



The Nonprofit Racial Leadership Gap in Central Texas: *A Race to Lead* Brief

Introduction

The Building Movement Project's *Race to Lead* series investigates why there are so few leaders of color in the nonprofit sector and documents the challenges people of color face as they reach for and attain senior leadership roles in nonprofit organizations. In 2019, the Building Movement Project conducted an updated nationwide survey to assess the experiences of nonprofit staff compared to the initial 2016 survey responses.

This report, *The Nonprofit Racial Leadership Gap in Central Texas: A Race to Lead Brief*, includes findings from the subset of approximately 350 respondents to the 2019 national survey who are paid employees of nonprofits in the Central Texas area,¹ and from focus groups that took place in Austin in December 2019.² The report explores:

- 1 Data reported by local nonprofit sector employees regarding qualifications and aspirations to lead;
- 2 How leadership networks in the Austin metropolitan area impact career and funding prospects;
- 3 Challenges faced by staff and CEOs of color, including economic wellbeing and organizational dynamics; and
- 4 The effectiveness of nonprofit efforts to address diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

Inequality in Central Texas

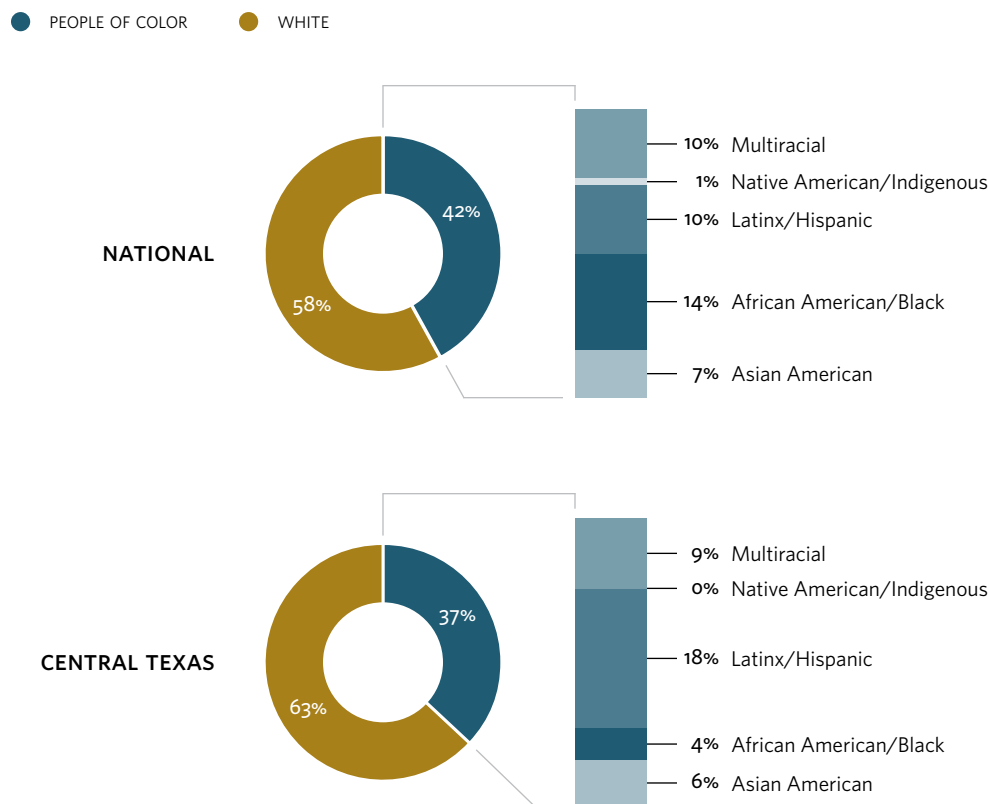
The findings in this report are of particular interest given the stark inequalities that characterize the Central Texas area. Austin and its surrounding areas—like many parts of the South—have a long history of racial segregation and discrimination against Black and Latinx residents.³ While Austin has experienced a technology boom in recent decades,⁴ this economic growth has not extended to the region's communities of color. Austin is the only "high growth" city whose Black population is on the decline,⁵ and its Black and Latinx residents are being pushed to the city's outskirts where they contend with precarious access to jobs and quality schools.⁶

The Central Texas *Race to Lead* Respondents

Demographically, the Central Texas sample had a slightly larger share of respondents who were white (63% of Central Texas respondents compared to 58% nationally) than people of color (37% compared to 42% nationally).

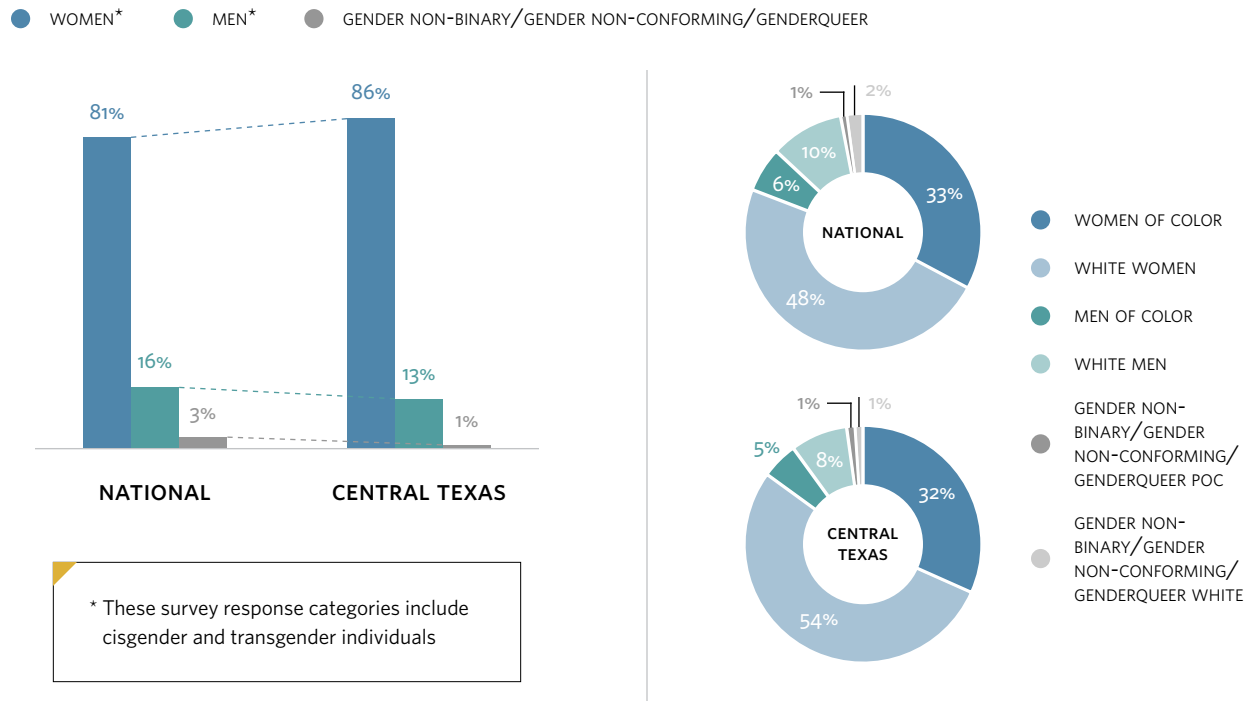
As *Figure 1* shows, the Central Texas sample had a larger share of Latinx/Hispanic participants (18% of the sample compared to 10% nationally) and fewer Black respondents (4% of the sample compared to 14% nationally). In comparison, data from the U.S. Census Bureau for the Austin metropolitan statistical area shows Latinx/Hispanic people and Black people are, respectively, nearly 33% and 7% of the population over the age of 18.⁷

FIGURE 1 | RACE/ETHNICITY OF RESPONDENTS (NATIONALLY AND IN CENTRAL TEXAS)



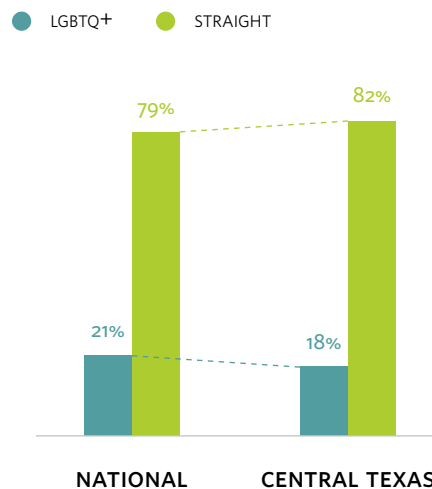
In terms of gender identity, 86% of Central Texas respondents were women, 13% were men, and 1% identified as gender non-binary/gender non-confirming/genderqueer. In terms of race and gender, 32% were women of color, 54% were white women, 5% were men of color, and 8% were white men. Less than 1% were gender non-binary/gender non-confirming/genderqueer people of color and gender non-binary/gender non-confirming/genderqueer white nonprofit staff (Figure 2).

