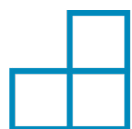




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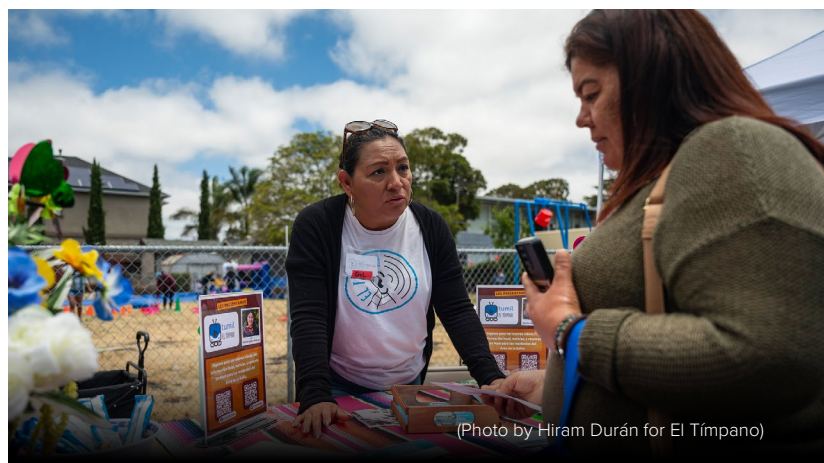
**Institute for
Nonprofit News**

INDEX REPORT ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION IN THE NONPROFIT NEWS SECTOR

INN INDEX 2023



(Photo by Justin Taylor for The Current)



(Photo by Hiram Durán for El Tímpano)



Table of Contents

- Acknowledgments 2
- Executive Summary 4
- Introduction 7
- Methods 10
- Race and Ethnicity 12
- Gender 19
- DEI Practices 22
- Funding from Foundations and Individual Donors 30
- Conclusion 37

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INN’s Index is shaped by the vision and leadership of Sue Cross, INN’s CEO and executive director, who launched the recurring Index survey in 2018 and inspired the idea for undertaking in-depth studies of DEI every three years as part of the Index’s contribution to knowledge about the sector.



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[Previous Index reports are archived.](#)

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Executive Summary

On an annual basis, the Institute for Nonprofit News (INN) conducts an Index survey of its growing network of newsroom members to help assess the state of the nonprofit news sector. Its latest Index survey focused deeply on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), exploring whether and how DEI is reflected in the sector's staffing and leadership, operations, engagement with underserved communities and revenue patterns.

This report draws on survey responses from 348 INN members (a 90% response rate), supplemented by interviews with a subset of these members (n=16) to help us interpret and contextualize patterns in the survey data. As one of the most comprehensive surveys of nonprofit news organizations in North America, INN's Index data may be treated as a rough approximation of the sector, though with the recognition that INN membership does not include all U.S. nonprofit news organizations.

The research findings indicate that there are promising signs of progress, including thoughtful and nuanced efforts underway to advance not just diversity, but also equity and inclusion. But there is still a great deal of work to be done to advance a more diverse, equitable and inclusive sector. Some of the key findings are highlighted below.

Diversity:

- **Racial and ethnic composition of the sector in 2022.** The racial and ethnic composition of personnel in the nonprofit news sector is largely similar to the U.S. population. Based on available data on race and ethnicity in the news industry more broadly, the nonprofit news sector also appears to be more diverse than other parts of the industry. However, the degree of diversity is stronger at the staff level than at the leadership level in nonprofit news organizations. More than two-thirds of nonprofit outlets surveyed are white-led, which we define as organizations in which more than 50% of all executives and managers are white. This is roughly four times the number of outlets led by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).
- **Change in racial and ethnic diversity since 2020.** Across the nonprofit news sector as a whole, personnel became more racially and ethnically diverse between 2020 and 2022. But this progress towards greater diversity was uneven across outlets and across organizational levels: About half of outlets reported an increase in BIPOC representation among their staff and contractors, while 28% reported an increase among executives and managers. Among majority-white outlets, which are the primary focus of efforts to push for greater DEI in the news industry, very similar proportions of outlets reported increased diversity at staff and leadership levels.
- **Gender composition of the sector in 2022.** Women comprise about half of nonprofit news staff and an even higher proportion of executives and managers, surpassing the level of women's



representation in many other peer news organizations. Outlets reported that 1.6% of personnel identify as nonbinary or nonconforming, and 0.6% of individuals identify as transgender. The overall gender composition of nonprofit news personnel changed little between 2020 and 2022.

DEI practices:

- **Prevalence of specific practices.** While a little over half of news outlets have set goals for improving diversity, far fewer have set goals for improving equity or inclusion, created a plan of action for achieving DEI goals or allocated resources and staff time for evaluating progress towards those goals. In addition, practices that can impact how a news organization operates — such as using a pay equity audit to inform changes in salaries or compensation policies, or implementing structural changes that strengthen the formal decision-making authority of staff of color or staff from other underrepresented groups — are not widespread, implemented by a minority of outlets. When it comes to assessing how communities of color or other historically marginalized or oppressed groups are represented in their coverage, two-thirds of outlets had used at least one of the methods listed in the survey. Asking members of these groups for feedback and conducting a content analysis were the most frequently cited methods.
- **Attention to the “how.”** In interviews, INN members emphasized that how these practices are implemented is as important as what is implemented. They flagged questions they are wrestling with as they seek to integrate equity and inclusion in their internal policies and systems, including how to structure employee benefits, how the pay scale values different forms of expertise, and how to ensure transparency and equity in hiring and advancement processes.
- **Variation across news organizations.** Engagement in DEI practices varied across organizations, which vary widely in their mission, history, size and ways of working. White-led outlets were less likely than BIPOC-led outlets to have undertaken many of the DEI practices explored in the survey. Smaller outlets were also less likely to engage in each of the DEI practices than their larger counterparts.

Funding:

- **Foundation funding in 2022.** Against a backdrop of recent research highlighting disparities in philanthropic support for BIPOC-led versus white-led organizations, we explored questions around equity in foundation funding for nonprofit news outlets. The answers were nuanced, requiring careful attention to differences across INN members and historical contextualization. BIPOC-led organizations — particularly state and local outlets and startup outlets — reported a higher median amount of foundation funding than white-led counterparts. But among national outlets, particularly more established organizations, the reverse pattern emerged, with white-led outlets reporting higher levels of funding. The flexibility of funding also varied, with BIPOC-led outlets less likely to receive general operating support from foundations than white-led outlets.



- **Attention to context.** In interviews, INN members observed that any shift in foundation funding towards BIPOC-led and/or BIPOC-serving outlets is a relatively recent development traced in large part to funders' increased focus on DEI since 2020. Moreover, organizations flagged the need for funders to bring a stronger equity lens to their grantmaking. They urged funders to acknowledge both historical patterns of oppression and inequity as well as current practices that perpetuate inequities, including racial bias in some funders' decisions about whether, how much, and under what terms they are willing to fund BIPOC-led outlets vs. white-led outlets.
- **Individual giving in 2022.** The data also confirmed that BIPOC-led and BIPOC-serving outlets at the state and local level face challenges fundraising from individual donors. The median amount of individual giving reported by BIPOC-led outlets serving communities of color is less than half of the median among other state and local outlets.

This report aims to contribute to a much larger effort among news outlets, researchers, funders and others to illuminate, discuss, innovate and challenge the way DEI is, or is not, reflected in the news industry.



Introduction

On an annual basis, the Institute for Nonprofit News (INN) conducts an Index survey of its growing network of members to help assess the state of the nonprofit news sector. INN's most recent survey, the 2023 Index, focused deeply on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). The data offer an updated picture of whether and how DEI is reflected in the sector's staffing and leadership, operations, engagement with underserved communities and revenue patterns.

This report represents INN's second in-depth study of DEI among its members. INN published its first DEI Index Report in January 2020, examining components of diversity, equity and inclusion across its membership in calendar year 2019. At that time, other industry studies examining race, ethnicity and gender representation within the journalism sector were unable to capture standardized, representative figures that would allow for year-over-year tracking. INN committed to measuring diversity as the nonprofit news sector continues to expand, using its recurring Index survey to track diversity metrics annually and undertake in-depth studies of DEI every three years.

Since INN's first report on DEI in the nonprofit news sector was published, the conversation around what it looks like — and what it takes — to advance DEI within journalism has evolved. In May 2020, mass protests against police brutality and systemic racism erupted nationwide and globally following the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police. In that context, many white-led and primarily white-serving news outlets were confronted with their own “racial reckoning” regarding their staffing, internal norms and culture, and coverage of communities of color. Concurrently, new (mostly digital) startups founded and led by people of color have since entered the nonprofit news space, helping to grow the existing cohort of print, broadcast and digital outlets with a mission to serve communities of color.

In this context, INN needed to reassess how it asked about DEI, while continuing its commitment to publish comparable, year-over-year data based on a set of recurring survey questions. We convened an advisory board of researchers, INN members and partner organizations to help us navigate this balance, guide a revision of the survey instrument and frame our research focus based on the sector's emerging questions and needs. Early in 2023, we published a blog post summarizing our approach and research goals.¹

¹Susanna Dilliplane and Emily Roseman, “[Exploring diversity, equity and inclusion within the nonprofit news sector: What we hope to learn in INN's 2023 Index survey.](#)” *Medium* Jan. 23, 2023.



This report aims to help answer key questions that INN’s members, partners, funders and colleagues are asking as they work towards a more diverse, equitable and inclusive nonprofit news sector:

- **Diversity:** What is the racial, ethnic and gender composition of nonprofit news staff, leadership and boards, and how have these demographics changed over time?
- **DEI practices:** What practices are news organizations using to advance diversity, equity and inclusion — both in how they operate and in how they serve the information needs of communities of color?
- **Funding:** Are there disparities in the level of foundation funding and individual giving reported by news outlets led by people of color and serving communities of color compared to other outlets?

Across these three questions, we recognize that the meaning of “DEI” — and the extent to which certain questions about diversity, DEI practices and funding — is not the same across all INN members, who vary widely in terms of their respective histories, missions and ways of working. Current conversations and efforts around DEI are grounded in the context of the 2020 racial justice protests and calls for change within historically white-dominated news organizations — a continuation of efforts across many decades to diversify a predominantly white-led and white-serving industry. These efforts focus primarily on majority-white news organizations, interrogating how power structures that privilege whiteness (and maleness) are embedded in news outlets’ practices, procedures, policies and culture. News outlets founded by and for people of color are positioned differently relative to DEI. As some outlets noted in survey responses, “DEI is baked into everything we do already” and “DEI is in the fiber of our organization.” The historical context of racism and oppression also bears differently on access to funding for these outlets compared to white-led outlets.

Our analysis aims to identify and explore these differences among INN members. For example, in examining diversity, we seek to understand how much of the nonprofit news sector is led by white people or by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), and how many majority-white organizations have increased the diversity of their leadership and staff over time. In our analysis of DEI practices, we use data on the racial and ethnic leadership of news outlets to break out the findings for white-led outlets, while also drawing on insights from BIPOC-led outlets about how they approach DEI in their practices. Our analysis of funding patterns applies an equity lens to explore where and how foundation and individual giving dollars are being invested.

We also recognize the limitations of our study: Much remains to be explored and understood about DEI in the nonprofit news sector. For example, additional data would be needed to make demographic comparisons between outlets’ personnel and the markets or communities they aim to serve, taking into account wide variation in the missions, intended audiences, distribution platforms and geographic



scopes of INN members. Future research could also apply a regional or place-based lens to measure demographic shifts over time. More broadly, our report doesn't fully capture the longer-term and nonlinear processes through which news organizations can become more diverse, more equitable and more inclusive in how they operate and how they relate to and serve communities.

This report aims to contribute to a much larger effort among journalists, researchers, funders and others to illuminate, discuss, innovate and challenge the way DEI is, or is not, reflected in the news industry. Our hope is that the report serves as a useful resource to the sector's efforts to advance DEI – not simply as an end in itself, but in service of broader goals of racial, gender and social justice.



