

National Findings on Diversity and Representation in the Nonprofit Sector

Nonprofit Trends and Impacts 2021

Lewis Faulk, Mirae Kim, Teresa Derrick-Mills, Elizabeth Boris, Laura Tomasko, and Nora Hakizimana

Most nonprofits serve the general public, **45 percent have programs that focus on people below the federal poverty level**, and **10 to 30 percent focus on historically marginalized groups**.

Seventy percent of nonprofits **have at least one board member of color**, **34 percent have at least one** board member with a **disclosed disability**, and **44 percent have at least one** board member who **identifies as LGBTQ+**. **Half** of board members on average are **women**.

Sixteen percent of nonprofits with programs **that primarily serve people of color** have **all-white boards**.

Twenty-one percent of executive directors and **21 percent of board chairs** are **people of color**. **Sixty-two percent of executive directors** and **46 percent of board chairs** are **female**.

Nonprofit organizations in the United States play a vital role delivering services, strengthening communities, and facilitating civic engagement. Though research has illuminated much about these organizations in recent years, until now we have lacked a nationally representative portrait of the nonprofit sector detailing donation trends and nonprofits' experiences across a variety of dimensions.

We conducted a nationally representative study of operating 501(c)(3) public charities and published an open dataset of the survey results. Our sample focuses on nonprofits whose activities range from direct service provision to community building and advocacy, have annual expenses of \$50,000 or more, and can be linked to IRS Form 990 data. This study excludes nonprofit hospitals, schools, higher-education institutions, houses of worship, foundations, and mutual benefit and philanthropic support organizations.

In this fact sheet, we highlight key findings on the populations nonprofits serve and the diversity of nonprofit board members and executives. Future annual surveys of organizations in this panel will provide additional data on long-term trends and will help researchers, practitioners, funders, and policymakers garner evidence and insights on issues affecting nonprofits across the country.

NONPROFITS SERVE COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE UNITED STATES

The distribution of nonprofits across urban, suburban, and rural areas mirrors that of the US population. More than half of nonprofits are located and provide services in lower-income communities.

NONPROFITS SERVE A WIDE RANGE OF PEOPLE

Most nonprofits (55 percent) provide programs that serve the general public, and 45 percent provide programs that focus on people and families below the federal poverty level.

Many organizations provide programs that focus on historically marginalized groups, including people who are Black or African American (29 percent), Latinx (27 percent), Indigenous, Native American, or Alaskan Native (17 percent), and LGBTQ (19 percent).

DIVERSITY OF BOARDS AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

Our study produced findings about the composition of nonprofit leadership and boards of directors, including the following:

- 70 percent of nonprofits have at least one board member of color
 - » 21 percent of board chairs are people of color
 - » 21 percent of executive directors are people of color
- 50 percent of nonprofit board members on average are women
 - » 46 percent of board chairs are female
 - » 62 percent of executive directors are female
- 44 percent of nonprofits have at least one board member who identifies as LGBTQ+
 - » 6 percent of board chairs identify as LGBTQ+
 - » 10 percent of executive directors identify as LGBTQ+
- 34 percent of organizations have at least one board member with a disclosed disability
 - » 6 percent of board chairs have a disclosed disability
 - » 9 percent of executive directors have a disclosed disability

SOME CHALLENGES RELATED TO REPRESENTATION

When examining populations served and board composition, we identified some challenges with representation in the sector. These include the following:

- 16 percent of nonprofits that primarily serve people of color have all-white boards
- 58 percent of rural nonprofits have no board members of color, compared with 15 percent of urban core nonprofits and 31 percent of suburban nonprofits

ADDITIONAL READING

ON THE NONPROFIT TRENDS AND IMPACT STUDY

Nonprofit Trends and Impacts 2021

Lewis Faulk, Mirae Kim, Teresa Derrick-Mills, Elizabeth Boris, Laura Tomasko, Nora Hakizimana, Tianyu Chen, Minjun Kim, Layla Nath
<https://www.urban.org/research/publication/nonprofit-trends-and-impacts-2021>

THE NONPROFIT TRENDS AND IMPACT DATASET

National Survey of Nonprofit Trends and Impacts Public Use Files

<https://datacatalog.urban.org/dataset/national-survey-nonprofit-trends-and-impacts-public-use-files>

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