

# Working at the Intersections: LGBTQ Nonprofit Staff and the Racial Leadership Gap



## Executive Summary

This report examines how the 21% of nonprofit staff who self-identified as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) responded to the Nonprofits, Leadership, and Race Survey.

The first report on the overall survey results—*Race to Lead: Confronting the Nonprofit Racial Leadership Gap*—showed that people of color have similar backgrounds and qualifications to lead as their white counterparts, and even report more interest in taking on leadership positions, but that structures and systems limit access and opportunity for aspiring leaders of color. The findings here are equally compelling as those explored in *Race to Lead*.

LGBTQ staff in nonprofits report similar rates of discrimination based on their sexuality as are reported in surveys on the workforce overall. However, LGBTQ people of color are negotiating an even more treacherous landscape. LGBTQ staff of color reported facing adverse effects of racism in their attempts to advance in the nonprofit sector, which were compounded by barriers related to their sexuality. In fact, LGBTQ people of color respondents reported significantly more challenges in almost every area of their career, as compared to straight people of color and both LGBTQ and straight whites. The findings indicate that the nonprofit sector needs to address the structural barriers to leadership based on race, and must simultaneously consider the additional impact of sexuality.

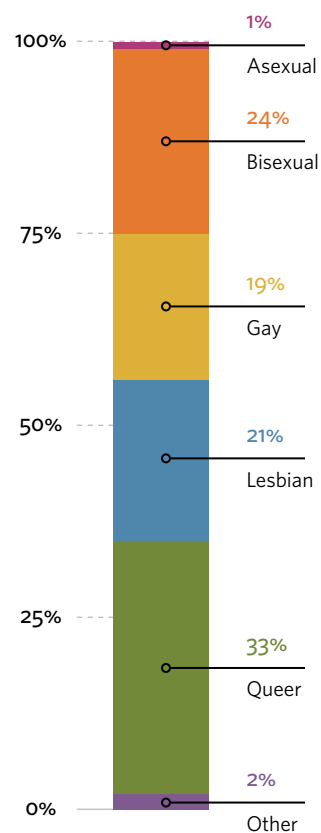
More specifically, the report details the following findings:

### › The LGBTQ Sample Was Diverse

The respondents who self-identified as LGBTQ were diverse in race and ethnicity. The LGBTQ sample was somewhat younger than the pool of straight respondents and reflected a diverse range of gender identifications.

### › LGBTQ Respondents Reported Anti-LGBTQ Bias in Nonprofit Spaces

There were many instances of bias reported by LGBTQ respondents, and due to the patchwork of state laws, many LGBTQ people don't have legal protections against discrimination in nonprofit organizations.



Primary Sexual Orientation

› **LGBTQ People of Color Face Compounding Barriers**

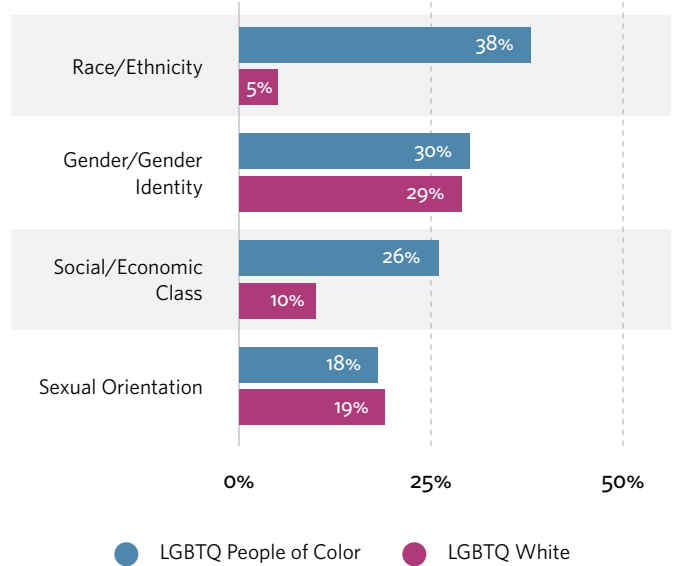
LGBTQ people of color face the dual effects of their race and sexuality on their career advancement. However, race was the most significant dimension impacting the opportunity to advance into leadership roles.