Methods

Analysis of the state of the sector in 2022: This report draws on INN’s 2023 Index survey, which was conducted in January 2023, to summarize the state of diversity, equity and inclusion in the nonprofit news sector in calendar year 2022. A total of 348 INN members are included in the analysis, encompassing print, digital-only and broadcast outlets.² With a 90% response rate, the survey data provide a representative picture of INN members’ personnel and their efforts to advance DEI. For ease of reference, this report treats these outlets as a rough approximation of “the sector.” However, we recognize that INN membership does not include all U.S. nonprofit news organizations. The findings should be interpreted with that caveat in mind, particularly with regard to public media outlets and print legacy outlets, which tend to be less well represented among INN members. Readers should also bear in mind that many news outlets led by and for people of color are for-profit organizations, falling outside the scope of INN’s membership. Findings we discuss in this report, particularly those focused on outlets that are led by and primarily serve people of color, should not be treated as representative of all U.S. news outlets led by and for communities of color.

For transparency purposes, INN has made the full survey instrument publicly available.³ We encourage interested readers to consult the survey instrument for details on full question wording. Survey response options have been abbreviated in this report’s charts and graphs for reasons of space.

Analysis of change over time: We were able to explore patterns of change over time on a limited basis. Specifically, we examine potential changes in the demographic composition of staff and leadership between calendar years 2020 and 2022.⁴ This comparison provides initial insights into whether diversity in nonprofit news organizations increased in the wake of the 2020 racial justice protests. The analysis focuses on the subset of news organizations for which we have comparable data from both survey years: a total of 196 organizations. Our ability to examine changes in diversity over a longer period of time was constrained by changes in question wording, responses rates and the composition of INN membership across different years of data.

²INN’s Index reports typically omit public media outlets due to systematic differences in how these organizations report revenue and expenses. Public media account for 28 of the 348 outlets that completed the 2023 Index survey. For this reason, we excluded them from the part of our analysis focused on funding. However, they *are* included in our analysis of demographic composition and DEI practices. We note that some public media outlets (as well as a small set of other INN members that are not public media) reported demographics for their entire organization because they were unable to break out the data specifically for their news department.

³The 2023 Index survey instrument can be accessed [here](#). It encompasses questions about DEI as well as an array of other questions that INN asks each year for purposes of producing its reports on trends, opportunities and challenges in the sector more broadly.

⁴For this analysis of change over time, we opted to use demographic data gathered in INN’s survey covering calendar year 2020, as opposed to using data gathered for its first in-depth study of DEI covering calendar year 2019. This is because the response rate was higher for calendar year 2020 than it was for 2019, allowing us to include a larger and more representative sample of INN members who completed the survey in both years.



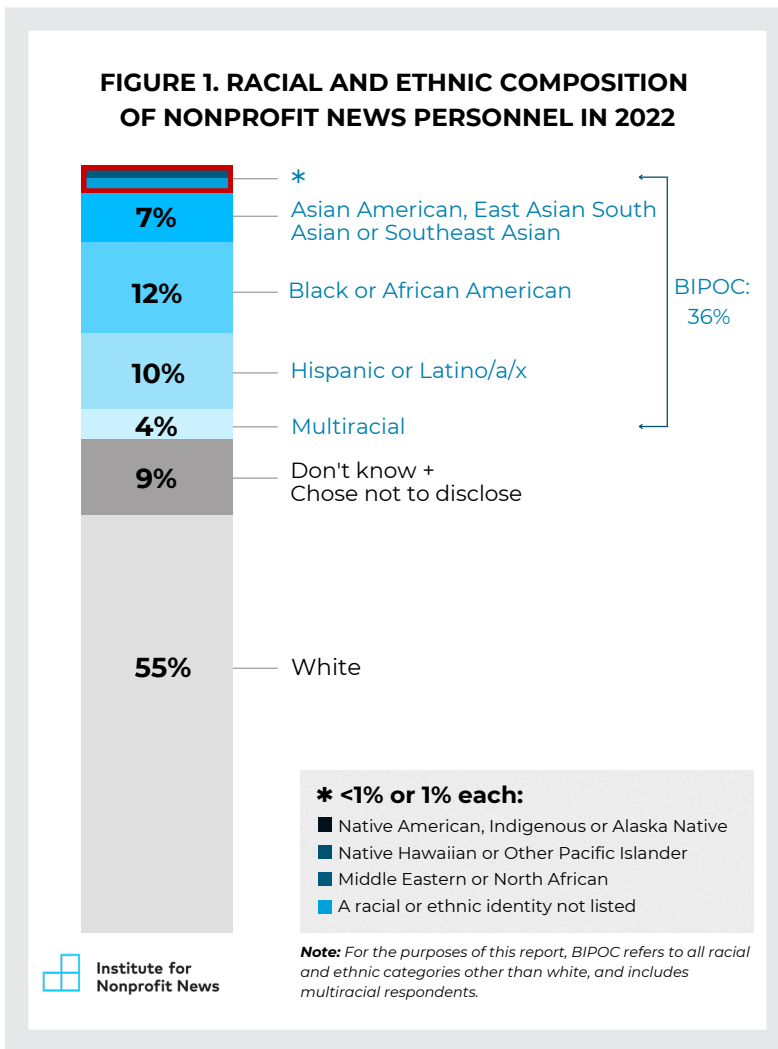
Interview data: As a complement to the survey data, we conducted interviews with 16 INN members in June 2023. We focused on outlets led by and for people of color, outlets that reported an increase in diversity between 2020 and 2022, and outlets that reported taking on some of the more time-intensive DEI practices. We drew on insights from these interviews to help interpret and contextualize some of the patterns observed in the survey data.

Challenges: There are many methodological challenges inherent in measuring DEI in the nonprofit news sector, including the lack of comparable data to examine change over time and the difficulty of gathering accurate demographic information, particularly from news organizations that do not already track this. There's also an evolving conversation with differing perspectives on what to ask, and how, in order to meaningfully capture DEI. We are grateful to the group of advisors who helped guide our efforts to address these challenges, while at the same time we recognize that the survey is neither perfect nor comprehensive. Lessons from the 2023 Index will help INN learn how to strengthen its future efforts to gather and share information about DEI in the sector.

Race and Ethnicity

WHAT IS THE RACIAL AND ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF NONPROFIT NEWSROOMS?

The racial and ethnic composition of nonprofit news personnel is largely similar to the U.S. population.



According to the U.S. Census Bureau, people who identify as “white alone, not Hispanic or Latino” comprise about 58.9% of the U.S. population⁵. Among INN members, 55.3% of personnel identify as white (and no other racial or ethnic category), a slightly lower percentage than the population overall (*Figure 1*).⁶ Black or African American individuals comprise 12.2% of nonprofit news personnel, compared to 13.6% in the U.S. population, while Asian individuals make up 6.8% of nonprofit news personnel and 6.3% of the broader population. Approximately 1.1% of nonprofit news personnel identify as Native American, Indigenous or Alaska Native, compared to 1.3% in the general population, and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander individuals comprise 0.4% of news personnel, compared to 0.3% in the general population.⁷

⁵See U.S. Census Bureau, Quick Facts, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/> (accessed August 2023).

⁶For purposes of this report, the term “personnel” refers to the combined number of executives, managers, staff and significant contractors reported by INN members. It does not include board members. “Significant contractors” were defined for survey respondents as “personnel who play a significant, ongoing role in your organization, not occasional freelancers or one-off projects.”

⁷The remaining 9% of news personnel is composed of individuals whose race and ethnicity were reported as not known or not disclosed.



Hispanic and Latino/a/x individuals stand out as the primary divergence: they make up 10.5% of nonprofit news personnel, compared to 19.1% of the U.S. population. Although this suggests that people who identify as Hispanic or Latino/a/x are underrepresented in nonprofit news outlets, it is important to be cautious in making comparisons because of differences in how Hispanic or Latino origin is measured in the census versus INN's 2023 Index.⁸

The nonprofit news workforce is more racially and ethnically diverse than many news industry peers.

Approximately 35.7% of nonprofit news personnel are BIPOC. (This is an extrapolated category that we have defined, for the purposes of this report, as encompassing individuals who identify with a racial or ethnic category other than white, including multiracial.) Although comparisons with the rest of the news industry are complicated due to a lack of comprehensive, comparable data on workforce diversity,⁹ available data tentatively suggest that nonprofit news organizations are relatively more diverse than many of their peers. For example, based on data from RTDNA's 2022 survey of broadcast news outlets, BIPOC people made up a smaller proportion of the TV news workforce (25.5%) and the radio news workforce (17.8%), compared to nonprofit news organizations.¹⁰ RTDNA data further show that the non-commercial radio news workforce is more diverse than its commercial counterpart. That aligns with the higher level of diversity reported by National Public Radio (41% BIPOC).¹¹ Although we lack comparable aggregated data for newspapers and digital news outlets, recent data shared by individual news organizations indicate that INN members are more diverse than Gannett (25% BIPOC), and roughly comparable to the New York Times (37% BIPOC) and the Washington Post (39.6% BIPOC).¹²

⁸The U.S. Census asks two separate questions, one focused on ethnicity (Hispanic and Latino origin) and one focused on race. INN opted to ask one question that combines race and ethnicity, including "Hispanic or Latino/a/x" as a category alongside racial categories. We did this to align with our understanding of how most news outlets gather information about race and ethnicity, with the expectation that this would help them more easily determine how to respond accurately to our survey question based on the demographic information they have. We interpret the percentage of individuals who identified only as "white" in INN's race/ethnicity question as *roughly* comparable to the U.S. Census' calculated percentage of respondents who indicated only "white" in the race question and "not Hispanic or Latino" in the ethnicity question (i.e., "white alone, not Hispanic or Latino"). But we caution against treating the two metrics as the same, given the methodological differences.

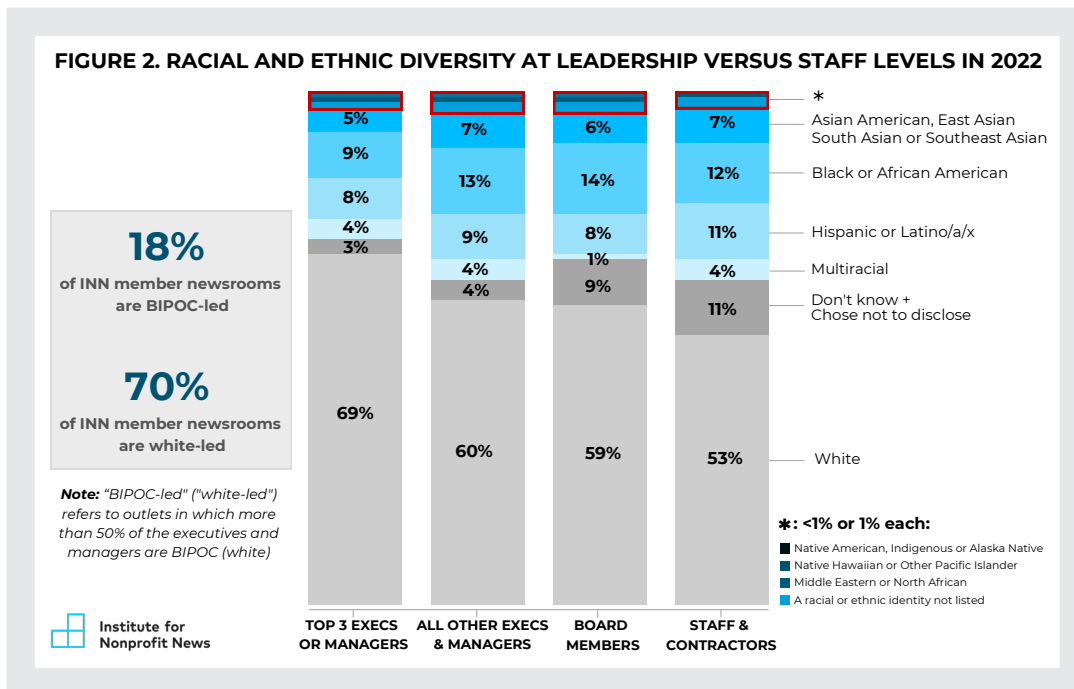
⁹See Sarah Scire, "[Crushing resistance: Yet again, newsrooms aren't showing up to the industry's largest diversity survey](#)," *Neiman Lab* April 12, 2022

¹⁰Bob Papper with Keren Henderson, "[TV News Gets More Diverse, Still Doesn't Reflect Public](#)" (Radio Television Digital News Association/Newhouse School at Syracuse University, 2022). Bob Papper with Keren Henderson, "[Radio Newsrooms Are More Diverse Than Ever](#)" (Radio Television Digital News Association/Newhouse School at Syracuse University, 2022).

