



Diversity  
Project  
NORTH AMERICA

DEI Perception Study

# Going the Distance

Accelerating DEI  
in Asset & Wealth  
Management

2023/2024

Prepared  
with



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## NICSA PRESIDENT'S LETTER

With the unique ability to leverage collaborative thought leadership among its member firms, Nicsa's Diversity Project North America seeks to champion diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) across the asset and wealth management landscape. In doing so, our members have dedicated themselves to the challenge of advancing our industry into a future that is inclusive and equitable for all.

2023 marks the five-year anniversary of the Diversity Project North America. Since our inception, leadership styles and corporate cultures across the industry have evolved. Business executives have committed to widen talent pipelines, retain diverse talent, and embrace inclusivity in order to support the workforce of the future and to enhance innovation.

DEI as a business strategy is here to stay. As an industry, we've made notable progress in accepting DEI as a vital component of an organization's success. We still, however, have room to grow when it comes to putting these ideals into action. We hope that this report serves as a baseline from which the industry can measure its progress and establish new initiatives for the coming year that continue the advancement of our collective goals.

Beginning in 2020, Nicsa's DEI Perception Survey has measured the broader industry's beliefs around DEI and how they view their own firm's progress. This year, we once again joined forces with a valued founding member, EY, to bring you the 2023 DEI Perception Survey and this report of its findings. Survey results were complemented with insights provided by Diversity Project North America member firm leaders in a

series of roundtables. We thank EY for their steadfast dedication to the Diversity Project mission and for their expertise on this important initiative.

I'd like to also highlight the work of our DEI Perception Committee, comprising professionals across industry verticals, which worked to identify the themes, key takeaways, and opportunities for growth outlined herein. We are hopeful this report sheds light on the industry's perception on topics such as talent attraction and retention, transparency, and accountability. Thank you for your ongoing passion and commitment to Nicsa and the industry we all serve!

We are very proud of all the good work that the Diversity Project North America has undertaken to date. I am extremely optimistic for the future of our industry given the energy and enthusiasm that our members have brought to our mission over the past five years. I ask each one of you to join us in advancing our goal of fostering a diverse and inclusive industry that welcomes new participants and encourages different perspectives and leadership styles.

Thank you to our Board of Directors, our CEO Advisory Council, our member firms, all of our committee co-chairs, our committee members, and our volunteers for their leadership and dedication to Nicsa and the Diversity Project North America.

With hope for the future,



Jim Fitzpatrick  
President & CEO

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The asset and wealth management industry has made meaningful strides on the journey to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), but needs to go the distance to deeply integrate its commitments into corporate culture and everyday business decisions.

Since this survey was last held in 2021, priority has been placed on fulfilling and progressing the commitments made in recent years. The industry remains in the early stages of this journey, but there is increasing pressure to pick up the pace. While the calls to action for accelerated progress across all dimensions of DEI have not decreased, they have certainly grown more complex.

Recent rulings by the United States Supreme Court have added elements of uncertainty and caution into current environments on DEI. The move to upend affirmative action in college admissions has prompted firms in every industry to mobilize their leaders and assess the implications of this decision in an effort to mitigate the threats of legal action. Despite the uncertainties, the asset and wealth management industry must push forward in its commitment to advancing DEI while also adapting holistic DEI strategies to accommodate the unique pressures of today's economic, regulatory, and political landscape. Firms across the industry continue to strive toward a diverse workforce that reflects the communities they serve. It is imperative that organizations hold true to their values and continue to extend support to underrepresented groups in the current workforce and future generations.

The results of this year's survey continued to show differences in perception across nearly every topic based on the unique experiences and sentiments of underlying demographic groups. Executive respondents generally had rosier views of success and effectiveness across both their own organizations and the industry as a whole, as did white and male respondents. The greatest divergence in perceptions compared with the

average were seen in views held by Black or African American and LGBTQ+ respondents. On the positive side, year-over-year trending comparisons found more respondents reporting that their organizations share their DEI metrics both internally and externally (up 9% from 2021) as well as higher organizational commitments to allyship (up 14% from 2021).

However, perceptions have worsened when looking into overall measures of success and commitment for how the industry is advancing DEI. Fifty-eight percent of this year's survey respondents indicated they felt that the industry was only "somewhat successful" in advancing DEI initiatives over the past year, which is up significantly from 30% in 2020 and 50% in 2021. When asked how committed the industry is to making changes to improve DEI in the next year, 49% of people responded that it is only "somewhat committed." Not only has this perception also worsened since 2021, but Asian or Pacific Islander, Black or African American, LGBTQ+, and neurodiverse respondents all had higher rates of choosing "not committed at all" compared with the overall 2023 average. The industry's progress, or lack thereof, must be made more transparent on matters of DEI to directly address these perceptions.

Though meaningful progress has occurred and the momentum of the past few years continues to drive the industry ahead, there is a clear sentiment among many individuals that change is not happening at the speed or breadth in which they would expect. This year's survey makes clear that buy-in to the importance of DEI has not been achieved at equal levels across all demographic groups. Accelerating DEI requires shared responsibility at every level. This is a pivotal point for firms to benchmark themselves against the current expectations of the workforce and reaffirm or revise their commitments to DEI. While the road ahead is long and winding, it is not traversed alone. DEI strategies, programs, and messaging must be sustainably focused on increasing buy-in, addressing adversity, and enacting change. Collaboration will be crucial to success.

This report presents a summary of the industry's perceptions and provides a number of actionable insights based on leading DEI practices.

Capturing additional demographic parameters in this year's survey allowed for more granular analysis on sentiment differences among and across groups. Those differences are featured throughout this report, both in comparisons across 2023 demographic groups and in trends identified from 2020 and 2021 to 2023 survey data. Reactions and additional commentary were also gathered from business, HR, and DEI leaders in the industry, and subject-matter perspectives assembled from within finance and across other sectors further informed the report's development. **The detailed findings center on six key takeaways:**

### 1. Corporate culture continues to be a key area for industry improvement.

Embedding inclusion and belonging into work environments through robust DEI programming is essential. Corporate culture and work environment remains the biggest obstacle to increasing diversity in the workplace. Organizations must prioritize creating an environment where employees feel a sense of safety, inclusion, and belonging. Dedicating time and space for DEI programming during the workday demonstrates commitment to enhancing workplace culture.

### 2. Industry leaders should embrace accountability.

Priorities for DEI should be set and backed at the highest levels of the organization to achieve meaningful progress. Legacy succession models and promotion frameworks must be challenged, and industry leaders must be held accountable against clearly defined goals for DEI, including consequences for their failures and rewards for their success.

### 3. Best practices in talent recruitment and retention must evolve.

Building a more diverse workforce that includes both visible and non-visible dimensions of diversity isn't just a moral imperative; it's also good for business. To drive positive change, the industry needs to commit to thinking differently about how it attracts and retains talent at all levels—especially in the face of today's challenging economic and political environment.

### 4. The industry must work collaboratively to standardize metrics and advance reporting maturity.

Organizations must continue to sustainably adapt their DEI data collection and reporting efforts in line with the shifting expectations of investors, regulators, and other key stakeholders. Transparency reports should evolve and expand their disclosures to increase the industry's visibility into meaningful markers of progress.

### 5. Career development needs to evolve beyond traditional programs and resources.

Opportunities for employees should be dynamic, organic, and focused. Mentorship programs are some of the most prevalent opportunities for career development across firms in the industry. Employee career plans need to adapt based on the different needs and experiences of different individuals. Sponsorship and advocacy opportunities must also be prioritized for underrepresented groups in order to improve the diversification of leadership pipelines.

### 6. Robust training initiatives can help embed DEI in the day-to-day experience.

Promoting DEI at the individual level will be essential to drive the degree of widespread buy-in needed to effect meaningful change. Training programs and other learning initiatives must be directed toward helping identify and address limiting beliefs while also embedding DEI into the specific experiences and interactions of the industry's workforce.

## 1. CORPORATE CULTURE CONTINUES TO BE A KEY AREA FOR INDUSTRY IMPROVEMENT.

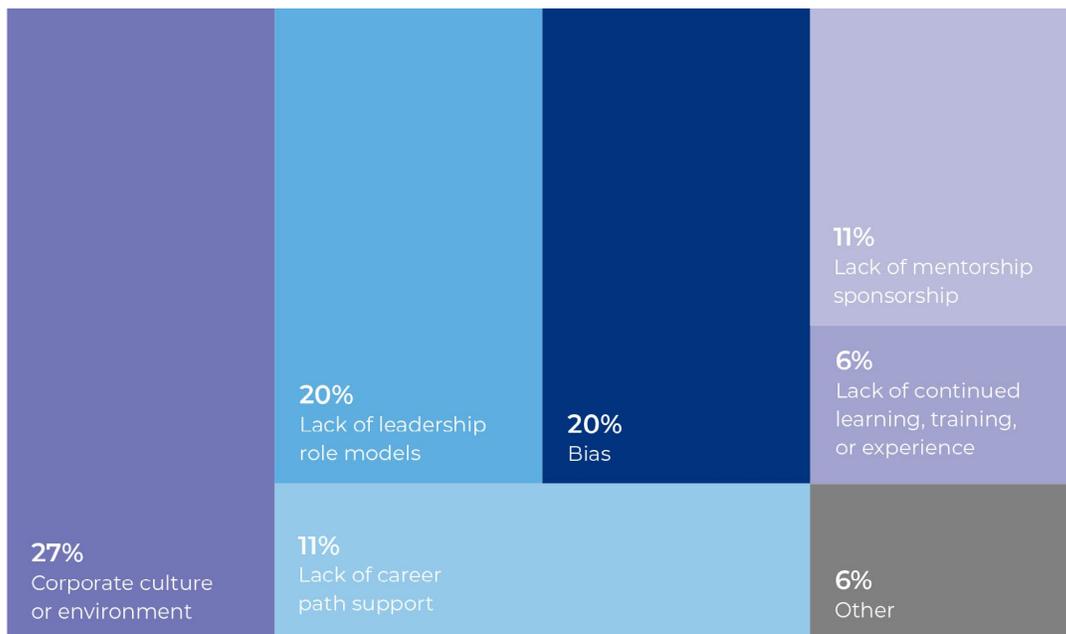
An organizational culture that embraces the importance of DEI can be a powerful tool for attracting and retaining top talent, creating a sense of safety and belonging in the workplace, and driving organizational performance. Yet despite the increased call to action for greater DEI across the industry, **corporate culture or work environment remains one of the biggest perceived obstacles to increasing diversity in leadership and the workforce.** Culture is generally recognized as the attitudes and behaviors that inform a group's shared values. It impacts how people work together and how things are done. When employees experience organizational culture in ways that differ from their own values, the values defined in their company's mission statement, or the values set out by executive leadership, it can create a perception gap.

When asked about the biggest obstacle to increasing diversity in industry leadership, 27% of respondents cited corporate culture or work environment as the top-ranked obstacle (**fig. a**). This continues the sentiment from 2021, when 26% of respondents had the same perception. However, we see views diverging when we look at specific demographic segments.