FIGURE 2 | GENDER IDENTITY OF RESPONDENTS (NATIONALLY AND IN CENTRAL TEXAS)



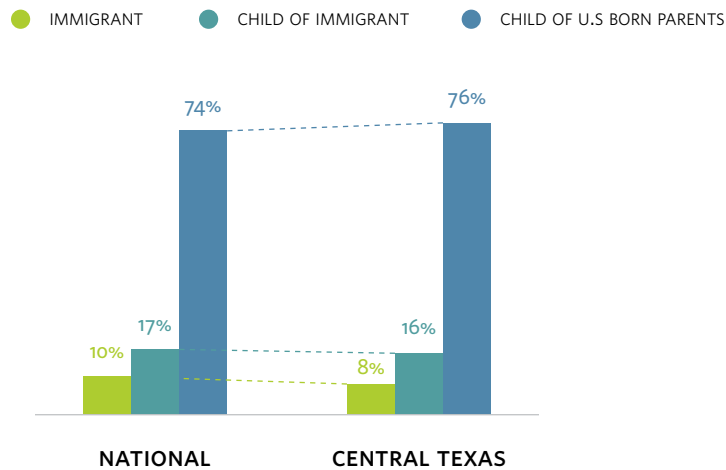
Among Central Texas respondents, 18% identified as LGBTQ+ compared to 21% nationally (Figure 3). People of color had a similar likelihood of self-identifying as LGBTQ+ in Central Texas (21%) and nationally (22%), while fewer white respondents in Central Texas were LGBTQ (17% in Central Texas compared to 21% nationally).

FIGURE 3 | SEXUAL ORIENTATION OF RESPONDENTS (NATIONALLY AND IN CENTRAL TEXAS)



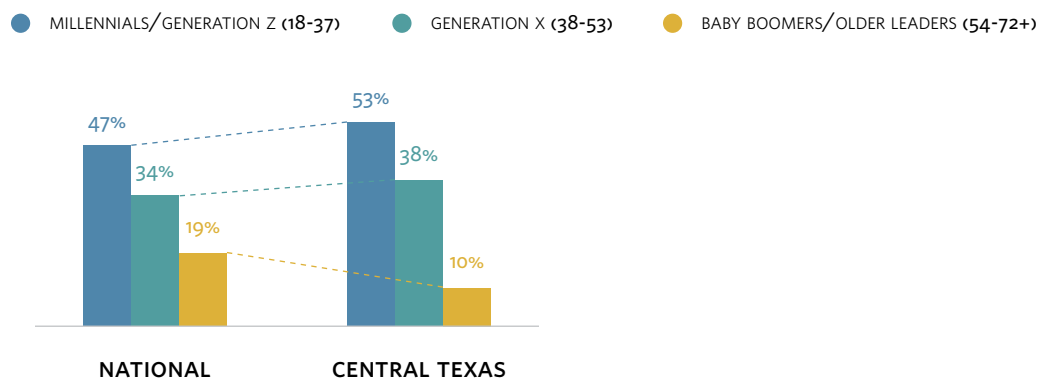
Three quarters (76%) of the Central Texas sub-sample were children of U.S.-born parents, 16% were children of immigrants, and 8% were immigrants themselves. These rates were almost the same as the national sample (74%, 17%, and 10% respectively) (Figure 4).

FIGURE 4 | IMMIGRANT STATUS OF RESPONDENTS (NATIONALLY AND IN CENTRAL TEXAS)



The sub-sample of respondents from Central Texas differed slightly from the national sample in terms of age/generation, with a larger share of millennial and Generation Z respondents (53% compared to 47% nationally) and Generation X (38% compared to 34% nationally), and a much smaller share of Baby Boomers and older leaders (10% compared to 19% nationally) (Figure 5).⁸

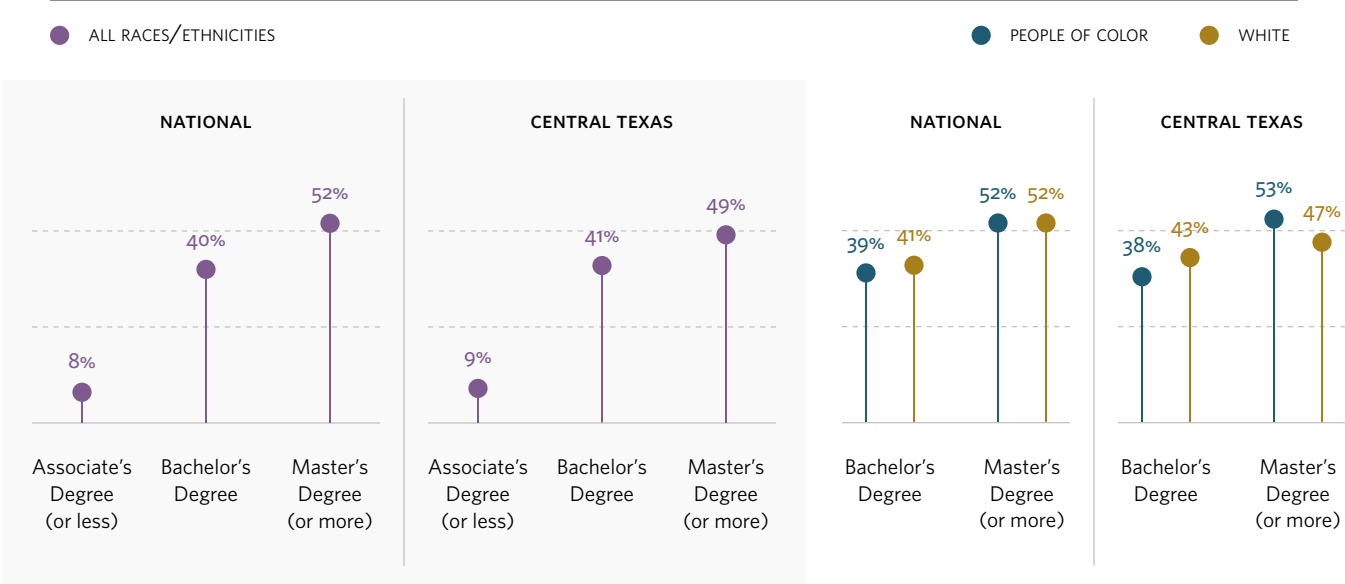
FIGURE 5 | AGE/GENERATION OF RESPONDENTS (NATIONALLY AND IN CENTRAL TEXAS)



Likely due to the larger proportion of younger participants, Central Texas respondents have spent fewer years working in the sector (11 years on average compared to 13 nationally) but the same time on the job (4 years on average both in Central Texas and nationally).

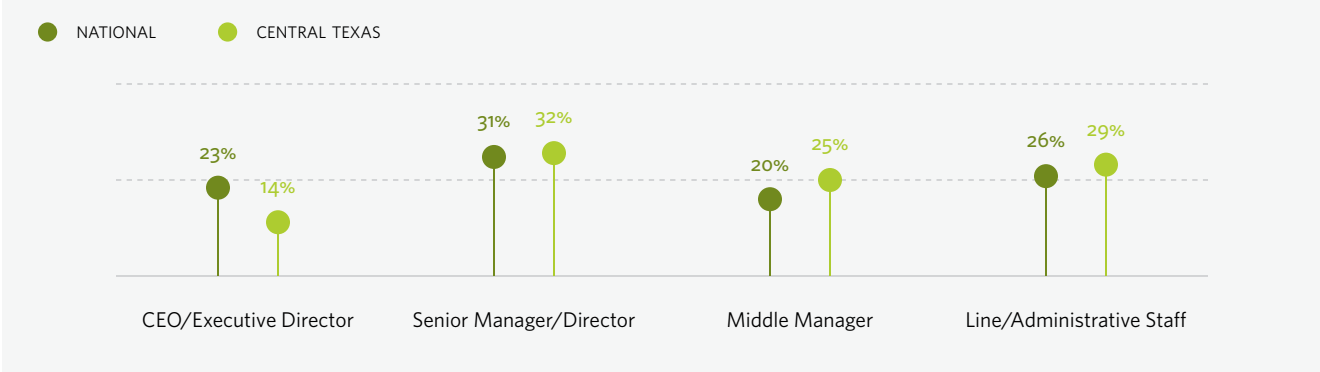
The vast majority of survey participants in Central Texas—and nationally—had at least a Bachelor’s degree (Figure 6). A Bachelor’s degree was the highest level of education obtained for 38% of Central Texas people of color. More than half of people of color in Central Texas had obtained a Master’s degree or more. Among white respondents, 43% had a Bachelor’s degree and 47% a Master’s degree or more.

FIGURE 6 | EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF RESPONDENTS BY RACE/ETHNICITY (NATIONALLY AND IN CENTRAL TEXAS)



The most common type of job role held by respondents (Figure 7) was senior manager/director (32% in Central Texas and 31% nationally). A smaller share of the Central Texas sample was in the position of chief executive officer or executive director (CEO/ED) than nationally (14% compared to 23%) and there were more middle managers (25% compared to 20% nationally) and line/administrative staff (29% compared to 26% nationally). Just 25% of the Central Texas CEOs/EDs responding to the survey were people of color, compared to 31% in the national sample.

