



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DIVERSITY OFFICERS
IN HIGHER EDUCATION

2025 State of the CDO Survey Report

A report by the

**National Association of Diversity
Officers in Higher Education**

and

Rankin Climate



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About the 2025 State of the CDO Survey

In the spring of 2025, the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education (NADOHE) commissioned its second **State of the CDO** study. The goal was to collect data to provide a clear picture of the demographics, institutional role, and socio-emotional state of chief diversity officers and academic diversity officers across the United States. Data gathered for the 2025 study update findings from the inaugural *State of the CDO Survey Report*, which was conducted in 2023. In addition, the 2025 survey focused on **changes to the diversity, equity, and inclusion profession** over the past two years. The findings included in this report are intended to support individual and institutional NADOHE members.

Demographics and Sample

- Three hundred and ninety-four Chief Diversity Officers (CDOs) and Academic Diversity Officers (ADOs) completed the 2025 State of the CDO survey, a **51% increase in participation from the inaugural 2023 State of the CDO survey** ($n = 261$).
- Of 2025 survey respondents, **almost half** (47%) **identify as Black or African American**.
- **Just over half of the 2025 respondents identify as women** (53%) and nearly a quarter identify as men (24%).
- Most respondents were between **35 and 64 years** old at the time of the survey.
- **Over one-third** (34%) **of respondents hold a Ph.D.**, and a similar proportion are first-generation students (35%).

The Role of the CDO

- The **majority** (88%) **of respondents are in a CDO role**.
- Eighty-seven percent of CDOs and ADOs have **been in their current role for five or fewer years**.
- One in three (33%) respondents came from a student affairs background or another position or industry (38%).

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Budgets and Salary

- **Over half** of the respondents indicated their **budgets have changed in the past two years**.
- Based on data collected in the 2025 survey, annual budgets for CDOs and ADOs, as a function of student population, generally decreased from 2023 to 2025, with the most significant decreases reported among institutions with over 15,000 students.

Institutional Support

- About **one in three CDOs** (34%) **indicated their role has changed in the past two years**, and 29% indicated their office has changed or reorganized since 2023.
- Diversity officers expressed **feeling most supported by their institutional president** (43%), **student affairs administrators** (40%), and **deans or directors** (32%).
- One in four (24%) diversity officers reported that the alignment between their office and other campus units or divisions has changed since 2023, either positively or negatively. Forty-two percent reported that the level of support for diversity, equity, and inclusion priorities at their institution shifted over the past two years, with approximately 35% noting an increase and approximately 38% noting a decrease.

Socio-Emotional Responses to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Work

- In the 2023 State of the CDO Survey Report, respondents were asked to compare their current role to previous roles held during their professional career. At that time, respondents were most likely to consider their current CDO roles more stressful than previous roles, and few CDOs considered their work manageable or predictable in comparison.
- In response to questions in the 2025 survey, **most respondents indicated their work is less predictable** (68%), **more stressful** (87%), and **more upsetting** (77%) than it was in 2023.

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The Future of the Profession

- Nine out of ten respondents (91%) indicated that **the political climate is the most pressing challenge for future diversity, equity, and inclusion work in higher education.**
- The three most pressing campus-level issues respondents endorsed were **challenging campus climates** (53%), **mental health of students, faculty, and staff** (43%), and **crisis management concerns** (43%).

About Us

NADOHE is the **preeminent voice for chief diversity officers**. The association leads the national and international conversation on diversity, equity, and inclusion in postsecondary education. Ultimately, NADOHE investigates, influences, and innovates to transform higher education so that inclusive excellence thrives at the core of each institution worldwide.

First organized in 2003, NADOHE is a membership organization designed for diversity professionals and institutions of higher education to become equipped with the necessary tools and mindsets to advance equity and dismantle systemic oppression. Through its signature Standards of Professional Practice, Chief Diversity and Academic Diversity Officer Fellows Program, A Framework for Advancing Anti-Racism Strategy on Campus, and the Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, NADOHE provides diversity professionals with the resources to be successful in their roles and within their campus communities. The association supports its members in navigating shifts in the legal landscape, understanding the increasing emphasis on equity, and embracing the ever-present value of belonging for students, faculty, and staff.



A Message from the President

Dear Colleagues,

With deep appreciation, I share the results of the 2025 State of the CDO Survey Report, the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education's second comprehensive look at the evolving realities of chief and academic diversity officers across the nation. The findings represent the voices and experiences of nearly 400 dedicated professionals advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging on our campuses, often amid intensifying scrutiny and shifting institutional structures.

Compared to our inaugural 2023 report, this year's survey paints a stark and complex picture: roles are becoming more stressful, less predictable, and in many cases, increasingly isolating. Despite growing institutional awareness, more than three-quarters of respondents find the work more upsetting than it was two years ago. These realities are not just statistics — they are a call to action.

Within the challenge lies resilience. Diversity professionals continue to innovate, lead, and show up for students, faculty, and communities. Many are driving change even as the political and policy landscape forces adaptation and recalibration. From expanded responsibilities to office reorganizations and reductions, this report captures the nuances and necessity of the work and underscores the continued importance of national support, strategy, and solidarity.

To those who participated in the survey: thank you. Your willingness to share your truth allows us to advocate more effectively on your behalf. Your responses affirm the importance of listening and responding with practical tools, professional development, and policy advocacy. This report will guide NADOHE's efforts and ensure our initiatives are aligned with the needs of those on the front lines of institutional transformation.

We see you. We support you. We will continue to walk with you.

With gratitude,

Paulette Granberry Russell, J.D.
President & CEO, NADOHE

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Methodology

The 2025 State of the CDO survey was developed by a group of nationally-renowned academics, administrators, and thought leaders in U.S. higher education.

The survey was launched to NADOHE members and other CDOs and ADOs in higher education on February 4, 2025, and data collection concluded on March 17, 2025. The survey was shared with members¹ via the association's MemberClicks listserv and promoted in the February and March issues of *NADOHE Now*. Respondents were also recruited during the 2025 NADOHE Annual Conference in Chicago, Illinois.

To expand data collection beyond NADOHE's current membership, respondents could nominate people who may not have received the direct invitation to participate; those nominations were reviewed by project staff, and additional invitations were sent in cases where the inclusion criteria were met.

Reminder emails were sent to individual and institutional members throughout the data collection period.

The survey was anonymous, and respondents could skip any survey item except the initial screening question, which was used to determine eligibility. There were 572 total responses; the final sample included 394 individuals who serve in a role that meets NADOHE's definition of a chief diversity officer (CDO),² academic diversity officer (ADO),³ or a similar role.⁴

The aforementioned national experts determined data disaggregation and analysis strategies, and all data management and analysis were conducted using SPSS v.27. The analysis strategy developed for the 2025 survey prioritized the ability to compare findings with the 2023 survey results directly and, more generally, understand shifts in the CDO and ADO positions over the past two years.

¹ When respondents completed the survey, they had the option, within Qualtrics, to anonymously invite colleagues who may not be members of NADOHE to complete the survey.

² In assessing whether an individual serves as CDO, NADOHE confirms this individual "play[s] the central administrative role in guiding, facilitating, and evaluating [diversity, equity and inclusion] processes on behalf of the institution" rather than a unit within the college or university (The Standards of Professional Practice, Executive Summary).

³ In assessing whether an individual serves as ADO, NADOHE confirms this individual guides, facilitates, and evaluates diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging processes on behalf of an academic unit within a college or university.

⁴ NADOHE understands that a CDO or ADO refers to roles, not titles. Given the range of institutional types, it is understood that CDOs and ADOs may hold differing titles and work within a variety of administrative structures.

Survey Results

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Demographics

Race and Ethnicity

As illustrated in Figure 1, 47% ($n = 184$) of survey respondents identify as Black or African American, and 11% ($n = 43$) identify as more than one race, Native American, or Alaska Native. Ten percent ($n = 41$) identify as Hispanic or Latinx, 7% ($n = 29$) identify as White (including individuals who identify as Middle Eastern or North African), and 5% ($n = 18$) identify as Asian, Pacific Islander, or Native Hawaiian. Twenty percent ($n = 80$) of respondents in the analysis sample did not specify their race or ethnicity.

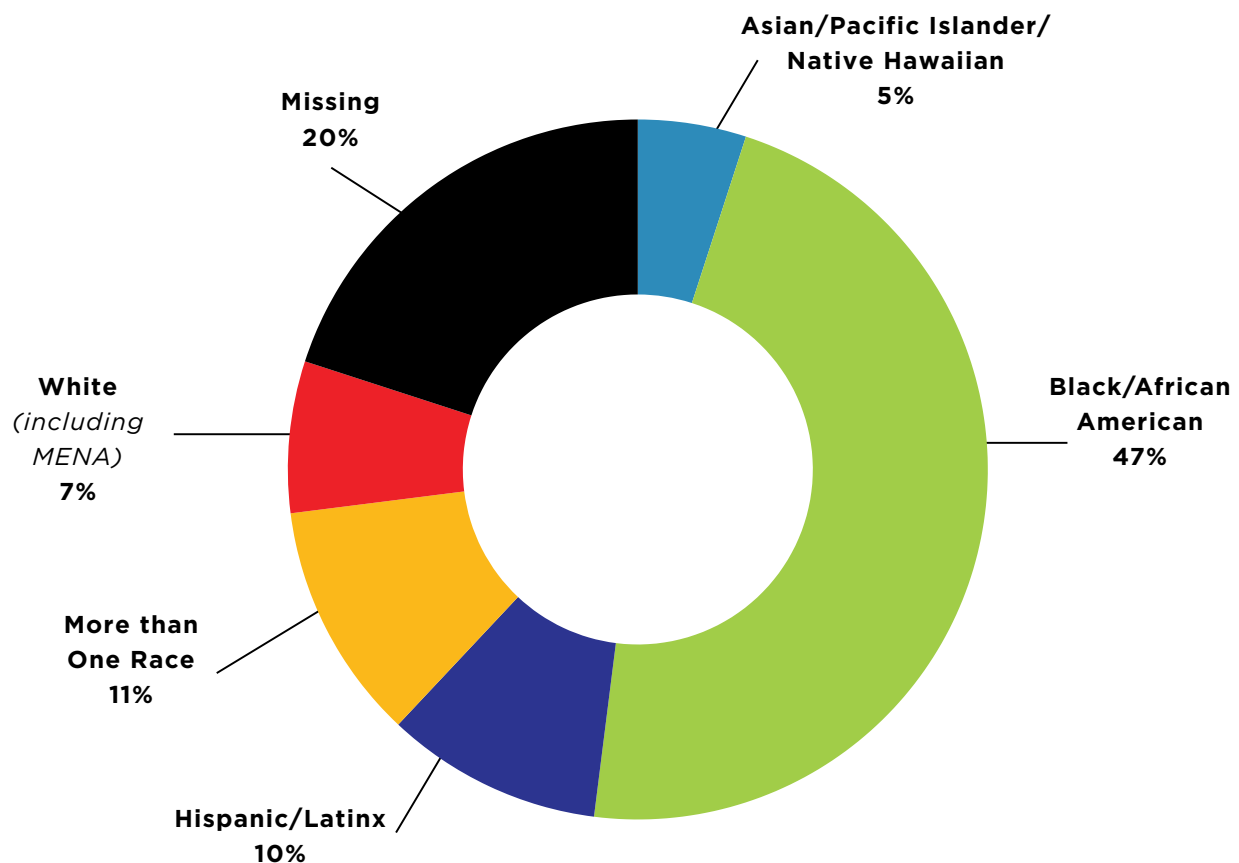


Figure 1. Race and Ethnicity of Participants

Gender Identity

Just over half of survey respondents identify as women (53%, $n = 209$), 24% ($n = 92$) identify as men, and 4% ($n = 14$) identify as gender-expansive.⁵ As with race and ethnicity, 20% ($n = 79$) of respondents did not disclose their gender identity (Figure 2).

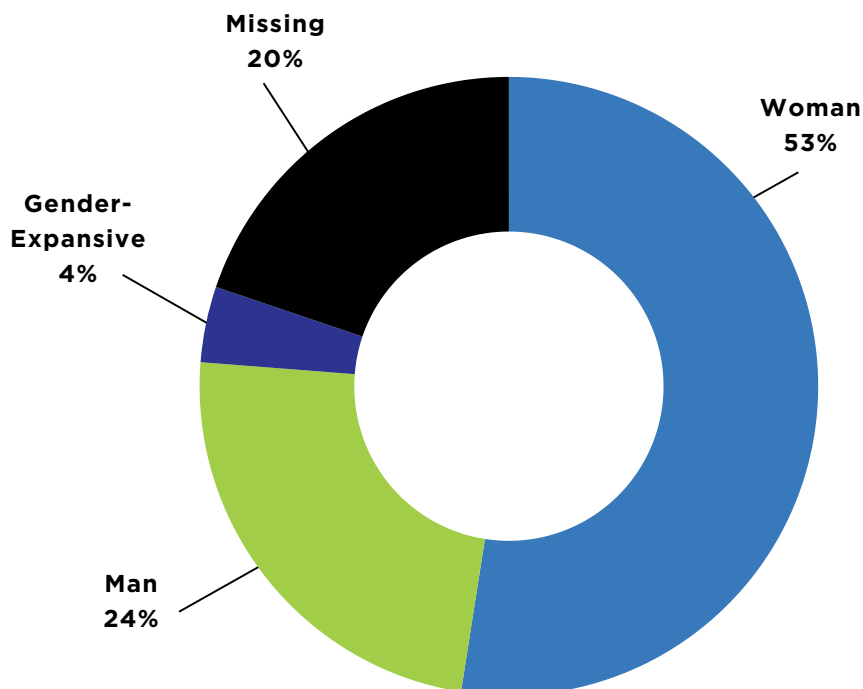


Figure 2. Gender Identity of Participants

Sexual Orientation

The majority of survey respondents identify as heterosexual or straight (61%, $n = 239$), and 15% ($n = 62$) identify as queer-spectrum.⁶ Twenty-four percent ($n = 94$) of respondents did not disclose their sexual orientation (Figure 3).