Hispanic or Latinx respondents were more likely to see corporate culture or work environment as the biggest impediment to diversity in industry leadership, exceeding the survey average by 9% with a total of 36%. Among executive respondents, only 20% pointed to corporate culture or work environment as an obstacle, suggesting a disconnect between executives and other employee ranks. Similarly, when considering the biggest obstacle to career progression for diverse employees in the industry, 22% of respondents felt that corporate culture or work environment is a top impediment, the second-highest response behind bias at 23%.

**The industry continues to see residual impacts to overall culture and work environment following the COVID-19 pandemic.** While some firms have elected to move back to mandated in-office working schedules for all employees, others have adopted fully remote or hybrid models as their new way of working. These models also sometimes vary within individual organizations based on their specific lines of business, which may each have different requirements. This can make it difficult to enable a shared experience and culture throughout the organization.

CORPORATE CULTURE REMAINS TOP-RANKED OBSTACLE



(FIG. A)

Flexible arrangements remain highly impactful on talent attraction and retaining diversity in the workforce. Studies show that women and underrepresented groups have the highest levels of interest in remote work. Sixty-one percent of this year’s survey respondents felt that their organizations are “very committed” or “committed” to enabling a flexible work environment, dipping slightly from 64% in 2021 (**fig b**). The greatest discrepancy occurred between executives (75%) and staff levels (57%), representing a 22-percentage-point difference. Black or African American, neurodiverse, LGBTQ+, and female respondents also came in below the average.

Corporate culture is also highly influenced by employees’ feelings of psychological safety and belonging. When asked how committed their organizations are to creating a safe environment where employees feel a sense of belonging and trust, the overall number of respondents who indicated a belief that their organizations are “very committed” declined 11%, from 49% in 2021 to 38% in 2023; however, it’s

still over twice as high as the 16% in 2020. The largest declines in this year’s perceptions occurred among Black and African American (22%), Hispanic and Latinx (28%), and staff-level respondents (34%). Executive and senior leaders exceeded the survey average, choosing “very committed” as their majority response.

One way organizations create safe environments for their employees is through formal policies such as non-discrimination and zero-harassment mandates. When asked how committed their organizations are to establishing and communicating policies that safeguard employees, the number of respondents who answered “very committed” fell 11%, from 53% in 2021 to 42% in 2023.



**ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT TO ENABLING FLEXIBLE WORKING ENVIRONMENT HAS SLIGHTLY WORSENE**



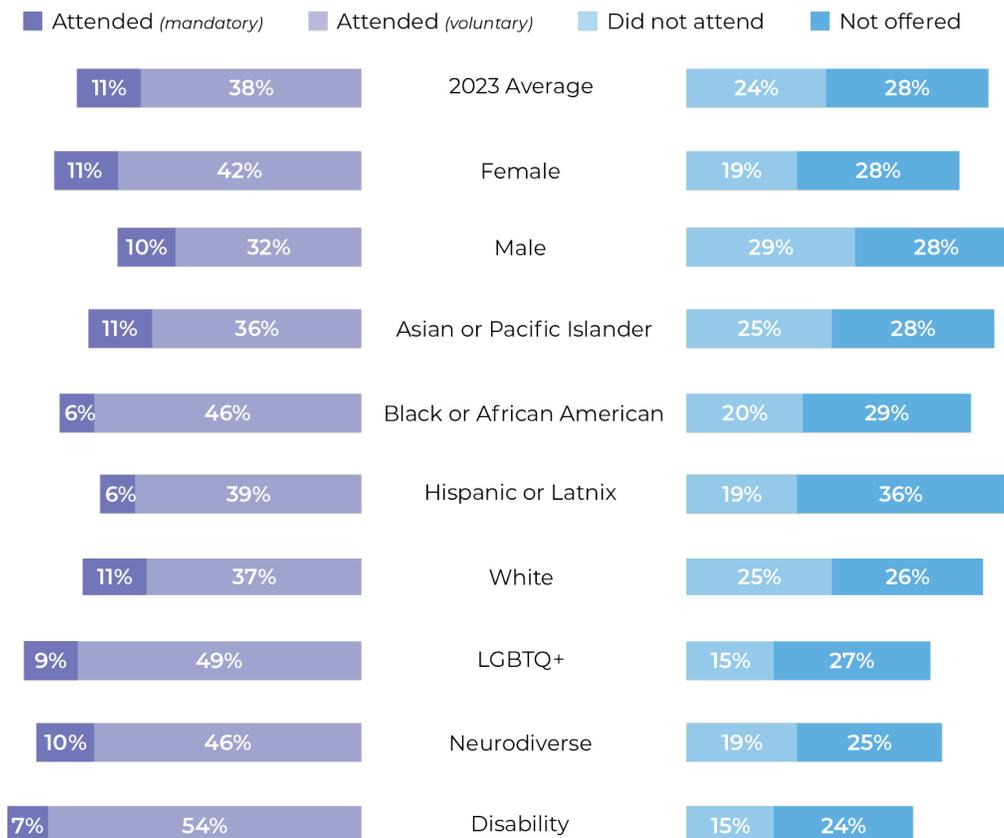
(FIG. B)

The largest drops occurred among Black or African American respondents (from 39% to 24%) and Hispanic or Latinx respondents (from 69% to 37%). Among staff-level ranks, only 36% felt their organizations were “very committed” to policies that safeguard employees, down from 52% in 2021. Meanwhile, executives had a rosier view, with 63% feeling that their organization was “very committed.” LGBTQ+ respondents remained below the survey average with 37% feeling their organization is “very committed,” representing an 8% increase from 29% in 2021.

This can have an impact on talent retention, as employees who do not have a sense of belonging or feel safe and supported in the workplace are likely to leave and seek that affirmation elsewhere, including in other industries. Exit interviews are a meaningful method of collecting targeted feedback on employee experiences and should include questions related to corporate culture and work environment to help identify areas for improvement.

Another impactful area of focus related to culture is allyship. Organizations have continued to evolve their approaches to allyship by expanding related programming and commitments. Allyship is important in addressing the feelings of inclusion that are experienced by different demographic groups. In this year’s survey results, 38% of respondents reported attending an allyship training, making it the second-highest attended voluntary training. Among demographic groups, LGBTQ+, Black or African American, and female respondents had higher attendance rates for allyship trainings than the average (**fig c.**). Some companies have begun to create more granular employee resource groups (ERGs) dedicated to specific areas of allyship, such as ERGs focused on men as allies for women. Existing ERGs have increased or formalized their allyship commitments to other groups, such as LGBTQ+ and Black or African American ERGs supporting one another’s initiatives and events. These more nuanced approaches help adapt the focus of allyship relative to specific demographic groups’ needs.

ALLYSHIP TRAINING ATTENDANCE STRONG, BUT VARIED AMONG GROUPS



(FIG. C)

It is important that dedicated time and space be given for employees to participate in initiatives related to diversity, equity, and inclusion during the workday. Limiting these programs to lunch sessions or weekend and after-work events can prompt employees to question their organization's commitment to enhancing workplace culture. Inclusion is a particularly nuanced area and should be driven through bottom-up feedback from employees on what makes them feel most supported to be themselves in the workplace.

### SUPPORTING QUOTES

“By building [DEI] into schedules across the board for all lines of business, we've seen success. There's a cost associated with that, but it's how we're demonstrating leadership, commitment, and accountability—by giving teams the time and space to focus on it.”

Industry Leader

“We work really hard on trying to help our employees understand the full spectrum of diversity and not just race and gender.”

Industry Leader

“DEI can only be achieved when there is equity and true equal opportunities.”

Survey Respondent

## 2. INDUSTRY LEADERS SHOULD EMBRACE ACCOUNTABILITY.

Accountability is a driving force behind accomplishing goals. It is important for industry leaders to show and own their commitments to DEI through their actions as well as their words. Employees should hear regularly from executives about their organization’s DEI goals and activities, giving these initiatives the same amount of emphasis as other business priorities. Achieving these DEI goals will not happen without buy-in from industry leaders. Resources—time, budget, and people—must also be dedicated to effect change.

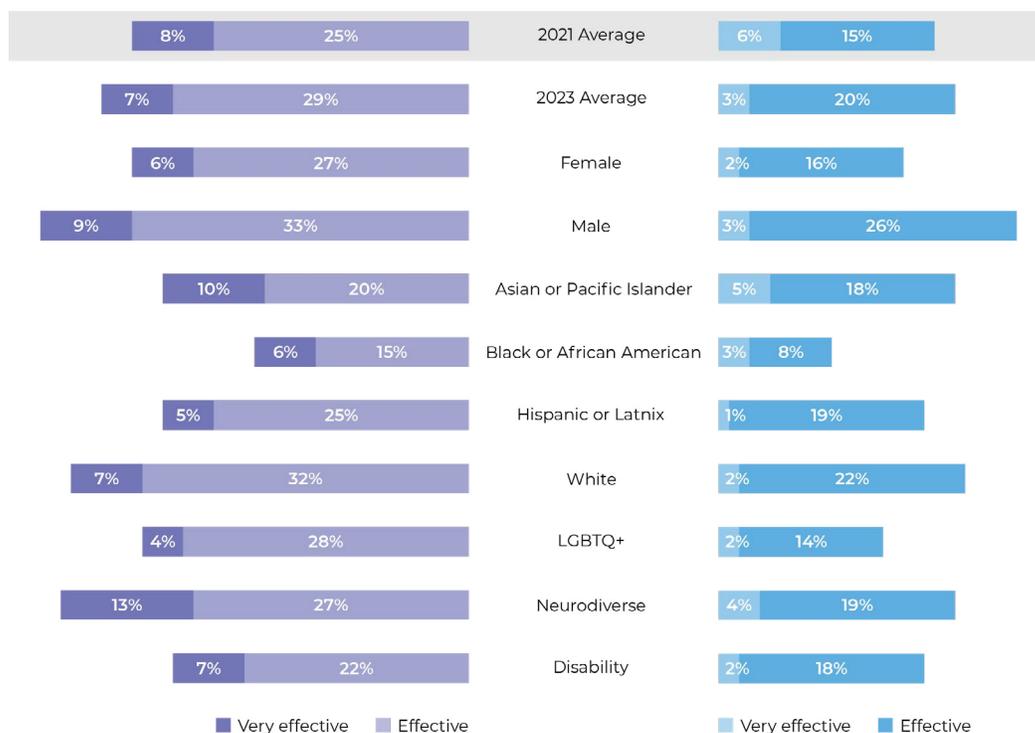
Just over a third of this year’s survey respondents (36%) felt that industry leaders are “effective” or “very effective” at publicly supporting DEI, a slight improvement from 33% in 2021. Respondents with disabilities and Asian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic or Latinx, LGBTQ+, and female respondents all had lower comparative sentiments than the average, but Black or African American respondents had the biggest discrepancy, with only 21% feeling that industry leaders are “effective” or “very effective” at publicly supporting DEI (fig. d). Neurodiverse respondents represented the largest year-over-year

increase in perception, with 40% choosing “effective” or “very effective” in 2023, compared with 27% in 2021.

Public support and messaging from industry leaders is impactful, but progress comes from action. When asked about taking action toward advancing DEI, 23% of this year’s survey respondents indicated they felt that industry leaders are “effective” or “very effective,” which is on par with 21% in 2021 (fig. d). Once again, Black or African American respondents showed the greatest variance across the demographic segments, dropping 12% below the 2023 average to a total of 11% (which is also a decrease from 15% in 2021).