¹¹National Public Radio, "Staff Diversity Statistics and Breakdown - 2022" (accessed August 2023).

¹²Gannett, "[Workforce Diversity: Representation Trends 2020 – 2023](#)" (accessed August 2023). The New York Times, "[2022 New York Times Diversity and Inclusion Report](#)." The Washington Post, "[The Washington Post's Workforce Demographics](#)" July 28, 2022.

Comparisons with the nonprofit sector and the U.S. workforce more broadly are complicated due to differences in how race and ethnicity are reported. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that 77% of the U.S. workforce was white in 2022, and Independent Sector reported that the nonprofit sector workforce was 76% white in 2022 – both of which are significantly higher than the percentage of white nonprofit news personnel (55.3%).¹³ However, both of these metrics include white people who identify as Hispanic or Latino; they do not provide a “white alone, not Hispanic or Latino” category, which would be more comparable INN’s data.¹⁴



There is less diversity at leadership levels of the nonprofit news sector.

When we break down the broader category of personnel into component parts, we observe different levels of diversity among staff and contractors compared to those in leadership positions (Figure 2). Among organizations’ top three executives, 68.8% are white and 28.2% are BIPOC. By comparison, 52.6% of non-managerial staff and contractors are white and 36.7% are BIPOC.

A corresponding pattern emerges when we look at how many nonprofit news organizations have leadership that is majority-white versus majority-BIPOC. More than two-thirds of outlets (70.2%) are white-led, which we define as organizations in which more than 50% of all executives and managers

¹³U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “[Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey](#)” (accessed August 2023). Independent Sector, “[Health of the U.S. Nonprofit Sector: A Quarterly Review](#),” Dec. 31 2022.

¹⁴Based on additional data about the Hispanic/Latino workforce from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, we can generate a rough estimate for the proportion of the U.S. workforce that is non-Hispanic white (60.5%). But as noted in footnote 8, we caution against making direct comparisons between these data and INN data because of methodological differences in how race and ethnicity are measured. See U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “[BLS Report: Labor force characteristics by race and ethnicity, 2021](#)” Report 1100, January 2023.



Defining “BIPOC-led” and “BIPOC-serving”

There are *varying definitions* of “BIPOC-led” used throughout the news industry, the nonprofit sector and philanthropy. Some definitions focus on the CEO or the founder; others include top executives and board members. Still others consider multiple levels of leadership and whether the organization serves BIPOC communities.

For purposes of this report, we have defined “**BIPOC-led**” as organizations in which more than 50% of all executives and managers identify with a racial or ethnic category other than white, including multiracial.

We have defined “**BIPOC-serving**” separately, based on whether newsrooms indicated that they focus primarily on serving the information needs of communities of color. We provided a specific definition of “focus primarily” for survey respondents: “people of color comprise a majority of your audience and your organization spends a majority of its funding, resources and staff time on stories for people of color.” We relied on organizations self-identifying if their audience and operations align with this definition.

In this report, we are careful to specify when we are referencing “BIPOC-led” versus “BIPOC-serving” metrics – or, where relevant, if both terms apply.

are white. This is about four times the number of nonprofit news organizations that are BIPOC-led (17.5%).

Outlets at the state or province level are the least likely to have BIPOC-majority leadership: 10.1% of these outlets are BIPOC-led, while 82.8% are white-led. National outlets emerged as the most likely to be BIPOC-led (24.6% of these outlets have BIPOC-majority leadership), while outlets at the local, regional and global level fell in between.

Although we don’t have directly comparable data, a similar pattern is observed among news industry peers. For example, RTDNA’s 2022 survey, cited above, shows that white people comprise a higher proportion of TV and radio news directors, compared to their proportion in the broader TV and radio news workforce. Gannett and other major news organizations like The New York Times and The Washington Post also report this same pattern: The proportion of white people is higher at leadership levels, compared to their broader pool of employees.¹⁵

BIPOC personnel are not evenly distributed across all news outlets; many are concentrated in outlets where they comprise the majority of people in the organization.

Looking at the racial and ethnic composition within each news organization, we observe that approximately 23% of INN members are majority-BIPOC outlets – that is, more than half of their personnel are BIPOC. This set of outlets accounts for nearly half (46%) of all BIPOC personnel working for INN members.

At the other end of the spectrum, a larger set of outlets (about 55% of INN members) reported that BIPOC individuals make up less than a third of their personnel. About 23% of all BIPOC personnel work for these outlets. These patterns speak to the varying levels of diversity that staff and leaders experience in their respective working environments.

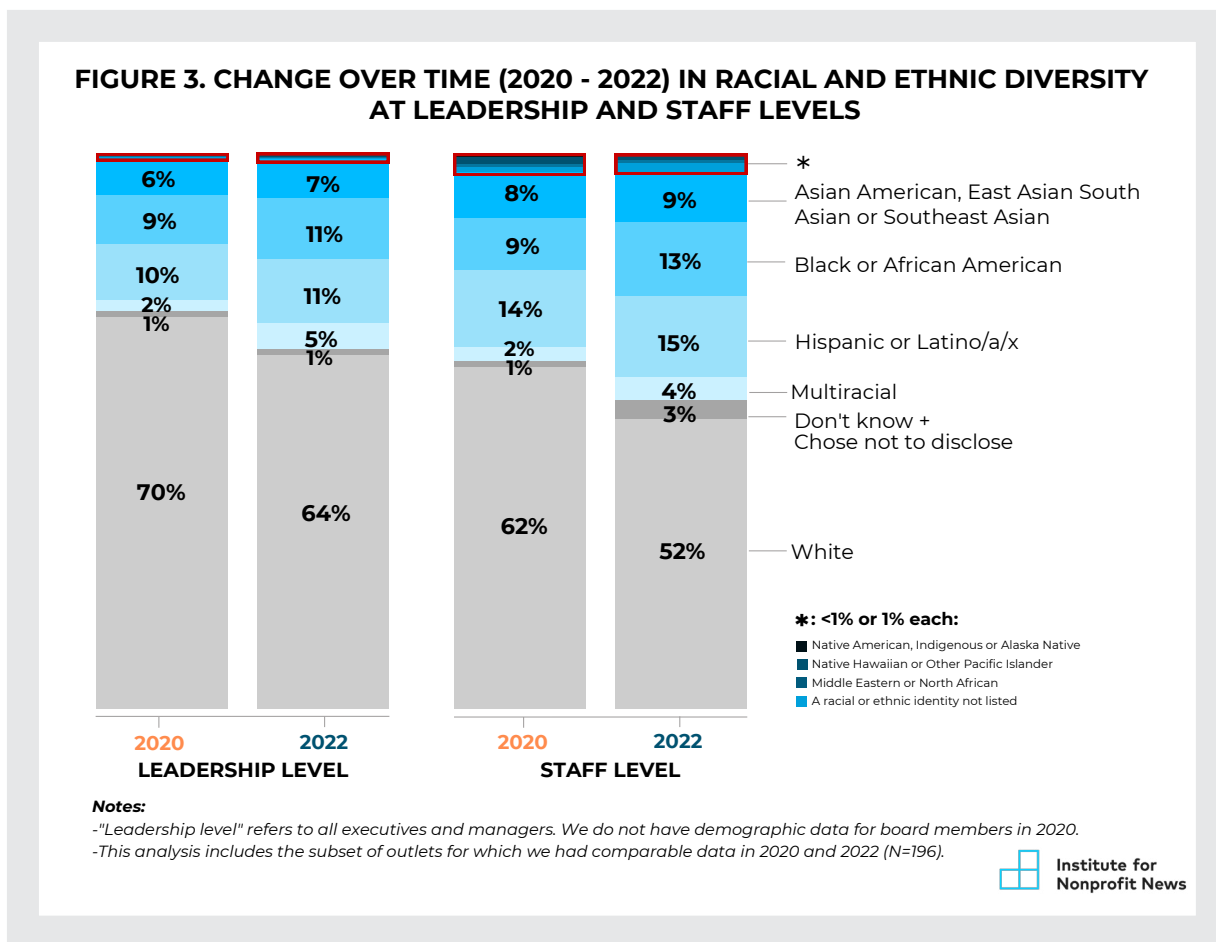
¹⁵Gannett, The New York Times and The Washington Post posted demographic data for all personnel as well as breaking out the demographics of leadership separately. See Gannett, “[Workforce Diversity: Representation Trends 2020 – 2023](#)” (accessed August 2023). The New York Times, “[2022 New York Times Diversity and Inclusion Report](#).” The Washington Post, “[The Washington Post’s Workforce Demographics](#)” July 28, 2022.



HAS RACIAL AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY AMONG NONPROFIT NEWS OUTLETS INCREASED OVER TIME?

This question has long challenged the news industry as a whole. Efforts to track diversity in the industry, led by the American Society of News Editors (now News Leaders Association) since 1978, suggest that news organizations remained short of reaching racial and ethnic parity with the U.S. population as of its latest survey in 2018.¹⁶ More recently, there is heightened awareness around the imperative to measure changes in diversity after the 2020 racial justice protests prompted many news outlets to undertake DEI efforts.

The data show that the racial and ethnic composition of INN’s membership did become more diverse overall between 2020 and 2022 (Figure 3).



¹⁶American Society of News Editors, "How Diverse Are US Newsrooms?" (interactive website with Google News Lab, accessed August 2023). See also News Leaders Association, "Digital-only platforms drive race and gender inclusion among newsrooms in 2019 ASNE Newsroom Diversity Survey" Sept. 10, 2019. ¹⁹Within this set of outlets for which we have comparable data across the two years, the number of BIPOC-led outlets rose from 28 in 2020 to 31 in 2022.

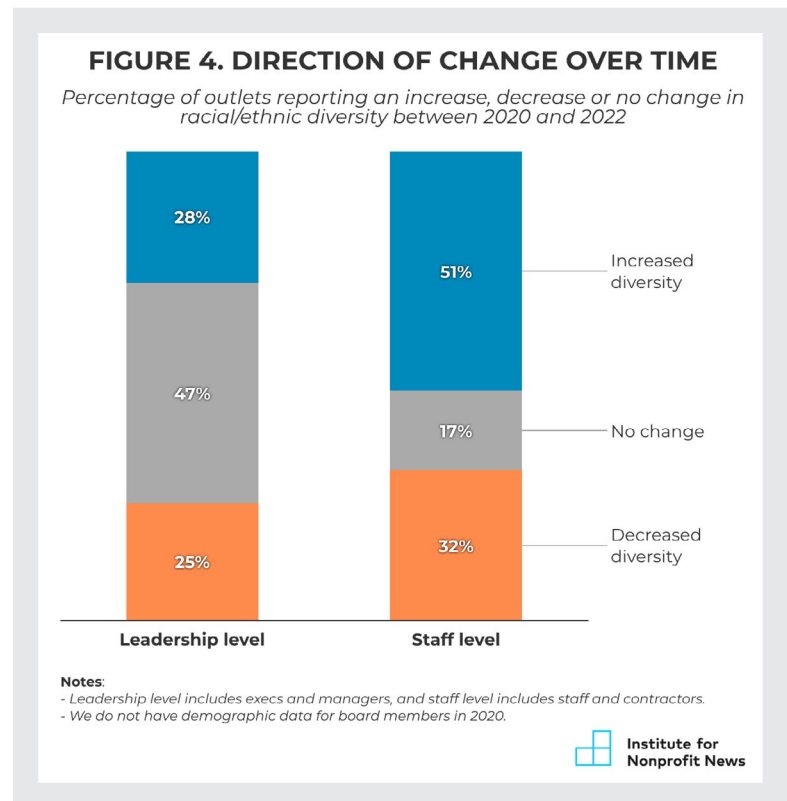


Pooling data across outlets, we observed a 7 percentage-point increase in BIPOC personnel during this two-year period – both at the staff and contractor level (rising from 37% to 44% BIPOC) and at the executive and manager level (rising from 28% to 35% BIPOC). As noted earlier, this analysis focuses on outlets for which we have comparable data across the two years, ensuring that observed changes are not attributable to changes in INN’s membership.

This increase in diversity among nonprofit news outlets is larger than changes observed in RTDNA’s trend data on broadcast outlets: The percentage of BIPOC people in the workforce grew by 2.4 percentage points for radio news and 0.5 percentage points for non-Hispanic TV news between 2020 and 2022.¹⁷ Digiday’s trend analysis of the percentage of white employees at major media organizations suggests the amount of change varies, but most organizations report an increase in diversity of between 2 and 5 percentage points.¹⁸

But progress towards greater diversity was uneven across individual news outlets, particularly at the leadership level.

A little more than a quarter (28%) of outlets reported an increase in BIPOC representation among executives and managers, while the remaining outlets either stayed the same or reported a decrease in the percentage of leaders who are BIPOC (Figure 4). This variation in the direction of internal change helps explain why we observed a very



¹⁷RTDNA data show that BIPOC workforce representation for all TV news outlets (Hispanic and non-Hispanic) actually fell by 1.1 percentage points between 2020 and 2020, but this appears to be a methodological artifact due to a drop in survey participation among Hispanic stations in 2022. Hence, we focus on non-Hispanic TV stations here. See Bob Papper with Keren Henderson, “TV News Gets More Diverse, Still Doesn’t Reflect Public” (Radio Television Digital News Association/Newhouse School at Syracuse University, 2022). Bob Papper, “Research: Local news diversity reaches records, but representation gap shrinks slowly” (Radio Television Digital News Association/Newhouse School at Syracuse University, 2021). Bob Papper with Keren Henderson, “Radio Newsrooms Are More Diverse Than Ever” (Radio Television Digital News Association/Newhouse School at Syracuse University, 2022).

¹⁸Sara Guagione, “Media businesses are slowly getting less white, male-dominated, stats from Condé, WSJ, NYT, others show,” Digiday Jan. 5, 2023.

small increase in the number of BIPOC-led outlets overall.¹⁹ A shift towards more diverse leadership within a minority of outlets did not yield a substantial change in the overall number of outlets led by people of color.

To explore change among majority-white outlets in particular, we narrowed our focus to the subset of outlets whose personnel were more than 50% white in 2020. These outlets comprised a large majority (77%) of the news organizations for whom we had comparable data. The same pattern emerged, with 28% of these majority-white outlets reporting an increase in BIPOC leadership in 2022.

Large outlets were particularly likely to report changes towards greater BIPOC representation at the leadership level, compared to smaller and mid-sized outlets.²⁰ Nearly 3 in 5 large outlets (59%) reported an increase in the percentage of BIPOC executives and managers between 2020 and 2022.

Movement towards greater diversity at the staff level was more widespread: 51% of all outlets reported an increase in BIPOC representation among their staff and contractors. Among the subset of outlets with majority-white personnel in 2020, the proportion of outlets reporting an increase in staff diversity was slightly higher at 57%. Again, large outlets were particularly likely to exhibit an increase in diversity: Two-thirds of these outlets reported a higher proportion of BIPOC staff in 2022 compared to 2020. National outlets also stood out as particularly likely to report increased staff diversity (63% of them did so), compared to outlets with other geographic scopes.

¹⁹Within this set of outlets for which we have comparable data across the two years, the number of BIPOC-led outlets rose from 28 in 2020 to 31 in 2022.

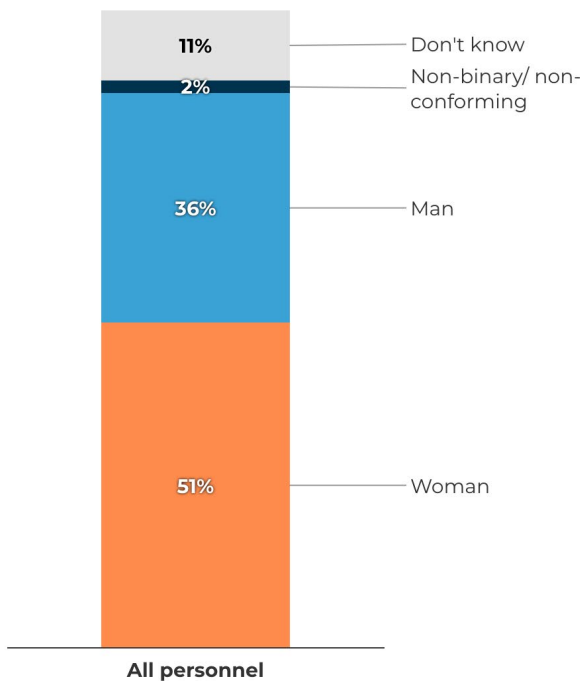
²⁰For purposes of analysis, we grouped news outlets into four categories of organization size: very small = 1-5 personnel (26% of news outlets); small = 6-10 personnel (27%); mid-sized = 11-20 personnel (22%); and large = 21 or more personnel (25%).

Gender

WHAT IS THE GENDER COMPOSITION OF NONPROFIT NEWS OUTLETS?

Women comprise about half of nonprofit news personnel. This mirrors the U.S. population, but diverges sharply from the nonprofit sector, where women comprise a much higher proportion of the workforce.

FIGURE 5: GENDER COMPOSITION OF ALL NONPROFIT NEWS PERSONNEL IN 2022



Note:

- < 1%
- Chose not to disclose
- A gender identity not listed above

Across all personnel reported by INN members in 2022, 51.4% are women (Figure 5). This is similar to the percentage of female persons in the U.S. population (50.4%), as measured by the U.S. Census. It is also slightly higher than women’s representation in the U.S. workforce as a whole (46.8%), according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.²¹ By contrast, data from Independent Sector show that women are much more heavily represented within the nonprofit sector, comprising 64.4% of the workforce.²² That is 13 points higher than the percentage of women among nonprofit news personnel.

Within the news industry, nonprofit outlets have a higher proportion of women personnel than many other news outlets.

For example, RTDNA’s 2022 survey shows that women were a minority of the TV news workforce (44.7%) and the radio news workforce (39.5%). RTDNA’s data

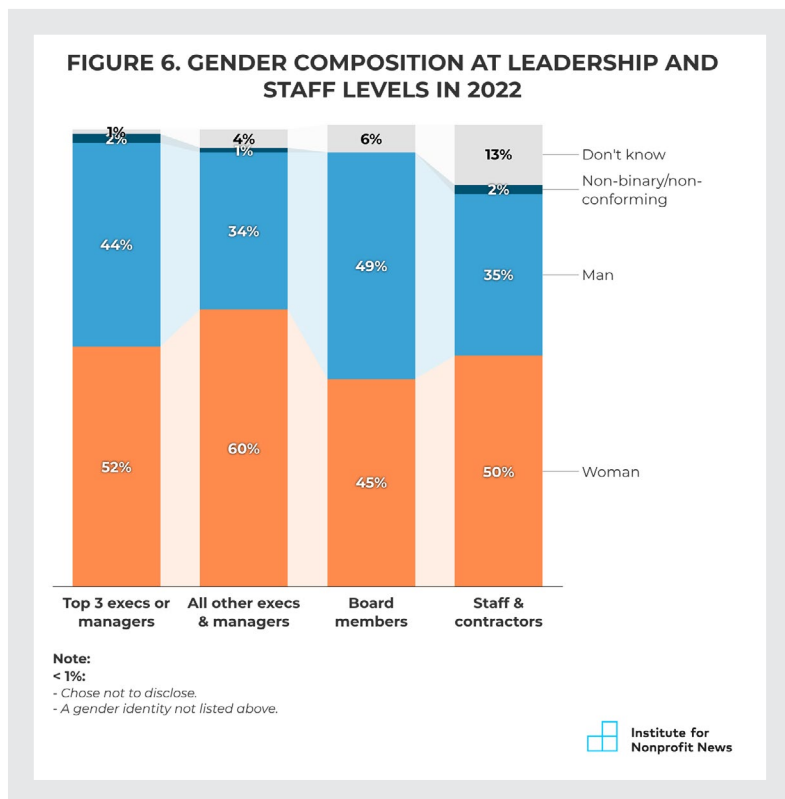
further show that women’s representation was particularly weak in commercial radio news (23.9%), as opposed to non-commercial radio news (50.2%). Similar to race and ethnicity, we lack comprehensive data on the gender composition of digital and print outlets, but available data from individual outlets indicate

²¹U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “[Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey](#)” (accessed August 2023).

²²Independent Sector, “[Health of the U.S. Nonprofit Sector: A Quarterly Review](#),” Dec. 31, 2022.

that women remain a minority in some major news organizations, such as Gannett (42%) and The Washington Post (44.9%), but are more strongly represented in others like The New York Times (55%).²³

Women’s representation in nonprofit news outlets extends to the leadership level, surpassing the level of women’s leadership at other peer news organizations.



Women occupy a little over half (52.3%) of the top three executive positions and 60.4% of other executive and manager positions (Figure 6). Moreover, many nonprofit news outlets are women-led organizations, which we define as organizations in which women hold more than 50% of executive and manager positions. A little less than half (46.8%) of nonprofit news organizations fell into this category of having majority-women leadership.

These patterns are notable, given that women are underrepresented in leadership positions in many news outlets and in the U.S. workforce as a whole. RTDNA’s data show that women hold a much smaller percentage of news director positions in TV news

(40.5%) and radio news (24.3%). Women are also underrepresented at the leadership level at Gannett (42%) and The Washington Post (47%). Within the U.S. workforce more broadly, data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicate that women comprise 40.5% of employees in management positions, and their share of chief executive positions is even smaller: 29.2%.²⁴

Beyond the binary of “man” and “woman,” people who identify with additional or other gender categories comprise a very small percentage of nonprofit news staff and leadership.

News outlets reported that 1.6% of personnel identify as nonbinary or nonconforming. Approximately 0.6% of individuals identify as transgender — the same percentage as the U.S. population, according

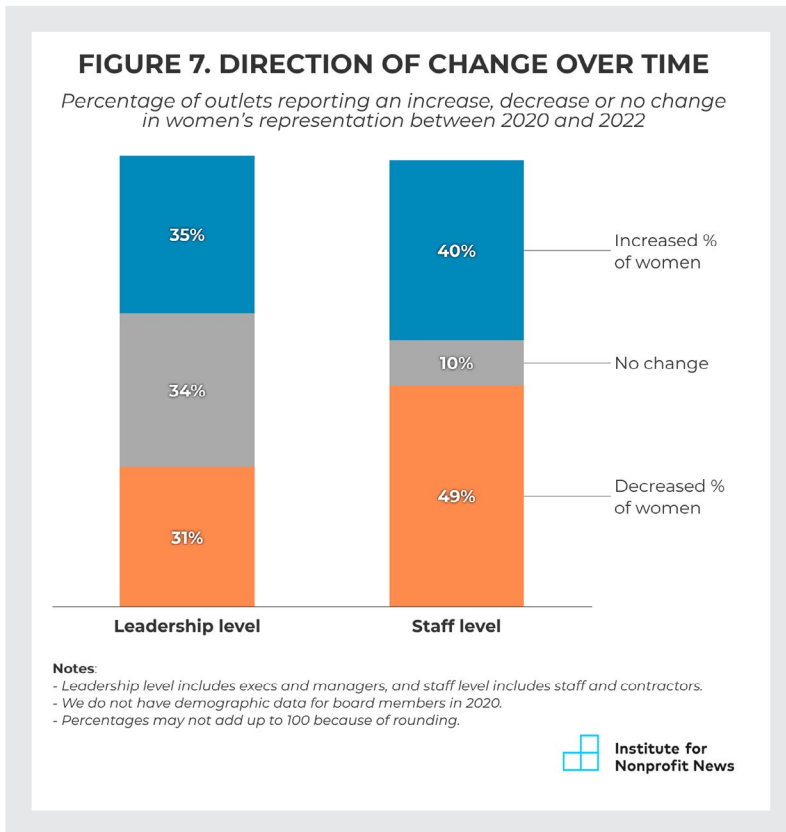
²³Gannett, “[Workforce Diversity: Representation Trends 2020 – 2023](#)” (accessed August 2023). The New York Times, “[2022 New York Times Diversity and Inclusion Report](#).” The Washington Post, “[The Washington Post’s Workforce Demographics](#)” July 28, 2022.