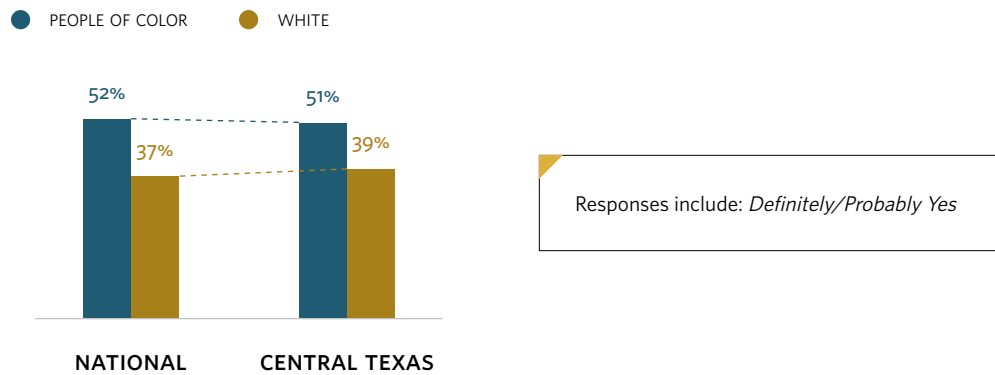
FIGURE 7 | CURRENT ROLE/POSITION OF RESPONDENTS (NATIONALLY AND IN CENTRAL TEXAS)



Aspirations to Lead

A key finding in the national *Race to Lead* report series—as illustrated both in the 2016 survey and affirmed by 2019 responses—is that respondents of color were more interested in pursuing nonprofit leadership positions than their white counterparts. A similar pattern can be found in Central Texas, where half of respondents of color aspire to nonprofit CEO/ED roles (*Figure 8*).⁹ Somewhat more white people in Central Texas aspire to leadership (39%) than in the national sample (37%). Notably, a larger percentage of people of color in Central Texas said they did *not* ever want to lead a nonprofit (31%) than people of color nationally (24%). Among white respondents, there was little difference between those who did not want to lead a nonprofit in Central Texas (34%) and nationally (35%).

FIGURE 8 | LEVEL OF INTEREST IN TAKING A TOP LEADERSHIP ROLE AMONG NON-CEOS (NATIONALLY AND IN CENTRAL TEXAS)



Networks in the City

MENTORS, ROLE MODELS, AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

Survey respondents were asked about their access to mentors and role models, and the importance of social capital and networks in the nonprofit sector. People of color (POC) in Central Texas were less likely than white respondents to say they had mentors outside their workplaces (42% compared to 50% for white respondents) or mentors inside their workplaces (47% compared to 55% for white respondents) (Figure 9).¹⁰ Although these findings were similar to national results, people of color in Central Texas were 16 percentage points less likely to have received external mentoring than people of color in the national sample; the difference between white respondents in Central Texas and nationally was just five percentage points. Many respondents agreed that they need more mentorship support. More people of color in Central Texas, asked what they need more of to support their career journey, wanted internal on-the-job mentoring (42%) than people of color nationally (38%), white respondents in Central Texas (35%), and white respondents nationally (29%).¹¹ POC and white respondents in Central Texas had a similar likelihood of wanting external mentors (46% POC and 47% white) while the gap was larger nationally (45% POC vs. 40% white). Considering the disparity between people of color and white nonprofit respondents regarding access to mentorship, it is no surprise that people of color were also more likely to say they *often* or *always* lack role models (44% of POC respondents compared to 22% of white respondents) (see Figure 10 on the next page).

FIGURE 9 | MENTORS AND PEER SUPPORT BY RACE/ETHNICITY (NATIONALLY AND IN CENTRAL TEXAS)

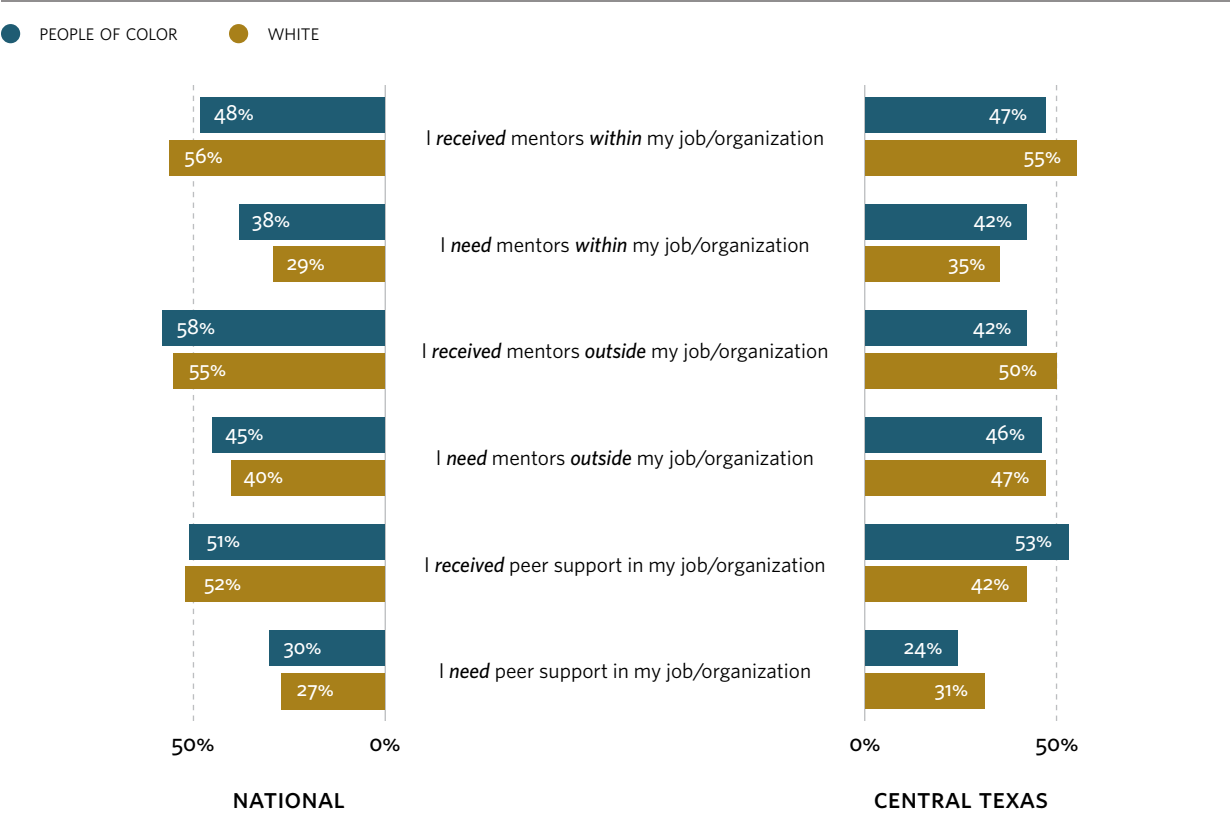
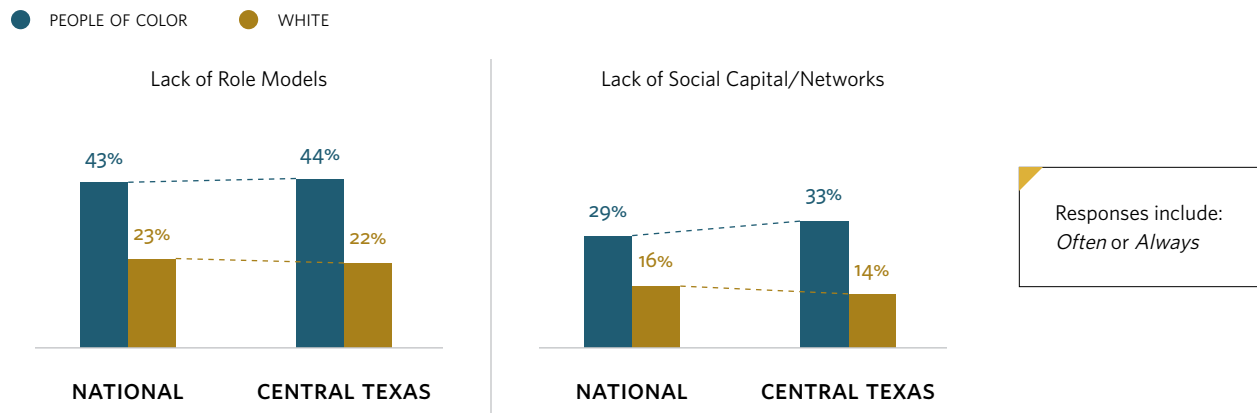


FIGURE 10 | LACK OF ROLE MODELS AND SOCIAL CAPITAL/NETWORKS BY RACE/ETHNICITY (NATIONALLY AND IN CENTRAL TEXAS)



While people of color in Central Texas were less likely to have mentors and role models than their white counterparts, they were more likely to have received peer support (53% compared to 42% for white respondents) (see *Figure 9* on the previous page).¹² Peer support can help people of color navigate the workplace — for example, survey write-in responses nationally described how people of color turn to peers for emotional support and advice when they encounter racial discrimination in the workplace. However, peer support will not translate into career opportunities if aspiring leaders lack access to the gatekeepers in the local nonprofit sector. Indeed, one third (33%) of people of color in the Central Texas sample said they *often* or *always* lacked access to social capital/networks, compared to just 14% of white respondents (*Figure 10*).

