Reviewing the Diversity of NNIP

Leah Hendey and Donovan Harvey

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KEY FINDINGS

Across all partner staff, the share of people of color increased from **37.0 percent in 2018 to 47.7 percent in 2023**.

The shares of Black and Hispanic members on organizational and advisory boards **are higher than either group's share of staff overall**.

The **share of Black members on boards of directors has increased substantially** since 2018, rising to 31.3 percent from 17 percent.

The National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership (NNIP) helps local communities use data to shape strategies and investments so that all neighborhoods are places where people can thrive.[1] NNIP's national network of local organizations in more than 30 cities connects communities with the data they need and the help they need to use it to support local priorities. Since NNIP's founding nearly three decades ago, NNIP partners have been dedicated to building relationships with local organizations and residents to coproduce relevant data and analysis.

The NNIP network has recognized the need to better reflect the diversity of the communities it serves across dimensions of age, race and ethnicity, gender identity, and country of birth. A diverse staff and network will improve the relevance and quality of the services provided to communities and ultimately the influence NNIP has on local and national policy.
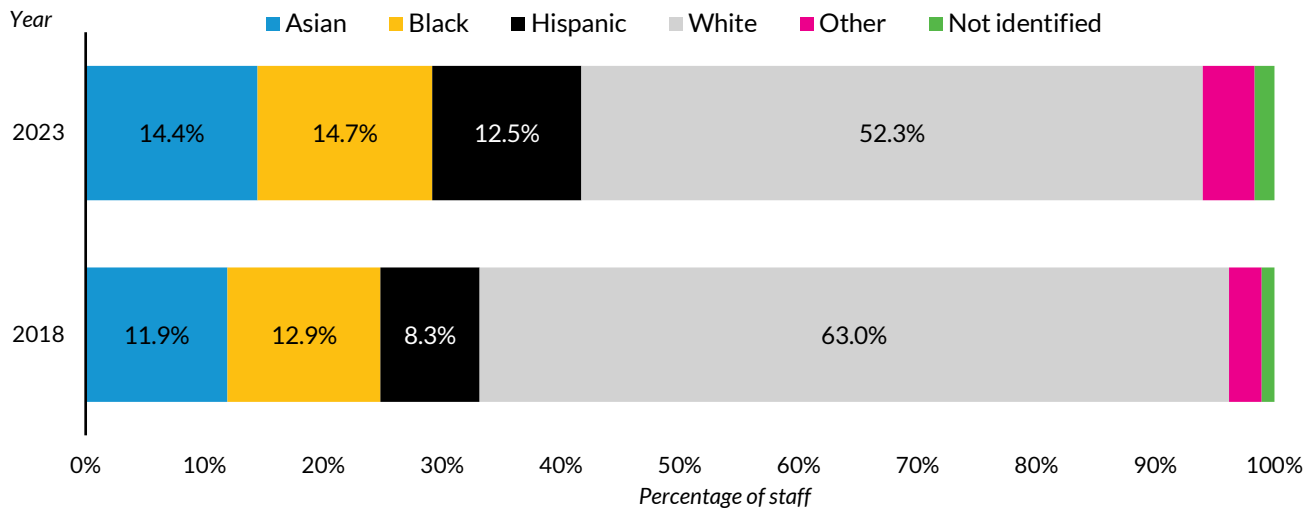
The Urban Institute, as the national partner of NNIP, first asked local NNIP partners in 2018 to provide data on the demographics of their staff and their project-specific committees, advisory committees, and governing boards of directors as well as answer questions about practices in hiring and retention of staff and board development (Arena and Hendey 2019). We repeated the survey in August 2023. We share key findings on racial diversity from the survey in this summary.

In total, 28 of the 32 partner organizations completed data collection, a response rate of 87.5 percent. NNIP's local members are housed in a variety of institutions. Among the responding organizations, 43 percent are in applied university research centers, 36 percent in nonprofits, and 21 percent in local foundations, regional or local governments, or a social enterprise. Staff size varies, but 60 percent of organizations have 10 or fewer employees.

KEY FINDINGS

We find that the racial diversity of NNIP staff increased from 2018 to 2023, with the shares of Black, Hispanic, and Asian staff members increasing (figure 1). In total, the share of people of color across all NNIP staff increased from 37.0 percent in 2018 to 47.7 percent in 2023. The diversity of leadership in NNIP partner organizations also increased, with the share of people of color increasing from 22.0 to 35.7 percent over the same period (figure 2). Leaders remain a less diverse group than staff overall. The survey did not capture the drivers for the improvements noted. Factors may include partner organizations' efforts to attract diverse staff and general demographic trends.