²⁴U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “[Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey](#)” (accessed August 2023).



to the U.S. Census Bureau.²⁵ However, we caution against drawing definitive conclusions about the representation of transgender people, given that news organizations responded “don’t know” for about 39% of the total number of individuals reported in the survey.

HAS WOMEN’S REPRESENTATION IN NONPROFIT NEWS OUTLETS CHANGED OVER TIME?



There was almost no change in the overall gender composition of nonprofit news leadership and staff between 2020 and 2022.

However, similar to our findings for race and ethnicity, we do observe variation in the direction of change within organizations over time. Just over a third of organizations showed an increase in women’s representation at the leadership level, while the remaining outlets were more or less evenly divided between no change and a decrease in the percentage of leadership positions held by women (Figure 7). This illustrates the “churn” in women’s representation among leadership underlying the overarching pattern of stability.

Dimensions of diversity we didn’t capture in the 2023 Index

While race, ethnicity and gender are salient dimensions of diversity, we recognize that there are many other characteristics relevant to understanding diversity in newsrooms, such as socioeconomic background, age, education or lived experience. A key challenge for INN centers on gathering accurate information from newsrooms, particularly when we are asking about things that organizations do not typically track. A case in point: In the 2023 Index, we attempted to gather information about the number of individuals with disabilities, but we found that a sizable majority of respondents left the question blank. We also acknowledge that there are limits to what a survey can cover – and that some dimensions of diversity may be better explored with more flexible and qualitative approaches that invite reflection on nuance and context.

²⁵U.S. Census Bureau, “Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in the Household Pulse Survey” Nov. 4, 2021.



DEI Practices

In this section, we explore an array of practices intended to support progress towards greater diversity, equity and inclusion — both in terms of how news organizations operate internally and how they relate to the communities they serve.

In gathering data on DEI practices, we acknowledged that meaningful measurement of these practices is difficult.

The temptation is to ask about easily measurable activities that can be “checked off” as completed or not. It is harder to capture the longer-term and nonlinear process through which news outlets can become more diverse, equitable and inclusive. This includes shifts in workplace culture and changes in who holds power to influence how the news outlet operates and what values it reflects. And it encompasses a broader evolution towards policies, systems and ways of working that both enable diverse employees to thrive and ensure communities see themselves and their information needs reflected in coverage. As one INN member commented, “It would be easy to measure that success with just numbers — more than half of our staff and board identify with a marginalized community — but more valuable is to have those members of our team feel supported, like they have an equal right and voice to contribute to the mission and that our community sees themselves reflected through our reporting, sources, staff, vendors, consultants and general practices.”

Although our survey and interviews weren’t able to capture the full breadth and nuance of longer-term processes of change, we sought to frame questions that aren’t just about *what* members do, but also *how* they do it and *with what impact*. We also encouraged respondents to consider the distinct definitions of diversity versus equity versus inclusion to clarify where there has been progress and where there have been challenges.

As noted in the introduction of this report, our analysis of DEI practices acknowledges that “DEI” does not hold the same meaning for all INN members due to wide variation in their respective histories, missions and ways of working.

Recognizing that calls for greater diversity, equity and inclusion primarily focus on the practices of historically white-dominated news outlets, we break out the findings for white-led outlets, which comprise about 70% of INN membership.

At the same time, it is important to reflect the work that organizations led by people of color are doing in this space. Indeed, their interview and survey responses indicate that many are exploring how they can further advance DEI — not just from a racial and ethnic perspective, but also across other dimensions of diversity, equity and inclusion. “We don’t consider ourselves exempt from this work,” as one respondent shared. In addition to implementing efforts focused on their own internal operations and culture, these outlets also noted that their DEI work can be outward-looking as they share their practices and serve as thought leaders and advisors to others in the sector. Our



analysis seeks to capture that this work is taking place, breaking out the DEI practices of BIPOC-led outlets alongside our analysis of white-led outlets. The work of these outlets is also reflected in our qualitative discussion of *how* outlets are implementing DEI practices.

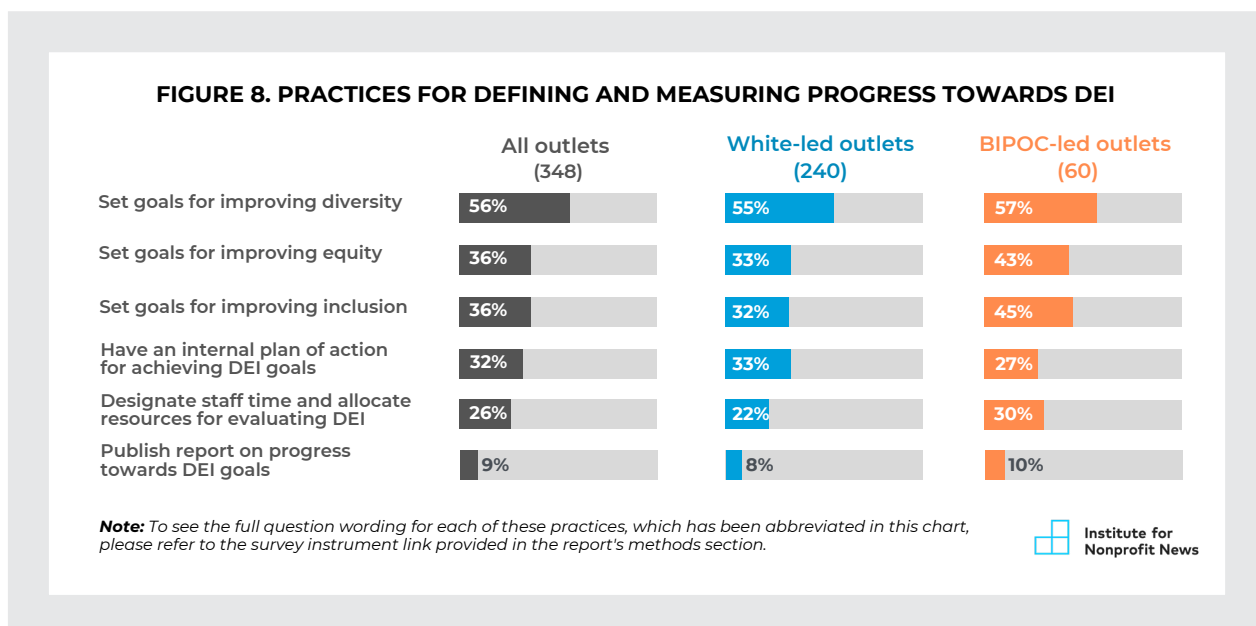
A secondary lens we bring to the analysis is organization size. INN members vary widely, from one-person newsrooms to organizations with more than 100 people. We expect some DEI practices might be more relevant to larger organizations — or in some cases more feasible for larger organizations to undertake for reasons of cost.

WHAT STEPS ARE NEWS ORGANIZATIONS TAKING TO DEFINE AND MEASURE PROGRESS TOWARD DEI?

Goal setting is one initial step that organizations can take to define what it looks like to successfully advance DEI. Complementary steps include creating a plan of action for progressing towards those goals, investing resources in evaluating DEI within the organization and publishing a public statement reporting on progress toward DEI goals. Each of these practices can contribute to an organization’s ability to be transparent about and accountable for its efforts to advance DEI.

Overall, the data suggest that many nonprofit news outlets have not yet taken these steps to define and measure progress towards DEI.

The survey asked about goals for diversity, equity and inclusion separately to help explore whether organizations’ efforts are mainly focused on the “D,” with less emphasis on the “E” or the “I.” Indeed, the findings indicate that setting goals to improve diversity was the most common practice, reported by 56% of INN members. But setting goals to improve equity or inclusion was noticeably less common (Figure 8).





This points to a potential gap in how news organizations approach DEI efforts. There seems to be a clearer focus on the need to hire or retain more BIPOC employees but less clear intentions around what needs to happen to ensure that inclusive and equitable policies, processes and practices are in place to encourage them to stay and enable them to do their best work. This gap may in part reflect relatively greater clarity around what diversity looks like and how to measure it, compared to equity and inclusion. It may also reflect differences in organizational contexts and priorities. For example, while white-led outlets and BIPOC-led outlets were about equally likely to have set goals for diversity, BIPOC-led outlets were more likely than white-led outlets to have also set goals for equity and/or inclusion. Organization size also plays a role: The larger the organization, the more likely it was to have engaged in these practices.

Insights from interviews with INN members that have increased the diversity of their personnel over time underscore the importance of these practices. They note that organizations need to set clear intentions and goals around what the organizations can and should look like, grounded in a shared understanding of the outlet's mission and the values of its readers. Tracking the diversity of personnel as well as the impact of equity and inclusion practices on workplace culture can help create and sustain momentum.

HOW ARE NEWS OUTLETS CHANGING THEIR OPERATIONS TO HELP ADVANCE DEI?

This set of practices focuses on efforts that impact how news outlets operate, including their internal policies, processes and ways of working. This includes participating in activities like a pay equity audit or trainings and coaching to help inform changes in the organization, or creating safe spaces for staff members to have honest conversations about racism, belonging, and other related topics. It also includes investing in recruitment efforts to increase diversity and implementing structural changes that strengthen the formal decision-making authority of staff of color or staff from other underrepresented groups over how the news organization operates.

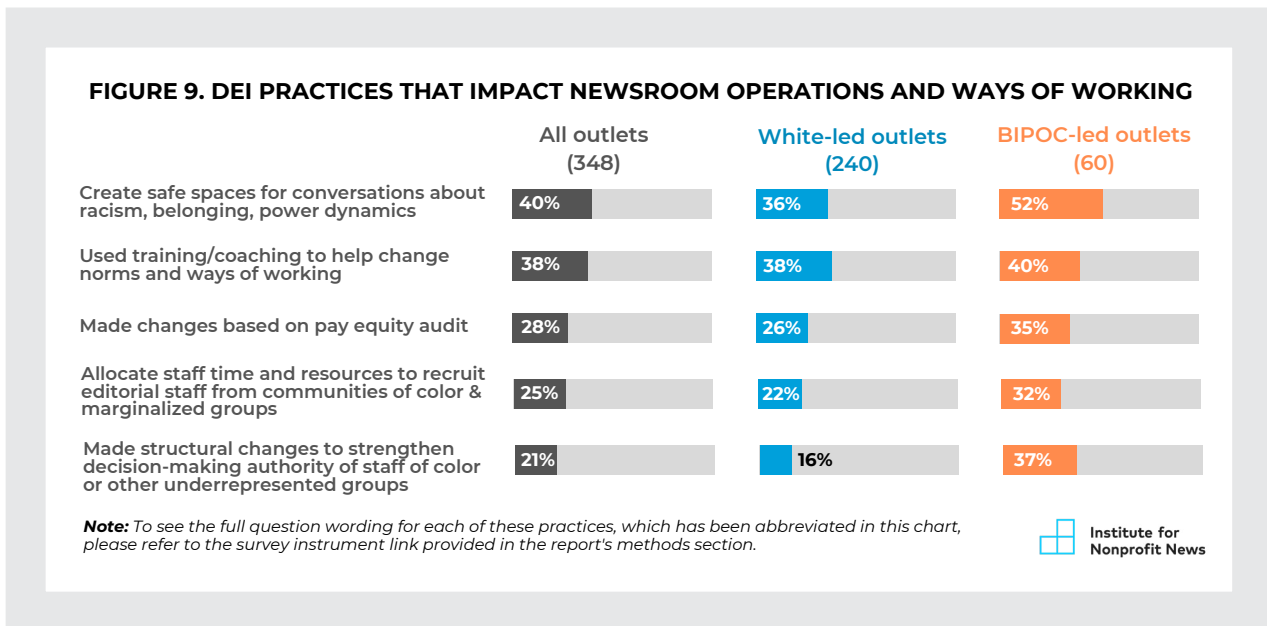
Overall, the data indicate that engagement in these practices is not widespread, with a minority of outlets engaging in each (Figure 9). But the pattern varies across different categories of outlets.

For example, there was variation by organization size: The larger the organization, the more likely it was to report each of these practices. Although our data don't show why larger organizations are more likely to employ certain DEI practices, INN's work in the field sheds some light: Larger organizations are more likely to have personnel dedicated to DEI efforts internally and often have access to more unrestricted funding that can be spent on equity and inclusion trainings, management coaching, formal recruitment efforts and pay equity audits. In addition, some practices — such as a formal pay equity audit — may be more relevant to organizations with a larger number of staff and/or contractors.

The practices also appear to be somewhat more prevalent among BIPOC-led outlets, which were more likely than white-led outlets to report implementing four of the five practices shown in Figure 9. The biggest difference: BIPOC-led news outlets were more than twice as likely as white-



led outlets to report they had implemented structural changes that strengthened the formal decision-making authority of staff of color or staff from other underrepresented groups over how the news organization operates. The data do not allow us to disentangle the factors contributing to this pattern. For example, it could be that BIPOC leadership helped prompt structural changes, or it could be that the structural changes themselves contributed to increased BIPOC leadership in these news outlets.



News organizations that dedicate staff time and money for recruitment have more diverse personnel.

The data point to a connection between the level of investment in recruitment efforts and the level of diversity among personnel. Among organizations that had designated staff time and allocated resources to recruit editorial personnel from communities of color or other marginalized groups, the median percentage of BIPOC personnel was 44%. Among organizations that said they made some effort to recruit editorial personnel from these groups, *but did not have designated staff time and allocated resources for this effort*, the median percentage of BIPOC personnel was 25%. Outlets that had designated time and resources to recruitment were also nearly twice as likely to have BIPOC-majority personnel (39%), compared to outlets that had made some effort but lacked designated time and resources (21%).

This connects to a larger point raised by INN members in interviews and in open-ended survey responses: the need to allocate money towards DEI efforts. It cannot be an unfunded mandate, nor a process shouldered by one person. Organizations need to have funds they can dedicate to DEI efforts — whether it is for more intentional recruitment activities, competitive and equitable salaries to



hire and retain staff, a DEI committee's efforts to support and facilitate internal changes or other organizational efforts.

The “how” is as important as the “what.”

In interviews, INN members emphasized that “how” these practices are implemented is as important as “what” is implemented. And they observed that the “how” can be difficult to figure out. Some of questions that INN members are wrestling with as they seek to integrate equity and inclusion in their internal policies and systems include:

- If you are hiring people who reflect the life experiences of the community you serve — including burdens experienced by that community — how do you set up the benefits or supports needed to help these employees thrive?
- In the context of pay equity, how does the pay scale reflect the value of life experiences, language skills and other expertise that falls outside “traditional” journalism skill sets?
- What needs to be done to ensure that hiring and advancement opportunities reflect a transparent, equitable process based on skills and professional development, rather than employees’ level of comfort or experience advocating for themselves?
- How are you building accountability for DEI across the organization — for example, by including DEI goals in performance reviews?

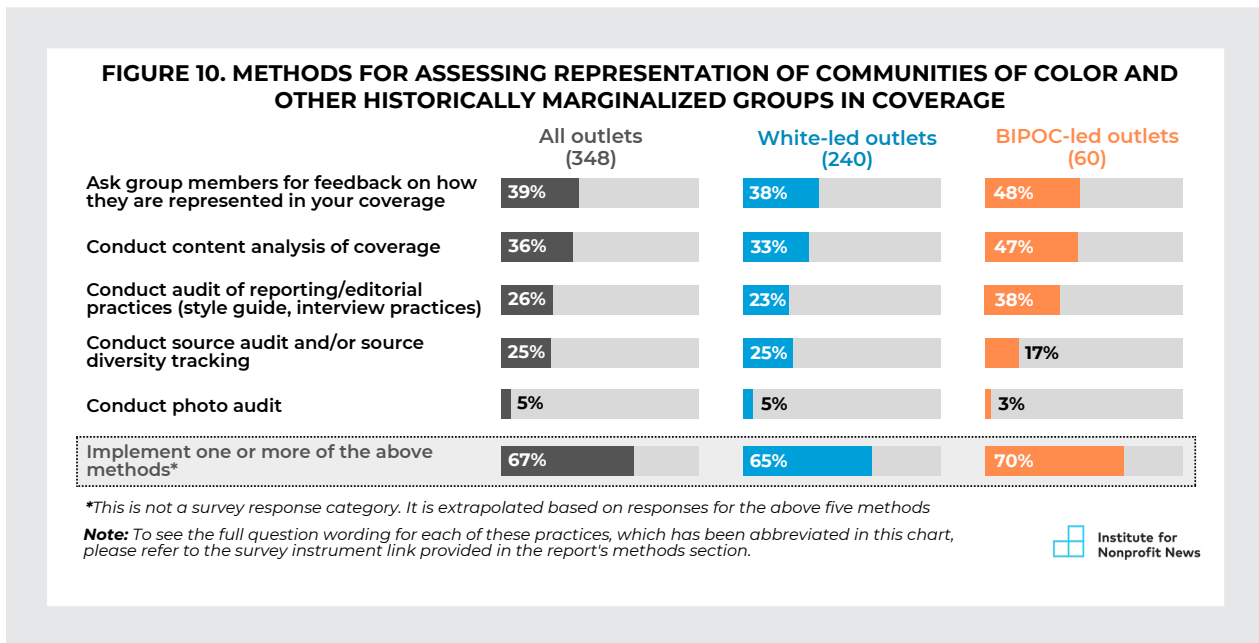
These kinds of questions illustrate the careful consideration needed to intentionally rethink operations through the lens of equity and inclusion. Some INN members expressed a desire for more concrete examples, advice, coaching and hands-on technical assistance to help deepen their understanding of how to create equitable and inclusive policies and procedures, and how to decenter whiteness and build an anti-racist workplace culture.

WHAT ARE NEWS OUTLETS DOING TO ASSESS THEIR COVERAGE OF COMMUNITIES OF COLOR AND HOW WELL THAT COVERAGE IS SERVING THE INFORMATION NEEDS OF THESE COMMUNITIES?

In addition to practices to strengthen DEI internally, news outlets are also undertaking efforts to better understand how their coverage represents and serves diverse communities. These efforts respond in part to evidence that coverage by mainstream (typically majority-white) news outlets has systematically underrepresented, misrepresented and/or harmed communities of color.

Two-thirds of news outlets use one or more methods for assessing how communities of color and/or other historically marginalized, oppressed or excluded groups are represented in their coverage.

The most common methods are conducting content analyses and asking members of these groups for feedback on how they are represented in coverage. This is true of both white-led and BIPOC-led outlets, though white-led outlets were less likely than BIPOC-led outlets to have undertaken either of these methods (Figure 10). Organization size again played a role: The percentage of news organizations using one or more of these methods ranged from 46% among very small outlets to 89% among large outlets.



A related question is how well news outlets are serving the information needs of communities of color. This question revolves around who the intended audience is. If an outlet considers communities of color an intended audience, how does that outlet know if its coverage is serving their information needs?

To help answer this, we focused on INN members who said their organization primarily focuses on serving the information needs of communities of color. Approximately 21% of INN members indicated that they fall in this “BIPOC-serving” category. (As explained in an earlier section of this report, this category is separate from the “BIPOC-led” category.) We asked about various methods for gathering input and feedback on whether their coverage is serving the information needs of communities of color.

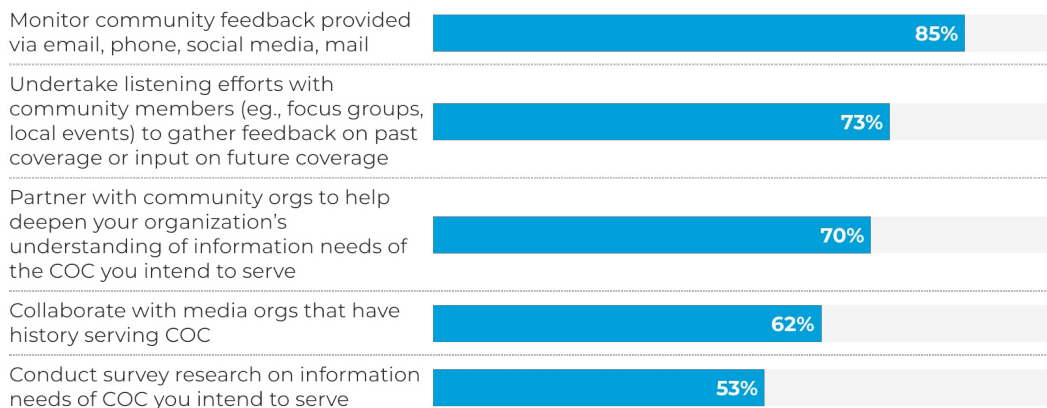


The data suggest that most outlets that identify as BIPOC-serving are using multiple methods to gather input and feedback from communities of color.

The most common methods, used by large majorities of these outlets, are: monitoring comments and questions that community members provide via email, phone or other means; undertaking listening efforts with community members to gather feedback on past coverage or input on future coverage; and partnering with community organizations to help deepen understanding of the information needs of communities of color (Figure 11). In addition, most of these outlets (84%) indicate that they have invested editorial resources in covering topics that communities of color have identified as missing from coverage or inadequately covered.

FIGURE 11. METHODS FOR GETTING INPUT AND FEEDBACK FROM COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

Among outlets primarily focused on serving communities of color (COC)



Notes: This question was asked of the subset of outlets (n=73) who said that they primarily focus on serving the information needs of communities of color, defined in the survey as "people of color comprise a majority of your audience and your organization spends a majority of its funding, resources, and staff time on stories for people of color." For full question wording, please refer to the survey instrument link provided in the report's methods section.



Again, the *how* matters as much as the *what*. Based on open-ended survey responses, our interviews and other conversations INN has had with its members,²⁶ we were able to gather additional insights into what these methods look like in practice. For example, when undertaking listening efforts, INN members emphasize the importance of joining existing community spaces to learn about information needs, rather than creating new spaces. That means spending time with community

²⁶See the Q&A series with INN members, facilitated by INN's Sara Shahriari and Emily Roseman, accessed at: Institute for Nonprofit News, "[Q&A Series: How nonprofit newsrooms serve communities of color](#)" February 2022.



members at places like grocery stores, laundromats and bus stops. It means asking neighborhood groups or local organizations that interact regularly with community members: What stories need to be covered, and how are we doing as a news organization? It can also involve asking to join a local working group or coalition focused on an issue of importance to community members. Two guiding principles undergird these efforts: *don't assume you know what people want* and *don't just listen, take action to respond to the information needs communities express*.

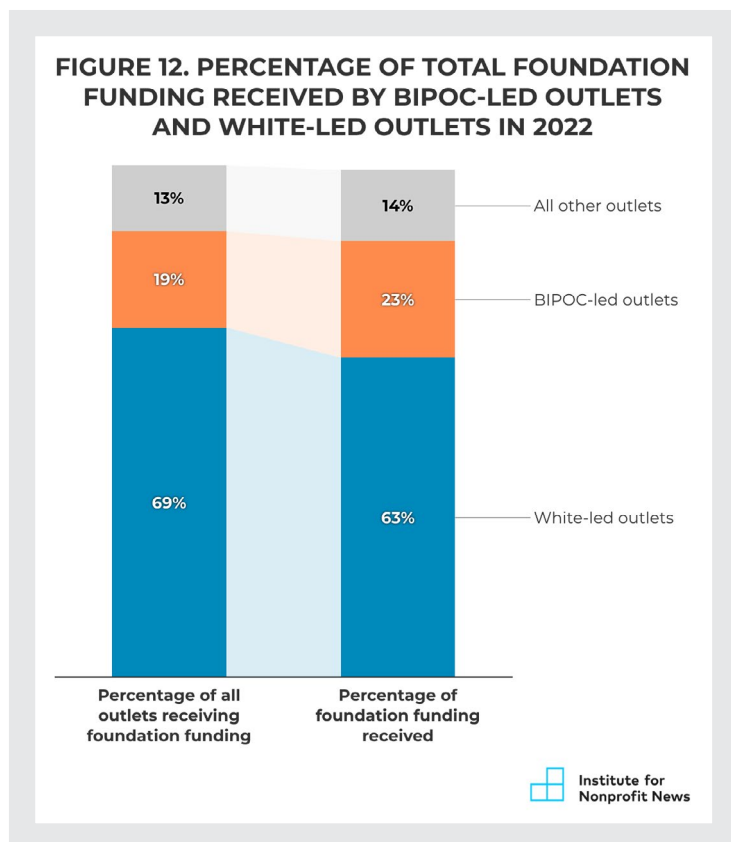
News organizations also underscore that it matters who is writing the story. This connects back to questions of diversity. Qualitative comments from several outlets focused on the importance of hiring staff, freelancers, and paid interns who live in the communities they serve and are able to identify information needs within their own communities. Another related example is pairing residents with a professional journalist to train them on reporting basics, and then paying them a stipend to report from where they live. Still another example: Creating regular opportunities for audience members to submit stories they have written around a specific theme. The common thread across these examples is that efforts to gather and respond to the input and feedback of communities of color aren't just about journalists going "into" the community; they are also about being "of" the community.

Funding from foundations and individual donors

In the nonprofit and philanthropic sectors, there is growing attention to questions around equity in funding. Recent research has documented disparities in funding between BIPOC-led and white-led organizations in the nonprofit sector, as well as inequities in accessing philanthropic support experienced by BIPOC-founded news outlets.²⁷ Against this backdrop, we examined patterns in foundation funding and individual donations reported by INN members.

ARE THERE DISPARITIES IN FOUNDATION FUNDING FOR BIPOC-LED VERSUS WHITE-LED OUTLETS?

The answer to this question is nuanced and multifaceted: Some BIPOC-led outlets, particularly state and local outlets and startups, report higher levels of foundation funding than white-led counterparts. But the reverse pattern occurs among more established national outlets. The flexibility of funding also varies, with BIPOC-led outlets less likely to receive general operating support from foundations.



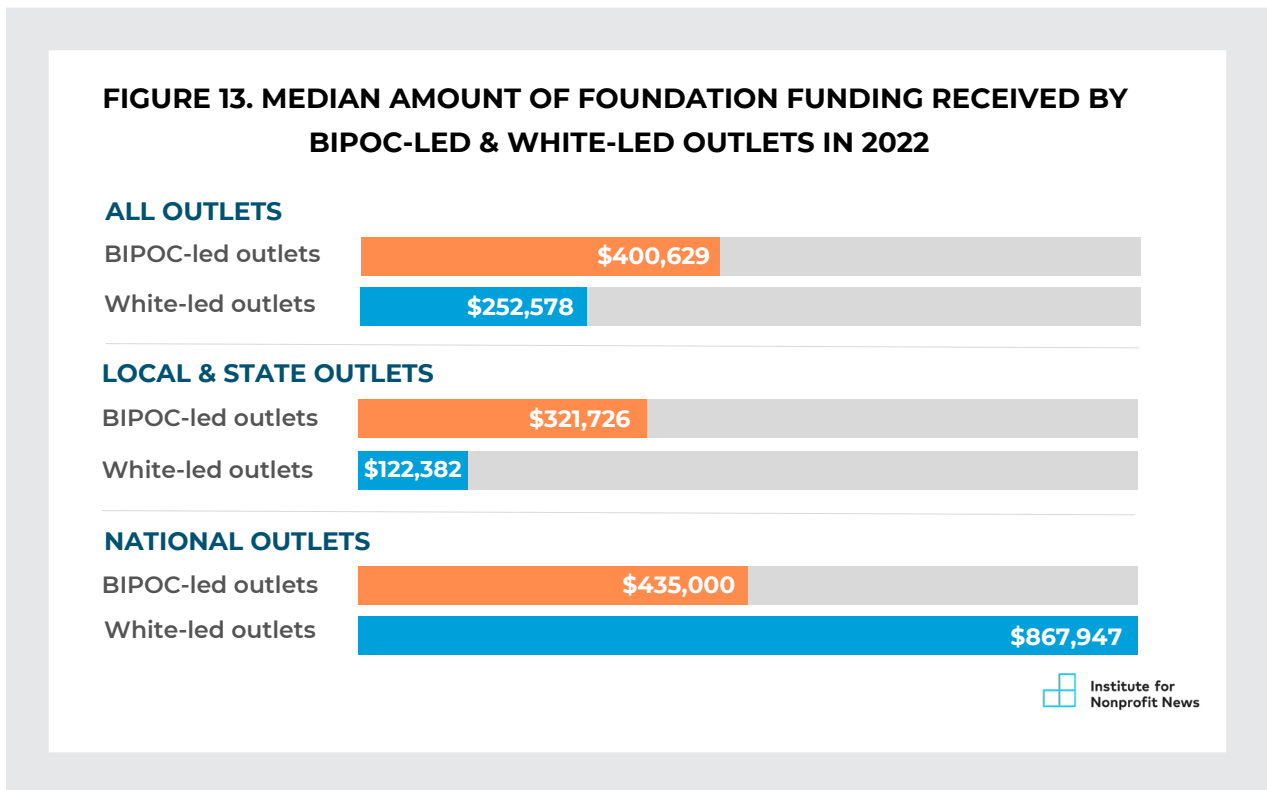
At a sector level, the total amount of foundation funding going to white-led outlets far exceeds the total amount going to BIPOC-led outlets (Figure 12). This lopsided distribution matches the much higher number of white-led outlets compared to BIPOC-led outlets in INN's membership: The amount of funding going to white-led and BIPOC-led outlets is roughly proportional to their respective prevalence in the sector. This pattern suggests that the overall distribution of foundation funding in the sector reflects an equality lens. An equity perspective might prompt us to ask how foundation funding takes into account historical exclusion and oppression that created the racial wealth gap.

To probe this further, we examined the median amount of funding for BIPOC-

²⁷Nonprofit Finance Fund, "2022 State of the Nonprofit Sector Survey," Meredith D. Clark and Tracie M. Powell (2023), "Architects of Necessity: BIPOC News Startups' critique of Philanthropic Interventions" *ISOJ Journal*, 13(1), 115-141.



led outlets compared to white-led outlets. The median amount of funding reported by BIPOC-led outlets was about 1.6 times higher than the median amount reported by white-led outlets (Figure 13). This pattern stayed the same when we narrowed our focus further, looking at the smaller subset of outlets that are both BIPOC-led and BIPOC-serving.²⁸



What might help explain this pattern? Informed by suggestions from INN members and advisory board members, we explored two potential factors that could be driving the overall pattern: geographic scope and launch year (i.e., startups versus more established outlets). We suggest caution in interpreting these patterns, given that some subgroups in our analysis of geographic scope and launch year have only a small number of outlets ($n < 10$), but preliminarily, our analysis suggests that these two factors do matter. Outlets at the state and local level show the biggest funding advantage for BIPOC-led outlets relative to white-led outlets. Meanwhile, among national outlets, the pattern is *reversed*: White-led outlets reported a higher median amount of foundation funding than BIPOC-led outlets.

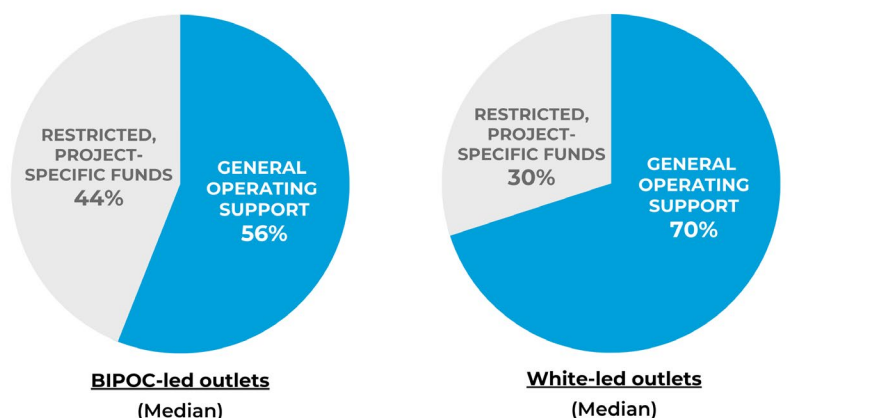
Philanthropic support for BIPOC-led startups is an interrelated piece of the puzzle: The median amount of foundation funding among BIPOC-led startups is about 4.5 times the median among

²⁸We also experimented with tightening our definition of “BIPOC-led” from outlets with majority-BIPOC executives and managers to outlets with majority-BIPOC executives and managers *and* a majority-BIPOC board. The median amount of foundation funding reported by this smaller group was slightly higher — approximately 2.1 times greater than the median among white-led outlets.

white-led startups. (For purposes of this report, INN defines “startups” as outlets established between 2020 and 2022.) The difference is particularly pronounced at the state and local level, where the median amount of foundation funding among BIPOC-led startups is six times higher than among white-led startups. This may partly explain why BIPOC-led outlets at the state and local level report higher foundation funding than white-led outlets.

Meanwhile, philanthropic support for more established BIPOC-led outlets (launched prior to 2020) shows a different pattern. These outlets tend to report lower levels of foundation funding than their BIPOC-led startup counterparts. And among national outlets in particular, they lag behind white-led outlets: The median amount of foundation funding among national white-led organizations launched prior to 2020 was 4.1 times the median among their BIPOC-led counterparts.

FIGURE 14. MEDIAN PERCENTAGE OF FOUNDATION FUNDING THAT CAN BE USED FOR GENERAL OPERATING EXPENSES



When it comes to accessing general operating support from foundations, BIPOC-led outlets report lower levels of this kind of flexible funding compared to white-led outlets. The median BIPOC-led outlet reported that 56% of foundation dollars received in 2022 were available for general operating expenses, compared to 70% among white-led

outlets (Figure 14). This suggests BIPOC-led outlets tend to receive more restricted grants than white-led outlets. In our interviews, BIPOC-led and BIPOC-serving outlets highlighted funders’ resistance to providing general operating support as a problem that significantly undermines their organizational growth and ability to sustain the work. One said, “We have told funders over and over, if you are only going to fund the really cool idea, that cool idea is going to fizzle out in 2-5 years. Because you have to fund the operations team, the admin team, the CPO. If you really love this cool idea, you have to create a sustainable organization that can keep it going. In the end, what it comes down to are the teams who are actually able to sustain the work — and that takes general operating support.”



It is important to contextualize these findings: They cannot be treated as representative of all BIPOC-led and/or BIPOC-serving news outlets in the U.S. — nor do they capture the full picture of how inequities in philanthropic support have impacted and continue to impact BIPOC-led outlets.

As noted earlier, we do not recommend generalizing these findings to the full universe of BIPOC-led and BIPOC-serving outlets in the U.S. — which includes many *for-profit* outlets serving specific racial, ethnic and language communities, as well as an unknown number of nonprofit outlets that are not INN members.²⁹

Even among INN members, we recognize that the median doesn't reflect the experiences of all BIPOC-led and BIPOC-serving outlets. Some of those we interviewed said the findings did not resonate with their experience accessing foundation funding. Other BIPOC-led and BIPOC-serving INN members were less surprised by the findings, based on their observations of recent shifts in philanthropic priorities. This bifurcated response aligns with findings from a 2023 NORC study of nonprofit and for-profit newsrooms, which found that 56% of the organizations that said they primarily focus on serving the information needs of communities of color reported an increase in philanthropic funding in the last five years.³⁰

To the extent that foundation funding has shifted towards BIPOC-led or BIPOC-serving outlets, interviewees emphasized that this is a recent development traced in large part to funders' increased focus on DEI since 2020. One interviewee commented, "Our organizations have historically not been the recipients of foundation funding. Last year [2022] was an outlier. It was not the norm. The analysis of funding has to look at what happened prior to 2020 to see that it was a major change." Another noted, "We ended up getting all the grants that we applied for last year. That blew my mind because it was such a stark departure from previous years."