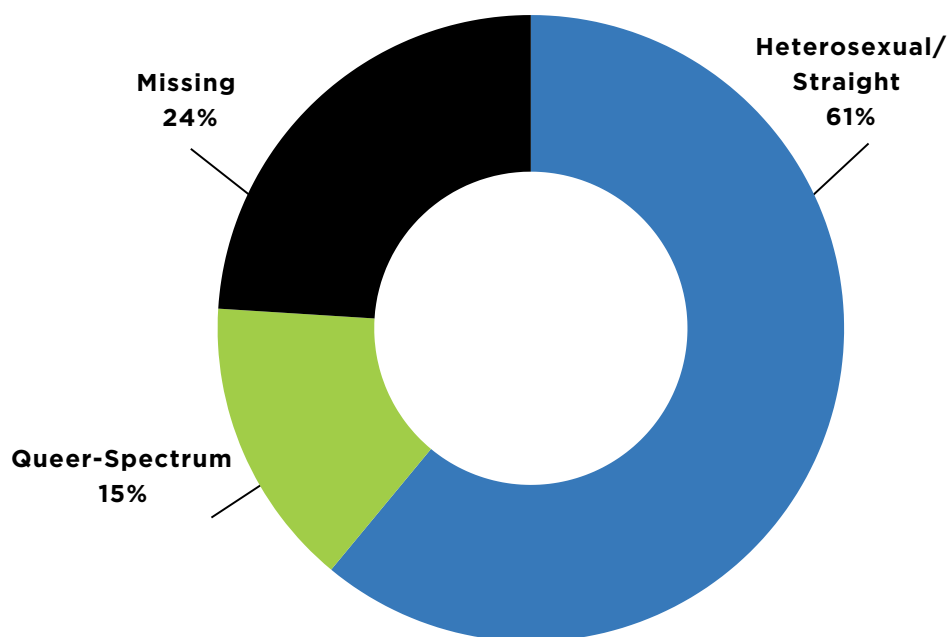


Figure 3. Sexual Orientation of Participants

⁵ The gender-expansive category includes individuals who identify as genderqueer, gender non-conforming, or non-binary.

⁶ Queer-spectrum includes individuals who identify as asexual, bisexual, gay, lesbian, pansexual, or queer.

Age

Most survey respondents were between 45 and 64 (55%, $n = 215$) (Figure 4). Two percent ($n = 9$) of respondents were between 25 and 34, 17% ($n = 66$) were between 35 and 44, and 7% ($n = 27$) were between 65 and 74. As with other demographic categories, 20% ($n = 78$) of respondents did not disclose their age.

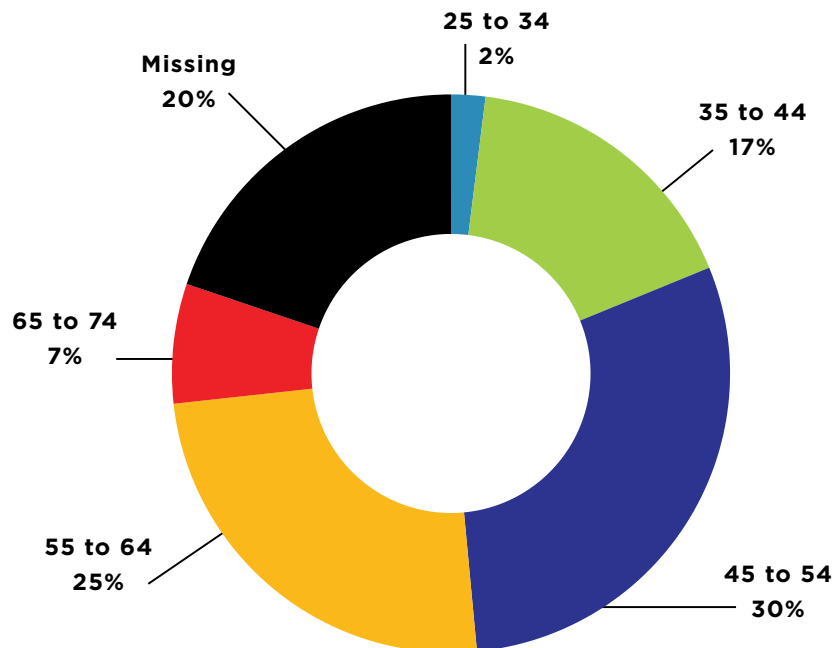


Figure 4. Age of Participants

Education

Thirty-five percent ($n = 137$) of the 2025 survey respondents were first-generation college students,⁷ whereas 45% ($n = 178$) were continuing-generation students; 21% ($n = 80$) of respondents did not disclose their college-generation status. Of the respondents who indicated their highest post-secondary degree (Figure 5), 1% ($n = 4$) have a Bachelor's degree, 1% ($n = 4$) have a medical doctorate (e.g., MD, DDS, DVM), 4% ($n = 15$) have a Juris Doctor, 17% ($n = 68$) have a professional doctorate (e.g., EdD, PsyD), 25% ($n = 91$) have a Master's degree (e.g., MA, MS, MFA, MBA, MSW), and 34% ($n = 134$) have a Ph.D. Twenty percent ($n = 79$) of respondents did not disclose their highest level of education.

One in three respondents (35%, $n = 139$) completed their graduate degree in an education-related field. Seventeen percent ($n = 67$) studied the social sciences, 9% ($n = 37$) studied humanities, 5% ($n = 18$) studied law, 3% ($n = 13$) studied business, and 3% ($n = 10$) studied science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM). An additional 8% ($n = 30$) indicated they studied another discipline, and 21% ($n = 81$) did not disclose their graduate field of study.

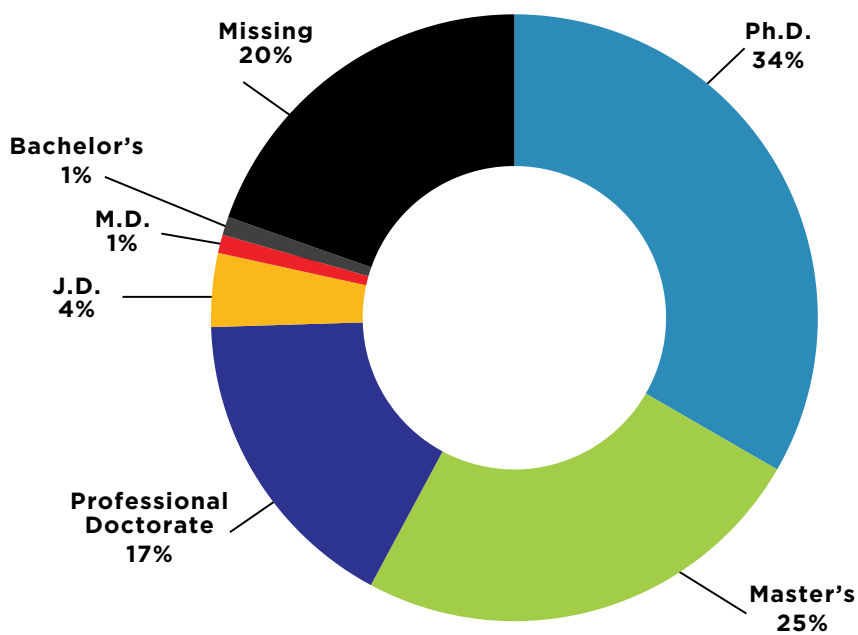


Figure 5. Education of Participants

⁷ First-generation college student is defined as “an individual whose parents did not complete a baccalaureate degree; or in the case of any individual who regularly resided with and received support from only one parent, an individual whose only such parent did not complete a baccalaureate degree” (20 U.S.C.Sec.107a-11(h)(3)).

Level of Education by Race and Ethnicity

Among those survey respondents with a Ph.D., the highest percentage by race and ethnicity identify as Asian, Pacific Islander, or Native Hawaiian (44%, $n = 8$), more than one race, Native American, or Alaska Native (44%, $n = 19$), or Black or African American (43%, $n = 80$). Half of survey respondents who identify as Hispanic or Latinx (51%, $n = 21$) obtained a Master's degree, as did 45% ($n = 13$) of White or MENA-identifying professionals (Figure 6).

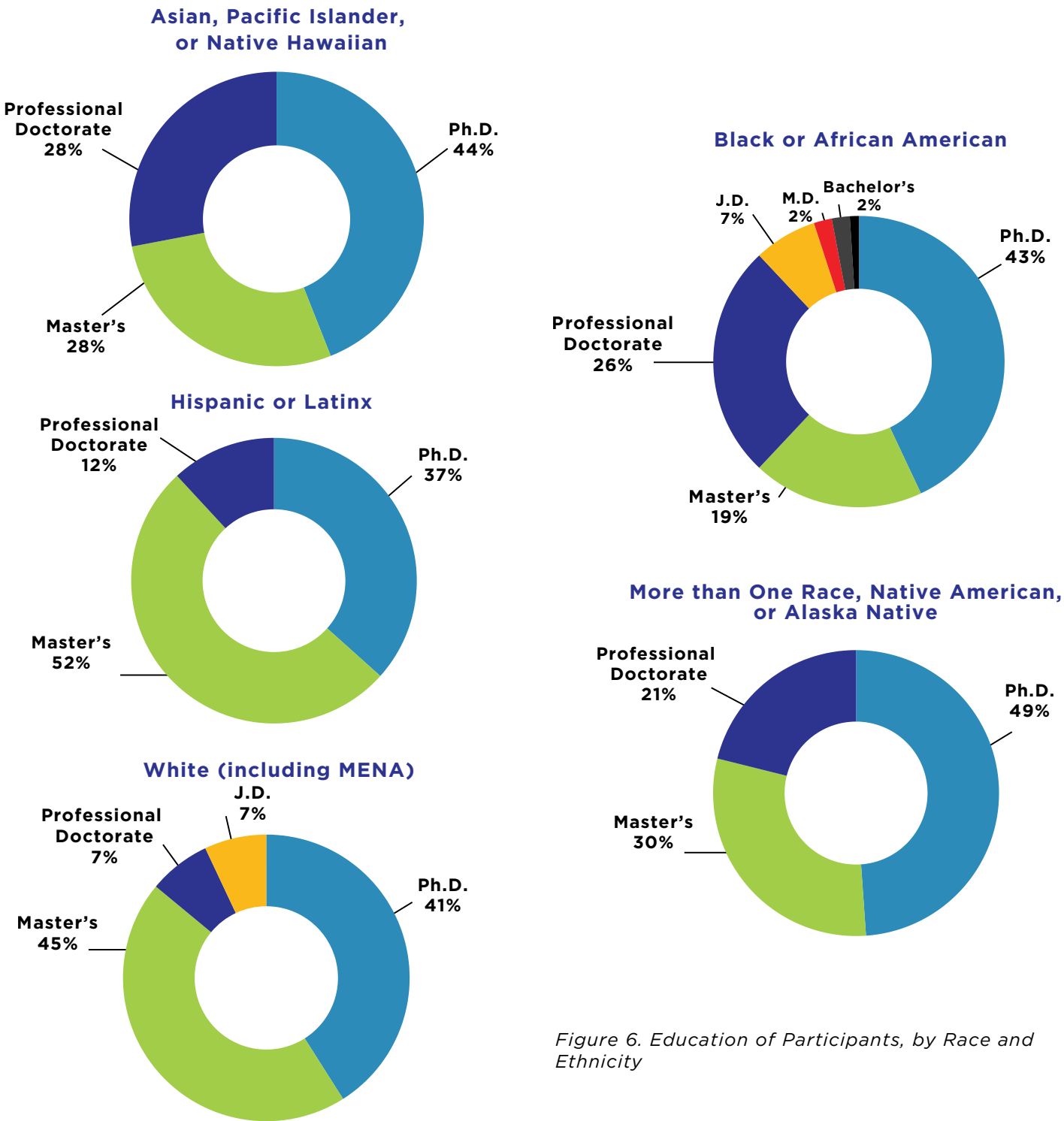


Figure 6. Education of Participants, by Race and Ethnicity

Other Demographic Information

Almost half of the survey respondents (49%, $n = 156$) are members of an external board. Of those individuals, 38% ($n = 57$) serve on one external board, 36% ($n = 54$) serve on two boards, 19% ($n = 29$) serve on three boards, and 7% ($n = 10$) serve on four or more boards. In addition, 57% ($n = 180$) engage in diversity, equity, and inclusion consulting outside their official campus role(s).

Survey respondents were asked if they identified as having a disability: 18% ($n = 70$) reported having a single disability, 11% ($n = 42$) having multiple disabilities, and 38% ($n = 151$) did not indicate a disability. Thirty-three percent ($n=132$) did not disclose their disability status.



The Role of the CDO

Most survey respondents, 88% ($n = 347$), indicated they serve in a CDO or similar role, whereas 12% ($n = 48$) serve in an ADO role. Eighty-two percent ($n = 322$) hold their role at the institution level, whereas 18% ($n = 73$) are associated with an academic unit. Sixty percent ($n = 191$) are the inaugural person in that role at their institution-level or within their academic unit.

Job Preparation

Before their current role,⁸ 28% ($n = 109$) of respondents indicated they were in a student affairs role, and 25% ($n = 96$) had been a faculty member. As illustrated in Figure 7, 10% ($n = 37$) have a background in academic support services, 5% were previously in a legal, regulatory, or compliance role ($n = 21$) or human resources role ($n = 19$), and 2% ($n = 8$) joined their campus from the private sector. Four out of ten respondents (41%, $n = 158$) were in a different position or industry before their current role.