Without a sense of personal accountability, there can be little to no perceived consequences for failing to progress in DEI goals and targets. As stewards of the organization, executive leaders are expected to own and champion a wide range of business initiatives, of which DEI should be a primary factor. A common method of holding top executives accountable for making tangible progress on DEI goals is tying performance metrics to compensation on a sliding scale, where executives are rewarded in line with the progress made.

PERCEPTIONS OF PUBLIC SUPPORT (LEFT) VS. TAKING ACTION (RIGHT) ARE MISALIGNED FOR SOME GROUPS



(FIG. D)

Organizations have also begun to implement scorecards across multiple tiers of leaders, all the way through to middle management, on DEI areas of focus such as hiring and promotions. This has enabled a shift to emphasize equity alongside diversity in these decisions. However, **many organizations are still being challenged to identify how inclusion can be meaningfully measured as a leadership imperative.**

Thirty-three percent of this year’s survey respondents indicated they felt that DEI-related performance metrics are “somewhat important” to their organization’s evaluations of leadership, while 19% felt they are “not important at all.” Among middle management ranks, those who felt these metrics are “somewhat important” rose significantly from 23% in 2021 to 33% in 2023. This may reflect an increase in responsibility for achieving DEI goals being placed on middle managers, who are often referred to as the “frozen middle” but who also represent some of the biggest enablers for change within an organization given their direct proximity to the day-to-day experiences of the workforce. Respondents with disabilities and non-white, female, and LGBTQ+ respondents held significantly higher sentiments

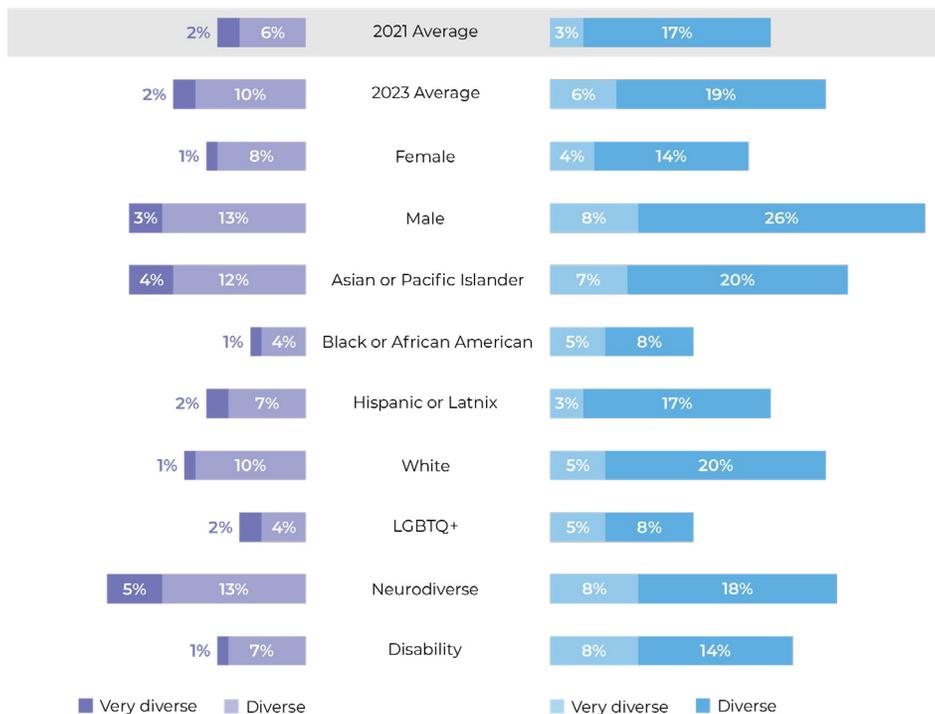
**2023**  
**33%** of respondents felt that DEI-related performance metrics are “somewhat important” to their organization's leadership evaluations  
**19%** felt “not important at all”

**2021**  
**24%** of respondents held the same sentiment of DEI-related performance metrics being “somewhat important”  
**15%** felt “not important at all”

that DEI-related metrics are “not important at all” in performance reviews of their organization’s leadership.

While metrics are a critical component of enacting progress in DEI, there is also an emphasis on the leaders themselves. The industry continues to struggle to break free from a homogenous, non-diverse image in the upper echelons despite many organizations prioritizing changes to their executive and senior leadership levels. Only 12% of this year’s survey respondents described industry leadership as “diverse” or “very diverse,” which is a slight improvement from 8% in 2021. Respondents with disabilities and non-white, female, neurodiverse, and LGBTQ+ respondents had the highest sentiments of the industry’s leadership being “not diverse at all” when compared with the average (**fig. e**).

**PERCEPTIONS OF DIVERSITY AMONG INDUSTRY (LEFT) AND ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP (RIGHT) CONTINUES TO DIFFER ACROSS DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS**



(FIG. E)

The survey also found a significant shift in perception when individuals were asked how they viewed their organization's leadership diversity. Twenty-five percent of respondents described their organization's senior or executive leaders as "diverse" or "very diverse," more than double that of the same description for industry leadership and 5% higher when compared with 2021 (though still notably down from 43% in 2020). The same demographic segments who described the industry's leadership as "not diverse at all" also had higher response rates for that category when asked about their own organization's leadership diversity (fig. e). Overall, 29% of respondents felt that their organization's leadership is "not diverse at all," which remains steady at the same percentage from 2021 and increased from 17% in 2020.

Despite these sentiments on the current diversity of industry leaders, 82% of this year's respondents indicated that a diverse leadership team is "very important" or "important" to organizational performance.



This perception increases to 91% of Black or African American and LGBTQ+ respondents and 89% of female and neurodiverse respondents aligned on those same categories. Comparatively, 73% of male respondents shared the same feelings of importance, down from 78% in 2021. Regardless of these variances, **diversity at the leadership level is widely viewed as paramount to success.** There must be a continued focus on evolving the current makeup of industry leaders over time.

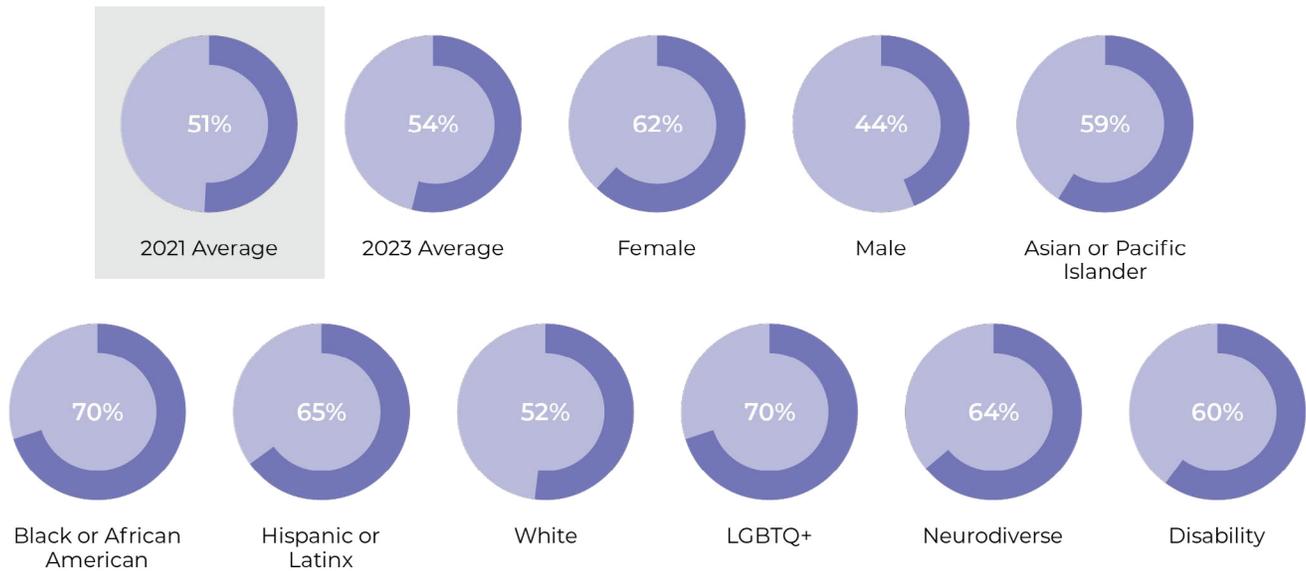
One way for non-diverse leadership teams to address their gaps is to look for other mechanisms to bring in diverse perspectives. Some firms have established councils of diverse senior leaders and managers who are in the executive pipeline. Representing different aspects of the business, they can provide missing perspectives to the executive team. To be successful, these councils and positions, such as chief diversity officers (CDOs) or other lead diversity roles, must be given a true voice at the top to help inform strategic decisions.

Organizations can also revamp how they conduct succession planning at the leadership levels. A critical lens should be applied to current plans allowing for existing pipelines to be reconsidered and challenged. What will the leadership team become over the next few years as these roles transition as currently planned? Is that in alignment with the organization's commitments to DEI? If not, what needs to change? How can current expectations or requirements be challenged to allow for a more diverse set of candidates to be included in considerations?

Leadership styles can and should vary from those traditionally held within the industry, in order to challenge the current culture. Dimensions of diversity span many areas, including visible and non-visible personal identifications. It is critical to consider the full spectrum of diversity and how the myriad dimensions come together into an individual leader's interpersonal style. How leaders interact with their workforce, their clients, and their industry is a major driver of the trust that those groups will give. Without trust, it is difficult for people to feel a sense of confidence in a leader's commitment and vision.

PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF DIVERSE LEADERSHIP (“VERY IMPORTANT”) IN TALENT ATTRACTION AND RETENTION HAS IMPROVED

(FIG. F)



Attracting and retaining a diverse workforce can also be a challenge when employees don't see diversity reflected back in the highest tiers of their organizations. This is especially true for Black or African American (70%), Hispanic or Latinx (65%), and LGBTQ+ (70%) respondents, who feel that a diverse leadership team is “very important” to attracting and retaining diverse talent, significantly exceeding the average response of 54% (fig. f). It is critical for underrepresented groups to have a seat at the table and feel that their organization's leadership is encouraging a path of career development and progression. By following leaders who understand and champion the importance of diversity in the workforce, organizations can cultivate an environment that is conducive to inclusive growth and change. To meet the expectations of the next generation of talent, this will be essential.

SUPPORTING QUOTES

“[Lack of diverse leadership] shows the perception that there's not a place for me here to grow. My firm isn't as committed as they said to putting leaders in place that look like me or developing me to be that leader.”

Industry Leader

“Until the mindset is changed from the top down, DEI will truly never move forward in the industry. Leadership needs to be at the forefront and there can be no exceptions to accountability.”

Survey Respondent

“The future is bright, but we need to continue to shine the light on every example of our industry pushing the boundaries of what leadership has looked like in the past.”