› **LGBTQ Respondents Showed Increased Awareness of Racial Issues**

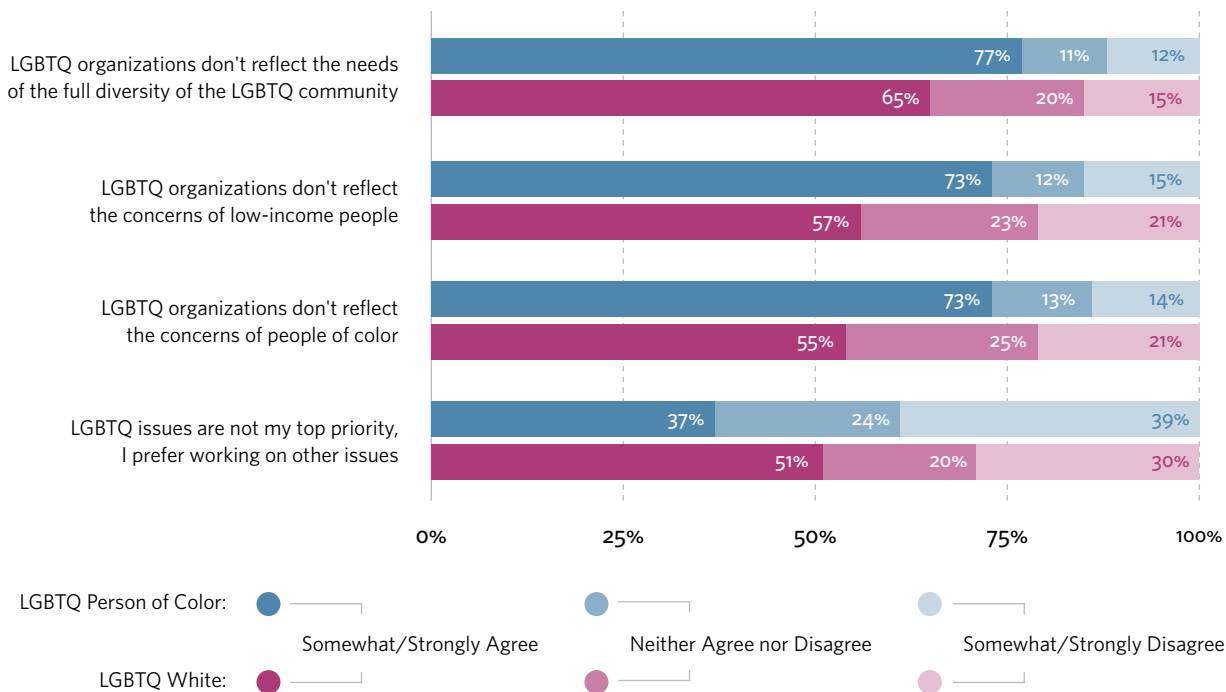
LGBTQ respondents had more sensitivity to issues of race and race equity than straight peers of the same race.

› **LGBTQ Organizations Are Perceived to Have a Race Problem**

LGBTQ respondents, especially those not working in LGBTQ organizations, have questions about the ability of mainstream LGBTQ-identified organizations to address race and race equity.



Factors Negatively Impacting Career Advancement of LGBTQ Respondents, by Race ("Very" or "Slightly")



Level of Agreement with Statements about LGBTQ Organizations, by Race (among LGBTQ respondents who do not work for LGBTQ organizations)

# Call to Action

LGBTQ people work across the nonprofit sector. In fact, most LGBTQ respondents reported working for non-LGBTQ organizations. The fact that LGBTQ respondents reported negative impacts of their sexuality on their career advancement shows that too many nonprofits still need to address anti-LGBTQ bias.

The findings from the LGBTQ sample also point to the importance of balancing the intersecting factors of race, sexuality, and gender identity. Nonprofit organizations and the sector can shift toward greater acceptance and affirmation of the full diversity of nonprofit staff.

## › Address Race First, But Not in Isolation

As the *Race to Lead* report suggested, strategies to address racial bias in nonprofit organizations must focus on addressing systems barriers through hiring and promotion practices, training boards of directors, and integrating race equity into all leadership development programs. In addition, the focus on race must also acknowledge the intersection with anti-LGBTQ bias. Organizational trainings, leadership development programs, and hiring committees must acknowledge the importance of intersectionality and other markers of difference (like sexuality, gender, and class), while also maintaining a focus on race as the dimension of diversity with the greatest impact on career opportunities and challenges.

## › Commit To—and Incentivize—Non-Discrimination Across the Nonprofit Sector

On top of the problem of the racial leadership gap, many nonprofits are failing to value and recognize the leadership of LGBTQ people in general. Foundations and nonprofit associations should lead the way in taking a principled stand against discrimination by pushing organizations to adopt nondiscrimination policies that include sexuality and gender identity, and establishing systems for monitoring and addressing the outright and noxious discrimination that too many LGBTQ people of all races wrote about experiencing in response to this survey.

## › Increase Funding to Support Intersectionality and Inclusion Across the LGBTQ Movement

Funders who previously directed funding to marriage equality efforts should now lead the way in supporting the intersectional capacity of organizations connected to the LGBTQ movement. Funders should pursue a two-pronged strategy of both increasing funding to organizations led by LGBTQ people of color, as well as making targeted investments to help mainstream LGBTQ organizations continue to shift toward diversity and inclusion in both their internal staffing and issue work.



Organizations should seek out consultants and trainers with expertise addressing issues of race and race equity with an intersectional framework.

Foundations and nonprofit associations should lead the way in taking a principled stand against discrimination.

Grantmakers should expand their definition of the LGBTQ movement to include organizations that have LGBTQ people of color in prominent leadership roles, even if the organizations are not primarily focused on LGBTQ issues.



Building Movement Project

For more information, please visit  
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