Survey respondents who held another position or were part of an industry not listed in the response options could provide a write-in response to this survey question. Of those respondents, 7.6% ($n = 10$) previously held a CDO role; 5.3% ($n = 7$) were a dean, associate dean, or assistant dean; 4.5% ($n = 6$) were an associate, vice, or assistant provost; 4.5% ($n = 6$) were a director of diversity outside of higher education; 3% ($n = 4$) were

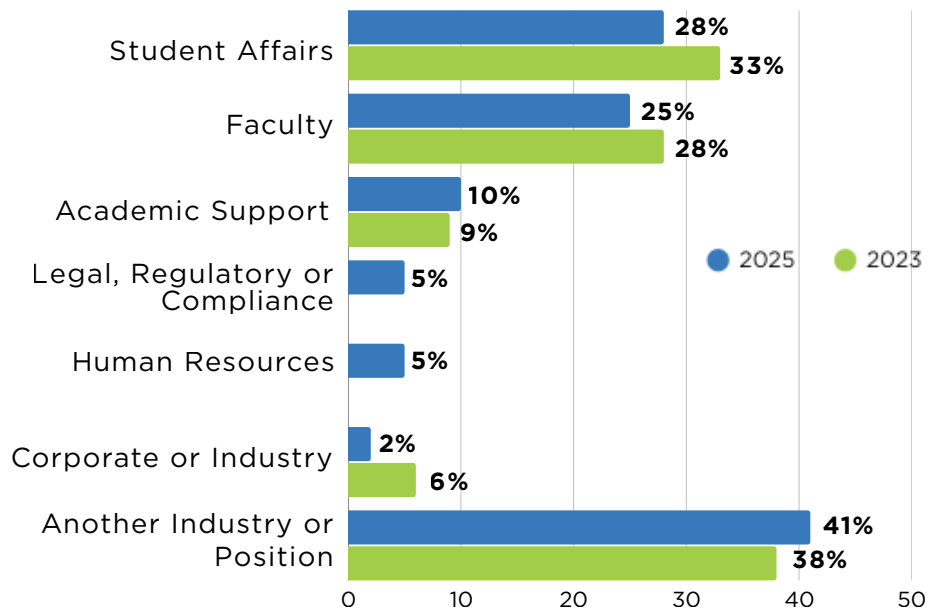


Figure 7. Industry or Role Prior to Current Role, 2023 to 2025

⁸ Fifty-nine percent ($n = 231$) of respondents noted their current role was the first they had held of its kind.

a member of their president's office staff; and 1.5% had a role in inclusive excellence ($n = 2$), the office of the provost ($n = 2$), the non-profit sector ($n = 2$), or enrollment management ($n = 2$). There were additional write-in responses that did not fit within the provided response categories.⁹ Approximately 61% ($n = 239$) of respondents were external hires to their institution, similar to the 2023 State of the CDO Survey Report findings (Figure 8). Approximately one-third of respondents have engaged in diversity, equity, and inclusion work for 15 or more years (35%, $n = 138$), and an additional third (36%, $n = 141$) have been in the profession between six and fourteen years. Approximately one in five (17%, $n = 68$) have been in the profession for less than three years, and 11% ($n = 46$) between four and six years. Almost half (47%, $n = 186$) of respondents reported that a great deal of their time, before their current role, had been dedicated to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

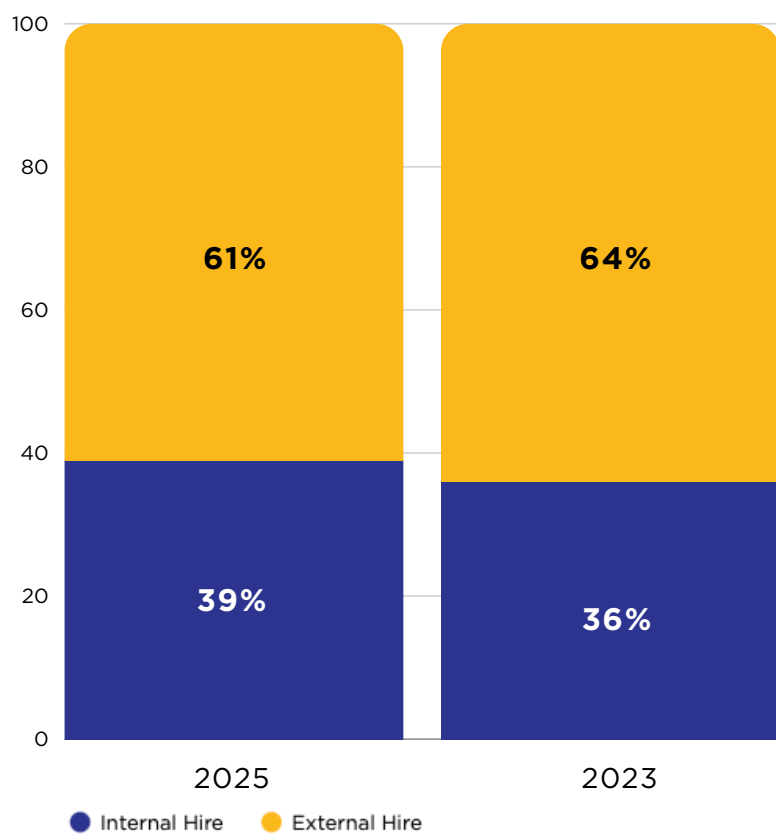


Figure 8. Internal or External Hire Status, 2023 to 2025

Sixty-three percent ($n = 242$) of respondents completed a diversity-focused training or certification, with 30% ($n = 42$) completing the NADOHE Standards of Professional Practice Institute, and 7% ($n = 10$) completing NADOHE's Chief Diversity or Academic Diversity Officer Fellows Program. Beyond NADOHE professional development offerings, 24% ($n = 33$) of respondents completed the Cornell University Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Certificate Program. Fewer than 5% completed another training or certification program (e.g., National Coalition Building Institute's Leadership Institute; Coursera and Rice University's Organizational Leadership in Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion program; Georgetown University's Executive Certificate in Diversity, Equity & Inclusion; or BetterUp's Diversity and Inclusion Coaching program). Most respondents who completed a certification or training program (63%, $n = 88$) had completed a program not offered as a response option in the survey.¹⁰

⁹ Additional write-in options included: director of advising, assistant dean of career services, success coach, civil rights consulting, attorney, government relations, program evaluation and research, K-12 grants, assistant principal, vice president of global growth and development, DEI manager in healthcare, and diversity consultant.

¹⁰ Respondents had the option to write in the certification or training program they completed. Write-ins included: APLU New Leadership Academy, ATIXA DEI Practitioner, Universal Experiences training program (Bentley University), CIC/ACUE Fostering a Culture of Belonging credential, La Academia de Liderazgo (Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities), National Conference for Community and Justice Human Better Series, National Diversity Practitioners Institute, NCORE Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice, NIXLA, Safe Zone Training, Social Justice Training Institute, Intercultural Leadership Program (Tulane University), Leading with Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity in Higher Education (University of Michigan), Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Workplace Certificate (University of South Florida), and Center for Professional and Executive Development Diversity, and Equity, and Inclusion Training (University of Wisconsin-Madison).¹

Position Title

In the 2023 State of the CDO Survey Report, approximately one in three respondents indicated their title was “Chief Diversity Officer” or “CDO.” The 2025 survey saw that proportion decrease to 18% ($n = 70$) (see Figure 9). The highest percentage of 2025 respondents (40%, $n = 156$) indicated that they had a position title not offered in the survey response options.¹¹ Write-in responses included: senior or associate dean,¹² special assistant to the president, senior vice president or vice chancellor, senior diversity consultant, senior access officer, senior advisor, program director,¹³ executive director,¹⁴ divisional diversity officer, director,¹⁵ co-CDO, associate vice president or vice chancellor,¹⁶ and associate or assistant dean.¹⁷

Twenty-three percent ($n = 92$) of respondents are in a vice president role, and 11% ($n = 43$) are in a diversity director or manager role. Two percent of respondents are in a chief equity officer, academic diversity officer, or strategic initiatives, engagement, or inclusion officer role. One percent or less are in a multicultural affairs director or manager, chief culture officer, director or manager of belonging or community, faculty fellow, or diversity coordinator or program assistant role. Fourteen percent ($n = 54$) of survey respondents indicated holding a tenured faculty role at their institution.

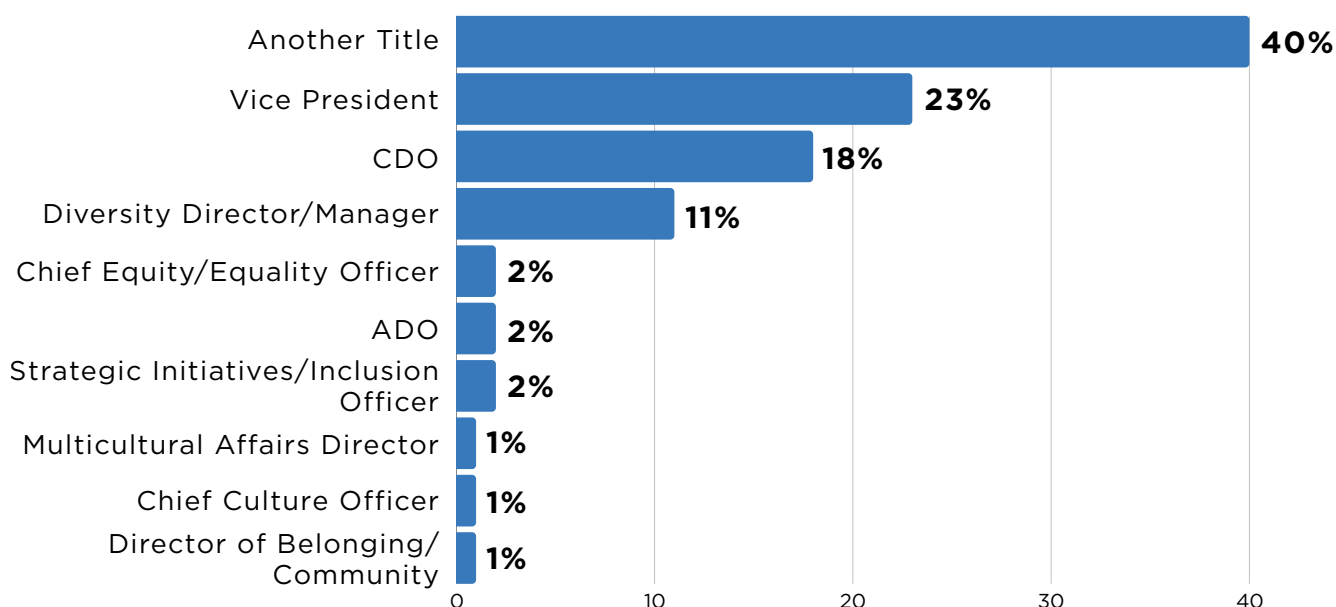


Figure 9. Position Title of Participants

¹¹ There was some overlap in the write-in responses to the “another title” response option, including CDO.

¹² Write-in options for senior or associate deans included inclusive excellence, student life and community engagement, admissions, financial aid, campus equity, and educational equity.

¹³ Write-in options for program directors included equity, inclusion, sustainability, and academic climate.

¹⁴ Write-in options for executive director included equity and inclusion, public service programs, Title IX/EO coordinator, belonging, access, and engagement, and equity and belonging.

¹⁵ Write-in options for director included workplace inclusion and belonging; strategic initiatives for equity and organizational development; justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion; JEDI education and programs; and diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

¹⁶ Write-in options included associate or assistant vice president of institutional equity, community and belonging, and community engagement and inclusion.

¹⁷ Write-in options for associate or assistant deans included inclusive excellence; faculty and inclusive excellence; educational equity; diversity, inclusion, and belonging; DEIB; access and equity; access and engagement; justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion; opportunity, belonging, and enrichment; and student services, inclusion, and strategic partnerships.

Time in Role

Close to half of the 2025 respondents have been in their current position for three to five years (46%, $n = 146$). This finding is logically consistent with the finding from 2023 that most respondents had been in their role for less than two years.¹⁸ Twenty-seven percent ($n = 84$) of the 2025 respondents have been in their role for one to two years, and 14% ($n = 43$) have been in their role for less than one year. Ten percent ($n = 17$) have been in their role between six and fourteen years, and 2% ($n = 8$) have been in the role for more than 15 years (Figure 10).

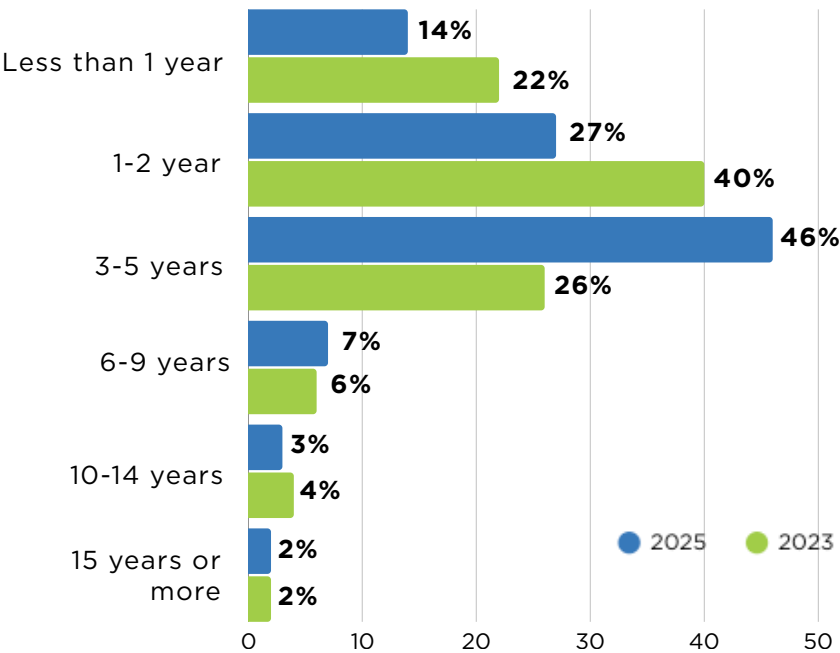


Figure 10. Time in Role, 2023 to 2025

Institution Type

Half of the survey respondents, 50% ($n = 190$), are at a doctoral university (e.g., R1, R2, D/PU, etc.), 24% ($n = 89$) are at a Master’s college or university, and 16% ($n = 60$) are at a baccalaureate college (Figure 11). A relatively small number of respondents are at an online institution (6%, $n = 20$).