Survey Respondent

### 3. BEST PRACTICES IN TALENT RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION MUST EVOLVE.

Diversifying the workforce is a business imperative. Across today’s working world, there is growing recognition that workforce diversity is a major driver of organizational performance. However, the industry’s perceptions on this vary widely. Fifty percent of this year’s survey respondents indicated that a diverse workforce is “very important” to organizational performance.



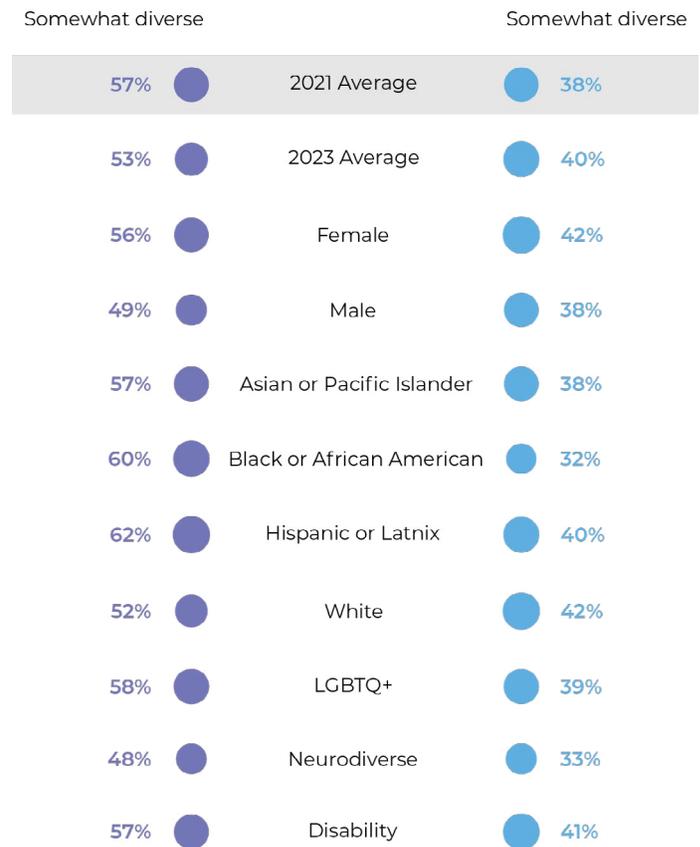
Almost all demographic groups surveyed responded to this question less favorably than in 2021, with one notable exception—LGBTQ+ respondents, who jumped from 60% in 2021 to 71% in 2023. Respondents with disabilities (64%) as well as Black or African American (62%) and neurodiverse (64%) respondents had higher feelings of “very important” compared with the average in 2023. White and male respondents had lower response rates of “very important” compared with the average, remaining at 49% and 43% respectively across both 2021 and 2023.

**Despite overwhelming agreement that a diverse workforce is imperative to performance, this feeling is not aligned with how the current workforce is perceived.** When asked about the diversity of the workforce within their own organizations, 53% of this year’s respondents indicated that their organizations are only “somewhat diverse” across all levels, which is a 4% decrease compared with the 57% in 2021 but a 15% increase from the 38% in 2020. Respondents with disabilities and Asian or Pacific Islander, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latinx, LGBTQ+, and female respondents all had higher-than-average perceptions that the workforce is “somewhat diverse” in 2023. Black

or African American respondents also had a higher feeling of “not diverse at all” at 20% compared with the average of 11% (**fig. g**).

These **sentiments worsen in regard to specialized roles in investment and portfolio management**, where feelings of “not diverse at all” increase from 11% across all levels of the workforce to 26%. Within the industry, these areas of the business are notorious for being the least diverse groups. Perceptions of that reputation worsened when specific demographic segments were considered. Black or African American respondents had the highest variance for this category, nearly doubling the average at 50%. Meanwhile, respondents with disabilities and Asian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic or Latinx, LGBTQ+, neurodiverse, and female respondents all had higher response rates than the average on the sentiment of “not diverse at all” for their organization’s investment and portfolio management roles (**fig. g**).

**PERCEPTIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL DIVERSITY ACROSS ALL LEVELS (LEFT) VS. SPECIALIZED ROLES (RIGHT)**



(FIG. G)

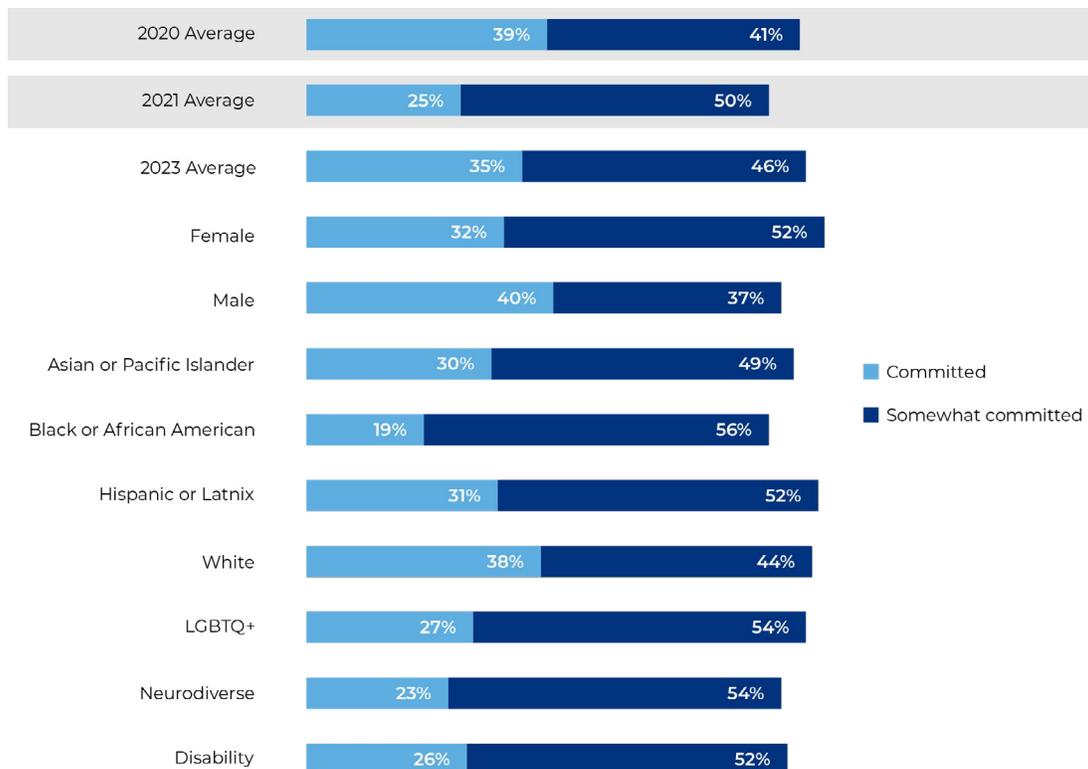
As collective understanding of the impact of workforce diversity across both visible and non-visible dimensions continues to evolve, industry executives, talent leaders, and other stakeholders must also adapt how they attract and nurture diverse candidates. Eighty-one percent of this year’s survey respondents felt that the industry is “committed” or “somewhat committed” to attracting and retaining diverse talent, up from 75% in 2021 and 80% in 2020 (fig. h). However, when asked how successful their own organizations are at attracting and retaining diverse talent, 55% of respondents felt that they are only “somewhat successful,” which is just slightly higher than 52% in 2021 and much higher compared to 35% in 2020.

These hiring challenges impact leadership levels of the industry as well, with only 22% of this year’s respondents feeling that their organization is “successful” or “very successful” at finding a diverse pool of candidates to fill leadership positions (up marginally from 20% in 2021). Lack of leadership role models was selected as the second (20%) and third (19%) highest-ranked

obstacle to increasing diversity in industry leadership and workforce, respectively. These figures reflect a significant jump from 2021, when this obstacle was ranked seventh and sixth (both at 8%). In this year’s survey, executive respondents felt that lack of leadership role models is the top obstacle to increasing diversity in industry leadership. Without diverse leadership role models, diverse talent may seek opportunities outside their organizations or outside the industry as a whole that are more supportive of their career ambitions and the nuanced paths they must traverse to achieve them. If the industry does not take measured steps to address these gaps, it runs the risk of losing a lot of top talent.

**While many organizations have made efforts to revamp their hiring commitments over the past few years, the industry’s current perceptions are not yet reflective of meaningful change.** Hiring and retention practices must evolve quickly to prove that organizations across the industry are committed to evolving the current culture to be more supportive of diversity at all levels.

PERCEIVED COMMITMENT TO ATTRACTING AND RETAINING DIVERSE TALENT HAS IMPROVED, BUT SUCCESS IN THIS AREA LAGS



(FIG. H)

Especially in light of the 2023 decision by the United States Supreme Court to end race-conscious admissions, or “affirmative action,” programs at colleges and universities—which directly impacts recruitment strategies for diverse talent. It is important that these practices shift and change so that DEI remains at center in the asset and wealth management industry.

In times of challenging market conditions when hiring slows and headcounts are made leaner, it is critical to maintain and even scale-up focus on retention and career development initiatives. While retention practices address goals such as instilling a sense of trust and belonging in work environments, thus leading to lower attrition rates, career development programs such as training and mentorship opportunities prepare employees to excel and develop into strong candidates for the next levels of the workforce or leadership rungs.

Alternatively, in stronger market cycles, talent leads and hiring managers must be prepared for potential hiring spikes. Organizations throughout the industry are employing several measures to attract more diverse applicants, including lowering requirements on years of experience; accepting transferable skills and investing in targeted technical training or onboarding; modifying job description language to be more inclusive; removing identifying information from resumes to reduce bias; and facilitating internal hiring rotations. They must proactively implement these measures, even in times of slow or no hiring, to minimize the risk of returning to legacy hiring practices that are not as supportive of DEI.

Recruiting teams must also continue to diversify their candidate pools and encourage talent development at earlier stages in the hiring lifecycle. Many organizations have begun to offer mentorship opportunities at the high school and collegiate levels, outside of traditional internship programs, to support continued career development and networking for teenage and young adult groups. This approach helps encourage an interest in the industry from an earlier starting point and can be instrumental in preparing teenagers for continuing education in finance. While these practices have a longer runway to produce results, they are crucial to sustainably diversifying the makeup of the industry’s talent pool.

#### SUPPORTING QUOTES

“You get diverse employees into your organization, but then you don’t have the trained managers, the infrastructure, or the processes to actually support them. It becomes a revolving door.”

Industry Leader

“I feel like I’m...having to work twice as hard for half the recognition. There is no clear path to promotion. The goal post is always moving.”

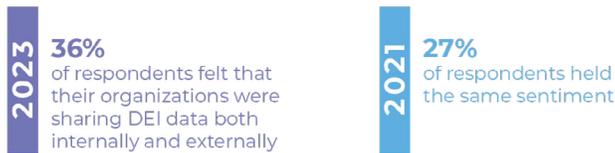
Survey Respondent

“Building diverse teams takes time, investment, and commitment – recruiting new talent to our industry must be the #1 priority.”

Survey Respondent

## 4. THE INDUSTRY MUST WORK COLLABORATIVELY TO STANDARDIZE METRICS AND ADVANCE REPORTING MATURITY.

Organizations across the industry are more adept at tracking key DEI metrics than ever before, but there are still improvements to be made—especially around data availability, transparency, and standardization. Of this year’s survey respondents, 36% felt that their organizations are sharing DEI data both internally and externally, which is up from 27% in 2021.



While this is a positive trend, there is a noticeable discrepancy when looking into the sentiments by rank. Staffs through to senior leadership fall in the 32% to 38% range, while executives are significantly higher at 51%. This is a large perception gap, suggesting that if metrics truly are being collected and shared from top levels of the organization, those efforts are not being effectively communicated and shared with employees.

LGBTQ+ respondents experienced a large jump in year-over-year perception of their organizations sharing data internally and externally, going from 17% in 2021 to 38% in 2023. Alternatively, Black or African American respondents had a lower-than-average sentiment at 30%, only a 1% increase from 2021, and neurodiverse respondents dropped from 33% in 2021 to 30% in 2023.

**Many organizations in the industry have elected to publish their own annual DEI transparency reports** that disclose current progress alongside overarching goals and targets. However, the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) continues to be a primary driver of diversity data collection in North America, with the EEO-1 annual filing requiring private companies with more than 100 employees to disclose their workforce composition

across racial, ethnic, and gender demographics. Some firms exclusively rely on the required collection of EEO-1 data to meet DEI reporting requirements, and they do not always make that data readily available or publicly shared with other stakeholders.

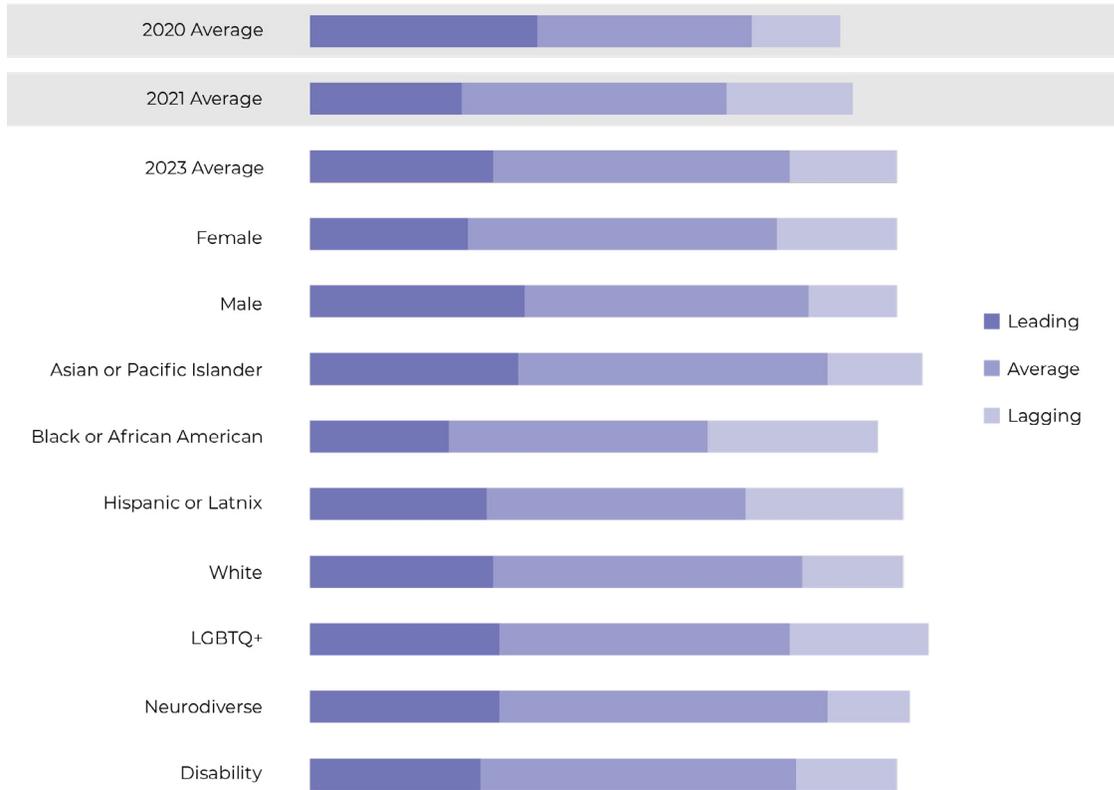
**A key challenge of collecting DEI data, for many firms in the industry, is the lack of standardization in current metrics frameworks and reporting methods.** Investors have continued to emphasize the importance of DEI in their relationships with asset and wealth managers. A wide range of due diligence and investment monitoring questions related to DEI are being posed, often in different forms and at different degrees of granularity. Regulatory bodies such as the SEC have also increased their scrutiny on DEI in the industry.

Organizations such as the CFA Institute have championed collaboration across the industry; the CFA Institute released its Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Codes for the Investment Profession in the United States and Canada as well as in the United Kingdom in 2022. Efforts such as these are directed at standardizing the types of data collected and shared while enabling alignment not just within finance but also with how other industries measure and track DEI.

**The collection and storage of this data remains difficult** for many firms to easily accommodate because of differences in global legal and risk constraints. Methods need to be highly adapted at a country-by-country, and even state-by-state or territory-by-territory, level to ensure legal restrictions, data privacy requirements, and cultural nuances are being met. It is imperative that firms properly disclose the breadth and coverage, or lack thereof, for the data that is available to be shared in transparency reports and where it is coming from.

PERCEIVED EXTERNAL REPUTATIONS HAVE IMPROVED, BUT ROOM FOR GROWTH REMAINS ACROSS SOME DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS

(FIG. I)



Given the industry’s reputation for DEI and corporate culture, the availability of transparency reports is also crucial to provide a wide range of stakeholders—from current employees, board members, and investors to prospective talent, vendors, and clients—with a view that emphasizes commitment to a better future. Of this year’s survey respondents, 47% indicated that their organization’s external reputation for DEI was “average” and 17% that it was “lagging.”

Black or African American, Hispanic or Latinx, LGBTQ+ and female respondents all indicated higher-than-average feelings that their organizations are “lagging” (fig. i).

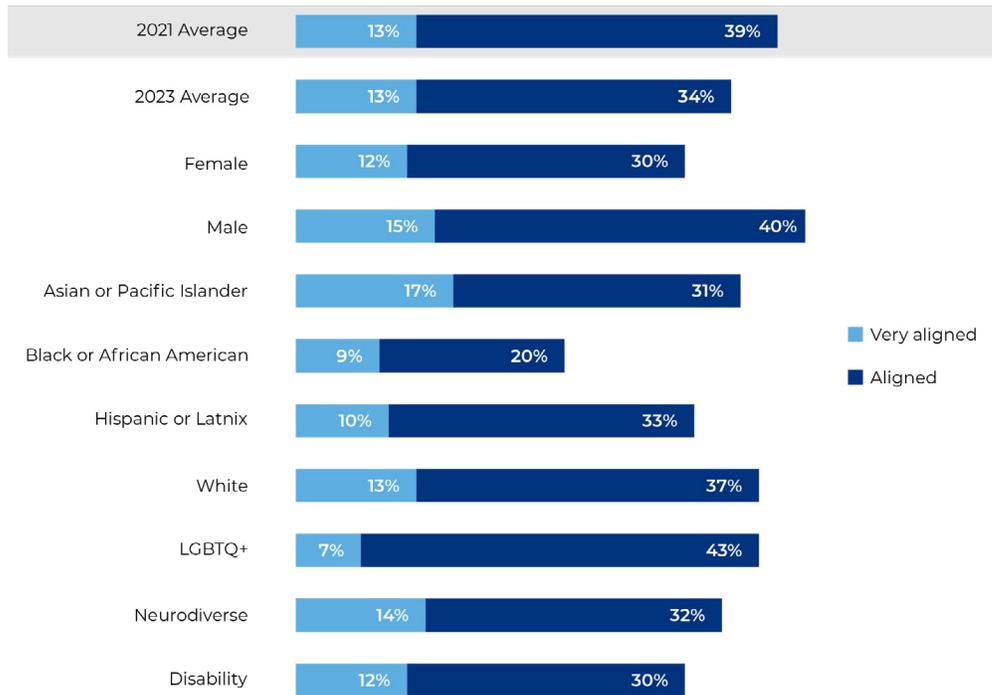
When asked about their organization’s internal reputation for DEI, the comparison was very similar. Forty-six percent of respondents indicated that their organizations are “average,” though there was a higher sentiment of “lagging” at 23% compared with external reputations.

**2023**  
 46% of respondents felt that their organization's internal reputation for DEI was "average"  
 23% felt it was "lagging"

**2021**  
 46% of respondents held the same sentiment of "average"  
 27% felt it was "lagging"

PERCEIVED ALIGNMENT OF ORGANIZATIONAL MESSAGING WITH ACTIONS OF ITS PEOPLE HAS WORSENERD

(FIG. J)



Once again, respondents with disabilities as well as Black or African American and Hispanic or Latinx respondents noted higher-than-average feelings that their organization had a “lagging” reputation internally. This suggests that how different demographic groups experience their organization’s commitments to DEI at the external and internal levels varies widely, impacting how they view related reputational areas compared with other groups.

These differences in experience can also impact the perceived alignment of an organization’s DEI positioning and messaging with the everyday actions of its people. While 47% of respondents indicated that their organization’s DEI position messaging was “aligned” or “very aligned” with the actions of its people (down from 52% in 2021), this sentiment changes within underlying demographic segments (fig. j). Black or African American respondents reported the strongest disconnect, responding 18% below average, which remains consistent with 2021. Respondents with disabilities as well as Hispanic or Latinx and female

respondents also reported lower feelings of alignment compared with the average, though they are far closer than Black or African American sentiments.

There was an overwhelming feeling (73%) that the availability and transparency of DEI metrics was “very important” or “important,” though this perception is down 10% from 83% in 2021. While respondents with disabilities and non-white, female, neurodiverse, LGBTQ+, senior leadership, and middle management respondents held the highest views of importance, other demographic groups did not share the same feeling. Male (65%) and executive (68%) respondents had lower sentiments of importance compared with the average. On the whole, when compared with perception data gathered in 2021, every demographic group reported a decrease in feelings of importance, with Black or African American and executive respondents dropping the most, from 92% and 86%, respectively, to 72% and 68% in 2023.

One contributing factor to this shift could be what is known as “DEI fatigue.” Organizations rely almost exclusively on self-identification campaigns to collect workforce data related to diversity, with additional surveys and pulse checks leveraged to gather sentiments on topics of equity and inclusion. If these initiatives are undertaken at intervals that are too close together, and paired with DEI trainings, programming, and other communications that are not balanced or integrated, it can leave people feeling overwhelmed and frustrated. It is critical that the industry work together to embed DEI practices and commitments into the overarching culture and day-to-day working environments in a sustainable manner, so people are left feeling energized and encouraged in the long run. While reporting on progress and goals remains an important component of an overarching DEI strategy, the underlying actions themselves are paramount to inspiring confidence and enacting change.

### SUPPORTING QUOTES

“We measure all of our other business objectives with KPIs and metrics, so why wouldn’t we measure this one with the same level of rigor?”

Industry Leader

“If firms feel like they really are committed, the transparency in the organization has absolutely got to be there so employees feel that commitment.”

Survey Respondent

“We need more pressure on organizations to publicly publish their DEI metrics and also educate the sectors internally on their specific areas of improvement and invest in making that happen.”

Survey Respondent

## 5. CAREER DEVELOPMENT NEEDS TO EVOLVE BEYOND TRADITIONAL PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES.

A robust approach to career development is critical to building a diverse workforce and improving the pipeline to senior and executive leadership roles. Only 34% of this year's survey respondents reported feeling that their organization was "successful" or "very successful" at providing career development opportunities to diverse employees, a 1% increase from 33% in 2021 though still significantly below the 79% in 2020.



Respondents with disabilities (26%) and Black or African American (18%), female (28%), and LGBTQ+ (22%) respondents had lower ratings compared with the average when asked about their organization's success, while male respondents came in much higher at 42%.

Career development opportunities take many forms, depending on the type of organization and even the line of business or functional area. These opportunities are also further adapted based on individual resources and what is commonly needed at certain stages of a career journey, including considerations for differences in demographic factors. **One of the most prominent development approaches currently undertaken by firms in the industry is mentorship programs.**

Eighty percent of this year's survey respondents reported having an opportunity to be mentored either formally or informally within their organizations, which is down marginally from the 81% in 2021 and a significant improvement from the 66% in 2020. Black or African American respondents reported the highest sentiment of having opportunities to be mentored, at 84%, which continues the momentum from the 82% in 2021. Female, LGBTQ+, and neurodiverse respondents also came in above the average, indicating that organizations may be focusing their programming to these segments. Providing underrepresented groups with opportunities to be mentored can greatly impact corporate culture and can also begin to address the obstacles to increasing diversity among leadership levels and the workforce.

When respondents were asked if they had opportunities to serve as a mentor to others within their organizations, the average response did not change across 2023 and 2021. Respondents with disabilities (79%) and non-white (77%), LGBTQ+ (75%), and neurodiverse (75%) respondents all reported more limited opportunities to fill the role of mentor, remaining consistent with 2021 results. Diverse mentors who serve in formal or informal capacities are critical to supporting employees in building relationships with colleagues or leaders who share an understanding of the adversity and unique experiences that they have, provide empathy, and lend valuable career or personal development guidance—especially where these individuals may not have the opportunity to otherwise interact in the organization.

**Many firms have elected to formalize their mentorship programs** in recent years, while others continue to encourage resources to build those relationships on their own. Formal programs will leverage surveys or application forms for potential mentees and mentors to identify matches based on an individual's career aspirations, general background and experience, areas of interest, and skillset development needs. Some firms also implement a rotational component in their formal programs, where mentees have the opportunity to meet and network with several different leaders throughout the organization over the course of a set time.

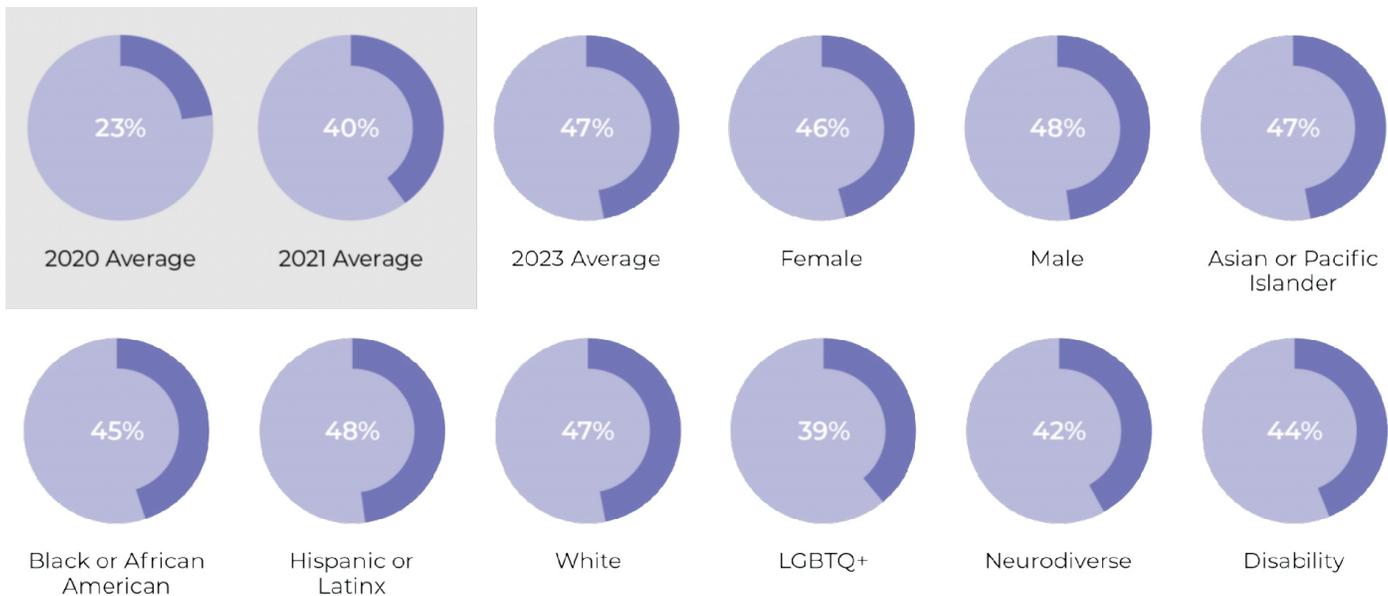
**Sponsorship, on the other hand, proved to be a greater challenge** for both diverse employees and diverse leaders, though opportunities have been steadily improving over time. Forty-seven percent of this year’s survey respondents reported an opportunity, either formal or informal, to be sponsored within their organizations. This is up from 40% in 2021 and 23% in 2020 (fig. k). However, respondents with disabilities and Black or African American, female, LGBTQ+, and neurodiverse respondents all had lower response rates than average, with LGBTQ+ respondents having the greatest discrepancy in perceived opportunity at 39%. Creating equal opportunities for high-performing employees that are representative of a wider range of demographic groups should remain a top priority for firms.

Only 16% of this year’s executive and senior leadership ranks indicated that they had “many opportunities” to serve as a sponsor within their organizations.

When examining the different demographic segments of these leadership levels, this sentiment was lowest among Asian or Pacific Islander (9%), neurodiverse (9%), LGBTQ+ (11%), and female (13%) leaders and highest in Hispanic or Latinx (26%), Black or African American (19%), and male (19%) leaders.

Very few firms in the industry offer formal sponsorship programs. Where mentorship is often a demand on time from industry leaders, sponsorship requires both their time and their personal capital. Sponsors must put themselves and their own reputations up as collateral when advocating for their sponsored employees to be considered for promotions or other career opportunities. Sponsorship puts a greater emphasis on personal connection and confidence in a person’s abilities, which means these relationships are developed organically and cannot be forced.

**SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES IMPROVED OVERALL, BUT LAG FOR UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS**



(FIG. K)

In lieu of formalizing these programs, firms and leaders must instead turn a critical eye to the individuals who are being afforded sponsorship opportunities and the backgrounds or demographics that they represent. Sponsorship is often afforded to much smaller segments of the workforce based on those who are high performers or who have the highest degrees of perceived success at opportunities to lead and advance, but bias can influence these selections. There is a risk that these relationships can occur based on similarities and shared experiences between individuals and current leaders, which can perpetuate a lack of diversification in pipelines and pathways to the top. It is crucial that leaders challenge their own biases and assumptions while also being held accountable for patterns in promotion and sponsorship decisions that are not supportive of DEI.

Firms must be dynamic and focused with their approach to career development, particularly when considering the unique needs and barriers experienced by underrepresented groups. This includes mentorship and sponsorship as well as other networking and relationship-building opportunities, trainings and continued learning initiatives, and deployment mobility such as rotational programs or leadership coaching.

**Several industry organizations offer programs that are specifically aimed at providing meaningful career development and coaching opportunities to emerging diverse leaders, such as Nicsa Diversity Project North America's Rising Star Program.** Access to these opportunities and visibility throughout the organization and the industry are crucial to the future success and development of diverse talent.

### SUPPORTING QUOTES

"It all comes down to the exposure. Who is getting this exposure? Who is getting that access to networking and development opportunities across the organization at all different levels?"

Industry Leader

"Our industry has a lot to say about DEI, but our actions do not always back up our words. Our underrepresented talent feel they are not valued in the same way, nor are they given opportunities in the same way as our majority talent."

Survey Respondent

"Oftentimes the current leaders 'see themselves' or have mentees who remind them of themselves, which further perpetuates the current low level of inclusion."

Survey Respondent

## 6. ROBUST TRAINING INITIATIVES CAN HELP EMBED DEI IN THE DAY-TO-DAY EXPERIENCE.

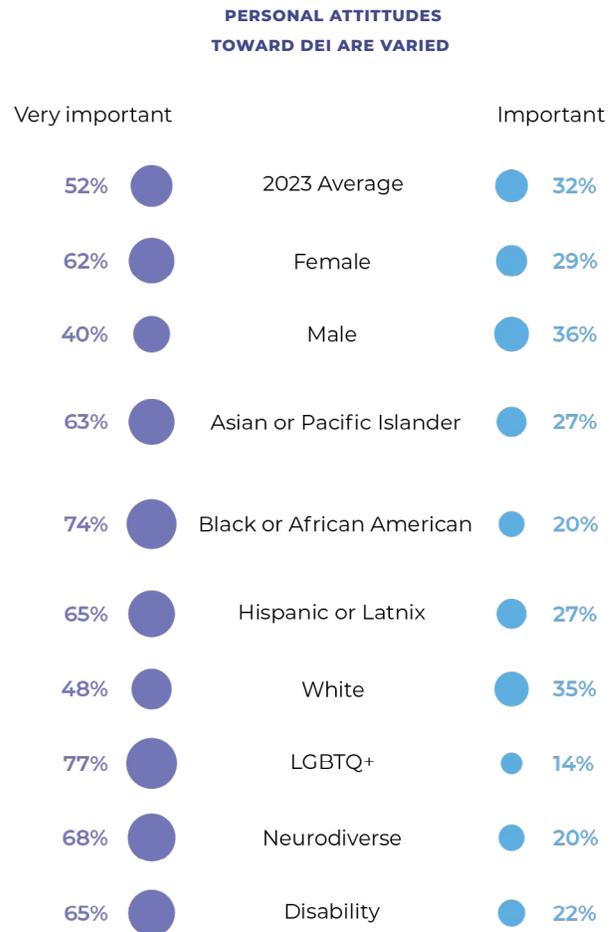
**Individual attitudes on DEI remain highly nuanced throughout the industry.** In 2023, survey participants were asked a new question on how important DEI is to them at a personal level; 52% of respondents indicated that it is “very important” while 32% responded “important.” Respondents with disabilities and Asian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic or Latinx, female, and neurodiverse respondents had higher response rates of “very important,” with LGBTQ+ and Black or African American respondents boasting the highest sentiments in this category, at 77% and 74%, respectively. White (48%) and male (40%) respondent groups had the lowest feelings of “very important” compared with the average and other demographic groups (**fig. l**).

As firms continue to reimagine and refocus their commitments to advancing DEI, it is crucial that they understand where individual perceptions and commitments lie. Personal accountability for DEI is not something that is formally assessed or enforced by most organizations, especially outside of leadership levels. While many individuals hold a view that it is a moral imperative just as much as a business imperative, there remains the perception that DEI is being handled by someone else or that it is the responsibility of industry leaders, dedicated roles such as CDOs or talent managers, and members of underrepresented groups to push forward. To meaningfully accelerate progress on key DEI initiatives across the industry, shared responsibility must be felt at every level.

Sixty percent of survey respondents indicated that DEI-related performance metrics are “somewhat important” or “not important at all” in their personal performance reviews, appraisals, and evaluations from management, representing a significant downward trend since 21% in 2020. Black or African American (72%) and LGBTQ+ (71%) respondents account for the largest negative perceptions compared with the average. These sentiments may prompt employees to question why they should devote resources—in this case their time,

effort, and money—to DEI initiatives when they are not seen as valued by their organizations.

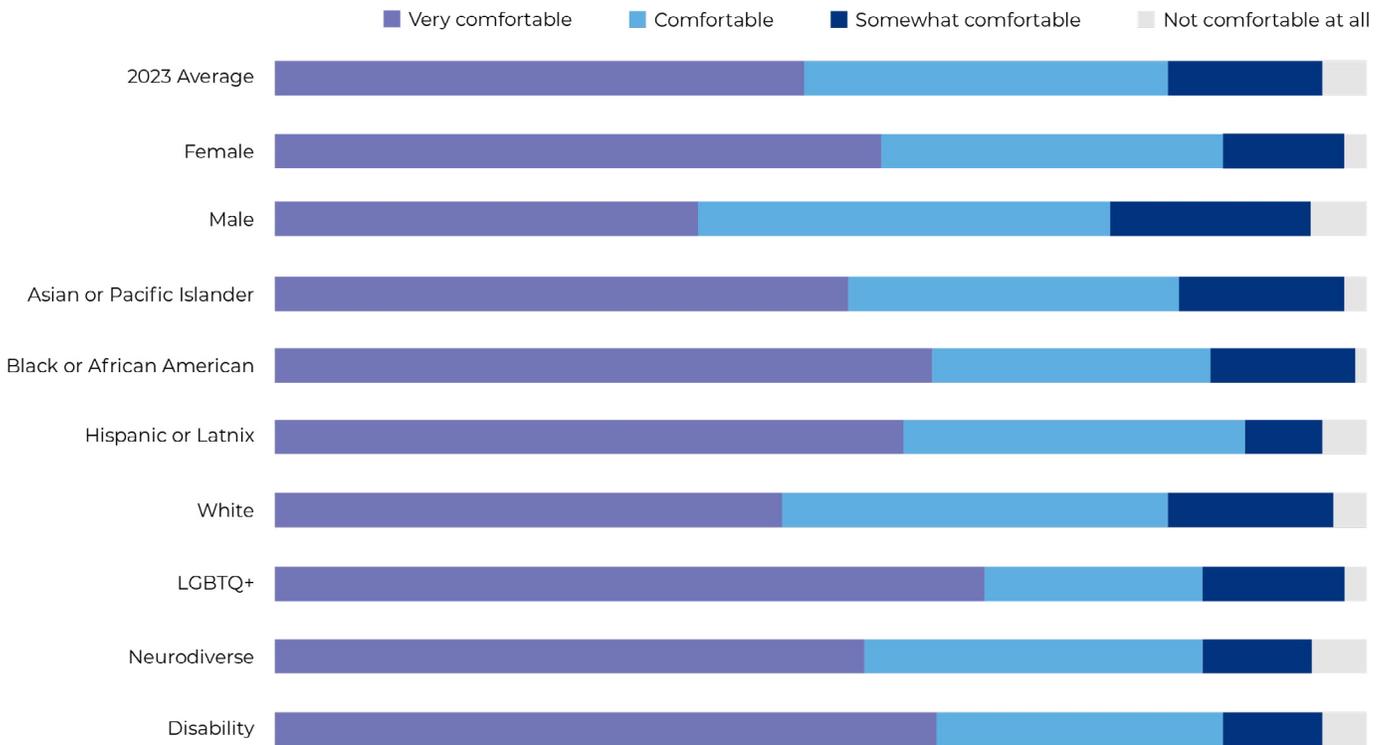
Survey participants were also asked how comfortable they are with participating in initiatives related to DEI. Forty-eight percent of this year’s respondents reported feeling “very comfortable” while an additional 33% reported feeling “comfortable.” Among the underlying demographic groups, respondents with disabilities as well as LGBTQ+ and executive respondents all had sentiments of “very comfortable” that were at or above 60%. Meanwhile, male respondents had a significantly lower response rate in the same category, coming in at just 38% feeling “very comfortable” in participating in DEI initiatives (**fig. m**).



(FIG. L)

COMFORT LEVEL WITH DEI INITIATIVES IS HIGH

(FIG. M)



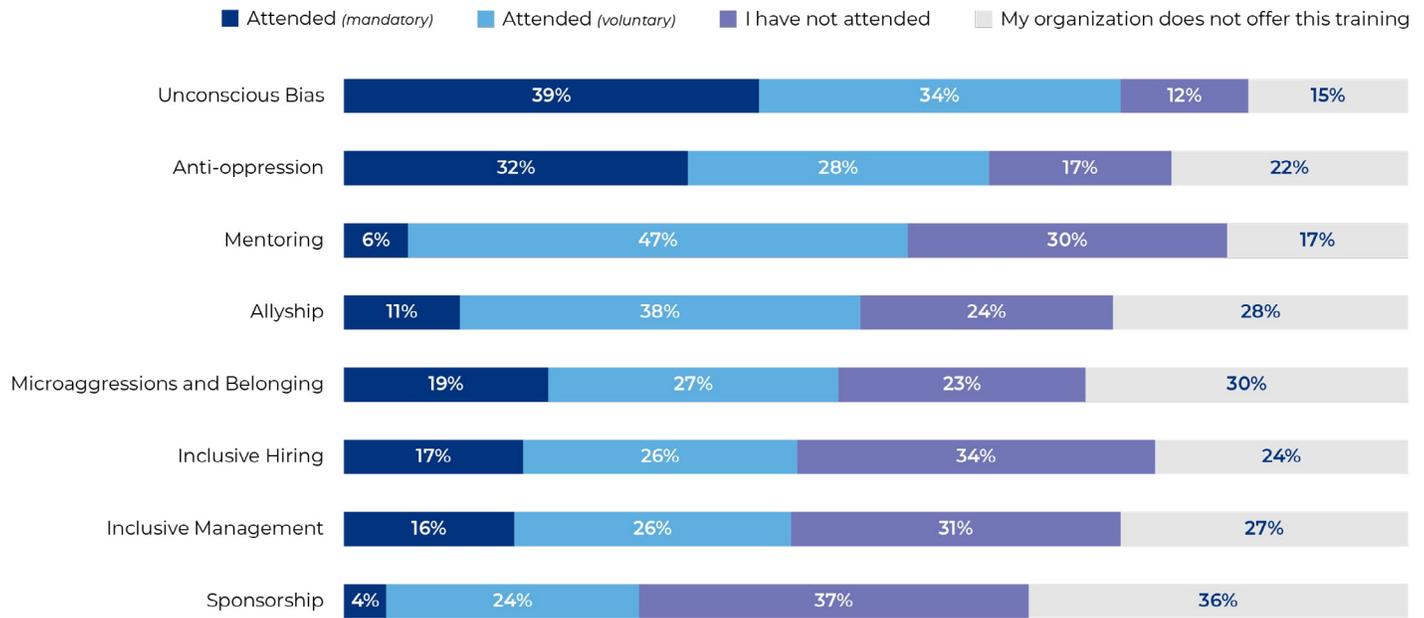
These results suggest that **while many people in the industry are comfortable participating in DEI initiatives, they are not necessarily being recognized or rewarded for that participation** in their performance reviews, appraisals, and evaluations. This can lead to a disconnect where individuals do not feel that their firms are valuing this participation and engagement in DEI, and that firms may not emphasize these commitments as core values for all members of their workforce to share accountability in achieving.

One of the ways in which **DEI is being embedded into the day-to-day experiences of people in the industry is through tailored training programs.**

These programs have continued to emphasize the importance of shifting behaviors related to DEI, and not just transferring knowledge on core topics. In 2023 survey data, the highest attended trainings were unconscious bias, anti-oppression (anti-racism, anti-sexism, etc.), and mentoring, which remained the same from 2021 (**fig. n**). Meanwhile, the lowest-attended trainings were sponsorship, inclusive management, and inclusive hiring, with inclusive hiring taking the place of microaggressions and belonging from the 2021 results.

UNCONSCIOUS BIAS, ANTI-OPPRESSION, MENTORING REMAIN MOST ATTENDED TRAININGS

(FIG. N)



Notable differences in this year’s survey attendance rates occurred in Asian or Pacific Islander, Black or African American, female, neurodiverse, and LGBTQ+ demographic groups, which all increased by 15% or more on average across all DEI training and event categories. **This significant uptick in attendance demonstrates a willingness to engage, educate, and promote core DEI initiatives through furthered learning opportunities.** When examining the types of trainings and events offered, programs on allyship, mentorship, and anti-oppression had the largest year-over-year increases in attendance compared with 2021 results.

In recent years, many firms have been faced with challenges in developing training programs related to DEI and encouraging attendance. Several states in the US have prohibited these programs and events from being mandated for employees to attend. Lawmakers in the United States have also introduced multiple pieces of legislation that ban and prohibit a wider range of initiatives aimed at DEI beyond training, with recent targets directed at higher education institutions.

How training programs are developed and made available can vary widely depending on the size of the organization. Larger firms will often opt to develop their own trainings in-house, which allows them to accommodate their own corporate culture and unique needs. Alternatively, smaller firms will often rely on outside vendors that provide industry-standard programming that is immediately implementable into their own ecosystems. In both cases, there is often a need to ensure that training programs and learning initiatives, whether bespoke or vendor-provided, take into consideration the different cultural nuances and legal restrictions across local, regional, national, and global business environments.

Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) is being increasingly integrated into trainings to adapt and learn where people require additional focus and coaching on DEI. This becomes highly relevant in programs that are designed to help shift where bias or microaggressions manifest in common workplace interactions. Scenario-based learning approaches continue to take theoretical and conceptual ideas and put them into practice in a way that resonates with the specific asset and wealth management industry environment.

While training is one prong of the overall strategy to advance DEI across the industry, it must be part of a multi-faceted approach to enact change. Studies have shown that trainings on DEI topics such as unconscious bias will not move the needle on their own. Behaviors must shift at the individual level and employees should be held accountable, recognized, and rewarded for their participation in achieving DEI goals. Advancing DEI does not fall solely upon any one group's shoulders; it is an imperative shared by all in the pursuit of a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive future for the asset and wealth management industry.

### SUPPORTING QUOTES

“People think that DEI is somebody else’s responsibility. It’s leadership’s responsibility, it’s management’s responsibility. It’s not my responsibility. There’s still the issue out there that DEI is somebody else’s job, and the reality is that it’s everybody’s job.”