Survey respondents were asked if they believe lack of networks hinders the career advancement of people of color (see *Figure 11* on the next page). Among people of color, 65% in Central Texas and 69% nationally agreed with the statement “It is harder for people of color to advance in the nonprofit sector because they tend to have smaller professional networks.” Notably fewer white respondents agreed with the statement (42% nationally and 36% in Central Texas). In focus groups with people of color in Austin, several participants distinguished between the size and power of networks. Overwhelmingly, people of color focus group respondents—especially Gen X and Baby Boomer participants—thought that *who* rather than *how many* people you know determines whether nonprofit career success is bolstered by the personal network. They emphasized that people of color do have networks that

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“

[My identity and background have] removed me from networking and relationship opportunities that could have assisted in my career advancement... I have focused on building up champions who can introduce me into new networks and communities.”

—Woman of Color Central Texas Survey Respondent

equal the size of those maintained by white counterparts, but the connections are not as valued by those in power and might not be the “right ones” to get ahead. Additionally, focus group participants said the networks between white nonprofit leaders in Central Texas often do not extend to people of color unless they have a direct connection to specific universities, notably the University of Texas at Austin or Texas A&M University in College Station. As one person of color explained in a focus group, “you’re just treated differently if you’re from one of those schools.”

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“

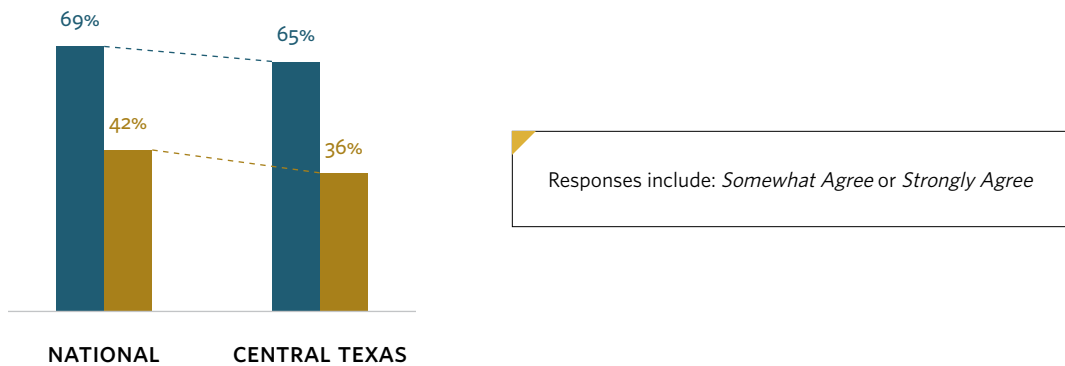
I don’t believe that it’s people of color have smaller professional networks. It’s that our professional networks don’t have the same power and access that white middle-class ... normative cisgender networks have.”

—Person of Color Gen X/Baby Boomer
Focus Group Participant

FIGURE 11 | IMPACT OF NETWORK SIZE ON CAREER BY RACE/ETHNICITY (NATIONALLY AND IN CENTRAL TEXAS)

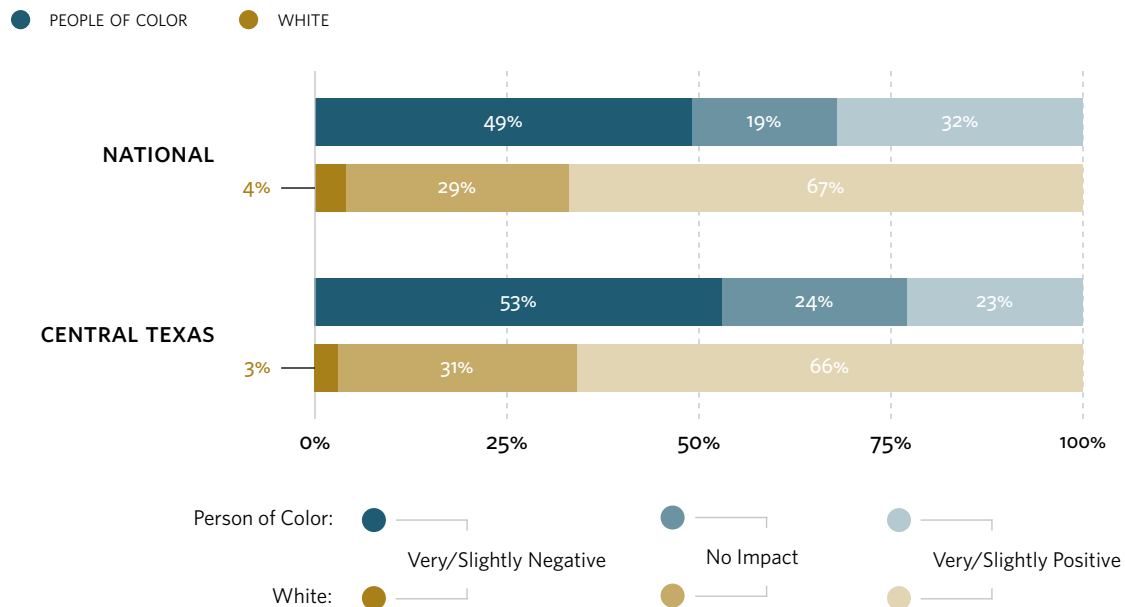
● PEOPLE OF COLOR ● WHITE

It is harder for people of color to advance because of their smaller networks.



Focus group participants also affirmed the survey responses regarding challenges faced by people of color trying to reach top leadership roles in nonprofit organizations in Central Texas. The challenges they described—particularly the experience of having advanced qualifications and years of experience and being denied jobs and opportunities in favor of less experienced white applicants—are vivid examples of the dynamics reported by Central Texas respondents of color, 53% of whom said their race had negatively impacted their career advancement (see *Figure 12* on the next page). Only 23% of Central Texas people of color said race had a positive impact on their career advancement, compared to 32% nationwide.

FIGURE 12 | IMPACT OF RACE ON CAREER ADVANCEMENT BY RACE/ETHNICITY (NATIONALLY AND IN CENTRAL TEXAS)



IN THEIR OWN WORDS



Texas is an interesting state with a racialized history ... I've hit the glass ceiling several times ... Despite having higher levels of education, unique fellowship experiences and years of diverse work experience ... less experienced white women or male leaders of color ascend[ed] into promotions."

—Woman of Color Central Texas Survey Participant

WHO LEADS IN CENTRAL TEXAS

The lack of access and networks for people of color is reflected in the leadership of organizations employing survey respondents. The survey asked respondents what share of their organization’s board, senior leadership, staff, and community are people of color. The data shows that, like the national sample, the composition of organizations in Central Texas tends to be whiter at the top, with larger shares of people of color in lower-level staff roles and among the community served. As shown in *Figure 13* on the next page, the majority of both people of color (88%) and white respondents (94%) in Central Texas work for organizations where boards are less than 50% people of color. These figures are more extreme in Central Texas than nationally, where 70% of people of color and 88% of white respondents work for organizations where boards are less than 50% people of color.

A larger gap exists between people of color and white respondents regarding staff in top leadership roles in the workplace; 80% of POC respondents work

for organizations where less than 50% of the senior leadership team consists of people of color, compared to 93% of white respondents. Similar to the findings on board composition, both people of color and white respondents in Central Texas are more likely than the national sample to work in organizations where less than half of the leadership are people of color. Notably, there is a 21-percentage-point difference between people of color nationally and in Central Texas.