FIGURE 1
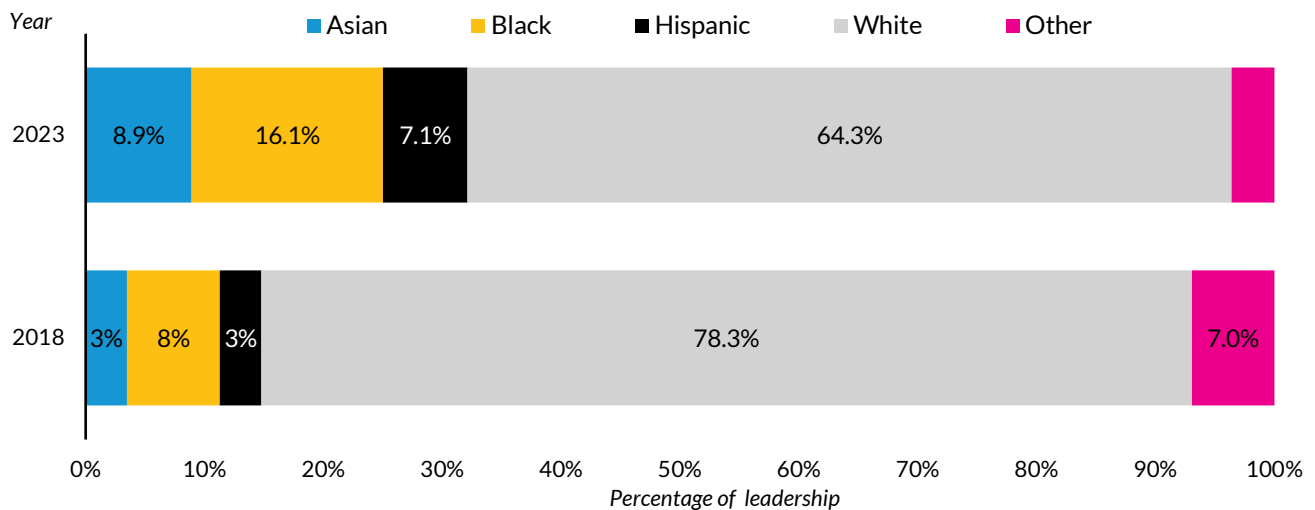**Racial and Ethnic Composition of All NNIP Staff, 2018 and 2023**

Year

| | Asian | Black | Hispanic | White | Other | Not identified |

| 2023 | 14.4% | 14.7% | 12.5% | 52.3% | | |
| 2018 | 11.9% | 12.9% | 8.3% | 63.0% | | |

Percentage of staff

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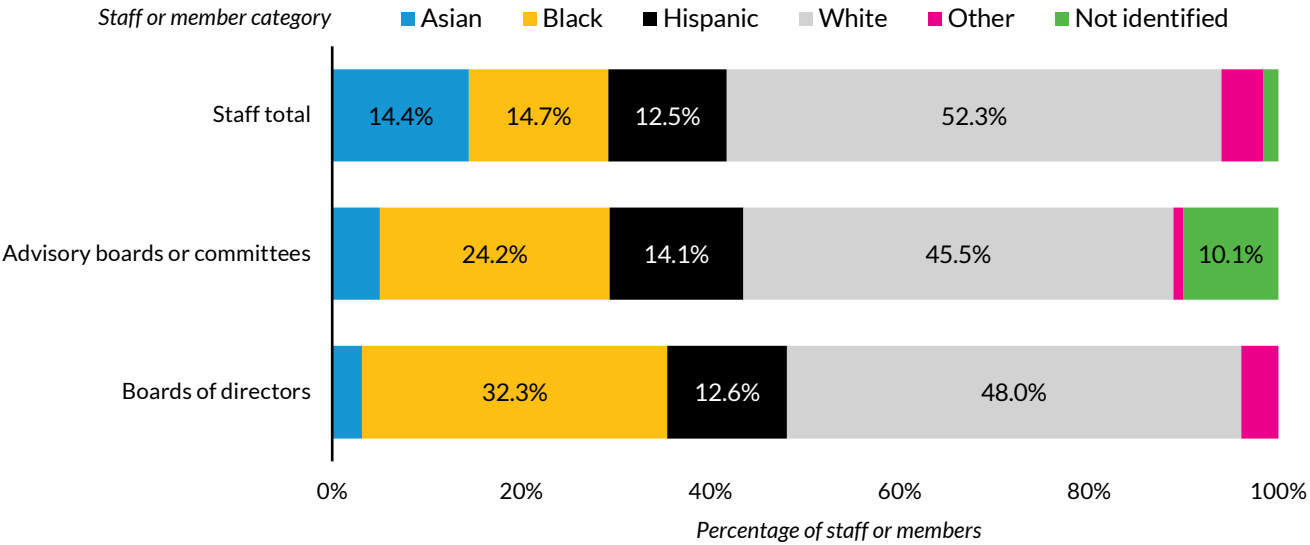**Source:** 2018 and 2023 NNIP diversity surveys.
Notes: N=367 (2023); N=469.5 (2018). "Other" includes individuals who identified as Middle Eastern/North African (in 2023 only), Native American, multiracial, Pacific Islander, or other.