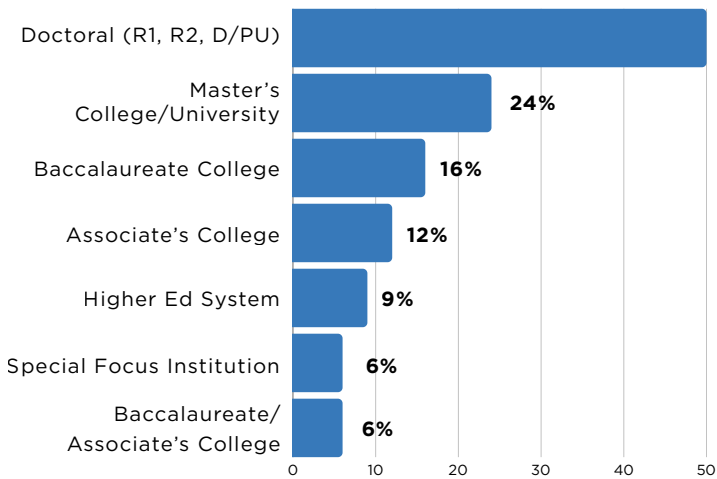


Figure 11. Institutional Type of Participants

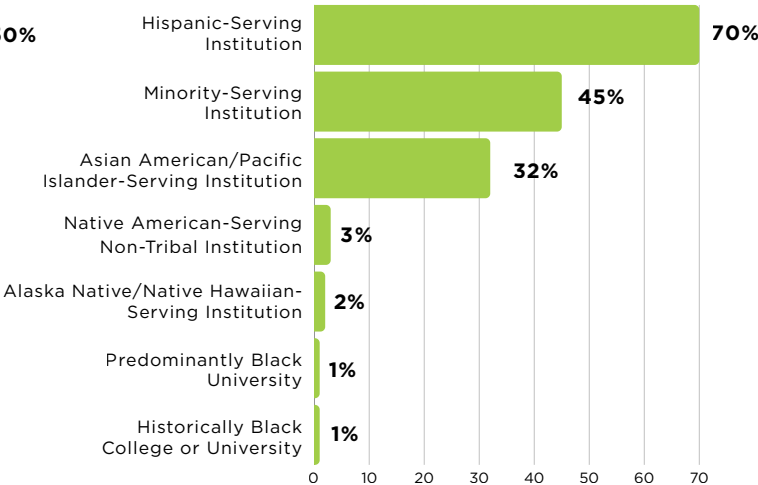


Figure 12. Institutional Designation of Participants

As shown in Figure 12, of respondents who indicated their institution has a recognized Department of Education designation, most are at a Hispanic-serving institution (70%, $n = 64$). Minority-serving institutions employ the next highest percentage of respondents at 45% ($n = 41$), 32% ($n = 39$) who work at an Asian American and Pacific Islander-serving

¹⁸ Respondents to both the 2023 and 2025 State of the CDO surveys will have been in the role for two more years, thus less than 2 years becomes 3 to 5 years.

institution, and less than 5% who work at an institution with another federal designation.

One in three survey respondents works at an institution with fewer than 500 faculty or staff (34%, $n = 101$), another one in three is at an institution with 501 to 2,000 (34%, $n = 101$) employees, and the remaining third works at an institution with more than 2,001 (31%, $n = 92$) employees. As a function of student population, 20% ($n = 58$) have 2,000 or fewer students on their campus, 23% ($n = 67$) have between 2,001 and 6,000 students, 23% ($n = 65$) have between 6,001 and 15,000 students, and 34% ($n = 99$) have more than 15,001 students.

Region

Approximately one in three respondents (29%, $n = 101$) work at an institution in the Mid East region of the U.S. (e.g., Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania). Seventeen percent ($n = 60$) work at an institution in the Far West region (e.g., Alaska, California, Hawaii, Nevada, Oregon, Washington), 15% ($n = 51$) work at an institution in the Great Lakes region (e.g., Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin), 13% ($n = 47$) work at an institution in New England (e.g., Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont), 10% ($n = 36$) work at an institution in the Southeast (e.g., Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia), 7% ($n = 23$) work in the Plains region (e.g., Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota), 5% ($n = 15$) work in the Rocky Mountain region (e.g., Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming), 3% ($n = 10$) work in the Southwest (e.g., Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas), and 2% ($n = 6$) work at an institution in another location. (See Figure 13)

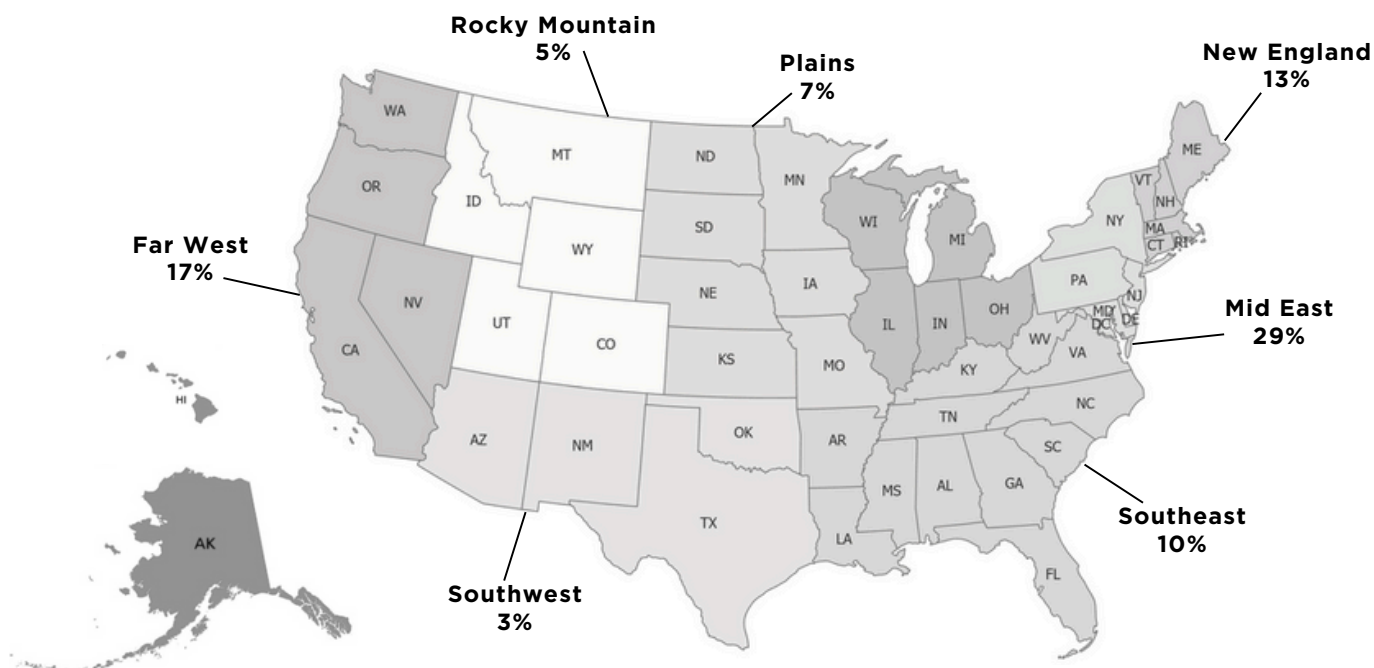
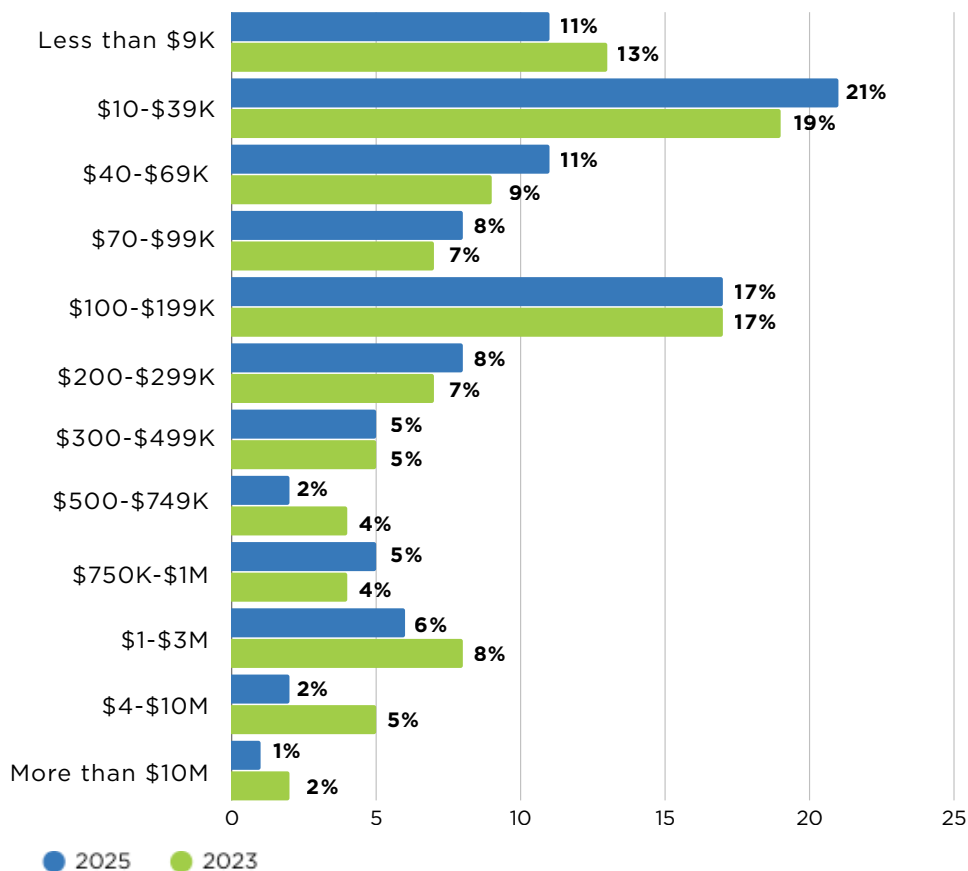


Figure 13. Region of Participants

Resources

Almost two-thirds of survey respondents indicated that their annual operational budget, excluding salaries and fringe, is less than \$150,000 (see Figure 14).

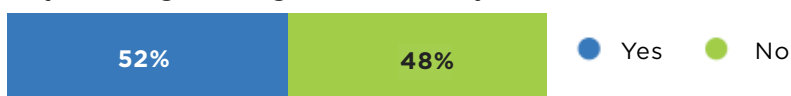


Fifty-two percent of respondents ($n = 97$) indicated their budget has not changed in the past two years, and for those whose budgets have changed, 52% indicated it had increased (Figure 15). Respondents could expand on how or why their budget increased via a write-in, open-ended survey question. Responses regarding budget increases included new positions, expansion of programs, grant funding,¹⁹ climate survey initiatives, and restructuring or strategic alignment.

¹⁹ References to grant funding ranged from \$150,000 to \$3M, and some survey respondents noted the majority of their funding comes from philanthropy or state-mandated funding.

Figure 14. Annual CDO Budgets, 2023 to 2025

Did your budget change in the last 2 years?



If yes, did your budget increase or decrease?



Figure 15. Budgetary Changes in Diversity Offices, 2023 to 2025

Of those who indicated their budget decreased since 2023 (48%), 98 write-in responses offered additional context. Budget cuts ranged from 10% to 60%, or between \$5,000 and \$700,000. Some of these reductions were attributed to institution-wide budget “deficits” or enrollment declines; others wrote that their budget has decreased due to state and

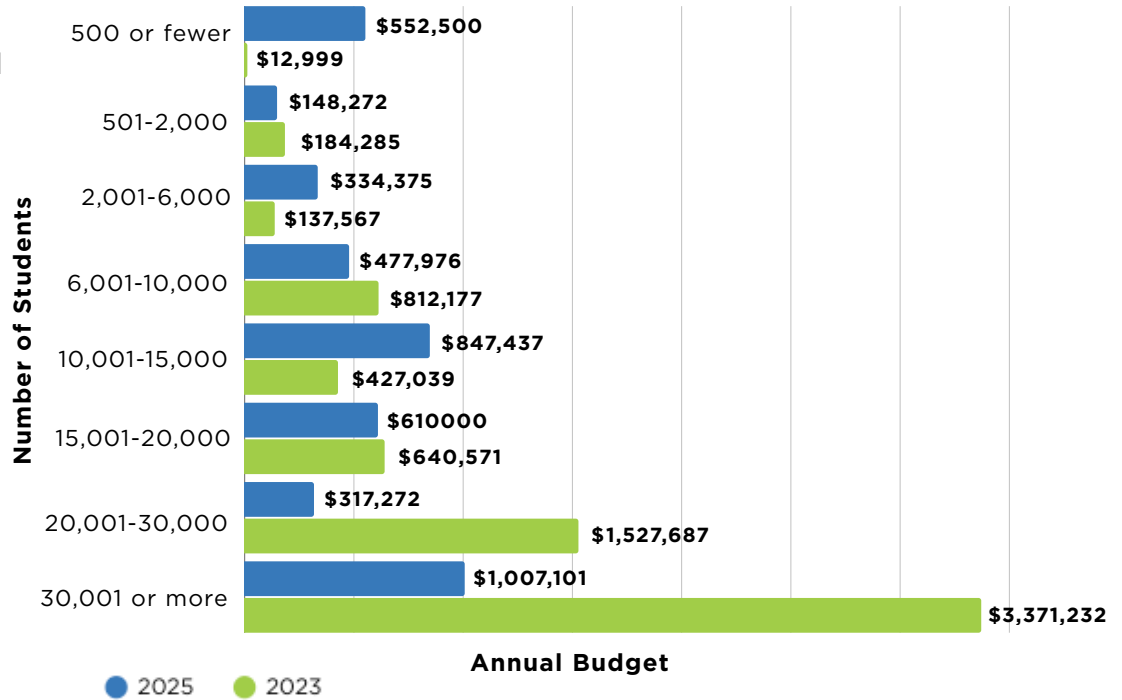
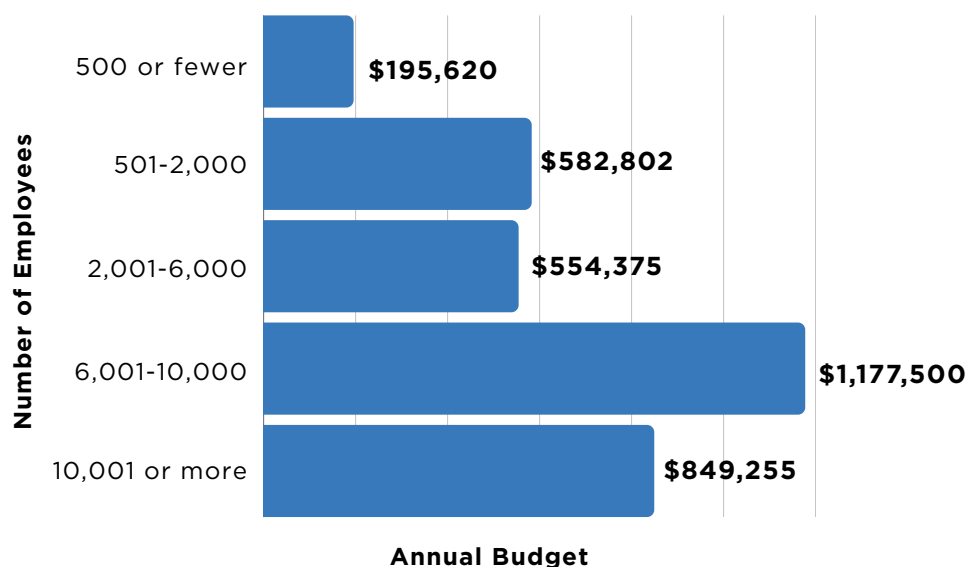


Figure 16. Annual Budget by Student Population, 2023 to 2025

federal policies or legislation (e.g., the “Trump order”). Other respondents indicated their budgets have been frozen due to “concerns that DEI spending will be heavily scrutinized by central administration and bring negative attention to the unit.” The average budget for these roles varied by institution size and student population (Figure 16).

When examined by number of employees, annual diversity, equity, and inclusion budgets ranged from \$195,620 annually at institutions with 500 or fewer employees to \$1,177,500 at institutions with 6,000 to 10,000 employees (see Figure 17). Slightly more



than half (56%, $n = 219$) of respondents have two or fewer full-time employees (FTEs) who report to them, excluding student workers or volunteers. Twenty-two percent ($n = 86$) have three to five FTEs, and 23% have six or more direct reports, down from 31% in 2023.

Figure 17. Annual Budget by Faculty/Staff Population, 2025

Salary

Annualized salaries indicated by respondents in 2025 (Figure 18) were similar to findings detailed in the *2023 State of the CDO Survey Report*. Fifteen percent ($n = 58$) of diversity professionals make less than \$100,000 per year, 33% ($n = 129$) make between \$100,000 and \$149,999 per year, 22% ($n = 86$) make between \$150,000 and \$199,999 per year, 14% ($n = 54$) make between \$200,000 and \$249,999 per year, 9% ($n = 34$) make between \$250,000 and \$299,999 per year, and 7% ($n = 28$) make more than \$300,000 per year. Forty-six percent ($n = 180$) of respondents strongly agreed or agreed they are paid similarly to other similarly-situated executives at their institution who perform a comparable scope of work at the participant's level of performance; 33% ($n = 138$) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

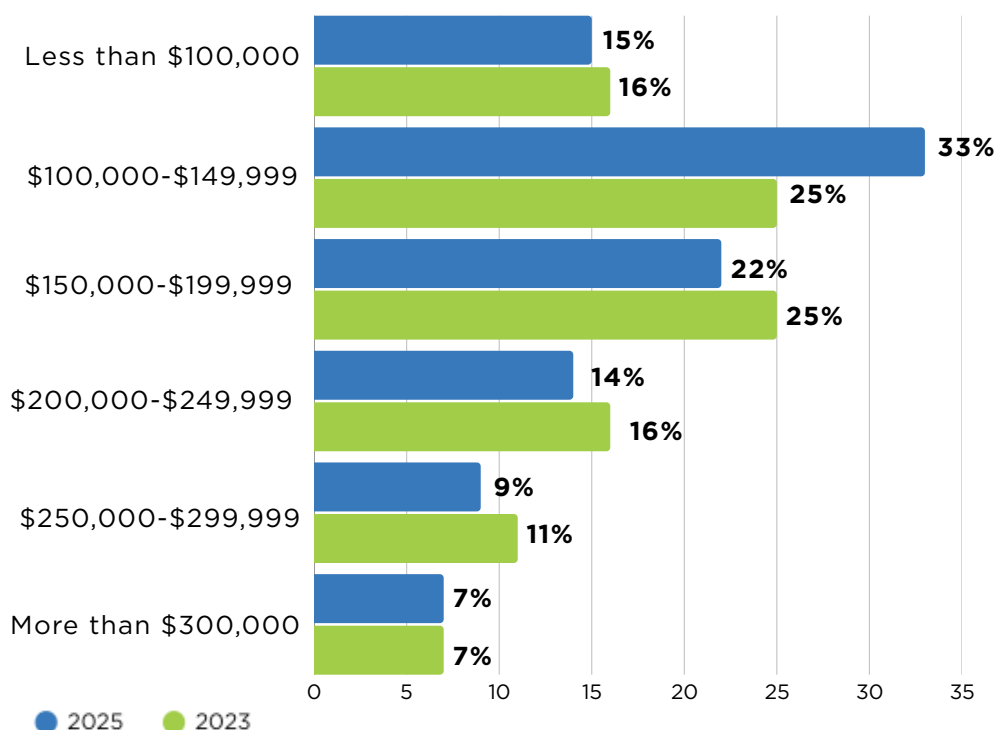


Figure 18. Average Salaries, 2023 to 2025

Thirty-three percent of men and women-identifying respondents earn an annual salary between \$100,000 and \$149,000, although 56% ($n = 50$) of men²⁰ make more than \$150,000 per year compared to 52% ($n = 108$) of women.²¹ More women have an annual salary over \$300,000 than men, at 10% and 3%, respectively. Survey respondents who identify as gender-expansive²² make less than \$250,000 annually.

Average salaries at institutions in the 2025 data²³ indicate slightly lower salaries overall at doctoral and Master's institutions compared to the 2023 data (see Figure 19, next page). Salaries were slightly higher at baccalaureate, baccalaureate/associate's, and associate's colleges according to the 2025 data.

²⁰ Among men-identifying respondents, 28% ($n = 25$) make between \$150,000 and \$199,999 per year, 16% ($n = 14$) make between \$200,000 and \$249,999, 9% ($n = 8$) make between \$250,000 and \$299,999, and 3% ($n = 3$) make more than \$300,000 per year.

²¹ Among women-identifying respondents, 19% ($n = 39$) make between \$150,000 and \$199,999 per year, 13% ($n = 27$) make between \$200,000 and \$249,999, 10% ($n = 21$) make between \$250,000 and \$299,999, and 10% ($n = 10$) make more than \$300,000 per year.

²² Thirty-six percent ($n = 5$) of gender-expansive respondents make less than \$100,000 per year, 7% ($n = 1$) make between \$100,000 and \$149,999 per year, 21% ($n = 3$) make between \$150,000 and \$199,999, and 36% ($n = 5$) make between \$200,000 and \$249,999 per year.

²³ The 2025 State of the CDO survey included two additional categories for institutional type: special focus and academic system. Because of these additions, there is only average salary data for 2025 (Figure 19).

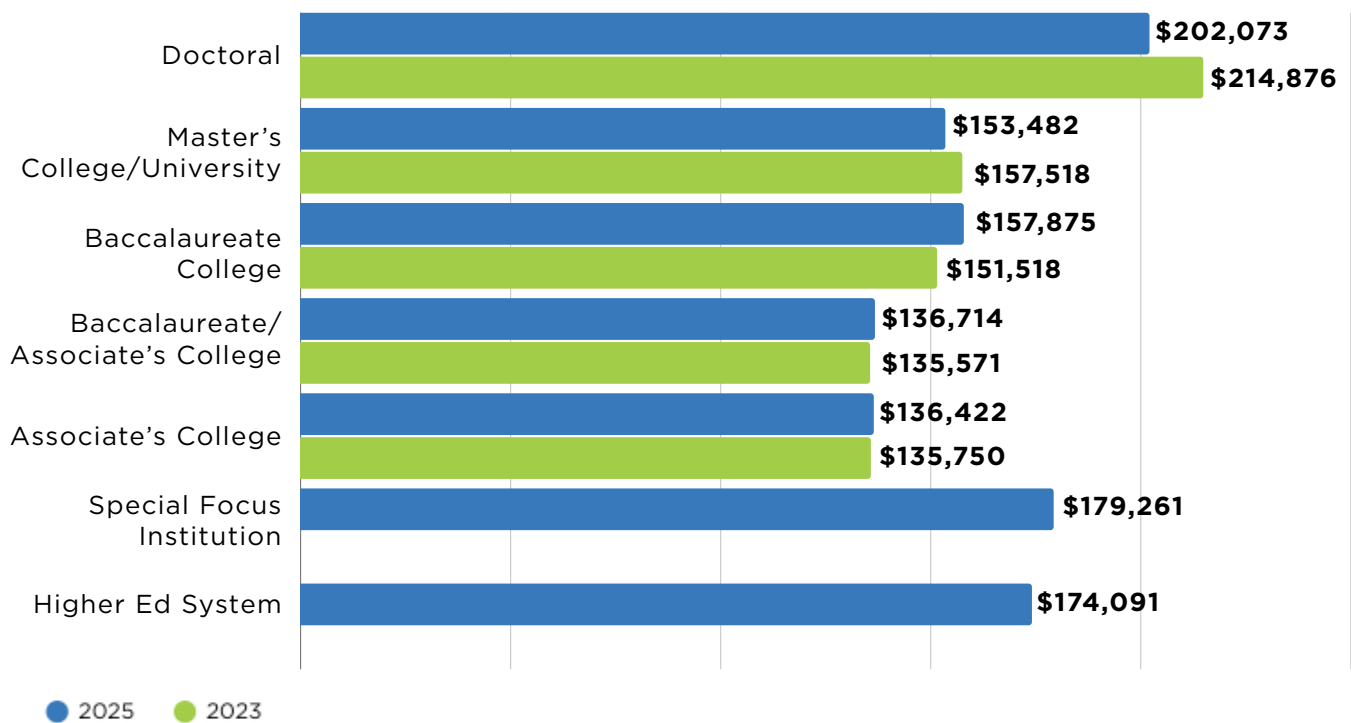
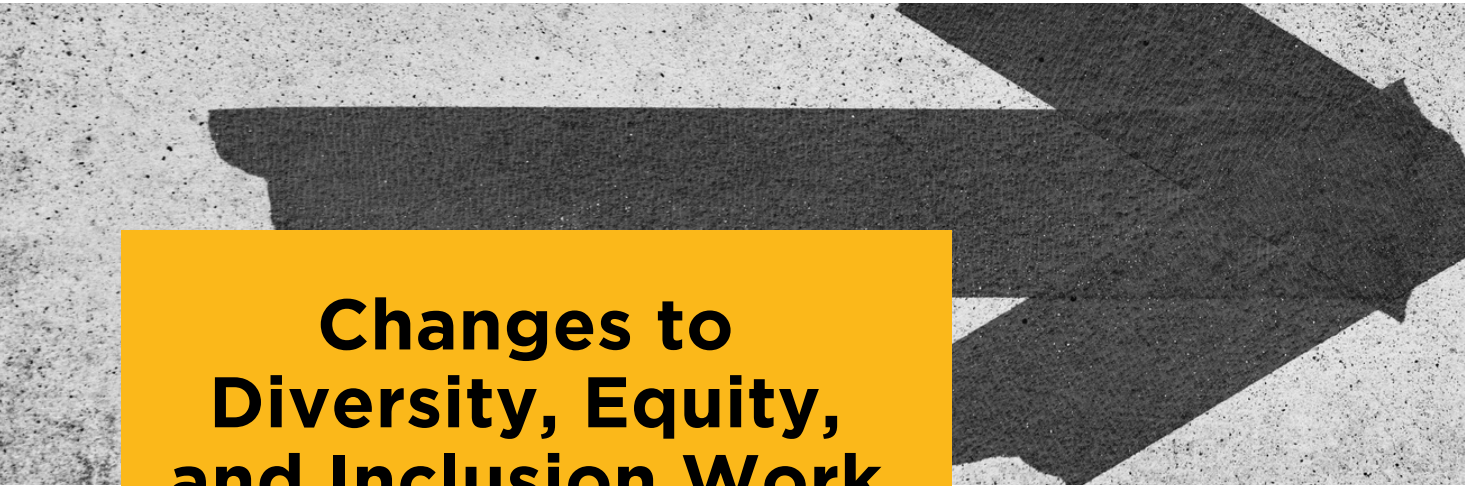


Figure 19. Annual Average Salary for Diversity Leaders by Institution Type, 2023 to 2025



Changes to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Work

Over one-third of respondents (34%, $n = 132$) **indicated their role has changed in the past two years**, and three out of ten (31%, $n = 122$) reported feeling their work has changed significantly. Twenty-nine percent ($n = 114$) of respondents noted that their institution's diversity, equity, and inclusion office had been reorganized in the past two years.

Role Changes

Thirty-one percent ($n = 108$) of respondents indicated that their role or position had changed in the past two years. Some of these changes included a title adjustment. Approximately 27% ($n = 38$) of write-in responses to this survey question indicated a role adjustment, including promotions, being “downgraded,” or receiving a “new title.” Several respondents who fell within the category of role adjustment wrote that they were promoted and now “have a seat at the table” with campus leadership. A subset of

respondents became the inaugural diversity officer on their campus.

Approximately one in four (24%, $n = 34$) of write-in responses indicated that over the past two years, individuals have experienced an expansion of their responsibilities. Respondents described much of this as integrating student success, Title IX, human resources, accessibility, or community engagement into their roles and responsibilities. Write-in responses referenced “executive orders,” “political climate affecting [their] role,” and “disbanded due to state action.”

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

How has your role changed
in the last two years?

“The diversity components were removed.”

“It is still being defined. While I have been able to remain in an Executive Leadership role, due to pending legislation and Federal and State Executive Orders, it may eventually be eliminated.”

“Half of my team (two FTE) was reassigned to other divisions within my academic unit, and the remaining staff (including me) are being forced to restructure our roles to be 75% student-facing, which is vastly different than the organizational development work we were doing before, mostly focused on climate improvement.”

Approximately 8% ($n = 12$) of respondents who indicated their role had changed noted that their role had been eliminated or their responsibilities discontinued. Eight percent ($n = 11$) had been hired into a new or inaugural role at their institution since the 2023 *State of the CDO Survey Report*, and 5% ($n = 7$) indicated they have been serving in an interim CDO role.

Office Changes

Twenty-nine percent ($n = 99$) of respondents indicated their office has changed in the past two years. Approximately 14% ($n = 17$) of that group indicated their office was dismantled or eliminated, often due to state law (e.g., SB-17 in Texas). On other campuses, respondents noted their office has been merged with another office, including human resources (9%, $n = 11$), student affairs (11%, $n = 13$), the provost's office (7%, $n = 9$), or legal and compliance (5%, $n = 6$). Approximately 9% ($n = 11$) indicated their office name or title has changed, often modifying “diversity,

equity, and inclusion” to encompass inclusive excellence, belonging, access and opportunity, culture and connection, or people, culture, and equity.



VOICES FROM THE FIELD

How has your office changed in the last two years?

“Has not been moved but has been rebranded.”

“It was part of the President's office and now part of the Student Affairs Office. Still has institution-wide oversight and responsibility.”

“It has not been moved but titles have changed and we have evaluated all services and programs to make sure they are compliant with new legislation.”

“It has been dismantled.”



Work Changes

The scope of diversity, equity, and inclusion work in higher education is being reshaped by federal and state policies. Twenty-nine percent ($n = 101$) of respondents indicated that their work has changed significantly in the past two years. Approximately 20% ($n = 28$) of those respondents noted it was due to political and legislative impacts, including but not limited to, replacing “diversity, equity, and inclusion” with “belonging” or “inclusive excellence,” changes to institutional compliance policies, and a rise in risk management, legal compliance, and regulatory functions across higher education more broadly. Some respondents indicated their work or programs have been cut or discontinued.

For respondents whose roles shrank between 2023 and 2025, most attributed this to political or budget-based decision-making. Some described it as “role eliminated,” “responsibilities pared down,” “office dissolved,” or “bias reporting discontinued.” Others experienced expansion of their work: approximately 30% ($n = 42$) of write-in responses to this survey question indicated their work scope has expanded to include student affairs, compliance, human resources, Title IX or Title VI, conflict resolution, wellness, accessibility, community engagement, and/or career development responsibilities. Other

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

How has your work changed in the last two years?

“More engagement with all campus constituents and offering of training and standardization.”

“Responsible for areas on campus and I am now a member of the President’s Executive Team.”

“Much [of] my work now, rather than helping push DEIBA initiatives within my department and its various campuses and locations, it is now largely spent on strategizing for the current political climate. While I am trying to keep our teams focused on our current goals, it is difficult to do so within a climate filled with high anxiety and stress over the future.”

“We have had to remove or alter several initiatives due to anti-DEI sentiment and edicts from our Regents. This includes removing Diversity Statements in faculty hiring, modifying our promotion guidelines to soften the DEI language, and adjusting our trainings.”

“As of today, DEI staff are considered automatically biased and cannot participate in decision-making.”

respondents noted that offices in their campus diversity division have been moved. At one institution, for example, Title IX and disability services were transferred from the diversity division to the campus office of civil rights. The participant noted, “I believe it is in the process of reorganization. I do not know where it will go. My hunch is that parts will go to different other units on campus, such as the dean of students, facilities planning and management, etc.” Some respondents noted their role has been excluded from institutional decision-making, meetings, and emails within the past two years; others indicated a decline in institutional enthusiasm and budgetary support for their work.

Advisory Role

Survey respondents were asked if their role as advisor to the person they report to has changed in the past two years (Figure 20). Among the 14% of respondents ($n = 42$) who indicated their role as advisor has changed since 2023, qualitative responses included:

- “He started hearing less advice from me.”
- “I was an advisor to the former President. The new President has indicated no need for a DEI advisor.”
- “I am now a direct report, whereas we were colleagues before.”
- “The CDO used to be part of the President’s cabinet. Now, I am not.”
- “I only get invited to the table AFTER some type of diversity issue occurs to be the person to ‘fix it’.”

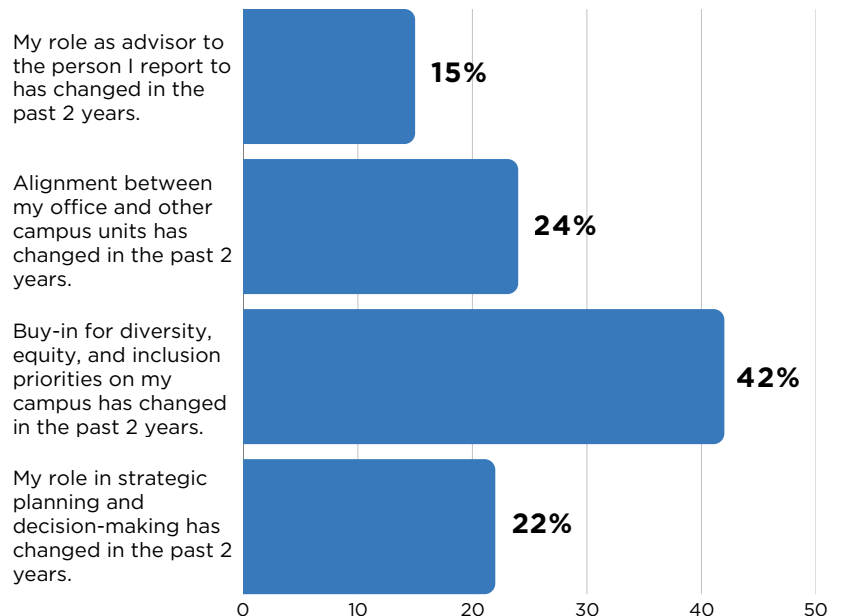


Figure 20. Changes to Diversity Leadership Roles

Although a majority of the write-in responses indicated less support or trust as an advisor, some respondents indicated a positive shift in their advising role:

- “I have become a more integral part of the Dean’s advisors. As we have been working more closely the past few months, I find that my Dean seeks out my opinion more often. I have fought to have a seat at the table at more decision making sessions and I’m just starting to get pulled into those more without having to fight for it.”
- “A lot more strategic and supportive of culture change efforts.”
- “A new Dean has given me a stronger voice at the table.”
- “He has become more receptive to my advice.”

Alignment on Campus

Approximately one in four respondents (24%, $n = 93$) indicated that alignment between their campus diversity office and other offices or divisions has changed in the past two years (see Figure 20). According to write-in responses, almost half of those respondents indicated improved alignment (48%, $n = 64$). Some of this alignment stems from new strategic plans, others from “formal structures and communication channels.” One participant noted that “alignment with Student Affairs has deepened the work on multiple initiatives.”

Campus Buy-In

Four out of ten CDOs who completed the survey indicated that their campus’s buy-in for diversity, equity, and inclusion priorities has changed since 2023 (42%, $n = 159$) (Figure 20). Among respondents who indicated a shift in campus buy-in, there was a relatively even split between increased (35%, $n = 71$) and decreased (38%, $n = 77$) support. Among respondents who saw a decline in campus buy-in, this was often due to political realignment:

- “Buy-in has decreased. DEI is like the new ‘F’ word.”
- “My budget is now zeroed out due to the Trump order.”
- “Institution leaders are afraid to vocally support the work.”
- “Eliminated—constant threats from Regents.”

Among respondents who indicated an increase in their campus’ buy-in, it was often due to their role as CDO being a new addition to campus, or increased support given the changes to higher education and federal and state legislative efforts:

- “It’s now embedded into our mission and strategic plan.”
- “Gained more support from upper leadership.”
- “Having a CDO has motivated involvement and buy-in.”
- “The campus is more engaged despite the political moment.”

Strategic Planning & Decision-Making

Twenty-two percent ($n = 84$) of survey respondents noted that their role in their institutional and/or academic unit’s strategic planning and decision-making processes

has changed in the past two years (Figure 20). Among those respondents, approximately 40% have increased involvement in decision-making. This increased involvement could include participation or chairing strategic planning committees, promotions to their institution's cabinet or senior leadership teams, and inclusion of equity as an institutional goal or as part of their strategic plan. One participant noted, "We have infused equity across all strategic pillars," while another wrote, "I now sit on the Cabinet, which gives me more gravitas."

For the approximately 30% who experienced a decrease in their strategic influence, this was primarily due to being moved from the president's or chancellor's office to another unit (e.g., human resources or student affairs) or removal from decision-making stemming from political pressure. A sample of responses to this survey question included:

- "Fewer opportunities to collaborate with leadership."
- "I no longer have access to decision makers."
- "We have a strategic plan that calls out DEIB as a core value, along with goals to reduce institutional performance gaps (e.g., retention and graduation rates) for marginalized populations. But as outside pressures mount, we are being asked to help our universities reach those goals under new structures and roles that essentially have done away with references to words or practices associated with DEIB."



Institutional Access and Support

Access to Resources

Survey respondents were asked to identify the level to which they agreed with statements related to institutional and/or academic-level support using a five-point scale (from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*). Approximately one in three respondents *somewhat agreed* with “I have adequate access to resources to perform my responsibilities” (35%, $n = 120$) compared to 20% ($n = 68$) who *strongly agreed* with this statement; this illustrates a decrease in perceived support over the past two years, where 42% of survey respondents *somewhat agreed* with this statement and 23% *strongly agreed* in 2023.

When support was examined by type, 41% ($n = 139$) of survey respondents *somewhat agreed* with “my institution has communication support for diversity, equity, and inclusion;” 43% ($n = 147$) *somewhat agreed* with “my institution/unit has data and analytics support for diversity, equity, and inclusion;” 44% ($n = 149$) *somewhat agreed* with “my institution/unit has faculty development support for diversity, equity, and inclusion;” 46% ($n = 156$) *somewhat agreed* with “my institution/unit has staff development support for diversity, equity, and inclusion;” and 44% ($n = 148$) *somewhat agreed* with “my institution/unit has student development support for diversity, equity, and inclusion.” More CDOs *strongly agreed* that they have access to institutional research data needed to do their job (38%, $n = 130$) than those who *somewhat agreed* (34%, $n = 115$).

CDOs who are employed at the academic system level were more likely to *strongly agree* with several statements, including having communications support for diversity, equity, and inclusion (50%, $n = 16$), having data and analytics support (44%, $n = 14$), and access to institutional research data (44%, $n = 14$). CDOs at institutions with a special-focus designation were more likely to *strongly agree* that they have communications support (41%, $n = 9$) and staff development support (38%, $n = 8$). CDOs at AAPI-serving institutions were more likely to *strongly agree* with having overall resource support. At HSIs, 47% ($n = 28$) of respondents *strongly agree* they have data and analytics support, and 51% ($n = 30$) *strongly agree* they have access to institutional research data.

Reporting Structures

Most respondents indicated they engage in a formal annual review or performance evaluation (85%, $n = 327$); 16% ($n = 64$) indicated their reporting relationship has changed²⁴ in the past two years. Half of respondents report to their university president (52%, $n = 203$), 16% ($n = 63$) report to a senior vice president or provost, 7% ($n = 29$) report to a dean, and 4% or less report to a cabinet vice president, human resources or finance leadership, a system head, or the university's general counsel. Seventeen percent ($n = 67$) of respondents indicated they report to another university executive not listed in the survey response options.

Almost thirty percent of diversity officers meet biweekly with their president (29%, $n = 100$) and with their provost as needed (27%, $n = 102$), respectively. One in four meet weekly with their institutional cabinet (41%, $n = 138$), with only 11% ($n = 37$) indicating that their cabinet schedule cadence has changed in the past two years. Twenty-two percent ($n = 74$) of CDOs indicated that their meeting schedule with their institutional president has changed in the past two years.

Skill Sets

Most senior diversity professionals are evaluated on strategic planning and initiatives (85%, $n = 306$) and access, success, and belonging for students (67%, $n = 244$). The top five evaluation criteria also include institutional and organizational change (62%, $n = 199$), community engagement efforts (57%, $n = 207$), and campus climate assessment strategies (53%, $n = 168$). This aligns with the top five priorities for CDOs, which across all survey respondents included strategic alignment of diversity, equity, and inclusion into an institutional vision (61%, $n = 178$); fostering an inclusive campus (62%, $n = 183$); diversity, equity and inclusion training and development (45%, $n = 133$) and programming (36%, $n = 105$); and establishing institutional diversity, equity, and inclusion goals²⁵ (35%, $n = 104$).

Diversity professionals indicated differences in skills and evaluation criteria, depending on their institution type (see Figure 21). For example, community engagement was among the top priorities for 57% of survey respondents; community engagement was among the top priorities for 82% ($n = 18$) of chief diversity officers at institutions with a special focus designation, and for 73% ($n = 16$) of those at baccalaureate/associate's colleges. Capacity building was a top priority for higher education system diversity officers (67%, $n = 22$) more frequently than respondents overall (50%, $n = 181$).

²⁴ Respondents who noted that their reporting relationship had changed in the past two years previously reported to the president (27%, $n = 17$), a dean (14%, $n = 9$), the provost or chief academic officer (8%, $n = 5$) or system head (2%, $n = 10$). Forty-nine percent ($n = 31$) indicated they had previously reported to another university executive.

²⁵ 69% ($n = 203$) of respondents indicated their campus' institutional mission directly references diversity, equity, inclusion, or access.

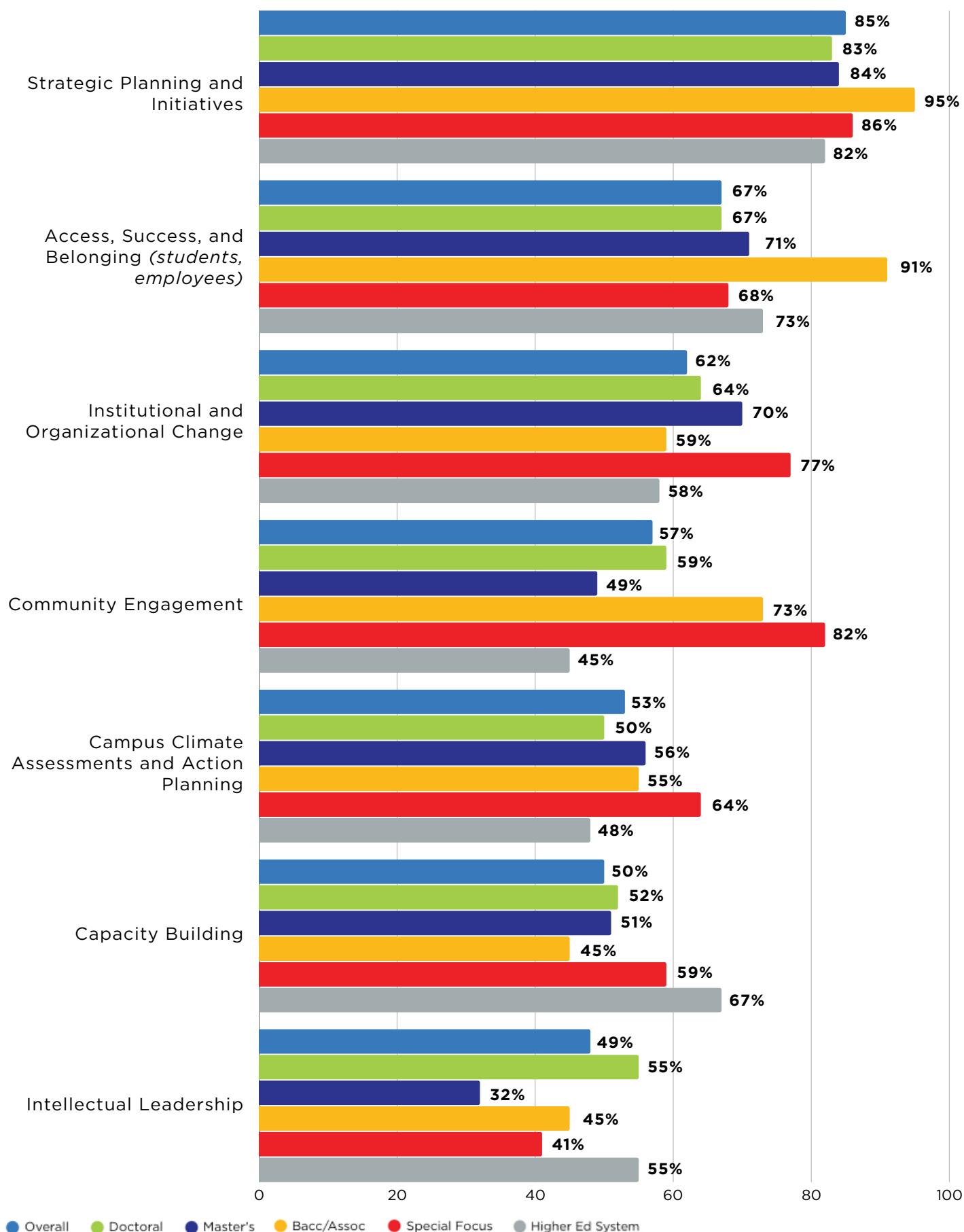


Figure 21. Top Five Skills and Evaluation Criteria for Diversity Leaders, by Institution Type

Support

Three out of four survey respondents indicated that their institutional president provides support to fulfill their charges via membership in diversity professional organizations (73%, $n = 266$) and through moral support (73%, $n = 265$). Men-identifying respondents indicated they receive more support from their institutional president than women-identifying and gender-expansive-identifying respondents (see Figure 22). CDOs identifying as Black or African American also indicated they feel the most support from their institutional president.

CDOs and ADOs indicated that they receive the most institutional support from the office of the president (43%, $n = 150$), student affairs (40%, $n = 139$), and deans and directors (32%, $n = 110$) for advancing the institutional (or academic unit) mission. Boards of trustees (39%, $n = 118$), development offices (34%, $n = 102$), and faculty (23%, $n = 69$) were perceived as offering the least support or understanding of the challenges of diversity, equity, justice, and inclusion work. Two-thirds (68%, $n =$

226) of respondents indicated they need more funding to continue their role and work on campus, and just over half (51%, $n = 169$) need additional support from other administrative units. For CDOs who have been in their role for more than 10 years, the need for additional financial support jumped to 80% ($n = 12$).

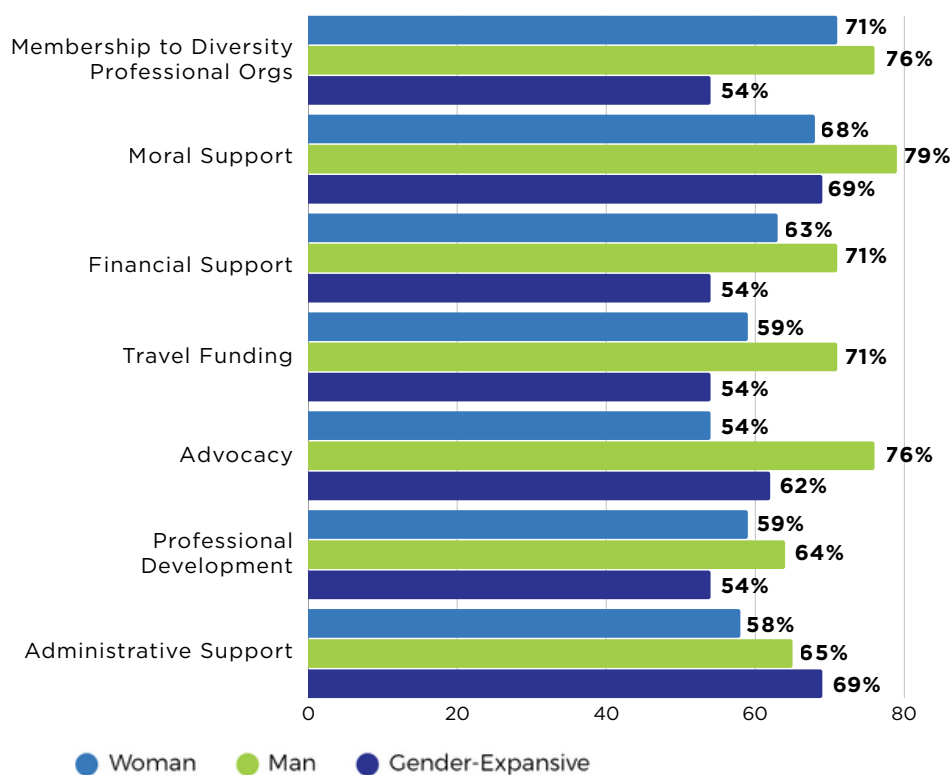


Figure 22. Institutional Support Perception(s) by Gender Identity

Socio-Emotional Responses to the Work

In the 2023 State of the CDO survey, respondents were asked to compare their CDO role to previous roles using a five-point scale (from *much less* to *much more*) for several terms that could describe their work: fulfilling, stressful, satisfying, rewarding, upsetting, manageable, overwhelming, and predictable. At that time, few CDOs considered their work manageable or predictable, and were instead most likely to consider their job more stressful than their previous positions.

In the 2025 survey, respondents were asked to react to the same terms to describe their work, but were asked if it had become more or less so in the past two years (see Figure 23). The majority of respondents indicated that their job and work have become *much less* or *somewhat less* predictable (68%, $n = 211$) in the last two years and *much more* or *somewhat more* stressful (87%, $n = 270$). Seventy-seven percent of survey respondents indicated their job has become *much more* or *somewhat more* upsetting ($n = 241$), and 39% ($n = 120$) noted their job has become *somewhat less* or *much less* fulfilling.

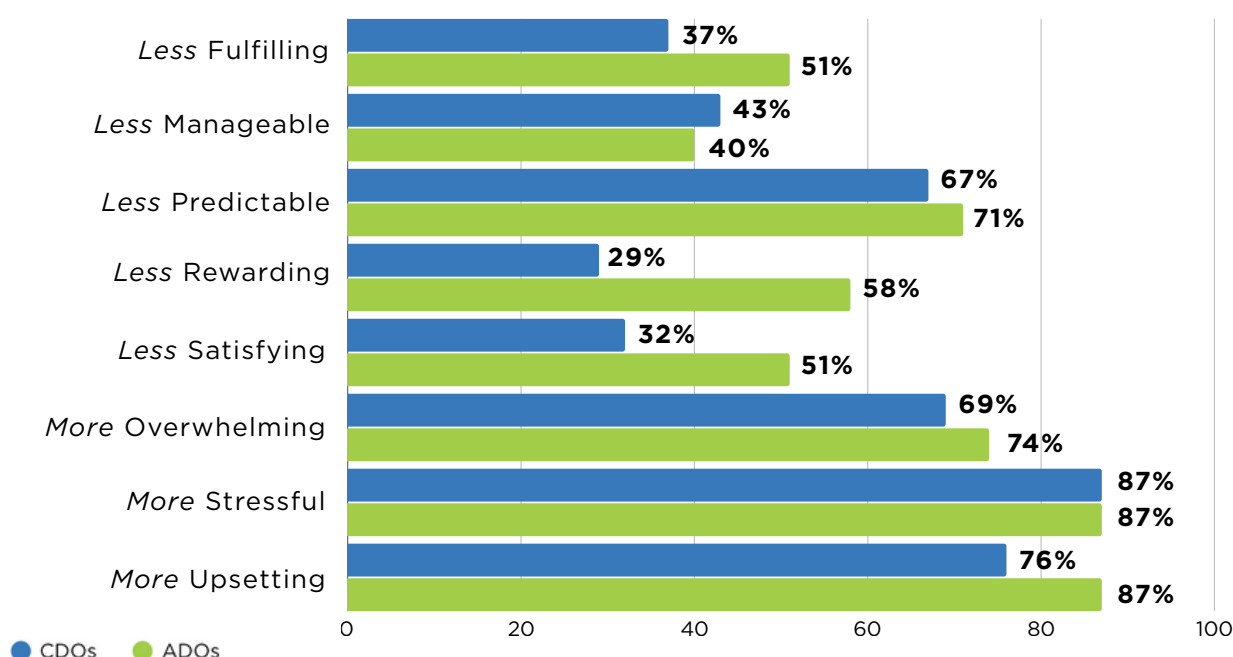


Figure 23. Socio-Emotional Response to Job Changes by CDOs and ADOs, 2023 to 2025

When evaluating differences between CDO and ADO socio-emotional responses to diversity, equity, and inclusion work over the past two years, chief diversity officers indicated their roles changed slightly less, positively or negatively, than those in academic diversity officer roles (Figure 24). Seventy-six percent ($n = 208$) of CDOs indicated their job has become *much more* or *somewhat more* upsetting compared to 87% ($n = 33$) of ADOs; 32% ($n = 87$) of CDOs consider their role to be *much less* or *somewhat less* satisfying compared to 51% ($n = 19$) of ADOs; 29% ($n = 78$) of CDOs considered their role to be *much less* or *somewhat less* rewarding compared to 58% ($n = 22$) of ADOs; 67% ($n = 184$) of CDOs considered their role to be *much less* or *somewhat less* predictable compared to 71% ($n = 27$) of ADOs; 69% ($n = 190$) of CDOs considered their role to be *much more* or *somewhat more* overwhelming compared to 74% ($n = 28$) of ADOs; 37% ($n = 101$) of CDOs considered their role to be *much less* or *somewhat less* fulfilling than their ADO counterparts, at 51% ($n = 19$); and 37% ($n = 101$) of CDOs considered their role to be *much less* or *somewhat less* fulfilling compared to 51% ($n=19$) of ADOs. CDOs indicated that they consider their roles *much less* or *somewhat less* manageable at slightly higher rates than ADOs, at 43% ($n = 119$) and 40% ($n = 15$), respectively. Eighty-seven percent of CDOs ($n = 237$) and ADOs ($n = 33$) considered their roles to have become *much more* or *somewhat more* stressful since 2023. ADOs reported that their job and work are much more stressful (66%, $n = 25$) over the past two years than CDOs who serve at the institutional level (54%, $n = 147$).

Survey data indicated differences in socio-emotional responses to diversity, equity, and inclusion work when examined by gender identity (Figure 24) and race and ethnicity (Figure 25). For example, 38% ($n = 77$) of women-identifying diversity professionals indicated that their job has become *much more* overwhelming in the past two years compared to 21% ($n = 19$) of men-identifying diversity professionals and 29% ($n = 4$) of gender-expansive-identifying diversity professionals. Respondents who did not identify as White considered

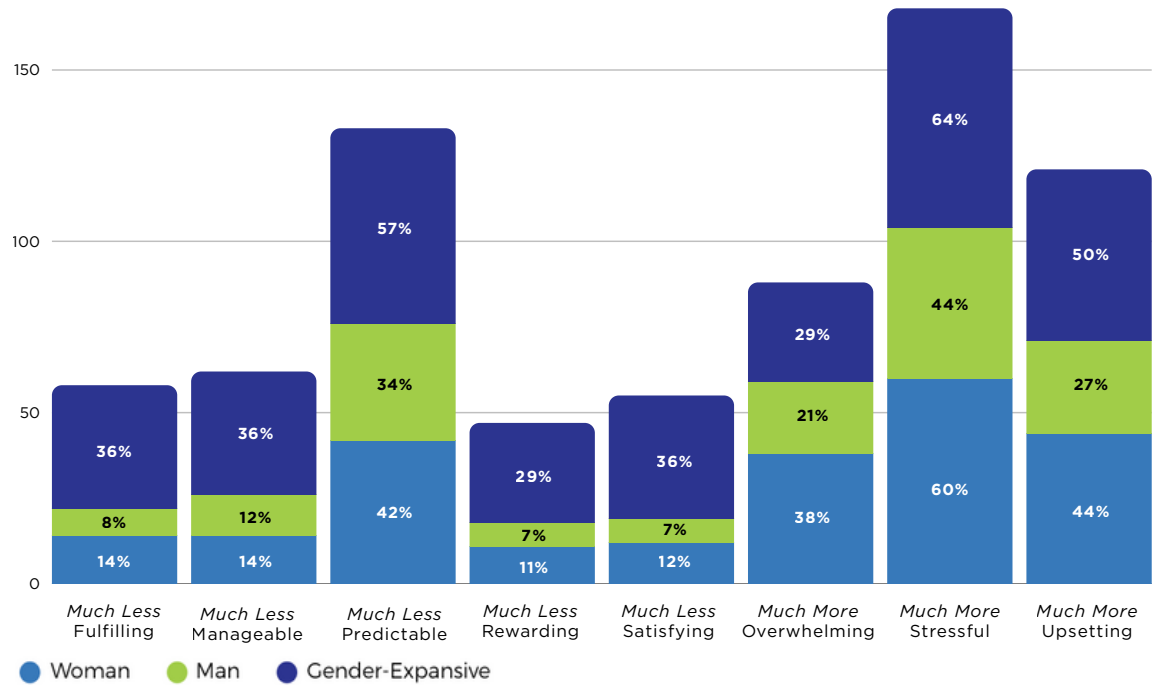


Figure 25. Socio-Emotional Response to Job Changes by Gender Identity, 2023 to 2025

their role much more stressful than those who did, 57% (*n* = 159) compared to 34% (*n* = 10).

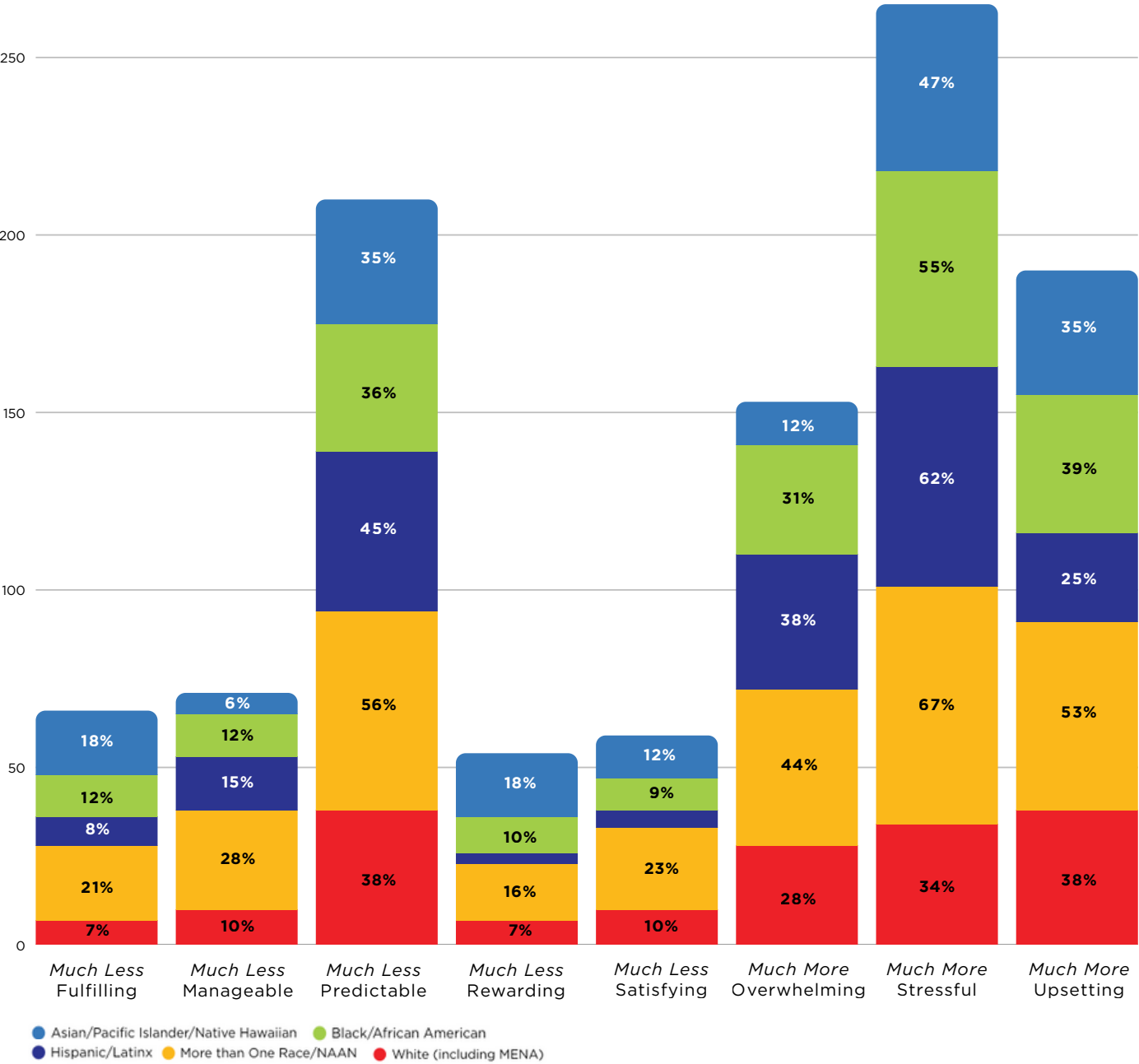


Figure 25. Socio-Emotional Response to Job Changes by Race/Ethnicity, 2023 to 2025

The Future of the Profession

Priorities

As the political and higher education landscapes change and diversity, equity and inclusion work faces additional challenges, many diversity professionals believe the most pressing issues they will face²⁶ include campus climates (53%, $n = 166$), mental health for faculty, staff, and students (43%, $n = 135$), crisis management (43%, $n = 134$), government relations (42%, $n = 132$), and campus policies and procedures (41%, $n = 129$). Nine in ten chief diversity officers indicated that the most pressing challenge to the future of diversity, equity, and inclusion work in higher education is the political climate (91%, $n = 298$); 55% ($n = 168$) of survey respondents indicated this is their top challenge. Half of CDOs ($n = 158$) indicated that budgets will challenge their work's future, followed by institution-wide accountability for diversity, equity, and inclusion (47%, $n = 150$). Just over half of respondents, 54% ($n = 160$), indicated that navigating changes to institutional support due to state or federal policy changes is their top issue or concern for future diversity, equity, and inclusion professionals. (See Figures 26, 27).

²⁶ This survey question asked respondents to select the top five areas they think will grow in importance and will need to be addressed by future diversity, equity, and inclusion professionals. The percentages represent the individuals who indicated the response option was in their top five.

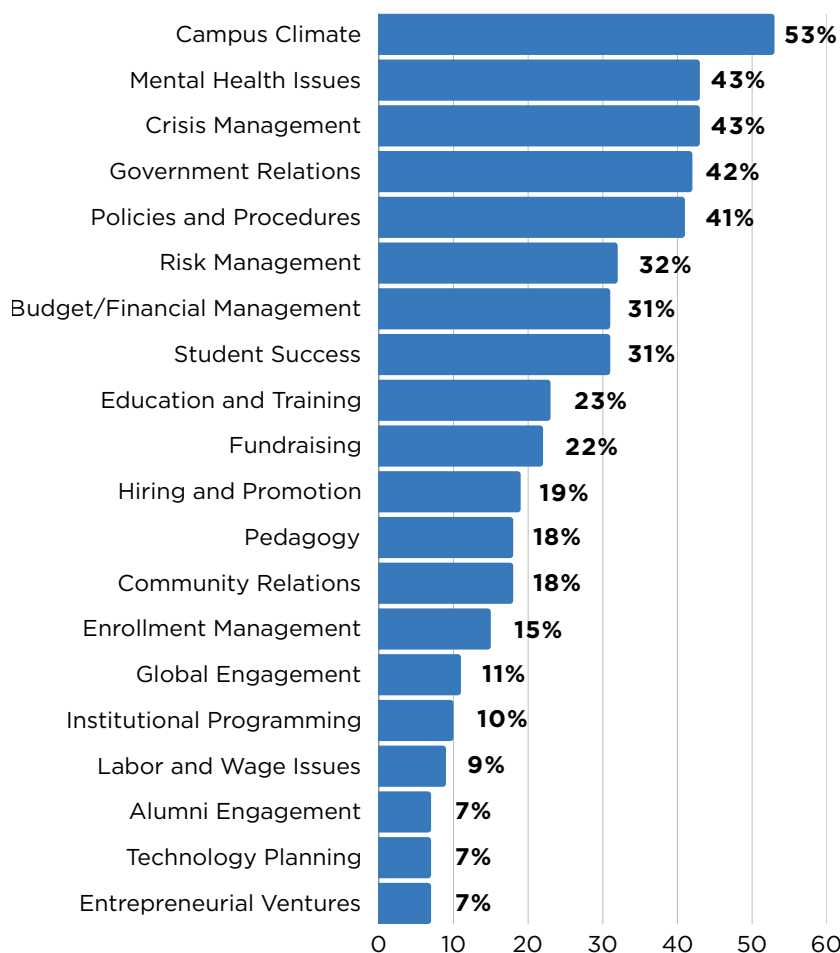


Figure 26. Areas of Importance for Future Diversity Professionals

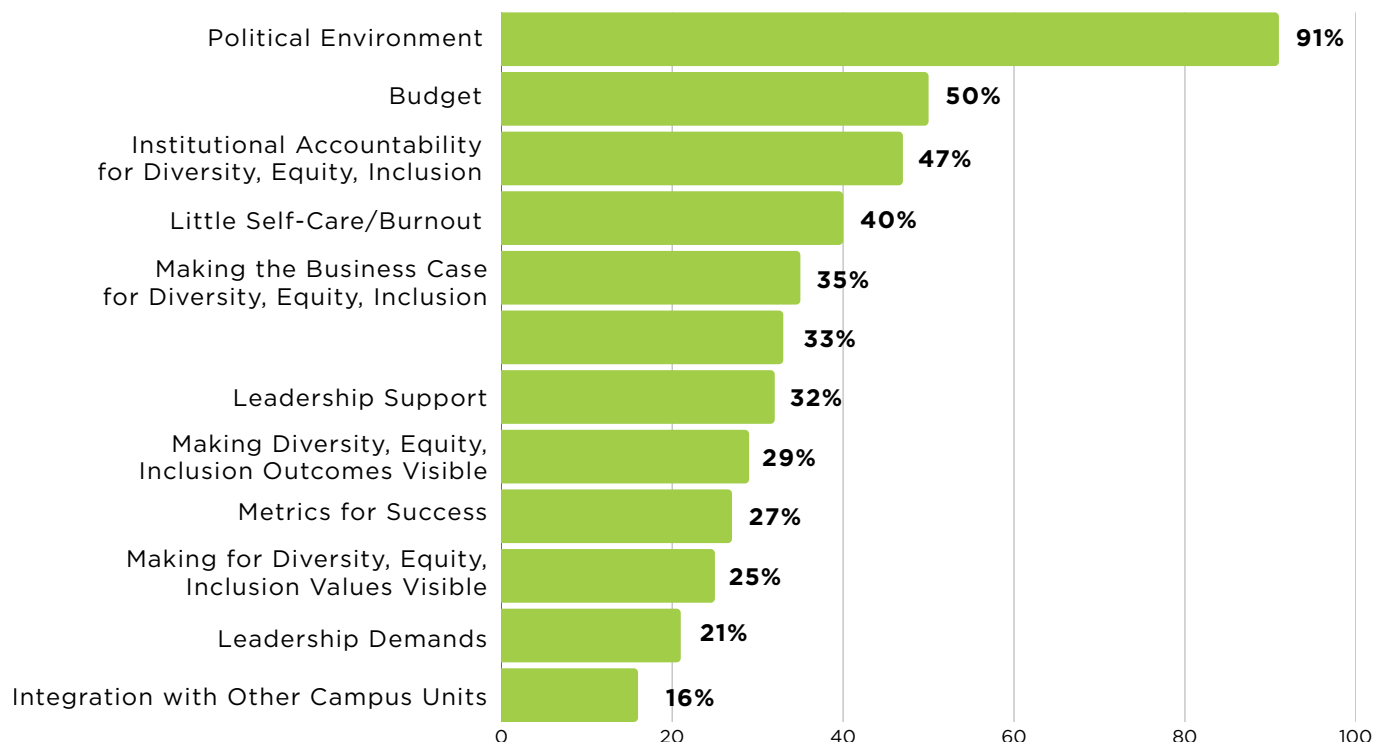


Figure 27. Most Important Challenges to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Higher Education

Support from NADOHE

The survey instrument included a question asking respondents how NADOHE can continue to support members, institutions, and the profession. Echoing recent feedback from individual and institutional members during the 2025 Annual Conference and through the work of NADOHE committees, respondents reported that the most pressing support needed is legal advocacy and federal policy guidance. Approximately 23% ($n = 95$) of survey respondents who responded to this question indicated a need for legal advocacy in defending diversity, equity, and inclusion work from “hostile legislation” and “federal rollbacks,” while 20% ($n = 82$) of respondents indicated that frequent and clear explanations of the changing legal and political landscape will be vital to successfully navigating their roles and the profession more broadly.

In addition to existing resources provided by NADOHE (e.g., Standards of Professional Practice, Chief Diversity and Academic Diversity Officer Fellows Program, *A Framework for Advancing Anti-Racism Strategy on Campus*), 18% ($n = 77$) of respondents requested additional resources, toolkits, or best practices. One participant wrote, “provide talking points, toolkits, and strategy documents,” while another wrote, “give us templates and benchmarks for programming,” and “offer a database of model policies and programs.” Between 10% and 15% of respondents indicated that community building, professional development, and peer support are needed during these unprecedented times, from connecting with other CDOs, ADOS, and diversity professionals to affinity-based mentorship, expanded virtual gatherings, and additional training and workshops (e.g., programs for mid-career diversity leaders).

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