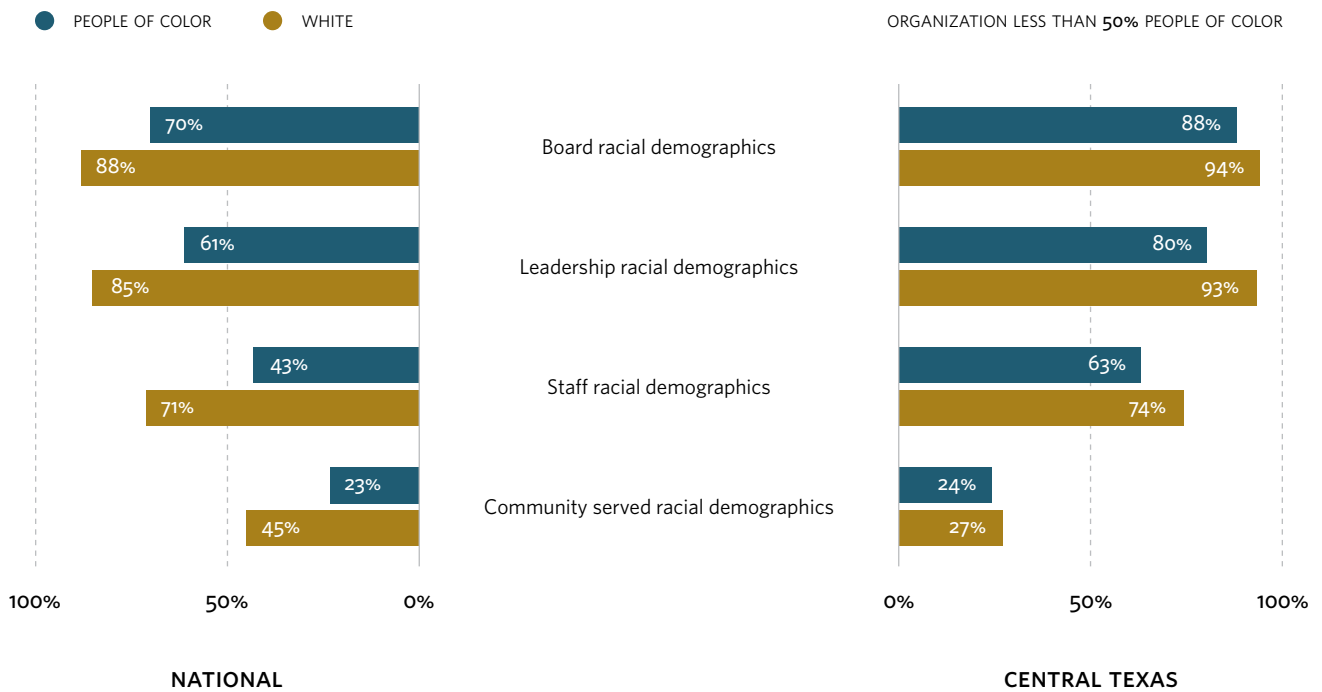
IN THEIR OWN WORDS



When I tried to apply for executive director positions, [I was told] they didn't want to take a risk on a person of color who had never been an ED before. But then when I look at my [white] counterparts, many times they were given the positions with no [executive level] experience.”

—Person of Color Gen X/Baby Boomer
Focus Group Participant

FIGURE 13 | ORGANIZATION RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS BY RACE/ETHNICITY (NATIONALLY AND IN CENTRAL TEXAS)



To further examine the demographics of organizational power, we categorized organizations described by survey respondents into three types. Organizations where both the board of directors and the senior staff teams include fewer than 25% people of color were defined as “white-run.” The second set of organizations, labeled “POC-led,” are groups that have 50% or more people of color on both the board of directors and among staff in top leadership roles. The third organizational category includes all other combinations of the board and senior staff demographics.

In Central Texas, the majority of respondents (56%) work for organizations that are at least three quarters white among both board and staff leadership, a share that is higher in Central Texas than in the national sample, and 41% worked for organizations that fall into another configuration of leadership below either of the thresholds defined for white-run and POC-led groups (Figure 14). Just 3% of respondents in Central Texas (all of whom were people of color) work for organizations where more than half of both the board and senior staff leadership are people of color.

FUNDRAISING, LEADERSHIP, AND RACE

Networks and relationships are critical to nonprofit fundraising in any part of the country, and people of color in Central Texas were more likely (44%) than their white counterparts (23%) to say they *often* or *always* lack relationships with funding sources. The gap between people of color and white respondents on this question (21 percentage points) was much larger in Central Texas than nationally (10 percentage points) (Figure 15).

FIGURE 14 | ORGANIZATION DEMOGRAPHICS (NATIONALLY AND IN CENTRAL TEXAS)

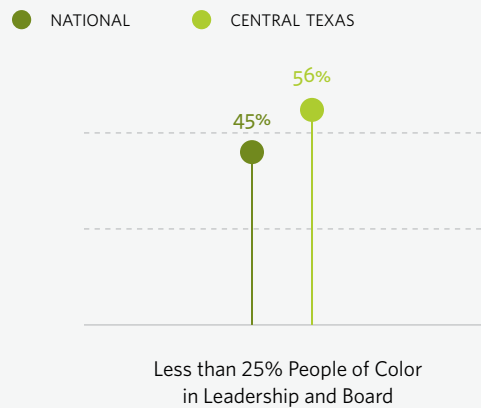
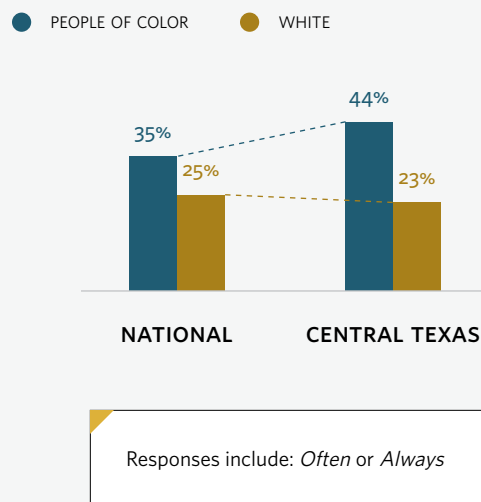


FIGURE 15 | LACK OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH FUNDING SOURCES (NATIONALLY AND IN CENTRAL TEXAS)



In focus groups, white people and people of color in CEO/ED roles described local fundraising challenges and reviewed survey results about national fundraising, including experiences reported by white people and people of color. Members of a white focus group noted that Austin has many nonprofits but few foundations, and more than one white CEO characterized the region as lacking a strong philanthropic tradition. One said that while wealthy communities in other large Texas cities like Dallas and Houston seem to have a social expectation of philanthropy — Austin’s lack of emphasis on giving creates a challenging fundraising climate because the city has “a particular social issue with philanthropy, which is maybe not racially focused, but more just community values.” Another white CEO noted that it was challenging to fundraise from wealthy individuals with longstanding roots to the Austin area, and therefore focuses fundraising relationship cultivation on wealthy transplants rather than longtime residents. Overall, members of the white CEO focus group thought factors other than race were more significant in shaping the fundraising challenges indicated by the survey data.

Although fundraising can be challenging for all, Central Texas CEOs of color described distinct racial disparities in their experiences. They characterized foundations and government agencies as favoring large organizations, even for equity-specific grants, a strategy that effectively disadvantages leaders of color who are more likely to lead organizations with smaller organizational budgets. Many leaders described receiving smaller grants than larger, white-led peer organizations doing similar work. To call attention to the inequities in local funding, one focus group participant described making ongoing, gradual efforts to educate funders about equity and inclusion. Another shared that a prior organization had begun its prospective funding relationships by asking foundations about their own diversity programs and the composition of women and people of color in leadership, and ultimately walking away from grants when there was a lack of alignment. However, many organizations and leaders of color did not feel they could decline funding or speak candidly to funders about diversity and race.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“

When [foundations are] giving smaller [grants] to smaller organizaions, I hear the response, ‘Oh, but that little amount will go far for what you’re doing, right?’ So, that’s their excuse to give less. ... And it’s like, ‘Well, with more we can make a bigger impact.’”

—Person of Color CEO Focus Group Participant

“

I don’t want my little organization getting nothing, so I am going to be grateful for that small [grant], but then I don’t know if I’m perpetuating some sort of negative feedback cycle [by not pushing funders about providing more support to organizations led by people of color].”

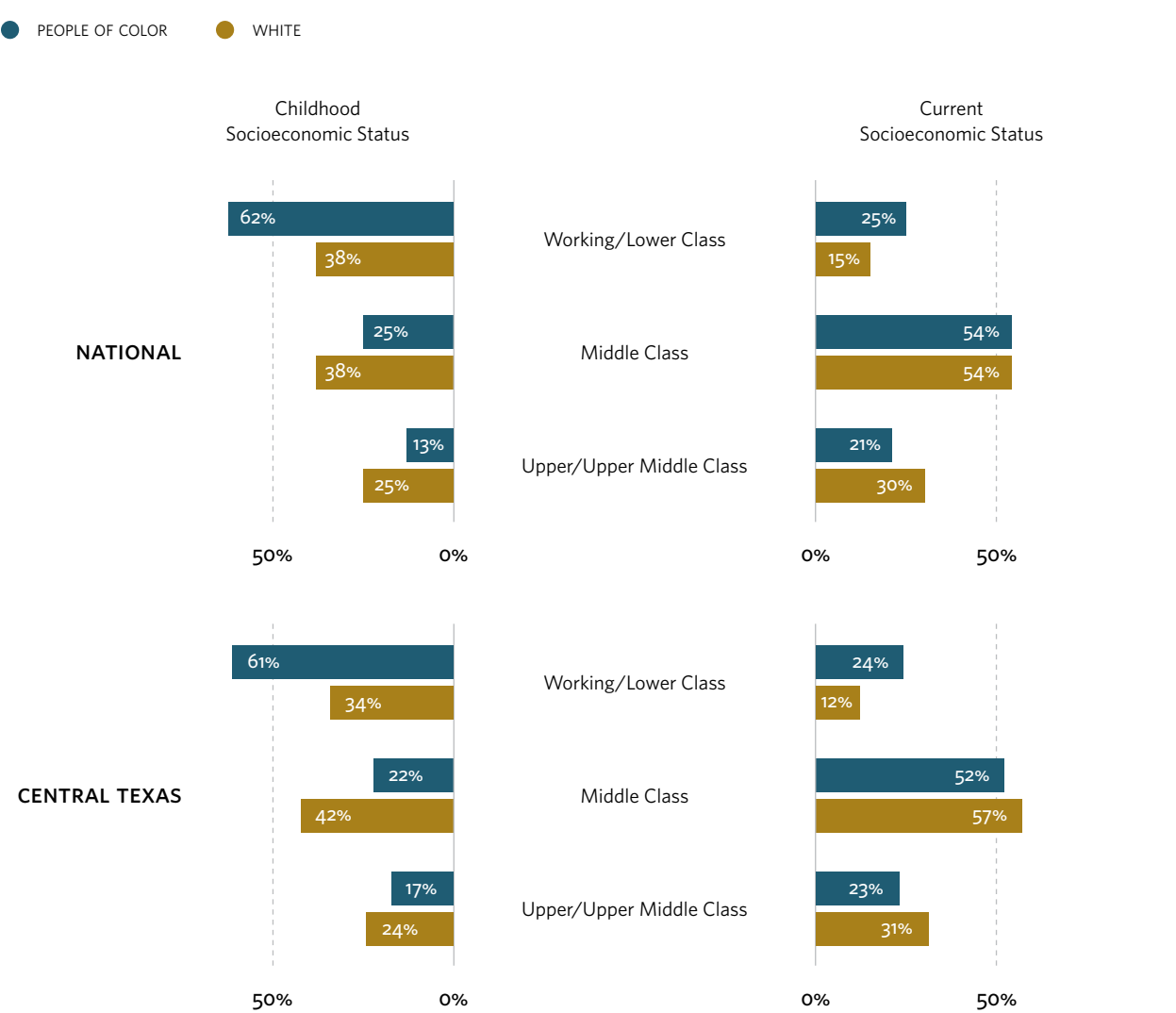
—Person of Color CEO Focus Group Participant