FIGURE 2
Racial and Ethnic Composition of NNIP Leadership, 2018 and 2023

Year

| | Asian | Black | Hispanic | White | Other |

| 2023 | 8.9% | 16.1% | 7.1% | 64.3% | |
| 2018 | 3% | 8% | 3% | 78.3% | 7.0% |

Percentage of leadership

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Source: 2018 and 2023 NNIP diversity surveys.
Notes: N=56 (2023); N=57.5 (2018). "Other" includes individuals who identified as Middle Eastern/North African (in 2023 only), Native American, multiracial, Pacific Islander, or other.

The racial diversity of NNIP staff compares favorably with that of the nonprofit sector overall. A nationwide survey of more than 1,500 nonprofits found that, on average, "10 percent of staff are people of color, and 37 percent of organizations have no staff of color" (Faulk et al. 2021). Other research estimates that about 68 percent of nonprofit employees are white (Independent Sector 2020), compared with 60.5 percent of the overall workforce and 52.3 percent of NNIP staff.

In addition to questions regarding staff, the 2023 NNIP diversity survey also included questions about NNIP partner organizations' boards of directors and advisory committees. In total, 11 organizations reported having a board of directors (with 10 submitting data), and 10 reported having a cross-project advisory board or committee (with 7 reporting data).

NNIP partners' boards of directors and advisory committees are more diverse than their staff overall. Specifically, the shares of Black and Hispanic members across both board types are higher than either group's share of NNIP staff overall (figure 3). However, the reverse is true for Asian board members, who represent a smaller share of boards of directors (3.1 percent) and advisory committees (5.1 percent) than staff overall (12.7 percent). The share of Black members on boards of directors has increased substantially since 2018, rising to 31.3 percent from 17 percent. However, the share of Asian and Hispanic members on these boards has fallen slightly since 2018.[2]

Racial and Ethnic Composition of Staff Overall, Boards of Directors, and Advisory Committees in 2023

Staff or member category ■ Asian ■ Black ■ Hispanic ▨ White ■ Other ■ Not identified

Percentage of staff or members

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Source: 2023 NNIP diversity survey.
Notes: N=367 (staff total), 99 (advisory boards and committees), and 127 (boards of directors). "Other" includes individuals who identified as Middle Eastern/North African, Native American, multiracial, Pacific Islander, or other.

On average, NNIP boards are substantially more diverse than nonprofit boards nationwide. Recent research, drawing on survey responses from more than 1,500 nonprofits, estimated that the average board is "11 to 20 percent [people of color], with the median organization reporting that their board is 1 to 10 percent people of color" (Faulk et al. 2021). This finding reflects trends identified in previous work on racial diversity on nonprofit boards, with one national survey of more than 5,000 nonprofits finding that, on average, 86 percent of board members are non-Hispanic white (Ostrower 2007).

Overall, we are seeing greater diversity among NNIP partner staff and board members, but more progress needs to be made. To this end, the NNIP network is committed to supporting peer learning and technical assistance opportunities for partners to continue increasing the diversity of NNIP staff and boards to better reflect the diversity of the communities they serve. Over the next five years, NNIP aims to expand these opportunities and develop guidance on these topics for its members and similar organizations. We will also continue to share insights from NNIP and conduct projects that advance the state of the field in policy areas critical to addressing inequities and ensuring that all neighborhoods are places where people can thrive.

NOTES

1   To see other NNIP publications, visit https://urbn.is/4blpr8z. To stay in touch with NNIP, sign up for quarterly updates at https://urbn.is/3QAzvAW.
2   Eight of the 10 organizations reporting on board diversity in 2023 also reported in 2018; there were four organizations that reported their board diversity in 2018 but not 2023.

REFERENCES

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Leah Hendey is a principal research associate in the Housing and Communities Division at the Urban Institute. She is also codirector of the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership.

Donovan Harvey is a former research associate in the Housing and Communities Division at the Urban Institute.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS