jr. (March 25, 2015). "The Color of Wealth in Boston" Duke University, The New School, and the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston. <https://www.bostonfed.org/publications/one-time-pubs/color-of-wealth.aspx>
- 25 For example: Dorsey, C., Bradach, J., and Kim, P. (May 2020). *Racial Equity and Philanthropy: Disparities in Funding Leaders of Color Leave Impact on the Table*. <https://www.bridgespan.org/bridgespan/Images/articles/racial-equity-and-philanthropy/racial-equity-and-philanthropy.pdf?ext=.pdf>
- 26 The full prompts regarding salary were "Inadequate salary (salary is not high enough)" and "Inequitable salary (paid less than colleagues doing the same work)."
- 27 Buteau, E. (September 5, 2019). "Reflecting on Leadership Diversity in Today's Nonprofit Sector." <https://cep.org/reflecting-on-leadership-diversity-in-todays-nonprofit-sector/>
- 28 For example: Emergent Pathways LLC and ABFE: A Philanthropic Partnership for Black Communities (December 2019). "The Case for Funding Black-Led Social Change." http://www.blacksocialchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/BSCFN_BLSCO_Report.pdf



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