Challenges for Staff and CEOs

ECONOMIC WELLBEING AND NONPROFIT STAFF

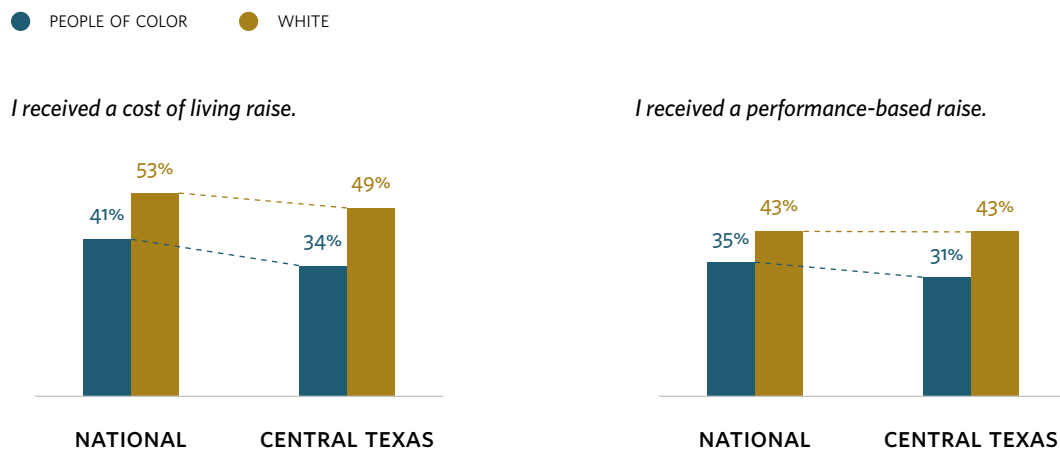
The survey asked respondents about their class background, income levels, and financial challenges. Consistent with national trends on wealth and income—illustrated both in *Race to Lead* survey findings and in extensive research about wealth income gaps based on race—the survey found that economic circumstances for people of color in the nonprofit sector were less favorable than for white people. For instance, people of color were twice as likely as white respondents to report that their household was low-income or working class both during their childhood and currently (*Figure 16*). While the data indicates that many survey respondents had upward class mobility, other findings pointed to financial disparities among nonprofit workers in Central Texas.

FIGURE 16 | SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS BY RACE/ETHNICITY (NATIONALLY AND IN CENTRAL TEXAS)



People of color in Central Texas were more likely (37%) than their white counterparts (29%) to report that their income was less than \$50,000 annually, and less likely to fall into the highest survey income bracket of more than \$95,000 annually (13% for POC and 18% for white respondents).¹³ There were even larger differences between people of color and white respondents regarding other forms of remuneration such as raises or bonuses (Figure 17). People of color in Central Texas were much less likely to have received a cost of living salary increase (34%) than white respondents (49%). They were also less likely to have received a performance-based raise (31%) than white respondents (43%).

FIGURE 17 | RESPONDENT COMPENSATION BY RACE/ETHNICITY (NATIONALLY AND IN CENTRAL TEXAS)



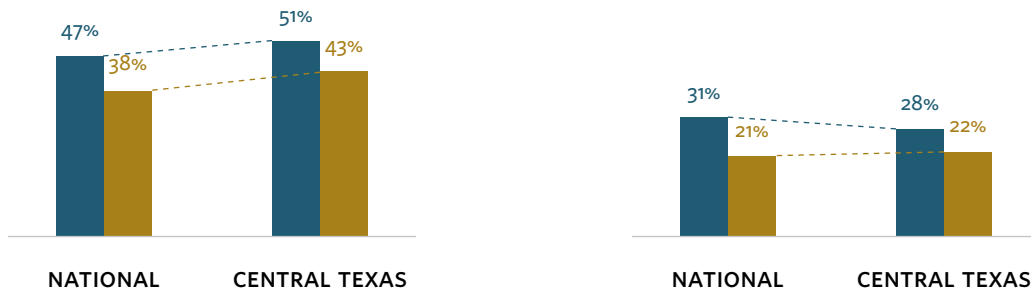
Other survey findings illustrate the economic challenges faced by people of color working in the nonprofit sector in Central Texas. Compared to white respondents, people of color were more likely to say they *often* or *always* contend with being paid less than peers for the same work (28% POC and 22% white).¹⁴ People of color also were more likely to say that not being paid a salary that was high enough for their needs was *often* or *always* a concern (51% POC and 43% white) (Figure 18 on the next page).¹⁵ People of color survey respondents in Central Texas were more likely to currently support family members outside of the household (24% compared to 16% of white respondents) and less likely to rely on another source of income to cover household expenses (56% compared to 60% of white respondents).¹⁶

FIGURE 18 | SALARY FRUSTRATIONS BY RACE/ETHNICITY (NATIONALLY AND IN CENTRAL TEXAS)

● PEOPLE OF COLOR ● WHITE

My salary is not high enough.

I am paid less than my colleagues for the same work.



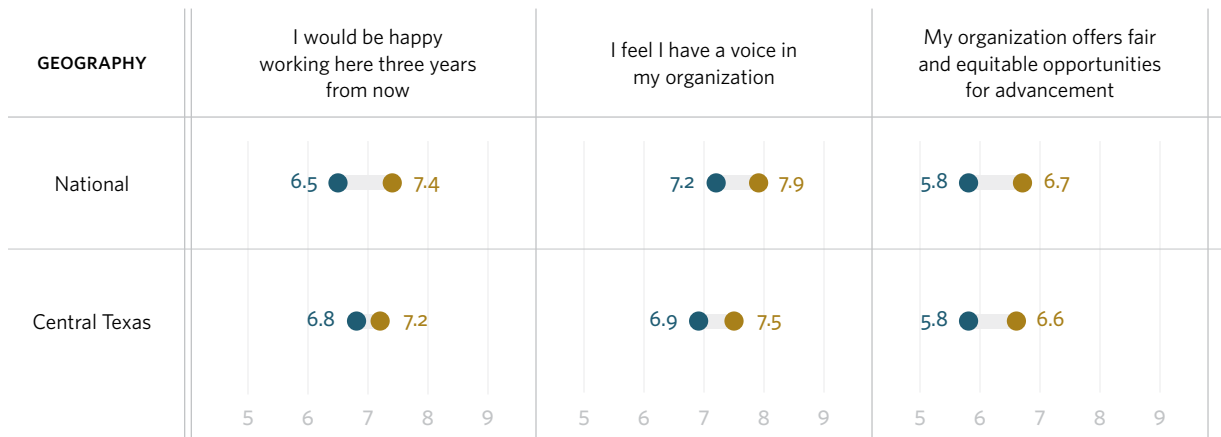
ORGANIZATIONAL DYNAMICS

The 2019 *Race to Lead* survey asked respondents to rate their level of agreement from 1 (completely disagree) to 10 (completely agree) with a series of statements about their nonprofit workplace (Figure 19).

FIGURE 19 | EXPERIENCES WITH THE ORGANIZATION BY RACE/ETHNICITY (NATIONALLY AND IN CENTRAL TEXAS)

● PEOPLE OF COLOR ● WHITE

AVERAGE RESPONSES ON A SCALE OF 1-10



White survey takers in Central Texas were somewhat more favorable than people of color in responses to whether they would be happy to work at their organization in three years (averages of 7.2 and 6.8, respectively).¹⁷ The rate of agreement was slightly lower for white people in Central Texas than national findings for white respondents, and slightly higher for respondents of color in Central Texas than nationally. White respondents had a higher average rating affirming that they have a voice in their organization compared to people of color

(average 7.5 for white respondents compared to 6.9 for people of color). Here, both white and POC respondents had a slightly lower rating in Central Texas than the national sample. Finally, white respondents had a higher score on their perception that there were fair and equitable opportunities for advancement in their organization (6.6 average agreement for white respondents compared to 5.8 for POC respondents), ratings that are similar to national figures for this question.