Industry Leader

“Unconscious bias training is not going to rid you of your bias. We have to move to more conscious decision-making and recognizing when bias creeps into interactions or how decisions are made about hiring and promotions.”

Industry Leader

## METHODOLOGY

Nicsa's 2023 DEI Perception Survey of the asset and wealth management industry was launched in collaboration with the Diversity Project North America DEI Perception Study Committee and EY. It went live in April 2023 following Nicsa's Strategic Leadership Forum industry conference and closed in July 2023 following Nicsa's Fearless Leadership Symposium—the first and only national conference focused solely on DEI issues specific to the global asset management and fund industry.

Data was collected from over 1,500 respondents representing multiple firms and organization types within the industry. The survey measured the perceptions of respondents on 40 core questions across key DEI themes such as leadership; workforce; metrics and performance; talent, hiring, and work environment; training, mentorship, and sponsorship; and DEI response and commitment. The majority of responses were collected based on a four-point scale (e.g., asking respondents to choose if they felt something was very important, important, somewhat important, or not important at all plus an additional option for those who preferred not to respond).

An additional 14 questions were asked to gather personal demographic data from respondents on areas such as age, racial or ethnic identity, gender identity, highest educational attainment, LGBTQ+, neurodiversity, geographic region, type of organization employed by, business unit or group within the organization, and level within the organization. Four of the 14 questions were newly added in the 2023 survey to capture personal demographic data related to disability, veteran status, and years of experience within the industry and current

organization. At the end of the survey, respondents were given the opportunity to provide free-text commentary with any additional thoughts on the state of DEI in the industry, some of which were featured anonymously throughout this report.

Nicsa and EY also hosted a series of virtual roundtable sessions throughout August to gather reactions and insights from industry leaders on the perceptions captured in the survey data. Thirty-four business and HR or DEI leaders from 22 Nicsa DPNA member firms participated in these interactive dialogues, with anonymized quotes and examples from the discussions included throughout this report. The quantitative data collected through the survey is interpreted within the context of relevant qualitative factors, such as the roundtable commentary and other industry insights.

Note that demographic segments with counts of less than 65 were deemed not statistically significant and were omitted from the graphics and numerical result references provided within this report. However, the responses of these groups were included in analysis and were considered when determining trends and key takeaways. For example, Native American or Indigenous survey participants totaled seven and Veteran participants totaled 30. While the responses of these individuals are important and were meaningful in informing the report's broader conclusions and content, specific deductions based on the raw data cannot be presented in charts, graphics, or numerical references based on statistical significance.

Where applicable, data from the 2020 and 2021 survey results has been provided alongside the results from 2023 for benchmarking purposes. In order to provide a clear comparison, the numerical range from the 2020 results (1 to 10, with 1 being "Strongly Disagree" and 10 being "Strongly Agree") was mapped to the relevant four-point scales for the 2021 and 2023 data sets. For any questions or to receive a deeper dive into the full results set, please contact Nicsa.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Allyship:** The consistent practice of taking action to support and advance the interests of a marginalized, mistreated, or oppressed group of which you are not a member.

**Belonging:** The feeling of psychological safety and trust one experiences, which leads to better inclusion. The experiences of belonging are not static and can often change from situation to situation.

**Culture:** The set of local cultural norms, beliefs, standards, and expectations, that may or may not include ethnicity and religion. Cultural background or affiliation refers to the culture in which a person has been raised, and / or the cultural environment with which they most identify. This is an invisible dimension and may be influenced by aspects such as geographic region, religion, and social group. One's genetic heritage can be different to one's cultural background. Also, people may identify with a mixed cultural background.

**DEI:** Diversity, equity, and inclusion.

**Diversity:** All of the qualities or ways in which people differ, which can include on the basis of nationality, background, education, gender, race, ethnicity, generation, age, working and thinking styles, religious background, sexual orientation, disabilities, abilities, experiences and technical skills, geography, and many other characteristics.

**ESG:** Environmental, social, and governance.

**Equity:** Treating all people fairly and impartially, especially with regards to access, advancement, opportunities, and the elimination of barriers.

**Flexibility:** Creating an agile workplace culture and working smarter, not working less. Challenging the assumptions about where, when, and how work gets done, while maintaining a clear focus on the results to achieve. Being agile and responsive to the differing needs of people, teams, clients, and others.

**Inclusion:** All people being welcomed, respected, supported, and valued in their encounters and environments, which can lead to a feeling of belonging.

**Intersectionality:** A term coined by professor Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 to describe how race, class, gender, and other characteristics “intersect” and overlap with one another on an individual or group level.

**LGBTQ+:** Acronym describing the community of people who identify as lesbian, gay, bi, transgender, queer, or other non-heterosexual / non-cisgender identities such as intersex or asexual and / or allies.

**Mentor:** Anyone in a position of experience, regardless of their level or title, who provides mentorship.

**Mentorship:** Guidance or advising provided by a more experienced, connected, or knowledgeable person to a less experienced, connected, or knowledgeable person. Informal mentorship can have little to no defined structure and can be based on personal chemistry or common goals and experiences, while formal mentorship is often more structured and can be part of a program or process with set pairings and time frames.

**Neurodiverse:** A concept that considers the range of differences in human brain function and all variations of cognitive function, which can include autism spectrum disorder, ADHD, dyslexia, and others.

**Nonbinary:** Someone whose gender identity is neither man nor woman. “Nonbinary” is also a term used to describe gender identities other than strictly “man” or “woman.”

**Sponsor:** Typically someone of a more senior or executive level or title who tends to use their own political capital to further a sponsored employee.

**Sponsorship:** Advocacy and advancement provided by a more experienced, connected, or knowledgeable person for a less experienced, connected, or knowledgeable person. Informal sponsorship can have little to no defined structure and can be based on personal chemistry or common goals and experiences, while formal sponsorship is often more structured and can be part of a program or process with set pairings and time frames.

## ABOUT NICSA

Nicsa is a not-for-profit trade association striving to connect all facets of the global asset and wealth management industry in order to develop, share, implement, and advance leading practices. Nicsa member firms include asset managers, wealth managers, broker dealers, custodian banks, transfer agents, and other professional service firms including audit, tax, law, technology, marketing, and compliance.

In 2018, Nicsa launched the Diversity Project North America to champion DEI as a strategic business priority within the asset and wealth management industry.

Through education, advocacy, and idea sharing, we promote the acceptance of diversity in all forms, the elimination of barriers and biases, and the creation of equitable opportunities.

We advance better business results for our member firms and positive long-term impact for the clients we all serve by fostering an industry where diversity is achieved, equity is the standard, and inclusion is celebrated.

To learn more, visit [nicsa.org/diversity-project](https://nicsa.org/diversity-project)

### DISCLOSURE

The observations contained in this work represent the thoughts of individuals comprising Nicsa leadership and its committees. They do not necessarily reflect the views of Nicsa or any of its member organizations. Nothing herein is intended to be or should be construed as legal advice.

# ABOUT NICSA'S DIVERSITY PROJECT NORTH AMERICA

## The 2023 Diversity Project CEO Advisory Council

### Co-Chairs

**Thomas Arnold**, Ernst & Young LLP

**Deirdre O'Connor**, Cerberus Capital Management, L.P.

**Cil Aquino Ross**, Harris Associates L.P.

**Larysa Bemko**, Baillie Gifford Overseas Ltd.

**Florian Bezault**, AXA Investment Managers

**Federico Cervantes**, Aon

**Sarah Cossa**, American Century Investments

**Scott Couto**, Columbia Threadneedle Investments

**Suzanne Cullinane**, Janus Henderson Investors

**Jamie Davis**, Hartford Funds

**Paul Dawe**, HSBC Global Asset Management

**Katharine Dean**, Nationwide Financial

**Stephen Denny**, Putnam Investments

**Richard Ernesti**, Citi

**Shahida Fazal**, Mawer Investment Management Ltd

**Nancy Folan**, Amundi US

**Nicole Fouron**, BNY Mellon

**Kirsten Garrett**, Confluence

**Alfred Giles**, Payden & Rygel Investment Group

**Nicole Greene**, SS&C Technologies, Inc.

**Mollie Jensen**, Russell Investments

**Raheel Jiwan**, BMO Bank of Montreal

**Wendy John**, Fidelity Investments

**Alan Jones**, ICG - Intermediate Capital Group

**Frieda Lewis**, Broadridge Financial Solutions, Inc.

**York Lo**, John Hancock Signature Services Inc.

**Sarah Maynard**, CFA Institute

**Cathie Mazza**, Schroders

**Ann Miletti**, Allspring Global Investments

**Lauren Mugavero**, Bank of America / Merrill Lynch

**Thomas Oprendeck**, SFS

**Anna Penn**, Invesco

**Kirsten Pickens**, FS Investments

**Ofelia Potter**, Northern Trust

**Candace Shaw**, Sun Life Financial

**Jackie Sinkler**, Calamos Investments

**Katrina Somsel**, Thrivent Financial Investor Services, Inc.

**Beth Sullivan**, J.P. Morgan

**Chris Thompson**, Aegon Asset Management

**Michelle Thompson-Dolberry**, MFS Investment Management

**LeAnn Trejo**, Capital Group | American Funds

**Rachel Trock**, Polen Capital

**Stacy Veleker**, State Street Corporation

**Stacey Winning**, Dimensional Fund Advisors Inc.

*As of November 2023*

## ABOUT NCSA'S DIVERSITY PROJECT NORTH AMERICA

**THE DIVERSITY PROJECT NORTH AMERICA IS COMPRISED OF 9 ACTIVE COMMITTEES MADE UP OF MORE THAN 200 ENGAGED AND PASSIONATE VOLUNTEERS:**

**CEO Advisory Council:** sets the strategic direction for the Project

**Executive:** ensures the committee work aligns with CEO Advisory Council objectives

**DEI Perception Study:** explores insights on the perception of progress through the Project's DEI Survey and Study

**Education Engagement & Outreach:** attracts diverse talent to the industry

**Fearless Leadership Symposium:** drives content and speaker identification for annual event

**Industry Engagement & Events:** shares findings, ideas and training to drive action and inclusive leadership

**"Next" Practices:** shares forward-looking ideas to help firms build bold programs that advance equitable opportunity and support business results

**Rising Stars:** supports the selection, implementation, and promotion of the annual Rising Stars, a career development program for diverse leadership.

### Diversity Project North America Member Firms



As of November 2023

## ABOUT EY

### How EY Global Wealth & Asset Management Sector can help your business

In EY wealth and asset management work today, not everything is innovation; a lot of it is evolution. And it's important to know the difference. FinTech disruptors continue to shift the rules, newer investors aren't flocking to older channels and cost pressure is relentless. From data and AI, to tech platforms and partners, the questions have never been bigger, and the stakes have never been higher.

At EY, we help clients re-think everything from pricing and operating models to competition and convergence. We bring critical questions into focus, which lead to bolder strategies, simplified operations and sustainable growth. Our sharp understanding of the state of play allows us to shift discussion from reacting to change, to helping shape it. Ultimately, EY teams work with clients not just to stay competitive, but to change investing for the better.

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