Interviewees observed that this shift within philanthropy includes changes in longtime journalism funders' grantmaking priorities and criteria, and the emergence of newer funds focused on supporting BIPOC-led and BIPOC-serving news organizations. There are also opportunities for outlets to pursue grants from justice-oriented foundations that don't have a specific focus on journalism. One interviewee explained, "Looking at funders outside of journalism has been a big success. They don't have journalism-specific grant opportunities, but they give to justice-oriented work. And they just 'get' the work immediately. You don't have to explain as much."

²⁹To our knowledge, there is no comprehensive directory of all BIPOC-led or BIPOC-serving outlets in the U.S. However, efforts to map BIPOC-serving news media indicate that hundreds of such outlets exist. For example, the Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY has identified over 600 Latino news media outlets in its [Latino News Media Map](#) and nearly 300 media outlets that primarily serve Black communities in its Black Media Directory, which is a project of the Center for Community Media's [Black Media Initiative](#). In addition, a directory of ethnic media in California, compiled by [Ethnic Media Services](#), lists nearly 300 outlets for that state alone. By comparison, INN's 2023 Index included 60 BIPOC-led outlets — 41 of which indicated they were BIPOC-serving.

³⁰NORC at the University of Chicago, "[Journalism and Philanthropy: Growth, Diversity, and Potential Conflicts of Interest](#)" (NORC: 2023).



To the extent that philanthropic funding has shifted, it needs to be interpreted in relation to historical patterns of inequity and oppression.

Interviewees questioned whether the current focus on DEI — including an increased philanthropic focus on supporting BIPOC-led and BIPOC-serving organizations — is proportional to the systemic harm and inequities experienced by people of color across hundreds of years. As one interviewee observed, “I see mainstream groups wanting to start trying to do things differently. But I don’t think it’s close to enough ... just because you hire one person of color in a white foundation, how much harm is caused to that person standing alone, or what can they actually do in those spaces? I think we’re a long way from it being sustainable or done in a way that is appropriate for the level of harm that’s been allowed here in the States for hundreds of years.”

Even in the current context, some funder practices continue to perpetuate inequities, contradicting the push to advance DEI. Interviewees described recent experiences with racial bias in funders’ decisions about whether, how much, and under what terms they are willing to fund BIPOC-led outlets versus white-led outlets. For example, one interviewee described their outlet’s struggle for “legitimacy” in the eyes of foundations, noting times when they were able to get funding because they asked a white person to speak up for them. Another interviewee observed that some funders’ support for Spanish-language media seems more performative, rather than substantive or equitable: They give out small grants that come with heavy reporting requirements and do not match the amounts awarded to English-language outlets. Another interviewee raised a related issue: The perception among many funders that it is “risky” to invest in a BIPOC-led outlet at the same levels they are willing to invest in a white-led outlet.

More broadly, interviewees flag the need for funders to bring a stronger equity lens to their work supporting BIPOC-led and BIPOC-serving outlets. Another interviewee noted, “Funders need to really think about why they have the hoops that they have in place for creatives and media makers. Is it about control? Is it coming from this old lens of philanthropy? Or is it really about making resources available for groups to be at the same level as other groups with inherited wealth or decades of support that weren’t offered to communities of color?”

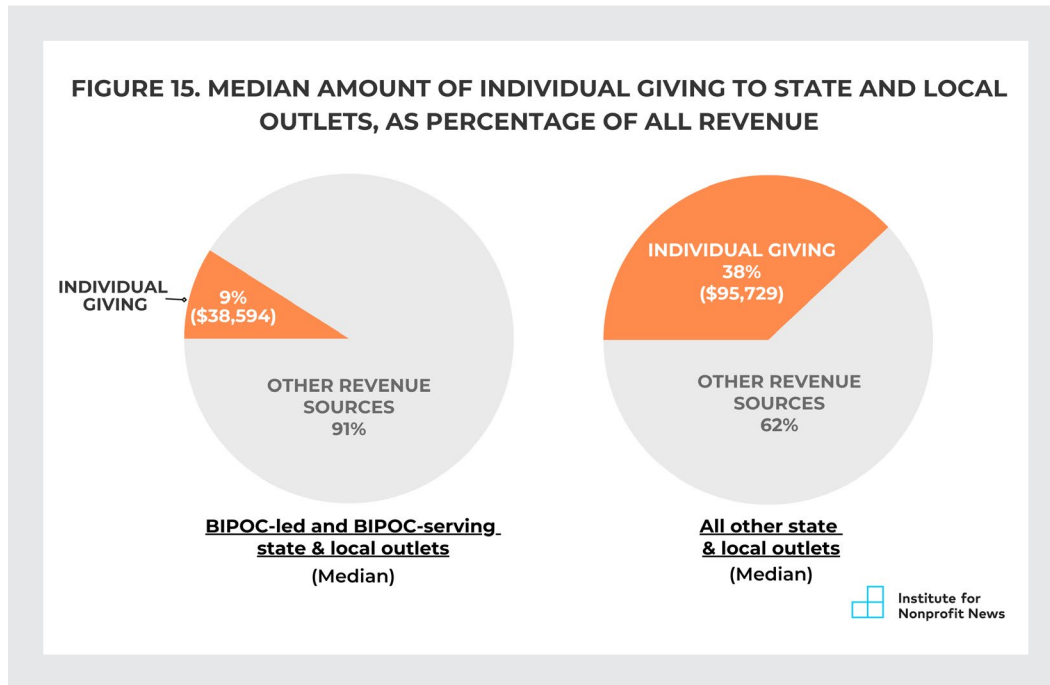


DO OUTLETS LED BY AND FOR PEOPLE OF COLOR REPORT LOWER LEVELS OF INDIVIDUAL GIVING THAN OTHER OUTLETS?

Individual giving is a major source of revenue for nonprofit news outlets, comprising just under a third of total revenue reported by INN members in 2022. Yet anecdotally, INN has heard from members that fundraising from individual donors remains a major challenge for some outlets, particularly BIPOC-led outlets serving communities of color at the state and local level.

To explore this, we examined individual giving among state and local outlets that are both BIPOC-led and BIPOC-serving, comparing them to all other state and local news outlets (not including public media outlets). This group of BIPOC-led and BIPOC-serving outlets is quite small, comprising just 11% of state and local outlets.

The data confirm that the median amount of individual giving reported by BIPOC-led and BIPOC-serving outlets is less than half of the median among other state and local outlets (Figure 15).



This pattern is consistent across different tiers of giving, from smaller donations of less than \$1000 to large donations of \$5000 or more. Correspondingly, individual giving plays a much smaller role in the overall revenue reported by BIPOC-led and BIPOC-serving outlets, comprising just 9% of total revenue, compared to 38% among other state and local outlets.³¹

³¹Individual giving makes up a similarly small percentage (median of 5%) of total revenue among the small set of BIPOC-led and BIPOC-serving outlets operating at regional and national levels (n=11).



Interviews with BIPOC-led and BIPOC-serving outlets confirmed that these patterns in individual giving resonate with their own observations and experiences. They attribute some of it to the audience that many BIPOC-led outlets serve — for example, low-income communities that may not have much money to give and/or first-generation immigrants who aren't familiar with U.S. norms around giving donations. This impacts where these outlets have decided to focus their fundraising efforts, in some cases targeting those who are outside their core audience. As one interviewee explained, "I know who my donors are, and they are not people who look like me. They are not people who have my history or are invested in this work because they come from this background. It's people who are allies from other communities that have the means to give."

Interviewees also observe that people of color encounter more barriers to accessing the networks of wealth that boost individual giving, particularly major gifts. One explained, "It's all about who you know and the connections that you or your board or your network has. Given the realities of the racial wealth gap, BIPOC-led and BIPOC-serving organizations likely have fewer connections within networks of wealth or fewer doors opened for them." A general lack of experience soliciting donations also plays a role, especially among smaller outlets that do not have a dedicated person on staff with fundraising knowledge and skills. This is not specific to BIPOC-led and BIPOC-serving outlets, but can compound the impact of other challenges they face in soliciting donations.



Conclusion

INN's first in-depth DEI report concluded that many news organizations were at the starting line in their efforts to diversify their staff, leadership and boards in 2019. Fast forward to 2022, and we find that news organizations have become more diverse — particularly at the staff level — and there are thoughtful and nuanced efforts underway to advance not just diversity, but also equity and inclusion. At the same time, significant work remains in key areas: Leadership remains heavily white, and many outlets have yet to take important steps to plan, resource and integrate DEI efforts into their internal operations.

Individual INN members vary widely in terms of the audiences they serve and the contexts in which they are situated. How different outlets seek to reflect DEI, and where they see room to strengthen their efforts, will vary accordingly. But at the aggregate level, the takeaway is that there is still a great deal of work to be done to advance a more diverse, equitable and inclusive sector.

That work does not rest solely with news organizations. Funders as well as field-building organizations like INN have key roles to play. Indeed, INN has initial reflections on the implications of this report's findings, with recommendations for funders, news organizations, and INN itself around some of the priority areas for advancing DEI in the sector. These priority areas include:

- **Investing in BIPOC-led and BIPOC-serving organizations with sustained and unrestricted funding.** Funders' decisions about who to fund and how to fund speak to important questions about how philanthropic wealth is allocated across the sector and what funders should (or should not) do to help address inequities, both within the sector and in the communities that news outlets serve. This report's findings suggest the need to continue deepening philanthropy's support for BIPOC-led and BIPOC-serving outlets. This support needs to reflect an understanding and recognition of power and trust, including the intentional shifting of power in relation to historical patterns of inequity. For example, unrestricted grants help shift power to outlets, recognizing that they are best positioned to determine how to use the funds for purposes of serving their communities and sustaining their work. INN and other field-building organizations can support this work – for example by helping to educate funders about these outlets, expanding the pool of funders engaged in supporting journalism that is created by and for BIPOC and other underserved communities, and tracking funding patterns over time.
- **Supporting pathways to greater racial and ethnic diversity, especially at leadership levels.** There are multiple pathways here. For example, one pathway is to create opportunities for BIPOC professionals — from those who are early in their careers to those in management positions — to access the support they need to advance professionally or achieve their organizational goals. This includes cohort-based programming that INN and other field-building organizations offer.



Another pathway involves resourcing and building capacity to increase diversity within news organizations, through efforts like recruitment and expansion of their leadership team. Some of this work falls on news outlets, particularly those who know their staff and leadership do not reflect the diversity of the communities they serve. But this needs to be in partnership with funders who enable news organizations to set meaningful diversity goals, resource their efforts and evaluate what's working (or not) to advance those goals.

- **Accelerating the adoption of DEI practices among news outlets of all sizes.** News outlets are at the center of this work. They are the ones who are tasked with setting goals, resourcing and implementing efforts, and ensuring those efforts yield the intended results. But they need the support of funders, who can do more to help outlets (particularly smaller ones) allocate money and staff time toward dedicated and sustained DEI efforts. News outlets can also benefit from field-building organizations that offer access to DEI resources and programming, particularly those that reflect a nuanced understanding of the different needs of different types of outlets. More broadly, this report's findings confirm that DEI efforts need to be guided by a clear sense of the "why" and a commitment to getting the "how" right. DEI is not simply an end in itself – it is in service to broader goals around advancing racial, gender, and social justice and helping diverse communities thrive. Attention should be paid to whether and how DEI practices have enabled a news outlet to contribute towards those goals, not just whether the outlet has implemented certain practices.

Looking ahead, INN will continue to reflect on the DEI findings and their implications for INN's work in supporting the sector –doing so in conversation with member news organizations, funders and partners.

There are signs of promising, incremental progress in the sector, but sustaining forward momentum is not a given. In this moment, when the focus on DEI could either endure or fade, there's an opportunity to double-down on efforts to create a sector that fully reflects and serves all communities.