Analysis of national survey responses indicates that being happy with the prospect of working in the same organization in three years was positively associated with a number of factors, including having a voice in the organization and perceiving fair and equitable opportunities for advancement.¹⁸ Focus group participants, particularly people of color, echoed this association, connecting their interest in staying with an organization to the degree to which their voice is recognized and their opportunity for promotion is open and fair — and the dismay experienced when those factors are absent. Several participants in people of color focus groups described frustration with how board or staff leadership ignored concerns about racial bias in hiring and promotions. Millennial and Gen Z people of color, who are more likely to be in more junior positions, often said they did not have a voice in their organizations, even after contributing to well-received projects. They also described that their organizations ignored or minimized concerns about racial diversity in staffing or client services until white colleagues started speaking up about the same issues. Some of the people of color in the Gen X and Baby Boomer focus group also expressed frustration about lacking power in their organizations, even from middle or senior leadership positions.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“

Our leader has the autonomy to appoint and move people into positions [as] he so chooses ... I've often called him out on doing this, yet he still continues ... promoting and moving Anglo men into positions and giving them raises [over staff of color] ... I'm seriously thinking of actually just putting in my resignation through the next couple of weeks, because it's so unfair.”

—Person of Color Gen X/Baby Boomer
Focus Group Participant

“

I had to put myself out there and be very vulnerable and try to use my voice hundreds of times. I just feel really undervalued, disrespected, not heard. So it makes me not want to stay at the organization at all.”

—Person of Color Millennial/Gen Z
Focus Group Participant

“

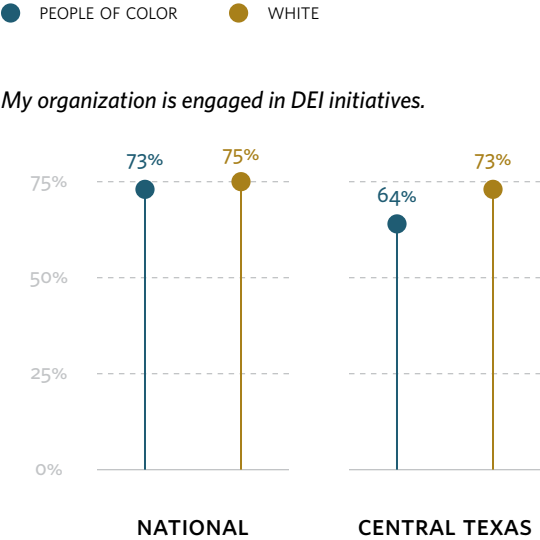
When I do speak up, because I do have a very strong voice [and] I have no problem letting people know how I feel ... I'm looked at as the angry Black woman [and told], 'Maybe you should watch your tone or how you speak with people.'”

—Person of Color Gen X/Baby Boomer
Focus Group Participant

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Efforts

Many nonprofits in the United States are taking steps to become more diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplaces, and this pattern is apparent in Central Texas. More than two-thirds (69%) of the Central Texas respondents work for organizations with diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives (Figure 20). Unlike the national sample, white respondents (73%) were more likely to report their workplace had DEI initiatives than people of color (64%).¹⁹ When asked why they thought their organization had undertaken DEI efforts, survey participants in Central Texas most often agreed it was to improve the organization’s impact (out of scale of 1-10, mean of 8.0 overall, 7.8 for POC, and 8.1 for white respondents), to improve hiring and retention of diverse staff (mean of 7.6 overall, 6.9 for POC, and 7.9 for white respondents), to be more responsive to people of color in the organization (mean of 7.3 overall, 6.6 for POC and 7.6 for white respondents), and to reflect or re-think the organization’s core mission and values (mean of 7.0 overall and for POC and white respondents).²⁰

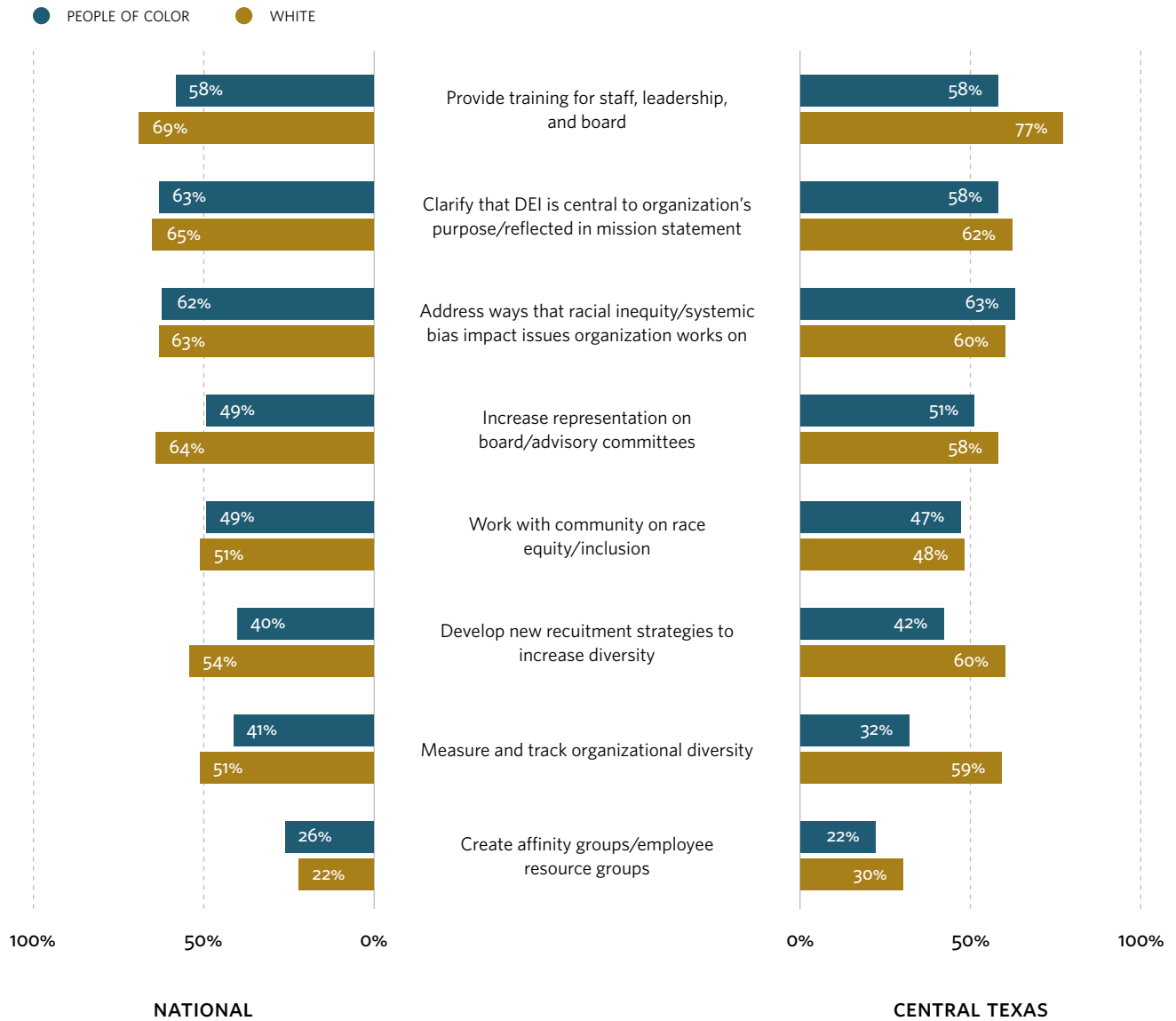
FIGURE 20 | DEI INITIATIVES BY RACE/ETHNICITY (NATIONALLY AND IN CENTRAL TEXAS)



My organization is engaged in DEI initiatives.

The survey asked respondents who indicated that their workplace had a DEI initiative to select from a list of activities employed by their organization. As Figure 21 shows on the next page, most common in Central Texas were training for staff, leadership, or board (70% overall, 58% for POC and 77% for white respondents), addressing ways that race inequity/bias impact the issues on which the organization works (61% overall, 63% for POC, and 60% for white respondents), and clarifying that DEI is central to the organization’s purpose and reflected in its mission (61% overall, 58% for POC and 62% for white respondents).²¹

FIGURE 21 | ORGANIZATION'S CURRENT DEI STRATEGIES BY RACE/ETHNICITY (NATIONALLY AND IN CENTRAL TEXAS)



IN THEIR OWN WORDS



How do you actually operationalize equity and inclusion like going to the gym? ... Like any kind of workout, you've got to have a regimen, you've got to have a goal. In the work that we do, we try to systematize how we actually measure what equity and inclusion looks like. Because if you don't define it, then you're open to all kinds of interpretation."

—Person of Color Gen X/Baby Boomer Focus Group Participant

Training was the most common DEI strategy in Central Texas and participants found it effective overall. Still, there were some differences of opinion about its impact. White respondents and people of color responded with a six-percentage-point gap regarding whether the impact of DEI training had been positive (92% and 86% agree, respectively).¹⁹ Feedback in the focus groups of people of color tended to be much more critical of training. While some participants of color expressed that training can be a good first step to start conversations about diversity, equity, and inclusion, they did not see it as an effective strategy to advance substantive change. People of color focus group participants often described training as something organizations use to “check off” taking action on diversity. Other concerns about trainings included that senior leaders often opt out, that curricula either lack depth or compel people of color to participate in sessions centered around white people, and that white colleagues are required to participate in trainings without any investment in learning.

Focus group participants also discussed the effectiveness of DEI initiatives in general. One white focus group participant said their organization is good at attracting people of color but has low rates of retention. Another white participant said their organization has been doing DEI work for several years and increased staff diversity but had not addressed internal practices; as a result, people of color want to leave the organization. One of the primary factors that made people of color express hesitation or unhappiness about staying at their nonprofit over the coming years was concern or dissatisfaction about their organization’s DEI efforts.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“

We started working on diversifying our board probably about three years ago. We’re right at the 50% mark, as of this year. It’s been very, very intentional and very slow. We were 100% white for year ... It’s a lot of time to build relationships, very intentionally seeking out the people to serve on our board, directly, one-on-one meeting ... just building up those relationships to get to that point that they would say yes to serving on the board.”

—White Millennial/Gen Z Focus Group Participant

“

[Training] was kind of opening up the conversation to make people a bit more comfortable with being uncomfortable and talk with each other. So that was actually nice to see.”

—Person of Color Millennial/Gen Z Focus Group Participant

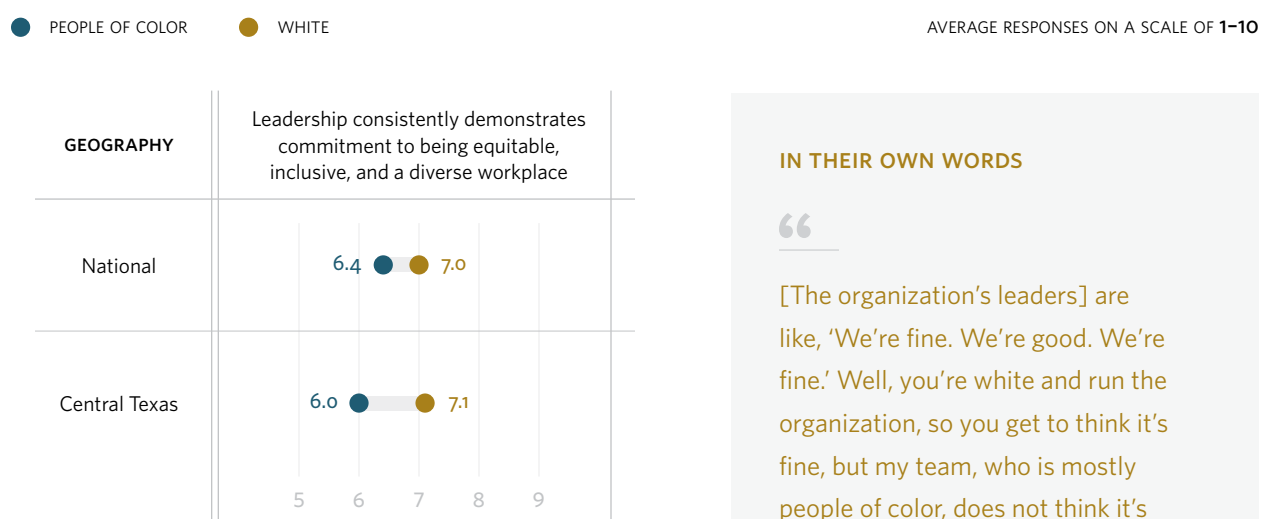
“

Trainings are not going to eradicate racism. Not in Austin, not anywhere. ... I think that a lot of us are very frustrated with the fact that we are spending a lot of money [on trainings] that can go directly into the community.”

—Person of Color Gen X/Baby Boomer Focus Group Participant

The survey also asked respondents to rate the commitment to DEI they perceived among their organization’s leaders on a scale of 1-10. Survey respondents in Central Texas ranked that commitment 6.7 on average, with white participants giving their leaders a higher score (7.1) than people of color (6.0) (Figure 22). Focus group participants echoed the survey findings, noting that leaders often seem resistant to meaningfully addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion and fail to recognize that issues exist within the organization. Leaders of color also faced difficulties in addressing DEI issues with their own superiors — the board of directors. Each of the ED/CEOs of color who participated in the Austin focus groups was a woman of color, and several described board members who were resistant to DEI conversations, particularly related to the mission of the organization and board composition.

FIGURE 22 | LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT TO DEI BY RACE/ETHNICITY (NATIONALLY AND IN CENTRAL TEXAS)



Some focus group participants described DEI efforts as “lip service” without “tangible material changes.” Another said the lack of reflection on diversity is emblematic of the nonprofit sector in Austin at large, “where people give themselves a pat on the back for being liberal and being do-gooders and they don’t see their own biases ... at least now, we’re calling it out, but it’s been like this forever.” Overall, focus group participants wanted to see less deliberation and more action to achieve diversity, equity, and inclusion for all.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“

[The organization’s leaders] are like, ‘We’re fine. We’re good. We’re fine.’ Well, you’re white and run the organization, so you get to think it’s fine, but my team, who is mostly people of color, does not think it’s fine. There’s just a lot of resistance to change, across the board.”

—White Millennial/Gen Z Focus Group Participant

“

When I tried to bring on more people of color to the board I heard, ‘Yeah, we don’t want ‘them.’ And obviously, I know who ‘them’ is ... It gets pretty exhausting, and sometimes it’s demoralizing [but] we just got to keep going and keep having those conversations.”

—CEO of Color Focus Group Participant

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Endnotes

- 1 The subset includes 350 respondents who work in the Austin area. Respondents were included in the sample if they indicated their nonprofit was located in ZIP Codes in Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Travis, or Williamson counties.
- 2 Focus groups took place in December 2019 organized by the following demographic categories: Millennial and Gen Z people of color; Gen X and Baby Boomer people of color; Millennial and Gen Z white people; and Gen X and Baby Boomer white people. A subset of participants from the Gen X and Baby Boomer session participated in smaller focus groups for executive directors and CEOs.
- 3 Zehr, Dan. (January 2015). "How Austin isolated Latinos with a unique form of segregation." *The Statesman*. <https://projects.statesman.com/news/economic-mobility/latino.html>
Winkie, Luke. (January 2015). *Vice*. https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/nnqdk7/austin-was-built-to-be-segregated
- 4 Chapman, Lizette. (March 2019). "Austin Is Building a Mini Silicon Valley, With Some of the Same Problems." *Bloomberg*. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-03-08/austin-is-building-a-mini-silicon-valley-with-some-of-the-same-problems>
- 5 MacLaggan, Corrie. (July 2014). "Feeling 'Invisible,' Black Residents Leave Austin." *The Texas Tribune*. <https://www.texastribune.org/2014/07/18/african-american-austin/>
- 6 Zehr, Dan. (January 2015). "The price of wider gaps and weaker links: As Central Texas' economy booms, its racial divides have only become more acute and costly." *The Statesman*. <https://projects.statesman.com/news/economic-mobility/divide.html>
- 7 U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey 5-Year Data (2009-2018). Prepared by Social Explorer.
- 8 Generations are categorized based on by birth year as follows: Generation Z (1998 or later); Millennial (1982-1997); Generation X (1966-1981); Baby Boomer (1947-1965); and older leaders (1946 or earlier).
- 9 Differences in this report are statistically significant unless otherwise indicated. Despite large differences in percentages, due to sample size and statistical power, we did not detect a statistically significant difference in this comparison.
- 10 See endnote 9.
- 11 See endnote 9.
- 12 See endnote 9.
- 13 See endnote 9.
- 14 See endnote 9.
- 15 We did not detect a statistically significant difference between POC and white respondents in Central Texas who *often* or *always* reported these concerns. There were, however, statistically significant differences between POC and white respondents who said they *rarely* or *never* contend with inadequate and inequitable salaries, including *never* or *rarely* being paid less than peers for the same work (39% POC vs. 51% white), and *never* or *rarely* being paid a salary that did not meet their needs (18% POC and 30% white).
- 16 See endnote 9.
- 17 See endnote 9.
- 18 The median tenure for paid employment—across all industries in the United States as of 2018—is 4.2 years. Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (September 2018). "Employee Tenure Summary." <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/tenure.nr0.htm>
- 19 See endnote 9.
- 20 See endnote 9. The only statistically significant difference between people of color and white respondents regarding perceived motivation for DEI was regarding hiring and retention.
- 21 See endnote 9. The DEI initiatives with statistically significant differences between people of color and white respondents in Central Texas were responses regarding training, developing new recruitment strategies, and measuring organizational diversity.



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